

Revista Canaria de

ESTUDIOS INGLESES

Universidad de La Laguna

92

2026



Revista Canaria de
ESTUDIOS INGLESES

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Servicio de Publicaciones de la Universidad de La Laguna
Campus Central. 38200 La Laguna.
Santa Cruz de Tenerife.

E-mail: servicio.publicaciones@ull.edu.es

DESIGN

J.H. Vera/Javier Torres/Luis C. Espinosa

TYPESET BY

Servicio de Publicaciones

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.25145/j.recaesin.2026.92>

ISSN: 0211-5913 (edición impresa) / ISSN: e-2530-8335 (edición digital)

Depósito Legal: TF 275/81

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Revista Canaria de
ESTUDIOS INGLESES

92

SERVICIO DE PUBLICACIONES
UNIVERSIDAD DE LA LAGUNA, 2026

REVISTA canaria de estudios ingleses. –N.º 1 (1980)–. –La Laguna: Universidad, Servicio de Publicaciones, 1980–
Semestral
ISSN: 0211-5913 (edición impresa) / ISSN: e-2530-8335 (edición digital)
1. Literatura inglesa-Publicaciones periódicas 2. Lengua inglesa-Gramática-Publicaciones periódicas I.
Universidad de La Laguna. Servicio de Publicaciones, ed.
820(05)
802.0-5(05)

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SPECIAL ISSUE

Interpersonal Grammar In Women's Instructive Writing /
La gramática interpersonal en la escritura instructiva de las mujeres

INTRODUCTION: INTERPERSONAL GRAMMAR IN WOMEN'S INSTRUCTIVE WRITING*

Francisco Alonso-Almeida
Universidad de Las Palmas de Gran Canaria

Women's instructive writing sits in an intriguing place in the history of English. It is plainly practical, often relentlessly so. Lists of ingredients, sequences of actions, advice on household management, institutional directions, pedagogical guidance, and those stubbornly repetitive genres that only look formulaic until one starts reading them closely. Yet it is also socially delicate. To instruct is to presume a right to guide someone else's actions, to calibrate what counts as "proper", "safe", "effective", "economical", "decent". For women writing in periods when access to formal authority was limited or policed, that presumption could not simply be taken for granted. The result is that instructive genres become, almost by design, privileged sites for negotiating authority, managing alignment with readers, and constructing an authorial position (Hyland 2005; Hyland 2012) that can be firm without sounding socially transgressive.

This Special Issue brings that interpersonal work into focus. Its aim is not to treat women's instructive texts as quaint artefacts of domestic history, nor to reduce them to stylistic curiosities. Instead, the guiding claim is straightforward. If we want to understand how women participated in the making and circulation of specialised knowledge, we need to look at the interpersonal grammar through which instruction is made doable, acceptable, and persuasive. That means attention to grammatical choices that enact relations and stances, not simply to "tone" as a vague impression. It also means anchoring interpretation in corpus-based evidence, because the phenomena at stake are often incremental and patterned: small shifts in modal choices, recurring conditional framings, subtle clustering of stance adverbials, the steady background hum of address forms and engagement cues (Biber and Finegan 1989; Biber et al. 1999).

Two research traditions, in particular, underpin the Special Issue. The first is work grounded in the *Corpus of Women's Instructive Texts in English* (CoWITE), which has provided a sustained empirical basis for examining women's instructive discourse across modern English, including its changing repertoires of directive force, mitigation, and evaluative positioning (Alonso-Almeida 2013; Alonso-Almeida et al. 2025). The second is the long-standing corpus scholarship developed by members of the MUSTE research group at the University of A Coruña, including their foundational work with the *Coruña Corpus* and its affiliated resources for historical specialised discourse (Moskowich et al. 2012). While the Coruña tradition is most

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.25145/j.recaesin.2026.92.00>

REVISTA CANARIA DE ESTUDIOS INGLESES, 92; abril 2026, pp. 11-28; ISSN: e-2530-8335
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often associated with scientific writing, its analytic commitments (to historical variation, register differentiation, and the linguistic construction of expertise and credibility) speak directly to the concerns of this issue (Moskowich 2016; Crespo and Moskowich 2015). Put simply, CoWITE and *Coruña-Corpus-based* scholarship converge on an empirical understanding of how writers make knowledge socially legible: how they present claims, manage epistemic access, and align audiences to procedures, explanations, or recommendations (Hyland and Tse 2004).

The notion of ‘interpersonal meaning’ is sometimes used loosely, as if it were synonymous with evaluation, politeness, or the expression of ‘attitude’. The approach taken in this Special Issue is narrower and, I think, more productive. We treat interpersonal meaning as a metafunctional dimension of language in the Hallidayan sense. This means the semiotic resources through which speakers and writers enact social relations, negotiate roles, and position themselves with respect to both addressees and the exchange itself (Halliday and Matthiessen 2014; Halliday and Hasan 1985). In Halliday and Matthiessen’s account, this includes the grammar of MOOD (declaratives, interrogatives, imperatives), modality, polarity, and related systems that construe obligation, inclination, probability, and usuality as part of the exchange (Halliday and Matthiessen 2014). It also includes the lexicogrammatical resources that allow writers to negotiate alignment, namely evaluative lexis, evidential framings, engagement markers, and strategies that distribute responsibility for knowledge (‘it is said’, ‘it seems’, ‘you will find’) (Alonso-Almeida 2023, Alonso-Almeida 2025, Hyland 2005; Hyland 2012). The relevant point for instructive writing is that these resources are not ornamentation. They are part of how instruction works as social action.

Instructive genres are especially revealing because they make interpersonal choices unavoidable. A recipe that says something like ‘Take the eggs and beat them well’ does more than describe a procedure; it performs a directive. A manual that writes ‘you should allow the mixture to settle’ positions the reader as a cooperative agent while modulating force. An institutional instruction that states ‘you must submit the form by Michaelmas’ invokes an explicit obligation and, often, a disciplinary backdrop. Even when writers avoid overt command forms, the interpersonal load does not disappear, and it is redistributed across modal choices, conditional packaging (‘if you wish to...’), or impersonal constructions that shift agency away from writer and reader alike (‘it is necessary to...’) (Alonso-Almeida 2023; Halliday and Matthiessen 2014; Palmer 2001).

Within SFL, it is also useful to preserve the distinction between modalisation and modulation. Modalisation concerns assessments of probability and usuality (how

* The research conducted in this paper has been supported by the Agencia Estatal de Investigación, Plan Estatal de Investigación Científica, Técnica y de Innovación 2021–2023, under award number PID2021-125928NB-I00. I hereby express my thanks. Unión Europea · Fondo Europeo de Desarrollo regional “Una manera de hacer Europa”. Special thanks are given to the General Editor of *Revista Canaria de Estudios Ingleses* for this collaboration.

likely, how frequent); modulation concerns obligation and inclination (how strongly required, how strongly willed) (Alonso-Almeida 2026; Halliday and Matthiessen 2014; Palmer 2001; Nuyts 2001). In women's instructive writing, that distinction is not merely taxonomic. It often tracks a rhetorical recalibration of authority, i.e., moving from bare obligation to graded recommendation; from absolute certainty to carefully bounded probability; or, conversely, from tentative possibility to the occasional, strategically placed necessity when safety, health, or institutional compliance is at stake (Alonso-Almeida 2015; Nuyts 2001). The issue is not whether women were "more tentative" in some essentialised way, but how interpersonal force is managed relative to genre aims, readership design, and historically situated constraints on authorial legitimacy (Hyland 2005; Hyland 2012).

At this point, 'stance' becomes analytically relevant, though we treat it as compatible with, rather than competing against, interpersonal grammar. In the tradition associated with Biber and Finegan, stance can be operationalised through recurrent lexical and grammatical markers that express affect, epistemic commitment, or evidential grounding (Biber and Finegan 1989; Biber et al. 1999). In the tradition associated with Hyland, stance is inseparable from engagement, since authorial positioning is always oriented to an imagined reader (Hyland 2005; Hyland 2012). In our context, stance is best understood as the discourse-level patterning that emerges from interpersonal choices. In other words, it is a profile of commitment, authority, caution, and reader-orientation that becomes visible when we look at distributions and co-texts across large bodies of instructive prose.

There is a familiar narrative according to which women's writing becomes relevant to the history of specialised discourse once women enter institutions more visibly: universities, professional societies, medical organisations, and publishing networks. That narrative is partial. It overlooks the fact that women were producing and circulating specialised knowledge long before those institutional openings widened, often through genres that were culturally available (or at least culturally tolerable) to them. Recipe collections, domestic economy manuals, conduct books, midwifery guides, household medicine, and educational materials are not peripheral to specialised discourse. They are actually part of its infrastructure. They disseminate procedures, stabilise terminology, and encode norms of practice. They also reveal, sometimes with unpredicted clarity, the interpersonal labour required to claim authority without overstepping the limits of what could be 'said' from a female subject position (Alonso-Almeida 2013; Moskowich 2016).

This is one of the major contributions of CoWITE-based scholarship. It allows us to treat women's instructive writing as a coherent empirical object, rather than a scatter of celebrated examples. When texts are assembled systematically and annotated in ways that support fine-grained searches, patterns become visible that would otherwise look like isolated stylistic choices. For instance, it becomes possible to track how directives are routinely softened or reinforced across centuries; how conditional structures are used not only to encode procedures but also to manage face and choice; how epistemic adverbials cluster around risky claims (health remedies are an obvious case); or how inclusive pronouns and address terms design a relationship of shared practice rather than top-down instruction (Alonso-Almeida



2015; Hyland 2005; Mele-Marrero 2025). The internal trajectory of this research, developed in CoWITE studies, repeatedly points to an interaction between gendered authorship, register constraints, and genre-specific communicative goals (Alonso-Almeida et al. 2026).

The Coruña Corpus tradition, cultivated by MUSTE researchers, offers a complementary lens. Scientific writing, especially in its early and late modern phases, provides a laboratory for observing how authority is linguistically legitimised: through evidential framing, hedging, attribution, and rhetorical management of dissent (Moskowich et al. 2012; Crespo and Moskowich 2015). When women's texts are placed within those broader histories of specialised registers, the analytical payoff is twofold. First, women's authorial strategies can be described without romanticising them; they can be compared against contemporaneous norms and against male-authored baselines, rather than treated as different by default. Second, the boundaries between "domestic" and "public" expertise become empirically inspectable. A nineteenth-century institutional recipe, a household medical direction, and a popular scientific explanation may differ in field and readership, yet they can share interpersonal architectures, e.g., how obligation is scaled, how certainty is warranted, and how the reader is invited to cooperate.

Because this Special Issue is grounded in corpus traditions, it adopts a particular standard of argumentation. Claims about interpersonal meaning should be traceable to recurrent lexico-grammatical patterns, not merely to selective quotation. This does not mean that interpretation is reduced to counting. In fact, the research that motivates this issue typically works through a productive alternation: quantitative mapping to locate patterns (frequencies, dispersion, collocational profiles, diachronic distributions), followed by qualitative interpretation of concordance lines and extended co-text. The point of that alternation is not to prove meanings statistically, but to keep functional interpretation honest. The rationale is to show that the interpersonal effects being argued for are not artefacts of cherry-picked examples, while still attending to the semantic and pragmatic work performed in situated instances.

This commitment is particularly relevant for instructive discourse, where interpersonal meaning often resides in apparently small grammatical decisions. The difference between 'must' and 'should,' the reach of a conditional ('if you wish to...') as a face-saving device rather than a procedural necessity, the use of impersonal constructions ('it is necessary to...') to redistribute agency, or the clustering of stance adverbials around risky claims and remedies. These are not isolated stylistic flourishes; they tend to recur with enough regularity to be observable at scale, yet they only become interpretable once we return to local contexts and ask what kind of exchange is being enacted (Halliday and Matthiessen 2014; Palmer 2001; Nuyts 2001).

Methodologically, then, the Special Issue endorses an approach in which corpus tools are treated as instruments for pattern discovery rather than as ends in themselves. Frequency and normalisation help identify which interpersonal resources are privileged in particular genres or periods; dispersion guards against over-reliance on a few idiosyncratic texts; collocation and colligation reveal the phraseological environments in which stance and modality are realised; and concordancing



provides the bridge back to discourse function (Biber et al. 1999; Hyland 2005). This is also where the design principles of historically oriented corpora matter. Both CoWITE and the Coruña Corpus tradition have insisted, each in its own way, on the importance of metadata, genre control, and transparent sampling criteria, since interpretive claims about historical discourse are only as strong as the contextual scaffolding that supports them (Moskowich et al. 2012; Moskowich 2016).

Finally, while the analytic centre of gravity in this issue lies in interpersonal grammar, contributors are encouraged to work at the interface between grammar and discourse. In practical terms, that often means moving across levels of description, e.g., from finite choices in MOOD and modality, to recurrent stance configurations, to broader interactional patterns of alignment and authority management. In a recipe, the interpersonal work may be compressed into directive sequences and modulated obligations (Alonso-Almeida 2026); in a pedagogical or institutional text, it may surface in more explicit reader-address and in the careful balancing of deontic force with justificatory or evidential framing. In either case, the goal is the same, i.e., to model instructive writing as a form of interpersonal negotiation, not merely a repository of procedures (Halliday and Matthiessen 2014; Hyland 2012).

This Special Issue is organised around a set of interrelated analytical axes that reflect both the breadth of women's instructive writing and the range of interpersonal resources through which authority, alignment, and guidance are negotiated. Rather than arranging contributions strictly by chronology or by genre, the volume follows a functional logic grounded in interpersonal grammar, moving from broader grammatical resources to more localised discourse phenomena and, finally, to case-based analyses of individual authors and texts. The opening group of contributions addresses core grammatical and discourse-building resources that shape interpersonal meaning across instructive and specialised registers. These chapters examine how writers organise experience and interaction through nominalisation, pronominal reference, and metadiscursive strategies, drawing on large, historically stratified corpora. Work by Elena Quintana-Toledo, Isabel Sofía Moskowich-Spiegel Fandiño, and Begoña Crespo García establishes a shared analytical ground by showing how interpersonal positioning is embedded in grammatical choices that are often treated as ideational or textual. Together, these studies foreground the relevance of nominal structures, pronominal systems, and metadiscourse for understanding how women writers construct authorial presence and negotiate expertise within instructive and scientific discourse.

A second block broadens the comparative scope by placing women's writing in dialogue with male-authored texts and cross-disciplinary registers, particularly within the Coruña Corpus tradition. Contributions by Ana Montoya Reyes and Leida Maria Monaco adopt multidimensional and contrastive approaches to stance, involvement, and verbal processes, allowing interpersonal patterns in women's instructive writing to be interpreted against wider norms of historical specialised discourse. This comparative perspective reinforces one of the central premises of the volume, namely, that interpersonal strategies in women's texts are best understood relationally, not in isolation. The central section of the monograph is devoted to modality, mitigation, and interpersonal calibration, themes that lie at the heart of



instructive discourse. Several chapters focus on modal verbs, downtoners, conditional structures, and related resources as mechanisms for regulating directive force and reader alignment. Contributions by Claudia E. Stoian, Francisco J. Álvarez Gil in collaboration with Néstor de Armas Guerra, Luis Puente-Castelo, and Estefanía Sánchez Balteiro explore how obligation, recommendation, avoidance, and extension are grammatically managed in women-authored instructive texts. Altogether, these studies show how apparently minor grammatical choices contribute to a finely tuned interpersonal economy, especially in genres where authority must be asserted without coercion.

A further set of chapters turns to measurement, evaluation, and cultural positioning as sites of interpersonal meaning. Work by Magdalena Bator and Isabel de la Cruz Cabanillas highlights how practices such as quantification, description, and cultural framing intersect with advice-giving and evaluative stance, extending the notion of interpersonal grammar beyond modal systems narrowly defined. The volume concludes with a series of text-centred case studies focusing on individual women writers and manuscript or printed collections. Chapters by Francisco Alonso-Almeida, Mercedes Cabrera-Abreu and Ivalla Ortega-Barrera, María Luisa Carrió Pastor, María José Gómez Calderón, and Margarita-Esther Sánchez-Cuervo with Carmen-María Yeste-Ruiz return to the materiality of instructive writing: recipes, manuals, and domestic guides situated in specific sociohistorical contexts. These studies demonstrate how interpersonal grammar operates at the micro-level of individual texts while remaining consistent with the broader patterns identified across corpora.

Overall, the structure of the Special Issue reflects a deliberate movement from general grammatical resources to situated interpersonal practice, and from corpus-wide tendencies to textually anchored interpretation. This organisation is intended to underscore the central claim of the volume, and that is that women's instructive writing constitutes a rich and methodologically revealing domain for the study of interpersonal grammar, where authority, guidance, and alignment are continuously negotiated through patterned linguistic choices.

The Special Issue opens with Quintana-Toledo's study of nominalization as a central grammatical resource in the construction of interpersonal meaning in women's instructive writing across the Late Modern period. Drawing on data from CoWITE18 and CoWITE19, the article offers a diachronic analysis of shifts in both the frequency and morphological profile of nominalizations between the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, combining quantitative evidence with functional interpretation (Quintana-Toledo, this volume). Adopting a systemic-functional perspective, the study treats nominalization as a form of grammatical metaphor that enables abstraction, lexical density, and procedural reification (Halliday 1989; Halliday & Matthiessen 2004). Crucially, Quintana-Toledo shows that, in women's instructive texts, these effects have clear interpersonal consequences: nominalized constructions facilitate the presentation of instructions as properties of processes rather than as directives issued by an identifiable author. In this way, interpersonal authority is redistributed from the writer to the procedure itself, allowing guidance to be conveyed with reduced imposition and increased objectivity.



The diachronic dimension of the analysis reveals a clear tendency towards greater reliance on Latinate nominal forms in nineteenth-century texts, aligning women's instructive writing with broader developments in specialised registers during the period (Biber 1988; Biber et al. 1999). Rather than interpreting this shift as stylistic convergence alone, the article situates it within the interpersonal economy of instructive discourse: increased abstraction supports a more impersonal instructional voice, one that enhances credibility and expertise while remaining compatible with the social constraints historically placed on female authorship (Alonso-Almeida 2013; Alonso-Almeida 2015).

This contribution establishes a key premise for the volume as a whole by foregrounding nominalization as an interpersonal strategy rather than a purely ideational one. Interpersonal grammar in women's instructive writing is often realised through indirect grammatical means, embedded in the architecture of the clause and the noun phrase, rather than through overt stance markers alone.

The second contribution shifts the focus from impersonalisation to explicit authorial presence, examining how first-person subject pronouns function as markers of stance and interpersonal positioning in nineteenth-century women's writing. Moskowich-Spiegel Fandiño conducts a qualitative analysis of texts drawn from two corpora: CoWITE19 and the *Corpus of English Chemistry Texts* (CECheT), a subcorpus of the Coruña Corpus (Moskowich et al. 2022; Alonso-Almeida et al. 2025). Building on earlier work on pronominal functions in scientific discourse (Moskowich 2017; Moskowich 2020), the article applies a functional classification that distinguishes between uses of first-person pronouns as markers of authority, commonality, mitigation, interaction, and neutral description. The analysis confirms that first-person pronouns in women-authored texts perform distinct interpersonal roles that go well beyond reference, aligning with established accounts of stance and self-mention in specialised writing (Hyland 2001; Hyland 2002; Hyland 2005).

A key finding of the study is the strong genre sensitivity of pronominal usage. While texts from the scientific register, particularly dialogic and textbook genres within CECheT, display a relatively rich use of first-person pronouns to claim authority, structure argumentation, or construct common ground with readers, recipes in CoWITE show an almost complete avoidance of such forms. This contrast is interpreted not as evidence of greater impersonality in women's instructive writing, but as a consequence of genre-specific rhetorical constraints, where imperatives and procedural sequencing take over the interpersonal work typically carried by pronominal self-reference (Biber and Finegan 1989; Crespo and Moskowich 2015). Importantly, the article challenges assumptions about women's writing as inherently modest or mitigated. The functional distribution of pronouns reveals that forms associated with authority and commonality outnumber those linked to modesty, particularly in scientific texts, suggesting a more assertive rhetorical stance than traditionally assumed (Argamon et al. 2003). In doing so, the study complements Quintana-Toledo's contribution by illustrating the counterpoint between agency suppression and agency assertion in women's specialised writing, i.e., where nominalization distances the author from the instruction, pronominal choice selectively reintroduces authorial voice when genre and communicative purpose allow.



The third contribution widens the analytical lens from specific grammatical resources to the discursive construction of authorial presence, situating interpersonal grammar within the broader architecture of metadiscourse. Drawing on nineteenth-century scientific texts from the Coruña Corpus, Crespo García examines how writers construct what she terms the scientific self through patterns of self-mention, engagement, and interactional metadiscourse (Crespo García, this volume). Anchored in established models of metadiscourse (Hyland 2005; Hyland and Tse 2004), the study shows that authorial presence in scientific writing is neither uniform nor neutral, but carefully calibrated according to genre, disciplinary expectations, and communicative goals. The analysis reveals systematic variation in the deployment of self-references, frame markers, and engagement devices, which collectively shape how writers claim epistemic authority while maintaining alignment with readers. Importantly for the present Special Issue, Crespo García demonstrates that these strategies are not merely rhetorical ornaments but constitutive of interpersonal meaning, governing how knowledge is offered, warranted, and made credible. Placed after the two opening articles, this contribution extends the volume's trajectory from clause-level resources (nominalization and pronouns) to discourse-level interpersonal organisation. It also provides a conceptual bridge between CoWITE-based work on instructive genres and Coruña-Corpus-based research on scientific writing, showing how women's authorial positioning participates in shared economies of expertise across specialised registers (Crespo and Moskowich 2015; Moskowich et al. 2012).

Montoya Reyes' article introduces a comparative and diachronic dimension that sharpens the Special Issue's concern with interpersonal grammar by examining verbal processes that encode perception, cognition, desire, and aspectuality. Using historical texts from the Coruña Corpus of History English Texts, the study contrasts male- and female-authored writing across the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries (Montoya Reyes, this volume). The analysis focuses on verb classes that are central to the negotiation of stance and evidential positioning, verbs of perception ('see,' 'observe'), communication ('say,' 'argue'), desire ('wish,' 'intend'), and aspect ('begin,' 'continue'). These forms are shown to function as interpersonal pivots, shaping how authors present knowledge, manage commitment, and align themselves with readers. The diachronic comparison reveals both continuity and change, as well as gender-sensitive distributions that cannot be reduced to stylistic preference alone. Within the logic of the monographic structure, this contribution reinforces two core claims. First, interpersonal meaning is not confined to overt modal or evaluative markers, but is deeply embedded in process type selection and aspectual framing (Halliday and Matthiessen 2014). Second, women's specialised writing, whether instructive or historical, must be analysed against contemporaneous male-authored baselines if claims about interpersonal design are to be empirically grounded rather than impressionistic. Montoya Reyes' findings thus resonate with earlier contributions while extending the interpersonal lens beyond instruction proper, situating women's textual practices within wider histories of specialised discourse.

Returning explicitly to the instructive genre, González Quintana and Stoian offer a micro-analytical study of modality in an early nineteenth-century domestic manuscript. Focusing on modal verbs as core interpersonal resources, the



article examines how obligation, recommendation, possibility, and prediction are grammatically encoded in a single, cohesive text (González Quintana & Stoian, this volume). Working within a systemic-functional framework that distinguishes between modalisation and modulation (Halliday & Matthiessen 2004; Palmer 2001), the authors show that modal verbs in the manuscript perform finely graded interpersonal work. Strong modals ('must,' 'shall') are sparingly used and tend to cluster around issues of safety, health, or non-negotiable procedure, while weaker forms ('may,' 'should,' 'can') dominate routine instruction. This distribution constructs an authorial voice that is authoritative without being coercive, allowing guidance to be framed as cooperative rather than imposed. Methodologically, the study exemplifies the Special Issue's commitment to close corpus-informed reading, where quantitative tendencies are interpreted through extended contextual analysis. Substantively, it reinforces a recurring insight across CoWITE-based research. Women's instructive writing does not avoid authority, but recalibrates it, distributing interpersonal force across modal choices in ways that remain sensitive to genre expectations and reader autonomy (Alonso-Almeida 2015; Quintana-Toledo 2024).

Álvarez Gil and de Armas Guerra study downtoners as mechanisms of interpersonal mitigation in women's instructive prose. Based on four canonical cookery and household texts from the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the article combines normalised frequency counts with detailed pragmatic analysis to show how degree modifiers such as 'almost,' 'a little,' 'slightly,' and 'rather' shape directive force (Álvarez Gil & de Armas Guerra, this volume). Drawing on established classifications of downtoners and intensifiers (Quirk et al. 1985; Biber et al. 1999), the authors demonstrate that these forms are both frequent and functionally stable across the period. Approximators and diminishers dominate procedural contexts where judgement is required, timing, quantity, temperature, while minimisers remain rare and pragmatically marked. Functionally, downtoners are shown to soften imperatives, temper assertions, and align instruction with norms of politeness and tact, consistent with historical accounts of hedging and negative-politeness strategies (Brown and Levinson 1987; Holmes 1995). This contribution brings the focus back to lexico-grammatical detail, showing how even small adverbial choices perform substantial interpersonal labour. Read alongside the preceding articles on modality, pronouns, and nominalisation, it reinforces the volume's central argument, i.e., interpersonal meaning in women's instructive writing is not episodic or incidental, but systematically woven into the grammar of instruction itself.

Monaco's contribution introduces a methodologically distinct but conceptually central perspective to this issue. The use of Biber's Multidimensional Analysis (MDA) to capture interpersonal variation at the level of register and subregister, rather than individual grammatical choices. Drawing on nineteenth-century history and life sciences texts from the Coruña Corpus of English Scientific Writing, the study focuses on Dimension 1: "Involved/Persuasive vs. Informational style", as originally operationalised in Monaco (2017), and examines how involvement patterns interact with author sex, discipline, and genre (Monaco, this volume). From the standpoint of interpersonal grammar, the relevance of this chapter is twofold. First, it provides a quantitative macro-mapping of interpersonal



orientation, showing how features associated with involvement (first- and second-person pronouns, modals, private and suasive verbs, questions, conditionals) and with informational density (nouns, passives, nominalisations) cluster across texts (Biber 1988; Biber & Finegan 1989). Second, it demonstrates that gender alone is an insufficient explanatory variable unless it is analysed in interaction with genre and disciplinary conventions. The results complicate long-standing generalisations about women's writing as inherently more personal or involved (Lakoff 1990; Argamon et al. 2003). While female-authored texts in both history and life sciences display slightly higher involvement scores than male-authored ones at an aggregate level, this difference largely disappears once genre is controlled for. Treatises written by women and men show remarkably similar, strongly informational profiles, whereas lectures, predominantly male-authored in the corpus, exhibit much higher involvement. In other words, genre exerts a stronger constraint on interpersonal style than author sex. Monaco's study performs an important calibrating function in this monograph. It establishes a baseline for what "involvement" looks like quantitatively in nineteenth-century specialised discourse, against which the more fine-grained analyses of modality, directives, downtoners, and stance can be interpreted. It also reinforces a recurring methodological principle across CoWITE- and Coruña-based scholarship. Interpersonal meaning is systemically patterned, not anecdotal, and claims about women's authorial style must be grounded in register-sensitive corpus evidence rather than inherited sociolinguistic stereotypes (Crespo & Moskowich 2015).

Álvarez Gil's article brings the focus back squarely to women's instructive writing, offering a tightly scoped analysis of two compact but highly productive resources: the prepositional phrase 'according to' and the directive verb 'see.' Based on data from CoWITE18 (1700-1799) and CoWITE19 (1800-1899), the study combines function-first coding with distributional and diachronic profiling to show how women writers calibrate authority and guide readers through procedure (Álvarez Gil, this volume). The contribution is theoretically anchored in Systemic Functional Linguistics, historical pragmatics, and work on evidentiality, stance, and engagement (Halliday & Matthiessen 2014; Nuyts 2001; Hyland 2005, 2019). Rather than treating 'according to' as a simple attributive marker, the analysis demonstrates that in instructive genres it overwhelmingly realises parameterisation and norm-alignment. Writers use 'according to' to anchor instructions to situational variables, size, age, taste, quantity, thickness, or to text-internal norms ('according to the following directions'), thereby delegating controlled judgement to the reader while maintaining procedural authority. Directive 'see,' by contrast, is shown to operate at the intersection of the interpersonal and textual metafunctions. Supervisory uses establish quality-control checkpoints within procedures, while navigational uses ('see p. xx') orchestrate reader movement across an increasingly articulated page. Diachronically, the study documents a clear nineteenth-century rise in navigational see, correlating with the stabilisation of pagination, headings, and visual material in instructional print (Bazerman 1988; Tebeaux 1997).

This chapter exemplifies the volume's central claim that interpersonal meaning in women's instructive writing is often realised through small, routinised



grammatical frames, rather than through overt stance markers alone. Together, ‘according to’ and ‘see’ instantiate what Álvarez Gil terms a “calibrated instructional voice,” i.e., authoritative without being coercive, directive without being inflexible, and deeply attuned to the practical contingencies of domestic and technical action. The chapter also connects directly with earlier contributions in the volume. Its account of parameterisation resonates with Quintana-Toledo’s analysis of nominalisation as impersonal authority, while its treatment of directive *see* complements González Quintana & Stoian’s findings on modulated obligation in domestic manuscripts. More broadly, it provides a concrete illustration of how engagement and stance are operationalised in procedural discourse, reinforcing the view that women’s instructive writing constitutes a sophisticated site for the negotiation of expertise and reader alignment across the Late Modern period.

Puente-Castelo’s chapter addresses a construction that, at first sight, might appear marginal, but which proves to be highly revealing when examined from an interpersonal perspective: the systematic avoidance of *then* in conditional *if*-clauses in women-authored texts. Working within a corpus-based framework and drawing on historical data that include women’s instructive prose, the study investigates how this absence reshapes the pragmatic and interactional profile of conditional constructions. From an SFL-informed standpoint, the omission of *then* has clear consequences for interpersonal alignment. The prototypical *if*-*then* schema foregrounds logical sequencing and inferential closure; removing *then* weakens the sense of mechanical causality and opens space for interpretive cooperation on the part of the reader. Puente-Castelo shows that, in women’s writing, conditionals frequently operate not as rigid logical operators but as soft procedural cues, inviting readers to assess relevance, necessity, or applicability themselves. This is particularly compatible with instructive genres, where advice must often remain adaptable to circumstances of use. The chapter connects productively with earlier CoWITE-based research on conditional framing as a mitigating strategy, where *if*-clauses function less as logical tests and more as devices for face management and choice preservation. By avoiding *then*, writers reduce overt authorial control and shift part of the decision-making burden onto the addressee, an interactional move that aligns with broader tendencies documented in women’s instructive writing, including the preference for graded obligation over categorical command. In this sense, Puente-Castelo’s analysis complements studies of modality and downtoning in the volume, showing how interpersonal meaning can be recalibrated through the absence of an element, not only through its presence.

Sánchez-Balteiro’s contribution turns to a set of pragmatic devices traditionally associated with spoken interaction, general and specific extenders, and demonstrates their systematic role in eighteenth-century women’s instructive writing. Using the CoWITE18 subcorpus (over 540,000 words), the chapter offers a detailed quantitative and qualitative account of extender forms, distributions, and functional variation in recipe discourse authored by women. The analysis draws on the now well-established distinction between adjunctive vs. disjunctive extenders and between general vs. specific types (Overstreet 1999), while situating these categories firmly within historical written discourse. What emerges is not random



imprecision, but a patterned use of vagueness as an interactional resource. Extenders such as ‘and all,’ ‘&c.,’ ‘or other,’ or ‘or what you please’ allow writers to delimit a semantic field without exhausting it, thereby acknowledging variability in ingredients, availability, or reader preference. From the perspective of interpersonal grammar, extenders perform a dual function. On the one hand, they reduce prescriptive pressure, signalling that the instruction admits alternatives. On the other, they construct shared knowledge, presupposing that readers can competently fill in the open-ended category. Sánchez-Balteiro shows that this balance between guidance and flexibility is not incidental but deeply embedded in the recipe genre, especially in texts written by women whose authority often rests on experiential credibility rather than institutional endorsement. The chapter resonates strongly with other contributions in the volume that examine mitigation, conditionality, and directive softening. Like the avoidance of *then* in conditional clauses or the use of evidential framings (according to), extenders exemplify how interpersonal work is offloaded onto seemingly minor grammatical choices. In CoWITE-based research, these micro-resources repeatedly emerge as central to the negotiation of authority in instructive discourse, and Sánchez-Balteiro’s study provides one of the most detailed historical mappings of this phenomenon to date.^k

A further strand developed in this issue concerns the relationship between interpersonal meaning and procedural precision, particularly as it is mediated through systems of measurement and culturally embedded practices. From this perspective, instructive discourse does not merely transmit technical information, but actively negotiates authority, expertise, and reader alignment through choices that balance standardisation and experiential knowledge. Magdalena Bator’s contribution examines the evolution of measurement terminology in women’s instructional texts across the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, drawing on the CoWITE18 and CoWITE19 subcorpora. Her study demonstrates that the nineteenth-century institutionalisation of the imperial system following the Weights and Measures Act (1824) did not result in a straightforward increase in numerical precision. Instead, women writers progressively favoured container-based and kitchen-specific terminology, such as spoonful, cupful or handful, over formally standardised metric units. As Bator shows, this shift does not signal imprecision, but rather the consolidation of a specialised culinary register, one that relies on shared domestic knowledge and reader familiarity rather than abstract quantification (cf. Norrick 1983; Diemer 2013). From an interpersonal perspective, these choices function as strategies of reader inclusion, positioning the addressee as a competent practitioner rather than a passive recipient of technical instruction.

This emphasis on experiential authority resonates strongly with the concerns addressed in Isabel de la Cruz Cabanillas’s article, which explores Lady Ann Fanshawe’s recipe book (Wellcome MS 7113) alongside her *Memoirs* as interconnected sites of cultural mediation. Focusing on Fanshawe’s encounters with Spanish culinary and domestic practices during her stays in Iberia, de la Cruz Cabanillas shows how recipes operate as vehicles for cross-cultural knowledge transfer, personal memory, and social networking. The incorporation of Spanish recipes, terminology, and practices, often explicitly marked by provenance or attribution, reveals the recipe



book as a space where domestic instruction intersects with diplomacy, travel writing, and identity construction (Basnett 2013; Valent 2018). Crucially, these two papers underscore that women's instructive writing constructs authority not through overt epistemic dominance, but through situated expertise, grounded in practice, observation, and lived experience. Whether through the calibrated vagueness of measurement terms (as in Bator's) or the embedding of foreign culinary knowledge within a domestic manuscript tradition (as in de la Cruz Cabanillas's), these texts foreground an interpersonal logic in which credibility emerges from familiarity, trust, and shared cultural frames rather than from institutional norms alone. In this sense, measurement systems and recipe transmission alike become interpersonal resources, shaping how knowledge is legitimised and how readers are positioned within the instructional exchange.

A more fine-grained mapping of interpersonal meaning is provided by Alonso-Almeida's contribution on Hannah Woolley's recipes and manuals (1670–1672), which occupies a pivotal position in the issue by placing its concerns on the early phases of printed women's instructive prose. Focusing on a tightly delimited corpus of Woolley's instructional texts, the study offers a systematic account of how interpersonal meaning is distributed across mood types, modal verbs, polarity choices, personal pronouns, conditional structures, and resources of graduation. Within an SFL-informed framework, Alonso-Almeida shows that Woolley's instructional voice is neither uniformly directive nor uniformly mitigated. Instead, authority is carefully calibrated through a combination of imperatives for procedural cores, modalised declaratives for advice and contingency, and a strategic use of predictive 'will' functioning as a promissory device that aligns reader cooperation with anticipated success. Particularly revealing is the role of paratextual sections, where authorial presence and interpersonal negotiation become more explicit, compensating for the relative impersonality of the recipe proper. Situating Woolley's practices within a general trajectory of women's instructive writing, the chapter establishes an early baseline for patterns of calibrated authority and reader alignment that recur, in transformed ways, throughout the Late Modern period.

This focus on calibrated guidance is taken up from a complementary angle in Cabrera-Abreu and Ortega-Barrera's study of advisory suggestions in Lady Catherine Fitzgerald's recipe book (1703). Concentrating on optional instructional segments that fall outside the procedural core, the authors examine how women writers encode advice without imposing obligation, relying on conditional clauses, modal verbs of permission, and formulaic expressions such as 'as you please' or 'if you like.' From an interpersonal perspective, these advisory suggestions function as low-modulation directives that redistribute agency to the reader while preserving the instructional frame. The analysis demonstrates that optionality in women's recipe writing is not a sign of indecision or imprecision, but a recurrent grammatical strategy for managing face, choice, and cooperation in contexts where domestic authority must remain socially acceptable. Read alongside Alonso-Almeida's contribution, this chapter reinforces a central argument of the monograph, and that is: women's instructive writing systematically exploits the resources of interpersonal grammar to reconcile the practical demands of instruction with historically situated constraints on authorial voice.



The final set of contributions consolidates the issue's focus on interpersonal meaning by foregrounding advice, hedging, and evaluative alignment as central mechanisms in women's instructive discourse. Carrió Pastor's article on hedging as interpersonal design in Mrs Johnston's *Receipts* (1740) further develops this perspective by offering a systematic account of mitigation as a structuring principle of instructional discourse. Drawing on a detailed analysis of modal verbs, approximators, and conditional frames, the study shows how hedging functions not simply to soften commands, but to organise the interactional space between writer and reader. In this recipe collection, hedging contributes to the management of epistemic responsibility, procedural flexibility, and reader autonomy, while still preserving the authority required for effective instruction. The article situates these patterns within broader discussions of stance and politeness, demonstrating that mitigation in women's instructive writing is best understood as a functional resource embedded in genre conventions rather than as a marker of insecurity or lack of confidence. In doing so, it strengthens the corpus-driven, functional interpretation of interpersonal meaning that underpins the volume.

A closely related perspective on advice and interpersonal calibration is developed in Gómez-Calderón's study of Elizabeth Moxon's English *Housewifery* (1749), which reads the work not as a loose assemblage of recipes but as a carefully engineered advisory system. Drawing on a copy-text-based analysis that integrates running recipe prose with paratextual elements such as Bills of Fare, indices, and title-page programmes, the chapter shows how directive force is systematically graded according to task, risk, and social function. Clause-level resources, imperatives, agentless passives, *let*-constructions, prohibitives, and permissive 'you may,' combine with evaluative lexis and purpose clauses to construct a voice of experienced domestic governance. Particularly significant is the role of paratext in organising advice beyond the clause, as menu structures and spatial cues for table service encode seasonality, order, and propriety without resorting to overt obligation. Framed within Systemic Functional Linguistics and genre analysis, the article demonstrates how frugality and health operate as ethical warrants that legitimise instruction, turning procedural detail into reasoned counsel. In doing so, it provides a fitting conclusion to the monograph showing how interpersonal grammar, modality, and layout together sustain a form of authority grounded in practice, care, and social accountability rather than institutional power.

The issue concludes with Sánchez-Cuervo and Yeste-Ruiz's study of conditional practice in Priscilla Haslehurst's *The Family Friend* (1814), which offers a theoretically integrated model for analysing conditionality in historical instructive prose. Combining Sweetser's functional domains with Martin and White's Appraisal framework, the authors show how *if*-clauses organise both procedural logic and interpersonal stance, distinguishing clearly between content-based and speech-act conditionals. Their findings reveal that conditional constructions play a key role in regulating obligation, choice, and contingency, while also shaping dialogic space through engagement and graduation resources. This article not only provides a fine-grained account of conditional meaning in a single-author recipe book, but also proposes a replicable analytical framework applicable across women's instructive texts



in CoWITE and related corpora. As such, it encapsulates the broader aims of issue, namely, to demonstrate how interpersonal grammar operates as a central organising principle in women's specialised writing, mediating between instruction, authority, and reader alignment across time.

All said, the contributions to this Special Issue sharpen a claim that sometimes gets lost in broader histories of specialised discourse: instruction is never "just" procedure. It is an interpersonal accomplishment. Across recipes, manuals, domestic guides, and institutionally inflected directions, women writers make expertise workable through patterned grammatical choices that manage obligation, distribute epistemic responsibility, and invite (or constrain) reader agency. What looks, at first glance, like the plain mechanics of doing, 'take,' 'add,' 'let,' 'if,' 'according to,' 'see,' 'a little,' emerges here as a finely tuned interpersonal economy, i.e., one in which authority is routinely calibrated rather than merely asserted, and in which alignment is engineered through recurrent micro-choices as much as through overt self-reference or explicit evaluation. The volume therefore treats interpersonal grammar not as a decorative layer on top of "content", but as part of the genre's core technology for making knowledge socially legible and practically usable.

Methodologically, this is also where CoWITE- and Coruña-based traditions converge most productively. Corpus evidence allows us to see that interpersonal meaning in instructive discourse is incremental and distributed. It resides in clusters, dispersions, co-textual preferences, and diachronic shifts, not in isolated quotations or stylistic impressions. At the same time, the functional-discursive lens keeps interpretation anchored in the exchange itself, who is positioned to know, to decide, to comply, to evaluate, to adjust. In that sense, the Special Issue contributes to the historical study of women's specialised writing in two directions at once: (a) it offers a more precise map of the interpersonal resources through which women authored instruction across time, and (b) it provides a replicable analytic orientation for future work where gender, genre, and register are treated as empirical constraints rather than as inherited assumptions. If there is a single through-line, it is the following: women's instructive writing makes authority possible by making it negotiable grammatically, recurrently, and with remarkable consistency across the long eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.



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ARTICLES

NOMINALIZATION IN WOMEN'S INSTRUCTIVE TEXTS, 1700-1899. DIACHRONIC SHIFTS IN FORM AND FUNCTION*

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ABSTRACT

This article examines the diachronic development of nominalization in women's instructive texts between 1700 and 1899, using evidence from the *Corpus of Women's Instructive Texts in English* (CoWITE). The study compares the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century subcorpora (CoWITE18, CoWITE19) to trace both quantitative changes in frequency and qualitative shifts in function. Findings show a steady increase in nominalization rates, from 11.1 to 15.2 per 10,000 words, accompanied by a morphological shift: while eighteenth-century texts relied heavily on native formations in *-ness* and *-ity*, nineteenth-century prose displays a marked preference for Latinate suffixes such as *-tion* and *-ment*. Functionally, nominalizations are used for procedural labelling, measurement and evaluation, impersonal expression, and abstraction. Their growing use supports a move toward higher lexical density and a more authoritative, impersonal style. In Hallidayan terms, this represents an increase in grammatical metaphor, aligning women's instructive prose with broader developments in Late Modern English toward informational density and professionalised writing.

KEYWORDS: Nominalization, Grammatical Metaphor, Systemic Functional Linguistics, Women's Writing, Late Modern English, Instructive Texts, Corpus Linguistics

LA NOMINALIZACIÓN EN LA ESCRITURA INSTRUCTIVA FEMENINA (1700-1899): EVOLUCIÓN DIACRÓNICA SEGÚN FORMAS Y SUS FUNCIONES

RESUMEN

El artículo analiza la evolución diacrónica de la nominalización en textos instructivos escritos por mujeres entre 1700 y 1899 a partir del corpus CoWITE. La comparación entre los subcorpus del siglo XVIII y XIX muestra un aumento sostenido en la frecuencia de nominalizaciones y un desplazamiento morfológico hacia sufijos latinos. Desde el punto de vista funcional, estas formas contribuyen a una mayor densidad léxica, impersonalidad y abstracción, reflejando una prosa instructiva progresivamente más autoritaria e institucionalizada dentro del inglés moderno tardío.

PALABRAS CLAVE: nominalización, metáfora gramatical, lingüística sistémico-funcional, escritura femenina, inglés moderno tardío, textos instructivos, lingüística de corpus.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.25145/j.recaesin.2026.92.01>

REVISTA CANARIA DE ESTUDIOS INGLESES, 92; abril 2026, pp. 31-46; ISSN: e-2530-8335
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1. INTRODUCTION

Nominalization, the process by which verbs, adjectives, or clauses are turned into nouns (e.g., *decide* → *decision*, *happy* → *happiness*), is a pervasive strategy in English writing, closely linked to abstraction, condensation of meaning, and the construction of authority (Halliday & Matthiessen 2014). In historical texts, the presence and frequency of nominalizations offer insights into shifts in rhetorical practices, genre conventions, and extensive epistemological orientations. Women's instructive writing of the long eighteenth and nineteenth centuries constitutes a particularly fertile ground for studying nominalization, as these texts negotiated the competing demands of authority, accessibility, and gendered expectations in domains such as cookery, domestic management, and medical advice (Beeton 1875; Acton 1882; Clarke 1886; Campbell 1893).

The Corpus of Women's Instructive Texts in English (CoWITE), with its two subcorpora covering the eighteenth (CoWITE18, ~541,789 tokens) and nineteenth centuries (CoWITE19, ~502,701 tokens), provides a representative dataset for examining how nominalization was mobilized diachronically in women's didactic discourse. Previous studies have shown that nominalization often correlates with increased textual density and impersonality in scientific and technical writing (Banks 2008; Halliday 2004). Yet, in women's instructive genres, where guidance must be both practical and persuasive, the use of nominalizations may serve additional interpersonal and rhetorical functions, such as projecting authority while avoiding overt prescriptiveness (Alonso-Almeida & Álvarez-Gil 2021).

Against this backdrop, the present paper seeks to investigate how nominalization operates in women's instructive texts across the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The analysis focuses not only on quantitative shifts in frequency but also on the functional roles these forms play in constructing voice, authority, and reader alignment. To guide the study, the following research questions are posed:

1. What are the most frequent nominalization patterns in CoWITE18 and CoWITE19, and how do their distributions compare?
2. Do nominalization strategies change from the eighteenth to the nineteenth century in terms of form (e.g., suffixation patterns, zero-derivation) and frequency?
3. What rhetorical or interpersonal functions do nominalizations serve in women's instructive writing, and how might these functions evolve across the two centuries?
4. How does the use of nominalization in CoWITE reflect the negotiation of authority and expertise by women writers in contexts such as cookery, domestic management, and medical advice?

* The research conducted in this paper has been supported by the Agencia Estatal de Investigación, Plan Estatal de Investigación Científica, Técnica y de Innovación 2021–2023, under award number PID2021-125928NB-I00. I hereby express my thanks. Unión Europea · Fondo Europeo de Desarrollo Regional “Una manera de hacer Europa”.



The remainder of this paper is structured as follows. Section 2 provides the theoretical background, situating nominalization within systemic functional linguistics (SFL) and historical linguistics. Section 3 describes the corpus materials, annotation methods, and procedures used to identify nominalizations (with the aid of corpus tools). Section 4 presents the results, comparing quantitative distributions and functional categories across the two centuries. Section 5 discusses the implications of these findings in relation to gender, authorship, and the evolution of instructive discourse. It also offers conclusions and directions for further research.

2. HISTORICAL-THEORETICAL BACKGROUND: NOMINALIZATION IN ENGLISH AND IN SFL

In English, *nominalization* broadly refers to the encoding of processes, properties, and relations as “things.” This can be achieved through derivation (*coagulate* → *coagulation*; *prepare* → *preparation*; *effective* → *effectiveness*), conversion or zero-derivation (*to mix* → *a mix*), *-ing* forms (*boiling*, *steeping* as nouns), and support-verb constructions (*make an infusion*; *take a decoction*) (Marchand 1969; Heyvaert 2003). Beyond morphology, nominalization reshapes clause structure: verbal predication yields to elaborated noun phrases, often heavily pre- or post-modified and accompanied by *of*-genitives. The effect is a compaction of information, heightened lexical density, and a greater capacity for reference and taxonomization (Biber & Gray 2010, 2016).

From a diachronic perspective, the rise of a nominal style has been linked to the consolidation of specialized prose, particularly in scientific and technical registers from the seventeenth century onwards (Atkinson 1999; Banks 2008). By the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, expository prose in English shows a marked preference for phrasal elaboration (complex noun phrases) over clausal elaboration (subordination). This shift is often taken as a hallmark of academicization and procedural standardization (Biber & Gray 2016). In instructional genres such as, domestic economy guides, or medical directions, nominalizations regularly label procedures (*filtration*, *infusion*, *administration*), materials (*mixture*, *solution*), and results (*precipitate*, *sediment*). In doing so, they create portable labels for steps and outcomes, facilitating de-agentive or impersonal sequencing of instructions.

The eighteenth and nineteenth centuries also saw the institutionalization of technical lexis and the stabilization of procedural genres. Studies of scientific and medical writing point to an increasing reliance on “thing-naming” over event-construing formulations, with derivational families in *-tion/-ment/-ance* proliferating, *of*-phrases expanding as classificatory resources, and light-verb frames objectifying processes (Banks 2008; Taavitsainen & Pahta 2011; Gotti 2003). These tendencies were not confined to elite journals: women’s manuals and recipe collections reveal a similar packaging of operations as standardized entities, promoting replicability, consistency, and an ethos of reliability for public consumption. Nominalization here intersects with other lexical classes, measurement nouns (*quantity*, *degree*, *proportion*),



container nouns (*vessel, receiver*), temporal nouns (*duration, interval*), to form a cohesive procedural lexicon.

For the women-authored instructive prose examined in this study (CoWITE 18/19), we therefore expect nominalizations to function as internal anchors: stabilising procedural steps, rendering outcomes callable by name, and supporting condensed thematic progression (*The infusion ... This preparation ... The application ...*). This feature enhances both skimmability and reusability across households and domains.

Within Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL), nominalization is a prime type of experiential grammatical metaphor: a process or quality is re-grammaticized as a thing (Halliday & Martin 1993; Halliday & Matthiessen 1998, 2014). The shift redistributes meaning from the clause to the nominal group, enabling three consequences: higher lexical density; technicality through taxonomic layering; and information packaging that supports abstraction and cumulative knowledge-building. In this view, nominalization is not simply word formation; it is a re-construal of experience that reorganizes logical and textual relations in the service of expert communication.

SFL predicts three interlocking outcomes, all testable in historical corpora:

1. Thingification and taxonomy. Processes and qualities are objectified (*the filtration of the tincture; the administration of the dose*), enabling classification and chaining through *of*-phrases and premodifiers.
2. Clause compression and cohesion. Information otherwise expressed through subordination is packaged in nominal groups, promoting phrasal elaboration and tighter thematic progression across steps (Halliday & Matthiessen 2014; Biber & Gray 2016).
3. Interpersonal distance. Objectified wording supports impersonality, shifting directive force from agent to procedure or product. While primarily ideational, nominalization's interpersonal effects –authority, mitigation, institutional stance– are well documented in analyses of academic and educational discourse (Halliday & Martin 1993; Schleppegrell 2004).

In instructive writing, these functions gain special resonance. Nominalizations stage procedures (*decoction, clarification, reduction*); encode standards and measures (*proportion, concentration, consistency*); manage agency via light-verb frames (*make a solution; give an application*); and facilitate intertextuality, as labels travel easily across texts and communities of practice (Banks 2008; Gotti 2003). Taken together, they mark nominalization as both register-defining and genre-enabling. In the CoWITE subcorpora, we thus anticipate two patterns: (i) quantitative increase, more nominalizations in the nineteenth century and more complex noun-phrase structures; and (ii) functional specialization, with an expansion of *-tion* forms for process-naming, light-verb constructions, and “N-of-N” patterns for classification. Following SFL, we also expect correlations with textual organization (nominalized heads serving as step-wise Themes) and with interpersonal stance (greater impersonality and authority co-occurring with heavier nominal load). Framed by this historical-functional account, the study asks how nominalization differs across centuries in form,



frequency, and rhetorical function, and how women writers adapted it to organize procedures, calibrate directive force, and build technical taxonomies.

3. METHODOLOGY

The study is based entirely on the *Corpus of Women's Instructive Texts in English* (CoWITE), more precisely on its eighteenth- and nineteenth-century subcorpora (CoWITE18 and CoWITE19). Together, these contain editions of prose published between 1700-1799 and 1800-1899, all authored by British women. The genres are practical: household manuals, cookbooks, conduct books, recipe collections, and medical guides for domestic use. Keeping the analysis within CoWITE alone, rather than importing external material, ensures that comparisons are made in a controlled discourse space, where both genre and authorship remain consistent. Our approach is corpus-driven but interpretive. Data were explored with #LancsBox (Brezina, McEnery & Wattam 2015), which provides concordancing, frequency counts, and collocation analysis. The software was used to retrieve candidate nominalizations, to calculate their frequencies, and to trace recurrent patterns. At each stage, the quantitative output was read against concordance lines, so that statistics were continually checked against textual nuance.

The first task was to establish what to count as a nominalization. We drew up a list of productive suffixes, *-tion*, *-ment*, *-ness*, *-ity*, *-ancel-ence*, *-ship*, on the basis of their long-established role in English derivation. This ensured that words such as *instruction*, *advisement*, *kindness*, *curiosity*, *deliverance*, or *friendship* would all be included. Once the list was fixed, wildcard searches were run in LancsBox: for example, **tion* retrieved forms from the predictable (*instruction*, *preparation*) to the unusual (*coction*). Each result came with surrounding context and bibliographical metadata, which later allowed us to trace usage back to specific decades or works.

At this point, the output had to be checked manually. Some forms retrieved by the queries were not genuine nominalizations, either because the ending was misleading (*actual* under *-al*) or because the item was part of a proper noun. These were excluded, leaving us with two verified datasets, one for each century. This stage was time-consuming but essential, as it ensured that later counts rested on accurate evidence. From there, several kinds of quantitative analysis were carried out. First, we measured raw and normalized frequencies to test whether nominalizations became more common in the nineteenth century. We then compared the distribution of endings, asking, for instance, whether *-tion* forms were increasingly preferred to *-ness* forms. A further step was keyword analysis: by contrasting one century against the other as reference corpus, we identified words that were strikingly characteristic of each period. For example, nineteenth-century texts displayed a marked rise in terms such as *education* and *instruction*.

Collocational evidence provided another angle. Here the focus was on the company that frequent nominalizations kept, verbs like *give* or *make* with nouns such as *instruction* or *solution*, or adjectives like *useful* and *necessary* that framed evaluative stances. Mutual Information and log-likelihood measures were applied



to establish statistical strength, though concordance inspection always remained the final arbiter. Finally, the metadata allowed us to plot usage across decades, which revealed whether trends were gradual or whether they accelerated, for example, in the later Victorian period.

Throughout, the numbers were treated not as ends in themselves but as clues to style and history. A heavier load of *-tion* nouns, for instance, may suggest that women's instructional prose moved towards a more objectified and procedural register in the nineteenth century, echoing broader academicising tendencies of the age. Conversely, the persistence of *-ness* nouns might point to the survival of moral and qualitative framing, characteristic of earlier conduct traditions. All said, the methodology combined computational searches with careful manual review and interpretive reading. The balance of quantitative and qualitative stages was designed to reveal not only how often nominalisations appeared, but also what they were doing in context, whether anchoring procedures, signalling measures, or modulating authority in women's instructive writing across two centuries.

4. RESULTS

4.1. FREQUENCY AND FORM

The numbers leave little doubt that nominalization became more common as the century turned. In the eighteenth-century subcorpus, CoWITE18 (about 541,789 words), I counted 603 instances, which works out at 11.1 per 10,000 words. The nineteenth-century set, CoWITE19 (502,701 words), contains 764, or 15.2 per 10,000. Put another way, the later texts show roughly one third more nominalizations than their predecessors. This rise is not an isolated quirk of women's writing but part of a wider tendency in Late Modern English. Over the course of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, prose shifted towards heavier noun-based phrasing, with finite verbs and subordinate clauses gradually giving way to compressed noun phrases. Biber and Gray (2016) describe the development in academic prose as a "compressed" style, where information is packed into dense nominal groups rather than strung out through verbal elaboration. The CoWITE material suggests that manuals, cookery books, and household medical guides written by women were following a similar path. Their nineteenth-century prose carries more nominalized expressions, which gives the writing a noticeably more compact and objectified feel.

The difference is modest in absolute terms, only a little over four tokens more per ten thousand words, but it is steady enough to matter. It tells us that by the Victorian period a set of instructions was increasingly phrased through named entities such as *the infusion* or *the preparation* instead of through verbs tied to an actor. The shift moves attention away from the person performing the action and towards the procedure itself. In doing so, it lends the text an air of authority, while also presenting the operation as something standardized and repeatable.



TABLE 1. DISTRIBUTION OF NOMINALIZATION TYPES BY SUFFIX IN CoWITE18 AND CoWITE19 (PERCENTAGE OF TOTAL NOMINALIZATIONS PER SUBCORPUS).

SUFFIX	CoWITE18 (%)	CoWITE19 (%)
<i>-tion (-sion)</i>	17%	35%
<i>-ness</i>	31%	15%
<i>-ity</i>	35%	25%
<i>-ment</i>	11%	11%
<i>-ing</i> (nominal gerund)	<1%	<1%
Zero-derivation	<1%	<1%

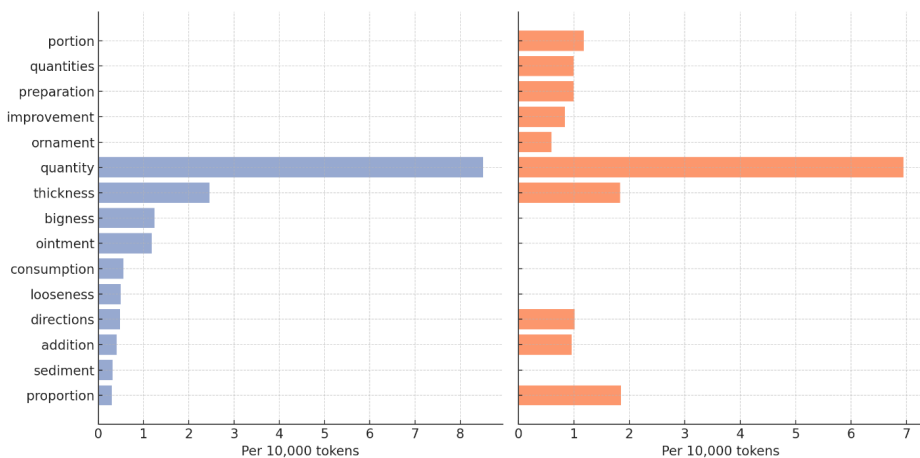
Note: Percentages are rounded. “Zero-derivation” refers to nominal uses of a verb or adjective with no affix (conversion). Plural forms are counted with their base suffix category.

When we look closely at suffixal patterns, both centuries draw on the same broad set of derivational tools, but their balance is far from identical. In CoWITE18 the bulk of tokens fall under *-ity* and *-ness*. Together they make up more than half of all nominalizations. The heavy use of *-ness* says much about the rhetoric of eighteenth-century recipes. Authors constantly describe qualities that can be scaled up or down: *the thickness of cream, the bigness of a walnut*. The native suffix fits this need perfectly, and words such as *goodness* or *looseness* appear again and again in the corpus. The nineteenth-century material tells another story. Here *-tion* nouns push to the fore, climbing from about one sixth of the earlier total to well over a third. Many are recognisably Latinate, e.g., *instruction, observation, proportion*, and their spread suggests a stronger taste for abstraction and formality. A recipe that once gave plain advice now states “a small proportion of saltpetre”. Whole sections open under headings like “Observations on...”, a practice hardly found in eighteenth-century manuals. In contrast, *-ness* forms shrink to around fifteen per cent, and familiar items such as *bigness* vanish altogether. *-ity* nouns remain frequent, but the count in the earlier period is inflated by the almost formulaic use of *quantity* in expressions like “a quantity of...”. By the nineteenth century this dominance has eased, and terms such as *portion* and *proportion* share the load.

The picture for *-ment* is stable in numbers, roughly ten to eleven per cent in both centuries, but not in character. In the earlier texts *ointment* is ubiquitous and concrete. In the later century we encounter more abstract uses: *improvement* of a recipe, *management* of a household. This change is small, yet it alters the flavour of the prose. Gerundial *-ing* nouns are strikingly rare. Academic prose of the same period often uses them, *the building of a bridge, the making of a law*, but instructive writing does not. These authors prefer the imperative. They tell the reader to *boil the pudding* rather than to talk about *the boiling of the pudding*. One fixed compound, *falling-sickness*, survives in an eighteenth-century medical recipe, but here *falling* functions as part of a set label rather than as an active pattern.

Zero-derivation hardly features. Words such as *use* or *cure* could in theory act as conversion nouns, but the corpus shows that writers avoided them. Instead,





Graph 1. Top ten nominalizations in CoWITE18 and CoWITE19 (normalized per 10,000 tokens)

they relied on overt suffixes to mark nominalisation clearly, which likely gave the prose greater formality and reduced ambiguity. Modern English, by contrast, makes frequent use of conversion. What emerges is a gradual shift in style: from the native, sometimes homely feel of *-ness* and similar forms to a preference for Latinate, more abstract endings. The nineteenth-century texts adopt a denser and more objectified style, one that aligns more closely with the scientific and technical registers of the time. The lexical profile of the most frequent items, illustrated in Graph 1, underlines this development.

In sum, both eighteenth- and nineteenth-century writers in CoWITE rely heavily on nominalization, yet the later century shows a higher rate and a preference for different morphological shapes. Some needs remain constant: writers in both periods turn to nominal forms when they need to measure, to name qualities, or to label procedures. What shifts is the choice of form. By the nineteenth century, the balance tilts towards Latinate and more abstract endings such as *-tion* and *-ment*, while the older native suffixes like *-ness* decline. This development fits the larger stylistic trajectory of formal English in the period, which moved steadily towards a more abstract and noun-heavy style. Banks (2008) had already noted that scientific prose, long reliant on nominalization, intensified this tendency in the nineteenth century. The CoWITE figures confirm that women's instructive writing was part of the same current. The increase from 11.1 tokens per ten thousand words in CoWITE18 to 15.2 in CoWITE19 matches the broader rise in informational density and phrasal compression described by Biber and Gray (2016). Put plainly, women authors who were often excluded from the recognized scientific sphere were nonetheless adopting the nominal style of late modern prose. Doing so lent their instructions a tone of impersonality and authority, preparing the ground for the rhetorical strategies discussed in the following section.



4.2. FUNCTIONS IN CONTEXT

Beyond raw counts, it matters how nominalizations work in practice. Close reading of concordance lines in CoWITE18 and CoWITE19 shows that they are used for a set of recurrent purposes. The same core functions appear in both centuries, though nineteenth-century writers sometimes use them more elaborately, for example, in framing commentary on their own text. Four functions stand out: (a) procedural labelling, (b) measurement and evaluation, (c) impersonal expression, and (d) abstraction and generalization. These often overlap, but for clarity they are treated separately, with examples drawn from the corpus in their original spelling.

(a) *Procedural labelling.*

Nominalizations often appear as labels that mark steps or sections of a procedure. Words such as *observation(s)*, *direction(s)*, *preparation*, or *caution* signal to the reader that what follows is not an imperative step but a block of general advice or framing comment. In Mary Randolph's *Virginia Housewife* (1824), we find:

- (1) General observations on roasting. Mutton is in season all the year round, but is best from October to Christmas. [...] (Randolph 1824)

Here *observations* works as a section heading, grouping together remarks on a practice before the instructions begin. Eighteenth-century texts behave in much the same way. One recipe, after listing ingredients, introduces the procedure with "The Directions how to take all." In both cases the verb is turned into a noun that names a resource: not "observe" but "observations," not "direct" but "directions." The effect is to create the feel of a structured manual rather than a personal note. Readers can also scan for these headings, which makes navigation easier in long compilations. Halliday's account of grammatical metaphor is relevant here: processes are re-packaged as entities that can be handled as units of discourse. The practice continues into the nineteenth century, with a touch more formality. Writers now add specifying adjuncts, *Observations on Roasting*, which makes the labels more precise and a little closer in tone to formal treatises.

(b) *Measurement and evaluation.*

A large proportion of nominalizations describe quantities, consistencies, or results. Instead of adjectives or clauses, authors rely on abstract nouns to pin down measurable properties. Fitzgerald's recipe from 1703 offers a good illustration:

- (2) *Stirre it continually, till it come to the thickness of creame or some thing thicker* (Fitzgerald 1703)



The noun *thickness* condenses a comparative description into a single word, linked by *of* to a standard measure. Similarly, *bigness* frequently appears in the eighteenth-century corpus, *the bigness of a walnut* is a stock way of specifying size. Such phrasing makes the property a unit in itself, something to be recognized by the reader.

Nineteenth-century texts retain this habit but add evaluative nouns such as *improvement*, *success*, *failure*, and *perfection*. Isabella Beeton (1861) comments:

- (3) Onions roasted, and then stewed with the gravy are a great improvement [to the dish]. (Beeton 1861)

Here *improvement* is not an action but a result. It names the positive effect of a technique in a way that feels factual rather than personal. This capacity to package both measurement and evaluation in a compact noun phrase is one reason nominalization is so effective in instructive prose. It allows writers to move between describing amounts (*a quantity of spirit*) and passing judgment (*the goodness of the meat*) without changing syntactic frame. The function is stable across the two centuries, though later texts tend to draw on a wider range of evaluative nouns and embed them in more complex noun phrases.

(c) *Impersonality and objectivity.*

Nominalization also supports an impersonal tone. Instead of “you must be cautious,” Anne Corbet (1835) writes:

- (4) [...] a great deal of Nicety and particular Caution is to be used in roasting the various Sorts of wild Fowl [...] (Corbet 1835)

The requirement is expressed through the noun *caution*, framed by a passive construction. No human agent is mentioned. The instruction appears not as advice from the author but as an abstract condition of the task. Later texts extend this tendency. An 1890 manual states: “the removal of stains should be effected quickly.” The noun *removal* again suppresses the actor, leaving the procedure itself as the focus. This pattern resonates with the wider stylistic drift in nineteenth-century English towards informational density and impersonality. It also complicates the stereotype that women’s writing was necessarily more involved or personal. In these genres, women adopted the impersonal register confidently, using nominalizations to present instructions as objective requirements rather than personal directives.

(d) *Abstraction and generalization.*

Finally, nominalization permits writers to step back from specific tasks and talk about wider principles. Educational and conduct texts make this especially



clear. An 1841 guide refers to “the effect on the morals and habits of the poor of a neglected education.” Here *education* is not an act but a social condition. Later works speak of *self-improvement* or *the cultivation of habits*, treating processes as objects that can be analysed, encouraged, or criticized. Even simple nouns such as *knowledge* or *virtue* serve the same function, encapsulating states or qualities in a way that allows them to be measured and discussed. This function also carries ideological weight. The late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries saw a push to formalize domestic science, pedagogy, and moral education. Women writers aligned their voice with that movement by phrasing their guidance in universal terms. A conduct manual might claim, “the happiness of a well-regulated family is secured by proper education.” Here *happiness* and *education* are presented as abstract entities, giving the statement the ring of a maxim rather than a personal opinion.

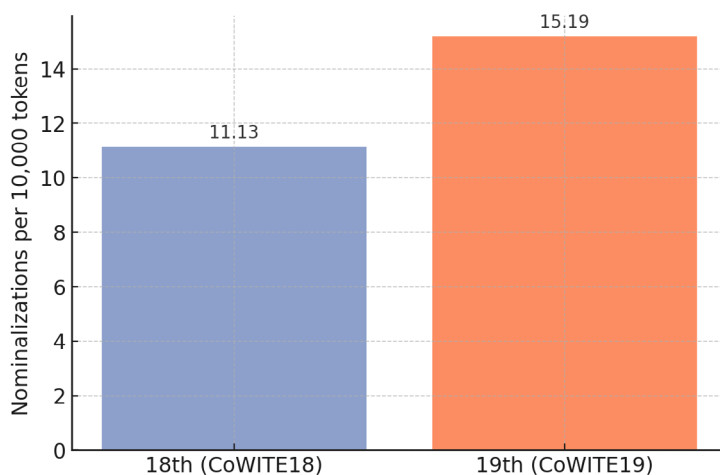
The corpus shows that nominalization in women’s instructive writing is not incidental. It is a tool for organising sections, conveying measures and judgments, adopting an impersonal tone, and formulating general principles. The rise in frequency across centuries corresponds to more frequent deployment of these functions, especially in nineteenth-century texts where authors also use nominal labels such as *observations* or *remarks* to manage text organization. The continuity is equally striking: across both centuries, nominalization allowed women to recast practical know-how as codified knowledge, presented with precision and authority.

5. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The rise in nominalization frequency from the eighteenth to the nineteenth century in CoWITE signals a shift toward what Halliday describes as grammatical metaphor (see Graph 2). Within the framework of Systemic Functional Linguistics, nominalization, the rephrasing of processes and qualities as nouns, is regarded as the central resource for ideational metaphor. It allows meanings that are congruently expressed as actions or properties to be recast as entities. Halliday and Matthiessen (2014) go so far as to call it “the single most powerful resource for creating grammatical metaphor,” since it underpins the technical vocabulary and dense exposition characteristic of specialized writing. When a process or quality is recast as a noun, it is treated as if it were an entity. This move allows writers to compress information and even turn a whole sequence of actions into a single nominal unit that can function as the Theme of a new clause. Historically, this capability was crucial for the development of scientific prose, since it made possible the construction of theoretical argumentation. The CoWITE material shows that women authors of instructive texts were also moving in this direction. Their prose increasingly re-presents experience through noun-based expressions, a choice that lends their instructions a more abstract and objectified character.

The numerical evidence is modest but telling. In CoWITE18 the rate is 11.13 nominalizations per ten thousand words; in CoWITE19 it rises to 15.19. The increase points to a genuine uptick in grammatical metaphor, with nineteenth-century instructive writing more likely to rely on nominal forms to encapsulate





Graph 2. Normalized frequency of nominalizations per 10,000 tokens in CoWITE18 and CoWITE19.

knowledge. Put simply, everyday activities and properties, once described in verbal clauses, were now more often reframed as stable concepts. This development aligns women's prose with the wider stylistic changes of Late Modern English, where noun-based construals came to dominate formal registers.

The nineteenth century does not just record a greater number of nominalizations. What is striking is the increasing complexity of the noun groups that bear them. As the form increases in number, it appears within long groups packed with qualifiers both before and after the head. Halliday noted that scholarly writing, once sophisticated, has a tendency to pack increasing amounts of information into such groups until an individual phrase becomes as complex as an entire clause (Halliday & Matthiessen 2014). It is simple to contrast. An eighteenth-century writer may use simple language and say something like “we observe the child's behaviour changes over time.” A latter-day writer may favour “the gradual observation of behavioural change through time.” Here the process *observe* has become the noun *observation* with the possibility of extension through adjectives and *of*-phrases. What used to be an action has become an object, something measurable and comparable and insertable into a taxonomy.

Instances from CoWITE illustrate the point. Nominal forms are utilized to label steps or bundle assessments: application of remedy, efficacy of method. Both centuries demonstrate the practice, yet the nineteenth yields more of it and longer and more compact noun groups. Functionally, the discourse shifts more toward the nominal manner of meaning. Relations and action that once may have been unpacked over clauses are condensed into a single information-bearing unit. The result is higher lexical density and a style more abstract and aloof. Morphology has the same story to tell. Later texts deploy increasing numbers of those *-tion* words,



e.g., *instruction, observation, evaluation*, while *-ness* words such as *usefulness, firmness*, or *kindness* become less common. The preference makes a difference. The form *-ness* tends as a rule to form nouns from adjectives, specifying attributes, often of an evaluative kind. *-tion* and its allies *-ment* and *-ity* derive from verbs and write processes or products. And they carry the distinction of Latinate form. The tendency towards *-tion* suggests a conscious effort at attaching procedures and products with a certain technicality. Absence of *-ness* suggests a drift away from specifying moral or personal qualities. In short, the prose returns from “what something feels like” towards “what is being done or made.”

This trajectory is not unique to women’s writing. Broader studies of Late Modern English (Biber & Gray 2016; Biber & Conrad 2009) chart the same movement, away from clauses and towards dense noun phrases. Nominalization is central to that process. The stylistic difference can be seen if we set two sentences side by side. Around 1780 a recipe might read, “If you apply this treatment, the patient will improve in health.” A century later one finds, “The application of this treatment results in a marked improvement in the patient’s health.” Both condition and outcome have been nominalized, and the sentence now carries more information in compressed form.

What are the repercussions of this for the genre as a whole? What it implies is that women’s teaching writing was not peripheral at all but deeply involved with the broader professionalization of prose. Domestic books and cookbooks no longer went with a conversational style by the nineteenth century. They were books of reference: compact, descriptive, and impersonal. Continued use of words like *instruction, observation, development, or measure* betrays a style from which authority flows through abstraction. The rise of nominalization cannot thus simply be a quantitative one. It betrays a conscious choice of grammar. These texts are moving towards the metaphorical, noun-bound register with which Halliday identifies expert writing. What we end up with are texts that are lexically richer, more abstract and more overtly of nineteenth-century English’s informational registers.

One thing that strikes me in these results is the way genre and gender meet. CoWITE brings together texts by women, and that fact cannot be separated from the way style developed. Women’s access to public, knowledge-oriented writing was limited, yet the corpus shows them using a device, i.e., nominalization, that makes their prose sound more detached, even authoritative. To my mind, this was not just style drifting over time but a deliberate move. Nominal forms give information without tying it to a visible speaker. That impersonal quality mattered for women who needed to sound credible in domains still shaped by male authority. We need to remember the prejudice of the age. Late Modern commentators, almost always men, wrote again and again that women’s prose was sentimental or decorative, good for letters perhaps but not for instruction. The charge was that women could not write in a logical or detached style. Yet the actual texts disprove it. Read them and you find plenty of nominalizations, plenty of impersonal phrasing. In other words, women were working within the same informational style as men. Bello Viruega’s (2021) work on female scientists makes the same point: they too leaned on nominal forms to build the voice of expertise.



It seems to me that women had more at stake in this than men did. By avoiding “I” or “you” and phrasing advice in nominal terms, they could step around the suspicion that came with a woman giving orders. The difference is clear if we put two phrasings side by side. “I recommend you cleanse the wound thoroughly” has a voice; “thorough cleansing of the wound is recommended” does not. The second version sounds like fact, not opinion. This kind of move was surely important in fields like medicine or education, where women’s authority was not taken for granted. Of course genre conventions mattered as well. Instructional writing aims to guide. It works best when it sounds firm and systematic. Nominalization helps: “during the fermentation of the beverage,” “on examination of the results,” “the importance of ventilation.” These are compact ways of packaging information. Both centuries use them, but the nineteenth century multiplies them and often makes the noun groups longer, with more modifiers. The result is a denser and more professional tone.

The wider social setting cannot be ignored. By the nineteenth century women were slowly gaining ground in education and print culture, if still at the margins. Stylistic change in their prose may reflect exposure to new models of writing, many of them male. By aligning with the impersonal style of science and technical registers, they positioned themselves inside the culture of expertise. Nominalization, in that sense, worked as a tool of self-legitimation. The general trend in English prose goes in the same direction. Across the nineteenth century impersonality and objectivity were prized. Nominalization serves those values neatly. A sentence such as “the removal of rust is essential for maintenance” makes the process itself the subject. Who removes the rust is not the point. Scholars have long noted the general depersonalization of nineteenth-century prose, with its reliance on passives and nominal forms. CoWITE shows that women’s texts were part of this same shift.

All this changes the authorial persona. In the eighteenth century, a woman might still write as a friendly adviser, even a motherly figure. By the nineteenth, the voice is more institutional, less personal. Nominalization contributes directly to that move, presenting information as if it were fact. Readers, too, adjusted to the style. A text with a high rate of nominal forms sounded serious, and seriousness was tied to authority. The rhetorical functions are worth recalling: headings, as in “the preparation of the solution”; evaluative nouns, as in “a marked improvement”; abstractions, as in “the progress of civilisation.” Each became more visible in the later material. The texts do not just say what to do; they begin to explain why and under what principles.

What all this shows, really, is that a feature as technical as the rise of *-tion* or *-ment* nouns points us to something larger. Women were moving from a spoken-like discourse to a more written, metaphorical register, in Halliday’s sense. That move let them condense meanings, build arguments, and above all sound like authorities. The form carried social weight. Impersonality and expertise were encoded in grammar itself, and women used that resource to enter discursive spaces where authority had long been gendered as male.

Reviews sent to the authors: 14/11/2025

Revised paper accepted for publication: 30/01/2026



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PRONOMINAL FUNCTIONS IN FEMALE SCIENTIFIC DISCOURSE: COWITE AND THE CORUÑA CORPUS*

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ABSTRACT

The study of *stance* gained popularity from the early 2000s with the many works by Hyland and has been applied to different pragmatic phenomena such as authorial voice. Stemming from the idea that specialised registers are not completely objective, this paper aims at analysing some nineteenth-century texts by women. In particular, it aims at studying first-person pronouns (both singular and plural subject forms) and the functions they perform beyond the merely referential one according to a classification previously proposed in an earlier paper (Moskowich, 2020). To this end, some texts from two corpora (The Corpus of English Chemistry Texts, CEChET (Moskowich et al., 2022) and the Corpus of Women's Instructive Texts, COWITE (Alonso-Almeida et al., 2025) will be scrutinised by close reading to provide a qualitative analysis of the voice of the authors in them and the functions they perform.

KEYWORDS: Stance, Authorial Voice, First-Person Pronouns, Women's Writing, Nineteenth-Century English, Instructive Texts, Corpus Linguistics

FUNCIONES PRONOMINALES EN EL DISCURSO CIENTÍFICO FEMENINO: COWITE Y EL CORUÑA CORPUS

RESUMEN

El estudio de la *stance* alcanzó mucha popularidad a partir de los primeros años de 2000 gracias a los numerosos trabajos de Hyland. Se han llevado a cabo estudios de distintos fenómenos pragmáticos, entre otros, el de la presencia de la voz autoral. Partiendo de la idea de que los registros especializados no son completamente objetivos, este artículo tiene como objetivo analizar algunos textos del siglo XIX escritos por mujeres. En concreto, se propone estudiar los pronombres de primera persona (las formas de sujeto tanto en singular como en plural) y las funciones que desempeñan más allá de la meramente referencial. Este estudio seguirá una clasificación de dichas funciones previamente propuesta en un trabajo anterior (Moskowich, 2020). Para ello, se examinarán detenidamente algunos textos procedentes de dos corpus (el Corpus of English Chemistry Texts, CEChET (Moskowich *et al.*, 2022) y el Corpus of Women's Instructive Texts, COWITE (Alonso-Almeida *et al.*, 2025) con el fin de ofrecer un análisis cualitativo de la voz de las autoras en dichos textos y de las funciones que desempeñan.

PALABRAS CLAVE: perspectiva, voz autoral, pronombres de primera persona, escritura femenina, inglés del siglo XIX, textos instructivos, lingüística de corpus.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.25145/j.recaesin.2026.92.02>

REVISTA CANARIA DE ESTUDIOS INGLESES, 92; abril 2026, pp. 47-60; ISSN: e-2530-8335
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1. INTRODUCTION

Stance in English texts has been used as an umbrella term for several pragmatic phenomena (Alonso-Almeida and González-Cruz, 2012) and has also become a very popular topic in the last decades thanks to the works by Hyland (1995, 1996, 1998, 2000, 2004). It has been studied also in its diachronic aspects (Hyland and Jiang, 2016, 2017) even when referring to registers apparently “devoid of linguistic and rhetorical flourishes, used to achieve an impersonal, objective style” (Moskowich, 2020: 56). Aspects such as the presence of the self (Hyland, 2008, 2011; Mele-Marrero, 2017) and engagement in academic writing have been relevant too. Therefore, stemming from the now widely accepted idea that academic and scientific registers are not as aseptic as initially thought of, the present paper aims at applying the same methodology as in Moskowich (2020) to texts that are not purely academic or scientific although they have been described as instructive (Alonso-Almeida et al., 2025). Since one of the clues to consider that such texts are not impersonal and are, on the contrary, full of indicators of stance such as the use of pronouns (Biber, 1988; Atkinson, 1999), the presence and functions of first-person pronouns will be analysed on this occasion. Since they are central pronouns (Quirk et al., 1985; Chamonikolasová, 1991), they are especially indicative of the author’s presence, voice and position regarding the contents they convey. Other papers (Moskowich, 2017, 2020, 2024) have already demonstrated that scientific English is not as detached and impersonal as initially thought (Atkinson, 1999).

My aim here is to analyse the use that women writers make of self-reference by comparing texts on Chemistry and recipes written both at the beginning and at the end of the nineteenth century. The first set of data will be taken from the *Coruña Corpus of English Scientific Writing* whereas the second will be extracted from the *Corpus of Women Instructive Texts* (COWITE). Both corpora contain texts relating to similar fields as Chemistry and recipes are not that different in the period under study as they are today when describing procedures.

With this aim, the present paper has been organised in sections so that section 2 will describe pronouns, and their functions as proposed in previous works. Section 3 presents the corpus material under analysis and the methodology employed for the study to then proceed to the analysis of the data from my material in section 4. Finally, section 5 will draw some conclusions.

2. PRONOUNS AND THEIR FUNCTIONS IN SCIENTIFIC WRITING

Already from the late twentieth century, English for Specific Purposes, Academic English and similar fields arose the interest of scholars following the

* Grant PID2022-136500NB-I00 funded by MICIU/AEI /10.13039/501100011033 and by FEDER, UE is hereby gratefully acknowledged.

theoretical tenets of Functionalism (Halliday, 1989, 2004), which considers language as an instrument of metaphor and power. Under a Hallidayan perspective, one could affirm that scientific, technical language can be considered as an excellent example of grammatical metaphor and this is so as this language is often used to refer to theoretical and abstract constructs. However, the expression of such complex, abstract thoughts is not always as detached and object-centred as considered by some scholars (Atkinson, 1999). Early works by Hyland (2001, 2005) in fact show that stance is contained in this type of writing and it can be detected in the use of different linguistic elements. Thus, appraisal, as an extension of the interpersonal metafunction described in systemic-functional grammar, pays especial attention to this “in terms of three basic systems known as “attitude”, “engagement” and “graduation”.” (Banks, 2019). There are many features in which one can recognise these three systems of interpersonal communication (Biber and Finegan, 1989), although pronouns may be said to be at the core in that they may be viewed both as a manifestation of involvement (Herriman and Aronsson, 2009) and interaction (Hyland, 2002).

Interpersonal communication or even stance in general are not the only questions that must be taken into account for the study of pronouns in specialised registers. On the contrary, it is also important to bear in mind that first-person pronouns are multifaceted (in the sense that they may be attributed more than a mere referential function). Similarly, we cannot forget that we are focusing on women’s writing and gender may shape language use. If we accept that women use a less detached language than men (Argamon et al., 2003) in general, maybe as a linguistic outcome of what Lakoff (1990) terms power asymmetry, we can also accept that such involvement is to be found in scientific writing as well (Moskowich, 2017). Involvement can be manifested through personal pronouns. Many scholars admit that personal pronouns in academic, scientific texts must have a function, although there is no agreement as to what that function is. Some authors claim that the singular form *I* is a mark of confrontation in academic prose (Martín-Martín, 2003; Zohar, 2015) which could be interpreted as interaction (Moskowich, 2020) as shown in example (1) below from my material:

- (1) Having thus described the various degrees of refining sugar, *I* shall now point out the method of preparing those colours with which they may be tinged, according to the fancy, and the different purposes for which they are to be used. (1814, Haslehurst Priscilla, COWITE)

Other authors (Hyland, 2001: 217) consider that writers use the first person as a way to set their work apart from that of other authors. Example (2) from my material illustrates this point:

- (2) When *we* find the skin of the fish is cracking, *we* shall know that it is sufficiently boiled. Take it carefully out, place on a hot dish, and serve with melted butter or egg-sauce. (1885, Clarke Edith, COWITE)



TABLE 1. FUNCTION OF 1ST P PRONOUNS IN SCIENTIFIC WRITING

FORM	FUNCTION	FUNCTION CODE
sg	mark of confrontation (Martín-Martín 2003), dialogue, interaction	1
	set one's work apart (Hyland 2001), identify author's main claims (Myers 1992; Harwood 2005), give sense of novelty to work	2
pl	express modesty (Myers 1989), mitigation	3
	claim authority and commonality (Pennycook 1994)	4
Sg./pl.	Description/narration of facts	0

Another position yet is that of Myers (1992) and Harwood (2005) concerning present-day specialised English. They support that the use of the first-person pronouns helps readers identify the writers' main tenets. These forms are also said to provide the text with a touch of novelty.

In turn, several different viewpoints can be observed when referring to the plural pronominal form. Thus, they are sometimes interpreted either as a sign of modesty (Myers, 1989; Hyland, 2001) or as a claim of authority or as an expression of commonality as with inclusive *we* (Pennycook, 1994):

- (3) HAVING completed *our* examination of the simple or elementary bodies, *we* are now to proceed to those of a compound nature; but before *we* enter on this extensive subject, it will be necessary to make you acquainted with the laws by which chemical combinations are governed. (Jane Marcet, 1706: 1 - CEChET)

In a previous work (Moskowich, 2020) I tried to describe and delimit these functions more clearly, although conscious that all these pronominal forms share the primary function of signalling the author. I then proposed a classification of the pronominal functions in the literature into five categories which are the ones represented in table 1.

The following sections of this paper will provide a qualitative analysis of the use of first-person pronouns and their functions in the writings of several nineteenth-century women. More specifically, the analysis will focus on writings on comparable fields in different genres so that both genre and date will be taken as variables for comparison.

3. CORPUS MATERIAL AND METHODOLOGY

The material here studied has been obtained from two different corpora. On the one hand, I have resorted to the texts in the COWITE Database, Corpus of Women's Instructive Texts in English (Alonso-Almeida et al., 2025). On the other, I have selected samples written by women in one of the subcorpora of the Coruña Corpus of English Scientific Writing, namely, the Corpus of English Chemistry Texts (CEChET) (Moskowich et al., 2022).



TABLE 2. TEXTS BY WOMEN IN NINETEENTH-CENTURY CECHET			
YEAR	AUTHOR	TITLE	WORDS
1806	Marcet, Jane Haldimand	Conversations on chemistry. In which elements of that science are familiarly explained and illustrated by experiments in two volumes. Vol II. On Compound Bodies.	10081
1882	Richards, Ellen H. Swallow	The chemistry of cooking and cleaning. A manual for housekeepers	10042
TOTAL			20123

TABLE 3. TEXTS BY WOMEN IN NINETEENTH-CENTURY COWITE 19			
YEAR	AUTHOR	TITLE	WORDS
1806	Rundell María	A New System of Domestic Cookery	20614
1880	Pye Julie	Home Notes and Household Hints: A Book of Domestic Economy and Recipes	10019
1883	Hooper Mary	Little Dinners: How to Serve Them with Elegance and Economy	10453
1885	Clarke Edith	High-Class Cookery Recipes: As Taught in the School	10090
1885	Edden Helen	Recipes of Old England	10142
1886	Clarke Edith	A Year's Cookery. Giving Dishes for Breakfast, Luncheon, and Dinner for Every Day in the Year	14776
1886	Lees-Dods Matilda	Handbook of Practical Cookery. New and Enlarged Edition	8281
TOTAL			84375

CEChET contains English texts dealing with chemistry and alchemy matters in late Modern English (1700-1900), and it can be used to describe such traditions both from a synchronic and a diachronic perspective. Samples in the Coruña Corpus are compiled so that there are always two 10,000-word text extracts per decade and this applies here too. All texts are encoded to be XML-TEI compliant and accompanied by metadata files with information both about the author and the text. In Chemistry, as well as in all the other disciplines compiled in the Coruña Corpus, text samples belong to different genres within the scientific register.

Only two women have been recorded in the nineteenth-century section of the Corpus of English Chemistry Texts, Jane Marcet and Ellen Richards, one at each end of the century as set out in table 2. As regards the genres used, the book by Marcet is a dialogue (in fact, a conversation among Mrs B., Caroline and Emily) and the one by Richards is a textbook.



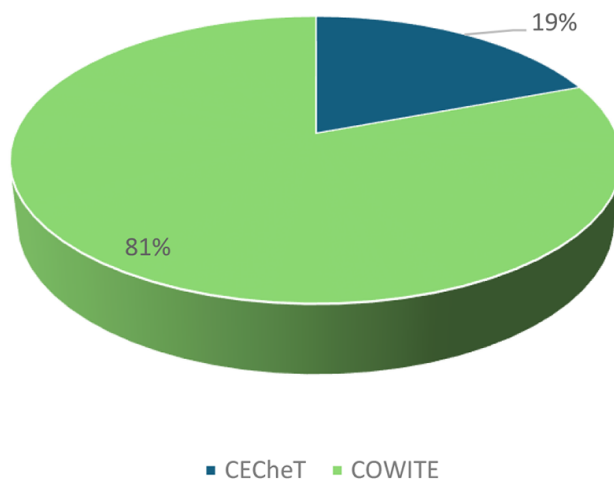


Figure 1. Distribution of words per subcorpus.

COWITE, the Corpus of Women's Instructive Texts in English, is also divided in several sections. The one under study here is COWITE19, corresponding to the nineteenth-century as it covers from 1800 to 1899. It comprises 33 texts by women, all of them of instructive prose, "encompassing cookery books, domestic guides, medical handbooks, and other forms of didactic writing addressed to a female audience or authored from a woman's perspective" (Alonso-Almeida et al., 2025). The beta version of the corpus used here has been prepared in plain text format. Of the total thirty-three texts in COWITE19, I have selected those published in the same decades as the ones found in CEChET to provide a reasonable comparison in the use of pronouns. This implies repeating one of the authors (Edith Clarke 1885 and 1886) which is a practice not to be found in the Coruña Corpus as the compilation principles of both corpora are different. Since COWITE is a monogeneric corpus, all the samples here belong to the genre recipe. The total word-count is set out in table 3.

An overview of the overall distribution of the 104,498 tokens in my material can be seen in Figure 1, where the word-count in COWITE, with more than 84,000 words, by large outnumbers that of CEChET (20,123 words).

As regards the method used, I have partly replicated the one in Moskowich (2020). Thus, to deal with the Corpus of English Chemistry Texts (CEChET), the Coruña Corpus Tool was used to first select the texts under scrutiny and then search for all the pronominal forms of interest, that is, nominative (subject) pronominal forms, both singular (*I*) and plural (*we*). Oblique cases were discarded as pronominal functions are not easy to assign in these cases. The same forms were searched for in COWITE19 with AntConc 4.3.1. All results were saved to broadsheets in Excel (version 16.96.1 /25042021). A time-consuming process of close reading of each occurrence ensued in order to ascribe each pronoun to one of the five functions already described in Moskowich (2020) and set out in table 1 above.



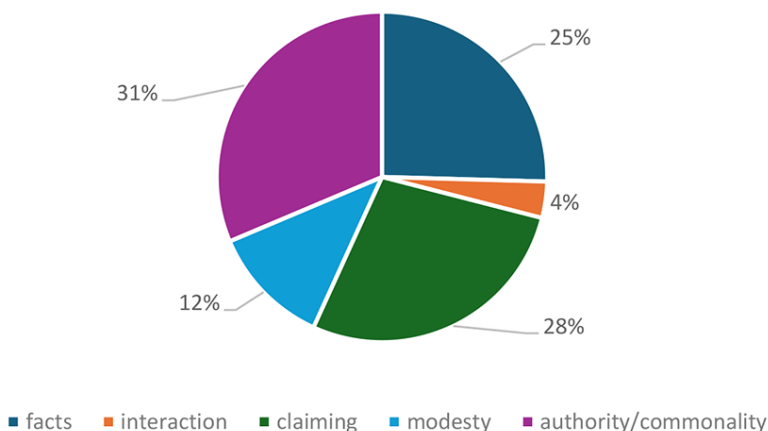


Figure 2. Overall distribution of pronominal functions in the material.

In the following paragraphs, the outcome of the analysis of these pronominal forms will be dealt with in some detail.

4. ANALYSIS OF DATA

Of the total 104,498 words in my material, only 169 correspond to first-person subject pronouns, which is less than 16% of the total. This may not be surprising as scientific writing is *a priori* not thought of as containing many of such forms. Besides, we must consider that most texts in the material under analysis are recipes, and these are usually characterised by the use of large numbers of imperative forms with no pronouns at all, which accounts for the general findings.

When considering singular and plural subject forms separately, we observe a very regular distribution as the 169 forms contain 83 instances of the singular *I* and 86 of *we*. What is surprising, however, is the fact that all pronominal forms are to be found in the texts on CEChET except for 3 cases that occur in the recipes of COWITE. One could expect a more detached style in texts on Chemistry than in recipes, but genre is playing an important role here: the book by Jane Marcet is a dialogue and the one by Ellen Richards a textbook. Any of these two imply a close relation with the expected readership and consequently both a direct address to them and an open manifestation of the author's voice can be expected.

The subject pronouns under study are used to fulfil the five different functions described both in Moskowich (2020) and in this paper. As set out in table 1, only one of the five functions attributed to first-person pronouns can be found to operate in both the singular and the plural. The other four correspond two to the singular form *I* and the other two to the plural form *we*. However, their overall distribution is very irregular as illustrated in figure 2.



Thus, the most abundant function with 53 instances is the one denoting either authority or commonality, a function exclusive of the plural form, although we have already seen that plural pronouns do not outnumber singular ones. Examples (4) and (5) illustrate the first function:

- (4) *We* find it also in the products of their decomposition, hence *we* reason that if the wear and tear of the muscles causes the liberation of nitrogenous compounds, which pass out of the system as such, this loss must be supplied by the use of some kind of food which contains nitrogen. (Hellen Richards, 1882: 37-38 - CEChET)
- (5) Our daily bread is so common a thing that *we* accept it with almost as little inquiry as thankfulness. (1883 Hooper, Mary - COWITE)

The second occurrence of the pronoun in example (4) is used by Ellen Richards to claim her authority in the subject she is dealing with as posited by Pennycook (1994). On the other hand, when Mary Hooper uses *we* in example (5) she is providing a sense of commonality or belonging together with her readers.

The second most abundant function with 47 hits is the one we find for singular *I* by which authors make claims, set their work apart or try to give a sense of novelty to their work. The samples in COWITE contain not a single instance of this use probably as a result not only of genre but also of content restrictions. Recipes are passed on from one generation to the following as part of the folklore or common knowledge and there is nothing to make claims about. Example (6) corresponds, therefore, to the text by Marcet contained in the Corpus of English Chemistry Texts (CEChET). As already noted, this is an instructive text in the form of a dialogue between a lady and two young girls, which favours the large number of self-references in the sample:

- (6) all the combinations that we have hitherto seen, one of the constituents has, *I* believe, been either liquid or aeriform. (Jane Marcet, 1806: 3 - CEChET)

The function *I* have labelled 0 in table 1 above is the only one to be found both in the singular and in the plural subject forms of the pronoun. With 43 cases (30 corresponding to the singular and 13 to the plural), it is the third most frequent function recorded in my material. It occurs when pronouns are used for the mere description or narration of facts, which is a function expected to be often used in both scientific and instructive texts. However, there are only two uses in COWITE, both found in the sample by Edith Clarke containing the recipe for “Fish Soup (white)” written in 1885:

- (7) When *we* find the skin of the fish is cracking, *we* shall know that it is sufficiently boiled. (1885, Edith Clarke - COWITE)



The other single use of *we* I have detected in COWITE is representing function 4, which is the one used express commonality (Pennycook 1994) This is found in in example (8) below:

- (8) Our daily bread is so common a thing that *we* accept it with almost as little inquiry as thankfulness. (1883 Hooper, Mary COWITE)

At a distance and with 20 cases, the fourth place is occupied by the use of plural *we* when expressing modesty (function 3 in my classification). This low number of tokens, as compared with the other three analysed so far, seems to indicate that these texts do not conform to the portrait Szymańska (2013) or Gil-Salom & Soler-Monreal (2014) make of women's writing in that those pronominal functions claiming authority or setting the writer's work apart are notably more abundant than those mitigating their claims. No examples of this function of modesty were found in COWITE, perhaps due to the fact that modesty is not needed when dealing with recipes but it is so when conveying knowledge typically attributed to men. Example (9) below has been taken from Hellen Richards' book *The chemistry of cooking and cleaning. A manual for housekeepers* published in 1882. and included in the Corpus of English Chemistry Texts (CEChET):

- (9) The nourishment is carried to them by the blood corpuscles. *We* find in these, as well as in muscular tissue, an element which *we* have not heretofore considered, nitrogen. (Hellen Richards, 1882: 37 - CEChET)

Finally, the least frequent function in the texts under scrutiny (with 6 occurrences) is number 1, identified with that of dialogue or interaction although Martín-Martín (2003) refers to this interaction in the sense of confrontation with the reader. Thus, it is no surprise that the pronoun *I* is only seldom used with this function in this particular dataset as the fact that women wish to present their own ideas or express a sense of commonality does not necessarily imply that they want to react against their readership. Example (10) has been taken from the chemistry corpus, the only field where it has been found.

- (10) What an amazing heat is disengaged. –*I* thought you said that cold was produced by the melting of salts? (Jane Marcet, 1806: 41 - CEChET)

This overview seems to have shown that the use of pronouns by women is a way to individualise themselves from male writers but only in those dominions where such thing is needed. Thus, there seems to be some kind of restriction imposed on the use of pronouns denoting self-mention and such restriction may not be only limited to the topic that is being dealt with (cooking vs. chemical formulae) but also to the rhetorical limitations of each genre (recipe vs. dialogue or textbook). In general, this means that women adapt their style when writing to the dominions and formats they are dealing with.



5. CONCLUSIONS

Stance in registers with an apparently detached style such as instructive and academic prose has been extensively dealt with from the last years of the twentieth century (Grabe, 1984; Hyland, 1998, 2005b; White, 2003; Halliday, 2004; Alonso Almeida, 2015). Certain linguistic manifestations have been identified as typical of stance (Hyland and Jiang 2016) among which self-mentions must be included. Personal pronouns, in particular those referring to the first person but also references to the readership, have deserved attention. Their behaviour in texts on different disciplines has been looked into (Crespo and Moskowich, 2015, 2024) so that both quantitative and qualitative studies have been carried out.

The analysis of the nine nineteenth-century texts written by women here presented is of a qualitative nature and has exclusively focused on the subject pronominal forms *I* and *we*. It demanded careful close reading of every single use of such forms detected as the method of analysis employed involved classifying every use as performing one of the five possible functions previously described (Moskowich, 2020). This is so as I consider that the use of pronouns goes beyond mere reference. Contrariwise, it includes the expression of authorial stance, the negotiation of interpersonal relationships, and the structuring of discourse.

I have examined the use and distribution of these first-person subject pronouns with a particular focus on how genre and rhetorical purpose may shape authors' linguistic choices. As on other occasions, my findings reveal a nuanced and context-sensitive use of pronouns, suggesting that women writers adapted their linguistic strategies according to the domain they were writing about and the format of their texts.

Despite the relatively low frequency of first-person pronouns found –only 169 instances in a corpus of over 104,000 words–, their functional diversity is notable. The seven recipes from COWITE, the Corpus of Women's Instructive Texts in English, only contain three uses of first-person pronouns and the three of them in the plural. This scarcity can be easily explained by the nature of the genre itself which is mainly characterised by the abundance of verbs in the imperative and a simple syntax, the one required to give directions. We could also see that the functions performed by these pronouns were similarly in agreement with the style of recipes so that pronouns were used either to describe facts or to provide a sense of commonality among the writer and the reader, perhaps to avoid sounding patronising. In addition, the presence and distribution of subject pronouns in scientific texts, particularly those in the Corpus of English Chemistry Texts, underscores the importance of genre in modelling authorial voice.

In my analysis I could identify the five distinct functions of first-person pronouns proposed, with the most frequent one being the expression of commonality, exclusively realised through the plural form *we*. This suggests that women writers often positioned themselves as part of a shared community with their readers (mostly other women). The second most frequent function, associated with the singular *I*, reflects claims of novelty or distinction, indicating moments where authors assert their intellectual contributions. Again, this is mostly found in the Chemistry texts,



probably to mark a contrast with men writers in the androcentric universe of science. Interestingly, the function of modesty, often linked to traditional portrayals of women's writing, was comparatively rare. This challenges existing assumptions and points to a more assertive rhetorical stance in texts dealing with scientific knowledge. The least frequent function –that of interaction– was limited to the text by Jane Marcet with conversational format, reinforcing the idea that rhetorical structure constrains pronominal use.

In general, my findings suggest that women's use of first-person pronouns in late Modern English specialised registers was not merely a reflection of grammatical convention but a strategic tool for negotiating identity and authority. These findings contribute to a broader understanding of gendered discourse practices and highlight the importance of considering genre, domain and rhetorical context in historical linguistic analyses.

Reviews sent to the authors: 19/11/2025

Revised paper accepted for publication: 21/01/2026



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CONSTRUCTING THE SCIENTIFIC SELF: A CORPUS-BASED ANALYSIS OF METADISOURSE AND AUTHORIAL PRESENCE IN 19TH-CENTURY TEXTS*

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ABSTRACT

This study examines how nineteenth-century English scientific and instructional texts construct persuasion and authorial identity using interactional metadiscourse features, namely boosters, self-mentions, and modal verbs. Drawing on two historical corpora, the Corpus of English Texts on Physics (CETePh) and the Corpus of Women's Instructive Texts in English (CoWITE19), comprising over 726,000 words, the analysis identifies significant contrasts in the frequency, distribution, and rhetorical function of these features. Physics texts exhibit a higher density and lexical diversity of these features, reflecting the persuasive, competitive, and epistemologically assertive nature of scientific discourse. Conversely, instructional texts employ more restrained linguistic choices, privileging impersonality, clarity, and procedural authority. These differences reveal how genre and disciplinary conventions mediate the negotiation between objectivity and individuality in nineteenth-century prose.

KEYWORDS: Nineteenth-century English Scientific Discourse, Metadiscourse, Persuasion, Authorial Identity, Corpus Linguistics, Self-mentions, Modal Verbs

LA CONSTRUCCIÓN DEL YO CIENTÍFICO: ANÁLISIS BASADO EN CORPUS DEL METADISCURSO Y LA PRESENCIA AUTORAL EN TEXTOS DEL SIGLO XIX

RESUMEN

Este estudio examina cómo los textos científicos e instructivos del siglo XIX escritos en inglés construyen persuasión e identidad autorial mediante el uso de rasgos de metadiscursos interaccional, en particular, intensificadores, autorreferencias y verbos modales. Basándose en dos corpus históricos, el Corpus de Textos en inglés sobre Física (CETePh) y el Corpus de Textos Instructivos Femeninos en inglés (CoWITE19), que comprenden más de 726 000 palabras, el análisis identifica contrastes significativos en la frecuencia, distribución y función retórica de estos rasgos. Los textos de física presentan una mayor densidad y diversidad léxica de estos rasgos, lo que refleja la naturaleza persuasiva, competitiva y epistemológicamente asertiva del discurso científico. Por el contrario, los textos instructivos emplean opciones lingüísticas más restringidas, destacando la impersonalidad, la claridad y la autoridad procedimental. Estas diferencias revelan cómo el género y las convenciones disciplinares median en la negociación entre objetividad e individualidad en la prosa del siglo XIX.

PALABRAS CLAVE: discurso científico en inglés del siglo XIX, metadiscursos, persuasión, identidad del autor, lingüística de corpus, autorreferencias, verbos modales

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.25145/j.recaesin.2026.92.03>

REVISTA CANARIA DE ESTUDIOS INGLESES, 92; abril 2026, pp. 61-84; ISSN: e-2530-8335
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1. INTRODUCTION

Persuasion in nineteenth-century English scientific texts is a rich and evolving topic that intersects with rhetoric, epistemology, and the history of science. Earlier traditions of natural philosophy in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries had already established that scientific authority depended not only on empirical demonstration but also on rhetorical strategies designed to cultivate credibility. As Serjeantson (2008) observes, reliability—or what he terms “proof”—was achieved through a combination of mathematical or experimental demonstration, appeals to authority, analogy, and credibility. These strategies, rooted in classical rhetoric, derive from three sources: the character of the speaker or writer, the emotions of the hearer or reader, and the logical structure of the argument itself (Whately, 1963). Building on this view, Yearley (1981) maintains that scientific writing cannot be regarded as a neutral transmission of facts but should be understood as a persuasive act in which authors seek to convince readers of the validity of their claims. In this respect, textual strategies function as resources for constructing trust, establishing authority, and shaping scientific identity.

The social dimension of scientific discourse remains a key concern in modern scholarship. Hyland (2011: 194), for instance, notes that “academic writing provides an objective description of what the natural and human world is actually like and this, in turn, serves to distinguish it from the socially contingent.” Academic writing does more than represent the natural or human world objectively; it is also a social practice shaped by disciplinary norms and community expectations: objectivity is therefore not absolute but mediated by the author’s rhetorical choices, through which identity, stance, and credibility are negotiated. The nineteenth century offers a particularly fertile ground for exploring this interplay between knowledge and the rhetorical strategies of persuasion. At this time, science was undergoing a process of professionalisation and specialisation, and authors had to balance the projection of authority with accessibility, adapting their rhetoric to both scholarly peers and broader readerships. In this sense, the author’s linguistic choices are key tools in the construction of the scientific self. By projecting authority, credibility, and responsibility, nineteenth-century authors shaped their identities as legitimate contributors to knowledge, negotiating their place within both their disciplinary community and the broader intellectual landscape.

This study examines how such authorial and persuasive strategies are linguistically realised in two distinct corpora: CETePh, which contains nineteenth-century physics texts, and CoWITE19, which includes domestic instructional texts, particularly recipes. The comparison between these corpora allows us to investigate how disciplinary stance and certain genre conventions shape the use of interactional metadiscourse features such as boosters, self-mentions, and modal

* The author gratefully acknowledges the financial support, grant no. PID2022-136500 NB-I00, funded by MICIU/AEI /10.13039/501100011033 and by FEDER, UE.



verbs. More specifically, this research is guided by several key questions. How do physics and instructional texts differ in their use of these features? What rhetorical purposes underlie these differences, particularly in relation to persuasion and authorial presence? To what extent do genre conventions influence the frequency, distribution, and lexical diversity of these linguistic forms? And finally, how do these strategies reflect broader epistemological values—such as authority, credibility, and universality—within their respective discourse communities? In addressing these questions, this paper argues that linguistic markers of persuasion and authorial presence provide critical insights into how scientific identity was constructed in the nineteenth century. The analysis demonstrates that while physics texts foreground authorial responsibility and the assertion of claims, instructional texts rely on clarity, impersonality, and procedural authority. The paper is organised as follows: Section 1 provides an overview of the context of science in the nineteenth century; Section 2 addresses the concepts of metadiscourse, persuasion, and their linguistic manifestations; Section 3 presents the material and methodology used; Section 4 offers a corpus-based analysis accompanied by discussion of the findings; and finally, Section 5 presents concluding remarks.

2. OVERVIEW OF SCIENCE IN THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

The nineteenth century marked a pivotal era in which scientific advancement became deeply intertwined with imperial expansion and the professionalisation of knowledge. Science served not only as a practical tool for exploration and control but also as a powerful narrative that justified empire-building and reinforced ideological goals, including racial classification and cultural domination (Qureshi, 2017; Gascoigne, 2011; Bennett, 2011). Emerging disciplines such as anthropology, botany, cartography, and geology often facilitated the classification and domination of colonised peoples and territories, later employing scientific research for military and political purposes.

The nineteenth century also attested for the popularisation of science through museums, exhibitions, and literature, shaping public understandings of empire and progress. Institutions such as the Royal Society, the Great Exhibition of 1851, and the Paris Exposition of 1900 showcased the marvels of scientific progress, attracting audiences across social classes and reinforcing imperial ideologies. In Britain, as the first industrial nation, the availability of cheap publications and public lectures made science broadly accessible, while cementing its cultural authority. From the 1860s to the 1880s, popular science magazines flourished, driven by increased literacy and reduced printing costs. In contrast, the proliferation of specialised journals signalled the professionalisation of science which subsequently narrowed public participation (Lightman, 2016). By the end of the century, science had transitioned from an amateur pursuit to a structured, career-based enterprise. The establishment of societies, journals, and university departments consolidated disciplinary boundaries and fostered a sense of professional identity among researchers. As Shapin (2008) observes, science became not only a method of inquiry but also a profession governed



by its own norms, hierarchies, and gatekeeping mechanisms. While this institutional framework provided scientists with platforms to disseminate their work and claim authority, it also imposed expectations on how knowledge was to be produced, presented, and validated, underscoring the dual processes of expansion and exclusion that defined nineteenth-century science. In this context, scientific writing served a dual function: it was both epistemic and social. On one hand, it aimed to report empirical findings with precision and clarity; on the other, it sought to persuade peers and broader audiences of the credibility and significance of those findings. The rhetorical dimension of scientific discourse became increasingly important as scientists needed to secure recognition, funding, and consensus. Charles Bazerman's seminal study *The Languages of Edison's Light* (1999) illustrates this dynamic vividly. Bazerman shows how Edison's success was not solely due to technological innovation but also to his ability to frame his work persuasively within the social and institutional contexts of the time. Language, in this sense, was instrumental in shaping public perception and institutional acceptance of scientific advancements. Similarly, Zappen (1997) explores the rhetorical shifts that accompanied the professionalisation of science. He argues that as science became more specialised and institutionalised, its rhetoric evolved from broad philosophical inquiry to more practical and disciplinary-specific forms of communication. This shift often led to a narrowing of rhetorical scope, distancing scientific discourse from broader societal concerns. Yet, even within these constraints, persuasion remained central. Scientists had to navigate the expectations of their communities, using linguistic strategies—such as boosters, expressions of modality, and self-mentions, to assert authority, align with disciplinary norms, and construct a credible scientific self.

3. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK: METADISOURSE AND PERSUASION

In scientific discourse, authors have historically needed to defend their findings, opinions, and positions, even when overt manifestations of authorial presence were discouraged by stylistic conventions rooted in the Baconian and Boyleian traditions. Despite this, writers employed subtle rhetorical strategies to persuade their readership. Such texts, aimed at shaping reader attitudes, are inherently audience-oriented and structurally organised, relying on mechanisms of persuasion and argumentation, whether explicit or implicit. This aligns with the concept of authorial self as discussed by Ivanić (1998) and Hyland (2002) which was moulded by the principles of logic and deduction. As Crespo (2011) notes, logic appealed to reason by presenting an opinion as the most rational solution, while deduction involved a justified method that builds claims from general principles to specific conclusions, thereby foregrounding shared assumptions and values. The ultimate aim of such language use was to effect a shift in the audience's perspective.

Hyland's (2005) model of metadiscourse has become a central framework for examining how writers construct meaning and negotiate relationships with readers in academic and professional texts. Building on earlier approaches, Hyland distinguishes



between two broad dimensions of metadiscourse: interactive features, which organise discourse and guide readers through the text, and interactional features, which explicitly involve readers and signal the writer's stance. Interactional resources play a particularly important role in projecting authorial presence and aligning with audience expectations. Among these, boosters or emphatics, lexical items that express certainty and reinforce the truth-value of propositions, (e.g., *clearly, undoubtedly*) allow writers to assert the strength of their claims. Boosters serve to persuade readers by signalling confidence and aligning claims with shared disciplinary knowledge. For example, a statement such as "Clearly, the results support the hypothesis" not only presents a conclusion but also invites the reader to accept it as self-evident within the disciplinary framework. Self-mentions or person markers (e.g., "I argue," "we propose") highlight the writer's identity and responsibility for the argument. These features contribute not only to the persuasive dimension of academic writing but also to the negotiation of authority and solidarity with the audience (Hyland, 2005; Hyland, 2019). Such person markers enable authors to establish their presence in the text, claim responsibility for findings, and position themselves within the scholarly community. Closely related to boosters is modality, which encompasses expressions of possibility, necessity, or obligation (e.g., *may, must, should*). Modality allows writers to calibrate their claims, balancing assertiveness with caution depending on the epistemic status of the information.

By foregrounding the interpersonal dimension of discourse, Hyland's model highlights that academic writing is not such a neutral medium for presenting facts but a social act in which authors manage both the credibility of their arguments and their relationship with readers. He argues that "academic writing provides an objective description of what the natural and human world is actually like and this, in turn, serves to distinguish it from the socially contingent." (Hyland (1998: 73). However, he also emphasizes that this objectivity is not absolute; it is shaped by disciplinary norms and the expectations of academic communities. Therefore, the features before mentioned collectively contribute to the construction of the scientific self, a rhetorical persona that blends authority, credibility, and engagement.

4. MATERIAL AND METHODOLOGY

This study employs a corpus-based approach, using texts from the *Coruña Corpus* and *COWITE* as primary data sources. The *Corpus of English Texts on Physics* (CETePh)¹ constitutes the seventh subcorpus of the *Coruña Corpus of English Scientific Writing* (CC). It includes samples of late Modern English texts on physics published between 1700 and 1900, covering areas such as mechanics, hydraulics, electricity, magnetism, and related fields. CETePh is designed to trace both the evolution of the language of physics and the variation within it. Each sample is paired with a metadata file containing details about the text (publication date, genre) and the

¹ The samples collected in CETePh are displayed in the appendix.



author's sociolinguistic background (place of origin, age, sex). As part of the CC, it contains 10,000-word samples (two per decade per discipline) of works originally written in English by English-speaking authors. To ensure representativeness, only one sample per author is included across the entire corpus. Compilation follows widely accepted principles in corpus linguistics such as external dating and sampling criteria, supplemented by the project's own parameters. Text and discipline selection is guided by UNESCO's classification of scientific and technological fields (1978, 1988). All CC subcorpora share common structural and editorial principles.

The *Corpus of Women's Instructive Texts in English* (CoWITE) is an annotated collection of instructional writing authored or compiled by women in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Its primary scope includes texts produced in both British and American English, focusing on areas central to domestic life and reform: cookery, domestic medicine, household management, hygiene (female), nutrition, beauty, moral guidance, cultural transmission and social improvement. The corpus brings together a wide range of genres, including recipes, manuals, guides, and other instructive prose. CoWITE is organised into two historical subcorpora. CoWITE18 spans the period 1700–1799 and consists of 22 texts totalling approximately 542,000 tokens. CoWITE19 covers the nineteenth century (1800–1899), with 33 texts amounting to around 503,000 tokens. All texts are part-of-speech tagged using TreeTagger to facilitate linguistic analysis. Each text in the corpus is accompanied by metadata including the author's identity and gender, the exact or approximate date of publication and genre classifications, among others.

In both cases, only the texts belonging to the nineteenth century have been analysed as Table 1 shows.

TABLE 1. CORPUS MATERIAL	
CORPUS	WORD NUMBER
CETePh_19 (beta version)	223,946
CoWITE19	502,680
Total	726,626

The specific composition of the corpora under analysis is relevant as various scientific genres possess distinct formal and functional taxonomies that shape their rhetorical conventions (Hyland, 2005; Crespo and Moskowich, 2020). The CETePh corpus comprises texts from the domain of Physics, including treatises, textbooks, essays, lectures and research articles. Genres in scientific discourse are characterized by their persuasive and explanatory functions (Moskowich and Crespo, 2016). In contrast, the CoWITE19 corpus consists of instructional texts, specifically recipes, whose primary communicative goal is “to guide readers in the preparation of certain products (Quintana Toledo, 2024, p. 167). This fundamental difference in genre, between the argument-driven discourse of physics and the directive, procedural discourse of recipes, provides the essential context for analysing their divergent use of boosters, modals, and self-mentions in the pages that follow.



The analysis integrates several computational tools, including frequency counts to quantify occurrences of specific features and concordance analysis to explore their contextual usage, and collocation analysis to identify lexical associations. Such analysis has been carried out using AntConc (4.3.1) as released from Lawrence Anthony's webpage: <https://www.laurenceanthony.net/software/antconcl/>. Figures have been normalised to 10,000 when necessary for the sake of comparison.

The methodology adopted in this study focuses on linguistic features widely recognized as vehicles of persuasion (Biber 1988, 1995; Biber & Conrad 2009; Atkinson 1999; Hyland, 2005; Mischke 2006; Nesi 2009; Moskowich & Crespo 2012, Vázquez & Giner 2009), enabling an exploration of authorial presence and the extent to which writers influence readers in a largely unidirectional communicative process.

According to the theoretical framework explained in section 2, three different features will be analysed: boosters, modals (predictive and necessity) and self-mentions (first person pronouns and possessive determiners and pronouns). To investigate the use of boosters, first, I have used the Word tab in the AntConc retrieval tool to list all the types contained in both corpora in order of frequency. I then proceeded to manually check in context those forms which were likely to be considered boosters. Next, I compared those items with the set of forms proposed by Hyland (2005) thus enlarging the original list of items boosting the scientific and instructional narratives from 64 to 203 types (Table 2).

TABLE 2. BOOSTERS

<p>Absolute, absolutely, abundant, abundantly Accuracy, accurate, accurately, acknowledge, actually, advisable, always, amply, ascertain, assert, beautiful, beautifully, best, brilliant, certain, certainly, certainty, clearly, complete, completely, conclusive, conclusively, confidentially, confirm, confirmation, considerable, conspicuous, constantly, convenient, conveniently, correct, correctly, correctness, crucial, decidedly, decisive, definitively, demonstrate, demonstration, determination, determine/determinate, devotedly, diametrically, direct, doubtless, effective, effectual, effectually, efficient, emphatic, empirical, energetically, engage, enormous, enormously, entire, entirely, essential, essentially, evidence, evident, evidently, exact, exactly, exceedingly, exclusively, exhaustive, experimental, experimentally, extensively, extremely, fact, favourably, firm, firmly, fully, fundamental, fundamentally, glorious, great, greatly, highly, honor, immediate, immediately, immense, immensely, important, impossible, incomparably, indeed, indefinitely, indisputably, infinite, infinitely, intense, intensified, judicious, justly, lowest, magnificent, manifest, manifestly, maximum, mere, mostly, necessarily, necessary, never, no doubt, noticeable, noticeably, numerous, obstinately, obvious, obviously, of course, perfect, perfectly, permanent, permanently, perpetually, plausibly, possible, possibly, powerful, powerfully, precise, precisely, primordial, primordially, principal, principally, probable, probably, proof, prove, purely, really, reliance, remarkable, remarkably, rigorously, satisfaction, satisfactorily, satisfactory, satisfy, show, significant, singular, singularly, specially, specific, specifically, splendour, strong, strongly, stupendous, sublime, successful, successfully, sufficient, sufficiently, superabundant, tenacious, thorough, thoroughly, total, totally, tremendous, tremendously, true, truly, trustworthy, truth, unavoidable, undoubtedly, universal, universally, utmost, vast, vehemently, very, well, wholly, wide, widely, wonderful, wonderfully</p>	<p>Actually, always, believe, believed, believes, beyond doubt, certain, certainly, clear, clearly, conclusively, decidedly, definite, definitely, demonstrate, demonstrated, demonstrates, doubtless, establish, established, evident, evidently, find, finds, found, in fact, incontestable, incontrovertible, incontrovertibly, indeed, indisputable, indisputably, know, known, must, (possibility), never, no doubt, obvious, obviously, of course, prove, proved, proves, realize, realized, realizes, really, show, showed, shown, shows, sure, surely, think, thinks, thought, truly, true, undeniable, undeniably, undisputedly, undoubtedly, without doubt</p>
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As for modals, the forms under scrutiny are shown in Table 3.

TABLE 3. MODAL VERBS	
NECESSITY MODALS	PREDICTIVE MODALS
must	will
should	shall
ought to	would

Self-mentions include *I, we, me, my, mine, our, us, ours*. No further discrimination of data has been applied to these two last bundles of features, but for their belonging to a different word category (must and will could also act as nouns with a different referential value). Finally, the study also compares the distribution and rhetorical function of these features across the two corpora, highlighting differences in linguistic strategies and disciplinary or genre conventions.

5. CORPUS-BASED ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

From the total number of 726,626 words that have been analysed combining both corpora, CETePh and CoWITE19, 14,830 forms or tokens represent linguistic elements such as boosters, self-mentions and modal verbs indicating persuasion and authorial presence. This represents 2.04% of the whole number of words. In addition, results are not homogeneous in both collections of samples: the frequency of occurrence of each feature varies from one corpus to other, this variation being connected with the purpose of the interaction and the field or domain discussed. To account for these findings it is necessary to consider, first, that in CETePh, the scientific texts on Physics, a variety of genres have been collected, namely, lecture, textbook, essay, article and treatise while “the texts in CoWITE19 belong to the recipe genre” (Quintana Toledo, 2024: 167) (See Figure 1 below).

As we can see, in Physics, a hard science, although, in principle, it might be common to find an impersonal baseline, the density of interactional strategies (189.46/10,000 words) surpasses that of a standard instructional genre like a recipe (40.96/10,000). The reason may lie in their diverse rhetorical purposes: a recipe’s goal is simple, universal instruction; a physics text’s goal is to persuade the audience of a new claim.

If we break down the data by linguistic element and we normalise figures to 10,000 words, the results are as shown in Figure 2.

Boosters and modal verbs indicating prediction and necessity are the most abundant features. Curiously enough, their frequency of occurrence is nearly the same (boosters, 86.73/10,000; modals, 86.47/10,000). However, self-mentions are less abundant, with their frequency decreasing to 30.89 forms per 10,000 words. Both physics and instructional texts require reliability and precision, and this can be achieved using boosters, asserting certainty and persuading peers of objective facts, and modal verbs, expressing logical predictions and necessary conditions. As



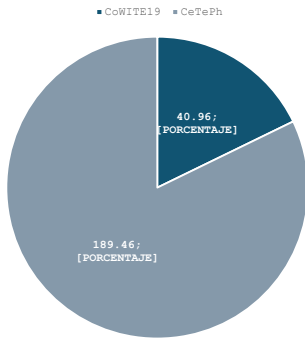


Figure 1. Interactional strategies in CETePh and CoWITE19.

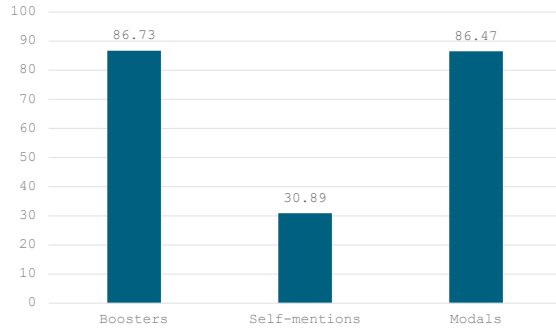


Figure 2. General occurrence of linguistic features in the material analysed.

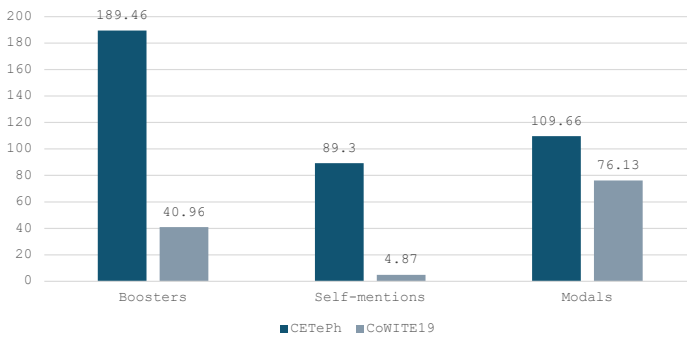


Figure 3. Linguistic elements per corpus (tokens).

a result of this interplay of forms, a tone of authority is created. In comparison, the lower number of self-mentions (first-person forms) could be explained on the grounds of avoiding a subjective touch that could undermine the samples' main goal of presenting a universal method or an objective truth.

Despite these general results, major differences emerge when the linguistic features under scrutiny are analysed independently in each corpus. Figure 3 shows these differences.

a) BOOSTERS

The texts on hydrostatics, optics, magnetism, aerostatics, material science, gravitation, acoustics, electricity, thermodynamics, heat and mechanics in the Physics corpus contain an extraordinary number of boosters when compared to



the recipes collection: authors use this rhetorical mechanism to emphasise the strength, novelty and certainty of their own contributions. Examples (1) to (5) illustrate this usage:

- (1) The effect is *always* measured by the product of the velocity of the load into its weight. (Playfair, 1812: 52)
- (2) but a mere inspection of the figure, with a mental reference to the actual experiment, is sufficient to show the fallacy of such an hypothesis: *in fact*, in every experiment that I made, after the complete fracture in the middle, the two fragments had been so little strained at the points of fixing, that they soon after recovered their correct rectilinear form. (Barlow, 1817: 107)
- (3) Under the same circumstances, the south pole of the magnet rotates from right to left. It is *evident* from this experiment, that the wire may also be made to perform a rotation round the magnet, ... (Sommerville, 1835)
- (4) We have just stated that it is a fundamental *truth* that water presses equally in all directions: let us not, however, be misunderstood. (Zornlin, 1843: 49)
- (5) But whereas, as has been previously stated, hydrogen produced a distinct hissing of its own when blown down the positive carbon in the open air, it produced none when used in the same way with the arc enclosed in the crucible. To *prove* that, in order to produce the sudden diminution of [P].[D]. under discussion, it was necessary for the active gas to actually touch the crater, a tubular negative carbon was used, and each gas was blown up through it in turn, gently enough not to force the gas directly against the crater. (Ayrton, 1899: 304)

These examples represent the five main categories (four lexical and one syntactic) that are used to reinforce reliability: adverbs, verbs, adjectives, nouns and prepositional phrases. They are typically employed when writers feel confident that their audience has been sufficiently guided through the argument and is likely to accept the conclusion (see example 5). As Mur (2007: 355) explains, “writers may be categorical in their phrasing of propositional content when they believe readers have been led throughout the argument and have been convinced of it.” Boosters thus serve to enhance the strength of a claim and instil conviction and trustworthiness in the reader’s mind.

Moreover, as Hyland (1998b: 368) notes, “Boosters are then rhetorical, persuasive strategies which function to mark, or rhetorically manipulate, consensual understandings based on shared community membership.” In other words, boosters help writers align their claims with the expectations and values of their disciplinary audience (see examples 2 and 3). Koutsantoni (2004: 172) further supports this view, stating that the use of boosters “can be motivated by epistemological reasons and be based on the results and findings themselves, and combined with social goals in scientific communities, such as gaining agreement and consensus by appealing to common knowledge and shared understandings.” All these expressions help authors assert confidence and persuade readers of the reliability of their conclusions, especially when backed by data and logical reasoning. Below (examples 6 to 14) you can find



some of the concordance lines for the word *accuracy* which testify to the persuasive and social dimension of boosters:

- (6) phys 1851 Hunt 104-150_20250609.xml and materials. [Fig. 84.] A very simple means for testing the *accuracy* of the above statements, is afforded by an arrangement
- (7) phys 1812 Playfair 215-279_20241020.xml within which the same quantity of it is contained. The *accuracy* of this definition is known from experience. The weight
- (8) phys 1820 Watts 27-32 2024 12 17.xml part of an inch, or to such a degree of *accuracy* as had not hitherto been attained; for the length
- (9) phys 1865 Maxwell 459-484_20210627.xml electrical measurement, and by actually determining electrical quantities with an *accuracy* hitherto unknown. (2) The mechanical difficulties, however, which are involved
- (10) phys 1817 Barlow 110-51_20250613.xml and in order to measure the deflections with the greater *accuracy*, I procured an ivory scale very accurately graduated into 40
- (11) Phys 1827 Arnott 5-33 2024 12 31.xml by the tendency downward of a certain sized solid; the *accuracy* of modern science has sought some fixed and natural
- (12) phys 1817 Barlow 110-51_20250613.xml his or my experiments, and thus satisfy themselves of the *accuracy* or inaccuracy of our results. It may not be
- (13) phys 1851 Hunt 104-150_20250609.xml of mercury (Fig. 112). This form is, however, wanting in strict *accuracy*, owing to the smallness and unequal shape of the
- (14) phys 1812 Playfair 215-279_20241020.xml the first case, and 268 in the second. Nevertheless, from the *accuracy* which the rule for barometrical measurement possesses, it may

From a persuasive dimension, the term *accuracy* is used to assert the precision and reliability of scientific methods and findings. For instance, in Watts (1820), the phrase “to such a degree of accuracy as had not hitherto been attained” emphasises the novelty and advancement of the measurement technique, persuading the reader of its scientific value and progress. On the other hand, the social dimension reflects the communal norms and practices of the scientific community. In Barlow (1817), the statement “satisfy themselves of the accuracy or inaccuracy of our results” invites peer verification, enhancing the collaborative and transparent nature of scientific inquiry. This usage reinforces the expectation that scientific claims should be open to scrutiny and reproducibility, aligning with the ethos of shared responsibility in empirical validation.

In instructional texts, boosters are used for emphasis on critical steps, but the range and rhetorical purpose are not the same as in the case of Physics texts. Here the certainty they express is related to a fixed process and not to a novel claim:

- (15) Blend the eggs with the water, by stirring gently (not beating), and add half a teaspoonful of sugar or half a saltspoonful of salt, to make it palatable.



Time required, about five minutes.

N. B.—This is *highly* recommended by physicians for children with diarrhoea, while teething. (Pye, 1880)

- (16) For liquid preserves the fruit should not be perfectly ripe, but nearly so. It is *essential* that the quantity of sugar should be neither too much nor too little. In the first case the preserves will candy, in the second they will not keep. (Mrs. Toogood, 1866)
- (17) ... and bear in mind that vinegar should always be boiled in unglazed earthenware; though, *in fact*, it ought never to boil at all, but be made just scalding hot, for boiling causes much of its strength to evaporate. (Corbett, 1835)
- (18) if you do not *find* it sour enough, after it has stood two or three days and shaken freely, add more of the acid. (Mrs. Child, 1841)
- (19) The principal *excellence* of this method is, that the paper receives the impression of the most minute veins & hairs; so that you may take the general character of most flowers much superior to any engraving. (Bird, 1825)
- (20) Set to rise again half an hour; form into rocky buns; put them on a floured tin with a few pieces of sugar upon each bun; *prove* fifteen minutes; bake in a hot oven. (Everard, 1890)

Note the use of the verb *prove* in example (20). In the culinary and domestic advice literature of the 19th century, the use of *prove* operates as a rhetorical tool, the term invokes the idea of testing and validating, a persuasive strategy that assures the reader of the method's reliability and effectiveness.

Figure 4 shows the frequency of use of types expressing certainty and reinforcing the truth-value of propositions. In terms of lexical variety, the range of boosters used is wider in the case of scientific authors than in the case of instructional texts writers.

The type–token ratio (TTR) calculated for each corpus provides insights into the lexical richness of boosters. A TTR of 0.0009 in CETePh compared to 0.0002 in CoWITE19 suggests that physics texts employ a moderately more diverse range of booster forms than recipe texts. The lower variation in CoWITE19 likely reflects the constraints imposed by the genre, where authors tend to rely on a more limited and conventionalised set of expressions. The relatively higher diversity of boosters in CETePh can be interpreted as a reflection of disciplinary stance: physics authors often need to assert the certainty of their claims and strengthen their authority within a highly competitive knowledge domain. In contrast, the limited range of boosters in CoWITE19 aligns with the instructional and procedural nature of recipe writing, where clarity and precision take precedence over overt stance-taking. This contrast illustrates how boosters function not just as linguistic resources but also as markers of disciplinary values and rhetorical expectations.



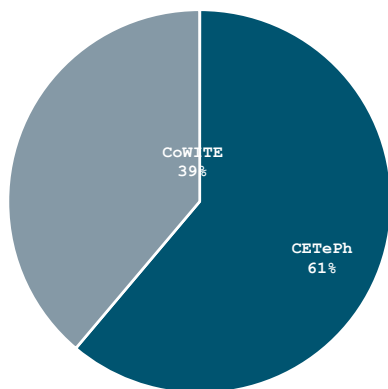


Figure 4. Proportional use of boosters in both corpora (types).

b) SELF-MENTIONS

The normalised figures for self-mentions in the two corpora indicate a clear disciplinary difference. In CETePh (physics texts), the frequency of self-mentions is relatively high (89.3/10,000), which reflects the rhetorical need for physicists to project authorial presence, claim responsibility for findings, and strengthen the authority of their arguments (Tang and John, 1999; Hyland, 2002). In contrast, in CoWITE19 (recipe and domestic instructional texts), self-mentions occur far less frequently (4.87/10,000) (see Figure 3 above). This aligns with the genre's focus on procedural clarity rather than personal stance: the authority of the text derives from shared cultural conventions and practical reproducibility, not from the author's explicit presence. However, there are instances of such uses as can be seen in examples (21) to (23). As claimed by Alonso-Almeida (2023: 124) "Despite the instructional text type's inherent nature, which tends to focus on direct orientation and seemingly limits the use of complex structures and evaluative language, the findings indicate that this is not always the case." Women writers show how they take responsibility for their actions and are committed with their statements when using first person pronouns:

- (21) Books of this kind have usually been written for the wealthy: *I* have written for the poor. *I* have said nothing about rich cooking (Mrs Child, 1841)
- (22) Some people like it thicker than others; *I* should think three large spoonfuls of flour to a quart of milk was about right. It should always be seasoned with salt; (Mrs Child, 1841)
- (23) If the fat of veal, mutton, lamb, or pork, have the slightest tinge of yellow, *I* avoid it as diseased. (Randolph, 1824)



Put it differently, on the whole, physics writing relies more heavily on self-mentions as a way to assert individual expertise and ownership of knowledge, while instructional domestic texts downplay the authorial voice in favour of an impersonal, directive style.

According to Hyland's (2005, 2019) model, self-mentions are an interactional metadiscourse feature, allowing authors to explicitly project their identity into the text and establish a relationship with readers. In scientific disciplines like physics, self-mentions signal credibility, accountability, and involvement in the research process—crucial for persuading peers of the validity of claims. By contrast, in domestic instructional texts, the scarcity of self-mentions, not their complete absence, reflects different rhetorical norms: here, the emphasis is on clarity, impersonality, and universality, with the text serving as a practical guide like in (24) rather than a space for negotiating epistemic authority.

- (24) Cut up young and tender hares, using only the hind quarters, and reserving the rest for broth or fricasee. Lay the pieces in an earthen soup-kettle, and cover with three pints of water to which a teacupful of wine vinegar has been added, with a tablespoonful of salt, two teaspoonfuls of peppercorns, four white onions sliced and fried brown in butter, and half a lemon cut thin. Boil all for one hour. Then take out the meat, strain the broth through a gauze sieve, and add enough good beef broth to make two quarts. Soak a packet of gelatine in a cup of warm water, add to this and boil up once, setting aside to cool. While the hare is cooling, a farcie of calf's liver is to be made as follows: -Boil a calf's liver half an hour; chop it fine and rub it through a sieve. Add to it half a pound of finely chopped boiled ham, two hard-boiled eggs cut fine, a cupful of bread-crumbs or rolled zwieback, two tablespoonfuls of melted butter, and half a teaspoonful of pepper, with one of salt. Blend all thoroughly, put it in an oiled tin, and bake till brown in a steady oven.

Thus, the comparative figures illustrate how disciplinary stance and communicative purpose shape metadiscursive choices. Physics authors deploy self-mentions to construct an authoritative persona, while women's domestic writing relies on genre conventions that suppress individual voice in favour of communal, instructional authority.

Authorial presence and persuasion are manifested not only by means of direct personal references but also by personal pronouns, possessive determiners and possessive pronouns. The frequencies are set out in Figure 5.

We (43.04/10,000 words) and *I* (22.9/10,000) are the most abundant personal forms, especially in CETePh. An example from this corpus illustrates how such proforms link the flow of the argument and enhance credibility by supporting previous claims which are followed by the speaker's own ideas:

- (25) I SHALL commence this afternoon by taking a few further consequences of the grand ideas of Carnot, which I developed at full length in my last lecture. Wherever, in fact, *we* meet with any one anomalous physical result, *we* almost



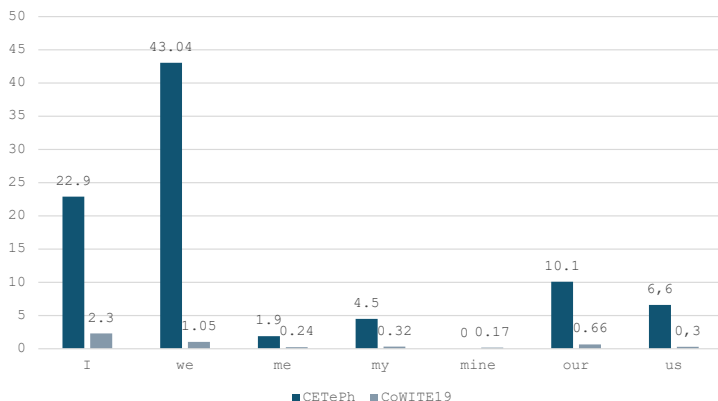


Figure 5. Normalised figures for self-mentions in CETePh and CoWITE19

invariably find that it is associated with other anomalous results; and perhaps it is in this respect that Carnot's ideas have been of the greatest use in giving *us* new information. Let *us* take, for instance, what I incidentally mentioned in connection with thermometers in my last lecture, – the fact that water would be an exceedingly bad substance to employ for the purpose of filling a thermometer bulb (...). (Stone, 1898: 1)

The personal tone is also reinforced by the kind of genre of the example, a fragment extracted from a lecture. The OED, in its sense 4. a. of the term, defines a lecture as “A discourse given before an audience upon a given subject, usually for the purpose of instruction. (The regular name for discourses or instruction given to a class by a professor or teacher at a college or University.)” Recorded for the first time in the year 1536, in Act 27 of Henry XII, Acts of Parliament. (Moskowich and Crespo, 2016: 316). *We* is embracing the audience to make them participants of their reasonings, actions and knowledge. It is an engaging mechanism to attract attention and gain acceptance: “Wherever, in fact, we meet with any one anomalous physical result”, “we almost invariably find”, “giving us new information”. The utterance also contains boosters which undermine the strength of the proposition: “in fact”, “invariably”, “exceedingly”. The use of “I shall commence...” employs the modal verb *shall*, which signals authorial intention and commitment, reinforcing the speaker's control over the discourse and guiding the audience through the logical progression of ideas, which, in turn, projects confidence and authority. Over the whole paragraph, the pronoun works as a discourse marker, linking past claims (“developed at full length in my last lecture”) with new ones. This modal choice enhances cohesion and certainty for the listener. Authorial presence is reinforced by a personal tone, appropriate for the lecture genre, the speaker's ownership of ideas and engagement with the audience through the creation of a dialogic environment. From a summary of



previous claims (“Carnot’s ideas”), moving to a generalization (“we almost invariably find...”) which is illustrated by a specific example (“thermometers and water”), these three stages result in scientific reasoning, where claims are supported by evidence and connected through inference. Self-mentions and, on occasions, modal verbs help navigate this flow, by making the argument coherent and persuasive and expressing assurance (Yamazaki, 2001).

We forms (e.g., we find, we meet) create a sense of shared inquiry, inviting the audience to participate intellectually. This personal tone is genre-appropriate and helps establish rapport and credibility, encourages collective reasoning by making the argument feel inclusive (Kuo, 1999) and softens assertions, turning them into shared observations rather than unilateral claims. The persuasive appeal increases by aligning the speaker with the audience. In nineteenth-century scientific discourse (as represented in CETePh), it was common for scholars to use *I* to narrate their scientific procedures, and *we* to align with the scientific community or readers. This reflects a time when scientific authority was often tied to individual reasoning and public demonstration, especially in lectures and treatises. CoWITE19, by contrast, contains instructional texts authored by women in domestic and semi-professional contexts which tend to be less self-referential.

The occurrence of the remaining forms is low except for *my* (4.5/10,000), *our* (10.1/10,000) and *us* (6.6/10,000) found in CETePh. The pronominal possessive plural *ours* was not traced at all in any of the corpus. In general, plural forms embracing author and readership predominate but the singular pronoun *I* is the most abundant in CoWITE19 (2.3/10,000).

c) MODAL VERBS

The selection of modals reflects the writer’s confidence and a way of aiding the reader so that they can interpret the message correctly. Studies (Biber & Gray, 2011; Gardner, Nesi & Biber, 2019) show that modal usage varies across genres and disciplines, with scientific writing often favouring modals to express cautious claims. Modals help writers express epistemic stance, that is to say, degrees of certainty, possibility, and necessity. In particular, predictive modals (*will, shall, would*) allow writers to speculate or forecast outcomes while necessity modals (*must, should, ought to*) convey obligation or strong recommendation.

The frequency of occurrence of these items varies across the two corpora under study.

Figure 6 presents a comparative analysis of predictive and necessity modals across the CETePh and CoWITE19 corpora. The data reveal distinct patterns in modal usage between the two datasets. Predictive modals are markedly more frequent in the CETePh corpus, accounting for 88.14 cases every 10,000 words of modal usage, compared to 37.69 in CoWITE19. This suggests that CETePh texts are more oriented towards expressing future possibilities, expectations, or hypothetical scenarios, features commonly associated with academic or scientific discourse (see examples 26 to 28).



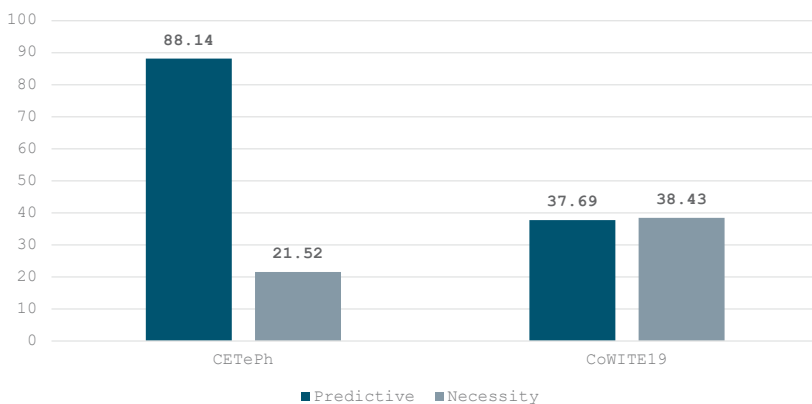


Figure 6. Predictive and necessity modals in both corpora

- (26) Whenever such a change takes place in the atmosphere as will diminish its density, it *will* be less capable of supporting the quicksilver in the barometer which *will* of course descend, and when it is least capable of supporting the quicksilver, it *will* also be least capable of supporting aqueous vapours, clouds, and every thing else that may be floating in it: of course they descend, and if the clouds come into a sufficiently close aggregation to form drops, rain *will* be the consequence if in summer, or snow if in winter. (Millington, 1823: 112)
- (27) Thus all these experiments depend upon the transference of energy in a kinetic form between two bodies, and the test of the capability of the one for receiving the energy which is sent out by the other is this, that the natural undisturbed times of vibration of the two bodies *shall* be as nearly as possible precisely the same. I have not time to enter more deeply into the subject today, but I *shall* endeavour, in the few minutes which remain to me, to sketch briefly what is to be our application, to modern science, of these purely mechanical Experiments. (Tait, 1876: 182)
- (28) The usual mode of proceeding is to reduce all observed heights to what they *would* be at the freezing-point of water, the rule being to subtract the ten -thousandth part of the observed altitude for every degree of Fahrenheit's thermometer. (Hunt, 1851: 148)

In contrast, necessity modals are more prevalent in the CoWITE19 corpus, with a frequency of 38.43, compared to 21.52 in CETePh after having normalised frequencies to 10,000 words. This indicates a stronger emphasis on obligation, recommendation, or evaluative stance in the instructional texts, which may reflect its pedagogical nature as in examples (29) to (31):

- (29) By keeping the water a certain time heating without boiling, the fibres of the meat are dilated, and it yields a quantity of scum, which *must* be taken off as



soon as it rises. You *should* never boil vegetables with meat excepting carrots or parsnips. (Corbett, 1835)

- (30) Make it exactly as you do the dried pea soup, only in place of the celery-seed, put a handful of mint chopped small, and a pint of young peas which *must* be boiled in the soup till tender; thicken it with a quarter of a pound of butter, and two spoonsful of flour. (Randolph, 1824)
- (31) For a day or two rub them well with it; afterwards they will only require turning. They *ought to* remain in this pickle for 3 weeks or a month, and then be sent to be smoked, which will take nearly or quite a month to do. (Beeton, 1875)

These examples align with deontic modality, where modal verbs express duty, obligation, or necessity. In historical instructional pieces of writing, the choice of modal verb serves as a rhetorical strategy that allows authors to position themselves as instructors and authorities. This positioning is often more subtle than the directness of imperatives, which can diminish the interpersonal tone. For instance, *should* conveys a strong recommendation rooted in experience rather than absolute necessity, establishing the author's authority and suggesting a sort of "best practice." *Ought to* frames the instruction within a context of tradition and normative expectations, reinforcing shared cultural or procedural knowledge. In contrast, *must* is reserved for steps that are foundational to the recipe's structural and chemical success, non-negotiable elements of the culinary process. Eventually, these findings reinforce the fact that modal usage varies significantly depending on the communicative purpose and genre of the texts. This variation offers valuable insights into the linguistic tendencies and pragmatic choices within each corpus.

6. CONCLUDING REMARKS

The findings of this study confirm and extend the view introduced earlier that nineteenth-century scientific writing was not merely a vehicle for transmitting knowledge but a rhetorical space in which authors constructed their scientific selves. As the corpus analysis demonstrates, interactional strategies such as boosters, self-mentions, and modal verbs, although quantitatively modest, representing only 2.04% of the data, play a decisive role in shaping persuasion and authorial presence. Their distribution across the two corpora, CETePh (beta version) and CoWITE19, reflects the distinctive rhetorical and epistemological aims of each domain. Physics texts display a far higher density of interactional features (189.46 per 10,000 words) than instructional recipes (40.96 per 10,000), highlighting the more explicitly persuasive and argumentative nature of scientific discourse. These differences in frequency correspond to contrasting rhetorical purposes. Physics authors aim to persuade peers of the novelty and validity of their findings, using language to construct authority and credibility. Boosters and modal verbs dominate their rhetorical repertoire, reinforcing certainty, logical projection, and confidence. The use of predictive modals such as *shall*, *will*, and *would* guides readers through hypotheses and causal reasoning, while self-mentions, though less frequent, enable scientists to claim



responsibility and engage directly with their community. By contrast, the writers of domestic instructional texts prioritise clarity, universality, and procedural accuracy. Their rhetorical aim is not to argue but to instruct, to ensure that processes are replicable by any reader. Necessity modals (*must, should, ought to*) therefore prevail, functioning as pragmatic directives that establish procedural authority rather than epistemic persuasion. Boosters in these texts reinforce precision and correct method rather than assertion or innovation, reflecting the genre's didactic ethos.

Genre conventions exert a strong influence on these linguistic patterns. The CETePh corpus comprises varied scientific genres, each demanding distinct forms of engagement and stance-taking. This diversity accounts for its richer lexical range and more subtle distribution of metadiscourse, with a type-token ratio (TTR) of 0.0009 compared to 0.0002 in CoWITE19. Instructional writing, by contrast, adheres to the highly formulaic conventions of the recipe, where imperatives and prescriptive structures dominate, leaving little room for explicit authorial self-projection. Authority is achieved through reproducibility and shared domestic expertise, not through overt claims of knowledge or self-assertion. These patterns of interactional metadiscourse reveal much about the epistemological values underpinning each discourse community. In physics, persuasion operates through the assertion of individual authority and rational credibility. The physicist's voice is both personal and institutional, confident, reasoned, and aligned with disciplinary norms. Here, linguistic strategies serve to enact the scientific self as an embodiment of trustworthiness and intellectual autonomy. In contrast, instructional texts reflect an epistemology grounded in collective knowledge and practical reliability. Authority derives not from innovation but from conformity to procedure and the implicit universality of the domestic task. Nonetheless, when women authors use self-mentions or modals to frame advice and justification, they subtly reclaim individual expertise within an otherwise impersonal genre, revealing the gendered negotiation of credibility in nineteenth-century authorship.

In both corpora, then, the shaping of the authorial voice mirrors broader epistemological and social dynamics of the nineteenth century: the tension between objectivity and individuality, between communal knowledge and personal authority. Persuasion reflects how writers positioned themselves as trustworthy knowers within their respective discourse traditions. The construction of the scientific self thus emerges at the intersection of rhetorical choice, disciplinary expectation, and social identity. Language, far from being a neutral medium, functions as a means through which authority, credibility, and belonging are negotiated. In this way, nineteenth-century authors, whether physicists or instructors, used interactional discourse to define what it meant to know, to teach, and ultimately, to be a credible author within the evolving landscape of scientific and instructional prose.

Reviews sent to the authors: 15/12/2025

Revised paper accepted for publication: 20/01/2026



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APPENDIX

DATE	AUTHOR	TITLE	WORD COUNT
1800	Young, Matthew	An Analysis of the Principles of Natural Philosophy. Dublin: Printed for the University Press by and for R.E. Mercier and co. Booksellers and printers to Trinity College: and for G.G. and J. Robinson	10,287
1808	Blair, David (Richard Phillips)	An Easy Grammar of natural and experimental philosophy:: for the use of schools. With ten engravings. A New Edition Corrected. London: Printed for Richard Phillips, no 6, Bridge Street (and to be had of all booksellers)	10,037
1812	Playfair, John	Outlines of natural philosophy : being heads of lectures delivered in the University of Edinburgh. Vol. I . Edinburgh: Printed by A. Neill & co. For Richard Constable and company, Edinburgh; and Longman, Hurst, Rees, Orme and Brown, Cadell and Davies, and John Murray.	12,751
1817	Barlow, Peter	An Essay on the Strength and Stress of Timber, grounded upon Experiments performed at the Royal Military Academy, on Specimens Selected from the Royal Arsenal, and His Majesty's Dock-Yard, Woolwich: preceded by an Historical Review of former Theories and Experiments, with Numerous Tables and Plates. Printed for J. Taylor, at the Architectural Library, No.59, High Holborn	10,383
1820	Watts, William	Art. III - On the Length of the Pendulum, in reply to a Letter contained in N° XVI. Of the «Quarterly Journal of Science.» The Edinburgh Philosophical Journal, vol. III. Edinburgh: Printed for Archibald Constable and Company.	1,561
1823	Millington, John	An epitome of the elementary principles of natural and experimental philosophy. Part the first. Corresponding to the general properties of matter, mechanics, pneumatics, acoustics, hydrostatics, hydraulics. And a copious product of the invention, progress, and present state of the steam engine; being the substance of a course of lectures in these subjects, delivered at the Royal and London Institution, and AT GUY'S HOSPITAL, SOUTHWARK, BY JOHN MILLINGTON. London: printed for and sold by the author; and by Shrewood, Jones and co. Paternoster Row; Cox and Son, St. Thomas's Street, Borough; and all other booksellers.	11,782
1827	Arnott, Neill	Elements of physics, or Natural Philosophy, general and medical explained independently of technical mathematics. London: printed for Thomas and George Underwood, Fleet Street.	7,292
1832	Callan, Nicholas Joseph	An Abstract of a Course of Lectures on Electricity and Galvanism, delivered in the R. C. College, Maynooth. Dublin: printed by John Coyne, 24, Cooke Steet	10,588
1835	Sommerville, Mary (born M. Fairfax)	On the Connexion of the Physical Sciences. London: John Murray, Albemarle Street	10,057
1843	Zornlin, Rosina	The World of Waters; or Recreations on Hydology. London: John W. Parker, West Strand	10,388
1847	Cooper, William White	Practical remarks on near sight, aged sight, and impaired vision; with observations upon the use of glasses and on artificial light. London: John Churchill, Princess Street, Soho	10,012



DATE	AUTHOR	TITLE	WORD COUNT
1851	Hunt, Robert	Elementary Physics, an introduction to the study of Natural Philosophy (with 217 wood-engravings). London: Reeve and Benham. Henrietta Street. Covent Garden	10,008
1854	Hogg, Jabez	The microscope: its history, construction and applications. Being a familiar introduction to the use of the instrument and the Study of Microscopical Science. London: Published at the office of the illustrated London Library, Milford House, Milford Lane, Strand: and «S. Orr and co., Amen Corner, Paternoster Row.	10,028
1865	Maxwell, James Clerk	A dynamical theory of the electromagnetic field. Philosophical transactions of the Royal Society of London, v. 155	10,273
1870	Norton, Sidney Augustus	The Elements of Natural Philosophy. Van Antwerp, Bragg & co. 137 Walnut Street, Cincinnati. 28, Bond Street, New York	10,300
1873	Gibbs, Josiah Willard	A method of geometrical representation of the thermodynamic properties of substances by means of surfaces. Transactions of the Connecticut Academy of Arts and Sciences, 2, 382- 404	10,379
1876	Tait, Peter Guthrie	Lectures on some recent advances on physical science with a special lecture on Force. Macmillan and co.	10,262
1880	Graham-Bell, Alexander	On the Production and Reproduction of Sound by Light. American Journal of Sciences, Third Series, vol. XX, n°118, Oct. 1880, pp. 305- 324. [Read before the American Association for the Advancement of Science, in Boston, August 27	7,484
1889	Thomson, William (Kelvin)	Popular Lectures and Addresses. Vol I. London: Macmillan and co. And New York.	12,643
1890	Lodge, Oliver J	Elementary Mechanics Including Hydrostatics and Pneumatics. W. & R. Cambers. London and Edinburgh.	10,623
1898	Stone, Isabelle	«On the Electrical Resistance of Thin Films». The Physical review, 6/1	3,312
1899	Ayrton, Hertha	The reason for the hissing of the electric arc. Nature, 60/1552: 302-305	4,202



PERCEPTION, COMMUNICATION, DESIRE, AND ASPECTUAL VERBS IN 18TH AND 19TH CENTURY HISTORY WRITING: A DIACHRONIC ANALYSIS OF MALE AND FEMALE WRITERS IN THE CORUÑA CORPUS OF HISTORY ENGLISH TEXTS*

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ABSTRACT

The understanding of history began to shift decisively in the eighteenth century and reached full institutional consolidation as an academic discipline in the nineteenth. Against this backdrop, this article explores how four semantic classes of verbs –communication, perception, desire, and aspectual verbs– are distributed and used in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century historiographical texts drawn from the History English Texts subcorpus of the Coruña Corpus of English Scientific Writing. The study pursues two main aims. First, it examines the frequency of these verb classes within historical discourse of the period. Second, it analyses their use from a gender perspective, asking whether male and female authors display comparable or divergent patterns. The findings point to clear asymmetries: male authors employ these verbs more frequently and with greater semantic range, while the patterns observed in women's writing shed light on their discursive positioning within historiography across the two centuries.

KEYWORDS: Corpus-based study, CHET, History, Verb Classes, Scientific Language, Coruña Corpus.

PERCEPCIÓN, COMUNICACIÓN, DESEO Y VERBOS ASPECTUALES EN LA ESCRITURA HISTÓRICA DE LOS SIGLOS XVIII Y XIX: UN ANÁLISIS DIACRÓNICO DE ESCRITORES Y ESCRITORAS EN EL CORPUS DE TEXTOS HISTÓRICOS EN INGLÉS DE LA CORUÑA.

RESUMEN

El artículo analiza el uso de cuatro clases semánticas de verbos, comunicación, percepción, deseo y aspectuales, en textos históricos de los siglos XVIII y XIX del *History English Texts* del *Coruña Corpus of English Scientific Writing*. El estudio examina su frecuencia y distribución desde una perspectiva de género, comparando la escritura de autores y autoras. Los resultados revelan diferencias claras en la frecuencia y variedad léxica, con un uso más amplio por parte de los hombres, mientras que el análisis de los textos femeninos aporta claves para entender la posición discursiva de las mujeres en la historiografía del período.

PALABRAS CLAVE: estudio basado en corpus, CHET, historia, clases de verbos, lenguaje científico, Coruña Corpus.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.25145/j.recaesin.2026.92.04>

REVISTA CANARIA DE ESTUDIOS INGLESES, 92; abril 2026, pp. 85-123; ISSN: e-2530-8335
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1. INTRODUCTION

The professionalisation of History as an academic discipline in Britain began in the 19th century, culminating in its recognition as an independent subject at Oxford and Cambridge in 1873 and the founding of the journal *The English Historical Review* in 1886, the oldest surviving English-language academic journal in the field of history. However, the intellectual foundations of this transformation were established earlier: from the mid-18th century onwards, History moved from a literary pursuit to a more systematic area of enquiry (Moskowich 2019c; Nyarko 2023). Pioneering figures such as William Stubbs and John Kenyon played a significant role in this change through their publications and efforts to institutionalise historical studies. By the 19th century, historical writing in Britain had developed into a mature genre, no longer regarded as a minor branch of letters but as a recognised means of transmitting and interpreting knowledge (Pérez Guerra 2019).

This study examines the linguistic aspects of this disciplinary development, focusing on how verbs serve as tools for constructing and conveying historical knowledge. Specifically, it analyses four semantic verb categories –communication, desire, perception, and aspectual verbs– as they occur in 18th- and 19th-century texts from the Corpus of History English Texts (CHET) (Moskowich 2019a), a subset of the Coruña Corpus of English Scientific Writing (CC). Communication verbs are notable in historical texts, reflecting the rhetorical strategies employed to convey, discuss, and disseminate information in them. Their analysis shows how historical events and perspectives were framed in the public discourse of the time. In contrast, verbs of desire offer insight into the motives, aspirations, and ambitions of historical actors, often revealing their subjective positioning or ideological orientation. Aspectual verbs signal duration, completion, and process and are essential for tracing how time and change are encoded in historical narratives. Finally, perception verbs reveal how authors shape their empirical observations and interpretations, which are key indicators of the increasing empiricism characteristic of Late Modern English scientific writing.

One of the aims is to assess the frequency and distribution of these verb categories in historical scientific writing, evaluating their role in forming a more objective, impersonal, and epistemologically precise type of discourse that is closer to what is now recognised as scientific language. The CHET subcorpus, spanning two centuries of historiographical production, comprises a representative sample of texts authored by both men and women, enabling a sex-based analysis of these verb classes. Therefore, in addition to examining usage trends over time, this study also investigates whether male and female authors employed these verbs in similar or divergent ways, thereby enriching our understanding of the linguistic and social dimensions of scientific history writing.

* The author gratefully acknowledges the financial support, grant no. PID2022-136500NB-I00, funded by MICIU/AEI /10.13039/501100011033 and by FEDER, UE.



The study is organised into six sections to achieve these two objectives. Following this introduction, Section 2 outlines the objectives and methodological framework, Section 3 presents the corpus under analysis, Section 4 explains the selection and study of the four verb classes, and Section 5 presents the results and their discussion. Finally, Section 6 concludes the paper and outlines directions for further research.

2. OBJECTIVES AND METHODOLOGY

The first objective of this study, as mentioned earlier, is to examine the frequency and distribution of four semantic verb classes –communication, desire, aspectual, and perception verbs– in the Corpus of History English Texts (CHET), a discipline-specific subcorpus of the Coruña Corpus of English Scientific Writing (CC). Using a corpus-based quantitative approach, this study aims to identify patterns in the use of these verbs in historical texts from the 18th and 19th centuries, a period marked by the increasing professionalisation of historical writing.

The second objective is to investigate potential differences in the use of these verb classes by male and female authors. By comparing sex-based usage, this study aims to explore whether there are discernible differences in linguistic behaviour associated with authorship, contributing to ongoing research in corpus-based language and sex studies.

These objectives build on the work of Montoya and Barsaglini (2024), who examined the same verb classes in the Corpus of English Life Sciences Texts (CELiST), another subcorpus of the CC. Their study identified disciplinary tendencies in the expression of agency and modality in scientific writing. The present study applies similar analytical criteria to the CHET corpus, enabling future cross-disciplinary comparisons of the discourse practices of Life Sciences and History.

On this basis, the type of analysis conducted in this study will contribute to providing more information on the state of this discipline, at a time when its content was intended for a wider audience, in contrast to other disciplines, and when it could not be considered science, given the definition of science born from the scientific method. However, the boundaries of knowledge were not clearly defined, and the language used by different scientific disciplines became more specialised.

Against this background, and with these aims in mind, this study seeks to broaden our understanding of verb usage in historical scientific discourse, shed light on potential sex-based linguistic variations, and contribute to ongoing scholarly debate on language and sex in scientific writing. To this end, the analysis involves two main stages:

Stage 1: Verb class identification and compilation: A representative list of lexical verbs for each class was compiled based on the semantic categorisations provided in Levin (1993) and Noonan (1985). The list was refined by referencing previous studies within the CC framework.



Stage 2: Data retrieval and analysis: The Coruña Corpus Tool (CCT) (Barsaglini-Castro & Moskowich 2019; Barsaglini-Castro & Valcarce 2020) was used to extract verb occurrences from CHET. In cases where ambiguity existed, such as polysemous forms or words belonging to multiple grammatical categories, manual inspection of concordance lines was conducted to ensure semantic accuracy. All results were normalised per 10,000 words to facilitate comparability across texts of different lengths.

Sex-based authorship information was derived from the metadata included in the CHET documentation. The list was refined in line with previous studies conducted within the CC framework. Descriptive statistics (raw frequencies and normalised proportions) were used to highlight observable trends. Non-inferential statistics were applied, given the limited sample size of the female-authored texts.

This methodology contributes to understanding how disciplinary writing practices evolved in a field that straddled the boundary between literature and emerging scientific discourse during this period. In addition, this study adds empirical evidence to broader discussions of scientific register development and authorial voice in historical discourse by identifying linguistic trends and variations associated with sex-based authorship.

3. CORPUS SELECTION

The corpus employed in this study is the earlier-mentioned *Corpus of History English Texts* (CHET), a subcorpus of the *Coruña Corpus of English Scientific Writing* (CC). CHET is the third discipline-specific component of the CC project, following the Corpus of English Texts on Astronomy (CETA) and the Corpus of English Philosophy Texts (CEPhiT), and focuses on texts within the so-called “soft sciences” during the Late Modern English period (Moskowich 2019c, 43).

CHET comprises 40 text samples totalling 404,424 words, with approximately 10,000 words per author and text. These are almost evenly divided between the 18th century (201,938 words) and the 19th century (202,486 words) (see Appendix 1). The corpus is good evidence of a wide range of historical writing genres (see Table 1), many of which, in today’s classification, might be regarded as archival or documentary rather than historiographical. However, they collectively “narrate events in the past that are related to human communities” and provide insight into how knowledge was organised, narrated, and legitimised at the time (Moskowich 2019c, 43).

CHET includes texts written by 40 authors, eight of whom are women, a not-usually high proportion for corpora of this period. This is particularly noteworthy when compared with CETA and CEPhiT, two subcorpora of the Coruña Corpus, which include only two and three female authors, respectively (Moskowich 2019, 51). Therefore, this relatively balanced representation of women in CHET allows for a more meaningful exploration of potential sex-based differences in language use.



TABLE 1: GENRES IN CHET		
GENRES IN CHET	SAMPLES	Nº OF WORDS
Treatise	28	283,002
Essay	3	30,312
Travelogue	1	10,005
Lecture	2	30,120
Textbook	2	20,203
Article	1	10,730
Dictionary	1	10,017
Biography	1	10,035
TOTAL		404,424

4. SELECTION AND ANALYSIS OF THE FOUR VERB CLASSES IN THE CORPUS OF HISTORY ENGLISH TEXTS

The analysis of the verb classes examined in this study in historical discourse seeks to contribute to our understanding of verb use during the emergence and establishment of the scientific register. In this case, this study extends this inquiry to the “soft sciences” domain and examines linguistic trends within a distinct historical period. The selection of these classes is grounded in the classification presented by Noonan (1985) and Levin (1993), based on the type of complements taken and their syntactic behaviour and semantic properties, respectively.

The four verbs under study in this paper belong to the four classes equally identified by Levin (1993) and Noonan (1985) respectively: verbs of communication (class 37) or utterance predicates (class 1) (hereafter VC1); verbs of desire (class 32) or desiderative predicates (class 7) (hereafter VC2); aspectual verbs (class 55) or phasal predicates (class 11) (hereafter VC3); and verbs of perception (class 30) or immediate perception predicates (class 12) (hereafter VC4).

The following subsections present four tables, each representing a verb class with its subcategories, class members, and verb lemmas found in the corpus. It is relevant to emphasise that the subcategories and class members listed by Levin are more detailed and extensive than those provided by Noonan (Montoya and Barsaglini 2024, 8)¹. Consequently, the subcategories presented in the tables are those used by Levin, as they include the class members mentioned by Noonan. However, it should be noted that both authors include the main categories and primary verbs within each class.

¹ Noonan includes 14 semantic classes in contrast to Levin with a total of 48 verb classes.



TABLE 2: VC1 LEMMAS IN CHET

SUBCATEGORIES	CLASS MEMBERS	VERB LEMMAS IN CHET
Verbs of Transfer of a Message and <i>Tell</i>	<i>ask, cite, demonstrate, dictate, explain, explicate, narrate, pose, preach, quote, read, relay, show, teach, tell, write</i>	<i>ask, cite, demonstrate, dictate, explain, narrate, preach, quote, read, show, teach, tell, write</i>
<i>Talk Verbs</i>	<i>speak, talk</i>	<i>speak, talk</i>
<i>Say Verbs</i>	<i>announce, articulate, blab, blurt, claim, confess, confide, convey, declare, mention, note, observe, proclaim, propose, recount, reiterate, relate, remark, repeat, report, reveal, say, state, suggest</i>	<i>announce, claim, confess, confide, convey, declare, mention, note, observe, proclaim, propose, recount, reiterate, relate, remark, repeat, report, reveal, say, state, suggest</i>
<i>Complain Verbs</i>	<i>boast, brag, complain, crab, gripe, grouch, grouse, grumble, ketch, object</i>	<i>boast, complain, object</i>
<i>Advise Verbs</i>	<i>admonish, advise, alert, caution, counsel, instruct, warn</i>	<i>admonish, advise, instruct, warn</i>

4.1. VERBS OF COMMUNICATION OR VERBS USED AS UTTERANCE PREDICATES (VC1)

Noonan presents this verb class within the category of *utterance predicate* (1985:110) without enumerating the verbs it includes. In contrast, Levin, known for her classification system of English verbs based on their syntactic behaviour and semantic properties, is much more specific. In this case, Levin includes nine subcategories in verb class number 37 (1993, 202) as verbs of communication. However, three subcategories (subcategory 37.3, verbs of manner of speaking; subcategory 37.4, verbs of instrument of communication, and subcategory 37.6, *chitchat* verbs) have not been included in the table as they are not present in the corpus. The other subcategories are present in the corpus, although two verbs, *observe* and *note*, are present in the subcategory of *sight* verbs in the verbs of perception class or immediate perception predicates (VC4). Manual disambiguation was necessary to classify the results generated by the CCT, as each occurrence required close reading and contextual interpretation before being assigned to the correct subcategory.

Table 2 above presents the subcategories and class members related to VC1, as included by Levin and Noonan, and the verb lemmas found in CHET.

4.2. VERBS OF DESIRE OR DESIDERATIVE VERBS (VC2)

This second verb class presents three semantic classes according to Noonan (1985:121): *hope* class predicates and *wish* class predicates, whose complements



TABLE 3: VC2 LEMMAS IN CHET

SUBCATEGORIES	CLASS MEMBERS	VERB LEMMAS IN CHET
Want Verbs	<i>covet, crave, desire, fancy, need, want</i>	<i>covet, crave, desire, fancy, need, want</i>
Long Verbs	<i>ache, crave, dangle, fall, hanker, hope, hunger, itch, long, lust, pine, pray, thirst, wish, yearn</i>	<i>fall, hope, itch, long, pine, pray, wish</i>

have an independent time reference, and *want* class predicates, whose complements have a determined time reference. Regarding this classification, Levin (1993:194) presents two classes: *want* verbs (transitive) and *long* verbs (intransitive) (see Table 3 above), as follows:

CHET presents occurrences of all the verbs included in the *want* verb subcategory (see Table 3), and the second subcategory is also well represented, as almost fifty per cent of the verbs are used in the corpus. It can be observed that the verb “crave” is present in both categories. Concerning the corpus, this verb is found only once, and given that a complement accompanies it, this form is counted in the subcategory “want verbs” (see example 1 below):

- (1) To apologize is to crave pardon, to entreat forgiveness; but where there is neither error nor vice, there can be no occasion to make apology. (CHET. Britton, 1814: 45 [145 (2308)])

4.3. ASPECTUAL VERBS OR PHASAL PREDICATES (ASPECTUALS) (VC3)

In this class, Noonan (1985, 129) lists seven verbs (*begin, start, continue, keep on, finish, stop, and cease*), and is again less specific than Levin (1993, 274), who lists two subcategories (*begin* and *complete*) comprising 18 verbs, as presented in Table 4. Regarding the presence of this verb class in the corpus, all the verbs except for two are present in the texts.

TABLE 4: VC3 LEMMAS IN CHET

SUBCATEGORIES	CLASS MEMBERS	VERB LEMMAS IN CHET
Begin Verbs	<i>begin, cease, commence, continue, end, finish, halt, keep (on), proceed, repeat, resume, start, stop, terminate</i>	<i>begin, cease, commence, continue, end, finish, halt, keep (on), proceed, repeat, resume, start, stop, terminate</i>
Complete Verbs	<i>complete, discontinue, initiate, quit</i>	<i>complete, quit</i>



4.4. VERBS OF PERCEPTION OR IMMEDIATE PERCEPTION PREDICATES (VC4)

This verb class, presented under the label of *immediate perception predicates* by Noonan (1985, 129), includes only five verbs (*imagine*², *see*, *hear*, *watch*, and *feel*). Once again, Levin's classification is much more comprehensive and detailed, with four sub-categories and fifty-seven verbs. The verbs considered by Noonan fall into Levin's first two subcategories (see Table 5).

TABLE 5: VC4 LEMMAS IN CHET

SUBCATEGORIES	CLASS MEMBERS	VERB LEMMAS IN CHET
See Verbs	<i>detect, discern, feel, hear, notice, see, sense, smell, taste</i>	<i>detect, discern, feel, hear, notice, see, taste</i>
Sight Verbs	<i>descry, discover, espy, examine, eye, glimpse, inspect, investigate, note, observe, overhear, perceive, recognise, regard, savour, scan, scent, scrutinise, sight, spot, spy, study, survey, view, watch, witness</i>	<i>descry, discover, espy, examine, inspect, investigate, note, observe, perceive, recognise, regard, spot, study, survey, view, watch, witness</i>
Peer Verbs	<i>check (on), gape, gawk, gaze, glance, goggle, leer, listen (to), look, ogle, peek, peep, peer, sniff, snoop (on), squint, stare</i>	<i>check, gaze, glance, listen, look, stare</i>
Stimulus Subject Perception Verbs	<i>feel, look, smell, sound, taste</i>	<i>feel, look, sound, taste</i>

After the presentation of the number of verb lemmas found in the corpus in these four subsections, a comprehensive search was conducted with the *Coruña Corpus Tool (CCT)*, the research tool developed by the IRLab at the University of A Coruña (Montoya & Barsaglini 2024), which enabled the identification of the number of forms corresponding to each verb lemma analysed in the four verb classes. The results of this quantitative analysis are presented and discussed in the following section.

² This verb can be considered both a verb of perception and an *appoint* verb, depending on how it is used in a sentence. Noonan presents this verb as a verb of perception, considering it to be used for describing the mental process of forming a mental image (1985, 130). However, as an *appoint verb*, *imagine* is used to suggest or suppose something; this is the classification used by Levin (2003, 181), as she includes this verb in her verb class 29, which encompasses *verbs with predicative complements*, specifically subcategory 29.1, *appoint* verbs. The fact that this verb has been placed in two different verb classes by the two authors has led to the decision to exclude it from the analysis.

5. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section presents the results obtained after searching for the verb classes studied in CHET, listing the total number of occurrences of the lemmas. This thorough analysis, conducted with the CCT, and the total occurrences of the verb forms under each lemma are presented according to each verb class, as shown in the corresponding tables in each section. The results are classified according to their frequency and diachronic variation and include a comparative account based on authorial sex.

5.1. VERBS OF COMMUNICATION (VC1)

Verbs of communication (VC1) constitute the most frequent of the four verb classes under analysis, with 2,948 occurrences in the 18th and 19th centuries. This class includes a diverse range of lexical items related to the processes of saying, reporting, quoting, and narrating—functions that are foundational to the construction of historical discourse.

5.1.1. *Frequency and diachronic distribution*

The diachronic distribution reveals a relatively balanced use, with a slight increase in the 19th century (1,531 vs. 1,422) (see Table 6), likely reflecting the formalisation of historiographical writing during this period and its evolution from a literary pursuit into a more formalised academic discipline.

	TOTAL OCCURRENCES	EIGHTEENTH CENTURY	NINETEENTH CENTURY
<i>Ask</i>	55	38	17
<i>Cite</i>	14	11	3
<i>Demonstrate</i>	6	3	3
<i>Dictate</i>	13	5	8
<i>Explain</i>	25	9	16
<i>Narrate</i>	2	0	2
<i>Preach</i>	13	6	7
<i>Quote</i>	27	7	20
<i>Read</i>	63	47	16
<i>Show</i>	60	16	44
<i>Teach</i>	37	17	20





TABLE 6: VC1 OCCURRENCES IN CHET

	TOTAL OCCURRENCES	EIGHTEENTH CENTURY	NINETEENTH CENTURY
<i>Tell</i>	138	98	40
<i>Write</i>	149	76	73
<i>Speak</i>	71	37	34
<i>Talk</i>	12	10	2
<i>Announce</i>	13	0	13
<i>Claim</i>	24	10	14
<i>Confess</i>	38	24	14
<i>Confide</i>	1	0	1
<i>Convey</i>	31	9	22
<i>Declare</i>	118	68	50
<i>Mention</i>	166	83	83
<i>Note</i>	17	5	12
<i>Observe</i>	214	132	82
<i>Proclaim</i>	31	12	19
<i>Propose</i>	60	21	39
<i>Recount</i>	2	1	1
<i>Reiterate</i>	1	0	1
<i>Relate</i>	100	58	42
<i>Remark</i>	25	7	18
<i>Repeat</i>	30	12	18
<i>Report</i>	27	12	15
<i>Reveal</i>	26	14	12
<i>Say</i>	1024	510	514
<i>State</i>	188	5	183
<i>Suggest</i>	28	7	21
<i>Boast</i>	12	5	7
<i>Complain</i>	23	10	13
<i>Object</i>	7	2	5
<i>Admonish</i>	10	6	4
<i>Advise</i>	17	10	7
<i>Instruct</i>	20	16	4



TABLE 6: VC1 OCCURRENCES IN CHET

	TOTAL OCCURRENCES	EIGHTEENTH CENTURY	NINETEENTH CENTURY
<i>Warn</i>	10	3	7
TOTAL	2948	1422	1531

The most frequent verb by far is *say* (1,024 occurrences), followed by *observe* (214), *state* (188), *declare* (118), and *mention* (166). These high-frequency verbs are evidence of the centrality of attribution, quotation, and reported speech in historical writing, which are key mechanisms of evidentiality and authorial stance.

The dominance of verbs such as *say*, *tell*, *declare*, and *mention* in the 18th century reflects a more narrative and personal tone, in line with the period’s literary-historical hybrid genre. The 18th century still retained some oral tradition markers (*talk*, *preach*) as historical writing embraced educational and entertainment purposes.

In contrast, there has been an increase in the use of more institutional and formal verbs (*state*, *propose*, *report*, and *suggest*). There is also an increased presence of *quote*, *proclaim*, *note*, and *announce*—verbs linked to intertextual authority and rhetorical precision. The verb *state* requires special attention, as it increased from five instances in the 18th century to 183 in the 19th century, reflecting the growing scientific ethos in historiography. The notable presence of this verb in the 19th century aligns with the period’s increasing emphasis on factuality and epistemic authority, paralleling the shift towards a more scientific and objective historiographical register.

5.1.2. Sex-based distribution

From a sex-based perspective, the distribution showed a pronounced asymmetry. Male authors overwhelmingly dominate the usage, with 2,510 occurrences, whereas female authors account for only 438 (see Table 7 and Appendix 2). Despite being normalised for corpus size, this last figure indicates a significant disparity (102.61 men vs. 51.36 women per 10,000 words). This trend is consistent across both centuries, although female participation in the 19th century increased numerically due to a higher number of female-authored texts in that period (see Table 7 below).

TABLE 7: NORMALISED OCCURRENCES (PER 10,000 WORDS) PER SEX OF VC1

	TOTAL OCCURRENCES	MALE OCCURRENCES	FEMALE OCCURRENCES	MALE (NORMALISED)	FEMALE (NORMALISED)
Ask	55	42	13	1.31	1.62
Cite	14	14	0	0.43	0
Demonstrate	6	5	1	0.15	0.12
Dictate	13	12	1	0.37	0.12

TABLE 7: NORMALISED OCCURRENCES (PER 10,000 WORDS) PER SEX OF VCI

	TOTAL OCCURRENCES	MALE OCCURRENCES	FEMALE OCCURRENCES	MALE (NORMALISED)	FEMALE (NORMALISED)
Explain	25	20	5	0.06	0.62
Narrate	2	2	0	0.006	0
Preach	13	12	1	0.37	0.12
Quote	27	25	2	0.07	0.25
Read	63	58	5	1.81	0.62
Show	60	52	8	1.62	1
Teach	37	33	4	1.03	0.50
Tell	138	134	4	4.18	0.50
Write	149	128	21	4	2.62
Speak	71	70	1	0.21	0.12
Talk	12	5	7	0.15	0.87
Announce	13	6	7	0.18	0.87
Claim	24	19	5	0.15	0.62
Confess	38	26	12	0.08	1.50
Confide	1	0	1	0	0.12
Convey	31	27	4	0.08	0.15
Declare	118	102	16	3.18	0.20
Mention	166	162	4	5.06	0.50
Note	17	17	0	0.53	0
Observe	214	202	12	6.34	1.50
Proclaim	31	24	7	0.75	0.87
Propose	60	47	13	1.47	1.62
Recount	2	2	0	0.06	0
Reiterate	1	1	0	0.03	0
Relate	100	89	11	27.8	1.37
Remark	25	22	3	0.68	0.37
Repeat	30	20	10	0.62	0.12
Report	27	24	3	0.75	0.37
Reveal	26	22	4	0.68	0.5
Say	1024	814	210	25.43	26.25
State	188	171	17	5.34	2.12



TABLE 7: NORMALISED OCCURRENCES (PER 10,000 WORDS) PER SEX OF VC1

	TOTAL OCCURRENCES	MALE OCCURRENCES	FEMALE OCCURRENCES	MALE (NORMALISED)	FEMALE (NORMALISED)
Suggest	28	20	8	0.62	1
Boast	12	10	2	0.32	0.25
Complain	23	19	4	0.59	0.50
Object	7	7	0	2.18	0
Admonish	10	9	1	2.81	0.12
Advise	17	12	5	0.37	0.62
Instruct	20	17	3	0.53	0.37
Warn	10	7	3	0.21	0.37
TOTAL	2948	2510	438	102.606	51.36

This imbalance reflects broader historical conditions: male historians dominated the academic and public discursive spheres, while women’s access to education, publishing opportunities, and formal historiographical roles remained limited. Consequently, their presence in the corpus is smaller and less linguistically assertive.

A closer examination of the individual lemmas highlights interesting patterns. The verb *say*, by far the most frequent (1,024 occurrences), is used relatively equally in normalised terms by both sexes (25.43 male / 26.25 female), suggesting that this fundamental reporting verb is widely employed regardless of the author’s sex. However, verbs such as *state*, *declare*, *mention*, *observe*, and *relate*, which often convey epistemic authority or structured argumentation, show marked male dominance. For instance, the verb *state* appears 188 times overall, 171 times by male authors and 17 times by female authors. Similarly, the verb *observe*, which is another epistemically loaded verb crucial for asserting objectivity, appears 202 times in male-authored texts compared with 12 times in female-authored texts.

When examining the sex-based distribution of VC1, the results suggest that while both male and female authors employ verbs of communication to construct historical discourse (see figure 1), the types of verbs chosen and their frequency reveal underlying social hierarchies. Male writers’ higher usage of these verbs reinforces their discursive dominance, while female authors, though less frequent in the corpus, engage in distinct communicative styles that reflect subtle positions in the historical narrative. After normalising the data, several verbs stand out as being more frequently used by female authors. The verbs *ask*, *explain*, *read*, *suggest*, *confess*, *propose*, and *say* present higher relative frequencies in their texts than in those written by men. This trend indicates that, despite their low presence in the corpus, female authors employed communicative strategies that differed from those used by men. For instance, *confess* and *propose*, which may introduce personal or interpretative elements, reflect a more narrative or reflective rhetorical stance. Additionally, the verbs ‘read’ and ‘explain’



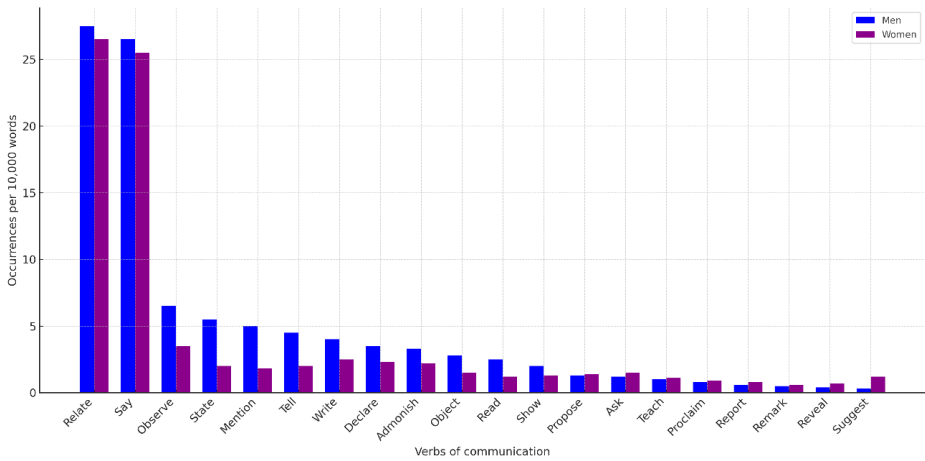


Figure 1. Verbs of communication (top 20 verbs).

point to didactic or informative functions within the text. A higher normalised use of *say* (see Figure 1 above), a highly frequent and neutral reporting verb, may suggest that probably female authors were equally, if not more, invested in the construction of reported discourse and attribution.

These patterns show that, although quantitatively underrepresented, female writers employed a subtly distinct communicative style that reveals their authorial voices within the historiographical genre.

5.2. VERBS OF DESIRE OR DESIDERATIVE PREDICATES (VC2)

Verbs of desire, also known as desiderative predicates, include a semantically rich class that reveals how authors of history texts constructed narratives around volition, intention, and affective orientation. Following Noonan's (1985:121) and Levin's (1993:194) classifications, this verb group is divided into two main subcategories: want verbs (transitive), such as *want*, *need*, and *desire*, and long verbs (intransitive), such as *hope*, *wish*, *pine*, and *yearn*. These verbs commonly occur with infinitival or clausal complements, functioning as markers of projected states or motivations, and often reveal subjective positioning within otherwise factual narratives.

In historical discourse, desiderative predicates serve important rhetorical functions. They allow the writer to attribute motives to historical actors, explain decisions or failures, and subtly embed normative judgments. As such, they are especially relevant in texts that aim to move beyond chronology to causal interpretations.

5.2.1. Frequency and diachronic distribution

The CHET corpus records a total of 352 instances of VC2 verbs, with a balanced diachronic distribution, although with a decreasing tendency (see Table 8): 184 from the 18th century and 168 from the 19th century. This stable presence suggests that the expression of volition and motivation remained relevant even as historiographical writing evolved towards a more scientific and impersonal style.

TABLE 8: VC2 OCCURRENCES IN CHET			
	TOTAL OCCURRENCES	EIGHTEENTH CENTURY	NINETEENTH CENTURY
Covet	3	1	2
Crave	1	0	1
Desire	55	37	18
Fancy	3	0	3
Need	17	3	14
Want	32	19	13
Fall	127	72	55
Hope	46	26	20
Itch	1	1	0
Long	2	1	1
Pine	1	0	1
Pray	21	10	11
Wish	43	14	29
TOTAL	352	184	168

The most frequent lemma is *fall* (127 occurrences), followed by *desire* (55), *hope* (46), *wish* (43), and *want* (32). The dominance of *fall*, although notable, should be interpreted with caution because of its polysemy; only instances with desiderative semantics were retained after manual disambiguation. Verbs such as *crave*, *pine*, and *long* do not appear frequently, only once or twice, indicating that their use was stylistically marked or context-dependent.

5.2.2. Sex-based distribution

From a sex-based perspective, the use of verbs of desire shows pronounced asymmetry. Male authors were responsible for 284 of the 352 occurrences, whereas female authors contributed only 68 occurrences (Table 9 and Appendix 2). When normalised per 10,000 words, the occurrences are 6.06 for male authors versus 1.68



for female authors, indicating that male writers use desiderative predicates over three times more frequently than female writers.

TABLE 9: NORMALISED OCCURRENCES (PER 10,000 WORDS) PER SEX OF VC2

	TOTAL OCCURRENCES	MALE OCCURRENCES	FEMALE OCCURRENCES	MALE (NORMALISED)	FEMALE (NORMALISED)
<i>Covet</i>	3	2	1	0.05	0.02
<i>Crave</i>	1	1	0	0.02	0
<i>Desire</i>	55	44	11	1.09	0.27
<i>Fancy</i>	3	2	1	0.05	0.02
<i>Need</i>	17	13	4	0.32	0.10
<i>Want</i>	32	26	6	0.64	0.15
<i>Fall</i>	127	106	21	2.62	0.52
<i>Hope</i>	46	43	3	1.06	0.07
<i>Itch</i>	1	0	1	0	0.02
<i>Long</i>	2	2	0	0.05	0
<i>Pine</i>	1	1	0	0.02	0
<i>Pray</i>	21	17	4	0.42	0.10
<i>Wish</i>	43	27	16	0.67	0.40
TOTAL	352	284	68	6.06	1.68

This difference is especially important since the proportion of female-authored texts in CHET is higher than in other Coruña subcorpora. However, the imbalance observed (Figure 2) cannot be solely due to sample size. This indicates that discursive roles and authorial stance were affected by the author's sex within the scientific historiographical genre.

This asymmetry may reflect the constraints historically imposed on female authors. Women writing history in the 18th and 19th centuries often adopted a more impersonal, distanced, and ostensibly objective register, possibly to align themselves with the dominant masculine norms of academic legitimacy. By contrast, male authors, enjoying greater discursive freedom, made more frequent use of verbs that conveyed intentionality, evaluation, and teleology –all of which are central to narrative historiography.

It is worth noting that while *say* in VC1 showed near-equal normalised use across both sexes, the verbs in VC2 are more likely to express subjective projection, potentially perceived as less compatible with the authoritative stance expected of women in the scientific discourse of the period.

Although less frequent than communication or aspectual verbs, verbs of desire play a key role in expressing historical agency, volition, and emotion in scientific history writing. From a sex-based perspective, male authors used these



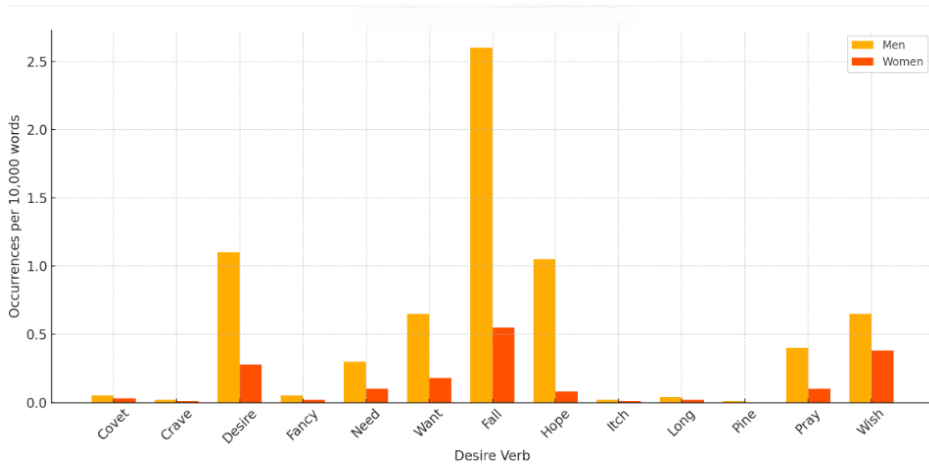


Figure 2. Desire or desiderative verbs by author's sex (normalised to 10,000 words).

verbs noticeably more often (see Figure 2 above), indicating a greater rhetorical freedom to explore their motivations and subjectivities. Female authors, conditioned by access and social expectation, seem to adhere more closely to discursive norms of impersonality. This lexical behaviour reveals stylistic preferences and reflects the broader epistemological and social positions of male and female historians in Late Modern English scientific discourse.

5.3. ASPECTUAL VERBS OR PHASAL PREDICATES (ASPECTUALS) (VC3)

Aspectual verbs, or *phasal predicates*, mark transitions in the temporal structure of events. They frame actions as beginnings, continuations, or completions, and are essential tools for managing event sequencing, process descriptions, and temporal framing in historical narratives. Following Noonan (1985:129) and Levin (1993:274), this class is divided into two subcategories: begin verbs (e.g., *begin*, *commence*, *continue*, *halt*, *stop*) and complete verbs (e.g., *complete*, *discontinue*, *quit*, *terminate*). These verbs do not primarily express action but signal phase changes in events, thus serving as rhetorical devices in historical writing to articulate progress, regression, and finality.

5.3.1. Frequency and diachronic distribution

VC3 constitutes the third most frequent class in the CHET corpus, representing a high level of lexical diversity and temporal precision, with 759 occurrences across both centuries (Table 10 on the next page).





TABLE 10: VC3 OCCURRENCES IN CHET

	TOTAL OCCURRENCES	EIGHTEENTH CENTURY	NINETEENTH CENTURY
<i>Begin</i>	143	93	50
<i>Cease</i>	19	10	9
<i>Commence</i>	44	9	35
<i>Continue</i>	160	81	79
<i>End</i>	21	11	10
<i>Finish</i>	19	14	5
<i>Halt</i>	3	2	1
<i>Keep (on)</i>	72	40	32
<i>Proceed</i>	131	48	83
<i>Repeat</i>	43	24	19
<i>Resume</i>	9	4	5
<i>Start</i>	7	0	7
<i>Stop</i>	10	5	5
<i>Terminate</i>	13	1	12
<i>Complete</i>	31	6	25
<i>Quit</i>	34	19	15
TOTAL	759	367	392

The relatively balanced diachronic distribution –367 occurrences in the 18th century and 392 in the 19th– indicates continuity in the rhetorical need to represent temporal structures in the two centuries. However, the nature of the verbs employed shifts subtly with time. For example, verbs such as *commence*, *proceed*, and *terminate* increased in the 19th century, suggesting a more formalised, bureaucratic tone aligned with the maturing academic register of historical writing. The verb *start* appears exclusively in the 19th century, reflecting the emergence of less Latinate, more colloquial alternatives within a gradually democratising historiographical discourse.

5.3.2. Sex-based distribution

The corpus reveals a notable sex disparity in VC3 usage: 609 occurrences are found in texts authored by males, whereas female writers produce only 150 (see Table 11 and Appendix 2). When normalised per 10,000 words, this corresponds to 15.06 occurrences (men) and 3.71 occurrences (women).

This 4:1 ratio reflects a trend observed in the communication and desiderative verb classes, further supporting the hypothesis that male authors were more likely to engage in agentive, process-driven, and authoritative discursive patterns.

TABLE 11: NORMALISED OCCURRENCES (PER 10,000 WORDS) PER SEX OF VC3

	TOTAL OCCUR- RENCES	MALE OCCURRENCES	FEMALE OCCURRENCES	MALE (NORMALISED)	FEMALE (NORMALISED)
<i>Begin</i>	143	113	30	2.80	0.74
<i>Cease</i>	19	16	3	0.40	0.07
<i>Commence</i>	44	34	10	0.84	0.25
<i>Continue</i>	160	136	24	3.36	0.59
<i>End</i>	21	18	3	0.45	0.07
<i>Finish</i>	19	14	5	0.35	0.12
<i>Halt</i>	3	3	0	0.07	0
<i>Keep (on)</i>	72	52	20	1.29	0.49
<i>Proceed</i>	131	113	18	2.80	0.45
<i>Repeat</i>	43	32	11	0.79	0.27
<i>Resume</i>	9	8	1	0.20	0.02
<i>Start</i>	7	6	1	0.15	0.02
<i>Stop</i>	10	8	2	0.20	0.05
<i>Terminate</i>	13	11	2	0.27	0.05
<i>Complete</i>	31	25	6	0.62	0.15
<i>Quit</i>	34	20	14	0.49	0.35
TOTAL	759	609	150	15.06	3.71

In addition, there are three dominant verbs in male texts (see Figure 3 below): *begin*, *continue*, and *proceed*, which emphasise event initiation and advancement, reinforcing a discursive model aligned with control over historical interpretation and structure.

Aspectual verbs (VC3) represent one of the most robust verb classes in CHET, signalling the importance of temporal management and process description in historical scientific writing. Regarding sex-based patterns, the results reveal significant male dominance in the use of these verbs, particularly those associated with event initiation (*begin*, *commence*) and continuation (*proceed*, *continue*). Female authors engage less with this aspect of historical discourse, likely influenced by social constraints on epistemic authority and rhetorical assertiveness.

As with other verb classes, the evolution of VC3 verbs reveals not only changing linguistic norms but also the broader epistemological framework of history as a scientific discipline in Late Modern English.



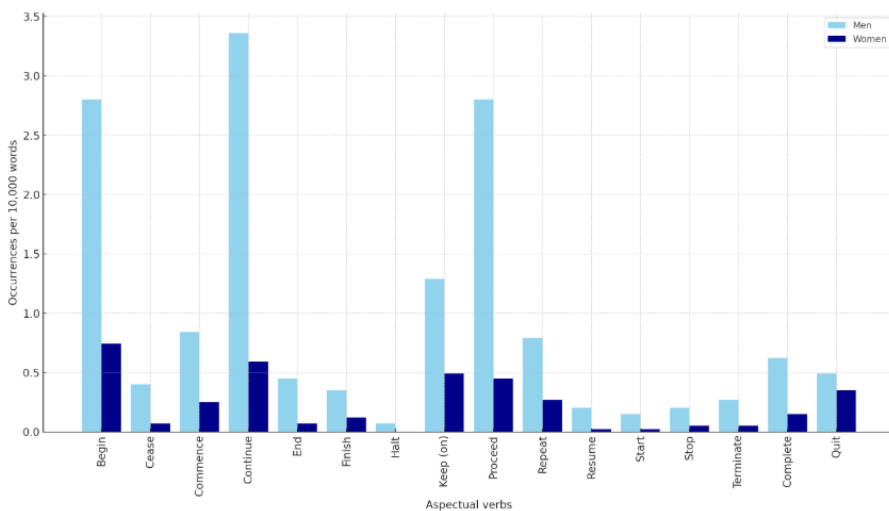


Figure 3. Aspectual verbs by author's sex (normalised to 10,000 words).

5.4. VERBS OF PERCEPTION OR IMMEDIATE PERCEPTION PREDICATES (VC.4)

Verbs of perception –or immediate perception predicates– encode the sensory or cognitive apprehension of phenomena, making them key lexical items for representing epistemic positioning, empirical observation and evaluative framing. Classified by Noonan (1985:129) as immediate perception predicates and by Levin (1993: 184-190) under four main subcategories (see verbs (e.g., see, hear, notice, feel); sight verbs (e.g., observe, inspect, witness, examine), peer verbs (e.g., look, glance, listen), and stimulus-subject perception verbs (e.g., sound, taste)), they represent a significant component of the lexical repertoire found in historical texts.

In the CHET corpus, this verb class ranks second in overall frequency, with 1,125 occurrences, following verbs of communication (VC1) and surpassing both desire (VC2) and aspectual verbs (VC3). This frequency confirms the relevance of perceptual processes in the construction of historical narrative, particularly at a time when observation and description began to carry increasing weight in academic writing.

In historiographical writing, these verbs play an epistemological role, transmitting sensory engagement (whether literal or metaphorical) and serving to frame interpretations, mark evidence, or distance the author from judgment.

5.4.1. *Frequency and diachronic distribution*

The total number of VC.4 occurrences identified in the corpus is 1,125, distributed across both centuries in a fairly balanced manner: 647 instances occur in

18th-century texts, while 478 appear in 19th-century writing (see Table 12 below). Despite this relatively stable presence, certain patterns can be noted in terms of preferred lemmas and their diachronic fluctuations.

TABLE 12: VC4 OCCURRENCES IN CHET			
	TOTAL OCCURRENCES	EIGHTEENTH CENTURY	NINETEENTH CENTURY
<i>Detect</i>	20	19	1
<i>Discern</i>	2	2	0
<i>Feel</i>	63	19	44
<i>Hear</i>	100	62	38
<i>Notice</i>	19	5	14
<i>See</i>	378	299	79
<i>Taste</i>	4	2	2
<i>Descry</i>	2	0	2
<i>Discover</i>	80	41	39
<i>Espy</i>	1	1	0
<i>Examine</i>	44	28	16
<i>Inspect</i>	8	5	3
<i>Investigate</i>	6	2	4
<i>Note</i>	6	4	2
<i>Observe</i>	141	75	66
<i>Perceive</i>	24	11	13
<i>Recognise</i>	13	0	13
<i>Regard</i>	44	4	40
<i>Spot</i>	1	0	1
<i>Study</i>	10	4	6
<i>Survey</i>	3	2	1
<i>View</i>	13	3	10
<i>Watch</i>	15	5	10
<i>Witness</i>	9	3	6
<i>Check</i>	11	3	8
<i>Gaze</i>	3	1	2
<i>Glance</i>	1	0	1
<i>Listen</i>	20	4	16
<i>Look</i>	76	37	39
<i>Peep</i>	0	0	0
<i>Stare</i>	2	2	0
<i>Sound</i>	6	4	2
TOTAL	1125	647	478



Among the most recurrent verbs are *see* (378 occurrences), *hear* (100), *observe* (141), *feel* (63), *look* (76), and *discover* (80). The predominance of *see*, accounting for over one-third of the entire class, reflects its function as a generalised perception verb, commonly used to describe events, recount observations, or include authorial commentary. This is followed by verbs like *observe*, which, although less frequent overall, exhibit more specific epistemic associations in the context of historical argumentation.

While the verb *see* occurs predominantly in 18th-century texts (299 vs. 79), *regard*, *feel*, and *look* appear more frequently and evenly across both centuries. The 19th century shows an increase in verbs associated with evaluative or interpretive processes (*regard*, *perceive*, *investigate*, *examine*), which are typically used to convey analytical engagement with past events rather than with immediate experience. The growing presence of these verbs aligns with the increasing formalisation of historiography during this century, where claims were more often supported by interpretative rather than sensory descriptions.

5.4.2. Sex-based distribution

When examined by authorial sex, the verbs of perception show a noticeable imbalance. Of the 1,125 total occurrences, 902 appear in male-authored texts, while 223 are attributed to female writers (see Table 13 and Appendix 2). After normalisation (see Table 13 below), this equates to 21.02 occurrences per 10,000 words for male authors and 5.51 for female authors, indicating that male writers used perception verbs at approximately four times the rate of their female counterparts.

TABLE 13: NORMALISED OCCURRENCES (PER 10,000 WORDS) PER SEX IN VC4

	TOTAL OCCURRENCES	MALE OCCURRENCES	FEMALE OCCURRENCES	MALE (NORMALISED)	FEMALE (NORMALISED)
<i>Detect</i>	20	20	0	0.5	0
<i>Discern</i>	2	1	1	0.02	0.02
<i>Feel</i>	63	45	18	1.11	0.45
<i>Hear</i>	100	82	18	2.02	0.44
<i>Notice</i>	19	18	1	0.45	0.02
<i>See</i>	378	288	90	7.12	2.22
<i>Taste</i>	4	3	1	0.07	0.02
<i>Descry</i>	2	0	2	0	0.04
<i>Discover</i>	80	68	12	1.68	0.29
<i>Espy</i>	1	1	0	0.02	0
<i>Examine</i>	44	41	3	1.01	0.07
<i>Inspect</i>	8	7	1	0.17	0.02
<i>Investigate</i>	6	6	0	0.15	0



TABLE 13: NORMALISED OCCURRENCES (PER 10,000 WORDS) PER SEX IN VC4

	TOTAL OCCURRENCES	MALE OCCURRENCES	FEMALE OCCURRENCES	MALE (NORMALISED)	FEMALE (NORMALISED)
<i>Note</i>	6	4	1	0.10	0.02
<i>Observe</i>	141	117	24	2.9	0.60
<i>Perceive</i>	24	19	5	0.47	0.12
<i>Recognise</i>	13	8	5	0.20	0.12
<i>Regard</i>	44	44	0	1.09	0
<i>Spot</i>	1	1	0	0.02	0
<i>Study</i>	10	9	1	0.22	0.02
<i>Survey</i>	3	3	0	0.74	0
<i>View</i>	13	11	2	0.27	0.05
<i>Watch</i>	15	9	6	0.22	0.15
<i>Witness</i>	9	5	4	0.12	0.10
<i>Check</i>	11	10	1	0.25	0.02
<i>Gaze</i>	3	0	3	0	0.07
<i>Glance</i>	1	1	0	0.02	0
<i>Listen</i>	20	10	10	0.25	0.25
<i>Look</i>	76	63	13	1.56	0.32
<i>Peep</i>	0	0	0	0	0
<i>Stare</i>	2	2	0	0.04	0
<i>Sound</i>	6	6	0	0	0
TOTAL	1125	902	223	21.02	5.51

The most frequent lemmas—*see*, *observe*, *hear*, and *discover*—are consistently more prominent in male-authored texts (see Figure 4 below). In particular, the verb *observe* appears 117 times in male-authored texts compared to 24 in female-authored texts, and the verb *examine* presents a similar pattern (41 vs. 3). These forms are often used in historical texts to assert authorial control over the interpretation or to describe methodical engagement with sources or phenomena.

In contrast, texts written by women tended to show lower frequencies throughout the class. When verbs such as *feel*, *listen*, and *look* are used, they are more often found in narrative passages or indirect reports rather than in statements that assert analytical authority. This difference is not only in quality but also in style: male authors use verbs that support an evaluative or observational perspective more frequently, whereas female authors prefer forms that focus on descriptions and indirect experiences.

This asymmetry in usage suggests that male and female authors approached historical narration using different rhetorical strategies. While male writers made more extensive use of verbs such as *observe*, *examine*, and *regard*, female authors showed a preference for less epistemically marked verbs, often favouring forms associated with



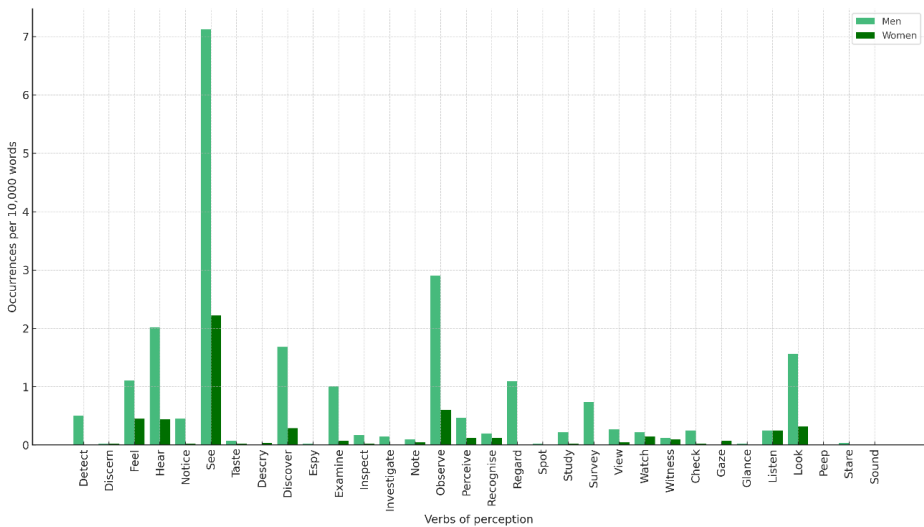


Figure 4. Verbs of perception by author's sex (normalised to 10,000 words).

experience or description rather than analysis. These patterns may reflect the differing expectations placed on each group: men, who occupied more secure positions within the academic discourse community, were more likely to employ language that foregrounded interpretation and authorial control, while women may have opted for a more cautious or indirect stance, influenced by the discursive limitations associated with their position as writers in a male-dominated field.

The overall distribution of perception verbs confirms their relevance in shaping historical discourse, particularly as the genre became more closely associated with the principles of scientific writing. The gradual preference for verbs conveying evaluation or scrutiny over those denoting simple sensory experiences suggests an increasing concern with methodological rigour and interpretative authority. At the same time, the lexical choices observed across sexes point to the broader social and institutional dynamics at play in historiographical production during the 18th and 19th centuries, where access to forms of epistemic authority was unevenly distributed and often mediated through language.

In conclusion, the analysis of these four verb classes shows how their usage changed from the eighteenth to the nineteenth century. As illustrated in the bar graph below (Figure 5 below), verbs of communication and aspectual verbs became more frequent in the 19th century, whereas verbs of perception and desire appeared less frequently than before. Male authors continued to use these verbs significantly more than their female counterparts despite the increasing presence of women in CHET during the 19th century.

When considered as a whole, these results provide significant information about the linguistic and writing tendencies of historical texts over the two centuries.



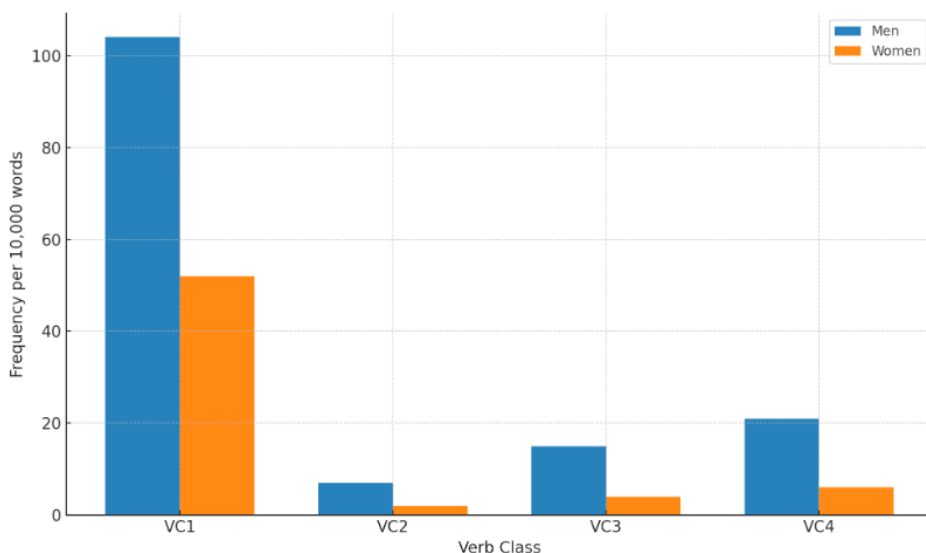


Figure 5. Normalised frequencies per verb class by author's sex.

The following section concludes the study by offering a reflection on the implications of these findings regarding language, historical texts and authorship during this period.

6. CONCLUSIONS

After examining the use of the four semantically defined verb classes in the 18th and 19th centuries through a corpus-based lens grounded in historical English linguistics, the analysis has revealed how verb usage encodes broader epistemic, disciplinary, and sex-based dynamics in the development of scientific historical writing during the Late Modern English period.

The diachronic analysis also shows the ongoing redefinition and development of history as a scientific discipline. While 18th-century writing still retained features of its literary tradition, 19th-century texts demonstrate a shift towards a more formal, epistemically marked discourse, reflecting the increasing formalisation of history as a discipline. The rise in communication verbs (1,422 in the 18th century to 1,531 in the 19th) indicates the emergence of a more authoritative and propositional style of expression. The verb *state* is a good example, with only five occurrences in the 18th century and 183 in the 19th, as it conveys formality, detachment, and epistemic certainty – three essential traits of scientific writing.

The verb *quote*, for instance, with seven occurrences in the 18th century and 20 in the 19th, can be evidence of the growing importance of intertextuality as a strategy of epistemic legitimisation. Its increased use reflects a heightened reliance



on explicit citations as a means of anchoring historical argumentation. Quoting thus functions not merely as a referential act but as a rhetorical mechanism that foregrounds transparency, documentation, and scholarly rigour – key features of the emergent scientific ethos in historiographical writing.

Similarly, the verb *show*, with 16 occurrences in the 18th century and 44 in the 19th, operates as a discourse-level device that contributes to analytical exposition. In 19th-century texts, the verb *show* frequently introduces explanations, demonstrations, or logical conclusions, positioning the historian as an interpreter of facts rather than a passive observer.

Apart from these two verbs, the increased frequency of verbs such as *claim*, *note*, *proclaim*, and *propose* supports the rising trend towards structured argumentation and institutionalised rhetoric in historical discourse. The shift from personal, narrative-oriented verbs, such as *tell* or *speak*, to more formal and assertive ones also demonstrates the discursive consolidation of history as a knowledge-producing discipline.

This lexical behaviour relates to the increasing formalisation of historical discourse, where historians are expected to argue from evidence rather than recount events experientially, a change from experiential engagement to mediated analysis, and from subjective observation to demonstrative authority.

The second verb class, aspectual verbs, also increased slightly in the 19th century, from 367 to 392 occurrences, indicating sustained interest in event structure, process, and temporality. The rise in verbs such as *commence*, *proceed*, and *terminate* suggests a rhetorical concern with ordering and explaining sequences of events – a move towards analytical exposition rather than anecdotal narration.

In contrast, verbs of perception and desire decreased in frequency in the 19th century. Perception verbs decreased from 647 in the 18th century to 478, while verbs of desire fell from 184 to 168. This lower number suggests a gradual distancing from subjective or sensory perspectives towards a more formalised, objective, and impersonal discourse. While verbs of perception, such as *see* and *observe*, continued to play a role in historiographical stance and evidentiality, their reduced presence (for example, the verb *see* from 299 occurrences to 79) in this subcorpus may reflect the genre's increasing detachment from experiential context. Likewise, the modest but measurable decline in desiderative predicates indicates a relative decrease in affective attribution or explanation, consistent with the genre's trajectory towards objectivity.

Regarding the presence of women, the sex-based analysis revealed consistent and marked asymmetry in the distribution of all four verb classes. Across every class, even when the corpus size was normalised, male authors contributed most of the verbs, showing a stronger preference for verbs associated with assertion, process, and perception – especially those marking epistemic authority and narrative control. For instance, male authors used the verb *state* 171 times compared to 17 times in female texts. Similarly, *observe* appears 117 times in male-authored works but only 24 times in female-authored works. Aspectual verbs also follow this pattern, with male authors using them four times more frequently than their female counterparts (15.06 vs. 3.71 occurrences per 10,000 words). Even in verbs of desire – typically associated with subjective or affective discourse – men predominate (6.06 vs. 1.68 per 10,000 words).



Even in verb classes such as *desire*, often linked to affect and interiority, male authors dominated both raw and normalised frequencies. Female authors, despite their proportionally larger representation in CHET than in other Coruña Corpus subcorpora, used significantly fewer of these verbs. Their usage patterns suggest a more cautious and restrained engagement with epistemic authority, likely shaped by socio-institutional barriers, social expectations, and restricted access to intellectual legitimacy. In contrast, male authors consistently used verbs that constructed agency, structured discourse, and asserted interpretive control.

Considering these results, the use of these four verb classes and their epistemic roles can be viewed as a linguistic expression of broader patterns of sex-based inequality. The ability to declare, demonstrate, and define the historical record was not equally accessible. Male authors had greater rhetorical freedom to craft authoritative accounts; in contrast, female authors appeared to adopt more deferential or impersonal styles aligned with prevailing norms of propriety and modesty in academic writing.

Taking these findings together, they support the idea that sex-based differences in historical scientific writing were not limited to content or access but extended to linguistic behaviour. The male dominance in verb usage frequency, lexical variety, and epistemic stance reflects broader institutional inequalities and discursive constraints. Female authors, in contrast, used a narrower rhetorical space, and their lexical patterns suggest cautious engagement with historiographical authority, likely in response to the discursive constraints imposed by their marginalised position within the scientific and academic communities of the time.

Finally, the increasing use of communication and aspectual verbs in the 19th century parallels the genre's alignment with scientific language and analytical structure. At the same time, the relative decline of perception and desire verbs leads us to think of a retreat from narrative immediacy and subjectivity in favour of more depersonalised, methodical modes of exposition. Additionally, variation in verb frequency and choice according to the author's sex provides further evidence of how linguistic resources were unevenly distributed across social identities, reinforcing discursive hierarchies which were embedded within the production of knowledge at that time.

Future research will aim to expand the scope of this study through comparative analyses across additional scientific domains within the Coruña Corpus, such as philosophy and astronomy. These comparisons may help to identify broader disciplinary trends and clarify the linguistic features that distinguish “hard” from “soft” sciences in the Late Modern period. Integrating findings from other historical corpora or digitised archives would also allow for a larger, more diversified sample, particularly of female-authored texts, which remain underrepresented despite CHET's relative inclusivity, and to assess whether the sex-based patterns observed in this study are consistent across different fields and corpora. Such a comparative study could confirm whether the linguistic asymmetries identified here were discipline-specific or reflected wider tendencies in Late Modern scientific writing.

Reviews sent to the authors: 19/11/2025

Revised paper accepted for publication: 24/01/2026



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APPENDIX 1

SOURCE TEXTS FOR CHET: 18TH-CENTURY MATERIAL.			
YEAR	AUTHOR	TITLE	WORDS
1704	Tyrrell, James	<i>The General History of England both Ecclesiastical and Civil: containing the reign of Richard II, taken from the most ancient records, manuscripts and printed historians, with an appendix... vol III, second part</i>	10089
1705	Anderson, James	<i>An historical essay, shewing that the crown and Kingdom of Scotland, is imperial and independent. Wherein the gross mistakes of a late book, intituled, The superiority and direct dominion of the imperial crown and kingdom of England, over the crown and kingdom of Scotland, and of some other books to that purpose are exposed. With an appendix.</i>	10067
1710	Crawford, George	<i>A Genealogical History of the Royal and Illustrious Family of the Stewarts, from the Year 1034 to the Year 1710. Giving an Account of the Lives, Marriages and Issue of the most Remarkable Persons and Families of that Name. To which are prefixed, First, a General Description of the Shire of Renfrew, the Peculiar Residence and ancient Patrimony of the Stewarts: and, secondly, a Deduction of the Noble and Ancient Families, Proprietors there for upwards of 400 Years, down to the present Times: Containing the Defcent, Original Creations, and most Remarkable Actions of their respective Ancestors; also the Chief Titles of Honour they now enjoy; with their Marriage and Issue, continued down to this present Year, and the Coat of Arms of each Family in Blazon.</i>	10113
1716	Oldmixon, John	<i>Memoirs of Ireland from the Restoration, to the Present Times. Containing An Account of the Designs of the Tories in England and Ireland, to ruin the Protestant Interest there, by breaking the Act of Settlement, and other Acts made for its Security, in 1660. &amp; seq. A Conspiracy to massacre the Protestants, in 1674. A Plot for a French Invasion, and to betray the strong Cities and Ports to the Invaders. The Debates, concerning that Plot in the Parliament of England, and the Proceedings against the Earl of Tyrone, and others thereupon. Tyrconnel's Cruel and Arbitrary Government. The Tyrannical Reign of the late King James, and his Treaty with Lewis the XIVth, to deliver up that Kingdom to him. Some Facts of the Wars in Ireland in 1689, 1690, 1691. Never before Printed. With Lifts of King James's Officers Civil and Military; of his Popish Parliament in 1689, and of King William's Parliament in 1692.</i>	10076
1721	Strype, John	<i>Ecclesiastical Memorials; Relating chiefly to Religion, and the Reformation of it, and the Emergencies of the Church of England, under King Henry VIII. King Edward VI. and Queen Mary the First. In three volumes. Volume I. All which Being New, and Such as hitherto Escaped our Writers and Historians, will Communicate much more Light to those great Transactions in this Kingdom: And moreover Discover further the Inclinations and Influences of the respective Princes; The Embassies and Correspondencies with Foreign Potentates and States, chiefly with respect to Religion: The Oppositions made to it; The Troubles and Persecutions of the Professors of it: The Tempers, Practices and Events of the Two Cardinals, Wolset and Pole, and other Prelates and Great Men of Both Parties, in the respective Reigns: Besides, Accounts of Convocations, Royal and Episcopal Visitations, Ecclesiastical Constitutions, Books from time to time set forth; with various other Matters worthy of Note and Observation. In three volumes. With a Large Appendix to each Volume, containing Original Papers, Records, &c.</i>	10082





1726	Penhallow, Samuel	<i>History of the Wars of New England with the Eastern Indians. Or, a Narrative of their continued Perfidy and Cruelty, from the 10th of August, 1703. To the Peace renewed 13th of July, 1713. And from the 25th of July, 1722. To their Submission 15th December, 1725. Which was ratified August 5th 1726.</i>	10192
1732	Horsley, John	<i>Britannia romana: or, The Roman antiquities of Britain: in three books. Britannia Romana: or the Roman Antiquities of Britain: In three books. The I. Contains the History of all the Roman Transactions in Britain, with an account of their legionary and auxiliary forces employed here, and a determination of the stations per lineam valli; also a large description of the Roman walls, with maps of the same laid down from a geometrical survey. Contains a compleat Collection of the Roman Inscriptions and Sculptures which have hitherto been discovered in Britain, with the letters engraved in their proper shape and proportionate size, and the reading placed under each; as also an historical account of them, with explanatory and critical observations. Contains the Roman Geography of Britain, in which are given the originals of Ptolemy, Antonini Itinerarium, the Notitia, the anonymous Ravennas, and Peutinger's table, so far as they relate to this island, with particular essays on each of these ancient authors, and the several places in Britain mentioned by them. To which are added, a Chronological Table, and Indexes to the Inscriptions and Sculptures after the manner of Gruter and Reinesius. Also Geographical Indexes both of the Latin and English names of the Roman places in Britain, and a General Index to the work. The whole illustrated with above an hundred Copper Plates.</i>	10107
1739	Justice, Elizabeth	<i>A Voyage to Russia: describing the Laws, Manners, and Customs, of that great Empire, as govern'd, at this present, by that excellent Princefs, the Czarina. Shewing the Beauty of her Palace, the Grandeur of her Courtiers, the Forms of Building at Petersburgh, and other Places: with several entertaining Adventures, that happened in the Passage by Sea, and Land.</i>	10005
1740	Bancks, John	<i>The history of the life and reign of the Czar Peter the Great Emperor Of All Russia And Father Of His Country.</i>	10058
1745	Hooke, Nathaniel	<i>The Roman History, from the building of Rome to the Ruin of the Commonwealth. Illustrated with Maps and other Plates. Vol. II. Book IV.</i>	10006
1750	Chapman, Thomas	<i>An essay on the Roman Senate</i>	10196
1760	Birch, Thomas	<i>The Life of Henry Prince of Wales, Eldest Son of King James I. Compiled chiefly from his own Papers, and other Manuscripts, never before published.</i>	10060
1762	Scott, Sarah	<i>The History of Mecklenburgh, from the First Settlement of the Vandals in that Country, to the Present Time; including a Period of about Three Thousand Years. The second Edition.</i>	10114
1770	Adams, Amos	<i>A concise, historical view of the difficulties, hardships, and Perils which attended the planting and progressive improvements of New-England; with a particular account of its long and destructive wars, expensive expeditions, &c</i>	10041
1775	Anderson, Walter	<i>The History of France. From the Commencement of the Reign of Henry III. and the Rise Of the Catholic League; to the Peace of Vervins, and the Establishment Of the famous Edict of Nantes, In the Reign of Henry IV. Together with The most interesting Events in the History of Europe, during that Period.</i>	10020

1780	Cornish, Joseph	<i>The life of Mr. Thomas Firmin, citizen of London</i>	10035
1788	Gibbon, Edward	<i>The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire. In twelve volumes. Volume X. A new edition</i>	10014
1790	Gifford, John	<i>The History of England from the earliest Times to the Peace of 1783. Vol. I. Book III.</i>	10320
1795	Adams, John	<i>A view of universal history, from the creation to the present time. Including an account of the celebrated revolutions in France, Poland, Sweden, Geneva, &c. &c. Together with an accurate and impartial narrative of the late military operations and other important events. Vol. II.</i>	10116
1800	Stock, Joseph	<i>A narrative of what passed at Killalla, in the County of Mayo, and the parts adjacent, during the French invasion in the summer of 1798. By an eye witness.</i>	10178
Word count for 18th-century material			201889

SOURCE TEXTS FOR CHET: 19TH-CENTURY MATERIAL

YEAR	AUTHOR	TITLE	WORDS
1802	Adolphus, John	<i>The history of England from the accession of King George the Third, to the conclusion of peace in the year one thousand seven hundred and eighty-three. In three volumes. Vol. III</i>	10079
1805	Warren, Mercy Otis	<i>History of the rise, progress and termination of the American revolution. Interspersed with Biographical, Political and Moral Observations. In three volumes. Vol. I.</i>	10215
1810	Bigland, John	<i>The history of Spain, from the earliest period to the year 1809. In two volumes. Vol. I</i>	10065
1814	Britton, John	<i>The history and antiquities of the cathedral church of Salisbury; illustrated with a series of engravings, of views, elevations, plans, and details of that edifice: also etchings of the ancient monuments and sculpture: including biographical anecdotes of the bishops, and other eminent persons connected with the church.</i>	10017
1820	Hardiman, James	<i>The history of the town and county of the town of Galway, from the earliest period to the present time. Embellished with several engravings. To which is added a copious appendix, containing the principal charters and other original documents</i>	10255
1828	Callcott, Maria Lady	<i>A Short history of Spain. In two volumes. Vol. II</i>	10332
1833	Aikin, Lucy	<i>Memoirs of the Court of King Charles the First. In two volumes. Vol. I</i>	10013
1839	Petrie, George	<i>On the History and Antiquities of Tara Hill. Transactions of the Royal Irish Academy, 18.</i>	10117
1840	Smyth, William	<i>Lectures on Modern History, from the Irruption of the Northern Nations to the Close of the American Revolution. In two volumes. Vol II</i>	9933
1844	D'Alton, John	<i>The history of Drogheda, with its environs; and an introductory memoir of the Dublin and Drogheda railway. In two volumes. Vol. I</i>	10008





1855	Masson, David	<i>Medieval history</i>	10166
1857	Sewell, Elizabeth Missing	A first history of Greece	10037
1860	Freer, Martha Walker	<i>History of the reign of Henry IV. King of France and Navarre.</i> In two volumes.	10061
1862	Bennett, George	<i>The History of Bandon</i>	10005
1872	Gray, John Hamilton	<i>Confederation; or, The Political and Parliamentary History of Canada, from the Conference at Quebec, in October, 1864, to the Admission of British Columbia, in July, 1871.</i> In two volumes. First volume.	10045
1875	Killen, William Dool	<i>The ecclesiastical history of Ireland. From the earliest period to the present times.</i> Vol. II	10083
1884	Breese, Sidney	<i>The Early History of Illinois, from its Discovery by the French, in 1673, until its Cession to Great Britain in 1763. Including the Narrative of Marquette's Discovery of the Mississippi</i>	10057
1887	Kingsford, William	<i>The history of Canada. Vol. I. [1608-1682.]</i>	10046
1893	Cooke, Alice M.	<i>The Settlement of the Cistercians in England. The English Historical Review, Vol. 8, No. 32. (625-648)</i>	10730
1895	Burrows, Montagu	<i>The History of the Foreign Policy of Great Britain.</i>	10158
Word count for 19th-century material			202422

APPENDIX 2

1. VC.1. Verbs of Communication in Women's Texts (Total: 438)

18 TH CENTURY WOMEN IN CHET			
	ELIZABETH JUSTICE (1739)	SARAH SCOTT (1762)	TOTAL
<i>Ask</i>	4	2	6
<i>Cite</i>	0	0	0
<i>Demonstrate</i>	0	0	0
<i>Dictate</i>	0	0	0
<i>Explain</i>	0	0	0
<i>Narrate</i>	0	0	0
<i>Preach</i>	0	0	0
<i>Quote</i>	0	0	0
<i>Read</i>	3	1	4
<i>Show</i>	2	0	2
<i>Teach</i>	0	0	0
<i>Tell</i>	0	1	1
<i>Write</i>	1	0	1
<i>Speak</i>	0	0	0
<i>Talk</i>	5	0	5
<i>Announce</i>	0	0	0
<i>Claim</i>	0	1	1
<i>Confess</i>	5	6	11
<i>Confide</i>	0	0	0
<i>Convey</i>	0	0	0
<i>Declare</i>	0	1	1
<i>Mention</i>	0	2	2
<i>Note</i>	0	0	0
<i>Observe</i>	1	1	2
<i>Proclaim</i>	0	1	1
<i>Propose</i>	1	1	2
<i>Recount</i>	0	0	0
<i>Reiterate</i>	0	0	0
<i>Relate</i>	1	0	1
<i>Remark</i>	0	0	0
<i>Repeat</i>	4	0	4
<i>Report</i>	0	0	0



<i>Reveal</i>	0	0	0
<i>Say</i>	32	2	34
<i>State</i>	0	0	0
<i>Suggest</i>	0	0	0
<i>Boast</i>	0	0	0
<i>Complain</i>	0	1	1
<i>Object</i>	0	0	0
<i>Admonish</i>	0	0	0
<i>Advise</i>	0	0	0
<i>Instruct</i>	0	0	0
<i>Warn</i>	0	0	0
TOTAL			79

19 TH CENTURY_WOMEN							
	MERCY OTIS CALLCOTT (1805)	MARIA LADY CALLCOTT (1828)	LUCY AIKIN (1833)	ELIZABETH MISSING SEWELL (1857)	MARTHA WALKER FREER (1860)	ALICE M. COOKE (1893)	TOTAL
<i>Ask</i>	0	0	0	3	4	0	7
<i>Cite</i>	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
<i>Demonstrate</i>	0	0	0	0	1	0	1
<i>Dictate</i>	1	0	0	0	0	0	1
<i>Explain</i>	0	0	1	0	2	2	5
<i>Narrate</i>	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
<i>Preach</i>	0	0	1	0	0	0	1
<i>Quote</i>	0	0	0	0	0	2	2
<i>Read</i>	0	0	0	0	0	1	1
<i>Show</i>	0	0	4	0	0	2	6
<i>Teach</i>	2	0	1	1	0	0	4
<i>Tell</i>	0	0	0	0	0	3	3
<i>Write</i>	1	2	0	0	16	1	20
<i>Speak</i>	0	0	0	1	0	0	1
<i>Talk</i>	0	1	0	1	0	0	2
<i>Announce</i>	2	0	0	1	4	0	7
<i>Claim</i>	1	1	1	0	0	1	4
<i>Confess</i>	0	0	1	0	0	0	1
<i>Confide</i>	0	0	0	0	0	0	0





<i>Convey</i>	3	0	0	0	0	1	4
<i>Declare</i>	1	0	3	6	1	4	15
<i>Mention</i>	2	0	0	0	0	0	2
<i>Note</i>	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
<i>Observe</i>	0	8	1	1	0	0	10
<i>Proclaim</i>	0	1	2	1	2	0	6
<i>Propose</i>	0	0	2	4	5	0	11
<i>Recount</i>	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
<i>Reiterate</i>	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
<i>Relate</i>	1	3	1	1	1	3	10
<i>Remark</i>	0	0	1	0	2	0	3
<i>Repeat</i>	1	0	3	1	1	0	6
<i>Report</i>	1	0	1	0	1	0	3
<i>Reveal</i>	0	0	1	2	1	0	4
<i>Say</i>	6	21	12	49	36	52	176
<i>State</i>	0	0	3	3	7	4	17
<i>Suggest</i>	0	1	3	2	1	1	8
<i>Boast</i>	1	0	1	0	0	0	2
<i>Complain</i>	1	0	1	1	0	0	3
<i>Object</i>	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
<i>Admonish</i>	0	0	1	0	0	0	1
<i>Advise</i>	0	0	2	3	0	0	5
<i>Instruct</i>	0	0	0	1	0	2	3
<i>Warn</i>	1	0	0	1	1	0	3
TOTAL							359

2. VC.2. Verbs of Desire in Women's Texts (Total: 68)

18 TH CENTURY WOMEN			
	ELIZABETH JUSTICE (1739)	SARAH SCOTT (1762)	TOTAL
<i>Covet</i>	0	1	1
<i>Crave</i>	0	0	0
<i>Desire</i>	3	3	6
<i>Fancy</i>	0	0	0
<i>Need</i>	1	0	1
<i>Want</i>	4	0	4
<i>Fall</i>	0	1	1
<i>Hope</i>	0	0	0
<i>Itch</i>	1	0	1

<i>Long</i>	0	0	0
<i>Pine</i>	0	0	0
<i>Pray</i>	2	0	2
<i>Wish</i>	0	4	4
TOTAL	11	9	20

19 TH CENTURY_WOMEN							
	Mercy Otis Callcott (1805)	Maria Lady Callcott (1828)	LUCY AIKIN (1833)	ELIZABETH MISSING SEWELL (1857)	MARTHA WALKER FREER (1860)	ALICE M. COOKE (1893)	TOTAL
<i>Covet</i>	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
<i>Crave</i>	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
<i>Desire</i>	0	1	0	3	1	0	5
<i>Fancy</i>	0	0	0	1	0	0	1
<i>Need</i>	0	0	0	2	1	0	3
<i>Want</i>	0	0	0	2	0	0	2
<i>Fall</i>	7	5	1	3	3	1	20
<i>Hope</i>	0	2	1	0	0	0	3
<i>Itch</i>	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
<i>Long</i>	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
<i>Pine</i>	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
<i>Pray</i>	0	0	0	0	2	0	2
<i>Wish</i>	2	1	0	8	1	0	12
TOTAL	9	9	2	19	8	1	48

3. VC.3. Aspectual Verbs in Women's Texts (Total: 150)

18 TH CENTURY WOMEN			
	ELIZABETH JUSTICE (1739)	SARAH SCOTT (1762)	TOTAL
<i>Begin</i>	1	1	2
<i>Cease</i>	0	1	1
<i>Commence</i>	0	2	2
<i>Continue</i>	5	5	10
<i>End</i>	0	0	0
<i>Finish</i>	2	1	3
<i>Halt</i>	0	0	0



<i>Keep (on)</i>	7	2	9
<i>Proceed</i>	0	3	3
<i>Repeat</i>	5	0	5
<i>Resume</i>	0	0	0
<i>Start</i>	0	0	0
<i>Stop</i>	1	1	2
<i>Terminate</i>	0	0	0
<i>Complete</i>	0	1	1
<i>Quit</i>	1	2	3
TOTAL	22	19	41

19 TH CENTURY WOMEN							
	Mercy Otis Callcott (1805)	Maria Lady Callcott (1828)	Lucy Aikin (1833)	Elizabeth Missing Sewell (1857)	Martha Walker Freer (1860)	Alice M. Cooke(1893)	TOTAL
<i>Begin</i>	4	3	2	10	3	6	28
<i>Cease</i>	0	1	0	0	1	0	2
<i>Commence</i>	2	1	2	0	3	0	8
<i>Continue</i>	1	5	0	3	3	2	14
<i>End</i>	0	1	1	1	0	0	3
<i>Finish</i>	0	1	0	1	0	0	2
<i>Halt</i>	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
<i>Keep (on)</i>	0	2	3	6	0	0	11
<i>Proceed</i>	1	4	4	0	4	2	15
<i>Repeat</i>	2	0	2	1	1	0	6
<i>Resume</i>	1	0	0	0	0	0	1
<i>Start</i>	0	1	0	0	0	0	1
<i>Stop</i>	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
<i>Terminate</i>	0	1	0	0	1	0	2
<i>Complete</i>	1	1	0	0	0	3	5
<i>Quit</i>	5	0	1	0	5	0	11
TOTAL	17	21	15	22	21	13	109



4. VC.4. Verbs of Perception in Women's Texts (Total: 223)

18 TH CENTURY WOMEN			
	ELIZABETH JUSTICE (1739)	SARAH SCOTT (1762)	TOTAL
<i>Detect</i>	0	0	0
<i>Discern</i>	1	0	1
<i>Feel</i>	0	2	2
<i>Hear</i>	4	1	5
<i>Notice</i>	0	0	0
<i>See</i>	39	3	42
<i>Taste</i>	0	0	0
<i>Descry</i>	0	0	0
<i>Discover</i>	0	1	1
<i>Espy</i>	0	0	0
<i>Examine</i>	0	0	0
<i>Inspect</i>	0	0	0
<i>Investigate</i>	0	0	0
<i>Note</i>	0	0	0
<i>Observe</i>	5	1	6
<i>Perceive</i>	2	0	2
<i>Recognise</i>	0	0	0
<i>Regard</i>	0	0	0
<i>Spot</i>	0	0	0
<i>Study</i>	0	0	0
<i>Survey</i>	0	0	0
<i>View</i>	0	0	0
<i>Watch</i>	1	0	1
<i>Witness</i>	0	0	0
<i>Check</i>	0	0	0
<i>Gaze</i>	0	0	0
<i>Glance</i>	0	0	0
<i>Listen</i>	0	0	0
<i>Look</i>	3	1	4
<i>Peep</i>	0	0	0
<i>Stare</i>	0	0	0
<i>Sound</i>	0	0	0
TOTAL	55	9	64



19TH CENTURY WOMEN

	MERCY OTIS CALCOTT (1805)	MARIA LADY CALCOTT (1828)	LUCY AIKIN (1833)	ELIZABETH MISSING SEWELL (1857)	MARTHA WALKER FREER (1860)	ALICE M. COOKE (1893)	TOTAL
<i>Detect</i>	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
<i>Discern</i>	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
<i>Feel</i>	1	3	0	6	4	2	16
<i>Hear</i>	1	4	0	6	1	1	13
<i>Notice</i>	0	0	0	0	0	1	1
<i>See</i>	4	12	0	20	1	11	48
<i>Taste</i>	0	0	0	1	0	0	1
<i>Descry</i>	0	0	0	0	2	0	2
<i>Discover</i>	5	4	0	1	0	2	12
<i>Espy</i>	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
<i>Examine</i>	0	3	0	0	0	0	3
<i>Inspect</i>	0	0	0	0	1	0	1
<i>Investigate</i>	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
<i>Note</i>	0	0	1	0	0	0	1
<i>Observe</i>	8	1	3	2	3	1	18
<i>Perceive</i>	0	2	0	0	1	0	3
<i>Recognise</i>	0	0	0	0	0	5	5
<i>Regard</i>	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
<i>Spot</i>	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
<i>Study</i>	0	0	1	0	0	0	1
<i>Survey</i>	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
<i>View</i>	0	0	1	0	1	0	2
<i>Watch</i>	1	0	0	2	2	0	5
<i>Witness</i>	0	0	0	1	2	1	4
<i>Check</i>	0	0	0	0	1	0	1
<i>Gaze</i>	0	1	0	0	2	0	3
<i>Glance</i>	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
<i>Listen</i>	1	4	0	5	0	0	10
<i>Look</i>	0	1	1	5	1	1	9
<i>Peep</i>	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
<i>Stare</i>	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
<i>Sound</i>	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
TOTAL	21	35	7	49	22	25	159



MODAL VERBS AS INTERPERSONAL CUES IN AN EARLY NINETEENTH-CENTURY DOMESTIC MANUSCRIPT*

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ABSTRACT

This article examines the interpersonal and pragmatic functions of modal verbs in an early nineteenth-century domestic manuscript by Arabella Philippa Maule. The analysis shows a predominance of epistemic modals, with *will* as the most frequent form and unusually low use of *shall*. The higher-than-average presence of *should* and *may* produces an advisory tone, while directive, predictive, and advisory uses coexist with strategies of flexibility and care. Overall, Maule's modal profile balances authority and accommodation within Late Modern English domestic writing.

KEYWORDS: Modal Verbs, Historical Pragmatics, Domestic Manuscripts, Gendered Discourse, Late Modern English, Interpersonal Meaning.

LOS VERBOS MODALES COMO INDICADORES INTERPERSONALES EN UN MANUSCRITO DOMÉSTICO DE COMIENZOS DEL SIGLO XIX

RESUMEN

Este artículo analiza las funciones interpersonales y pragmáticas de los verbos modales en un manuscrito doméstico de comienzos del siglo XIX compilado por Arabella Philippa Maule. El análisis muestra un predominio de los modales epistémicos, con *will* como forma más frecuente y un uso inusualmente bajo de *shall*. La presencia elevada de *should* y *may* genera un tono más orientador que prescriptivo, en el que conviven usos directivos, predictivos y de consejo con estrategias de flexibilidad y cuidado. En conjunto, el perfil modal de Maule equilibra autoridad y acomodación en la escritura doméstica del inglés moderno tardío.

PALABRAS CLAVE: verbos modales, pragmática histórica, manuscritos domésticos, discurso de género, inglés moderno tardío, significación interpersonal.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.25145/j.recaesin.2026.92.05>

REVISTA CANARIA DE ESTUDIOS INGLESES, 92; abril 2026, pp. 125-145; ISSN: e-2530-8335
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1. INTRODUCTION

During the Late Modern English period, women's instructional writing in the form of recipe books, household manuals, and collections of remedies became an essential channel for passing on medical and scientific knowledge in the vernacular. Such texts contributed both to the practice of domestic medicine and to the emergence of female authorship in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Typically compiled in the household and circulated among kin or within neighborhood networks, these manuscripts were not only practical collections of experiential knowledge but also discursive spaces where women could exercise authority within the limits society allowed. One striking linguistic device in this negotiation of voice is the modal verb: auxiliaries such as *will*, *shall*, *must*, *may*, and *can*, which color the tone of an instruction and help define the relation between compiler and reader. To tell a reader "you must do X" carries a non-negotiable force; to say "you may do X" introduces permission or a degree of flexibility. By modulating such force, women writers could assert expertise while observing the politeness and restraint expected of them.

Research in historical linguistics and pragmatics confirms the central role of modality in instructional discourse (cf. Alonso Almeida 2015; Crespo & Moskowich 2021). Modals are not simply grammatical markers but pragmatic resources for shaping the interaction between writer and reader. Within Halliday's systemic-functional framework, they belong to the interpersonal metafunction: they register the speaker's judgment or attitude, ranging from certainty to obligation, and, in doing so, establish roles and tenor in discourse (Halliday & Matthiessen 2014). For a woman compiler, this meant finding a delicate balance. She had to show enough authority to guide her reader, yet avoid a bluntness that might be deemed inappropriate. Hence the choice of "you should do X" (a measured recommendation) over "you must do X" (a categorical command). Wodak (1997) has described this kind of mitigation as characteristic of gendered discourse, a strategy that enables persuasion in settings governed by patriarchal expectations.

Although historical pragmatics has developed considerably in recent decades (Fitzmaurice & Taavitsainen 2007), much of the work on modality and stance has rested on broad corpus evidence. The Coruña Corpus of historical scientific writing (Moskowich 2013) and, more recently, the CoWITE (Corpus of Women's Instructive Texts in English) project (Alonso-Almeida et al. 2025) have been central in tracing overall patterns in women's use of modals. These surveys confirm that women writers in the period relied heavily on modals to express judgments and to frame directives. Studies, such as Alonso-Almeida & Mele-Marrero (2014), underline the prominence of modalised instructions and stance adverbs in female-authored texts.

* The research conducted in this paper has been supported by the Agencia Estatal de Investigación, Plan Estatal de Investigación Científica, Técnica y de Innovación 2021–2023, under award number PID2021-125928NB-I00. I hereby express my thanks. Unión Europea · Fondo Europeo de Desarrollo regional "Una manera de hacer Europa."



Yet aggregated analyses inevitably blur the detail of individual practice. As Crespo & Moskowich (2021) remind us, to understand the interplay of gender and genre we need to listen closely to particular voices.

This paper offers such a close reading by turning to one compiler, Mrs. Arabella Philippa Maule, author of a manuscript of culinary and medical recipes held in the Wellcome Library (MS 3499, dated 1800-1828). The document provides a coherent and internally consistent body of writing, well suited to examining how modality operates as an interpersonal cue in context.

The analysis asks several questions. First, what is the distribution of modal verbs in Maule's manuscript, and how does it compare with contemporary data such as CoWITE19? Second, which semantic categories, namely epistemic, deontic, dynamic, are most prominent, and what stance do they project? Third, what pragmatic functions do the modals serve, i.e., do they issue instructions, offer advice, grant permission, provide reassurance, or entertain hypotheticals, and how do these functions help shape the relationship between compiler and reader? By combining quantitative corpus findings with close pragmatic interpretation, we argue that Maule's use of modals is a central rhetorical device through which she fashioned an authoritative yet approachable instructional voice. The study highlights not only her individual style but also specific formal developments in instructive genres, gendered strategies of communication, and the history of modality in English.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Modality has long been recognized as central to meaning in English, expressing the speaker's view of how likely, binding, or desirable a proposition may be (Palmer 2001). Semantically oriented accounts (Palmer 1990; Coates 1983) commonly distinguish three main types: epistemic modality, which evaluates truth or probability (e.g. *may*, *will* for possibility or prediction); deontic modality, which expresses what is permitted or required (e.g. *must*, *should*); and dynamic modality, which refers to ability or willingness (e.g. *can*, *could*). These categories provide a useful starting point, though they cannot capture the full range of uses. Narrog (2005) stresses that modals are often polyfunctional and must be interpreted pragmatically, with attention to speaker intention and discourse context. Nuyts (2001) likewise argues that modality reflects the speaker's assessment of a communicative situation rather than belonging solely to abstract semantic boxes.

Within systemic-functional linguistics (SFL), modality is treated as part of the interpersonal metafunction, as it helps shape social roles and relationships (Halliday & Matthiessen 2014). The category here extends beyond auxiliaries to include adverbs (*perhaps*, *certainly*) and semi-modals (*have to*, *be able to*), though core auxiliaries remain the most economical way of signaling certainty, obligation, or inclination (Thompson 2014). SFL is particularly valuable for the present study because it draws attention to how choices in modality affect tenor, the social dimension of discourse. Selecting *shall* instead of *will*, for instance, can turn an instruction into an external prescription, whereas *will* is closer to a prediction or promise of outcome if directions



are followed. Such nuances are significant in texts where the writer is both instructor and advisor (Stoian 2020).

Gendered aspects of language use in historical settings have been noted by Tieken-Boon van Ostade (2009). Their work shows that women frequently adopted specific discursive strategies to claim authority in ways deemed socially acceptable. Alonso-Almeida & Álvarez-Gil (2021) found that female compilers of historical recipes occasionally employed firm directives, even sarcasm, to claim epistemic authority, though more often politeness and mitigation were the default (Brown & Gilman 1989; Curzan 2009). In domestic instructional writing, therefore, one expects an encouraging and collegial tone, with the compiler occupying a role akin to that of an experienced advisor or older relative. Wodak (1997) describes this dynamic as “double-voicing”: the simultaneous projection of expertise and deference. We shall see this tension in Maule’s frequent reliance on *should*, a form that frames advice while avoiding blunt command.

Maule’s manuscript belongs to the long tradition of the “domestic recipe book,” a hybrid genre that mixes medical cures, cookery instructions, household tips, and, at times, religious or literary extracts. Its conventions are recognizable, as recipes typically employ the imperative, with the agent understood rather than stated (e.g. “take two ounces of sugar, boil in water...”). Prior research (Alonso-Almeida 2013; Taavitsainen 2001) has shown that modals in recipes often mark conditional steps (*should be X, must not do Y*), express general truths (*will cure the ailment*), or allow alternatives (*may also add Z*). In this context, modals help authors assert credibility while observing a measure of modesty. A compiler who uses *must* signals a non-negotiable instruction; one who chooses *may* offers flexibility. Studies of Early Modern and eighteenth-century recipes (Moskovich 2010) found *must* and *will* to be especially common, consistent with the prescriptive character of the genre. By the nineteenth century, however, the distribution and meanings of modals were already shifting (Krug 2000; Leech et al. 2009). Tracing Maule’s choices against this background reveals whether her language is conservative or more innovative.

To place Maule’s manuscript in context, we draw comparisons with the Corpus of Women’s Instructive Texts in English, Nineteenth Century (CoWITE19; Alonso-Almeida et al. 2025). This reference corpus, covering women’s instructional writings between 1800 and 1900, provides modal frequencies and preferences typical of the genre. Alonso-Almeida (2023), for example, shows that *shall* and *will* dominate nineteenth-century recipe books, followed by *must*, with *might* and *could* much less frequent. Such patterns reflect the genre’s pragmatic focus on instruction and prediction. By comparing Maule’s text against this baseline we can identify both typical and distinctive features in her use of modals. A single-text analysis offers something broader surveys cannot: an explanation of why a compiler may diverge from the norm, whether because of personal style, the mixed contents of her manuscript, or changes already under way in the language.

In short, this study draws together insights from historical pragmatics, systemic-functional grammar, and gendered discourse analysis to examine modality in situ. The working assumption is that Maule’s modals are not incidental grammatical



choices, but tools closely bound up with genre, authority, and politeness. The next section sets out the corpus and methods used to analyze modals.

3. METHODOLOGY

The primary source for this study is a full transcription of Mrs. Arabella Philippa Maule's manuscript book (1800-1828), catalogued as Wellcome Collection MS 3499. Probably compiled in Scotland or England, the manuscript gathers a wide range of material: culinary recipes, medical remedies, household instructions, and even literary excerpts, among them quotations from Walter Scott. For the purposes of linguistic analysis, we included only the prose believed to be Maule's own, excluding long verbatim quotations from other authors. The transcription was prepared in plain text, retaining the original spelling and punctuation. The resulting corpus amounts to 17,188 tokens, with 3,893 distinct word forms. A type-token ratio of about 22.6% is consistent with the repetitive style of recipe writing, where formulaic phrasing and recurrent ingredient names are expected.

Annotation proceeded in two stages. First, the text was tagged for parts of speech with the CLAWS system in LancsBox v.5 (Brezina et al. 2021). This allowed the retrieval of all modal auxiliaries. We adopted a broad definition, covering canonical modals (*can, could, may, might, shall, should, will, would, must*) and periphrastic expressions (*have to, be able to, be to*), though in practice the latter were almost absent. Each candidate token was then manually checked in context. This step was essential to separate genuine modal use from homonyms (*will* as a noun, *must* meaning *grape must*) or from material not reflecting Maule's own text. For example, a quotation that reads "What else *shall* I have to fear?" contains a modal, but as it is clearly a literary aphorism it was not counted among her interpersonal strategies.

After verification, 246 modal verbs were identified. Each was assigned to one of the three standard semantic classes (epistemic, deontic, or dynamic) following Coates (1983) and Palmer (2001). In most cases the reading was straightforward: *must* "be well beaten" signals deontic necessity, while *will* "cure the cough" conveys epistemic prediction. Ambiguities were resolved by examining the co-text. For instance, in "If the patient *can* take it, add another spoon of brandy," *can* was judged dynamic, as it refers to physical capacity rather than permission.

A second layer of annotation addressed pragmatic function. Here, we drew on categories established in earlier studies of directives and recipes (e.g. Coates 1983; Hyland 1998). Six main functions were used: Instruction, Prediction, Permission, Advice, Reassurance, and Hypothetical Reasoning. Each modal was considered in context to determine which force was primary. Thus *must* in "you *must* boil for an hour" counts as Instruction, while *may* in "you *may* substitute honey for sugar" counts as Permission. Where functions overlapped, the most salient one was chosen. To check reliability, a fellow linguist independently coded a random fifth of the data. Agreement stood at 90 per cent; remaining differences were settled through discussion.



Quantitative analysis involved raw counts and normalization to occurrences per 10,000 words. Proportions of the semantic and pragmatic categories were also calculated out of the 246 modal tokens. Comparisons with external data draw on published frequencies from CoWITE19 (Alonso-Almeida et al. 2025). For example, Alonso-Almeida (2023) reports average rates of *shall*, *will*, and *must* in nineteenth-century women's recipes, which serve as points of reference. Because the present study focuses on a single text, we did not apply inferential statistics; the comparisons are illustrative rather than conclusive.

Two research caveats are in order. First, Maule's manuscript is multi-genre: alongside recipes it contains household notes and devotional extracts. This mixture may affect modal usage, as when *shall* occurs in a biblical quotation. We therefore concentrated on sections where Maule is actively instructing or explaining. Second, her text reflects a literate, probably upper-middle-class register, and may not capture the broader spectrum of women's domestic writing in the early nineteenth century. Even so, it offers a rich case study.

4. RESULTS

4.1. MODAL FREQUENCY AND DISTRIBUTION

In a corpus of 17,188 words, Maule employs 246 modal verb tokens. This corresponds to a density of 143.1 tokens per 10,000 words, which means that just over one per cent of her words are modal auxiliaries. The rate is somewhat lower than the average of around 170 tokens per 10,000 reported for nineteenth-century women's instructional texts in CoWITE19. Table 1 shows the distribution of forms, with both raw counts and normalized frequencies, alongside the CoWITE19 averages.

TABLE 1. FREQUENCY OF MODAL VERBS IN MAULE'S TEXT AND CORPUS AVERAGES from Alonso-Almeida et al. (2025) (normalized per 10,000 words).

Modal	Raw Freq (Maule)	Per 10k (Maule)	Per 10k (CoWITE19 avg)
<i>will</i>	53	30.84	36.5
<i>must</i>	41	23.85	30.1
<i>may</i>	45	26.18	19.2
<i>shall</i>	16	9.31	39.8
<i>should</i>	30	17.45	12.1
<i>can</i>	26	15.13	6.4
<i>could</i>	11	6.39	-6.4 (est.)
<i>would</i>	18	10.47	2.07
<i>might</i>	6	3.49	-3 (est.)



The dominant form in Maule's book is *will* (53 tokens, 30.8 per 10k). That is not surprising: recipes thrive on promises of outcome, "This mixture *will* relieve a cough." What does stand out is that her rate is slightly below the CoWITE19 average. Perhaps she was more sparing in making predictive or promissory claims. The real anomaly, however, is *shall*. It occurs only 16 times (9.3 per 10k), while comparable texts reach nearly 40. In the recipe tradition, *shall* often carries a formal prescriptive force, almost legal in tone. Maule seems to avoid that register, turning instead to *should* or *may*. Where another compiler might insist "The mixture *shall* be stirred continuously," her phrasing is more often "The mixture *should* be stirred," a noticeable softening of the directive.

Her use of *should* is thus high (30 tokens, 17.5 per 10k, compared with a norm of 12.1). It constructs advice rather than instructions. In a single sentence, she orders that "the writing *should* be exposed to the dry air (the sun is preferable) one day at least before it is washed." The instructions are obvious, but they are enshrouded in the rhetoric of advice. *May* is still more indicative. At 26.2 per 10k, it well surpasses the average, and the functions are obvious at a glance: "strong soap *may* also be used"; "you *may* add a little ginger if desired." It is the rhetoric of choice, nodding towards the fact that readers have varying materials available or varying preferences.

In contrast, *must* is used less frequently (23.9 per 10k as opposed to a corpus average of 30.1). She uses it only where strictly necessary, "Galbanum...*must* be rubbed till dissolved," yet hardly ever beyond. It seems a modal she saves for situations where no latitude whatever can be extended. Here, we come to the oddity of *would*. Maule writes with it a total of 18 times (10.5 per 10k), some five times the average. Most of these are used in conditional threats: "if not properly dried, the ink *would* fade." Here and similar places *would* does more than tell; it defends the direction of the instruction with reference to what otherwise would happen. This accords with our pragmatic classification of "hypothetical reasoning," and it provides her writing an explanatory tone.

Also conspicuous is *can* (15.1 per 10k). Sentences like "Any person *can* make this at home" are indicative of feasibility and reassurance. It is the rhetoric of encouragement. Conversely, *could* (11 tokens), and *might* (6 tokens) may stay at the periphery, since speculation is avertible in the majority of recipes, as we encounter mostly instructive texts.

All considered, Maule's profile is familiar yet distinctive. She avoids the heavy-handedness of *shall* and leans on *should* and *may*, thereby maintaining authority without harshness. Her extensive use of *would* adds a layer of conditional reasoning, anticipating the reader's doubts and addressing them before they are voiced. The effect is an instructive voice that is confident but considerate, firm yet attentive to alternatives.

4.2. SEMANTIC MODAL CATEGORIES

We assigned each modal token to a semantic category (epistemic, deontic, dynamic), and the overall pattern is shown in Figure 1 below, which visualizes the



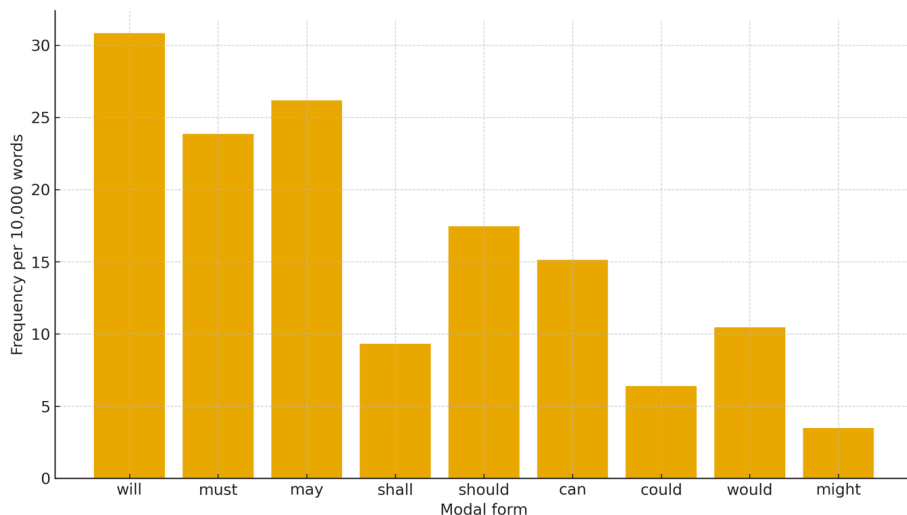


Figure 1. Distribution of semantic categories of modality in Maule's manuscript (per 10,000 words).

predominance of epistemic modality in Maule's text, followed by deontic and then dynamic modality:

Epistemic modality accounts for just over half of the tokens (133/246, about 54%). These are forms such as *will*, *may*, and *would* used to state predictions or possibilities. Maule often projects confidence, "The articles so washed *will* require to be several times rinsed," but she also leaves room for uncertainty, as in "It *may* preserve the milk sweet for several days." *Would*, *could*, and *might* occur when she moves into more cautious or hypothetical territory, sometimes outside recipe discourse proper. One entry even reflects on social life: "all these *would* be cut off," where *would* expresses a broader moral claim. The net effect of these epistemic choices is to present her as both knowledgeable and prudent. Certainty is foregrounded, but occasional hedges prevent overstatement and *may* have enhanced her credibility. We focus on each modal meaning in turn, in what follows.

- a) Epistemic modality. Maule leans heavily on epistemic forms, which suits her stance as informant and expert. With *will*, *may*, and *would* she casts outcomes as prediction or possibility. *Will* often marks what she treats as a regular consequence: "The articles so washed *will* require to be several times rinsed", an expectation grounded in practice. *May* licenses contingency: "It *may* preserve the milk sweet for several days", signaling that success depends on conditions. When she moves beyond the immediate procedure into conjecture, *would*, *could*, and *might* tend to take over, usually in conditionals or wider generalizations. "Many friendships are formed by sensual pleasures...



all these *would* be cut off” uses *would* to project a moral consequence rather than a kitchen result. On balance, her epistemic choices project authority without overreach: confident forecasts persuade, while lighter epistemics (*might, perhaps*) register uncertainty and keep promises modest. In a genre that stands or falls on practical credibility, that balance (mostly sure, sometimes hedged) works.

- b) Deontic modality. Deontic forms (*must, should, shall, may* in the sense of permission) constitute the second largest set and foreground the prescriptive core of recipe discourse. In Maule, *must* is the clearest marker of obligation. It clusters in critical steps, “The veal *must* be well beaten otherwise it *will* be hard,” where the injunction is immediately anchored in a consequence; the deontic push is buttressed by an epistemic warrant about likely results. *Shall* is rarer and tends to appear in copied, formal mandates, as in “The weight of every sort of bread... *shall* be in avoidrupois as follows...”, where the force is quasi-legal and external to the writer’s voice. In her own instructions, she largely avoids *shall*, favoring *must* or *should*. The form *should* carries much of the advisory load. It signals recommended procedure rather than compulsion, “Potatoes for boiling *should* be sorted, so that the large and the small *should* be boiled separately” (paraphrased), and suits Maule’s didactic yet courteous stance. Deontic *may* licenses action without imposing it (“The patient *may* take a spoonful in the morning”), granting readers discretion where the choice is safe or merely convenient.

Overall, the profile is one of tempered authority. Strong deontics occur where failure is a genuine risk (“must be done, or the outcome fails”), not to project rank. Elsewhere, *should* and *may* open space for judgement and accommodation. This graded system calibrates obligation to context and fine-tunes interpersonal distance: strict where protection is needed, permissive where it is not. A telling instance: “Brine the chops are salted in *must* not be added to the ham pickle but thrown away.” The prohibition is firm (*must not*), yet it is framed as error-prevention, keep salted brine out of fresh pickle, so the tone reads as protective rather than peremptory. In short, Maule’s deontic choices instruct, safeguard, and respect the reader’s autonomy, all at once.

- c) Dynamic modality. Dynamic forms, chiefly *can* and *cannot*, are least represented, which is to be expected in a text more concerned with what should or will be done than with agents’ abilities. In instructional prose, *can* often appears in patterns such as “you *can* do X if Y” or in generic statements of feasibility (“anyone *can* obtain this ingredient”). Maule’s *can* oscillates between pure ability and uses that verge on permission. Thus, “In summer, the cordial *can* be made without heating” signals that circumstances permit the method; it is possible because the conditions allow it. These dynamic tokens mark what is workable in practice and how a procedure adapts when something can or cannot be done. Their low frequency is unsurprising: the text largely presumes a competent reader who can follow the steps unless told otherwise.



Where dynamic marking does appear, it targets concrete contingencies, “if the patient *cannot* take milk warm, it *can* be given cold,” accommodating tolerance or capacity without dwelling on personal skill.

This sparing use aligns with the genre’s center of gravity: method and outcome take precedence over individual ability. When dynamic modality surfaces, it tends to be impersonal (“this *can* be done”) rather than addressee-directed (“you *can* do this”), which avoids commenting on the reader’s competence and keeps the advisory tone courteous. In sum, Maule’s modal profile remains predominantly epistemic, with a substantial deontic stratum; dynamic modality plays a minor, pragmatic role, confirming feasibility at the margins rather than shaping the instructional voice.

4.3. PRAGMATIC FUNCTIONS OF MODALS

Every modal token was coded for its pragmatic role in its immediate co-text. Table 2 sets out the six functions defined earlier, with raw counts for Maule’s manuscript. Row by row, the figures show how often each function surfaces across the corpus, so the pattern is visible at a glance. This was a token-by-token pass rather than a broad sweep, which keeps the mapping from context to function transparent.

PRAGMATIC FUNCTION	RAW FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE OF MODALS
Instruction (Directive)	91	36.99%
Prediction	59	23.98%
Advice	41	16.67%
Permission	23	9.35%
Reassurance	17	6.91%
Hypothetical reasoning	15	6.10%

These categories show, in practical terms, how Maule’s modals work as interpersonal signals and as deliberate argumentative moves. In what follows, we take them one by one, highest to lowest frequency, as shown in Figure 2, and illustrate each with brief extracts (from firm *must* to permissive *may*, and the in-between *should*), noting how these choices shape her manner of address and the kind of guidance she offers.

- a) Instruction (37% of modals). The largest set covers uses where modals direct actions or secure a procedural step. That fits the genre. The deontic trio, *must*, *shall*, *should*, accounts for most of the 91 tokens here. In a glue-making recipe, for example, “Galbanum [...] *must* be rubbed till dissolved.” *Must*



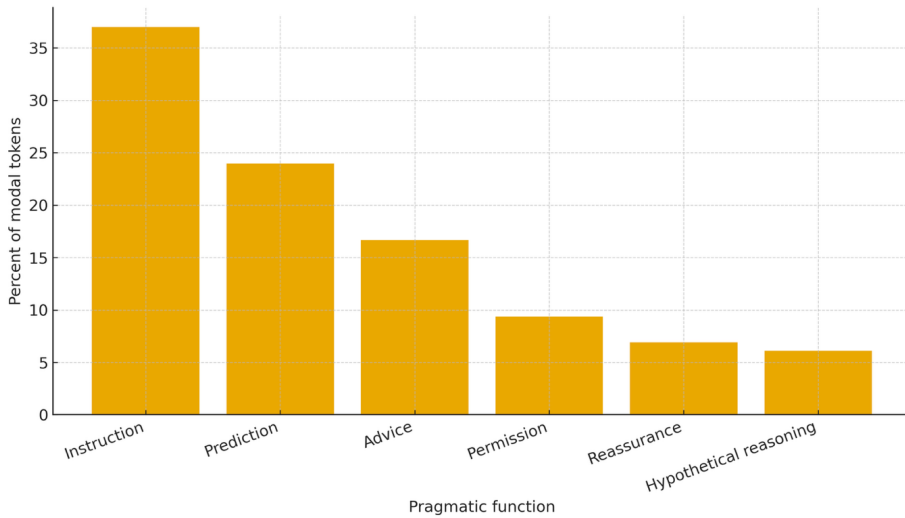


Figure 2. Pragmatic functions encoded by modals

presents the step as non-optional and anchored in process. *Shall* appears in more formal frames, as in “They *shall* boil an hour” (puddings), a phrasing with the ring of a rule. In places the manuscript shows voice-blending: one line reads “They *must* boil an hour,” another recasts it with *shall*, likely echoing copied regulations and lending quasi-official weight. *Should* softens the directive into best practice: “The writing *should* be exposed to dry air one day before washed.” The guidance remains clear, but the tone is advisory rather than absolute.

Crucially, even within instruction, Maule grades force. *Must* targets steps where deviation risks failure, chemical conditions, safety, or keystone stages. *Should* signals the preferred method, leaving room for practicable alternatives. The contrast is visible across domains: in baking, she doubles *must* (“the butter *must* be creamed... which *must* all be beat separately very fine”), marking sequential essentials; in cleaning, “the writing *should* be exposed to dry air (sun is preferable) one day at least,” a strong recommendation rather than a rigid rule. Readers thus learn not only what to do, but how much it matters: *must-do* versus *should-do*, with *may* (treated under Permission) marking the optional.

Maule also pairs instructional modals with rationales. “Do X, otherwise Y *will* happen” joins a deontic requirement with an epistemic forecast. The combination instructs and reassures at once. It is a pedagogical move: compliance follows more readily when the reason is plain, and household discourse often makes that reasoning explicit where professional manuals of the period could be terse.



b) Prediction (24% of modals). The second most frequent function is predictive: modals used to forecast results, outcomes, or future states given certain steps or conditions. Here, the load falls on epistemic *will* and *would*, with occasional *should* in the sense of ‘is expected to’ (counted as epistemic where it clearly signals expectation). We identified 59 instances, nearly a quarter of all modals, in which Maule effectively says: follow this procedure and X will happen. Recipe discourse thrives on such outcome lines (“the mixture *will* turn white”; “it *will* cure the ailment in a day”), and in Maule, *will* does most of the work: “After mixing, it *will* become thick”; “The patient *will* feel relief in ten minutes.” These forecasts steady the reader’s hand. They set a horizon of expectation and double as checkpoints: if X will happen and it doesn’t, something has gone awry.

Would appears in conditional or quasi-predictive frames, “If left to stand, it *would* turn sour by morning.” This shades into hypothetical reasoning, yet the force remains forward-looking: it predicts an outcome under a non-ideal scenario. The move teaches by negative example and, we suspect, distils experience; one hears the voice of someone who has seen what follows when a step is skipped. The prominence of predictive modality casts Maule as a knowledgeable witness to consequences and efficacy. It also serves a persuasive end common in historical medical and domestic writing, assuring readers that remedies and methods “will” work (cf. “applied thus, it *will* remove the stain”; see also Alonso-Almeida 2015). In practice, prediction often sits alongside instruction but is not the same as reassurance: it states what follows, plainly, without addressing anxieties. That it ranks second overall shows the discourse is not purely imperative; it is instructive and explanatory in tandem. Maule does not simply say “do X”; she adds “and Y *will* result,” which makes the text easier to follow and, frankly, more teachable.

c) Advice (17% of modals). Here Maule is counselling rather than commanding. There are 41 tokens (16.7%). The workhorses are *should* and *may*; *can* sometimes edges in when “you *can*...” reads as a gentle nudge. We treat a case as Advice when the phrasing signals preference or leeway, not necessity. So “One *should* not use metal pans for this purpose” is seasoned guidance drawn from practice; “For a delicate stomach, one *may* omit the pepper” opens an option without pressure. In her manuscript, *should* often carries housecraft beyond the recipe proper, general upkeep, storage, small efficiencies. *May* sits beside it to license alternatives: “Strong soap *may* also be used... a fine brush with fine emery will finish the whole.” That first clause reads as a sanctioned workaround; permission and suggestion blur. A clearer instance from cookery: “Potatoes for boiling *should* be sorted, so that the large and the small *should* be boiled separately.” Mixing sizes won’t ruin the dish, but sorting improves it; that is precisely the advisory pitch.

Why it matters that advice ranks third: it shows a compiler who teaches by guidance. *Must* is saved for failure-sensitive stages; *should* and *may* convey “this



works better” without talking down to the reader. The effect is collaborative. We hear a practiced voice passing on what has proved reliable and doing so in a way that invites trust.

- d) Permission (9% of modals). We counted 23 tokens (-9.4%) where Maule explicitly licenses options, typically with *may* and sometimes *can*. These uses cluster around optional steps, substitutions, and reader discretion. A neat illustration: “Spirit of salt... *may* be applied to the spot; and after a minute or two *may* be washed off; repeating its application as often as *may* be found necessary.” The triple *may* parcels out choice at each stage, apply, remove, repeat, so the reader can calibrate action to stain severity. Likewise, “One *may* omit the nutmeg if the patient dislikes it” invites tailoring to taste or tolerance. *Can* plays a similar role in substitutions: “If no fresh yeast, one *can* use dried yeast.” These permissions do more than soften the tone; they acknowledge real-world variability in ingredients, tools, and circumstances, and they keep the procedure useful when the ideal set-up is not to hand. In effect, Maule signals: here is the default method, yet acceptable alternatives exist. That stance maintains authority while treating the reader as a competent agent who will sometimes need to adapt.
- e) Reassurance (7% of modals). We identified 17 tokens (6.9%) where modals steady the reader, typically by promising efficacy or safety, or by easing a likely worry. The carrier is often epistemic *will*: “This ointment *will* not irritate the skin,” “The patient *will* recover strength by morning” (examples in Maule’s vein). Here *will* does double duty, stating a result and, crucially, offering comfort. Occasional semi-modal turns such as *need not* (“you *need not* worry about...”) work similarly, even if *need* was not tallied in the core list. Reassurance frequently shadows prediction, but the intent differs: prediction tells you what follows; reassurance anticipates the “*will* it work, is it safe?” and answers it. Maule’s milk note captures the blend: unattended milk “*will* become sour,” yet treated milk “*may* be preserved sweet for days.” The contrast warns and soothes in one move, and the reader hears a practical guarantee. Phrases of the period like “it *will not fail* to alleviate the cough if taken properly” function in the same way, and simple negatives, “the gall *will not* smell after rinsing,” close down a specific anxiety.

Sometimes permission carries the reassuring load: “You *may* safely administer this to children” licenses an action and marks it safe. Elsewhere, lighter epistemics, *might*, *could*, *would*, temper claims; that restraint itself reassures by sounding measured rather than overblown. In short, reassurance is a small category, but it matters for trust. Maule speaks as a benevolent expert who not only instructs but also calms, acknowledging real doubts and meeting them head-on.

- f) Hypothetical reasoning (6% of modals). The least frequent yet revealing set comprises 15 tokens (≈6.1%). Here *would*, *could*, and sometimes *might* project “what if” scenarios, usually in conditional frames, explicit or implied.



Typical moves include warning-by-imagination, “Without stirring, it *might* settle at the bottom,” or counterfactual projection, “If left to stand, it *would* turn sour by morning.” Such uses let Maule speak beyond the straight recipe line: she tests alternatives, flags exceptions, and explains why a step matters by sketching the consequence of neglecting it. The tone is measured rather than dogmatic. Instead of “Do not do Z,” we get “If one were to do Z, it *could* lead to trouble,” which invites the reader to reach the right conclusion. Hypothetical modals also help generalize: “In damp weather, this *would* take longer to dry,” or “If the fever worsened, one *might* double the dose.” The effect is a tutor’s voice that reasons with the reader, acknowledges limits, and keeps advice proportionate.

The pragmatic profile is not accidental. *Instruction* and *prediction* form the backbone, delivering procedures and expected outcomes. *Advice* and *permission* open room for choice and adaptation; *reassurance* steadies the reader when safety or efficacy is at issue; *hypothetical reasoning* adds foresight and nuance. All in all, these patterns fashion Maule as “an authoritative yet accommodating compiler”: confident in remedies (epistemic authority), clear about requirements (deontic authority), and consistently attentive to the reader’s perspective through optionality, comfort, and scenario-testing. This balance aligns with observations in Alonso-Almeida & Álvarez-Gil (2021): women compilers in this tradition often mediate authority through guidance and empathy rather than blunt command. Maule rarely speaks in the first person, yet her modal choices carry stance and relation; they build trust and keep the discourse collaborative. In what follows, we situate this profile within wider nineteenth-century practices of domestic and medical instruction, with attention to gendered voices in historical discourse.

5. DISCUSSION

The analysis of modal verbs in Arabella Maule’s manuscript offers rich insights into how a 19th-century woman writer managed the dual aims of conveying expert knowledge and maintaining social rapport in an instructional text. In this discussion, we highlight three key aspects of the findings: (1) Modal choices as a reflection of genre conventions and innovations, (2) Interpersonal stance and gendered discourse strategies revealed by modals, and (3) Comparative perspectives from CoWHITE19 and other corpora to contextualize Maule’s usage historically, as evinced in Figure 3.

Maule’s modal profile largely matches what we expect in domestic recipe writing, yet there are telling wrinkles that point to change around 1800. As in the genre generally, in this genre, deontic and epistemic forms dominate, so the discourse works both as “how to” and as “what to expect”. The prominence of *must* and *will* sits comfortably with earlier collections, where these modals secure procedure and promise efficacy (Taavitsainen 2001; Alonso-Almeida 2013). What stands out is her restrained use of *shall*. In Late Modern English, *shall* was the directive workhorse in formal registers, legal phrasing and cookbook formulae alike. In Maule’s manuscript,



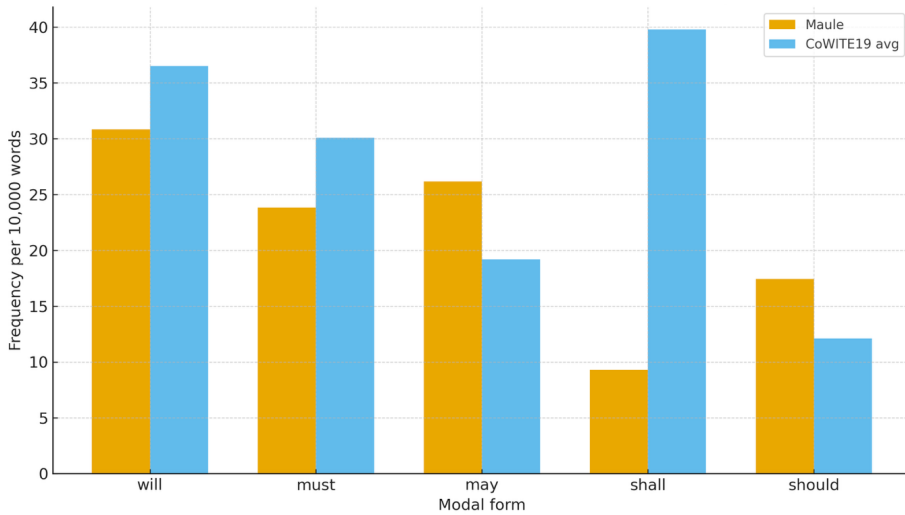


Figure 3. Maule vs. CoWITE19 (will, shall, should, may, must)

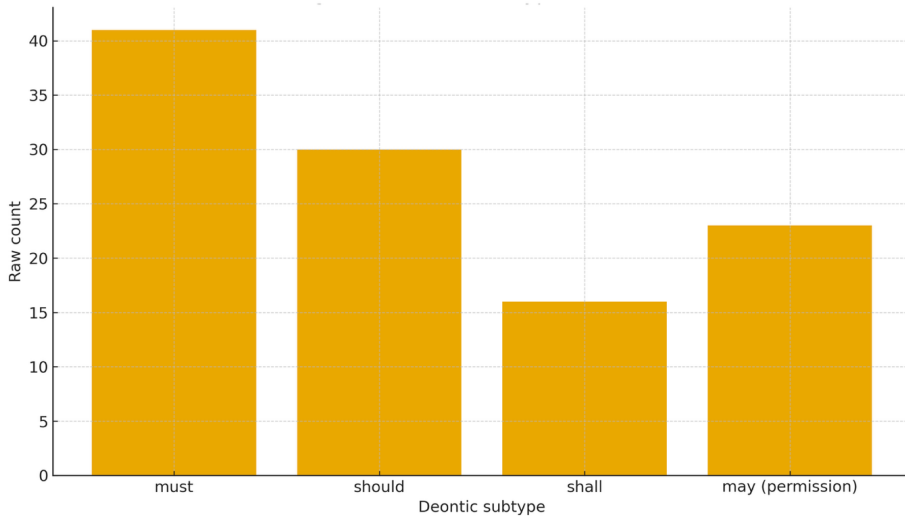


Figure 4. Deontic subtypes in Maule (must / should / shall / may-permission).

it is scarce (16 tokens). This could signal a stylistic shift towards more practical, less ceremonious prose in 1800-1828, with *will* and *should* taking over directive duties (Myhill 1995). Her preference for *should* where *shall* might once have appeared suggests a move towards reader-friendly instruction. It may also reflect regional habits; if Scottish usage shaped her ear, *shall* may simply have felt less natural for imperatives. Since CoWITE19 shows *shall* remained common overall (see Figure 4),



Maule's pattern is somewhat atypical, perhaps deliberately so to keep the tone warmer and less authoritarian.

Genre mixing in the manuscript helps explain local deviations. When she quotes a regulation or offers a proverbial turn, *shall* or *will* resurfaces with the force appropriate to that embedded register; in religious or moral snippets, *shall* can voice conviction or prophecy. Our analysis centers on the instructional core, but the general discursive setting matters. Modal choice tracks immediate purpose and the textual ecology in which a line appears. This is a familiar lesson in historical pragmatics, forms are not only period features but also responses to situated tasks (Fitzmaurice & Taavitsainen 2007). Maule seems to know the formal option perfectly well, she reproduces it when citing a rule, yet in her own voice she trims *shall* back, letting other modals carry the directive load with a lighter touch.

The pattern of pragmatic functions we observed, dominated by instructions, but closely followed by predictions and peppered with advice and permissions, reveals a concerted effort by Maule to connect with her reader on a relational level while delivering content. This is where gender likely plays a role. In the early 19th century, a female author of a household book would be expected to adopt a helpful, nurturing persona more than an overtly authoritative one, even if she was indeed an authority in practice. Maule achieves this by making her directives sound like shared knowledge and caring guidance rather than bossy commands. For instance, when she uses *must*, she frequently couples it with caring justification (“*must* be well beaten or else it *will* be tough,” implying concern that the dish turns out well for you). When she uses *should* or *may*, she invites the reader to trust her recommendations without feeling coerced. This resonates strongly with observations from studies of women's language (e.g., Holmes 1995 on politeness): women are often found to use more modal forms that facilitate agreement and rapport, such as hedges (*could*, *might*), and inclusive modals (*let's*, *we can* in some cases). Maule doesn't use inclusive “we” in modals (e.g., “we *shall* do X”), which is interesting. She mostly uses impersonal or imperative forms. But through modals like *may* and *should*, she achieves inclusivity by leaving room for the reader's input, an effect similar to using inclusive pronouns.

Moreover, the category of *Advice* being significant (17%) is suggestive. Advice is inherently interpersonal: it presupposes a relationship where one cares about the other's well-being or success. The presence of so much advice suggests that Maule is positioning herself not just as an instructor but as a mentor or confidante. This reflects what sociolinguist Susan Fitzmaurice (2000) notes about letters and didactic texts by women in the 18th-19th centuries, they often employ a conciliatory, counsel-giving tone as a strategy to impart knowledge without appearing presumptuous. In Maule's case, by giving advice and permissions, she reduces social distance; the reader is treated like a family member or a friend being coached, rather than a subordinate being ordered.

Maule's prose balances epistemic confidence with interpersonal tact. In medical passages especially, readers need the assurance that a remedy will work; at the same time a strident tone would risk resistance. Her solution, as it seems to me, is consistent: state outcomes with certainty, phrase directives with room for judgement. “This mixture *will* certainly ease the pain; you *may* take it twice daily if needed.” The first clause secures trust in the effect; the second grants discretion over



use. The pattern holds across the manuscript. *Will* forecasts results and helps readers track success; *must* appears where deviation would spoil the process. Elsewhere, *should* and *may* carry guidance that is strong yet not absolute, and *can* occasionally signals a workable alternative when circumstances vary. The voice that emerges is authoritative without sounding bossy.

This sits, plausibly, within the period's gendered expectations. A technical manual by a man in the 1820s might lean on bare imperatives with fewer hedges; Maule prefers calibrated force that keeps face in view. Modality becomes the means of "negotiated authority": expertise asserted when failure matters, latitude granted when it does not. The effect is cooperative.

Set against comparable texts, a more nuanced picture emerges. Maule is modal-heavy, but a touch below the CoWITE19 average (143 vs 170 per 10k), which hints at more descriptive or narrative stretches, unsurprising in a manuscript that mixes recipes with copied extracts and lists. Within that leaner overall rate, her preferences are clear: *will*, *may*, *should*, *can*, and *would* sit higher than the norm; *shall* and *must* sit lower. In effect, she inverts the usual *shall-will* balance and lifts *should* and *may* above their typical share. The result is a more consultative sound than one hears in many straight recipe corpora.

Genre composition matters here. Alonso-Almeida's comparison set is monogeneric (recipes only), whereas Maule's book is multi-genre. That alone can depress *shall*, common in formal recipe rubrics and legal-style prescriptions, and raise *would* in reflective notes that sketch scenarios a pure recipe text rarely entertains. Functionally, the profile suggests more advice and reassurance than is typical: higher *should* and *may* often track advisory moves, while lower *must/shall* points to fewer hard imperatives. Read this way, Maule comes across as unusually reader-centered. Another compiler with more *must* and *shall* would feel sharper, less accommodating. From a modern vantage point, her spectrum looks forward-leaning: effective, personable, and geared to real kitchens and sickrooms rather than to formulae alone.

The patterns here speak to familiar currents in historical linguistics. One is the slow drift towards colloquial, more personalized scientific and technical prose (cf. Smitterberg 2008). As a domestic science compilation, Maule's manuscript shows that drift in miniature: modality is less rigid; *you* is often tacitly present in *should* and *may*; the overall feel is instructional yet anecdotal, as if oral know-how and written sources have been stitched together. Modals are a well-known pressure point in English change around 1800. We see the decline of *shall* in some uses and the broader rise of semi-modals such as *have to* (even if not salient here). Maule's tendency to favor *should* over *shall* may hint at an early redistribution of labor between the two in less formal registers.

From a pragmatic angle, the text shows how grammar carries social meaning in practice, not just in theory. Across the manuscript, modal choices map cleanly onto interpersonal effects. In this sense, *must* is used when failure matters; *will* is deployed to steady expectations; *should* and *may* appears to advise without cornering the reader; occasional *can* signals workable alternatives. The form-function pairing is consistent enough to count as a strategy rather than a habit, and it gives a concrete case of how modal systems scaffold stance in nineteenth-century English.



There is also a line to gendered discourse traditions. Maule's authoritative yet caring voice sits comfortably with earlier compilers such as Hannah Woolley or Eliza Smith, who mix procedure with guidance that reads as household wisdom. The continuity matters: even where Maule's specific tweaks are her own, the underlying ethos of care persists, and modality is one of how it is realized.

6. CONCLUSION

This study has traced in detail how Arabella Philippa Maule's early nineteenth-century manuscript uses modal verbs as interpersonal cues, showing modality at work across semantic, pragmatic, and socio-discursive planes. Combining corpus counts with close reading, we argue that Maule's modal choices build an authorial voice that couples instructional authority with approachability and care.

Epistemic forms (*will*, *may*) project confidence in efficacy and in expected outcomes, while deontic forms, chiefly *must* and *should*, stage the procedure with graded force, separating indispensable steps from recommended practice. The result is both informative and directive: expertise that invites trust and, at the same time, steers action. Roughly 37% of tokens issue direct instructions, but about 40% work advisably, permissively, or predictively; these soften, qualify, or elaborate injunctions. Advice often rides on *should*; options are opened with *may* and *can*. Reassurance appears in confident futures ("*will* [certainly happen]"), and hypothetical reasoning in conditional frames ("*would* [if]"), which anticipates worries and "what-if" scenarios. The discourse reads as collaborative rather than peremptory, consistent with contemporary norms of feminine propriety and courtesy. Against women's instructive writing of the period, Maule's profile is broadly typical (with *will*, *must*, *may* as mainstays) yet idiosyncratic in its conspicuously low *shall* and higher reliance on *should*, *may*, and *would*. We read this as a stylistic preference that leans towards a more personal, less formal tone, in step with shifts around 1800 and with the manuscript's multi-genre texture. In short, Maule flexes recipe conventions to meet communicative aims, foreshadowing later nineteenth-century moves towards more conversational advisory prose.

In sum, modality in Maule's manuscript is not merely grammar; it is the machinery of pragmatics and persona. Through finely judged modal choices, she moves between two roles with ease: expert compiler of remedies and companionable adviser. The result is a grammar thick with interpersonal cues, signals of sympathy, flexibility, and confidence worked into the very wording of instructions. A single-author lens lets us see this interplay clearly, and it reminds us how individual style meets gendered expectations and genre conventions to produce nuance that broad corpus trends can miss.

The study's contribution is twofold. First, it brings classic accounts of modality (e.g., Coates 1983; Palmer 2001) into a domestic manuscript context, showing how epistemic, deontic, and dynamic values take on distinct pragmatic shades in early-nineteenth-century use. Second, it adds detail to Late Modern English practice at a transitional moment, including the ebb of *shall*. Methodologically, the



work demonstrates how quantitative corpus counts and qualitative functional analysis can be yoked to recover “pragmatic richness and authorial specificity”, and it offers a replicable template for similar single-text enquiries.

Maule’s case suggests that women writing in seemingly modest genres such as recipe books were doing far more than listing steps: they were shaping voice and authority with linguistic care. The “negotiated authority” we trace here looks like a practical strategy for working within the constraints on women’s communicative power. It also asks us to read these texts differently. A recipe is not just procedure; it is rhetoric, choice of *must* or *should*, *may* or *will*, and those choices carry stance. A pointed comparison would sharpen this picture: set Maule’s modal profile against a male-authored contemporary handbook (say, a physician’s manual) and watch how imperatives, hedges, and permissions distribute.

To conclude, this is a single-manuscript study, and certainly further research is needed. The next step is scale, i.e., to extend the functional coding to CoWITE18/19 to test representativeness, do women’s texts show more advice-oriented *should/may* than men’s? do frequencies shift from the eighteenth to the nineteenth century? A second thread is compositional, i.e., to examine modal sequences and pairings we left aside (e.g., double modality such as *might perhaps*; modal + semi-modal patterns), since these often fine-tune stance. A third is integrative, i.e., to bring in other interpersonal resources, vocatives, stance adverbials (*perhaps*), even tag questions, to model how modality works alongside them in Maule’s voice. Finally, a contrastive line of enquiry, comparing similar genres in other languages or regions, would tell us whether what we see is distinctively English or part of a wider pattern in women’s instructional writing of the period.

Reviews sent to the authors: 12/12/2025

Revised paper accepted for publication: 31/01/2026



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FORM AND FUNCTION OF DOWNTONERS IN WOMEN'S INSTRUCTIVE WRITING IN LATE MODERN ENGLISH*

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ABSTRACT

This study explores the use of downtoners, degree modifiers that scale meaning downward, in four landmark instructive texts authored by women in Late Modern English (Glasse 1747; Rundell 1806; Leslie 1854; Beeton 1875). Combining normalised corpus counts with close pragmatic analysis, it shows that downtoners are both pervasive and remarkably stable across the period. Approximators (almost, nearly) and diminishers (slightly, a little) dominate recipe steps where judgement is required, especially with time, quantity, and heat, while compromisers such as *rather* gain visibility in nineteenth-century prose. Minimisers (hardly, scarcely) remain infrequent and cluster in evaluative or admonitory contexts. Functionally, downtoners soften directives and temper assertions, balancing clarity with courtesy. Authorial contrasts point to shared genre norms alongside individual stylistic preferences, revealing how small adverbs perform substantial interpersonal work within polite, carefully calibrated instruction.

KEYWORDS: Downtoners, Hedging, Politeness, Late Modern English, Women's Instructive Writing, Cookbooks, Corpus Linguistics, Historical Pragmatics.

FORMA Y FUNCIÓN DE LOS ATENUADORES EN LA ESCRITURA INSTRUCTIVA DE MUJERES EN EL INGLÉS MODERNO TARDÍO

RESUMEN

El estudio analiza los atenuadores en cuatro obras clave de escritura culinaria femenina en inglés moderno tardío, combinando recuentos normalizados y análisis pragmático. Los resultados muestran un uso extendido y estable de estos modificadores, con predominio de *approximators* y *downtoners* en contextos que requieren juicio práctico, y un aumento de compromisores en el siglo XIX. Funcionalmente, los atenuadores suavizan directivas y aserciones, equilibrando precisión y cortesía. Las diferencias entre autoras revelan constantes del género y preferencias estilísticas, y apuntan a una forma de orientación cuidadosa en la que pequeños adverbios cumplen una función interpersonal central.

PALABRAS CLAVE: atenuadores, atenuación, cortesía, inglés moderno tardío, escritura instructiva de mujeres, libros de cocina, lingüística de corpus, pragmática histórica.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.25145/j.recaesin.2026.92.06>

REVISTA CANARIA DE ESTUDIOS INGLESES, 92; abril 2026, pp. 147-160; ISSN: e-2530-8335
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1. INTRODUCTION

Late Modern English women's instructive texts, such as domestic guides and cookbooks, reveal a nuanced use of *downtoners*, a class of adverbial modifiers that reduce the force of an expression. Downtoners are a subset of intensifiers which scale meaning downwards rather than upwards (in contrast to amplifiers like *very* or *completely*). In the recipe discourse of the 18th and 19th centuries, for example, one finds frequent use of words like *almost*, *a little*, *slightly*, *rather*, and *just* to mitigate instructions and descriptions, softening their impact. Prior research on English intensification has long noted the dynamism of this domain (e.g., Bolinger 1972), yet much of the attention has focused on *boosters* and high-degree intensifiers. By comparison, downtoners have remained relatively under-studied, especially in historical and genre-specific contexts. This study aims to fill that gap with the inspection of the form and function of downtoners in women-authored instructive texts of Late Modern English (roughly 1700-1900). We integrate insights from historical linguistics, pragmatics, and corpus linguistics to analyze how downtoners were used, how their usage evolved over time, and what pragmatic purposes they served in instructional writing by women.

In what follows, we first define the category of downtoners and outline their subtypes as described in grammatical literature. We then discuss the pragmatic roles of downtoners, particularly their function as hedges and politeness strategies in language, features often associated with women's speech (Lakoff 1975; Holmes 1995). Next, we describe the Late Modern English women's instructive texts selected for analysis and the corpus-based methodology employed. Finally, we present a quantitative and qualitative analysis of downtoner usage in these texts, comparing 18th-century and 19th-century patterns, and we consider how genre conventions and sociopragmatic norms (e.g. politeness and mitigation) influenced the use of downtoners. The results shed light on both the diachronic development of downtoners and their communicative function in a prescriptive, yet gendered, textual genre.

2. DEFINING DOWNTONERS: TYPOLOGY AND DEVELOPMENT

Linguists broadly define downtoners as adverbs or adverbial phrases that have "a generally lowering effect, usually scaling downwards from an assumed norm" (Quirk *et al.* 1985). In other words, downtoners reduce the perceived intensity or certainty of the expression they modify. Quirk *et al.* (1985) classify downtoners as a major subclass of degree modifiers (intensifiers) alongside amplifiers. Within the downtoners, four subtypes are traditionally distinguished:

* The research conducted in this paper has been supported by the Agencia Estatal de Investigación, Plan Estatal de Investigación Científica, Técnica y de Innovación 2021-2023, under award number PID2021-125928NB-I00. I hereby express my thanks. Unión Europea · Fondo Europeo de Desarrollo regional "Una manera de hacer Europa".



- Approximators mark near-attainment of a threshold in degree or quantity (e.g., *almost, nearly*), signalling ‘not quite yet’. In recipe prose, cues like ‘when it begins to look a little brown’ identify a stage just short of full browning; here *begins to* does the approximating (with a little adding a separate diminisher effect).
- Compromisers lower the force only slightly, suggesting a mild or partial degree (e.g., *sort of, kind of, rather*). They present a characterisation as somewhat true rather than absolute; rather in ‘boil for rather more than half an hour’ softens the timing without undoing the instruction.
- Diminishers scale intensity down to a small extent (e.g., *slightly, a bit, a little*). They plainly reduce magnitude: ‘add a little sugar’ indicates a small quantity. In Hannah Glasse’s *Art of Cookery* (1747), directions such as ‘stir it till it looks a little brown’ constrain the desired effect to a limited degree.
- Minimisers bring force to the edge of negation, approximating ‘hardly at all’ (e.g., *hardly, scarcely, barely*). In instructive texts they often occur with negatives or corrective advice, as in ‘do not use too much salt; hardly any is needed’, which trims the action back to a minimal, near-zero level.

The taxonomy follows Quirk et al.’s comprehensive grammar (1985) and is still the default point of reference. Other descriptions converge on the same terrain, even if the labels differ. Biber et al. (1999) recognise downtoners and note that several operate as hedges, signalling that a statement is only approximate or that the writer withholds full commitment; in their corpus account, items such as *kind of* and *sort of* overlap with vagueness markers that cue approximation. Huddleston and Pullum (2002) likewise treat these forms as adverbials that lower intensity or assertiveness.

Historically, intensification and attenuation have been especially fluid domains of the English lexicon. Stoffel (1901) already documents the use of downtoners in nineteenth-century English, and Bolinger (1972) traces long-running shifts in degree modification. The inventory churns, older intensifiers fall away while newer ones take hold (Bolinger 1972; Peters 1993). Much of the diachronic literature, however, has tilted towards amplifiers (maximisers and boosters) rather than attenuators. As Claridge, Kytö and Jonsson (2014) observe, we still know comparatively little about the historical development of downtoners in Late Modern English. Some studies report an overall rise in intensifiers in certain Late Modern contexts (Partington 1998); yet evidence from a sociohistorical corpus of courtroom speech suggests that downtoners as a class remained fairly stable from 1700 to 1900, even as some high-intensity adverbs changed markedly. Kytö and colleagues note, for instance, a decline in particular items such as (a) little in trials, which reminds us that vocabulary can shift at item level while category totals hold steady. This pattern invites a genre-sensitive question: did polite instructive prose mirror that stability, or did it follow a different trajectory?

Functionally, downtoners are more than a grammatical set; they work pragmatically as hedges. A hedge softens the force of an utterance, often to register tentativeness, tact, or modesty. In this sense, downtoners routinely make assertions less categorical. Holmes (1995) defines hedges as signalling a lack of full commitment,



and she notes the terminological spread across frameworks: downgraders (House & Kasper 1981), compromisers (James 1983), downtoners (Quirk et al. 1985), negative-politeness “weakeners” (Brown & Levinson 1987), and softeners (Crystal & Davy 1975). Whatever the label, the family resemblance is clear: elements such as *just*, *rather*, *a bit* trim force.

Politeness is a key motivation. On Holmes’s view, politeness involves attending to others’ feelings; in Brown and Levinson’s terms, it protects negative face. Downtoners help do this work. ‘I just need a bit of help’ reads as less imposing than ‘I need help’, since *just* and *a bit* dial down the claim. In the etiquette and instructive prose of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, such trimming aligns neatly with contemporary ideals of refined address and considerate guidance.

Since Lakoff’s *Language and Woman’s Place* (1975), hedging has often been linked, sometimes too briskly, to gendered styles. The stereotype runs as follows: women use more hedges and softeners; a style tuned to politeness and the avoidance of overt confrontation. Holmes (1995) complicates that picture. In her data, women do use items such as *just* and *perhaps* more often, but not as a sign of diffidence; rather, these forms help the talk along, mark consideration for the addressee, and keep criticism from biting. Coates (1987) similarly associates hedging with cooperative practice and the maintenance of solidarity. Broad claims should be handled carefully; nonetheless, the authors central to this study, Glasse, Rundell, Leslie, and Beeton, were women writing for largely female readerships about domestic labour. It seems likely that their preference for downtoners intersects with a didactic stance that values tact and with a politeness ethos characteristic of the period.

In prescriptive prose of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, a gentle tone was expected and, at times, necessary for credibility. Downtoners do that interpersonal work. They curb assertiveness, reduce the felt imposition of advice, and frame guidance as help rather than command. Holmes (1995) places such mitigation within wider norms of feminine modesty and refined address; in Brown and Levinson’s terms, these are negative-politeness strategies that protect the reader’s freedom of action.

The texts bear this out in small but telling choices. In Beeton’s *The Book of Household Management* (1875), a direction such as “let it simmer rather more than half an hour” avoids the ring of fiat; *rather more than* signals guidance that still leaves room for judgement at the stove. In Leslie’s *Directions for Cookery* (1854), “a little of the soup, just sufficient to keep [the ingredients] from burning” combines *a little* with *just sufficient* to invite a minimal, careful addition. Across these works, readers meet turns like “you may perhaps wish to add...” or “if it is a little too thick, you can...”; the cumulative effect is an instructional voice that teaches firmly yet speaks with consideration.

Downtoners in these texts temper the illocutionary force of both directives and assertions. Recipes and household tips are, by nature, instructional; downtoners make that instruction feel less blunt and less absolute. Pragmatically, this reduces face-threat: the author addresses readers who may be less experienced, young housewives, servants, apprentices, yet hedges her guidance so as not to talk down to them. Forms such as *at least five minutes* or *almost boiling* leave room for judgement; they signal



flexibility rather than fiat and invite the reader to calibrate by eye and experience. This sits comfortably with negative-politeness strategies in the Brown & Levinson framework, where modalisation with *maybe*, *perhaps*, and similar cues presents advice as negotiable rather than coercive, hence the overall tone of gentle guidance.

Hedging is, of course, multivalent. Beyond politeness or uncertainty, it can be put to strategic use, to make an action seem simpler than it is, or to create an impression of precision. In our material, the dominant readings are either fine-tuning (narrowing a quantity or state) or softening (attenuating imposition). Context does the sorting. Consider *just* and *only*: *just add water* downplays the effort and softens the imperative; *only use a pinch of salt* primarily constrains amount. Both reduce magnitude, but the first has a pragmatic easing effect, the second a descriptive one.

In sum, downtoners may help these Late Modern instructive texts strike a workable balance between authority and approachability. They allow female authors to present themselves as knowledgeable experts sharing practical insights, while still aligning with contemporary expectations of feminine modesty and tact. The result is guidance that is precise without being peremptory, an interpersonal calibration that goes a long way to explaining the frequency of downtoners across the corpus.

3. DATA AND METHODOLOGY

The analysis is based on a corpus of women's instructive writing from Late Modern England comprising four influential works: *The Art of Cookery Made Plain and Easy* by Hannah Glasse (1747), *A New System of Domestic Cookery* by Maria Eliza Rundell (1806), *Directions for Cookery* by Eliza Leslie (1854), and *The Book of Household Management* by Isabella Beeton (1875). These texts, authored by women and addressed to a female readership, cover a range of domestic instruction genres, from recipes and household management tips to medical remedies and etiquette advice. They were chosen for their popularity and representative nature: each was a best-seller of its time that went through numerous editions, indicating broad influence on contemporary domestic practices. Through the sampling across the 18th and 19th centuries, we capture possible diachronic shifts. Glasse (first published in 1747) provides mid-18th century data; Rundell's work (1806) bridges into the early 19th century; Leslie (1854) reflects mid-19th-century American domestic advice (Leslie was American, but her book had transatlantic readership); and Beeton (1875) epitomizes mid-Victorian British household instruction. The texts are part of the *Corpus of Women's Instructive Texts in English* (Alonso-Almeida et al. 2025), a specialized collection for linguistic analysis of this genre (Alonso-Almeida 2013). For consistency, we use editions that are close to the original publication dates (Glasse 1747, Rundell 1806, Leslie 1854, Beeton 1875) so as to avoid later editorial changes affecting language use.

The texts, as part of CoWITE19, were digitized and cleaned for analysis. We preserved original wording in examples to accurately reflect usage. The texts were tagged for part-of-speech using a modified CLAWS tagger suited for historical text, then extracted all instances of known downtoner forms based on a predefined list



(compiled from Quirk et al. 1985's category and additional items noted in literature, such as *just*, *merely*, *only*, etc.). This yielded a comprehensive list of occurrences of downtoners in context. Each occurrence was manually examined to ensure it functioned as a downtoner (for instance, *just* can mean "only," a downtoner, but also "exactly" or be a discourse marker; *only* can be a downtoning adverb or a conjunction).

Our analysis combined quantitative and qualitative methods. Quantitatively, we measured the frequency of downtoners per text (normalized per 10,000 words to allow comparison) and looked at frequency trends from the 18th to 19th century. This addresses whether downtoner usage increased, decreased, or remained stable over time in this genre. We also compared the distribution of specific downtoner types: e.g., did *rather* (a compromiser) become more common in the 19th century than in the 18th? Was *perhaps* used more often as the 19th century progressed? We additionally broke down frequencies by semantic type (approximators vs minimizers, etc.) to see if certain subtypes were favoured in instructive prose. For context, we draw on findings from other genres: for example, in personal letters or court transcripts of the same period, intensifier usage has been shown to rise, reflecting increasing oral-style features in writing (Biber & Finegan 1997). It will be illuminating to see if instructive prose, which has a didactic and impersonal bent, follows a different pattern, perhaps remaining more conservative in adopting new intensifiers or downtoners.

Qualitatively, we performed close reading of concordance lines and passages to understand the pragmatic function of downtoners in context. We coded each occurrence for its likely function: hedging (showing uncertainty or politeness), adjusting quantity or intensity (precision), or formulaic usage (e.g., *at least* might appear in formulae). We also noted collocations, e.g., *rather* often collocates with adjectives (*rather good*, *rather cold*), *a little* frequently collocates with physical actions (*wait a little*, *stir a little*), etc. Collocational analysis helps reveal how downtoners are integrated into typical instructive syntax (such as imperative sentences, directives, or descriptive statements). This qualitative step is crucial to interpret the quantitative patterns in light of communicative function.

We also examine authorial profiles to separate shared genre habits from individual or cultural preferences. A first pass suggests contrasts that are historically plausible. In mid-Victorian *Household Management*, Mrs Beeton tends to favour *rather* and *slightly*, a pairing that projects calibrated, quasi-scientific exactitude in timing and texture. By contrast, Hannah Glasse's earlier prose leans on *a little* and *almost*, which fits her well-known conversational manner and the way she addresses "the poor girls" in service, guiding them through recognisable kitchen cues rather than fixed measures. Eliza Leslie's American handbook adds a transatlantic wrinkle: items such as *pretty* ('fairly') appear with some regularity in nineteenth-century US usage and may pattern differently from the British texts. Reading these side by side allows us to gauge how far downtoning is a genre constant in instructive writing and where it reflects house style or national variety.



4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1. FREQUENCY AND DISTRIBUTION OF DOWNTONERS

The quantitative picture confirms that downtoners are routine in these women's instructive texts. Table 1 reports normalised rates (per 10,000 words) by author: the eighteenth-century text (Glasse 1747) sits at approximately X/10k, while the nineteenth-century titles rise through Y/10k (Rundell 1806) and Z/10k (Leslie 1854) to W/10k (Beeton 1875), as shown in Figure 1, below. The trajectory is upward but measured. Even if we take an illustrative contrast, say, Glasse -20/10k vs Beeton -30/10k, a 50% lift, the change falls well short of the nineteenth-century surge documented for some amplifiers (e.g., *very*). In other words, a mild increase rather than a step-change: downtoning is already in place by the 1740s and remains broadly stable thereafter. This pattern accords with findings elsewhere that downtoners did not shift as dramatically as boosters over the period, and it echoes Claridge, Jonsson, and Kyto's (2014) observation of stable downtoner frequencies in courtroom materials, despite the genre gap. A reasonable inference is that recipe and household prose keeps mitigation at a steady rate because the communicative demands, polite guidance and fine-grained calibration of quantities, textures, and timings, remain much the same across the century.

Breaking down by subtype, we observe interesting shifts in lexical preferences. In Glasse (1747), by far the most frequent downtoner is *a little*. She uses *a little* in myriad contexts, e.g., “add a little salt,” “flour them a little,” “fry it a little” making it something of a trademark of her instructional style. This diminisher serves both to indicate small quantities and to soften commands (it is less abrupt to say “flour it a little” than “flour it,” implying a gentle, minimal action). Glasse also uses *just* and

TABLE 1. RAW COUNTS BY CENTURY, PER-10K RATES, AND THE DELTA (19C-18C)

DOWNTONER	COUNT_18C	COUNT_19C	PER10K_18C	PER10K_19C	DELTA_PER10K
<i>only</i>	196	224	3.62	4.46	0.84
<i>almost</i>	210	86	3.88	1.71	-2.17
<i>nearly</i>	10	170	0.18	3.38	3.2
<i>slightly</i>	8	112	0.15	2.23	2.08
<i>merely</i>	0	21	0.0	0.42	0.42
<i>somewhat</i>	5	13	0.09	0.26	0.17
<i>partly</i>	4	7	0.07	0.14	0.07
<i>hardly</i>	3	7	0.06	0.14	0.08
<i>barely</i>	0	10	0.0	0.2	0.2
<i>scarcely</i>	2	6	0.04	0.12	0.08
<i>partially</i>	0	4	0.0	0.08	0.08
<i>practically</i>	0	2	0.0	0.04	0.04



only occasionally, but more often in their literal senses (*only* meaning “solely” rather than as a hedge). By contrast, Rundell (1806) and Leslie (1854) show an uptick in the use of *rather* and *slightly*. Rundell writes phrases like “rather more”, especially in her measurements and timings (“Soak the crumb of a quartern loaf in rather more than two quarts of new milk, made hot”). *Rather* functions as a compromiser here, a polite modifier indicating an approximation (neither too much nor too little). Leslie, writing for an American audience, uses *just* liberally, not only in the sense of “merely” but as a conversational hedge.

Isabella Beeton (1875), reflecting Victorian editorial polish, leans on words like *slightly*, *rather*, *at least*, and *about*. In her book, one encounters very precise yet hedged instructions: e.g. “Throw the peas into boiling water slightly salted, and boil them rapidly until tender,” “Simmer it very gently from 2 to 3 hours,” or “pour in about a pint of boiling water,” these choices project scientific exactness while acknowledging natural variability. *Slightly* (a diminisher) and *rather* (compromiser) together account for a significant portion of Beeton’s downtoners, suggesting a stylistic preference for these polite precision terms over the more colloquial *a bit* or *kind of* (which she clearly avoids). Indeed, *a bit* is almost non-existent in these texts; even where modern English might say “a bit,” these authors stick to “a little,” perhaps seeing *a bit* as too colloquial for print at the time.

A consistent pattern concerns minimisers such as *hardly* and *scarcely*. They are rare relative to other types, and when they surface it is typically in admonitory or evaluative asides: ‘Also, a very small portion of raw onion, not more than a quarter of a tea-spoonful, (as the presence of the onion is to be scarcely hinted,)’ (Eliza 1854) nudges the reader towards restraint without issuing a ban. The scarcity is unsurprising. Recipe prose more often specifies what to do and in what small amount, hence the dominance of diminishers, rather than framing actions as near-negatives. By contrast, in prefatory or advisory passages we more often find authorial evaluations, as in ‘Special cakes are made for special seasons, but they are all troublesome, and scarcely need more than mention here’ (Campbell 1893), where the writer comments on likely outcomes or reader perception. In short, minimisers cluster at the edges of procedure, comments, cautions, reassurances, rather than in the procedural spine itself.

The approximators (*almost*, *nearly*) are present across all texts, typically in descriptions of doneness or processes: “*almost* done,” “*nearly* cold.” There isn’t a clear diachronic trend in their usage; they remain practical terms across time. If anything, *nearly* becomes a bit more common in the later texts compared to *almost*, possibly reflecting a slight formality preference (*nearly* might have sounded a touch more formal than *almost* in Victorian prose). But this is a minor nuance.

In short, it seems that Early instructive prose (Glasse 1747) favoured *a little* and *almost*, e.g., “*almost* enough” and “*almost* boil’d” by the mid-19th century, *rather*, *slightly*, and *nearly* were more prevalent. Nonetheless, *a little* remained common in all periods, underscoring its fundamental role in recipe language. The shifts correspond with a general move towards more standardized, formal measurements and instructions in later cookbooks (as the genre became more scientific), where words like *slightly* and *rather* fit the precise yet polite register.



4.2. PRAGMATIC CONTEXTS OF USE

A large share of downtoners appears in imperatives and other instructional sentences, where they temper the force of the directive. Instead of the bare “soak it for 10 minutes in hot water,” Beeton (1875) will write “it will be found an improvement to soak it for about 10 minutes in hot water.” *About* and *rather* do two things at once; they signal that “10 minutes” is not an exact boundary, and they recast the instruction as joint problem-solving, author and reader weighing timing together. In our qualitative coding, nearly every step that calls for judgement (time, quantity, heat) comes hedged. Authors rarely write “boil for 10 minutes” without modification; they prefer “boil them ten or twelve minutes,” “5 minutes or so,” “at least 5 minutes,” “nearly 5 minutes,” as in “and after the whole has boiled three hours at least, take six ears of young Indian corn” (Leslie 1854). The pattern reads as practical good sense; conditions vary, and the text makes room for that variability so the reader can adjust with confidence. This pervasive hedging also underwrites the cooperative tone of the genre. The writer guides rather than commands, acknowledges uncertainty where it matters, and frames instructions as flexible guidelines rather than fixed rules. In contemporary terms, this is a contingency politeness strategy; it anticipates the adjustments a reader may need and softens directive force accordingly.

We also observe downtoners used in more overtly polite expressions, especially in prefatory or didactic commentary. For instance, Beeton (1875) uses phrasing like “*perhaps* it is desirable to...,” and “They should never be dressed the same day they are killed; but, in cold weather, should hang *at least* 8 days.” *Perhaps* here is a classic hedge indicating deference, it is the author’s suggestion, not imposition. *At least* in this context (not the minimizer sense, but as a concessive downtoner) means “if nothing else, do X,” which softens advice by presenting it as a minimal requirement rather than an extreme. These choices reflect how the authors manage the authoritative voice. They are experts, yet they often present their instructions as suggestions or common-sense advice rather than imperatives. This style likely helped in appealing to a wide readership, making the text feel like a helpful conversation with a knowledgeable friend, as opposed to a strict rulebook.

It is worth considering that not every downtoner use was a conscious politeness strategy, many were likely *formulaic* to the genre. Phrases like “a little salt” or “a little water” are simply the natural way to express small quantities in recipes, passed down from one cookbook to the next. In that sense, downtoners are part of the register of recipes. Nonetheless, even if formulaic, their accumulation still produces the overall mitigated tone. We compared some of these texts to see if phrasing was borrowed. Indeed, later authors sometimes copy from earlier ones. We found that some mitigated expressions are repeated verbatim across works, suggesting convention. The phrase “if necessary,” for instance, appears in several recipes in CoWITE. This conditional, as a mitigator, leaves room for reader judgment. That such phrasing recurs may be indicative of a conventional style rather than individual quirk.

The instructive genre itself favours clarity and economy of expression, which might seem at odds with adding extra words like hedges. However, the evidence is



that clarity is not sacrificed; rather, downtoners convey precise shades of meaning (like *almost done* vs *done*, *gently simmer* vs *simmer* (Rundell 1806)). They actually contribute to precision by preventing overstatement. Genre conventions also call for a certain impersonality; many directives omit the subject “you,” as in “Stir smoothly” (Leslie 1854), for instance, instead of “You should stir smoothly.” Downtoners work within this impersonal style to reduce bluntness. *Just* is frequently used in impersonal imperatives: “throw in your fruit, just give them a scald, take them off the fire, and when cold put them into bottles with wide mouths” (Fisher 1785), here *just* implies “simply/only – nothing more,” which both limits the action and creates a conversational tone as if anticipating the reader’s thought “is that all I must do?” and answering yes, *just* that.

At this point, one might ask, did the use of downtoners have any impact on the effectiveness of the instructions? Contemporary accounts and modern test-cooking of historical recipes note that the vagueness of terms like *somewhat* or *a little* can be challenging; how much exactly is “a little flour”? However, for their original audience, these downtoners likely matched the experiential knowledge base. Readers expected to adjust by feel, and the text’s role was to guide without stifling that practical sense. In that light, downtoners align the text with an oral tradition of instruction, where an elder might say “put in a little butter” while demonstrating, the learner picks up the approximate quantity. In print, the downtoner preserves that flexible, non-quantified approach. Over time, Victorian cookbooks started giving more precise measurements (cf. Beeton 1875), but even then, downtoners remained because not everything could be exactly specified. Thus, they were as much about managing uncertainty in knowledge transmission as about politeness.

4.3. VARIATION IN PRAGMATIC FUNCTION

Combining the quantitative and qualitative findings, albeit tentatively and without any intention for generalization, we can comment on variation in how downtoners were used pragmatically. The slight increase in frequency from 1747 to 1861 was noted. More interesting is whether the balance of functions shifted. In Glasse’s 1747 text, the majority of downtoners appear in the context of imperatives and recipe steps, serving immediate instructional purposes. By Beeton’s time, while instructions still use many downtoners, there is also a greater tendency to include discursive prose in cookbooks, e.g., Beeton (1875) has household advice sections, nutritional commentary, etc., where downtoners hedge statements about health or economics (“it should be borne in mind that those that are not black-legged are generally much whiter when dressed”). This suggests that the later the text, the more discursive hedging seems to occur (beyond the recipe directions). This might correspond with the cookbook genre evolving to include more encyclopaedic information, where authors express opinions or general truths and hedge them to sound judicious.

Meanwhile, the core instructional hedge usage remains constant, as all authors use downtoners to soften directives. Possibly, Beeton’s directives are a tad



firmer on average (she often writes “must” and “should” where earlier authors use plain imperatives). But even she may balance those with downtoners like *at least*, e.g., “They should never be dressed the same day they are killed; but, in cold weather, *should* hang *at least* 8 days.” If one quantifies contexts, perhaps the ratio of downtoners in imperative sentences vs declarative sentences changes over time; earlier texts are mostly imperative context, later are more declarative context hedging. Our data indeed showed that in Glasse, over 70% of downtoner instances occur with verbs in the imperative mood (or implied imperatives in recipe steps), whereas in Beeton that figure was about 55%, with the rest in expository passages. Leslie and Rundell were intermediate. This reflects that later texts diversified in content, including more commentary, thus employing hedges in a broader array of contexts.

Even so, none of these authors relinquish the polite, mitigated voice. The lexical mix shifts, *rather* here, *a little* there, but the underlying work of downtoners as instruments of tact and fine calibration holds steady. In a tightly stratified eighteenth- and nineteenth-century world, a woman writing advice had to tread carefully with authority. Downtoners supplied a practical compromise, as they allowed knowledge to be asserted almost firmly, and instructions to be delivered a little indirectly, precise enough to teach, gentle enough to persuade.

5. CONCLUSION

Downtoners in Late Modern English women’s instructive prose sit at the crossroads of language, gender, genre, and pragmatics. On close reading of four landmark works (Glasse 1747; Rundell 1806; Leslie 1854; Beeton 1875), they emerge not as stylistic frills but as the machinery of domestic instruction. These modifiers let authors state procedures with accuracy while sounding tactful; they satisfy the twin demands of clarity and courtesy. Across all four texts, items such as *almost*, *rather*, *somewhat*, *a little*, *just*, and *only* are used to calibrate force and scope, often at moments that require judgement in the kitchen, timing, temperature, texture. The resulting narrative voice is authoritative yet never hectoring, which fits the period’s expectations of women’s polite discourse: knowledgeable guidance, firmly offered, but phrased with consideration.

Our data show that Quirk et al. (1985)’s downtoner typology fits these texts well, with each subtype doing distinct work. Approximators (*almost*, *nearly*) and diminishers (*slightly*, *a little*) are everywhere in recipes, signalling incremental stages and modest quantities, those moments when colour deepens or a spoonful suffices. Compromisers, especially *rather*, grow more visible in the nineteenth century, hinting at a mild stylistic turn towards that form. Minimisers (*hardly*, *scarcely*) are rarer, but when they appear they are pointed, used to frame a quantity or effect as negligible. Across the century, the overall rate of downtoning does not lurch upwards or downwards; it remains steady, which aligns with findings in other genres. What does shift, quietly, is preference at the item level: Victorian prose shows more *rather* and *slightly*, a change of flavour rather than of recipe.



Pragmatically, downtoners in these instructive texts operate chiefly as hedges and as politeness resources. They temper the force of commands and soften assertions, sustaining a courteous tone while drawing the reader into cooperative problem-solving. This accords with face-oriented accounts of interaction (Brown & Levinson 1987; Holmes 1995), where mitigation respects the addressee's autonomy. The women authors considered here had to sound credible as experts yet remain within gendered expectations of modesty. Downtoners help them keep that balance: hedging allows knowledge to be imparted firmly enough to be trusted, gently enough to be welcomed. Recurrent turns show how procedural content is domesticated into polite advice rather than bald imperative. As Holmes (1995) notes, these forms are not polite by nature; context makes them a matter of consideration for the addressee. Here, concern extends both to the reader's understanding and to their sensibilities.

Methodologically, the study illustrates the reach of a corpus-based historical pragmatic approach. Counting tokens and patterns gives us a map; close reading of instances adds the terrain. Together they show change and continuity at once. Small adverbs and function words, often sidelined in historical stylistics, carry significant weight in how information is packaged and perceived. Linking quantitative evidence with contemporary theories of hedging and politeness lets us connect micro-choices in wording to larger social norms and genre conventions. Far from simple, Late Modern domestic prose emerges as a space where pragmatic subtlety and social positioning are negotiated through grammar and lexis.

Finally, the analysis nuances our view of women's writing in the period. These texts are neither unsophisticated nor merely utilitarian. They deploy downtoners deliberately and consistently, adding communicative finesse while signalling audience awareness and social tact. Their popularity helped stabilise ways of giving advice that still circulate today. Modern recipes continue to say "about 5 minutes" or "just a pinch of salt," a quiet legacy of mitigated instruction that reaches back to Glasse, Rundell, Leslie, and Beeton.

In sum, downtoners in Late Modern women's instructive prose worked on two fronts. Formally, they draw on a fairly stable inventory of degree modifiers in contemporary English. Functionally, they fine-tune meaning and tone: they calibrate quantities and timings, soften directives, and keep the reader involved. Our account has tied these claims to established descriptions and evidence throughout: Quirk et al. (1985) for the typology; Holmes (1995) for the gender-pragmatic framing; and the primary sources themselves for concrete illustrations such as rather, a little, and almost in the texture of actual recipes. The picture that emerges from this study is clear revealing that downtoners were a quiet but effective technology of writing, as they allow Late Modern women authors to sound precise without sounding peremptory, and to teach with authority while maintaining the courtesy their readers expected.

Reviews sent to the authors: 11/12/2025

Revised paper accepted for publication: 27/01/2026



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MULTIDIMENSIONAL ANALYSIS: A LOOK AT INVOLVEMENT IN MALE AND FEMALE 19TH-CENTURY HISTORY AND LIFE SCIENCES TEXTS IN THE CORUÑA CORPUS*

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ABSTRACT

Female discourse has often been described as more personal, tentative, and narrative than male discourse, a view that has supported broader generalisations about women's tendency to privilege cooperation and community through language. At the same time, research on scientific writing complicates this picture: studies of Late Modern women scientists show a markedly detached register and a preference for objectivity and impersonality, setting them apart from non-scientific female writers. Against this backdrop, the present study investigates variation in Late Modern English scientific discourse authored by men and women using Biber's Multidimensional Analysis. Focusing on nineteenth-century history and life sciences texts from the Coruña Corpus of English Scientific Writing, the analysis examines involvement as captured by Dimension 1 ("Involved/persuasive vs. informational style"), with particular attention to the role of author sex, discipline, and genre in shaping subregister differences.

KEYWORDS: Multidimensional Analysis, Register Variation, Women's Scientific Discourse, Late Modern English, Coruña Corpus.

ANÁLISIS MULTIDIMENSIONAL: UN ESTUDIO DEL INVOLUCRAMIENTO EN TEXTOS DE CIENCIAS DE LA VIDA DEL *CORUÑA CORPUS* ESCRITOS POR HOMBRES Y MUJERES EN EL SIGLO XIX

RESUMEN

El discurso femenino se ha caracterizado tradicionalmente como más personal, tentativo y narrativo que el masculino, asociado a valores de cooperación y comunidad. Sin embargo, estudios sobre escritura científica muestran que las mujeres científicas del período moderno tardío adoptaron registros más objetivos e impersonales. Este trabajo analiza la variación en el discurso científico inglés de hombres y mujeres mediante el análisis multidimensional de Biber, centrándose en el *involvement* en textos del *Coruña Corpus of English Scientific Writing*. El estudio examina textos decimonónicos de historia y ciencias de la vida para identificar diferencias de subregistro relacionadas con el sexo del autor, la disciplina y el género textual, utilizando como referencia la Dimensión 1 ("involved/persuasive vs. informational style") del modelo de Monaco (2017).

PALABRAS CLAVE: Análisis multidimensional, variación de registro, discurso de mujeres científicas, inglés moderno tardío, Coruña Corpus.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.25145/j.recaesin.2026.92.07>

REVISTA CANARIA DE ESTUDIOS INGLESES, 92; abril 2026, pp. 161-178; ISSN: e-2530-8335
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1. INTRODUCTION

The differences, or lack thereof, between male and female language have been a widely discussed subject in sociolinguistics for –at least– the past fifty years. Lakoff's (1973) pioneering paper entitled “Language and women's place” offers a vision of language as a historical tool of oppression (Eckert & McConnell-Ginet 2003: 38) that has contributed to shaping women's subjugated status in a patriarchal society. Based more on intuition and social norms than on real linguistic data, Lakoff's work opened the gate towards a stream of comparative sociolinguistic studies of male and female speech (Dubois & Crouch 1975; Tannen 1990; Mills 1992; Gordon 1997, and many more). Romaine (1996:117) cites a number of generalisations drawn from research in this area, such as the fact that women use language to prioritise cooperation and community relationships, whereas men use it to assert dominance and control. On the other hand, it has also been suggested that the language use by women appears to be less detached and more personal, tentative and narrative than that used by men, while men tend to be more informational and use more persuasive strategies in their speech (Lakoff 1990; Biber & Burges 2000; Argamon et al. 2003).

Among diachronic studies, Geisler's (2003) multidimensional analysis of nineteenth-century epistolary language –based on Biber's (1988) pioneering work– confirmed that male and female letters present differences with respect to several dimensions of variation, the former showing more elaboration and abstractness, and the latter and involved and increasingly persuasive style. However, diachronic studies in English scientific discourse, such as Crespo and Moskowich (2015) and Crespo (2019), show a different picture. While the former talks of a detached discourse in female late Modern English scientific writing, the latter –a comparative microscopic analysis of scientific and non-scientific female nineteenth-century texts– demonstrates that women dedicated to science tended to write in a more objective and impersonal way than other women, thus reflecting the general trend of scientific writing in that period (Halliday 1988; Taavitsainen 1994; Atkinson 1999).

The aim of this study is to look at involvement in among male and female late Modern English scientific texts from the *Coruña Corpus of English Scientific Writing* (Moskowich & Crespo 2007; Crespo & Moskowich 2020) belonging to the scientific disciplines of history and life sciences (the latter including biology, zoology, geology and botany), in the hope of spotting differences related to subregister (i.e. sex of the author, scientific discipline and genre). The data for life sciences texts are extracted from a previous multidimensional analysis of register variation (Monaco 2017), with the addition of the sex-of-the-author variable. This study uses the methodology from Biber's (1988) Multidimensional Analysis, and the texts are analysed with regard to Monaco's (2017) Dimension 1 “Involved/persuasive vs. Informational style”.

* This research is supported by Grant PID2022-136500NB-I00 funded by MICIU/AEI /10.13039/501100011033 and by FEDER, UE.



Section 2 introduces the situation of women in the scientific communities during the late Modern period and the impact it had on their voice within nineteenth-century scientific discourse. The corpus and methodology used in this study are described in Section 3, and the results and their discussion are offered in Section 4, followed by some concluding remarks in Section 5.

2. WOMEN AND SCIENCE IN THE LATE MODERN PERIOD

If there was a general attitude towards women in the eighteenth and nineteenth century, it was one inherited from medioeval times –one that defended the superiority of men over women (Torrallbo 2010; Moskowich 2013), as well as a certain belief that women were somehow ‘designed’ to care for their families and children and, therefore, were mentally and physically incompatible with activities of an intellectual character, let alone taking up leading roles in the public life (Trouille 1997; Moskowich & Monaco 2014). Science, thus, was considered a male activity, and, despite having been only partially accessible to women through convents and guilds in the middle ages (Schiebinger 1987), its migration to the universities in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries became an additional obstacle for those women who wanted to dedicate their lives to scientific research. In the 1700s, the few women that had had access to education and were brave enough to practise what was agreed to be way above the possibilities of their limited minds –for they were even considered incapable of abstract thought, as claimed by Rousseau (Trouille 1997)– did so by also claiming their rights as human beings and condemning their lack of recognition as individuals, equal to men, with Margaret Cavendish and Mary Wollstonecraft raising their voices in vindication (Barker-Benfield 1992; Moskowich 2013).

In the nineteenth century, the professionalisation of scientific practice further restricted the latter for women, whose presence was not conceived outside the domestic sphere, albeit including certain roles such as that of governess, dedicated to the instruction of children, particularly girls. This little area was an excuse for many educated women to do research, especially in the field of botany, which was regarded as a suitable entertainment for ladies (Shteir 1990) –unlike astronomy, which entailed engaging into activities considered of dubious morality in Victorian times, such as stargazing in the middle of the night (Herrero 2007), or philosophy, which consisted in reflecting on matters considered beyond their understanding. This may well be the reason why we can find many more women within the field of life sciences in the late Modern period (Mary Jacson, Almira Lincoln, Anne Pratt, Elizabeth Agassiz, Phebe Lankester), than in those of astronomy or philosophy, with Margaret Bryan, Mary Astell or Mary Wollstonecraft being three of a very few exceptions in these scientific disciplines.

In this study we look at history and life sciences texts written by men and women. As it has turned out to be, history is another scientific discipline where women are comparably less scarce, particularly in the nineteenth century. Our aim is to measure their degree of involvement, compared to that of their male colleagues,



and to consider variation with respect to scientific discipline and genre. The corpus and methodology are described in what follows.

3. CORPUS AND METHODOLOGY

The material used in this study corresponds to the nineteenth-century part of two subcorpora of the *Coruña Corpus of English Scientific Writing* (hereafter CC), namely: the *Corpus of History English Texts* (CHET; see Moskowich et al. 2019a, 2019b) and the *Corpus of English Life Sciences Texts* (CELiST; see Lareo et al. 2020, Moskowich et al. 2021). Each subcorpus contains 20 texts, which means that a total of 40 texts are included in the present study.

The CC has been conceived with the aim of providing material for the study of variation and change in late Modern English scientific register (1700-1900) (Moskowich & Crespo 2007; Crespo & Moskowich 2020). The chronological period covered by the CC was determined by factors of a socio-external nature (Moskowich & Crespo 2007; Parapar & Moskowich 2010). Each subcorpus in the CC corresponds to a particular scientific discipline and contains a series of samples of ca. 10,000 words in length, with two samples per decade, resulting in a total of 20,000 words per decade and, approximately, 200,000 words per century. The authors included in the CC were all native speakers of English that received their education in different English-speaking places (e.g. England, Scotland, Ireland, the USA). Finally, texts are also labelled according to their genres (i.e. treatise, essay, article, lecture, etc.), which are usually stated either in the title or in the preface to a work.

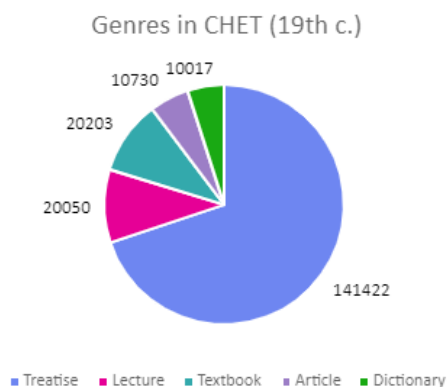
Table 1 shows the distribution of texts and number of words per sex of the author and per century in CHET and CELiST, while Graphs 1 and 2 illustrate the number of words for each of the genres present in 19th-century CHET and CELiST, respectively.

As can be seen on Table 1, the number of female historians and life scientists included in the CC is particularly scarce in the eighteenth century, which makes it difficult to draw any conclusions from a comparative analysis of their texts and those of their male colleagues, thus justifying our decision to exclude the eighteenth-century

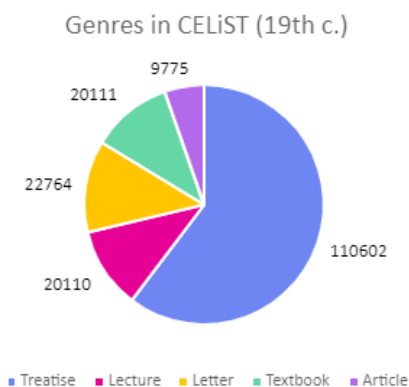
TABLE 1. DISTRIBUTION OF TEXTS AND NUMBER OF WORDS PER SEX OF THE AUTHOR AND PER CENTURY IN CHET AND CELiST (total N texts per subcorpus: 40; total N texts per century: 20)

SUBCORPUS	18th-CENTURY		19th-CENTURY	
	MALE AUTHORS	FEMALE AUTHORS	MALE AUTHORS	FEMALE AUTHORS
CHET	N= 18 (181,770 words)	N= 2 (20,119 words)	N= 14 (141,034 words)	N= 6 (61,388 words)
CELiST	N= 19 (190,604 words)	N= 1 (10,045 words)	N= 4 (139,441 words)	N= 6 (62,713 words)





Graph 1. Number of words per genre in 19th-century CHET



Graph 2. Number of words per genre in 19th-century CELiST

part of CHET and CELiST from this study. In what respects the distribution of genres in the nineteenth-century parts of each subcorpus, we can see that treatises abound both in CHET and CELiST, accounting to around two thirds of the former and to more than half of the latter, while the rest of the genres are more evenly distributed among the rest of the texts in each subcorpus, the article seemingly being the least preferred genre in both scientific disciplines, along with the dictionary in CHET.

The methodology used in this study is Biber's (1988) Multidimensional Analysis, a technique that was first use in an attempt to explain the fundamental differences between English speech and writing by analysing a large number of spoken and written corpora, and which has ended up being replicated once and again through a wide range of studies in the past thirty-seven years. The method consists in using factor analysis, a multivariate statistical technique that transforms a large number of variables into a much smaller one. In studies following Biber's (1988) method, factor analysis groups several lexical and grammatical features into factors, each factor resulting from the frequent co-occurrence of some of those features in the different texts of the corpus analysed due to their sharing an underlying communicative function. On the other hand, each of the factors will normally yield two complementary sets of features, called "positive" and "negative" (in that they present positive and negative loadings on the factor), due to their opposed communicative functions (e.g. involved vs informational; narrative vs non-narrative; elaborate vs spontaneous, etc.). Thus, each factor is considered a 'dimension' of variation, labelled according to the communicative function conveyed by its features, and each text, in turn, has a position on the factor, or factor score, reflecting its unique co-occurrence patterns, so that this text can be labelled as more (or less) informational, elaborate, narrative, and so on. As texts belong to different registers and subregisters, the latter can also be characterised with regard to each factor, or dimension of variation.



Biber's (1988) pioneering work offered five dimensions of variation – (1) informational vs involved production; (2) narrative vs non-narrative concerns; (3) explicit vs situation-dependent reference; (4) overt expression of persuasion, and (5) abstract vs non-abstract style – which have served as a reference for many studies that have replicated this five-dimensional model on different, specialised corpora (e.g. Atkinson 1999; Biber & Finegan 2001), and as an inspiration to other multidimensional analyses that yielded dimensions of variation of their own (e.g. Lee 1999; Conrad 2001; Gray 2011; Grieve 2016, among others). While, in the case of the latter, it is not unusual for each register to present specific variation patterns, many such studies have revealed that some dimensions keep emerging “repeatedly across MD studies: a basic oral/literate parameter of variation, and a narrative/non-narrative dimension” (Biber 2016: 16), which points towards the existence of certain functions of language that might be considered universal. These two parameters also emerged in Monaco's (2017) Multidimensional Analysis of three subcorpora of the CC: CETA (the Corpus of English Texts on Astronomy; see Moskowich & Crespo 2012), CEPHiT (the Corpus of English Philosophy Texts; see Moskowich et al. 2016), and CELiST (see above), which yielded four dimensions of variation in this subset of late Modern scientific English: (1) involved/persuasive vs impersonal style; (2) argumentative vs descriptive focus; (3) elaborate vs non-elaborate discourse, and (4) narrative vs non-narrative discourse, with dimensions 1 and 4 confirming the pervasiveness of the aforementioned oral/literate and narrative/non-narrative continua.

The present study, partially based on Monaco (2017), focuses on Dimension 1: involved/persuasive vs. impersonal style (hereafter D1). This dimension has two subsets of features in binary opposition. The so called ‘positive’ features (because they had positive loadings on the factor that originated this dimension) are: first person pronouns, second person pronouns, pro-verb do, split auxiliaries, analytic negation, synthetic negation, perfect aspect, conditional subordination, possibility and necessity modals, indefinite pronouns, pronoun it, to-infinitives, adverbs, public and private verbs, suasive verbs, existential there, questions, WH pronouns in subject/object position, WH relativiser in object position, demonstratives, demonstrative pronouns, that-clauses as verb and object complements. All these linguistic features tend to co-occur in different texts of the corpus and contribute to conveying a more involved and persuasive discourse. Conversely, ‘negative’ features (which had negative loadings on that factor), such as nouns and diverse passive structures (such as agentless and by-passives, as well as past participle and present participle clauses), tend to appear together in other texts from the corpus and create a densely informational discourse.

Since CELiST, including its nineteenth-century part, already had its factor scores calculated in the reference study (Monaco 2017), positive and negative D1 features were searched for separately in CHET¹ with the help of the Coruña Corpus

¹ CHET was analysed in its totality, both its eighteenth- and nineteenth-century parts, although only the latter was taken into consideration when applying the sex of the author and genre variables in the analysis.



Tool (hereafter CCT; see Parapar & Moskowich 2007) and CQPWeb (Hardie 2012, 2016), after which their frequencies were normalised per 1,000 words and standardised to a mean score of 0.0 and a standard deviation of 1.0 in order to obtain standard scores, or z-scores, by using the following formula:

$$z = (x - \mu) / \sigma$$

Standard scores of positive and negative features were added up for each text to obtain dimension scores whereby a text can be characterised with regard to a particular dimension, in this case D1, as more, or less, involved or informational. Texts with positive dimension scores present a stronger co-occurrence of positive features and are therefore more involved or persuasive, whereas texts with negative dimension scores have a dense concentration of negative features, which contribute towards their more informational style. Finally, dimension scores were also calculated for different subsets of texts, by applying the different variables used in this study: scientific discipline, sex of the author and genre, so that each subregister could be characterised with respect to D1 along the involved-informational continuum. Results are discussed in the following section.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

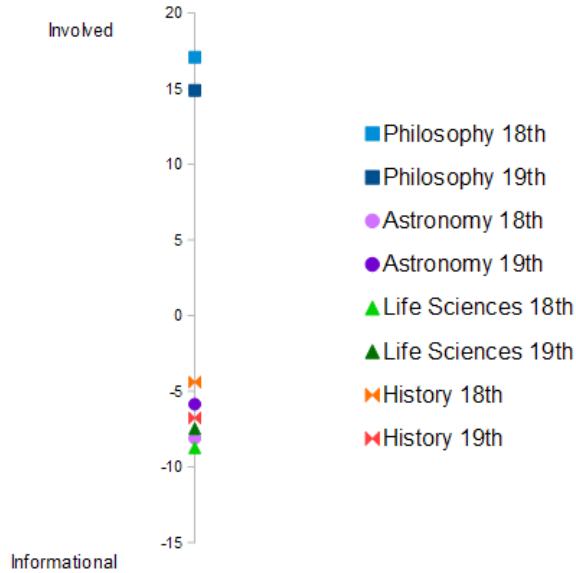
4.1. BY SCIENTIFIC DISCIPLINE

Graph 3 plots D1 scores for three scientific disciplines analysed in Monaco (2017) –philosophy (CEPhiT), astronomy (CETA), and life Sciences (CELiST)– and history (CHET), differentiating between eighteenth- and nineteenth-century scores. The first major difference that can be observed is the one between philosophy, with very high –that is, involved and persuasive– dimension scores, and the other three scientific disciplines, concentrated on the other end of the scale with sub-zero –i.e. informational, non-involved– dimension scores. This separation of philosophy from astronomy and life sciences was justified earlier (Monaco 2017, 178) by its being a discipline based on the development of thoughts and/or controversial ideas, with a reflective and often persuasive discourse, while the latter are disciplines based on observation and/or experiment, rather than reasoning, and present a much more impersonal, analytic language. What is remarkable, however, is that the newly added discipline, history, which, just like philosophy, is today classified as belonging to the humanities (as opposed to astronomy and life sciences, which belong to the so-called natural sciences; see UNESCO 1978), also presents comparatively low scores for D1, and appears to join the ‘informational’ group, thus seemingly portraying itself

² Normalised frequency value minus mean value in the reference corpus, divided between the standard deviation.



18th- and 19th-century CEPHiT, CETA, CELiST and CHET



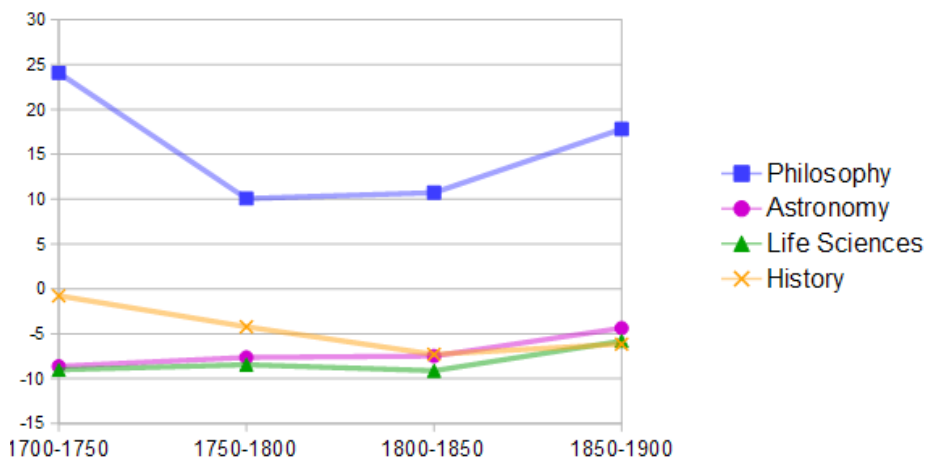
Graph 3. Mean scores for four scientific disciplines (philosophy, astronomy, life sciences and history) as represented by four subcorpora from the CC, across the 18th and 19th century, along Dimension 1 “Involved/persuasive vs informational style

as a discipline characterised by an objective discourse with little persuasion or involvement (next page).

Example (1) illustrates the remarkably persuasive style of philosopher David Hume (1748), with a high content of personal pronouns, private verbs, rhetorical questions and speculation, while Example (2), belonging to a treatise on the pancreas by Alexander Macalister (1876), appears to be clearly informative, with a high density of nouns:

By bringing Ideas into so clear a Light, we may reasonably hope to remove all Dispute, that may arise, concerning their Nature and Reality. It is probable, that no more was meant by those, who denied innate Ideas, than that all our Ideas were Copies of our Impressions; though it must be confessed, that the Terms they employed were not chosen with such Caution, nor so exactly defined as to prevent all Mistakes about their Doctrine. // For what is meant by innate? If innate be equivalent to natural... (CEPhiT, 1748 Hume).

- (1) The pancreas secretes a fluid containing water, phymatin, salts of soda, &c., tyrosin, leucin, guanin in traces. It emulsifies fats, setting the acids free, and permits their absorption, dissolves albuminoids, saccharizes starch, even in arid solutions. (CELiST, 1876 Macalister)



Graph 4. Mean scores for four scientific disciplines (philosophy, astronomy, life sciences and history) as represented by four subcorpora from the CC, across the 18th and 19th century with 50-year intervals, along Dimension 1 “Involved/persuasive vs informational style

Example (3), in turn, belongs to a nineteenth-century text on history, with a noticeable presence of passive structures:

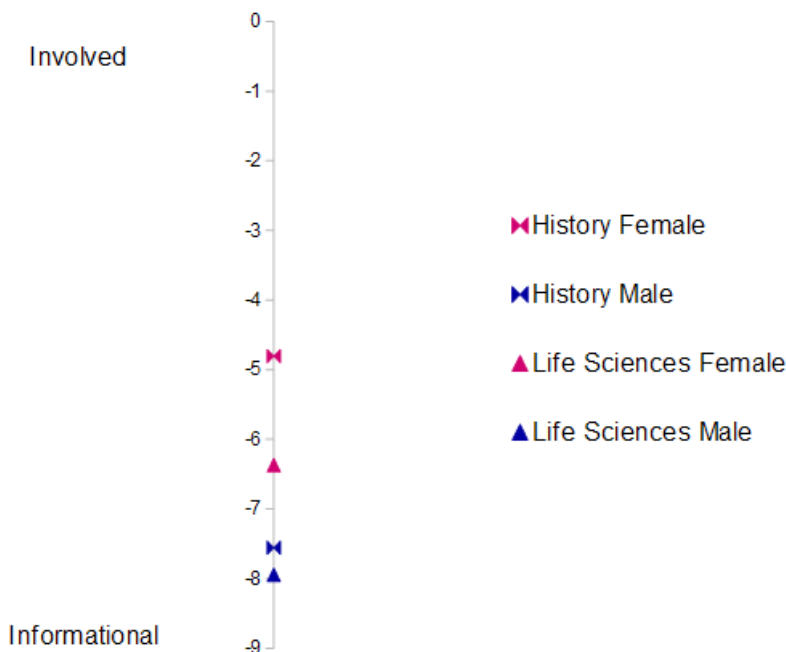
- (2) For the purposes of administration, the kingdom was divided into counties, each governed by an officer appointed by the king; the king had the right of declaring war or concluding peace; but the laws and general business of the kingdom were decided in assemblies consisting of the royal officers, the great Hungarian chiefs, and representatives of the clergy and the free Magyars (CHET, 1855 Mason)

If we go back to Graph 3, we can also observe that astronomy and life sciences show a very moderate movement in the involved direction in the 1800s, while history and philosophy do it the other way round, both moving a few scores down the scale. For a more accurate picture of change across the eighteenth and nineteenth century, Graph 4 plots the D1 scores for the four scientific disciplines with intervals of fifty years:

Graph 4 shows a very slow but, apparently, joint movement of the two natural sciences, astronomy and life sciences, towards a less densely informational style, although their dimension scores stay below the corpus mean by the end of the nineteenth century. Conversely, history, which was almost at a neutral point at the beginning of the 1700s, appears to gradually become more informational with time, with a very moderate movement upwards to reunite with astronomy and life sciences by the late 1800s, suggesting a general tendency towards a standard scientific discourse



19th-century CHET and CELiST



Graph 5. Mean scores for texts written by male and female authors in two scientific disciplines in the 19th century along Dimension 1 “Involved/persuasive vs informational style

that was consolidating at that moment. Philosophy, in turn, shows a dramatic drop during the second half of the eighteenth century from its highly involved initial position, staying moderately involved –though still well above the corpus mean– between 1750 and 1850, and going up again by the end of the nineteenth century and accentuating once more its separation from the three other scientific disciplines.

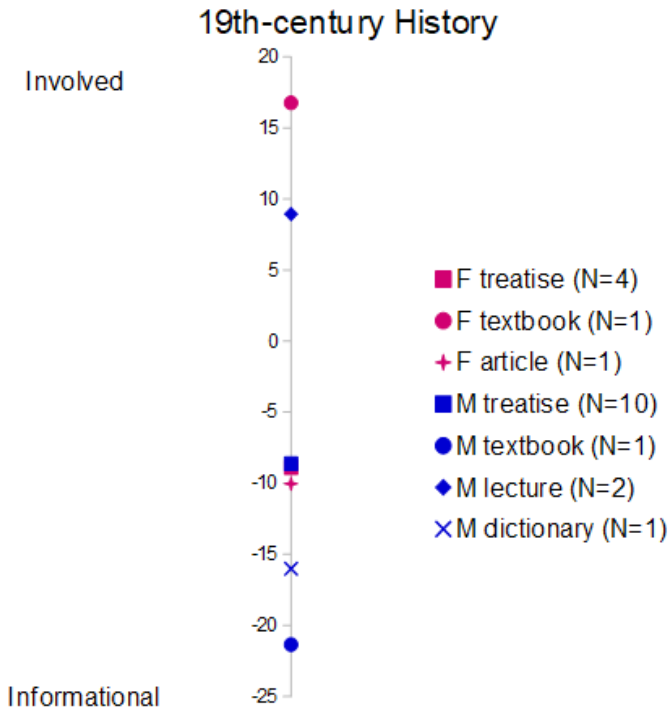
We have seen, thus, the evolution of four scientific disciplines across time with respect to D1. The following subsection focuses on comparing nineteenth-century history (CHET) and life sciences (CELiST) by applying the sex of the author variable.

4.2. BY SCIENTIFIC DISCIPLINE AND SEX OF THE AUTHOR

Graph 5 plots mean D1 scores for history and life sciences texts written by male and female authors in the nineteenth century.

If it appeared earlier that both disciplines were almost concentrated at the informational end of D1, Graph 5 shows a clear separation by sexes, with the texts written by female authors appearing as less informational (though remaining below the reference corpus mean) in both scientific disciplines, and with a wider gap between





Graph 6. Mean scores for 19th-century history texts (CHET), written by male and female authors, and belonging to 5 genres, along Dimension 1 “Involved/persuasive vs informational style”

the two sexes in the case of history. On the other hand, texts written by male authors present very similar scores in the two disciplines, at the lower end of the scale. These results, at a first view, appear to confirm earlier findings on the differences between male and female language, drawn from synchronic and diachronic studies (Lakoff 1990; Biber & Burges 2000; Geisler 2001; Argamon et al. 2003), whereby the latter has been characterised as more involved and with a lesser tendency towards abstraction than the former. However, we might want to take these data with caution, since, when comparing texts written by male and female authors in the CC, we are simultaneously comparing different genres without taking them into account.

In the next and last subsection, the genre category is dealt with as another variable, used along with the sex of the author variable.

4.3. BY SCIENTIFIC DISCIPLINE, SEX OF THE AUTHOR AND GENRE

Graphs 6 and 7 plot individual D1 scores for each genre, distinguishing between those written by male or female authors, in nineteenth-century history and life sciences subcorpora of the CC, respectively. Each subcorpus contains five genres,



but not all of the latter are represented equally, nor does each of them contain texts written by both sexes.

In the history subcorpus, represented on Graph 6, only treatises (among which 10 are written by male, and 4 by female authors) and textbooks (one for each category) are directly comparable, the rest of the genres being represented either by men (lecture, dictionary) or women (article) only. With respect to D1, all five genres, along with their variations by sex of the author, are distributed all along the scale, with different degrees of involvement, or lack thereof. The most involved genre, with the remarkably high score of 17.0, is female textbook, whereas the most informational one, with a negative score of -21.5, is its male equivalent. Considering the fact that each category is represented by only one sample, it might seem sensible to take this result with caution and avoid making any affirmations based on either of the variables included in this particular equation. While the CC is meant to be representative of the linguistic reality shown through its samples, one or a very small number of samples may not correspond to any existing trend as such, and could show a distorted picture of the reality we are trying to describe, due to specific idiosyncrasies related with the author of the text. The same may be said about the male dictionary and of the female article, although it does seem to be the case that they follow the general trend of the subcorpus, staying below the overall corpus mean.

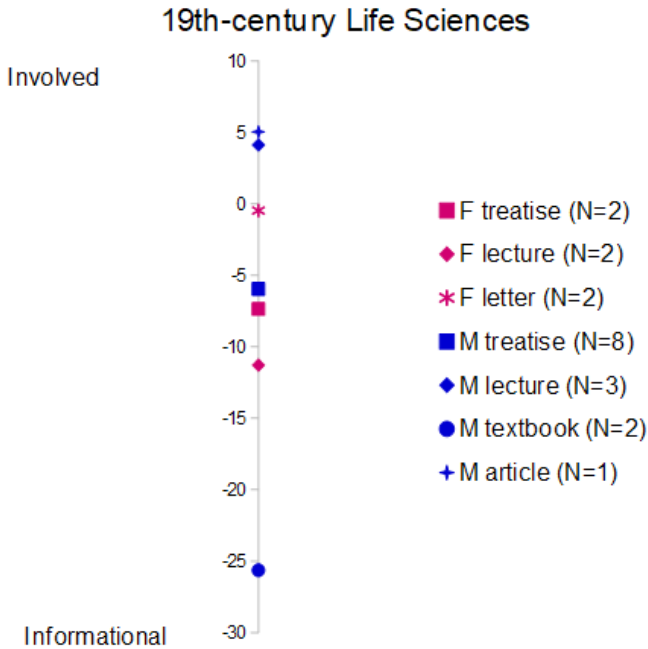
The two lectures, both written by men, present in turn rather high scores (8.9), reflecting an involved and/or persuasive style, perhaps because lectures were intended to be delivered in front of an audience and needed to appeal directly to the listeners, as can be seen in Example (4), where we find an abundance of rhetorical questions and the presence of first and second person pronouns *we* and *you*:

- (3) But here we ought certainly to ask, how, after all, was the Prince of Orange to attempt any regular enterprise against the crown of England? Observe his difficulties, and you will then understand his merit. He was only at the head of a small republic; that republic had been reduced, but a few years before, to the very last extremities, by the arms of Louis. How was William to prepare an expedition, and not be observed by the French and English monarchs; how to prosecute it, and not be destroyed by their power? If he attacked England with a small force, how was he to resist James? (CHET, 1840 Smyth)

What can also be noticed on Graph 6, however, is that treatises, male and female, appear to have very similar mean D1 scores (-8.6 and -8.9, respectively). This appears to suggest that, unlike lectures, late Modern English treatises on history in the 1800s tend to be quite informational and uninvolved, and, more remarkably, that male and female discourse in this genre does not seem to present any differences with respect to D1, as can be seen through examples (5) and (6), belonging to treatises written by historians John D'Alton and Martha Walker Freer, respectively:

- (4) There are no passage boats on either of these water lines. It may be here mentioned that the amount of inland traffic with Drogheda by these canals and by the





Graph 7. Mean scores for 19th-century life sciences texts (CELiST), written by male and female authors, and belonging to 5 genres, along Dimension 1 “Involved/persuasive vs informational style”

roads was, on the latest Parliamentary inquiry, estimated as 67,000 tons to the town, and 39,000 from it, annually. This river, discharging itself into the Irish sea about five miles below the bridge, affords equal facilities for foreign commerce, while the grand northern trunk railway makes its first important rest on its southern bank, at Pitcherhill, in the parish of St. Mary. (CHET; 1844 D’Alton)

- (5) The birth of a second illegitimate son at the château de Carlat in 1589, the fruit of a scandalous intrigue with one Aubiach, who held a menial position in the queen’s household, had again covered her name with infamy. After the arrest of Marguerite at Ivoi, a country house appertaining to queen Catherine, by order of her brother Henry III., her captor, the marquis de Canillac, succumbing under the power of her charms, caused Aubiach to be hanged from the ramparts of Usson, whither, by royal command, he had conveyed his prisoner. (CHET; 1860 Freer)

Graph 7, on the other hand, shows the case with nineteenth-century life sciences, where the directly comparable genres are treatise –this time, with two samples belonging to female, and ten to male authors– and lecture, of which three are written by men and two by women. Among the other genres, one –the



epistolary genre— is represented by women only, and two —textbook and article— by men. In terms of D1 scores, genres represented by men are separated very widely along the axis, ranging from -25.6 in the case of the textbook, to 4.1 in the case of the lecture (which, once more, and now also in the case of life sciences, appears on the ‘involved’ end of the dimension). Letters, written by female botanists, appear to be only slightly below the reference corpus mean (-0.4), with a more balanced distribution of involvement features and informational density, while both lectures and treatises written by women can be characterised as more or less informational, rather than involved, with respect to D1, with scores of -11.2 and -7.4, respectively.

If the difference between male and female lectures in nineteenth-century life sciences is remarkable (with respective scores of 4.1 and -11.2), pointing, perhaps, towards a conscious effort to avoid involvement on the part of female authors with the attempt of conveying a more rigorous and academical type of discourse, the gap between male and female treatises is, on the contrary, very small (-5.9 vs -7.4, respectively), confirming the informational character of this genre and the apparent lack of differences it presents when applying the sex of the author variable, as can be observed in Examples (7) and (8), both excerpts from treatises, written by a male zoologist and a female botanist, respectively:

- (6) The scapulæ, placed at the posterior and lateral aspects of the trunks, are kept wide apart by the clavicles: a line falling perpendicularly from the shoulder, in the erect attitude of the body, would pass far behind the hip: thus the upper limbs are thrown outwards and backwards, and have a free range in their principal motions, which are in the anterior direction. (CELiST; 1819 Lawrence)
- (7) The prickle may be stripped off with the bark, as in the rose and bramble, but the thorn, proceeding from the wood, cannot be torn off in this way.

The pink-blossoming hawthorn (*Crataégus rósea*) is merely a variety of the common hawthorn. Another variety—the yellow-berried hawthorn (*Crataégus aurea*)—which is often planted in shrubberies, is still more beautiful. (CELiST; 1840; Pratt)

It seems, thus, that the genre variable plays a crucial role when comparing male and female scientific texts in nineteenth-century CHET and CELiST with respect to D1, in that sex of the author alone shows only part of the picture. While both history and life sciences texts written by women present, overall, higher D1 scores than those written by men (as was shown in Graph 5, Section 4.2), those mean dimension scores appear to mask a very rich internal variation that emerges when we add the genre variable to the equation. The latter, in turns, has revealed a number of genre-related tendencies, such as that of a larger presence of involvement features in lectures (particularly male, since we have no samples of female lectures in CHET, while female lectures in CELiST do not show such tendency), or, conversely, the tendency towards informational density in treatises, regardless of the sex of their authors. It seems, thus, that the characterisation of women’s discourse as more involved and less abstract than male (Lakoff 1990; Biber & Burges 2000; Geisler



2001; Argamon et al. 2003) is only true for specific subregisters, but does not seem to apply to all women's writing—at least not to late Modern English scientific writing.

5. CONCLUDING REMARKS

In this study we have looked at a total of forty nineteenth-century history and life sciences texts from two subcorpora of the Coruña Corpus, CHET and CELiST, through the lens of Biber's (1988) Multidimensional Analysis as applied in Monaco (2017), focusing on Dimension 1 "Involved/persuasive vs informational style". A first part of the analysis has situated CHET and CELiST on the dimension scale along with two other subcorpora of the CC that had been used in the original analysis—CETA (astronomy) and CEPHiT (philosophy)—grouping history, astronomy and life sciences as informational disciplines, as opposed to philosophy, an involved and/or persuasive discipline. A diachronic glance shows that history and philosophy become slightly less involved with time, while life sciences and astronomy slightly moderate their informational character along the 1800s.

A second part of the study consisted in comparing nineteenth-century history and life sciences texts, using the sex of the author variable. The analysis has revealed that, within their relatively informational range, both history and life sciences texts written by women have higher mean D1 scores than those written by men, apparently confirming a recent generalisation in linguistics, according to which male language is more abstract and less involved than female (Lakoff 1990; Biber & Burges 2000; Geisler 2001; Argamon et al. 2003) —and suggesting that Rousseau's prejudice against women as rational creatures (Trouille 1997) may have had a justification in the way they used to write.

Despite these preliminary findings, a third part of the analysis, which included the genre variable, has shed some light on the incognita behind the aforementioned overall male and female dimension scores, unveiling sex-of-the-author variation among genres, some of which appears to respond to certain trends, namely: that in the two scientific disciplines analysed, a) lectures written by men are relatively more involved than almost all other genres, and b) treatises tend to be characterised by a high informational density and a strongly passivised discourse, whether they were written by male nineteenth-century scientists or by their female colleagues. While these results should be taken with caution, given the size and scope limitations of the present study, the latter finding appears to disprove Rousseau's aforementioned affirmations (Trouille 1997), demonstrating that women in the late Modern period were certainly capable of abstract reasoning. Further studies are needed to explore genre and sex of the author variation in other scientific disciplines along the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, a crucial time when each discipline was developing its own particular (sub)register.

Reviews sent to the authors: 27/11/2025

Revised paper accepted for publication: 27/01/2026



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AUTHORITY AND DIRECTION IN LATE MODERN ENGLISH INSTRUCTIVE WRITING: THE CASE OF *ACCORDING TO* AND DIRECTIVE *SEE**

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ABSTRACT

This article examines how Late Modern English women writers calibrate authority and guide readers through two compact resources: the prepositional phrase *according to* and the directive verb *see*. Using CoWITE18 (1700-1799) and CoWITE19 (1800-1899), this study combines function-first coding with distributional profiling. *According to* overwhelmingly realises parameterisation and norm-alignment rather than named attribution; directive *see* shows a nineteenth-century rise of navigational and supervisory frames. We interpret these patterns within historical pragmatics (function in context and diachrony), Systemic Functional Linguistics SFL (interpersonal and textual metafunctions), evidentiality and stance, and metadiscourse/engagement. Findings suggest a stable ethos of calibrated guidance, anchoring procedures in situational variables, accompanied by stronger textual scaffolding and reader management in the nineteenth century.

KEYWORDS: Attribution, Evidentiality, Directives, Metadiscourse, Engagement, Women's Instructive Prose.

AUTORIDAD E INSTRUCCIÓN EN LA PROSA INSTRUCTIVA DEL INGLÉS MODERNO TARDÍO: *ACCORDING TO* Y EL IMPERATIVO *SEE*

RESUMEN

En el presente artículo se analiza cómo autoras del inglés moderno tardío modulan la autoridad y orientan al lector mediante dos recursos: *according to* y el imperativo *see*. En CoWITE18 y CoWITE19, *according to* se emplea sobre todo para parametrizar o alinear con normas, no para atribuir a autoridades con nombre propio; *see* crece en el siglo XIX en usos de navegación textual y supervisión del proceso. El patrón refleja una autoridad calibrada y una mayor gestión del lector, interpretadas desde la pragmática histórica, la Lingüística Sistémico-Funcional, la evidencialidad y el metadiscursos. Los hallazgos sugieren un ethos estable de orientación calibrada, con procedimientos anclados en variables situacionales y acompañado, en el siglo XIX, de un refuerzo de la estructuración textual y de la gestión del lector.

PALABRAS CLAVE: atribución, evidencialidad, directivas, metadiscursos, compromiso, escritura instructiva femenina.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.25145/j.recaesin.2026.92.08>

REVISTA CANARIA DE ESTUDIOS INGLESES, 92; abril 2026, pp. 179-197; ISSN: e-2530-8335
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1. INTRODUCTION

Late Modern women's instructive writing, i.e., cookery books, domestic economy manuals, household medicine, offers a clear view of how textual authority is built and how practical action is coordinated on the page. Two small forms, easily overlooked, do persistent heavy work across this material: *according to* and imperative *see*. The first tethers a recommendation to a parameter or norm ("according to size/taste/season/directions"); the second recruits the reader's attention for supervision and navigation ("see that it does not scorch;" "see p. 72"). Read together, they reveal a compact subsystem where stance, evidence, and reader management converge. There are good reasons to single out these items rather than cast a wider net over "modality" or "directives" in general. According to straddles evidentiality and procedure: it can attribute a claim to a source, but, in these genres, it more often calibrates the doing of a task to variables that matter at the bench, namely quantity, size, age, taste, thickness. That is, it marks how far an instruction extends under local conditions, not simply where the knowledge came from (Nuyts 2001; Palmer 2001; Aikhenvald 2004; Cornillie 2009). *See*, by contrast, belongs to what Hyland (2005; 2019) would call engagement: it secures a check ("see that..." "see whether...") or orchestrates movement across the book ("see under Soups," "see Figure 2"). Its work is as much textual as interpersonal: pointing, sequencing, routing (Schiffrin 1987; Fraser 1999).

The historical stakes are specific. Eighteenth- and nineteenth-century instructional print thickened its scaffolding: pagination stabilised, sectional headings multiplied, figures and plates entered the kitchen and the stillroom. As the book became a tool with parts, writers acquired a compact directive to move readers across that architecture, *see*, and they used it more (Bazerman 1988; Tebeaux 1997). At the same time, women authors writing for heterogeneous households had to sound authoritative without overreaching. *According to* suits that ethos; it locates authority in the task's contingencies ("according to the size"), or in the text's own rules ("according to the following directions"), rather than in named, external voices. This is not diffidence; it is an economy of authority keyed to practice. Our approach is function-first and diachronic. We examine *according to* and directive *see* in CoWITE18 (1700-1799) and CoWITE19 (1800-1899), coding each instance for pragmatic value, parameterisation, norm-alignment, attribution, navigation, supervision, checking, and for local patterning (head nouns after *according to*; clause types after *see*). The analysis is framed in Systemic Functional terms (interpersonal vs textual metafunctions: Halliday & Matthiessen 2014), situated in historical pragmatics (Jucker & Taavitsainen 2013), and informed by research on evidentiality/epistemicity and metadiscourse (Nuyts 2001; Palmer 2001; Aikhenvald 2004; Cornillie 2009; Hyland 2005, 2019).

* The research conducted in this paper has been supported by the Agencia Estatal de Investigación, Plan Estatal de Investigación Científica, Técnica y de Innovación 2021–2023, under award number PID2021-125928NB-I00. I hereby express my thanks. Unión Europea · Fondo Europeo de Desarrollo regional "Una manera de hacer Europa."



The contribution is twofold. Empirically, we chart the functional ecology of two high-dispersion, formulaic frames, *according to* + NP and *see* (that) + clause / *see* + page/section/figure, and trace their distributional shifts across the long nineteenth century. Interpretively, I argue that these items instantiate a calibrated instructional voice: *according to* manages tolerances and delegates controlled judgement to readers; *see* secures compliance points and navigates a more articulated page. The upshot is a historically specific balance of guidance and autonomy that helps explain how women writers staged expertise in print for domestic-technical tasks. Two expectations follow from this framing. First, *according to* should cluster with material and bodily parameters (size, age, taste, quantity) and with text-internal norms, while overt named attributions remain marginal. Second, directive *see* should increase in nineteenth-century texts, with growth especially in navigational pointers that exploit the book's material affordances, alongside steady supervisory uses that identify critical control points in procedures. The sections that follow test these expectations against the corpus and illustrate the patterns with contextually read examples.

Section 3 details the corpus and coding scheme (CoWITE18/19; functional labels for *according to* and directive *see*; dispersion and collocational measures). Section 4 presents the distributional results, and, the interpersonal/textual effects of using *according to* and directive *see*. Section 5 draws the threads together, linking parameterisation and navigation to a calibrated instructional voice, and notes limits and avenues for finer subgenre modelling. A short appendix gathers head-noun profiles for *according to* and pattern families for *see*, with file-year metadata to aid replication.

2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Historical pragmatics asks how meaning is done in earlier periods, inferring speech-act values, stance, and interactional work from written traces (Jucker & Taavitsainen 2013). Methodologically it pairs corpus evidence with close reading: recurrent forms are tracked as conventionalised routines, then interpreted in their immediate co-text and task ecology to see how functions shift across time and genre. Late modern instructional print, cookery, domestic economy, household medicine, thrives on compressed, repeatable cues that both stage authority and steer action. In this frame, *according to* and directive *see* are treated as conventional resources whose core functions, attribution/parameterisation and engagement/navigation, respectively, can be profiled diachronically in women's instructive prose.

Within SFL, meanings organise along interpersonal and textual planes (Halliday & Matthiessen 2014). In instructional genres, the interpersonal plane calibrates commitment and obligation (modals, evidentials, directives); the textual plane manages information flow and reader movement (sequencing, cross-reference). The two focal items sit at this interface: *according to* modulates commitment, either by attributing a proposition or by parameterising a procedure relative to local variables, while imperative *see* realises engagement (direct address, supervision) and textual navigation (pointers to pages, sections, headings). Put simply: one sets tolerances; the other routes attention.



I treat *according to* as a polyfunctional cue spanning reportative/attributive evidentiality and procedural parameterisation. Cross-linguistically, evidentiality encodes information source (Aikhenvald 2004); in English it often overlaps with epistemic stance (Nuyts 2001; Palmer 2001; Cornillie 2009). In instructive discourse, *according to* typically does two things:

- a) it distributes epistemic responsibility by anchoring a recommendation in an external norm or communal practice;
- b) it delegates local judgement by setting conditional ranges rather than categorical thresholds (e.g. according to your taste/need/size).

This duality, external anchoring with local calibration, offers a compact way to balance expert guidance with reader autonomy, a recurrent need in heterogeneous household contexts.

Directive *see* is analysed as an engagement marker in the metadiscourse repertoire: a device writers use to involve and guide readers in the unfolding procedure (Hyland 2005; 2019). In our material it clusters in two frames: process-supervisory (see that it does not scorch; see it be well beaten) and text-navigational (see p. 72; see under Soups; see the preceding receipt). Both enact reader management: the first choreographs attention and quality control at critical steps; the second orchestrates movement across the book's material architecture (sections, headings, plates, figures). Engagement of this kind complements stance resources (hedges, boosters, attribution) by co-ordinating action, not just evaluation.

From a speech-act perspective, *see (that...)* prototypes a directive: it is designed to get the addressee to ensure a state of affairs. Imperatives and directive paraphrases are central to instructional styles (Biber et al. 1999). Text-navigational *see* approaches the family of discourse-organising markers that signal relations between stretches of text or point readers to resources (Schiffrin 1987; Fraser 1999). Their spread is tied to print affordances: pagination, running heads, and indexing make compact cross-reference routines both possible and useful (Bazerman 1988; Tebeaux 1997). In domestic and medical how-to writing, such routines externalise sequence and retrieval, keeping the interactional load on short, learnable cues.

Both *according to* and directive *see* instantiate formulaic frames, *according to* + NP; *see (that)* + clause / *see* + NP/number. These show stable lexico-grammatical patterning and wide dispersion in procedural prose (Biber et al. 1999). Routinisation aids processing speed and intersubjective alignment: readers learn to treat *according to* as a condition-setter and *see* as a prompt to attend or navigate. A historical-pragmatic account therefore tracks frames, their collocates (e.g. *according to* + size/quantity/rule; *see* + page/section/that-clause), and their placement in imperative strings and transitional slots.

Women's domestic-technical authorship in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries sits at the junction of household expertise, emergent print conventions, and expanding lay readerships (Tebeaux 1997; Pahta & Taavitsainen 2011). Within this ecology, attribution (*according to X*) legitimises advice by aligning with recognised norms, while engagement (*see...*) choreographs non-expert readers through the



contingencies of materials, tools, and bodies. The interplay of these two compact resources, anchoring knowledge and directing practice, is a signature of instructive prose. It is also a sensitive indicator of how the didactic voice available to women writers adjusts over time as books acquire more architecture and readers more guidance expectations.

3. CORPUS AND METHOD

We draw on two subcorpora of women's instructive prose compiled to a common design: CoWITE18 (1700-1799; 22 texts; 541,789 tokens) and CoWITE19 (1800-1899; 33 texts; 502,701 tokens) (Alonso-Almeida, Álvarez-Gil & Ortega-Barrera 2025; Alonso-Almeida et al. 2025). Texts are women-authored and instructional (cookery, household economy, domestic medicine, handiwork), POS-tagged with TreeTagger. Filenames encode year of publication, enabling straightforward diachronic checks. All corpus searches are case-insensitive; quoted examples retain original orthography and punctuation.

We target two compact forms with clear formal signatures:

- *according to*: retrieved as the contiguous bigram *according to* (case-insensitive). Anticipated functions: ATTR (attributive/reportative evidentiality), PARAM (procedural parameterisation to variables such as *taste/age/season/size/quantity*), NORM (alignment to rules or book-internal directions, e.g., *according to rule/receipt/custom/directions*), OTHER (ambiguous/elliptical).
- directive *see*: imperative/directive uses only, in two main frames: SUP (process supervision: see that it does not scorch; see it be well beaten; see to it that...) and NAV (text navigation: see p./pp./page/fig./figure/table; see under/above/below; see the preceding receipt/No. N). We also tag CHK for imperative *see whether/if...* (diagnostic checking). We exclude perceptual/epistemic *see* (I/you/we see), predictive shall/will see, and infinitival to see unless sentence-initial *See...* is unambiguously imperative.

Queries are run in LancsBox (KWIC; N-grams to confirm formulaicity; GraphColl for local patterning; Whelk/dispersion for spread). For each hit we export KWIC lines with file and year metadata for coding (Brezina 2018). Each token is coded once for primary function using minimal surrounding context (typically $\pm 1-2$ clauses): (a) *according to*: ATTR / PARAM / NORM / OTHER, and (b) directive *see*: NAV / SUP / CHK / OTHER. Operational cues include right-hand head classes after *according to* (PERSON/BOOK/INSTITUTION vs MEASURE/QUALITY/MATERIAL/BODY) and complement types after *see* (finite *that*-clause; *see it/be + V-ed/ADJ*; numeral/heading pointers). Ambiguities default to OTHER, with notes for adjudication.

Counts are normalised per 10,000 words. We report dispersion as the share of texts with ≥ 1 instance and include DP (Gries 2008) to mitigate unequal file sizes. Diachronic comparisons are made at the corpus level (CoWITE18 vs CoWITE19)



with identical operational criteria across centuries. We characterise local patterning with GraphColl using L5-R5 windows, $f \geq 5$, and LogDice as the association measure (Rychlý 2008). For *according to* we profile right-hand heads (e.g., *size, age, taste, quantity, thickness; rule, receipt, directions*). For directive *see* we track pattern families (e.g., *see that, see it be V-ed/ADJ, see p./No./under/above*). Collocation summaries are presented as short ranked lists (top 8-10 items) rather than full network plots to keep results compact and readable.

4. ANALYSIS

Across centuries, *according to* is stable; *see* rises in the nineteenth century, as seen below:

Corpus	<i>according to</i> (count; per-10k)	<i>see</i> (count; per-10k)
CoWITE18	116; 2.14	120; 2.21
CoWITE19	118; 2.35	172; 3.42

Concerning dispersion, both items are widespread rather than idiosyncratic:

- *according to* occurs in 19/21 texts in CoWITE18 (90.5%) and 26/30 in CoWITE19 (86.7%).
- *see* occurs in 20/21 texts in CoWITE18 (95.2%) and 26/30 in CoWITE19 (86.7%).

Automatic right-context heuristics show parameterisation as the dominant value in both centuries; norm-alignment is secondary; explicit attribution is absent in these KWICs.

Right-hand heads after *according to* (top).

- 18th c.: *quantity* (19), *size* (18), *bigness* (9), *receipt* (5), *strength* (4), *age* (3).
- 19th c.: *size* (37), *age* (13), *taste* (11), *quantity* (6), *thickness* (5), *directions* (5), *fancy* (4), *colour* (3), *season* (3).

TABLE 1. FUNCTIONAL PROFILE OF *ACCORDING TO* (PER 10,000 WORDS).

FUNCTION (<i>ACCORDING TO</i>)	CoWITE18 (COUNT; PER-10K)	CoWITE19 (COUNT; PER-10K)
PARAM (calibrating variables: size, age, taste, quantity...)	50; 0.92	67; 1.33
NORM (rule/receipt/directions/custom)	11; 0.20	16; 0.32
ATTR (named authority/source)	0; 0.00	0; 0.00
OTHER / ambiguous	55; 1.02	35; 0.70



TABLE 2. FUNCTIONAL PROFILE OF DIRECTIVE *SEE* (PER 10,000 WORDS) FOR SUBTYPES.

FUNCTION (<i>SEE</i>)	CoWITE18 (COUNT; PER-10K)	CoWITE19 (COUNT; PER-10K)
NAV (page/section/figure/receipt pointers; <i>see under/above/below</i>)	7; 0.13	60; 1.19
SUP (<i>see that / see it be / see it does not ...</i>)	17; 0.31	30; 0.60
CHK (<i>see whether / see if...</i>)	5; 0.09	10; 0.20
NONDIRECTIVE (e.g. <i>if you see ...</i> ; not counted as directives)	69	7
OTHER / unclear	22	65

These heads make the parameterising function transparent: instructions are tailored “according to size/age/taste/quantity...,” with nineteenth-century texts showing a stronger pull toward *size/age/taste* (and book-internal *directions*) than the eighteenth-century mix (which still includes older terms like *bigness*).

Directive uses are separated into NAV (text navigation), SUP (process supervision/quality checks), and CHK (diagnostic *see whether/if*). Non-directive perception (e.g. *if you see...*) is flagged as NONDIRECTIVE and not interpreted as engagement/command.

The phrase *according to* is steady overall but more explicitly parameterising in the nineteenth century; *see* shows a marked nineteenth-century shift toward navigational and supervisory imperatives, tracking the growth of internal cross-referencing conventions. In what follows, I comment on specific instances from the corpus to illustrate the different categories.

4.1. ACCORDING TO AS CALIBRATED INSTRUCTION

Parameterising cues license adjustment within a bounded space, classic interpersonal work in SFL terms, where obligation and commitment are modulated rather than imposed (Halliday and Matthiessen 2014), and they instantiate what Nuyts calls a stance-as-tolerance posture, not a categorical fiat (Nuyts 2001; Palmer 2001). In procedural discourse this amounts to contingency management (Biber et al. 1999), aligning writer and reader by granting controlled choice at points where materials, tools, or preferences vary (Hyland 2005; 2019). In evidential terms, such cues shift responsibility from the author’s personal say-so to the situational conditions that warrant adjustment (Aikhenvald 2004; Cornillie 2009). The following instance shows how quantity calibration is realised:

- (1) Quantity calibration (early 18th c.). “salt, *–according to your quantity*, as for example, If you gather four gallons of Mushrooms, put three handfulls of salt, and no more or less.” (Fuller 1712; CoWITE18)



Example (1) encodes a ratio-based tolerance band, “three handfulls: four gallons,” that the reader can scale up or down. The prepositional frame *according to + NP* signals the variable (*your quantity*) that governs adjustment; the follow-up exemplum (“as for example...”) operationalises the rule so it can be re-used beyond the single case. In SFL terms, the clause-final conditioner *according to your quantity* modulates the illocutionary force of the imperative step (add salt) by specifying how far the obligation extends under differing inputs (Halliday and Matthiessen 2014). From a pragmatic angle, the instruction distributes epistemic responsibility: the writer fixes the proportional relation and the upper–lower bounds (“no more or less”), while the reader determines the exact dose once the input (four gallons; two gallons; etc.) is known, precisely the reportative–epistemic balance observed for English evidential cues (Aikhenvald 2004; Cornillie 2009). As procedural design, this is textbook contingency management: where measurement is inherently approximate (note the vernacular *handfulls*), the text replaces unattainable precision with a learnable heuristic that supports fast, reliable action (Biber et al. 1999). Interpersonally, it is also engagement through option-granting: the author retains authority over the relation and the safe bounds, yet cedes local judgement to the performer (Hyland 2005; 2019). The result is a compact calibration device well suited to late-modern household practice, where inputs vary and tolerances, not fixed thresholds, secure procedural success (Nuyts 2001; Palmer 2001).

Where preferences plausibly vary, writers open a bounded space for reader choice, still an instruction, but with calibrated leeway. In SFL terms, the imperative nucleus (“add salt...”) is modulated by a postposed conditioner that specifies how far the obligation extends (Halliday & Matthiessen 2014). Pragmatically, this realises stance-as-tolerance (Nuyts 2001; Palmer 2001): the writer maintains control over the action while allowing the degree to be reader-managed. As engagement, such option-granting recruits the reader as co-agent in the task (Hyland 2005; 2019). In evidential terms, responsibility is nudged from the author’s fiat to situational grounds, here, the taster’s palate as a licit criterion for adjustment (Aikhenvald 2004; Cornillie 2009). The following instance shows taste calibration in practice:

- (2) Taste calibration (early 19th c.). “... thicken the liquor... add salt and some dumplins *according to your taste*; stew it till tender.” (Randolph 1824; CoWITE19)

Example (2) preserves a non-negotiable action (*add salt*) but opens a tolerance band via *according to your taste*. The writer thus fixes the procedural step while delegating the quantitative endpoint to the reader’s organoleptic judgement. Interpersonally, this balances authority with controlled choice (Hyland 2005); textually, it avoids over-specification where variability is expected (different broths, diners, regional palates). In SFL terms, the clause-final prepositional phrase functions as a postposed conditioner, modulating obligation without downgrading the command (Halliday & Matthiessen 2014). As an evidential move, the calibration is licensed by local conditions (what tastes right now), not the author’s personal say-so (Aikhenvald 2004; Cornillie 2009). In short, the device codifies a practical



norm: *you must salt, but the endpoint is contingent*, a neat solution to the problem of instructing heterogeneous households.

When physical affordances constrain outcomes, e.g., thickness of joints, capacity of vessels, authors invoke size to scale time, heat, or quantity. Here the modulus is material rather than evaluative, but the logic is the same: a fixed step plus a variable tolerance (Biber et al. 1999). In SFL terms, *according to + size* realises graded modulation rather than a single threshold (Halliday & Matthiessen 2014). The corpus shows size to be the most frequent 19th-century head in this frame, signalling a shift toward concrete, reader-salient parameters.

- (3) Size calibration (19th c.). “... wash it well, and put it to boil *according to the size*.” (Rundell 1806; CoWITE19)

Example (3) encodes an input-dependent tolerance: larger joints require longer or gentler boiling; smaller ones, less. The postposed *according to the size* marks the governing variable that the reader must assess before executing the step. Interpersonally, this preserves the imperative, *put it to boil*, while instructing how far to take it (Nuyts 2001; Palmer 2001). Textually, the brevity of the frame keeps the sequence light, outsourcing calculation to a learnable heuristic rather than listing times for every cut (Biber et al. 1999). As an evidential gesture, the adjustment is grounded in visible, measurable conditions (Aikhenvald 2004; Cornillie 2009). Together with (2), it shows how *according to + MEASURE/QUALITY* heads (*size, age, taste, quantity, thickness*) operationalise a compact, genre-typical solution: be authoritative, yet flexible, stipulate the action, specify the parameter, and let readers tune the outcome within safe bounds (Hyland 2005; 2019; Halliday & Matthiessen 2014).

4.2. ACCORDING TO AS NORM-ALIGNMENT

When *according to* points not to persons or books but to rules, receipts, or directions, it aligns the current move with the text’s own canon. Pragmatically, this is metadiscourse: the writer frames what follows as compliant with an already stated procedure or an immediately forthcoming list (Crismore, Markkanen & Steffensen 1993; Hyland 2019). In SFL terms, the device couples interpersonal authority (this is how one ought to proceed) with textual organisation (recycling or foreshadowing structure). It is endophoric signalling in Schiffrin’s sense, cohesion through in-text reference, realised by a compact, learnable frame (Schiffrin 1987; Fraser 1999). The following instance shows rule-following:

- (4) Rule-following (mid-18th c.). “... they are all to be boiled exactly in the same manner, and *according to the same rules*; only allowing a larger time...” (Bradley 1750; CoWITE18)

Example (4) internalises authority: the “rules” invoked are the author’s own, established earlier in the book. Rather than cite an external source, the writer upgrades



prior instructions to normative status, a classic metadiscursive move where the text authorises itself (Crismore et al. 1993; Hyland 2019). Textually, *according to the same rules* functions as an endophoric pointer, achieving cohesion by re-application of a stored procedure (Schiffrin 1987). Interpersonally, it compresses a directive sequence (“boil as before, mutatis mutandis”) into a single cue, thereby economising repetition while keeping the obligation salient (Fraser 1999). Historically, such self-referential norming sits well with eighteenth-century compilations that rely on a core method plus allowances (“only allowing a larger time”), a pattern noted in early technical and domestic print (Bazerman 1988; Tebeaux 1997).

A second pattern uses *according to* to pre-align the reader with a list or procedure that immediately follows. The next example illustrates book-internal directions:

- (5) Book-internal directions (early 19th c.). “... the first process in the art of confectionary... *according to the following directions.*” (Haslehurst 1814; CoWITE19)

Here *according to* serves as an advance organiser: it forecasts that compliance will be measured against a forthcoming set of steps. The prepositional frame (*according to + directions*) explicitly binds the imperative ethos to the material architecture of the page (Hyland 2019). In discourse-organisational terms, it is an instructional frame marker signalling a shift from overview to procedure (Crismore et al. 1993; Fraser 1999). The move also reflects the nineteenth-century codification of manuals, e.g., headings, numbered entries, plates, on which such compact cross-reference depends (Bazerman 1988; Tebeaux 1997). By anchoring the next actions to “the following directions,” the text both routes and regulates: it primes the reader to treat what comes next as the applicable norm.

All in all, (4)-(5) show *according to* operating as a norm-alignment switch: not “what X says” but what this book establishes. The effect is twofold. It keeps authority within the text, a strategic stance in women’s domestic-technical authorship, and it reduces redundancy by licensing reference and foreshadowing rather than full restatement, precisely the kind of metadiscursive economy that matured with Late Modern print conventions (Hyland 2019; Bazerman 1988; Tebeaux 1997).

4.3. DIRECTIVE *SEE* AS SUPERVISION AND NAVIGATION

Imperative *see* concentrates two kinds of engagement (Hyland 2005; 2019): SUPERVISION, *see that... / see it be...*, which secures quality and safety at critical control points within the procedure, and NAVIGATION, *see page/under/plate/No.*, which orchestrates the reader’s movement across the book’s architecture. Both are directive in force (Biber et al. 1999), but they operate on different planes, process vs text, and together they knit interpersonal guidance to textual design (Schiffrin 1987; Fraser 1999; Halliday & Matthiessen 2014). The supervisory uses choreograph attention where outcomes are fragile; the navigational uses exploit print affordances



(pagination, headings, plates, numbering) to externalise sequence and retrieval (Bazerman 1988; Tebeaux 1997). The examples that follow illustrate these two strands.

Early recipe prose often embeds *see* inside conditionals rather than as a bare imperative, mitigating the directive while still installing a checkpoint.

- (6) Process supervision (18th c., imperative-like check). “... put them into the oven; *if you see* them rise too fast, put them down with your hand... when you *see* them well baked, take them out.” (Fitzgerald 1703; CoWITE18)

In (6), *see* packages perceptual diagnostics (“rise too fast;” “well baked”) as gates for progression. Functionally, these are control points: proceed iff a criterion is met, prototypical of instructional sequencing (Biber et al. 1999). The conditional wrapper (“if you see...”) softens the command in line with period politeness, yet the illocutionary force is clear: ensure X before Y. Interpersonally, this is engagement by attention management; textually, it locks to the stepwise connective *then*, tying the interpersonal and textual metafunctions (Hyland 2005; Halliday & Matthiessen 2014).

A second supervisory pattern moves from conditional narration to a more direct prompting of what must be observed.

- (7) Observational checkpoint (18th c.). “... set it upon an easy fire, and *see* it begin to boyl or rise up, then pour upon it...” (Fitzgerald 1703; CoWITE18)

Example (7) is a canonical CHK: the writer stipulates the diagnostic sign (“begin to boil”) that warrants the next action. Compared with (6), the imperative contour is more salient; the reader is recruited as inspector. This is still lighter than *see that it boils*, but the pragmatic outcome is the same, assure the state before advancing. Such micro-directives reduce error and standardise tacit craft knowledge (Hyland 2005; 2019), aligning with the SFL notion of modulated obligation at points of uncertainty (Halliday & Matthiessen 2014).

Nineteenth-century print conventions, stable pagination, sectional heads, plates, and numbered entries, licensed concise routing. Imperative *see* becomes a text-navigation engine.

- (8) Navigating to a plate (intermodal hand-off). “*See Plate 1st*. In this plate the fowl is placed in the proper position for carving...” (Rundell 1806; CoWITE19)

See X uses a heading-based indexical to route the reader to a labelled locus (the figure). This is endophoric organisation in Schiffrin’s sense (1987), i.e., cohesion by internal reference, here leveraging the book’s paratext. The author does not repeat technique; she outsources it to the visual, cutting cognitive load (Hyland 2019). The pattern presupposes a mature page architecture (Bazerman 1988; Tebeaux 1997). In this particular instance, prose hands off to image. The imperative is minimal, while the payoff is high, as spatial technique is better taught by a diagram than by prose. Pragmatically, *see Plate 1st* functions as a pointer-directive; textually, it coordinates



modes, verbal instruction and visual demonstration (Hyland 2019). Again, the efficacy depends on numbered plates and captions. Alongside this use, there is a related use of navigational *see*, indicating the page where a particular recipe may be found, as in the nineteenth-century example in (9), which is nowhere found in the eighteenth-century compilation, using only the term *page* followed by a number, as illustrated in the excerpts (9)-(12):

- (9) Put in a Pint of good fry'd Gravy (*as in Page 12*). (Glasse 1747)
- (10) Mrs. Mason gives the above receipt, differently expressed, *page 263*. (Cole 1789)
- (11) This you may do in the same manner as the collops with the white sauce *on page 40*. (Frazer 1791)
- (12) Make a rice cake (*see p. 228*). (Mrs Toogood 1866)

Across these instances, there is a diachronic drift from narrated contingencies to bare imperatives, tracking the rise of editorialised manuals and an increasingly confident didactic voice. Supervisory *see* installs assurance conditions inside the process; navigational *see* exploits the material page to choreograph consultation. Together they show how a tiny verb carries substantial interpersonal (engagement, vigilance) and textual (routing, cohesion) labour in Late Modern instructive prose (Schiffrin 1987; Bazerman 1988; Tebeaux 1997; Biber et al. 1999; Fraser 1999; Hyland 2005, 2019; Halliday & Matthiessen 2014).

4.4. TEXTUAL ECOLOGY: PLACEMENT, CO-SELECTION, AND PATTERNING

Two placement tendencies stand out. First, *according to* is typically clause-medial after the nucleus of instruction, where it behaves as a postposed conditioner; it also appears pre-list as an advance organiser. Second, directive *see* prefers clause-initial, often in stand-alone sentences, which maximises salience at decision points. In SFL terms, clause-initial position gives thematic prominence to *see* as a control or routing move, while clause-medial *according to* functions as an adjunct of modulation, narrowing how far the preceding command extends (Halliday & Matthiessen 2014). The pattern is easy to see in the corpus.

– Clause-medial conditioner (postposed): the nucleus comes first, the tolerance afterwards.

- (13) Clause-medial (calibration). “Put sweet herbs (marjoram or sage) *according to your taste*.” (Mrs Child 1841; CoWITE19)

In (13) the imperative remains non-negotiable (*put sweet herbs*), but the scope of compliance is curtailed by the postposed *according to* phrase. Functionally this is stance-as-tolerance (Nuyts 2001; Palmer 2001): obligation stands, degree varies. As engagement, the move grants controlled choice (Hyland 2005, 2019), and as evidential practice it grounds adjustment in situational conditions (Aikhenvald 2004;



Cornillie 2009). The clause-medial placement keeps the sequence light and locally processable, command first, calibration second (Biber et al. 1999).

- Pre-list organiser (foreshadowing): the frame signals that what follows is the norm to be applied, as in (14), below:

(14) Pre-list (norm-alignment). “... the first process in the art of confectionary... *according to the following directions.*” (Haslehurst 1814; CoWITE19)

Example (14) uses *according to* to prime the reader for a procedural list. This is metadiscourse in Crismore et al.'s sense (1993): an organisational cue that binds the upcoming text to the current move (Hyland 2019). It also reflects nineteenth-century codification, headings, numbered steps, plates, on which concise cross-reference depends (Bazerman 1988; Tebeaux 1997).

- Clause-initial pointer (routing): the directive occupies theme position and issues a high-salience instruction to consult elsewhere, as in:

(15) Clause-initial (navigation). “Pigeons.- *See Plate 1st.* Here are the representations of two, the one with the back uppermost, and the other with the breast” (Haslehurst 1814; CoWITE19)

In (15) the imperative fronts the clause, projecting a clear route through the book's architecture. The pay-off is cognitive economy, as prose hands off to image where demonstration outperforms description (Hyland 2019). Such clause-initial *see* is a classic engagement cue that orchestrates movement across a designed page (Schiffrin 1987; Fraser 1999), a practice that scales with stable pagination and visual apparatus (Bazerman 1988; Tebeaux 1997).

Beyond position, co-selection reinforces function:

- *according to* pairs with evaluative heads (*taste, strength, thickness*), measure heads (*quantity, size, age*), and norm heads (rule, receipt, directions); these heads identify the governing parameter or the in-book norm.
- *see* co-occurs with negation/preventions (see that it does not burn (Clarke 1885)), with quality adjectives (see it clean (Haddock 1720), see it clear (Maciver 1774)), and with textual nouns (*page, plate, No.*); these collocates mark assurance conditions or routing targets.

The positional and collocational evidence points to formulaic frames that speed processing and stabilise expectations: readers learn that *according to* + *NP* signals tolerances or norms, and *see* + *that/No./page* signals checks or pointers (Biber et al. 1999). In short, placement gives the cue its information status (theme vs rheme), while co-selection advertises its work, calibrate here; ensure this; turn there.



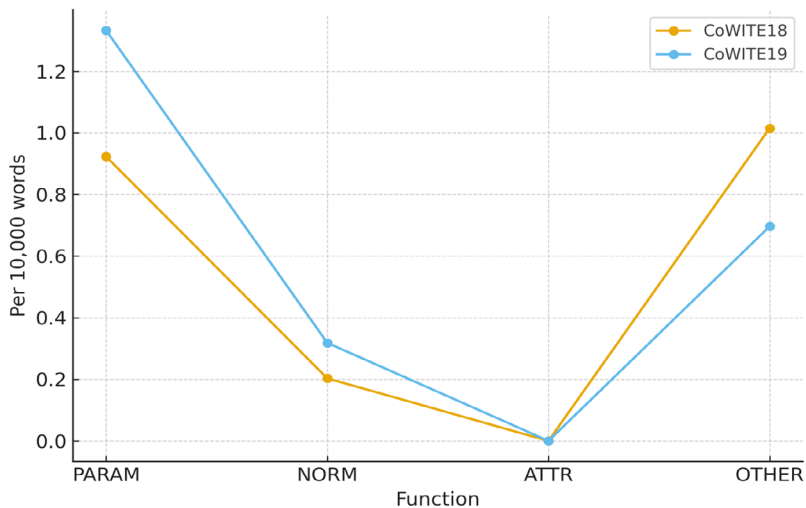


Figure 1. 'according to' functions per 10,000 words (CoWITE18, 1700–1799, vs CoWITE19, 1800–1899). PARAM = parameterisation; NORM = norm-alignment; ATTR = attributive/reportative; OTHER = ambiguous/elliptical.

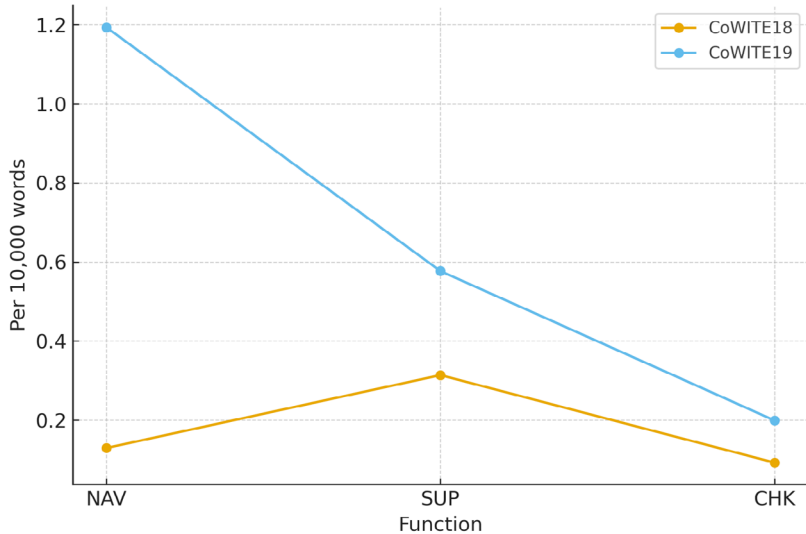


Figure 2. Directive 'see' functions per 10,000 words. NAV = text navigation; SUP = process supervision; CHK = diagnostic checks.

4.5. VARIATION

As Figures 1–2 below show, three diachronic tendencies structure the profile of our two targets. First, steady parameterisation. The overall rate of *according to* barely shifts from the eighteenth to the nineteenth century (2.14 → 2.35 per 10,000 words), yet its centre of gravity remains firmly PARAM, with NORM rising modestly and ATTR (named attribution) essentially absent. The right-hand heads that dominate the frame, namely, *size, age, taste, quantity, thickness*, index a pragmatic ethic in which calibration, not citation, carries instructional authority. In SFL terms, postposed *according to* + NP narrows the scope of an obligation without weakening the imperative force; it realises interpersonal modulation while keeping the procedural nucleus intact (Halliday & Matthiessen 2014). From a stance perspective, this is tolerance rather than fiat (Nuyts 2001; Palmer 2001), and in evidential terms it grounds adjustment in situational conditions rather than the author's say-so (Aikhenvald 2004; Cornillie 2009).

Directive *see* increases overall (2.21 → 3.42 per 10,000), with the NAV subtype doing most of the lifting (0.13 → 1.19 per 10,000). This growth tracks the densification of nineteenth-century book architecture, stable pagination, numbered entries, sectional heads, plates, features that both enable and invite concise routing (Bazerman 1988; Tebeaux 1997). In metadiscourse terms, *see p./plate...* functions as a compact engagement cue that organises the reader's path through a designed page (Hyland 2005, 2019). The page itself becomes part of the procedural tool-set, so that movement across the book is orchestrated as deliberately as movement through the task.

SUP frames (*see that...; see it be...*) also rise (0.31 → 0.60 per 10,000), while CHK (*see if/whether...*) remains minor but persistent (0.09 → 0.20 per 10,000). The supervisory drift reallocates some of the burden of quality control to explicit checkpoints, naming the perceptual or procedural state that must obtain before the next step, very much the contingency management one expects in procedural prose (Biber et al. 1999). Interpersonally, engagement becomes more overt; textually, assurance conditions are placed at high-salience positions, often clause-initial, to maximise attention at decision points (Halliday & Matthiessen 2014; Hyland 2019).

These trends are robust across texts (high dispersion in both centuries) and hold under dispersion-sensitive metrics, indicating genre-wide routines rather than idiosyncratic habits. In short, the nineteenth century adds navigation and supervision to an already stable base of parameterisation, a recalibration of the didactic voice that mirrors the maturing affordances of instructional print.

5. DISCUSSION

The distributional picture is clear enough, but the interpretive pay-off lies in how these small forms organise authority and action together. *According to* holds steady in rate across the two centuries while remaining decisively parameterising. The right-hand heads that dominate the frame locate judgement in the situation



rather than in the writer's fiat. In SFL terms, the postposed *according to* + NP works as interpersonal modulation. It narrows how far the preceding command extends without weakening its imperative force (Halliday & Matthiessen 2014). From a stance perspective, this is tolerance, not categorical obligation (Nuyts 2001; Palmer 2001). In evidential terms, the calibration is licensed by observable or felt conditions, what the joint weighs, what the broth tastes like, rather than by an appeal to learned authority (Aikhenvald 2004; Cornillie 2009). That ethos fits the genre: household tasks vary; a ratio or parameter helps more than a name.

Directive *see* tells a complementary story. Its nineteenth-century growth is driven by navigational pointers, which makes sense once the page itself acquires more architecture. Stable pagination, sectional headings, numbered entries and plates allow writers to route readers economically; the imperative becomes a pointer that turns the book into a working space, not just a script (Bazerman 1988; Tebeaux 1997). In metadiscourse terms, *see X...* is a compact engagement cue that manages the interaction with the document as much as with the task (Hyland 2005, 2019). The interpersonal and textual metafunctions cooperate here: the writer addresses the reader directly while orchestrating movement across an artefact designed for consultation (Schiffrin 1987; Fraser 1999; Halliday & Matthiessen 2014).

Supervisory *see* also rises, though more gently, and it does a different kind of work. Frames such as *see that it is perfectly smooth when you put it in the dish* (Randolph 1824) install assurance conditions. Earlier recipe prose often narrates such contingencies conditionally (*if you see...*, as in *if you see them rise too fast, put them downe with your hands before they be too hard, soe when you see them well baked, take them out* by Fitzgerald (1703)); later texts tend to command them outright. Either way, the effect is the same: attention is channelled to diagnostic signs before the next step is licensed. That is classic contingency management in procedural discourse (Biber et al. 1999) and an instance of engagement as vigilance rather than evaluation (Hyland 2005, 2019). The preference for clause-initial *see* in stand-alone sentences gives these checks thematic prominence, which is exactly where a control point should sit if it is to be noticed in time (Halliday & Matthiessen 2014).

Two further observations matter for generalisation. First, dispersion is high for both targets in both centuries, which points to genre-wide routines rather than a handful of stylistic tics. The collocational cores, MEASURE/QUALITY heads after *according to*; textual nouns, negation, and quality adjectives around *see*, are stable and easily learnable. This is the kind of formulaicity that speeds processing and stabilises expectations in time-sensitive tasks (Biber et al. 1999). Second, author and subgenre will still shade the details. The eighteenth-century preference for conditional narration, for instance, sits well with contemporary politeness and with looser page design, while nineteenth-century manuals can afford crisper imperatives because the layout carries more of the organisational load. Our corpus controls (normalisation, DP dispersion, shared retrieval criteria) reduce file-size artefacts (Gries 2008), but they do not eliminate stylistic variance. That is a limit worth acknowledging, as it does not undo the main tendencies.

In short, it appears that the system is coherent. *According to* keeps the instructional voice calibrated. It stipulates the action and names the parameter that



governs safe adjustment. *See* secures the procedure at its fragile points and routes the reader through the book that now houses the method. The nineteenth century does not abandon the earlier ethos of calibration; it layers on navigation and more explicit supervision as print affords it. The result is an instructional voice that is firm, intelligible, and, crucially, workable on the page.

6. CONCLUSION

This article has shown how two small, formulaic resources, *according to* and directive *see*, carry much of the work of authority and direction in Late Modern women's instructive prose. The quantitative backdrop is unambiguous. Across CoWITE18 and CoWITE19, *according to* holds steady in overall frequency (around 2.1-2.3 per 10,000 words) yet functions chiefly as parameterisation, with normalisation secondary and named attribution essentially absent. Directive *see* intensifies in the nineteenth century (2.21 to 3.42 per 10,000), above all through navigational pointers (around 0.13 to 1.19 per 10,000) and, more modestly, supervisory prompts (around 0.31 to 0.60). These distributional facts match the close readings: women authors calibrate procedures to materials and bodies, and they increasingly route readers through a more articulated page.

Set against the research questions, the pattern is consistent. For *according to*, parameterisation dominates in both centuries, with right-hand heads shifting from eighteenth-century *quantity, size, bigness* to nineteenth-century *size, age, taste, thickness* (plus *directions*). The shift signals a turn to concrete, reader-salient tolerances and a mild codification of practice. For directive *see*, two families are robust: process supervision marking critical control points; and text navigation that treats the page as infrastructure. Placement and co-selection behave as expected. *According to* is clause-medial as a postposed conditioner or prefaces lists; *see* favours clause-initial, stand-alone imperatives at decision junctures, collocating with preventives, quality adjectives, and textual nouns. Diachronically, *according to* is stable but more explicitly parameterising in the nineteenth century; *see* grows markedly, with navigation doing most of the lifting. High dispersion across authors and texts suggests genre routines rather than quirks, though some subgenre shading is likely.

The implications are twofold. Theoretically, small formulae deserve centre stage in historical pragmatics. *According to* is not mere reportative tagging but a condition-setter that realises stance-as-tolerance within SFL's interpersonal plane; *see* is engagement made practical, addressing the reader while designing their path across a material artefact. The nineteenth-century rise of navigational *see* reads best as a pragmatic response to maturing print affordances, stable pagination, headings, numbered entries, plates, rather than a stylistic fad. Historically, the pairing amounts to a gendered solution to the puzzle of sounding authoritative without overreach. Where appeals to learned names were scarce or strategically awkward, women writers grounded expertise in parameters the reader could act on and in a page architecture the reader could follow.



Methodologically, a lightweight, function-first workflow anchored in clear formal signatures (the bigram *according to*; imperative *see* frames) and supported by normalised rates, dispersion (DP), and collocational profiling can recover meaningful diachronic tendencies in compact expressions. The pipeline is transparent and replicable, and readily extends to adjacent items, *see also*, *refer to*, *as directed*, and to near-by evidential frames such as *as is said*. Two limits remain. Automatic heuristics inevitably leave an OTHER bucket for *according to* (orthography, ellipsis) and risk under-counting borderline *see whether/if* checks versus non-directive *see*; and the field has been treated broadly, with subgenre and author likely modulating preferences for conditional narration versus bare imperatives. Neither caveat alters the core tendencies, but both indicate where precision can improve.

Future work should model subgenre and author as random effects to separate stylistic from systemic variance; widen the metadiscursive net to map the fuller ecology of anchoring and direction; and link navigational density to paratextual features (recipe numbering, plates, running heads) to quantify the nexus between book architecture and directive practice. If we think of instructive print as a tool, *according to* is the calibrator and *see* the pointer. Together they let women writers of the long nineteenth century teach not only what to do, but how far to go and where to look next, an instructional voice at once firm, intelligible, and quietly collaborative.

Reviews sent to the authors: 11/12/2025

Revised paper accepted for publication: 27/01/2026



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“IF THEY ARE NOT, THIS IS UNNECESSARY”: EXAMINING THE AVOIDANCE OF “THEN” AFTER “IF” IN WOMEN-AUTHORED TEXTS*

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the uses of “then” in “if... then...” structures, with a particular focus in their use (of lack thereof) by women authors, the evolution in their use over time and whether these uses are linguistically prompted or not. To do so, CHET, CEChET and COWITE, three corpora of eighteenth and nineteenth-century texts including texts on history, chemistry and mostly recipes, will be examined, and cases will be manually disambiguated and analysed. The results will show how the distribution of the use “if... then...” structures depends on both socio-historical and linguistic constraints, with a first stage in which its use is freer, reflecting its widespread use in the scholastic tradition, and a later phase in which the use is mostly reserved to linguistically and contextually prompted cases, mostly to avoid ambiguity and after long or complex conditional clauses. The apparent preference of women authors to avoid “if... then...” structures is confirmed, with the cause hypothesized as a reflection of their experiencing a lighter scholastic influence.

KEYWORDS: Conditional Structures, Correlative Structures, Scientific Register, Female Authors, Scholasticism.

“IF THEY ARE NOT, THIS IS UNNECESSARY”: LA AUSENCIA
DE «THEN» TRAS «IF» EN TEXTOS DE AUTORÍA FEMENINA

RESUMEN

El estudio analiza el uso de then en las construcciones condicionales *if... then...* en textos de los siglos XVIII y XIX, con especial atención a la escritura femenina y a su evolución histórica. A partir de tres corpus especializados (CHET, CEChET y COWITE), los ejemplos se analizan manualmente para distinguir factores lingüísticos y sociohistóricos. Los resultados apuntan a una evolución en dos fases: un uso inicial más libre, heredero de la tradición escolástica, y una etapa posterior en la que *then* se restringe a contextos lingüísticamente motivados. El análisis confirma una tendencia de las autoras a evitar estas estructuras, posiblemente relacionada con una menor exposición a dicha tradición.

PALABRAS CLAVE: estructuras condicionales, estructuras correlativas, registro científico, autoras femeninas, escolasticismo.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.25145/j.recaesin.2026.92.09>

REVISTA CANARIA DE ESTUDIOS INGLESES, 92; abril 2026, pp. 199-213; ISSN: e-2530-8335
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1. INTRODUCTION

In 2016, a study on the uses of “if...then...” in CEPHiT, the subcorpus on philosophy in the Coruña Corpus of English Scientific Writing, containing samples of philosophy texts from the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, found, among a number of other interesting findings, that there was no single use of “if... then...” in the texts authored by women included in the corpus (Puente-Castelo 2016, 174).

Although the scarce total number of texts written by women precluded any definite conclusion, the results were, nevertheless, intriguing. “If... then...” sequences are interesting in that the use of “then”, being voluntary and often stylistic, can often be explained by a number of linguistic factors, such as the length of the subordinate clause. At the same time, these sequences, as one of the prototypical examples of logical argumentative language, are considered as particularly characteristic of scholastic discourse (Taavitsainen 1999, 249), a preference which could influence the results.

A number of competing hypotheses could be posed to explain the absence of “if... then...” in these texts authored by women philosophers: It could be a reflection of disciplinary differences at the time, with philosophy (and women philosophers) being particularly prone to use conditionals without “then”; it could be a particular characteristic of female writing, with the absence of “then” after “if” being a consequence of the different ease of access to education and textual production men and women experimented during the scholastic period; or it can also be simply a result of idiosyncrasies in the compilation of the corpus: there are only three female-authored samples in CEPHiT, and all three were published in the eighteenth century.

In any case, to check these hypotheses it is necessary to extend the analysis further to include other corpora. The ones selected for this study are, on the one hand, two further subcorpora of the Coruña Corpus of English Scientific Writing, namely CHET and CEChET, including c. 400,000 words each of texts on respectively, history and chemistry, authored by both male and female authors; and, on the other hand, COWITE, a corpus of instructive texts written by women, whose 18th and 19th century sections total more than one million words. These will be examined to find uses of “if... then...” and thus, first, check if the results are similar to the ones for CEPHiT, and, second, try to find the answer as to why women seem to avoid using “then” in conditional structures.

In what follows, section 2 examines the uses of “if... then...” sequences in detail, identifying several linguistic and contextual features which seem to promote the use of “then”. Section 3 presents the description of the different corpora and the methodology used, whilst Section 4 features the analysis of the results. These are later discussed in Section 5, which also includes some tentative conclusions.

* The research reported here has been funded by the Spanish Ministerio de Ciencia, Innovación y Universidades, Grant PID2022-136500NB-I00 funded by MICIU/AEI /10.13039/501100011033 and by FEDER, UE.



2. USES AND FUNCTIONS OF “THEN” IN “IF.. THEN...” STRUCTURES

“If.. then...” structures are mostly similar to their “then”-less counterparts: The use of “then”, a conjunct at the start of the apodosis, seems a purely stylistic decision on the part of the author, and its introduction adds little, if any, new meaning, compared with its omission. However, the structure presents both linguistic and sociohistorical features that merit further investigation:

2.1. LINGUISTIC FEATURES OF THE “IF...THEN...” CONSTRUCTION

There are a number of linguistic features that favour the presence of “then” in conditionals. Most crucial of all is the fact that, as “then” always appears as the first element of the apodosis, it also marks precisely the point at which the protasis ends. This is particularly useful in cases of ambiguity or with complex protases, as the presence of “then” helps solve any possible doubt in terms of interpretation.

In fact, previous studies (Puente-Castelo 2016, 176-177) have shown that linguistically or contextually-prompted cases account for the majority (69.1%) of all uses of “then” in conditionals. Some of these complex or ambiguous uses are illustrated in examples (1-3) below, all taken from CEPHiT. (1) below is a clear case of ambiguity, in which the absence of “then” would cause the whole reasoning to become ambiguous, with the second clause being potentially considerable as part of the protasis instead of the apodosis in case “then” is cut out. In (2) and (3), we can see complex conditional structures, in (2) with two coordinated protases that have just one apodosis, and in (3) with an example of a constructive dilemma, a type of inference rule which develops a disjunction in which its two elements act as antecedents of two independent implications, then concluding that one of the two consequences of those implications must be true. In both cases, the presence of “then” helps achieve a clearer understanding of the arguments being made.

- (1) “For if causes are not necessary causes; then causes are not suited to or are indifferent to effects;” ([85 (1850)]¹ Collins 1717, 58)
- (2) If God has placed within our reach the means of avoiding unhappy marriages, and if we neglect to avail ourselves of his gift, then we are ourselves to blame for the evils we endure. ([111 (7587)] Combe 1846, 29)
- (3) “This I have always thought, yet have found it difficult to refer the phenomena to their specific causes. If mechanical, then no miracle; and, if a quality of matter, then absurd in its operation.” ([106 (4829)] Phillips 1824, 28)

¹ Cases from the Coruña Corpus are identified with this univocal notation, in which the first number identifies a specific sample and the second, between brackets, identifies the position of the query word (in this case, “*if*”), in the specific sample.



“Then” is also frequently used with long protases, to simply help mark the end of the subordinate clause and help the reader understand the text more easily. An extreme example is shown in case (4) below, with a 97-word long protasis in which the presence of “then” seems particularly useful to remind the reader of the fact that all previous text is in fact a conditional subordinated clause.

- (4) But if what we perceive and cognise is not merely a cause of our subjective impressions, but a Thing possessing, in its own nature and essence, a long list of properties, Extension, Impenetrability, Number, Magnitude, Figure, Mobility, Position, all perceived as “essential attributes” of the Thing as “objectively existing” –all as “Modes of a Not-Self” and by no means as an occult cause or causes of any Modes of Self– (and that such is the case Sir [W]. Hamilton asserts in every form of language, leaving no stone unturned to make us apprehend the breadth of the distinction) then I am willing to believe that in affirming this knowledge to be entirely relative to Self, such a thinker as Sir [W]. Hamilton had a meaning, but I have no small difficulty in discovering what it is. ([110 (6207)] Mill 1845, 21)

Finally, “then” can indeed sometimes keep part of its temporal meaning, as shown in (5) below, or be part of a semi-formulaic use, such as “if... then follows”, as in example (6):

- (5) “and if they can prove the contrary, in a just and merciful God, then they may make good their Assertion, but not before” ([87 (4586)] Kirkpatrick 1730, 21)
- (6) “If this is proved, then it follows, that when the same motives predominate, the same action must result;” ([101 (4083)] Crombie 1793, 26)

More peripheral but also interesting is the fact that the use of “then” prevents a change in the order of the conditional constituents, imposing the canonical protasis-apodosis order, as shown in (7), with the opposite, (8), being impossible unless “then” is deleted.

- (7) “if any action whatsoever can be done without a cause; then effects and causes have no necessary relation” ([85 (5372)] Collins 1717, 82)
- (8) “*then effects and causes have no necessary relation, if any action whatsoever can be done without a cause.”

2.2. SOCIO-HISTORICAL FEATURES OF THE “IF... THEN...” STRUCTURE.

There are as well a number of sociohistorical reasons that could be favouring the continuous use of the “if... then...” structure over time. It has been argued that scholastic scholars preferred the use of “common logical terms to organise discourse and build up the arguments” (Taavitsainen 1999, 249), and “if... then...” structures



satisfy this criterion in two ways at once, as they fulfil a double role as a structure that is conditional and correlative at the same time:

Conditional structures, with their formal and functional versatility, are particularly valuable in scientific and academic discourse (Carter-Thomas & Rowley-Jolivet 2008, 191), where they have been used particularly frequently (Horsella & Sindermann 1992, 131, Ferguson 2001, 69). They play a number of important roles in argumentative writing, particularly as the main linguistic device to represent the logical relation of implication (Ferguson 2001, 62), marking dependencies and thus being central for the advancement of any reasoned argument; but also in a number of other ways, such as indicating “the relationship between different segments of text and to make the readers recognise this relation” (Warchal 2010, 146), creating argumentative spaces (Dancygier 1998), introducing tentative claims or conclusions as a result of their inherent non-assertiveness (Carter-Thomas & Rowley-Jolivet 2008, 191), speculating with different options and outcomes, or formulating hypothesis and theories (Ferguson 2001, 61, Gabrielatos 2010, 1).

They are also central to the interpersonal development of discourse, being used as “a rhetorical device for gaining acceptance for one’s claims” (Warchal 2010, 141) with which writers try to reach consensus and gain acceptance for their claims. Conditionals can do this in a number of ways, such as introducing direct conventional politeness structures (Quirk et al. 1985: 1095), alternatives to one’s own claims (Declerck & Reed 2001), recognising uncertainty, or mitigating the strength of a claim (Atkinson 1996, 1999; Alonso-Almeida 2025), among many others.

Correlatives, despite their diverse and discussed² nature, have played a key role in the logical and textual organisation of discourse in English ever since the Old English period (Millward & Hayes 2011, 275). They also accommodate well to the Renaissance style, with the influence of Latin, and the importance of subordination and parallelisms, with their paired introductory elements being particular helpful for scholastics, reflecting their content- and logic-heavy discourse, in which “establishing the correct definition of things” (Taavitsainen & Pahta 1998, 167) and the relationship between them is of crucial importance.

Initially, it would seem that the preference of scholasticism for this kind of structures should imply a drop in the number of cases of “if... then...” over time, as scholasticism loses its influence on scientific writing, but previous results (Puentes-Castelo 2016: 172-174) have shown that, although there is indeed some evolution in the use of “if... then...” structures over time, this seems to account for very little (2.83%) of the total variation. In fact, a general examination of the results showed that most authors did not use the structure at all in their texts, with its use only being generalised in the first fifty-year period studied (1700-1750).

² The position taken here follows Truswell (2008), considering correlatives “as a family of constructions” defined by “by a cluster of properties which do not necessarily all co-occur”. In any case, even authors with narrower criteria, such as Hockett (1958), consider “*if... then...*” as an example of correlative, to the point that he uses it to illustrate the whole category (1958, 195).



In any case, scholastic influence could also be shown in some other aspects: differences among disciplines, with those having suffered the scholastic influence for longer hypothetically showing more uses than those that evolved more quickly towards the newer scientific register; and differences regarding the different trainings of writers, with those having acquired their writing habits in scholastic universities showing, perhaps, a higher preference for “if... then...” structures than those that did not, particularly women, who were mostly kept out of formal training for most of the period (Abir-Am & Outram 1987).

3. CORPUS AND METHODOLOGY

This study uses three different corpora: CHET, CEChET and COWITE. CHET (Moskowich et al. 2019) and CEChET (Moskowich, Puente-Castelo & Monaco, 2022) are the subcorpora on history and chemistry, respectively, of the Coruña Corpus of English Scientific Writing, a corpus of eighteenth and nineteenth century scientific writing in English. All the subcorpora in the Coruña Corpus share the same general design, principles of compilation and criteria for the selection of samples. Each of them is devoted to a specific discipline, and contains two c.10,000-word samples per decade, for a total of c.400,000 words per subcorpus (404,658 words in CHET and 402,869 in CEChET specifically). Texts in the Coruña Corpus have to be originally written in English, and in prose. First editions are preferred. Texts by both male and female authors are included, as are different genres, topics, and authors with different origins (Moskowich & Crespo 2007).

COWITE (Alonso-Almeida et al. 2025a; 2025b) is a corpus of late Modern English instructive texts written by women, “with a focus on cookery and domestic medical recipes authored or compiled by women” (Alonso-Almeida et al. 2025c). This study uses the eighteenth and nineteenth century sections of COWITE, including a total of 55 samples and totalling 1,044,184 words.

The total size of the different corpora newly examined here amounts to 1,851,711. The study also incorporates data from CEPhiT (Moskowich et al. 2016), the subcorpus on philosophy in the Coruña Corpus, as published in Puente-Castelo (2016), mainly for illustrative reasons, accounting for an extra 401,129 words. This extends the total size, when considered with CEPhiT, to 2,252,840 words³.

To obtain the data, searches were made for “if” and “then”, with the help of the Coruña Corpus Tool (Parapar & Moskowich, 2007; Barsaglini-Castro & Valcarce, 2020) for the corpora in the Coruña Corpus Family and of AntConc (Anthony 2024) for COWITE. The results were then examined and manually disambiguated, looking for equivalences of “if... then...” and eliminating non-conditional uses of “if”, so that calculations of prevalence could be accurate. As illustrated in (4) above,

³ Particular care has been taken to specify which total is being considered during the calculation of the averages.



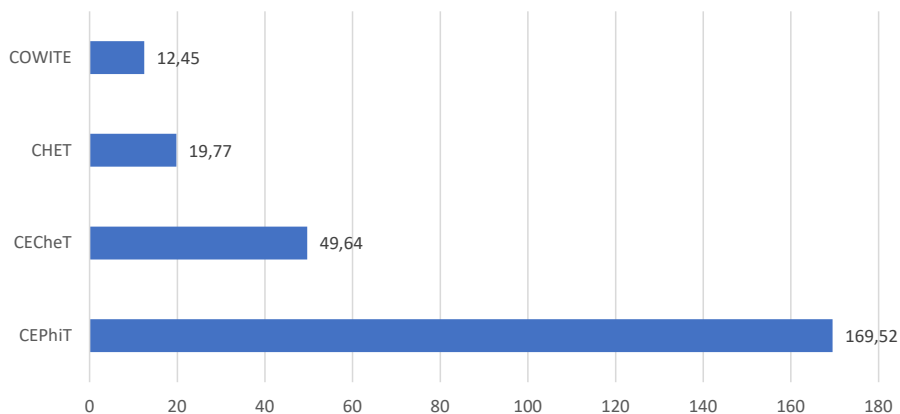


Figure 1. Total use of “if... then...” in the different corpora. Normalized figures, N=1,000,000.

the length of the protases precluded any possible automatic gap-search, with manual disambiguation remaining the only possible option. Results were then recorded, and its context and linguistic structure examined to check the degree to which the insertion of “then” has been contextually prompted.

4. ANALYSIS OF RESULTS

After the analysis, the total number of new “if... then...” cases found was 41. This amounts to 22.14 cases per million words, and represents 0.92% of all 4,478 uses of “if”, and 0.40% of the 10,134 uses of “then”. It is also less than the 68 cases found in the original examination of CEPhiT (in a corpus 4.5 times smaller) in Puente-Castelo (2016).

The examination of the different corpora found interesting contrasts. As shown in Figure 1 above, the use of “if... then...” is much more common in the different subcorpora of the Coruña Corpus, particularly in CEChET, than it is in COWITE. COWITE has only 13 cases of “if... then...” in the whole corpus (12.45 cases per million) whilst, CEChET shows 20 (49.64 per million words) and CHET eight (19.77). As already mentioned, CEPhiT had 68 cases of “if... then...” (169.52 per million words).

This difference is even more striking if we consider the results in terms of the percentage of uses of “if... then...” over all conditional uses. In CEPhiT, 5.09% of all uses of “if” showed a concurrent “then” (68 of 1335). This percentage amounts to 2.08% in CEChET (20 out of 961) and 1.91% in CHET (8 out of 419). However, in COWITE, only 0.42% of all conditional uses (13 of 3098) present a correlative “then” after “if”.



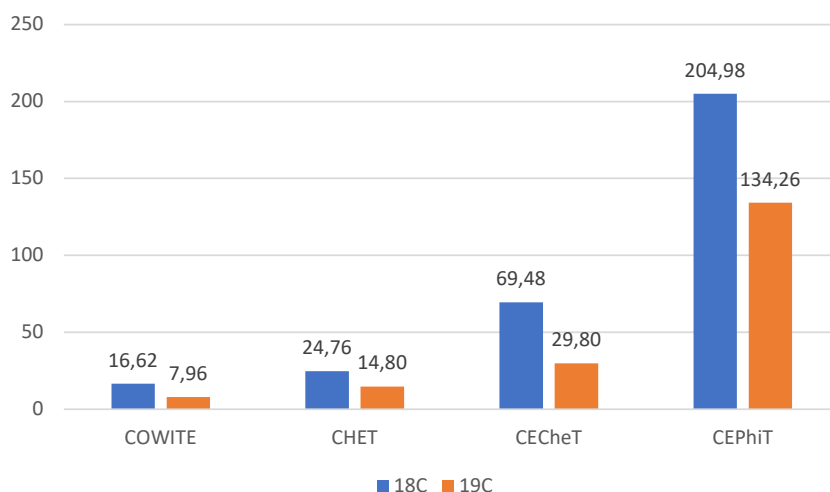


Figure 2. Evolution in the use of “if... then...” per century and corpora. Normalized figures, N=1,000,000.

This, however, is just a general view, and the results according to both socio-historical and linguistic variables show further nuances.

4.1. RESULTS ACCORDING TO SOCIO-HISTORICAL PARAMETERS

Comparing the results across the two centuries under study, as shown in Figure 2 above, all corpora show a decrease in the use of “if... then...” over time. In CEPHiT there were 204.98 uses of “if... then...” per million words in the eighteenth-century section, and these decreased to 134.26 in the nineteenth century, 34.50% less. A similar percentage can be seen in CHET, in which the diminution from 24.76 to 14.80 cases per million amounts to a loss of 40.22% of all uses. These drops are however much steeper in COWITE (16.62 to 7.96 cases per million, a 52.12% descent), and, particularly, CEChET (69.48 to 29.80, meaning 57.12% less uses).

If we analyse the evolution of the proportion of use of “if... then...” over all conditionals we find a similar panorama of unanimous descents: 5.27% to 4.85% of all possible conditional uses in CEPHiT, 2.23% to 1.54% in CHET, 3.39% to 1.09% in CEChET and 0.61% to 0.25% in COWITE.

However, the most striking difference is in the use according to the sex of the author. As shown in Table 1 below, the results show a single instance of “if... then...” in female authored texts in the three subcorpora of the Coruña Corpus which have been analysed, resulting in 7.04 cases per million. This is comparable, if even lower, to the use in COWITE, which, as already explained above, has 13 cases (12.45 per million) in the whole of the corpus, which only includes texts written by women.



TABLE 1: USES OF “IF... THEN...” ACCORDING TO SEX OF THE AUTHOR AND CORPUS

CORPUS	SEX	NUMBER OF CASES	NORMALIZED FIGURES (N=1,000,000)
CEPhiT	Male	68	183.32
	Female	0	0.00
CHET	Male	8	24.76
	Female	0	0.00
CECheT	Male	19	50.99
	Female	1	33.07
Coruña Corpus (Sum of Subcorpora)	Male	95	89.07
	Female	1	7.04
COWITE	Female only	13	12.45

The results back the original hypothesis that women use “then” in conditional structures much less often than men do. However, a linguistic examination of the results is still necessary to check whether their use is free or presents any kind of linguistic constraint.

4.2. RESULTS ACCORDING TO LINGUISTIC CONTEXT

The linguistic analysis of the results has found that less than half of the new uses of “if... then...” found in CHET and CECheT (13 out of 28, 46.43%) are favoured by the linguistic context in one way or another. The same happens in COWITE, where the proportion is even lower (5 out of 13, 38.46%). This contrasts starkly with CEPHiT, where, as explained above, a majority (69.1%) of the cases where influenced by the linguistic context, mainly because of the complexity of the syntactic context or the ambiguity the deletion of “then” would cause.

As shown in Figure 3 below, in CECheT the most common linguistic factor prompting the use of “then” is the length of the protases, whilst in both CHET and COWITE it is the complexity of the syntactic environment.

Among the complex syntactic environments, we can find examples of double protases, as in (9) below; and of ambiguity, as in (10), in which the deletion of “then” would hinder the identification of the point where the protasis ends and the apodosis starts. There are also examples of constructive dilemmas, such as the one shown in (11) below, taken from CHET. In this case, a modified version of the classical logical rule, the author justifies a common result developing a disjunction with two implications, leading to the same result (A or B, if A then C, if B then C; So C). Constructive dilemmas seem particularly productive contexts for the presence of “then”.



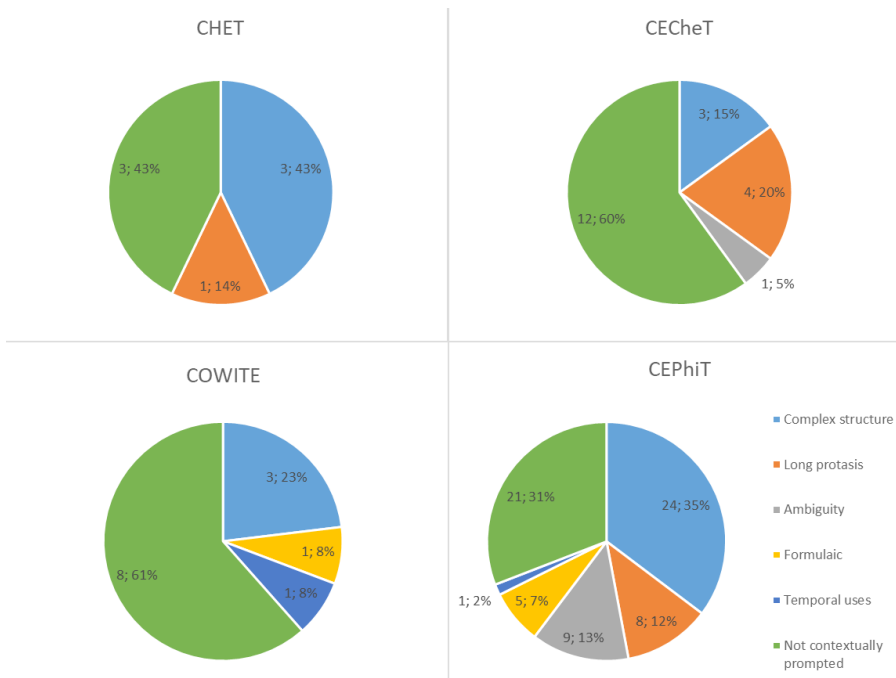


Figure 3. Linguistic reasons behind the use of “if... then...” structures per corpus.

- (9) If there are no more alkaline falts in nature, than the three already mentioned; and if there were no more acids than four; then the number of neutral falts would be confined to the twelve marked in [Dr]. Cullen’s Table ([176 (407) Monro 1767, 481])
- (10) If the particles of atmospheric air were capable of division to an infinite degree, then the attenuation which occurs in the higher regions of the air should have no limit, and we should look upon all space as occupied by the elements which form our atmosphere, rarefied to an inconceivably great degree, and that our earth had provided itself, in its course through space, with as much of this circumambient matter as, from its attractive power, it was able to keep round it. ([192 (4233)] Kane 1842, 438)
- (11) As also to demand the several Captives which they had of ours, and that hence forward they would withdraw all manner of assistance from the Enemy; for as they were Indians bordering between both Governments, they belonged either to the Dominion of Great Britain, or unto the French King; if to the French King, then consequently they were his Subjects, and the encouraging or supplying them with warlike Stores against the English, was a flagrant violation of the Peace between the two Crowns; if they belonged to the King of Great Britain, then the exciting them to War was as great a breach, and a stirring them up to Rebellion, contrary unto their Allegiance and Submission in the year 1693. ([127 (6378)] Penhallow 1726, 108)

There are as well a number of uses of “then” justified by the length of the protases. An example of this is (12) below, the only example of “if... then...” used by women found in the three subcorpora of the Coruña Corpus examined here, taken from CEChET. In this example, Ellen Richards, the author, introduces “then” after a thirty-word long protasis. It should also be noted that this example also contains a coordinated protasis, another instance of complex syntactic environment, highlighting how both length and syntactic complexity can happen at once.

(12) “If the animal, having accomplished this decomposition of the vegetable, and appropriated the material, is killed, and the prepared nitrogenous food in the form of muscle is eaten by man, then no force is necessary to render the food assimilable; it is only to be dissolved in order that it may enter into the circulation.” ([200 (4349)] Richards 1882, 41)

Apart from these, there are also some instances in which the use of “then” is favoured by a combined temporal meaning, as in (13) below, as well as some semi-formulaic uses, such as “if not, then...”, as shown in (14).

(13) When the bowels cease to be sore and inflamed, if the weakness still continues, then astringents are often useful. (COWITE 19 – Mrs Child 1841)

(14) if not, then let the Mistress turn them for her. (COWITE 18 – Bradley, 1750)

The distribution of these results over time offers another interesting finding. In the previous study of “if... then...” in CEPHiT (Puente-Castelo, 2016) it was found that unexplained uses (also labelled as “not-contextually prompted”) were clustered in the first half of the eighteenth century, with 11 out of the 21 (52.38%) unexplained cases occurring in the first fifty years, and the rest over the remaining 150. However, as shown in Table 2 below, this clustering is even more notorious now, as 14 out of the 23 (60.87%) total new unexplained cases in CHET, CECHET and COWITE are clustered in the first fifty years. This is most clearly in CECHET, the corpus, out of the three, that presents the most total uses.

TABLE 2: DISTRIBUTION OF LINGUISTICALLY EXPLAINED AND UNEXPLAINED USES OF “IF... THEN...” OVER CORPUS AND PERIOD.

PERIOD	1Q (1700-1750)		2Q (1750-1800)		3Q (1800-1850)		4Q (1850-1900)	
	Explained	Un.ed	Explained	Un.ed	Explained	Un.ed	Explained	Un.ed
CHET	3	1	0	1	2	0	0	1
CEChET	2	10	1	1	2	1	3	0
COW- ITE	4	3	0	2	1	1	0	2
TOTAL	9	14	1	4	5	2	3	3
CEPHiT	18	11	10	2	4	4	9	4



Finally, there is another linguistic feature, which had not been considered in the original study on CEPHiT, which was noticed during the close reading of the texts in COWITE, and which could provide a linguistic context explaining the lack of use of “if... then...” structures. This is the proportion of use of temporal “then” in the different corpora.

As shown in Table 3 below, COWITE uses “then” particularly more frequently than the other corpora, with 8597.14 uses per million words, compared with 1079.45 in CEPHiT, 1247.97 in CHET and 1618.39 in CEChET. This high usage corresponds with the more instructional nature of the texts included, which usually imply following a sequence of instructions. At the same time, the results suggest that the overwhelming presence of “then” as a temporal adjunct seems to discourage the use of “then” as a conjunct and, consequently of “if... then...” structures.

	COWITE	CHET	CEChET	CEPHiT
Then	8977	505	652	433
Then (N)	8597.14	1247.97	1618.39	1079.45
If... then...	13	8	20	68
% of uses of “if... then...” over all “then” uses	0.14%	1.58%	3.07%	15.70%

5. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUDING REMARKS

Despite the notorious differences in the overall proportion of use of “if... then...” depending on the discipline, the distribution of the results as presented above mirror some of the results obtained for CEPHiT (Puente-Castelo 2016): women use “if... then...” particularly scarcely, and, even among male authors, most of these uses are linguistically or contextually prompted, with a majority of the not-contextually prompted uses clustered in the first half of the eighteenth century.

This distribution is coherent with a scenario in which the use of “if... then...” structures is influenced by both socio-historical and linguistic factors.

In what has to do with socio-historical factors, the more frequent use of “if... then...” in the eighteenth compared to the nineteenth century, in more speculative rather than descriptive or instructional disciplines; and in male rather than female-authored texts, all point to a scenario in which “if... then...” structures could be remnants of an older writing style, with a higher degree of scholastic influence. This would correspond with the notably more frequent use of the structure in texts on philosophy, a discipline in which the scholastic influence seems to last longest (Puente-Castelo 2017); and also with the notable distinction in the proportion of uses between male and female authors, as women were precluded from accessing universities (Abir-Am & Outram 1987), then controlled by scholasticism, and thus could not adopt scholastic writing features.



Regarding the linguistic factors, features contributing to the use of “if... then...” structures seem to coexist with features hindering their use. Among the former, the length of protases, their complexity, the emergence of ambiguity after the elimination of “then”, as well as the sporadic temporal or semi-formulaic uses, all seem to contribute to justifying the use of the structure; whilst, among the latter, a higher usage of temporal “then” seems to discourage their use.

The results, then, seem to back the interpretation given in Puente-Castelo (2016, 179): The distribution of usage of “if... then...” reflects the paradigmatic evolution of scientific and instructive writing, with two authorial attitudes towards their use coexisting and gradually replacing one another.

In the old attitude, “if... then...” is used freely by authors. This explains the distribution of non-contextually prompted uses of the structure, concentrated in the first half of the eighteenth century, and would also be an instance of enduring scholastic practices, thus reflecting its higher use in philosophy texts and among male authors.

This attitude would then evolve towards a new one, in which most of the cases are contextually prompted, and only a minority are used at the discretion of the author. This process, however, would be happening at different rates in different disciplines and authors with different backgrounds, thus explaining the lower clustering of non-contextually prompted uses of “if... then...” at the beginning of the period in CEPHiT, as the influence of scholastic practices in philosophy would last much longer than in other disciplines.

Finally, in what has to do with the analysis of the usage of the structure by female authors, in the Coruña Corpus, only one example has been found in the whole of the three subcorpora analysed (in what would amount to 7.04 cases per million words), and in COWITE there were only 13 total cases found (12.45 per million words). These results seem to back the hypothesis that female authors use “if... then...” structures very scarcely indeed, a result that fits nicely with the two-attitude interpretation explained above, in which women would be less affected by scholastic influence as a result of their exclusion from the scholastic-controlled universities.

However, the fact that most cases in COWITE are not contextually or linguistically prompted is intriguing and seems counterintuitive, even if the scarce total number of cases seems to make the results necessarily unrepresentative. In any case, for a complete analysis, it would be necessary to compare COWITE with a corpus of male-authored instructive texts, to see if the difference is merely a question of disciplinary specificities. This, however, is a matter for further research.

Reviews sent to the authors: 29/11/2025

Revised paper accepted for publication: 28/01/2026



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“HERBS AND OTHER INGREDIENTS”. SPECIFIC AND GENERAL EXTENDERS IN THE *CORPUS OF WOMEN'S INSTRUCTIVE TEXTS IN ENGLISH* (COWITE18)

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ABSTRACT

Extenders frequently appear at the end of enumerations, often taking forms such as *or things like that* or *and so on*, and their primary function is to broaden the semantic range of a list of elements. This study aims to examine the distribution and usage patterns of extenders by female authors in the eighteenth century in a corpus of recipes called *Corpus of Women's Instructive Texts in English* (CoWITE18) comprising a total of 541,973 words. From a methodological perspective, the compilation of a list of likely general and specific extenders will represent a preliminary step. The subsequent analysis will be conducted using a computerised corpus-based approach, with the aim of identifying which forms are most frequently employed in instructional discourse produced by women in that century.

KEYWORDS: Extenders, Instructive Texts, Recipe books, Late Modern English, Women Writing.

“HERBS AND OTHER INGREDIENTS”. *EXTENDERS* GENERALES Y ESPECÍFICOS
EN EL *CORPUS OF WOMEN'S INSTRUCTIVE TEXTS IN ENGLISH* (COWITE18)

RESUMEN

Los *extenders* suelen aparecer al final de las enumeraciones, a menudo adoptando en inglés formas como *or things like that* o *and so on*. Su función principal es ampliar el alcance semántico de una lista de elementos. Este estudio tiene como objetivo examinar la distribución y los patrones de uso de los extenders por parte de autoras del siglo XVIII en un corpus de recetas denominado *Corpus of Women's Instructive Texts in English* (CoWITE18) que comprende 541 973 palabras. Metodológicamente, el primer paso consistió en elaborar una lista de posibles extenders generales y específicos. El análisis posterior se llevaría a cabo utilizando un enfoque basado en corpus informatizado, con la intención de identificar qué formas se emplean con mayor frecuencia en el discurso instructivo producido por las mujeres en el siglo XVIII.

PALABRAS CLAVE: *extenders*, libros de recetas, *late Modern English*, CoWITE18, escritura de mujeres.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.25145/j.recaesin.2026.92.10>

REVISTA CANARIA DE ESTUDIOS INGLESES, 92; abril 2026, pp. 215-237; ISSN: e-2530-8335
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1. INTRODUCTION

Extension is a fundamental strategy for organizing information within discourse. To support understanding beyond the literal level, speakers use discourse strategies that depend on the listener's ability to make inferences and construct mental representations. In this study, I examined certain structures that trigger one of these inferencing processes: extenders (*and others, and things like that...*), and more explicitly, in late Modern English recipe books.

This study aims to identify and examine the frequency of occurrence of adjunctive and disjunctive extenders, both general and specific, in eighteenth-century English texts produced by female authors, and explore possible variant forms within the dataset. In order to do that, I will adopt a traditional, frequency-based approach. Quantitative analysis and visual inspection are combined using software tools to examine occurrences and perform a comprehensive analysis. The corpus material was taken from a subcorpora of the *Corpus of Women's Instructive Texts in English* (CoWITE18) (541,973 words in total). The CoWITE18 covers the 18th century and its texts mainly consist of instructive prose, covering genres like household guides, conduct literature, recipe collections, and medical treatises aimed at a female audience or presenting a woman's viewpoint. This genre provides valuable insight into the linguistic practices of the period. Recipes, typically prepared by middle- and upper-class women, functioned not only as cookbooks but also as vehicles for transmitting knowledge and traditions within the domestic sphere (Soto-Déniz 2024). Although genres such as recipes may require precision and clarity to understand the cooking process or to make the correct ointment, they also allow for the incorporation of linguistic elements like extenders that permit flexibility and adaptation by the reader, making this genre a suitable context for the occurrence of those forms.

Next, I provide a detailed description of the corpus used, along with a thorough explanation of the methodology applied for the analysis. This is followed by a discussion of the data, highlighting significant patterns and allowing for the extraction of meaningful insights. Finally, the study concludes with a series of closing remarks that summarize the main findings and suggest potential directions for future research.

2. EXTENDERS: FORM AND USAGE.

In English linguistics, extenders are pragmatic markers used to broaden or generalize the meaning of preceding elements, often appearing at the end of lists or enumerations. They typically indicate approximation or non-exhaustiveness, helping speakers and writers to manage the scope of their statements. Extenders occur frequently in both spoken and written discourse and play a key role in making communication more flexible and natural. Thus, formulaic expressions such as *or other things, and the like, or and so on and so forth* can be regularly observed in both forms of language use.



Extenders have long been recognised as representative instances of linguistic vagueness (Channell 1994; Drave 2002; Cutting 2007). Indeed, their use often reflects a deliberate choice to employ imprecise or non-specific language. Typically, vagueness in reference was regarded as a deplorable departure from precision. Following a relevantist approach, Jucker, Smith, and Lüdge (2003) fled from this consideration and presented extenders as powerful devices that help convey the intended meaning of an utterance, following the path opened by Aijmer (1985). They (2003, 1737) claimed that vagueness is an interactional strategy and that the purpose of using extenders could be correlated with speakers' strategic desire to digress from precision and to offer instead effective procedural guides that trigger powerful contextual implications. For example, in 1:

- (1) This had great Success, under God, in the Plague; 'tis good likewise against the Small-Pox, or any other Pestilential Disease. (Smith 1728)

The structure positions the extender at the end of the enumeration, thereby constraining the semantic domain of possible alternatives to those associated with "pestilential diseases", including examples like *cholera* and *typhus*. Instead of presenting a focus, the extender becomes the informatively marked element. It allows the possibility of showing (i) that the writer's intention was not that of providing an exhaustive list; (ii) that the enumeration is somehow incomplete; and (iii) that it is the reader's responsibility to complete it (Domínguez 2005). Its main function is to expand the semantic field to which the words it precedes belong without the need to resort to a large number of terms from that same semantic field that could make the list endless.

According to their structure and their function in extending the semantic scope within an enumeration, extenders can be classified into two categories, as proposed by Overstreet (1999): general and specific. Thus, expressions such as *and things of this kind*, or *and others* would exemplify general extenders, whereas examples like (1) would show instances of specific extenders, whose tendency inclines to reinforce or clarify the category to which the listed items belong. At the same time, the extenders analysed in this study will be grouped into two main types: those introduced by *and*, known as adjunctive, and those introduced by *or*, referred to as *disjunctive extenders*.

3. WOMEN, RECIPE BOOKS AND EXTENDERS

Seeking to explore women's writing through a historical perspective, the current research examines the discourse employed by English women recipe writers of the eighteenth century. The recipe is defined as a genre that serves the purpose of providing "instructions on how to prepare medicine, a dish, or some household utility like ink" (Taavitsainen 2001, 86). Recipes fulfilled not only a practical purpose, but also played a crucial role in the exchange of knowledge within women's social networks. In pre-modern households, recipes, both medical and culinary, served as



the primary means for recording and sharing information and knowledge, and many families had a designated notebook for recording, compiling, and sharing essential pieces of practical knowledge (Leong 2013, 83). As well as that, recipe books also had sentimental value as inherited objects (Allen 2015, 2). In addition, these kinds of compilations were subject to exchange and gift, for example as a wedding present, as mentioned by Leong and Pennell (2007, 141).

While this particular domain is predominantly shaped by women, it is equally important to acknowledge that the history of science has been marked by an enduring male-dominated culture that has systematically excluded or overlooked women's roles and voices. This has created systemic barriers for women in science, limiting both their active involvement and the recognition of their contributions within the field (Golinski 2002). Women have struggled to define and assert their identities within that men's world. It is important to remember that not everyone had access to education at the time, and, regrettably, this was especially true for women. Publishing opportunities for them were severely limited, a condition further intensified by the fact that their work was often carried out "in the shadows" (Moskowich 2017), without recognition. Social factors may account for the absence of female authors in certain disciplines. To put an example, historical narratives or nature observation, particularly in rural settings, were deemed more suitable for women, in contrast to areas like astronomy or philosophy. The practice of stargazing at night was often considered inappropriate for women, while prevailing gender norms cast doubt on women's intellectual abilities. Men at the time were credited as "being more able to engage in abstract reasoning, with women considered to be suited to the more practical, immediate aspects of life" (Moskowich 2013, 469). One of these aspects may include the compilation of recipes and remedies showing how women at the time were bearers of their family's knowledge and responsible for its dissemination and preservation for future generations. Thus, through the analysis of recipes, we can deepen our understanding of female writing practices in the 18th century, revealing how women modified linguistic conventions to suit personal and practical needs.

Relatively few scholars have examined extenders from a historical perspective in the context of the English language. However, the contributions of Carroll (2007) and Ortega-Barrera (2008), who has also worked with a corpus of recipes, have been particularly valuable. We aim to contribute to the diachronic study of extenders in English corpus linguistics, as existing research in this area remains limited. The use of extenders can be interpreted as a way of assuming shared knowledge and reducing the distance between reader and creator. If the extender and something like that occurs, how should this be interpreted? Extenders can serve to downplay importance, to lighten the tone or remove rigidity from the text as a whole. They can thus bring the reader closer, who is free in a certain way to choose the ingredients that best suit them, within certain limits, of course. Therefore, the use of a linguistic device like extenders in recipes appears quite reasonable, as their inclusion can leave room for interpretation and adaptation based on factors such as personal taste, economic constraints, or practical considerations.



4. CORPUS DESCRIPTION AND METHODOLOGY

4.1. SOME PRELIMINARY CONSIDERATIONS

One of the main motivations behind my decision to explore the use of extenders in CoWITE18 was the results obtained in earlier research. Previously, I had employed various corpora to examine the most traditional use of extenders, as this field had received relatively little scholarly attention. Thus, the majority of published works on the topic rely on oral and contemporary sources, whereas diachronic and historical studies have been largely overlooked. Some prior corpus material was sourced from two subcorpora within the *Coruña Corpus of English Scientific Writing: CHET* or *Corpus of History English Texts* (Moskowich, Lareo, Lojo and Sánchez-Barreiro 2019) and *CELiST* or *Corpus of English Life Sciences Texts* (Lareo, Monaco, Esteve-Ramos and Moskowich 2020). The first one belongs to the field of History whereas the second one pertains to Life Sciences. The objective was to identify a suitable representation of scientific English in the 18th century. Thanks to that historical approach to extenders, it was demonstrated that not only were these elements used in writing more than two centuries ago (although their presence was already well-documented in the Oxford English Dictionary), but they also existed in a non-oral and more formal context, such as scientific texts.

Although, on this occasion, the focus is not on scientific texts, the material under consideration is historical and also pertaining to the same century. Similarly historical, and more specifically centred on the recipe genre, is the work of Ortega Barrera (2008), who conducted a study where she shed some light about extenders in recipe texts in order to examine their forms and usage, as well as formal and/or functional changes. In contrast to my study, her research covered a different corpus¹ not specifically written by women.

The genre of recipes to which the analysed samples belong may significantly influence the overall study, as each genre is assumed to exhibit distinct linguistic and rhetorical features that could account for the use of extenders. Simultaneously, female authorship may shape the way extenders are used, affecting their form, frequency, and typical co-occurrences.

4.2. CORPUS MATERIAL

To frame this work, I made use of the *Corpus of Women's Instructive Texts in English* (henceforth, CoWITE). The complete project CoWITE constitutes a diachronic collection of English-language instructional and technical texts authored by women and written between 1550 and 1899. Once complete, the corpus is expected

¹ Her paper explores the forms and the functions of extenders in the *Corpus of Early English Recipes (1350–1850)*.



to comprise over 1.75 million words. It includes excerpts from printed books and manuscripts related to cookery, domestic economy, health, and dietetics. The corpus supports research into many historical patterns, but without a doubt it represents women's contributions to the transmission of knowledge within domestic domains.

Within the collection of subcorpus available, I have chosen to work with the 18th century subcorpus of CoWITE, called CoWITE18. This one includes texts written by women as instructions to guide the reader throughout the preparation of a recipe. The cognitive domain primarily reflects the culinary field, incorporating terminology pertaining to ingredients and dish types included in each book. However, CoWITE18 also contains recipes about medical and pharmaceutical remedies, among other topics like household management or economy.

The version employed for this study (Version v1) comprises texts collected up to 5 April 2025², which belong to the recipe genre and reflect an expositive text-type. The texts derive from both printed and manuscript sources located in UK and USA libraries and have been computerised and stored as plain text which can be used in linguistic software for its consultation and retrieval.

CoWITE18, and therefore my study, consists of 22 texts all written by women in the eighteenth century and mainly in British English variety including also American English and Scottish English for two authors. All extracts are centred on instructive topics like cookery and household management. Each sample has a non-fixed word count and the total amount of analyzable tokens for the study is 541,973. The following table (1) shows all these details.

TABLE 1. FEMALE AUTHORS AND WORKS.

YEAR	AUTHOR	TITLE	WORDS
1703	Fitzgerald, Lady Catherine	<i>Collection of Cookery and Medical Receipts</i>	38,454
1709	Hickes, Hannah	<i>Hannah Hickes her Book of Receats</i>	17,152
1712	Fuller, Elizabeth	<i>A Collection of Cookery and Medicinal Receipts</i>	13,329
1714	Kettilby, Mary (ed.)	<i>A Collection of above Three Hundred Receipts in Cookery, Physick and Surgery</i>	21,056
1715	Owen, Letitia	<i>Cookery book, with a few medical receipts</i>	8,013
1720	Haddock, Elizabeth	<i>A Book of Receipts for Cookery and Physick</i>	17,363
1728	Smith, Mary	<i>A Book of Choice Receipts</i>	24,259
1730	Wake, Mary	<i>Mary Wake Canterbury December ye 3: 1730</i>	392
1733	Harrison, Elizabeth	<i>The House-Keeper's Pocket-Book, and Compleat Family Cook</i>	27,494

² They warn us to be mindful that some transcriptions in the current release of the corpus may contain inaccuracies, due to the complexity and variability of original manuscripts and early printed sources. A thoroughly revised and verified edition is currently in progress to improve overall accuracy and consistency.



TABLE 1. FEMALE AUTHORS AND WORKS.			
YEAR	AUTHOR	TITLE	WORDS
1740	Johnston, Mrs.	<i>The Young House-Keeper's Daily Assistant</i>	22,015
1747	Glasse, Hannah	<i>The Art of Cookery Made Plain and Easy</i>	26,062
1750	Bradley, Martha	<i>The British Housewife: Or, The Cook, Housekeeper's, and Gardiner's Companion</i>	27,109
1752	Moxon, Elizabeth	<i>English Housewifry: Exemplified in above Four Hundred and Fifty Receipts</i>	27,809
1755	Cleland, Mrs. Elizabeth	<i>A New and Easy Method of Cookery</i>	27,913
1767	Shackleford, Susanna	<i>The Family Receipt-Book, or, Universal Repository of Useful Knowledge</i>	25,140
1769	Raffald, Elizabeth	<i>The Experienced English Housekeeper</i>	26,321
1774	Maciver, Susanna	<i>Cookery and Pastry</i>	25,282
1777	Mason, Charlotte	<i>The Lady's Assistant for Regulating and Supplying her Table</i>	28,219
1785	Fisher, Ann	<i>The Practice of Cookery, Pastry, and Confectionary. In Three Parts</i>	25,114
1789	Cole, Susanna	<i>The Cook's Companion: or, the Housekeeper's Assistant in Dressing of Meat, Fowl, Fish, &c.</i>	28,696
1791	Frazer, Mrs.	<i>The Practice of Cookery, Pastry, Confectionary, Pickling, and Preserving</i>	57,286
1795	Taylor, Mrs.	<i>Mrs. Taylor's Family Companion, or the whole art of cookery made plain and easy</i>	27,495
TOTAL			541,973

The corpus was analyzed using *AntConc* (Version 4.3.1)(Anthony 2024), a corpus analysis toolkit that enables concordance, frequency, and keyword extraction.

Finally, I examined the possible tokens using a predefined set of adjunctive and disjunctive general extenders. The compilation of this initial inventory is based on works by Overstreet (1999), Aijmer (2002), Carrol (2007) and Sánchez-Barreiro (2010, 2024). The detailed list is shown in Table 2. At the same time, the inventory serves as a reference point for locating possible specific extenders within the corpus.

TABLE 2. GENERAL ADJUNCTIVE AND DISJUNCTIVE EXTENDERS TO BE SEARCHED FOR IN THE ANALYSIS	
ADJUNCTIVE GENERAL EXTENDERS	
and all (that)	and so on and so forth
and (this/that) (sort/kind/type) of (thing/stuff)	and things of (this/that) (kind/nature/sort)
and (all) the rest	and stuff (like that)
and c. (&c)	and such (or any)
and everything (like that)	And such like
and other	and that



TABLE 2. GENERAL ADJUNCTIVE AND DISJUNCTIVE EXTENDERS TO BE SEARCHED FOR IN THE ANALYSIS

ADJUNCTIVE GENERAL EXTENDERS	
and others	and the like
and (other) things (like this/that)	and the whole thing
and so	and this and that
and so forth	and whatever
and so on	and whatnot
and so on and so on	etc. / et caetera
DISJUNCTIVE GENERAL EXTENDERS	
Or any(one/body/thing/where)/some(one/body/thing/where) (like that)	Or (anything/something) of (that/this) (kind/sort)
Or stuff (like that)	Or others
Or such thing(s)	Or this or that
Or such-like	Or so
Or things (like that)	Or what
Or that	Or (sort/kind/type) of (thing/stuff)
Or other	Or whatever
Or the like	Or other things

Although the list of extenders is predefined, conducting the searches with *AntConc* allows for the inclusion of possible modifiers. Consequently, some results may feature them even when they have not been originally included in the previous inventory. Thus, retrieval of instances of *and other* may result in *and the other*, *and any other*, *and every other*, *and all other*, etc., or they may display variations in the position of the elements, as was the case with example 1 where the original form to find would be *and (all) (this/that) (sort/kind/type) of (thing/stuff)*.

(2) WHEN you roast a Goose, Turkey, or Fowls of any Sort, take care to singe them with a Piece of white Paper, and baste them with a Piece of Butter, [...] (Glasse 1747)

After completing the inventory and making initial searches with *AntConc*, the next step involves manual disambiguation, which constitutes a fundamental phase in the process. There is no doubt that such technologies significantly facilitate work where frequency analysis plays a key role, but the use of automated methods does not eliminate the need for manual text review in studies of this nature (Rissanen 1989). Thus, the necessity of discarding constructions that, due to their form, initially appeared to be extenders but were ultimately unrelated to the linguistic unit, is a task which must be carried out by examining the sections of the text that contain the possible forms. The feedback generated during the search process will facilitate access to the specific fragment in which the potential extender occurs.



Certain structures present significant challenges. Such is the case of *and that* or *and all*. In most instances, the element *that* is a relative, or at times, a pronoun, never representing any kind of general or specific extender. Many of the supervised sequences have a different function from the one researched in this paper or they do not have anything to do with the basic definition of extender, not to mention that they do not meet the essential requirement of belonging to an enumeration.

In addition, although the common trend is for enumerations to have three segments, as some authors have pointed out (Jefferson 1990; Lerner 1994), in this study I have chosen to include instances where extenders are used to accompany only one preceding referent. In such cases, even when the list contains only a single item followed by an extender, the meaning is implicitly broadened to include multiple elements. At times, the extender itself suggests reference to more than one unit.

Moreover, I have excluded from the analysis those cases which do not form part of an enumeration of different elements. This is illustrated in the following example:

- (3) At the same time let there be provided another shorter broom of about a foot and a half long, that with one hand may be so employed in the upper and other parts as to clean the cask well: [...] (Taylor 1795)

In this case, the set of words that take the form of extenders serves no pragmatic purpose and its function is strictly referential. It indicates parts of a cask other than the upper, but never gives any precise name to create a proper enumeration like *stave* or *hoop*.

Finally, in this study, I compiled all concordance lines corresponding to each term listed into Excel spreadsheets using LibreOffice (Version 24.8.1.2.), separating the valid forms from the invalid ones by following the criteria outlined above. Other elements considered, though not explicitly in the Table 2, include cases where certain adverbs or other types of modifiers appear between the conjunction and the noun or noun phrase which forms the extender.

Upon completion of this phase, we proceeded to the analysis, as detailed in the following sections.

5. ADJUNCTIVE EXTENDERS IN COWITE18

The current section outlines the frequency count, showing the proportion of general and specific extenders, based on the list provided in the previous section (Table 2 above). To facilitate a clearer analysis, the results for adjunctive and disjunctive extenders will be presented separately.

The samples analysed in this study originate specifically from the period spanning 1703 to 1795. A total of 22 samples were analysed, which together contained 541,973 words. The study revealed 271 occurrences of extenders, both general and specific. The adjunctive forms registered the highest count, 190, a result that was foreseeable given the nature and level of appearance of the conjunctions



and and *or*, even not being part of an extender. As shown in previous historical research, for example by Carroll (2007), conjunction-initial constructions with *and* occur more frequently than those introduced by *or*. That figure (190 extenders) corresponds to 12 expressions included in the initial list. No data is available for the remaining expressions.

In the case of the disjunctive constructions, those amount to a total of 81 occurrences represented by 8 different expressions. Again, some examples from the initial inventory could not be located. It is worth noting that the original list was also based on sources of oral discourse, as the written records from this period remain insufficiently studied to provide reliable comparisons. As well as that, the catalogue of adjunctive and disjunctive forms differ in the distribution of extender types. General-type extenders are more prevalent in adjunctive constructions, whereas disjunctive lists show a higher frequency of specific-type extenders. Table 3 below presents an overview of the first set of results obtained for adjunctive extenders.

TABLE 3. GENERAL AND SPECIFIC ADJUNCTIVE EXTENDERS IN COWITE18

ADJUNCTIVE EXTENDERS	GENERAL	SPECIFIC	TOTAL
And (all) the rest	0	2	2
And all (that)	14	18	32
And c. (&c.)	83	0	83
And everything (like that)	0	0	0
And other	0	20	20
And (other) things (like this/that)	8	0	8
And others	1	0	1
And so	0	0	0
And so forth	0	0	0
And so on	14	1	15
And so on and so forth	0	0	0
And so on and so on	0	0	0
And stuff (like that)	0	0	0
And such (or any)	0	1	1
And such like	1	1	2
And that	0	0	0
And the like	4	0	4
And the whole thing	0	0	0
And things of (this/that) (kind/nature/sort)	0	0	0
And this and that	0	0	0
And (this/that) (sort/kind/type) of (thing/stuff)	0	5	5
And whatever	0	0	0
And whatnot	0	0	0



TABLE 3. GENERAL AND SPECIFIC ADJUNCTIVE EXTENDERS IN COWITE18

ADJUNCTIVE EXTENDERS	GENERAL	SPECIFIC	TOTAL
Etc.	17	0	17
TOTAL	142	48	190

A first examination reveals that some adjunctive extenders in the inventory do not correspond to any of the samples. This includes the forms *and everything* (like *that*), *and so forth*, *and so on and so forth*, *and so on and so on*, *and stuff* (like *that*), *and that*, *and the whole thing*, *and things of (this/that)* (kind/nature/sort), *and this and that*, *and whatever*, *and whatnot*, *and so*. Some of the examples were excluded, such as those containing the word *stuff* as it functioned exclusively as a verb. In the case of *and everything* it seemed to serve as a summarizing reference to prior instructions or as an anaphoric expression more than as an extender.

Far from being rare, the forms *and so* or *and that* occur with notable frequency³. Nevertheless, during the analysis, I consistently encounter expressions that do not align at all with the definition of extender we propose. Thus, in countless instances, *and so* merely serves to introduce a consequence. Sometimes, its purpose is to indicate an ongoing process, not implying additional items as it is shown in example 4.

- (4) Take an anchovy barrel or a deep glazed pot, put a few bay leaves at the bottom, a layer of bay salt, some salt-petre mixed together, then a layer of sprat crouted close, then bay-leaves and the some and sprats, and so till your barrel or pot be fill, [...] (Fisher 1785)

As well as that, many times it indicates that an action can be repeated with many more containers.

- (5) Tie it in a Rag and let it hang for 6 days in a Bottle, and then put it in another, and so for a great many if you please, or else you may put 3 or 4 Drops of Tincture of Ambergrease. (Smith 1728)

Similarly, *that* may function as a demonstrative, a relative or a conjunction in the samples. However, no genuine instances of extension using *and that* were identified. A more detailed account of all the adjunctive extenders recorded can be seen in Figure 1, in which all these types with no instances have not been included.

Additionally, the formulaic expressions *and so on*, *and so forth*, *and so on and so forth*, and *and so on and so on* share the same basic meaning and function in language. However, in spite of being extremely similar, all the authors in CoWITE18 opted for using only one: *and so on*. All the instances corresponded to general extenders,

³ Searches using the general extenders *and so* and *and that* yielded 86 and 29 hits, respectively.



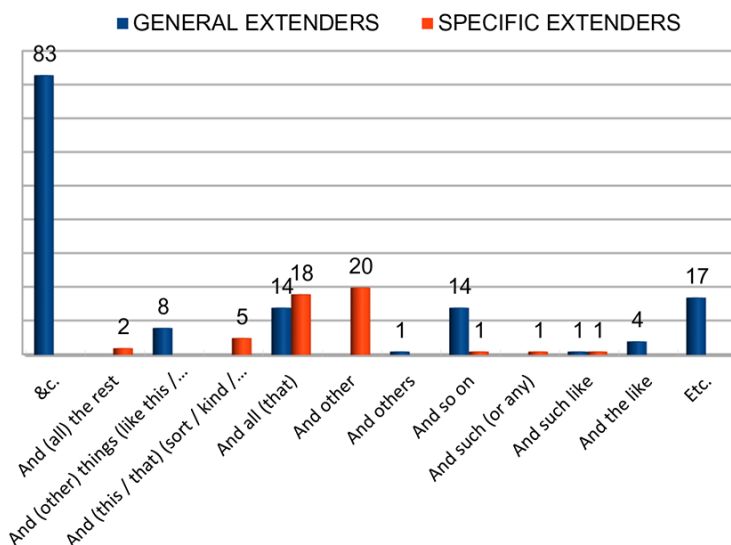


Figure 1. General and specific adjunctive extenders in CoWITE18.

present in 7 of the texts, except an example that we have classified within the group of specific extenders, *and so on of every sort*.

- (6) Yt lay a laying of toasts again, & so on of every sort till your pudding is full. (Haddock 1720)

This does not seem a very common expression, either in formal or informal contexts. It may even be viewed as unnecessarily repetitive and somewhat awkward.

And the rest refers to the remaining part of a specific set. For the purpose of this analysis, only two instances were included as specific extenders, as the remaining tokens did not qualify. The majority were anaphoric noun phrases whose function was not to extend the discourse, but rather to serve to complete a previously established quantity. This is illustrated in the following example:

- (7) [...] put in betwixt a Jack and a Jill of good Brandy, a Quart of light Yeast, and the rest of the Cream, [...] (Moxon 1752)

Additional entries, but within the general extenders category, include *and the like* (4 tokens), together with *and such like* (1 general and 1 specific token). Particularly, the earliest text by Fitzgerald (1703) records the form *& ye like*. Thus, among the spelling variants, the form *ye* (as a replacement for *the*) and the ampersand (as a substitute for the conjunction *and*) have consistently been used in queries.

Another point of interest is the form *&c.* When conducting searches, alternative forms such as *and c.*, *& co.*, *and co.* were also taken into account, but not



found. These different variants also highlight the simultaneous use of two forms: *and* and *&c.* Both coexisted naturally in the eighteenth century for various reasons, such as practical considerations, as the ampersand could save necessary space in printed texts, the idiosyncrasy of the author herself, the context, and so on. There was not exclusive use of either and they could appear alternately within the same sample.

In this context, *&c.* invariably serves as a general extender, and no ambiguity regarding its reference arises. It appears both in section headings and in smaller subsections that present different recipes or variations of the same dish. Moreover, the data indicates a significant preference for this form *&c.* since it is the most commonly found expression within the list, with as many as 83 instances, being employed by over half of the authors. A closer examination revealed that four of them included this expression no fewer than 12 times in their texts.

Another notable feature is the amount of antecedents attached to *&c.*, which also exceeds the number found in any other extender., reaching up to 13 instances along with many others where 6 or 7 are attained. In most cases, those antecedents are a sequence of nouns, as illustrated in example 8, but adjectives and verbs have also been counted, though to a lesser extent.

- (8) To chuse Salmon, Carp, Tench, Pike, Trout, Whitings, Barbels, Smelts, Shads, Chubs, Ruffs, Mackarel, Herrings, &c. (Taylor 1795)

Although not explicitly featured in the list, I conducted a search for several variations of *etc.* including forms like *et cetera*, *et caetera*, *et cætera*. Unfortunately, no cases were referred and only *etc.* could be accounted for. Such formula is similar in meaning to the previous *&c.* Both come from the Latin expression *et cetera*, which could be the equivalent of *and other things*. Within the corpus, it is apparent that both forms coexisted, with a clear preference for the use of *&c.* Today, this extender is rare and considered archaic or formal, whereas *etc.* is the common and standard way in English, and many other languages, to extend an enumeration.

In terms of the number of authors using an extender, *and all* stands out as the most prominent on this occasion, since more than approximately 72% of them use it at least once, both in its general or specific versions. As a result, *and all* becomes the second most widely used overall. Together, the figures yield a total of 37 (14 general and 18 specific).

- (9) TAKE half a peck of Shell-Snails, wipe them and bruise them Shells and all in a Mortar; (Ketillby 1714)

The previous example (9) includes the form as a general extender. In that context, *and all* can convey an impression of naturalness or informality, and it seems more typical of spontaneous speech. Probably, as a mirror of oral traditions or instructions, the use of *and all* gives the genre of recipes a more casual or conversational tone.



In some instances, the word *sorts* appeared together with *all*, in which case this form acts as a modifier. Therefore, constructions similar to example 10 were finally included under the expression *and (this/that) (sort/kind/type) of (thing/stuff)*.

- (10) [...] split them down the back, and marinade them about an hour in a little oil, with pepper and salt, and all sorts of sweet herbs chopped; [...] (Cole 1789)

All the reported cases belong to the specific group. However, another notable example is observed, an extender that occurs mid-way through a quite long list of ingredients and which continues after it. See the example below (11):

- (11) Cabbages and their sprouts, cauliflowers, artichokes, cabbage lettuce, beets, carrots, potatoes, turnips, some beans, peas, kidney-beans, and all sorts of kitchen herbs, radish, horse-radish, cucumbers, cresses, some tarragon, onions, garlic, roucombole, melons, and cucumbers for pickling. (Taylor 1795)

Here, *and all sorts of kitchen herbs* seems to mark a transition within a broader list. Preceding this expression, the list comprises staple vegetables such as cabbages, cauliflowers or lettuce, and root crops like carrots, potatoes or turnips. Those make a total of 12 antecedents, almost reaching the aforementioned case of *et c.* Following the specific extender, another enumeration of items continues, naming aromatic plants and culinary herbs like tarragon and cresses, condiments like garlic or rocambole and items of culinary use, rather than vegetables. However, there are only two herbs included in the latter part, out of the 10 ingredients mentioned, so the extender is merely functioning as a single item within the enumeration, an item followed by other types of non-herbal ingredients.

Regarding the construction *and other*, only specific extenders were listed. This expression ranks third in frequency of use with 20 tokens. A number of these extenders are likewise preceded by *all* such as *and all other green pickles*, that I decided to incorporate under the form *and other* after considering that *all* was here a modifier and not a main component of the unit. Included as well is the form with the article *the*, or as it was also searched *ye*, completing expressions such as *and the other ingredients*.

Similarly, but being another listed extender, we found *and others*. In this case, only one instance was recorded in the whole corpus. The category is that of a general extender with just one antecedent identified in a book by Martha Bradley (1750) who was referring to different kinds of asthmas.

Finally, another significant expression classified as *and (other) things (like this/that)* has registered 8 tokens. The criterion for inclusion of other similar forms was the presence of the word *thing* or *things* as the core element. Therefore, even extenders that reflected *the other* as part of it were included under this construction if their form resembled *and the other things*. The truth is that I consider this extender noteworthy because *and things* is rather vague and general. For example, it does not specify quantity or type, but simply adds a sense of undefined things. On the



contrary, a construction like *and all* is usually more emphatic and more precise, even its general version, as it implies the complete inclusion of everything that follows. Also consider *and others*, which has a degree of specificity because it refers to more items similar to those already mentioned. That said, this may provide some support for the argument that all forms containing *thing(s)* can be categorized as general extenders, which is precisely the case.

Consider these two forms, which share similar grammatical structures: *and such things* and *and such materials*. When comparing them, we find that *and such things* is more prototypical as a general extender due to its inherent vagueness, whereas *and such materials* moves beyond generality toward greater specificity. In that case, when closing the enumeration with the word *thing(s)*, constructions resembling *and (other) things* have been classified as general extenders associated with that adjunctive element: *and the other things*, *and such things*, *and all the other things*, *and all those things*, *and other thing*, *and other things*, *and things*. Together, they may constitute a more comprehensive inventory of general extenders to be considered in future historical research.

6. DISJUNCTIVE EXTENDERS IN COWITE18

This part will analyse disjunctive extenders found in the same samples from CoWITE18, following the organisational structure of the previous section and proceeding with their analysis using the same semantic criteria. As expected, based on findings from previous studies, as outlined in previous sections, the proportion of disjunctive extenders is significantly lower than that of adjunctive lists. Compared to the 190 examples obtained in the previous section for adjunctive extenders, the analysis reveals 81 occurrences of the disjunctive type. All the identified forms correspond to 8 expressions from the initial inventory.

As already mentioned, the distribution of extender types varies between the catalogues of adjunctive and disjunctive forms. Thus, it was verified that general-type extenders were more prevalent in adjunctive constructions. In contrast, disjunctive lists exhibit a higher frequency of extenders of a specific type. Table 4 below provides an overview of the initial results obtained for disjunctive extenders.

TABLE 4. GENERAL AND SPECIFIC DISJUNCTIVE EXTENDERS IN COWITE18.			
DISJUNCTIVE EXTENDERS	GENERAL	SPECIFIC	TOTAL
Or (anything/something) of (that/this) (kind/sort)	0	0	0
Or (sort/kind/type) of (thing/stuff)	0	12	12
Or any(one/body/thing/where)/some(one/body/thing/where) (like that)	5	8	13
Or other	0	37	37
Or other things	0	1	1
Or others	0	0	0
Or so	0	0	0



TABLE 4. GENERAL AND SPECIFIC DISJUNCTIVE EXTENDERS IN COWITE18.

DISJUNCTIVE EXTENDERS	GENERAL	SPECIFIC	TOTAL
Or stuff (like that)	0	0	0
Or such thing(s)	4	1	5
Or such-like	0	0	0
Or that	0	0	0
Or the like	0	1	1
Or things (like that)	0	0	0
Or this or that	0	0	0
Or what	0	11	11
Or whatever	0	1	1
TOTAL	9	72	81

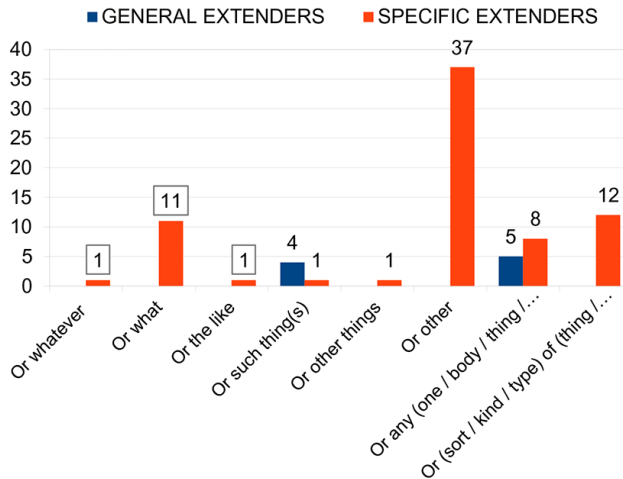


Figure 2. General and specific disjunctive extenders in CoWITE18.

Of the potential forms proposed in the initial inventory, 8 have been attested: *or (sort/kind/type) of (thing/stuff)*, *or any(one/body/thing/where)/some(one/body/thing/where) (like that)*, *or other*, *or other things*, *or such thing(s)*, *or the like*, *or what*, *or whatever*. Proportionally, the most frequent was the phrase *or other*, which accounts for 37 specific occurrences, representing more than half of the total instances.

By contrast, it is readily apparent that several disjunctive extenders included in the list are entirely absent from the samples analysed. These include 8 other forms: *or (anything/something) of (that/this) (kind/sort)*, *or others*, *or so*, *or stuff (like that)*, *or such-like*, *or that*, *or things (like that)*, *or this or that*. As in the previous section, a more detailed overview of all recorded disjunctive extenders is provided in Figure 2 above, excluding those types for which no instances were found.

Certain forms have not achieved significant prominence among women in this corpus. As previously noted, the adjunctive form *and whatever* was not attested in any of the samples analysed. However, its disjunctive counterpart was identified on a single occasion. The example is presented below.

- (12) It is a fine Thing in a House, and will serve for Gravy, thicken'd with a Piece of Butter, Red Wine, Catchup, or whatever you have a mind to put in, [...] (Glasse 1767)

As illustrated, the example shows a pattern with a specific disjunctive extender that conveys an open-ended option, allowing the interlocutor the freedom to include any element of their choice, or any other ingredients available in the kitchen at the time that could be useful for thickening the gravy.

Other expressions with a single specific occurrence are *or the like*, *or other things* and *or such thing*. The first case is exemplified in the excerpt below.

- (13) How to Cleere grounds ouerone with Gorse, broom Turss or the like weeds. (Fitzgerald 1703)

The following illustrates the second, assigned to *or other things* for incorporating that substantive.

- (14) Get a White Cabbage, one Cauliflower, a few small Cucumbers, Radish Pods, Kidney Beans, and a little Beet Root, or any other thing you commonly pickle; [...] (Raffald 1769)

On the contrary, a specific extender like *or such as are Weak*, has been included within the form *or such thing* due to its structural similarity and affinity. However, it does not contain the element *thing(s)*, which, as previously noted, is the component responsible for conveying general extension.

- (15) This is good for Consumptive Persons, or such as are Weak, in recovering a long Sickness. (Kettily 1714)

Additionally, some more instances with the expression were identified, these being general and incorporating the element *thing(s)*. Moreover, in all cases, they are accompanied by modifiers such as *any* and *some*, as in *or any such thing(s)* and *or some such thing*. *Some* and *any* do not alter the generality of the expression. Although they may introduce a degree of quantification, the overall meaning remains intact and they serve to add nuance or subtle variation.

Regarding the extender *or what*, it was incorporated into the inventory on the grounds that it constitutes a form of extension predominantly associated with spoken discourse. In contemporary English, it may simply be used to solicit agreement with someone's views (Overstreet 1999, 94), to express impatience, or even uncertainty that varies depending on the context and tone of voice. Therefore, it was not anticipated



that examples of this nature would be found in recipes or remedies, a supposition that has indeed been confirmed. In the analysis, in its specific type, eleven instances were documented. One of them is given below:

- (16) When your fowls are enough, send them to table with the gravy sauce in the dish. In this manner you may do pheasants, turkeys, or what fowls you please. (Shackleford 1767)

The rest of the examples are all of a kind including constructions such as *or what you please*, *or what fish you have*, and *or what you design to glue together*. All these expressions grant the reader considerable flexibility to choose or adapt the content based on their individual preferences or contextual circumstances. In fact, the phrase *or what fish you have*, for instance, is broader than it may initially appear, as its interpretation and application will vary depending on the reader. In this sense, the referent becomes highly variable, shifting from a matter of shared general knowledge to one shaped by personal, situational factors.

However, if any form stands out quantitatively, it is undoubtedly *or other*, a construction already documented in previous historical studies (Sánchez-Barreiro 2024). 45% of all disjunctive extenders belong to this expression, representing nearly three times the frequency of the next most common types (detailed below). All tokens identified were of the specific type, with a total of 37 occurrences. In addition, out of all the forms, only *or other* and its modified version *or any other* have been attested, consistently followed by a noun phrase. Besides that, the instances are evenly distributed, with over half of the authors using them at least once in their texts, and up to a maximum of five times.

With regard to other cases, when examining the combination *or (sort/kind/type) of (thing/stuff)*, a variety of patterns can be applied, namely *or that kind of thing*, *or some kind of thing*, *or any sort of thing*, *or that kind of stuff*, *or any type of thing*, etc. Any additional related expressions formed with *sort/type/kind* that do not involve *thing* or *stuff*, for instance, *or any sort of fowl*, were accounted for in the analysis as specific extenders, resulting in 12 occurrences.

I would like to draw attention to two cases where the construction had shifted from its original position as observed in example 17:

- (17) When you roast a Goose, Turkey, or Fowls of any Sort, take care to singe them with a Piece of white Paper, [...] (Glasse 1747)

Both on this occasion and another instance in which the specific extender followed a similarly reversed order, it will appear listed after *or (sort/kind/type) of (thing/stuff)*.

A last case to consider is that of *or any (one/body/thing/where)/some (one/body/thing/where) (like that)*, where many potential options are readily visible. Nevertheless, the last prepositional phrase *like that* has always been omitted in all the tokens found. Instead, instances combining *or anything* and *or something* were common. Moreover, in many of the cases those structures co-occurred with the words *else* or



more. This leads me to consider the prospective inclusion of general extenders with that specific configuration in the compiled list, namely: *or anything else, or something else, or something more*.

In this case, after performing the searches based on the initial inventory, I detected one of those previous combinations which had initially been overlooked. Examples 18 and 19 illustrate this:

- (18) [...] and put them in the same Water they were codled in, cover them with Vine Leaves, a white Paper or something more at the Top, [...] (Moxon 1752)
- (19) [...] put in as much grated manchet as will make it light, a nutmeg or something else, and as much sugar as you please, [...] (Fisher 1785)

Two more examples were noted, both functioning as specific extenders, under the form *or something* plus a comparative form of an adjective. Those were classified under the aforementioned construction *or any(one/body/thing/where)/some(one/body/thing/where) (like that): or something larger, or something thicker*. The rest of extenders within this category were formed with *anything*. No instances with other possible combinations like *anyone, anybody, somewhere*, etc. were observed.

7. CONCLUDING REMARKS

The growing and necessary interest in recent times in uncovering and valuing women's contributions has led to the development of projects like the corpus used in this study, CoWITE18, which places texts written exclusively by women at the forefront. This focus is especially significant given the historical context of the 18th century. Recipe books from this period are rich sources of knowledge, not merely compilations of culinary instructions, but true repositories of domestic expertise. Among numerous other aspects, they often included remedies for everyday ailments, instructions for making ointments, and advice on the medicinal use of plants, wisdom carefully preserved and passed down through generations as a valuable legacy of everyday life and care.

In this paper, we have explored the use of extenders in these historical texts, considering that such structures are typically associated with colloquial speech and oral discourse, in order to assess the extent to which they were present in 18th-century English recipe books, and to compile a definitive list of the extenders most frequently used by women within this genre.

The material analysed consisted of 22 texts dating from 1703 to 1795, comprising a total of 541,973 words, and taken from a subcorpora of the *Corpus of Women's Instructive Texts in English* (CoWITE18) which covers the 18th century. The analysis revealed 271 occurrences of extenders (190 adjunctive and 81 disjunctive), both general and specific. However, general extenders were predominant in adjunctive lists, contrasted with the dominance of specific extenders in disjunctive ones.

Regarding adjunctive forms, those accounted for the majority of the linguistic elements, with 142 general-type and 48 specific-type instances. The total number of



tokens corresponded to 12 of the expressions from the initial inventory, including: *and (all) the rest, and all (that), &c., and other, and (other) things (like this/that), and others, and so on, and such (or any), and such like, and the like, and (this/that) (sort/kind/type) of (thing/stuff), etc.* The expression *&c.* was particularly prominent, representing the majority of the adjunctive extender occurrences, and being broadly distributed throughout the corpus.

As regards disjunctive constructions, a total of 81 occurrences were recorded, 9 pertaining to the general type and 72 to the specific type. Eight expressions from the original list were attested: *or (sort/kind/type) of (thing/stuff), or any(one/body/thing/where)/some(one/body/thing/where) (like that), or other, or other things, or such thing(s), or the like, or what, and or whatever.* Among these, the most frequent was the phrase *or other*, which appeared 37 times and accounted for more than half of the total disjunctive instances.

Finally, this study has sought to demonstrate that extenders in recipe books written by women in the 18th century do not merely serve a linguistic function of enumeration or closure, but also act as discursive strategies that reflect orality, proximity to the reader, and the practical nature of the knowledge being transmitted. Since the findings so far are not definitive, further research could benefit from a more comprehensive approach that includes additional variables potentially affecting the use of extenders in English during that period of history.

Reviews sent to the authors: 15/12/2025

Revised paper accepted for publication: 30/01/2026



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FROM CUSTOMARY TO METRIC: ON LATE MODERN ENGLISH MEASUREMENTS*

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ABSTRACT

The paper aims to analyse Late Modern English instructional texts with respect to the use of measure terminology. It will focus on the changes in the use of measurement terms in light of the amendment of the Weights and Measures Act, which took place at the beginning of the 19th century. Two major categories of measure terms will be discussed: (i) specific terms, such as *pound* and *ounce*; and (ii) non-specific ones, which contain imprecise terminology, such as *a bit*, *a good deal of*, as well as container-related terms, such as *pot*, *kettle*, *cupful* and *glassful*. The research will answer whether the unification of the metric system affected the degree of precision among cookbook writers. The study is based on two parts of the *Corpus of Women's Instructional Texts in English* covering the 18th and 19th centuries, respectively.

KEYWORDS: Late Modern English, CoWITE, Measurements, Dry Weight System.

DE LO CONSENTUDINARIO AL MÉTRICO: SOBRE LAS MEDIDAS EN EL INGLÉS MODERNO TARDÍO

RESUMEN

El artículo tiene como objetivo analizar textos instructivos del inglés moderno tardío en relación con el uso de la terminología de medidas. Se centra en los cambios en el uso de los términos de medición a la luz de la modificación de la Ley de Pesos y Medidas (*Weights and Measures Act*), que tuvo lugar a comienzos del siglo XIX. Se discuten dos categorías principales de términos de medida: (i) términos específicos, como *pound* y *ounce*; y (ii) términos no específicos, que contienen terminología imprecisa, como *a bit*, *a good deal of*, así como términos relacionados con recipientes, como *pot*, *kettle*, *cupful* y *glassful*. La investigación responde a la pregunta de si la unificación del sistema métrico afectó al grado de precisión entre los autores de libros de cocina. El estudio se basa en dos partes del *Corpus of Women's Instructional Texts in English* que cubren los siglos XVIII y XIX, respectivamente.

PALABRAS CLAVE: inglés moderno tardío, CoWITE, medidas, sistema de peso en seco.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.25145/j.recaesin.2026.92.11>

REVISTA CANARIA DE ESTUDIOS INGLESES, 92; abril 2026, pp. 239-250; ISSN: e-2530-8335
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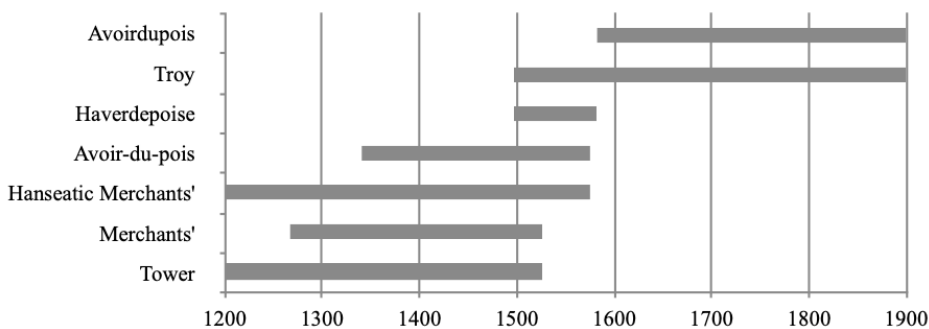


Figure 1. The major English dry weight systems and the period of their usage (based on Ross 1983, 18)

1. INTRODUCTION

The British metric system was, for a long time, chaotic and imprecise. In fact, there were several systems “based upon national systems enacted in law by the Crown”; however, there were also local (city and county) systems, which were often inaccurate and approximate, which caused a lot of regional variation (Ross 1983, 16). Within the dry weight measuring, for instance, 29 different systems were identified in England, seven of which may be regarded as primary ones at certain periods in the history (see Figure 1 above). The multiplicity of systems, diversity of terminology and differences in the values caused general confusion. As Thomas (1987, 117-118) writes, “The size of the perch and the acre varied in different parts of the country, while that of the bushel varied both regionally and when applied to different commodities. (...) In the remoter shires a bushel contained two or three times as much as in the counties near London, and a perch was a good deal longer. There were twelve ounces in the pound troy (used by goldsmiths), sixteen in the pound avoirdupois and eighteen in a Cornish pound of wool or mutton. The stone varied from eight pounds in weight to twenty-four pounds according to the commodity concerned.”

The same confusion existed in the metric terminology used with reference to various food products, which contributed to the fact that, until the Early Modern English period, physicians and cooks used intuitive (and often imprecise) units of measure (Thomas 1987). A study on medieval measurements in instructional texts shows that in cooking recipes the non-specific measure terms, such as *enough*, *(a) little*, *some*, prevailed. In contrast, specific terminology (i.e. based on one of

* The research conducted in this paper has been supported by the Agencia Estatal de Investigación, Plan Estatal de Investigación Científica, Técnica y de Innovación 2021-2023, under award number PID2021-125928NB-I00. I hereby express my thanks. Unión Europea · Fondo Europeo de Desarrollo regional “Una manera de hacer Europa.”

the metric systems, e.g. *ounce*, *pound*, *pennyweight*), as well as container-related terms (e.g. *cupful*, *dishful*, *potful*, *spoonful*) were in minority (Bator & Sylwanowicz 2017). Similar conclusions were drawn from medical instructions; however, here the authors noticed an increase in the use of specific terms towards the end of the Middle English period. Such a shift was also observed in culinary jargon, but only in the 17th century. A shift from non-specific to more precise measure terminology, on the one hand, has been attributed to the importation of Arabic mathematical texts (Spiller 2008); on the other hand, it has been explained by a shift in the target audience of cookbooks (Diemer 2013).

In any case, it should not be a surprise that the need for a unified system of measurements arose, prompting several attempts to redefine the existing units. Some of these were the introduction of the Winchester Units by King Henry VII in 1495, or the establishment of the Exchequer Standards by Queen Elizabeth I in 1588. However, even though some metric units became unified (Fox 2024), a significant amount of regional variation persisted. In the eighteenth century, among others due to “the efficiency of taxation” (Dijkman 2011, 205), a sturdy campaign aimed at standardisation of the system of weights and measures began. It ended with the passing of the Weights and Measures Act in 1824, which implemented one unified system across the British Empire. The Act defined all the standard metric units, “from which all other Weights shall be derived, computed, and ascertained” (Weights and Measures Act, §IV).

However, standardisation is a gradual process. Despite the introduction of the Weights and Measures Act, a significant number of recipe books remained imprecise and intuitive in terms of measurements, and where precise weight units were used, they might have represented different metric systems. This paper aims to examine a corpus of instructional texts from before and after the amendment of the Act in order to scrutinise whether any differences in terms of the use of metric units can be noticed. Has the unification of measurement terms contributed to an increased precision among cookbook writers? Or were they persistently using terminology based on the volume of kitchen tools and body parts, such as *cupful* and *handful*, or their own intuition, such as *enough* or *not too much*?

2. CORPUS AND METHODOLOGY

The study is based on instructional texts written in English and published in the 18th and 19th centuries. The database consists of two parts of the *Corpus of Women's Instructional Texts in English* (= CoWITE), which represent the two centuries, respectively. The 18th-century subcorpus consists of 22 text samples, the 19th-century subcorpus of 33 text samples, each of which exceeds the length of half a million words, coming to a total of 1,044,674 tokens in length. Table 1 illustrates the exact dates and size of particular collections.

The texts were searched using the Sketch Engine tool, each of the two subcorpora independently. This was achieved by selecting the advanced concordance search for all lemmas representing particular weight and measure terminology from



TABLE 1. DATES AND SIZE OF THE COLLECTIONS INCLUDED IN THE TWO CORPORA (ALONSO-ALMEIDA et al. 2025)

CoWITE18			CoWITE19		
YEAR	AUTHOR	NO. OF TOKENS	YEAR	AUTHOR	NO. OF TOKENS
1703	Fitzgerald	38,454	1806	Rundell Maria	20,614
1709	Hickes	17,152	1814	Haslehurst Priscilla	31,325
1712	Fuller	13,329	1818	A lady	19,803
1714	Kettilby	21,056	1824	Randolph Mary	25,288
1715	Owen	8,013	1825	Bird Mary	3,299
1720	Haddock	17,363	1825	Copley Esther	4,691
1728	Smith	24,259	1825	Copley Esther	2,107
1730	Wake	392	1825	Holland Mary	16,021
1733	Harrison	27,494	1830	A lady of distinction	2,071
1740	Johnston	22,015	1831	Smith Prudence	27,487
1747	Glasse	26,062	1835	Corbet Anne	18,063
1750	Bradley	27,109	1841	Mrs Child	26,892
1752	Moxon	27,809	1849	Mrs Putnam	24,596
1755	Cleland	27,913	1850	Mrs Bliss of Boston	22,812
1767	Shackleford	25,140	1853	Cust Mary Anne Boode, Lady	6,423
1769	Raffald	26,321	1854	Leslie Eliza	25,859
1774	Maciver	25,282	1863	Hill Georgiana	25,399
1777	Mason	28,219	1864	Wittenmyer Annie	5,720
1785	Fisher	25,114	1864	Wittenmyer Annie	6,001
1789	Cole	28,696	1866	Mrs Toogood	17,962
1791	Frazer	57,286	1875	Beeton Mary	15,152
1795	Taylor	27,495	1880	Mrs Eliza a Pitkin	6,176
			1880	Pye Julie	10,019
			1883	Hooper Mary	10,453
			1885	Clarke Edith	10,090
			1885	Edden Helen	10,142
			1886	Clarke Edith	14,776
			1886	Final Lees-Dods Matilda	8,281
			1890	Everard Mary	30,875
			1893	Campbell Helen	10,141
			1896	Clarke Edith	10,221
			1897	Earle Maude	26,129
			1899	Mary A Boland	7,813
	TOTAL:	541,973		TOTAL:	502,701



the 18th and 19th centuries, including various spelling variants. The list of lemmas was compiled with the help of *A Dictionary of Weights and Measures for the British Isles: The Middle Ages to the Twentieth Century* (Zupko 1985), which provides information about the timeline of their use, as well as Ross's *Archaeological Metrology* (1983), where all the values for the weight units representing various metric systems can be found. As the material under analysis covers recipes, the list was restricted to dry weight measurements. The non-specific terms were listed based on the available publications dealing with recipe collections from different periods (Norrick 1983; Chiaro 2013; Diemer 2013; Bator & Sylwanowicz 2017).

3. RESULTS

In the following analytical part, the measure terms will be discussed according to two major categories: (a) specific terms, which are based on any of the weight and measure systems, e.g. *dram, ounce, pound*, etc.; and (b) non-specific terms, which do not give the precise measurements, e.g. *a blade, a glass, a handful, a little, a (good/ great) quantity, some*, etc.

3.1. SPECIFIC MEASURE TERMS

The specific measure terms refer to those terms which belong to any of the weight and measure systems used in the 18th and 19th centuries (see Table 2 for a list of terms found in the analysed material). The two major systems used throughout the two centuries were the Troy and the Avoirdupois Weight Systems (see Figure 1 above). The former was adopted by Henry VII in 1497, originally for measuring

TABLE 2. THE NUMBER OF OCCURRENCES (TOKENS) OF THE SPECIFIC DRY WEIGHT MEASURE TERMS FOUND IN THE ANALYSED CORPUS.

SPECIFIC MEASURE TERM	18 th CENTURY	19 th CENTURY
dragma	113	39
gram	1	—
ounce	1,744	1,357
pound	2,925	1,362
scruple	28	6
stone	2	2
mutchkin	322	—
peck	78	16
TOTAL:	5,213	2,782



precious metals; and later, it was extended to corn and grain products. The major weight units used in the Troy system were: *grain*, *pennyweight*, *ounce*, *pound*, *pottle*, *bushel*, *hundredweight*, *quarter* and *ton*. The system continues to this day, in a slightly modified form, as some of the units were abolished in the 19th century (Ross 1983). With time, it was also restricted to its original purpose, i.e., measuring precious metals and stones (OED: s.v. *troy*, n²). The Avoirdupois Weight System was introduced by Elizabeth I in 1582 to replace some of the previously existing systems. It makes use of such units as: *scruple*, *grain*, *dra(ch)m*, *ounce*, *pound*, *stone*, *quarter*, *hundredweight* and *ton*. The two systems differ in the values of particular weight measures. For instance, a Troy pound equals 373.248 grams, whereas an Avoirdupois pound equals 453.6 grams. A Troy ounce weighs 31.104 grams, while an Avoirdupois ounce is 28.35 grams (Ross 1983). However, the latter is used “for all goods except the precious metals, precious stones, and medicines” (OED: s.v. *avoirdupois*), which, to a high extent, is what the Troy system covers.

Even though both subcorpora contain the specific measure terminology, all the measure units predominate in the earlier material, not only in terms of their frequencies (number of tokens) but also in the number of distinctive terms (types) mentioned in the recipes. The most popular weight units found in both subcorpora are *pound* and *ounce*, both of which are applied to a variety of products, such as herbs and spices, vegetables, butter, or meats. The 18th-century material not only outnumbers the later one in terms of the use of *pound* and *ounce*, but also both of these measurements are used in the abbreviated form, see example (1). In the later century, only eight tokens of *oz* were found (see example (2)), which might serve as evidence that these measurement units were better assimilated and more widely known (especially to non-professional audience) in the 18th century.

- (1) Eggs, keep out 6 Whites for glazing, take 3 *lib* . of fine Sugar, beat your Sugar an Eggs, till they be thick and white, take 2 *lib*. and a half of sweet Butter, ... (CoWITE18; 1740)
2 *oun* of granies; 2 *oun* of Caraway seeds, 2 *oun* of Aniseeds; 2 *oun* of Fenell seeds 2 *oun* of Lickerice 2 *oun* of Galling all; 2 *oun* of Camomill ... (CoWITE18; 1703)
- (2) 1 *oz*. butter, 1 *oz* , Flour, 1 gill of Oyster Liquor, 1 gill of Milk, 1/2 gill of Cream, Lemon Juice, Cayenne and Salt. (CoWITE19; 1885)

It is worth noting that three weight units found in the 18th-century subcorpus do not represent the Avoirdupois system, i.e. *gram*, *mutchkin* and *peck*. The first one originates from the French metric system. Zupko’s *A Dictionary of Weights and Measures for the British Isles: The Middle Ages to the Twentieth Century* does not include this unit at all. In the analysed material, it was used only once, in a medical recipe rather than a culinary one, see (3). *Mutchkin* goes back to the Scottish measure system, which was also used regionally in Northern England. It was used “for liquids and for dry substances of a powdery or granular nature” (OED: s.v. *mutchkin*). It was relatively popular in the 18th-century corpus, found in a variety of collections (see (4)). The last of the measure units which stands out of the Avoirdupois system,



peck, has been used in Britain since 1405 and is applied to “dry goods equal to a quarter of a bushel, now equivalent (in Britain) to two imperial gallons (approx. 9.09 litres)” (OED: s.v. *peck* n¹, 2a). Ross (1983, 35) enumerates it within the William III Winchester Corn Weight System, used from the beginning of the 18th century until 1826, which correlates with the diminishing number of occurrences of this particular measure unit in the 19th-century subcorpus. Its last record was found in 1854.

- (3) Take four ounces of sweet oil one ounce of spermaceti, and 25 *grams* of camphire, ... (CoWITE18; 1785)
- (4) TAKE a *Mutchkin* of fine Oat-meal, put to it two Chopins of Water, let it stand twelve Hours; ... (CoWITE18; 1775)

The specific measure terms were found in both subcorpora; however, they undoubtedly dominate in the earlier material. Not only do they abound in terms of the number of tokens, but a wider variety of types were selected from the 18th-century texts, which proves that at that time, measure terminology was not limited to units representing the Avoirdupois weight system.

3.2. NON-SPECIFIC MEASURE TERMS

This category contains terminology referring to weight and measure units which have not been specified. They have been called ‘non-technical’ by Carroll (1999) or ‘vague’ by Diemer (2013), as

- (i) they rely on the cook’s knowledge or intuition, e.g. *sufficiency*, *a piece*, *enough* (see examples under (5));
- (ii) they might be based on parts or forms of the product referred to, e.g. *a blade*, *a clove*, *a stick* (see examples (6)); or
- (iii) they might depend on the size of the container used for adding them, e.g. *a glass*, *a cupful*, *a pan*, *a spoonful*, etc. (see examples (7) and (8)). This group also contains what Spiller calls “measurements derived from the body” (2008, ix), as terms such as *handful* are included here as well. In what follows, this subcategory will be referred to, after Bator and Sylwanowicz (2017), as ‘container-related terms’.

Tables 3 and 4 illustrate the measure units representing the (general) non-specific and the container-related terminology, respectively, together with the number of tokens found in the analysed corpus.

- (5) Take half a pint of sorrel-juice, half a pint of white wine, and some scalded gooseberries, to which add a *sufficiency* of sugar and butter. ... (CoWITE19; 1831)
... to every two lbs. of potatoes add one spoonful of sweet butter or lard, a little salt and *enough* flour to make a dough, ... (CoWITE19; 1864)





TABLE 3. THE NUMBER OF OCCURRENCES (TOKENS) OF THE NON-SPECIFIC MEASURE TERMS FOUND IN THE ANALYSED TEXTS.

NON-SPECIFIC MEASURE TERM	18 th CENTURY	19 th CENTURY	NON-SPECIFIC MEASURE TERM	18 th CENTURY	19 th CENTURY
bit	181	254	much	723	126
blade	132	172	part	56	20
bunch	91	98	piece	526	626
bundle	104	70	pinch	2	111
clove	32	20	plenty	37	—
deal	76	48	quantity	305	280
drop	93	61	slice	268	326
enough	9	73	scrape	40	4
faggot	68	3	some	1,524	738
(a) few	373	501	sprig	59	74
grain	34	21	squeeze	50	4
(a) little	2,625	1,792	stick	49	32
lump	60	79	sufficiency	5	16
many	129	80	-worth	13	22
			TOTAL:	7,664	5,651

TABLE 4. THE NUMBER OF OCCURRENCES (TOKENS) OF THE NON-SPECIFIC MEASURE TERMS FOUND IN THE ANALYSED TEXTS.

CONTAINER-RELATED MEASURE TERM	18 th CENTURY	19 th CENTURY	FUL-DERIVATIVES	18 th CENTURY	19 th CENTURY
bushel	13	15	basinful	—	1
cup	5	320	bowlful	—	4
glass	252	134	boxful	—	1
kettle	28	26	cupful	15	117
pan	54	77	dishful	2	2
pot	50	20	glassful	6	29
spoon	19	62	handful	549	121
TOTAL:	421	654	ladleful	10	5
			mouthful	2	—
			pailful	—	5
			panful	10	4
			plateful	2	1
			potful	4	1

TABLE 4. THE NUMBER OF OCCURRENCES (TOKENS) OF THE NON-SPECIFIC MEASURE TERMS FOUND IN THE ANALYSED TEXTS.

CONTAINER-RELATED MEASURE TERM	18th CENTURY	19th CENTURY	FUL-DERIVATIVES	18th CENTURY	19th CENTURY
			saucerful	—	1
			spoonful	1,043	2,470
			thimbleful	3	—
			tumblerful	—	2
			tureenful	—	2
			TOTAL:	1,646	2,766

... then straine them out in abason, and take 3 times as *much* sugar as you haue dryed quence, ... (CoWITE18; 1703)

- (6) then add a few Leaves of Thyme stripped from the Stalks, a couple of small Onions shred to fine Pieces, half a dozen *Grains* of whole Pepper, and half a Race of Ginger. (CoWITE18; 1750)

Take three onions, two *cloves* of garlic, two ounces of grated horseradish, and a spoonful of salt; (CoWITE19; 1831)

... put it into a saucepan with three onions, a *blade* of mace, or two, and a few pepper-corns cover with water, ... (CoWITE19; 1806)

- (7) Mix two *handfuls* of bean-flour with one *handful* of salt, and it will answer the end very well. (CoWITE18; 1795)

- (8) ... Two *tablespoonfuls* of Bread-crumbs. One *dessertspoonful* of chopped Parsley. One *teaspoonful* of chopped Herbs. Pepper and Salt. (CoWITE19; 1885)

The non-specific terms appear to be commonly used regardless of the century. They are somewhat imprecise, leaving the decision regarding the amounts to the cook's intuition, knowledge, and taste (e.g., *some, a few, much, a deal of*), see example (9). Some of them refer to the form of the food product (e.g., *a sprig, a blade, a clove*), without specifying the size of the foodstuff, as if the recipe author assumed the proportions of these do not vary significantly enough to influence the taste of the dish. Some collective terms, such as *bunch, bundle, faggot* were also found. Additionally, in both subcorpora, instead of referring to the weight or amount of the foodstuff, the authors mention the value of the product, using terms such as *pennyworth* or *shillingworth*, see example (10).

- (9) ... mix as *much* salt as you judge proper with eight ounces of bay salt, four ounces of saltpetre, and one pound of coarse sugar, ... (CoWITE19; 1806)
 ... mince it with a Pound of Beef Suet, and a *good quantity* of Thyme, and Onions; beat it in a Mortar, season it with savory Seasoning, ... (CoWITE18; 1733)



- ... put a curst at the bottom of your dish, with *a great deal* of butter, and forced meat balls, then season the rooks with salt, pepper, ... (CoWITE18; 1785)
- (10) ... & melt therin halfe a pound of good butter and a pound of sugar add therto 4 *peny worth* of saffron dried & powdred, ... (CoWITE18; 1703)
Then take your pan off the fire, and to every pound of sugar, take *sixpence worth* of the oil of cinnamon, ... (CoWITE18; 1791)

A special group of non-specific terms are the container-related terms. Even though in some publications they are treated as a separate category, I have included them in the non-specific category, as the quantities they refer to are by no means precise. As Culpeper wrote, “[w]hat a handful is, is known to all, but how much it is, is known to none” (Spiller 2018, xxxvi).

The majority of these terms are derivatives coined by combining the name of a body part or a container with the suffix *-ful*. The former prevails in 18th-century recipes, as *handful* was used over four times more frequently than a century later. However, this is the only unit of measure which dominates in terms of its frequency over the 19th century material. The later period abounds with container-related terminology, as a greater variety of lexeme types was found in the 19th-century subcorpus than in the 18th century, indicating a greater creativity of the cookbook authors and a broader diversity of measure references. The most frequently used container-related terms in both subcorpora are *cupful* and *spoonful*. Among these measurements, we can distinguish a certain hierarchy, especially in the 19th century, as cookbook authors attempted to differentiate between various container sizes, specifying the measurements, e.g., *dessertspoonful*, *meat-spoonful*, *salt-spoonful*, *tablespoonful*, *teaspoonful*; or *breakfast-cupful*, *coffee-cupful*, *tea-cupful*, etc. (see example (8) above). These compounded terms constitute 72% of all the 19th-century container-related measurements, and only 4% of the 18th-century ones. This suggests that, despite the use of non-specific terminology, the authors of the 19th-century collections attempted to be as precise as possible, opting for kitchen-specific terminology rather than metric systems.

4. CONCLUSIONS

This paper aimed to analyse two Late Modern English subcorpora, CoWITE18 and CoWITE19, which contain instructional texts representing the 18th and 19th centuries, respectively, in order to examine the terminology applied by the recipe authors to specify the amounts of the ingredients mentioned. The extracted terminology has been divided into two major groups: specific and non-specific terms. The former category comprises weight and measure units used in one of the dry weight measure systems recognised in the UK. The latter category consists of relatively imprecise expressions which either appeal to the reader’s intuition, refer to containers typically used in the kitchen, or the value of the ingredients mentioned. The study allows us to draw several conclusions:



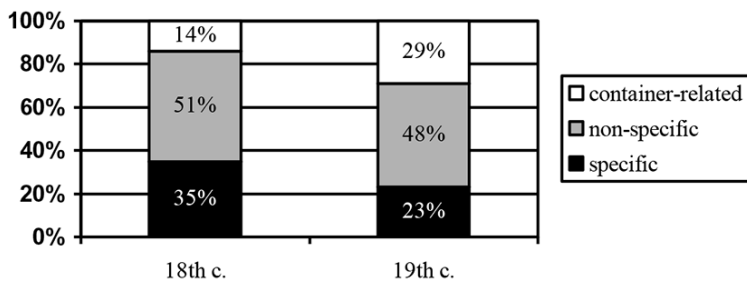


Figure 2. The ratio of occurrence of the measure terminology in the two subcorpora.

Nowhere in the recipes was any specification found regarding the choice of metric system applied by the author. This suggests that, except the three weight units discussed above (*gram*, *mutchkin* and *peck*), the Avoirdupois Weight System was followed, as this was the system recognised at that time in the UK.

A comparison of the terminology used in the two centuries suggests that specific terminology was preferred in the earlier period, with 35% of measure terms representing this category (see Figure 2). It seems that the 19th-century reduction in the use of specific terms was compensated for by a higher number of container-specific terms. This might indicate that the recipe authors, instead of using the commonly known metric units, turned towards some form of culinary jargon. As indicated by Norrick (1983, 180), “[t]he words *teaspoon*, *tablespoon*, *cup*, *pinch* etc. express meanings in recipes quite different from their everyday meanings in other contexts; hence the vocabulary of recipes is distinct from that of general English”, which suggests the development of the culinary jargon. Similarly, Diemer and Frobenius (2013, 77) include non-specific measure terms in what they call “special-purpose vocabulary”.

The container-related terms were not only more numerous in terms of tokens in the later subcorpus, but also in terms of the types. This proves that by coining more derivatives, a greater variety of measure terms was introduced, allowing for a larger scope of quantities to be expressed by culinary terminology. Moreover, the most popular of the *ful*-derivatives were compounded in such a way as to create a hierarchy of container sizes, thereby further distinguishing between different measure categories.

To sum up, the study has shown that the trend seems to have been from metric to customary rather than the other way round (as the title of this paper suggests). To answer the questions posed in the Introduction, the 19th-century unification of measure systems did not support precision in the recipes; instead, precision was aimed at by specification of the available kitchen-based terminology. The cook’s intuition did not devalue in the 19th century, as the non-specific terms were equally frequent in both centuries.

Reviews sent to the authors: 21/11/2025
 Revised paper accepted for publication: 28/01/2026



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LADY FANSHAWE'S SPANISH IMAGINARY

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ABSTRACT

This article examines Lady Ann Fanshawe's cultural experiences and interactions during her residence in Spain, where she lived with her husband. It focuses on her adaptation to local customs and her insertion of Spanish recipes in her recipe book, Wellcome MS 7113, a collection that highlights her role in preserving both family heritage and cross-cultural knowledge. Her *Memoirs*, written a decade after her husband's death, further enrich this analysis by offering insights into her extensive travels, cultural observations, and encounters with Spanish traditions, cuisine, and the high classes in seventeenth-century Spain. Together, these writings document not only the hardships of exile, diplomatic challenges, and personal losses, but also the creatively transformative impact of her Spanish experience on her manuscript production.

KEYWORDS: Wellcome MS 7113, Lady Fanshawe, Recipe Collections, Memoirs, Seventeenth-century Women Writing.

EL IMAGINARIO ESPAÑOL DE LADY FANSHAWE

RESUMEN

Este artículo examina las experiencias culturales y las interacciones de Lady Ann Fanshawe durante su estancia en España, donde vivió con su marido. Se centra en su adaptación a las costumbres locales y en la inclusión de recetas españolas en su recetario, Wellcome MS 7113, una colección que destaca su papel en la preservación tanto del patrimonio familiar como del conocimiento intercultural. Sus *Memorias*, escritas una década después de la muerte de su marido, enriquecen aún más este análisis al ofrecer una visión de sus extensos viajes, observaciones culturales y encuentros con las tradiciones españolas, la gastronomía y las clases altas en la España del siglo XVII. En conjunto, estos escritos documentan no solo las dificultades del exilio, los retos diplomáticos y las pérdidas personales, sino también el impacto creativo y transformador de su experiencia española en su producción manuscrita.

PALABRAS CLAVE: Wellcome MS 7113, Lady Fanshawe, recetarios, memorias, escritura femenina en el siglo diecisiete.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.25145/j.recaesin.2026.92.12>

REVISTA CANARIA DE ESTUDIOS INGLESES, 92; abril 2026, pp. 251-267; ISSN: e-2530-8335
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1. INTRODUCTION

The House of the Seven Chimneys in Madrid, now home to the Ministry of Culture, has hosted illustrious guests throughout its history. Built in the 1570s by order of Philip II, the house is named after the seven chimneys that line its façade. In the seventeenth century, the house served as the residence of Lady Ann Fanshawe and her family when her husband was appointed ambassador to Philip IV.

Lady Fanshawe, born in London to Sir John Harrison and Margaret Fanshawe, grew up in a privileged but turbulent household affected by her family's royalist loyalties during the English Civil War. Following her mother's death in 1640, Ann managed her father's household and faced financial hardships after his estate was seized due to his support for King Charles I.

Oliván-Santaliestra summarises her early years until her first visit to Spain in the following way:

Anne Fanshawe's first years had passed happily until the outbreak of the English revolution in 1640 which brought disgrace to her family. Anne managed to escape her precarious situation by marrying her cousin, Richard Fanshawe, secretary of war to Prince Charles and a member of his council. Thereafter began her peregrinations through England, Scotland, the Isles of Scilly and France, following the court of Prince Charles, to which her husband belonged. During the convulsive years of civil war, Anne witnessed more than one battle and experienced dangerous flights from cities in rebellion (Oliván-Santaliestra 2015, 70).

Ann Fanshawe travelled to Madrid for the first time in 1650, a few months after King Charles I's execution. For Richard, this was his second visit to Spain, having previously served as secretary of the English embassy there in 1638. On her return from Spain to London in 1651, she started the compilation of her manuscript household book, Wellcome MS 7113. The recipe book reflects her role in managing domestic affairs and documenting European culinary influences, especially Iberian recipes gathered during this early time she spent in Portugal and Spain with her husband both in the 1650s and 1660s.

Ann's hardships ended with the conclusion of the civil wars and the coronation of Charles II in April 1661. The king rewarded Richard Fanshawe by appointing him ambassador extraordinary to Portugal, where he negotiated Charles II's marriage to Catherine of Braganza. Following their marriage in May 1662, Fanshawe was sent back to Portugal as ambassador ordinary, allowing him to bring his family. The union strengthened Anglo-Portuguese relations, leading to English support for Portugal in its war against Spain.

In 1663, the Fanshawes returned to England, but Charles II soon dispatched them to Spain, where Richard was tasked with negotiating a trade treaty and mediating peace between Spain and Portugal. Delays in Catherine's dowry payments had frustrated the king, making a truce between the two nations a strategic priority. Having been appointed ambassador to Spain in January 1664, the Fanshawes arrived in Madrid in June that year, where they were met at Valdemoro by the Duke of

Medina de las Torres's secretary before their formal reception. Richard Fanshawe was officially received by Philip IV on 18 June 1664. The Fanshawes were assigned an official residence (*la Casa de las Siete Chimeneas – the House of the Seven Chimneys*) in Madrid. This house is referenced several times in Lady Fanshawe's writings, which "highlights the political importance of this knowledge sharing, for the address denotes their diplomatic residence in Spain" (Basnett 2019, 14). The couple lived there until 1666, when Richard was replaced as ambassador by Lord Sandwich, who arrived in the Spanish court on the 28th of May. Scarcely a month later, Richard fell ill and died in the *House of the Seven Chimneys*.

After her husband's death in 1666, Ann faced financial struggles and sought to recover debts owed by the royal Treasury. Her *Memoirs*, composed in 1676, ten years after her husband's death, recount their travels across England, France, Ireland, Spain, and Portugal during the civil war and interregnum, underscoring her resilience and resourcefulness. They were written for her surviving son, Richard, providing a personal and historical account of seventeenth-century aristocratic life. Although she distinguishes between memories related to her own family and those connected to her husband's, she integrates her identity with his, consistently adhering to the model of an "idealized partnership" characterised by shared emotions and goals (Seelig 2009, 95).

Both manuscripts, her *Memoirs* and Wellcome MS 7113, have been seen as "companion books" (Potter 2006, 19 and Valent 2018, 161). Previous researchers on Lady Fanshawe tend to focus only on one of these volumes. Yet both works will be used in the present article as the main sources to examine the cultural emotions and interactions of Lady Ann Fanshawe during her stay in Spain. Thus, this study explores her views on the country, her adaptation to Spanish habits and her recording of Spanish practices. Her *Memoirs* particularly enrich the analysis, offering insights into her extensive travels, cultural observations, and encounters with Spanish traditions, cuisine, and the seventeenth-century Spanish nobility. The experiences undergone in Spain are considered by scholars, such as Bassnett (2013) and Holloway and Wray (2016, 1387), valuable witnesses of the creatively transformative effect on her individual writing life.

2. ANN FANSHAWE'S TRAVELS TO SPAIN

The migrations into Spain significantly impacted Fanshawe's literary output, offering unique insights into cross-cultural experiences and identity formation. Thus, Spain served as a creatively transformative space for her. Ann's *Memoirs* reflect her engagement with Spanish culture through vivid descriptions of Spanish landscapes, architecture, and social traditions, as well as her incorporation of Spanish culinary practices into her household. Her writings also reveal a complex identity negotiation, as she navigates her English Protestant background while forming empathetic connections with Spanish Catholics and embracing elements of Spanish life.

She came to Spain first in 1650 from Ireland, as she recalls in her *Memoirs*: "in the beginning of March we all landed, praised be God, in Malaga, very well, and



full of content to see ourselves delivered from the sword and the plague, and living in hope that we should one day return happily to our native country” (Fanshawe 1830, 99). The arrival prompted mixed feelings, since she experiences relief for her arrival but also a nostalgic desire to come back home happily. From Malaga, the Fanshawes proceeded onwards to Madrid, pausing along the way at Velez Malaga and then Granada. Holloway and Wray note that “strikingly, Fanshawe does not record the trials of the six-week journey, and this is particularly notable given the fact that she is heavily pregnant at the time” (2016, 64-65). Yet, she is fascinated by the view of

the highest mountains I ever saw in my life, but under this lieth the finest valley that can be possibly described, adorned with high trees and rich grass, and beautified with a large deep clear river. Over the town and this standeth the goodly vast palace of the King’s, called the Alhambra, whose buildings are, after the fashion of the Moors adorned with vast quantities of jasper-stone; many courts, many fountains and by reason it is situated on the side of a hill, and not built uniform, many gardens with ponds in them, and many baths made of jasper, and many principal rooms roofed with the mosaic work, which exceeds the finest enamel, I ever saw (Fanshawe, 1830, 100).

To Moore, “here her writing took on the tone of a travel book, the most popular reading of the time, rhapsodizing over the landscape, architecture, sculpture and textiles” (2017, 160). Ann Fanshawe and other modern women travellers of her day “give a very good account of the vicissitudes of their journeys and the difficulties of gaining access to Spain, whether by sea or by land” (Barco-Cebrián 2018, 462),¹ and “they describe the anthropological and cultural values of the places they visit through their accounts” (Barco-Cebrián 2018, 462).² Thus, “through her story we can discover, among other things, what the boats of the time were like, who were the most important people in the cities through which she travelled” (Barco-Cebrián 2018, 453).³ The reader also learns about Spanish traditions like singing, dancing and bullfighting, which are also present in her *Memoirs*. She integrates these habits into her life to a greater or lesser degree. Similarly, the reader finds out about the social networks the Fanshawes established during their stay in Spain.

After the couple’s visit to the Alhambra, they continued their journey to the capital of Spain and, as Ann narrates, “on the 13th of April 1650, we came to the Court of Madrid, where we were the next day visited by the two English ambassadors, and afterwards by all the English merchants” (Fanshawe 1830, 102).

¹ Author’s translation of the original: “Describen muy bien las vicisitudes de sus viajes, las dificultades del acceso a España, ya sea por mar o por tierra” (Barco-Cebrián 2018, 462).

² Author’s translation of the original: “Describen los valores antropológicos y culturales de los lugares que visitan a través de sus relatos” (Barco-Cebrián 2018, 462).

³ Author’s translation of the original: “A través de su relato podemos descubrir cómo eran, entre otras cuestiones, las embarcaciones de la época, quiénes eran los personajes más importantes de las ciudades por las que discurría su viaje” (Barco-Cebrián 2018, 453).



After the Fanshawe's initial visit together in 1650-1651, they will come back to Spain a few years later so that Richard could hold the post of ambassador. Thus, when he was appointed by the King and having embarked at Portsmouth on the 31st of January 1664, Ann writes that "on the 23rd of February, our style, we cast anchor in Cadiz road, in Spain" (Fanshawe 1830, 165). This statement is followed by an extensive account of how they were received and lavished by Spanish nobles and kings:

So soon as it was known that we were there, the English Consul with the English merchants all came on board to welcome us to Spain; and presently after came the Lieutenant-Governor for the time being, Don Diego de Ibara, to give us joy of our arrival, and to ask leave of my husband to visit him, which Don Diego did within two hours after the Lieutenant's return (Fanshawe 1830, 166).

She was delighted by the welcome events organised in their honour and has clearly loved Spain ever since. She is particularly impressed by the variety and the quality of the food, for she writes:

I find it a received opinion that Spaine affords not food either good or plentiful. True it is that strangers that neither have the skill to choose nor money to buy will find themselves at a loss, but there is not in the Christian world better wines than their midland wines are especially, besides sherry and canary. Their water tastes like milk; their corne white to a miracle; and their wheat makes the sweetest and best bread in the world. Bacon beyond belief good; the Segovia veal, much larger, whiter and fatter than ours; mutton most excellent; capons much better than ours. They have a small bird that lives and fattens on grapes and corn, so fat that it exceeds the quantity of flesh. They have the best partridges I ever eat, and the best sausages; and salmon, pikes, and sea-breems, which they send up in pickle, called *escabeche* to Madrid, and dolphins, which are excellent meat, besides carps, and many other sorts of fish. The cream, called *nata*, is much sweeter and thicker than any I ever saw in England; their eggs much exceed ours; and so all sorts of salads, and roots, and fruits. What I most admired are, melons, peaches, burgamot pears, grapes, oranges, lemons, citrons, figs, and pomegranates; (Fanshawe 1830, 208-209).

This tribute to Spanish products extends across several pages, interwoven with reflections on Spanish religion, clothing, theatre, bullfighting, and other traditions, concluding with remarks on the dining habits of the king and queen. Here, Ann emerges as an astute observer of culinary and social dining practices. Beyond her sustained interest in food as a material good, she explores the ethical and symbolic dimensions of eating and engages in culinary ethnography. Her keen awareness of the nuances of commensality serves as a key framework in many of Fanshawe's narratives.

3. ANN FANSHAWE'S RECIPE BOOK

Wellcome Library MS 7113 is a folio manuscript, in morocco leather binding and central gild-stamped decoration. This conspicuous collection contains more than five-hundred recipes. According to the Wellcome catalogue,



The earliest entries are in the hand of one Joseph Averie, presumably a clerk acting as Ann Fanshawe's amanuensis, although most are signed by the latter. Many are ascribed to 'my mother' [Margaret Fanshawe], other members of the extended Fanshawe family, Sir Kenelm Digby, and others. Some of the recipes appear to be in Ann Fanshawe's own hand, a few are Spanish, dated Madrid, 1664-65 (<https://wellcomecollection.org/works/tw7bkjtg>).

Although most recipes are undated, the earliest is marked 1650 and it is believed that in 1678, two years before her death, Ann passed the volume to her daughter Katherine, as inscribed on the first page of the volume and noticed by several scholars who have worked on this manuscript (Goldstein 2013, 155; Pennell 2009, 22; Valent 2018, 169). Katherine Fanshawe would continue compiling remedies until approximately 1707 (Pennell 2009, 32; Goldstein, 2013 155; and Wellcome catalogue, <https://wellcomecollection.org/works/tw7bkjtg>). Even if Ann did not personally write the whole volume, it was clearly produced at her request. In fact, she is the compiler, as can be evidenced by the material included, which is directly related to her life as mother, spouse and her travels with her family.

Recipes usually reflect the society they were written in (De la Cruz-Cabanillas 2020 & 2022), but in the case of Ann Fanshawe's recipe book, they are also revelatory of her "political networks and female epistemologies, including [...] gift-giving, and obligation" (Bassnett 2019, 4). Thus, Fanshawe's recipes do not only talk about the various European societies she contacts, but they also relate to her role as a seventeenth-century woman responsible for her family's healthcare. Subsequently, the reader finds medical remedies to relieve her and her family's ailments and recipes to produce household utilities, and dishes she integrates from different European cuisine traditions.

3.1. MEDICAL RECIPES

The contents not only present popular remedies of the day, such as Lucatella's Balsam, Gascoigne Powder, *Aqua Mirabilis* or *Aqua Vitae*, but they also reveal her concerns about diseases that were rampant in her lifetime: namely, the plague, worms, kidney stones, bloody flux and other remedies for ulcers, burns or sore breast.⁴ Some of the recipes included are of particular significance to her, because she endured the effects of the disorders in her and in her family. Thus, the reader finds several recipes for smallpox. Moore notes that in 1659 "all three of the children travelling with her fell ill with smallpox, the disease that had taken Nan from them five years earlier" (2017, 290), episodes that are also informed in her *Memoirs*. Other relevant remedies

⁴ To carry out the research, Wellcome MS7113 has been transcribed by the author using the digitalisation available on the Wellcome Library website (<https://wellcomecollection.org/works/tw7bkjtg>). In this semi-diplomatic transcription, standard conventions are adopted: contractions are silently expanded, and the spelling practices and the punctuation of the original are maintained.



are for miscarriage and childbirth, as well as for scurvy, a disease her husband suffered from until his death.

3.1.1. *Miscarriage and childbirth*

Miscarriage has always been a concern for pregnant women, and, consequently, women's recipe books often included remedies for it.⁵ Lady Ann Fanshawe's book is no exception. In her *Memoirs* Ann gives account of her pregnancies. She gave birth to fourteen children: "six sons and eight daughters, born and christened, and I miscarried of six more, three at several times, and once of three sons when I was about half gone the time" (Fanshawe 1830, 46). Accordingly, her collection includes a remedy for miscarriage, which she considers has worked for her, as it is stated after the recipe, entitled *The red powder good for miscarrying*:

Take of Dragons blood one dram, powder of red corall one dram, amber greece thi weight of 3 barly cornes: bezoar stone the weight of 2 barly cornes. Make all these into powder and in a little burnt Claret wine give as much of this powder as will lie upon a pennie at morning and night first and last 3 or 4 times will serve. Make some broth with plantaine rootes and shepheards purse and knotted grasse burnett and bryer leaves, and drink this at pleasure. Put into the broth Just as you drinke it the treds of 9 eggs; I have found good Experementalley of this medicin (Wellcome MS 7113, 73).⁶

The efficacy phrase at the end of the remedy assures the reader that it is efficient, since Lady Fanshawe has proved it herself. Likewise, she must have tried a recipe to recover from childbirth entitled *An excellent Water Gruel for Cleansing a Childbirth Woman*, given the fact that she delivered fourteen children, although only five survived to adulthood:

Take a quart of spring water, half a pint of Rhenish wine, 3 spoonfull of whole groots, 2 handful of candied oringo root, 2 handfull of maydin hayre, boyle this close stopt in a pipkin: You must take this at 3 times, Viz: in the morning early fasting, at 4 of the clock in the afternoon, and when you are in your bed at night (Wellcome MS 7113, 316).

3.1.2. *Scurvy*

Scurvy had been known for centuries. It was a disease whose prevalence was probably higher in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, especially in sailors

⁵ For instance, Glasgow University Library MS 61 by Mary Harrison includes a recipe *to prevent Miscarriage*. For more information on this manuscript, see De la Cruz-Cabanillas (2016).

⁶ Wellcome MS 7113 has been paginated twice at the upper part of each page. I am following here the pagination in ink.



due to the long voyages undertaken during the expansion of the different European empires, but it is also present in other groups within society. Subsequently, remedies for scurvy can often be found in manuscripts of the period.⁷

The effects of the scurvy on Richard Fanshawe's health are often mentioned in Ann's *Memoirs*, so she records that in December 1651, Richard

fell very sick, and the fever settled in his throat and face so violently, that, for many days and nights, he slept no more but as he leaned on my shoulder as I walked: at last, after all the Doctor and Surgeon could do, it broke, and with that he had ease, and so recovered, God be praised! In 1652, he was advised to go to Bath for his scorbutic that still hung on him, but he deferred his journey until August, because I was delivered on the 30th of July of a daughter (Fanshawe 1830, 118).

Consequently, there are several recipes for this disease: for instance, *Pills for the scorbutic* (Wellcome MS 7113, 17), *A gargale for the scorbutic* (Wellcome MS 7113, 17), *An Excellent cordiall against the scorbutic in all Fiuers (spiritually malignant)* (Wellcome MS 7113, 17-18). With the purpose to alleviate her husband's symptoms, she recorded *An excellent water to be used constantly all winter for the scorbutic*:

Scurvy-grass bruised three pounds, horse Radish roots cut sliced and [illegible] one pound, 12 oranges cut into thin slices, put these into a glass still, powere in as much sac and white wine as will cover 3 fingers deepe, stop the glass close, let this stand 24 howers in digestion, the next day distill a water from hence.

Take a wine-glass full at pleasure, sweetened with syrup of elderflower, or oranges, or wood-sorrell, or cloves, gilly-flowers (Wellcome MS 7113, 16-17).

3.2. SPANISH RECIPES

Other remedies were directly gathered in her social circle, while she was staying in Spain. Rather than being of a medical nature, they are cooking recipes or for perfumes and related products. Bassnett analyses these recipes along with others provided by Mary and Ann Granville, as well as Sarah Hughes, and claim that they often contain "foreign terminology or references, or paradoxically inscribe their provenance through translation, actively positioning themselves as transcultural and transnational communications" (2019, 1).

In Ann Fanshawe's Spanish recipes, the foreignisation is evident in the titles and some of the objects, ingredients and dishes which are mentioned below. There are more than twenty recipes of Spanish origin,⁸ although several of them are written

⁷ For instance, in Glasgow University Library Ferguson MS 61 mentioned above, and in other early modern testimonies (De la Cruz-Cabanillas 2020).

⁸ Valent (2018: 163) includes a recipe *To dress Salmon; Carps; French trouts; Pikes; or Perch* (Wellcome MS 7113, p. 339), although there is no mention to a Spanish origin. Therefore, I have disregarded this and other recipes where there is no ascription to a Spanish contemporary or a Spanish

by her daughter Katherine. Considering the contents, they can be classified into perfumes and other household utilities, and cooking recipes.

3.2.1. *Perfumes and other household utilities*

Ann Fanshawe's praise of Spanish perfumes in her *Memoirs* is enthusiastic: "their perfumes of amber excel all the world in their kind, both for household stuff and fumes; and there is no such water made as in Seville" (Fanshawe 1830, 209). Subsequently, she must have been very pleased when on the 13th March 1664, she received a visit from Don Antonio de Pimentel, who sent her "a very rich present of perfumes, skins, gloves, and purses embroidered, with other nacks of the same kind" (Fanshawe 1830, 172).

Manuscript Wellcome 7113 bears witness of Ann's exceptional consideration for Spanish perfumes and other toiletries. Among the recipes, four of them are personalised through their attribution to Francisco Morena/o, who was well-acquainted with the Fanshawes. Here is a list of the items included in the volume:

1. "To make the famous oyle called y^e Queens oyle. Madrid 8th December 1664" (Wellcome MS 7113, 74).
2. "Francisco Morenos way of perfuming skinns. Madrid 8th December 1664" (Wellcome MS 7113, 192-193 & 63). On the page numbered 63,⁹ a whole section on perfumes starts, so some of the recipes are repeated somewhere else in the volume.
3. "The 18th day of June in Madrid in 1656 According to these proportion Perfumes may be made Viz" (Wellcome MS 7113, 193 and 64).¹⁰
4. "To make Paste Beades Viz." (Wellcome MS 7113, 193 & 64).
5. "To perfume Damaske Roses" (Wellcome MS 7113, 194 & 64).
6. "To make the best Pastiles to burn in the world, taught me by a seruant of Francisco Morenas, who was his nephew & came vs made them in my home before me this present 17th of Nouember 1664 in our house at y^e siete Chimeneas att Madrid" (Wellcome MS 7113, 195-196 & 65).
7. "To make spanish Hypocrist, which exceells all other. Madrid 8th December 1664." (Wellcome MS 7113, 197).
8. "To dresse Hunsia" (Wellcome MS 7113, 200 & 68).

place, such *A Course Powder for great linnin* (Wellcome MS 7113, p. 198) and *A fine Powder for linnen* (Wellcome MS 7113, 199 & 68).

⁹ This section on perfumes is made up of a quire paginated from 63 to 68 and it is included after page 208 and then the pagination resumes at page 209.

¹⁰ The date is problematic, as the "18th day of June in Madrid 1656" the Fanshawes were in England, with Ann heavily pregnant delivering baby Mary that year and losing another girl, Elizabeth, who was born in 1650 died in Kent in 1656.



9. “To perfume 12 pairs of ordinary seised gloves either for men or women with the saime Compound of Amber yat Francisco Morena in his life did & his seruant now doth. Madrid y^e 3rd of October 1665.” (Wellcome MS 7113, 201 & 67).
10. “To make a Compound for a Pomo by Francisco Morena. Madrid October 4th 1665;” (Wellcome MS 7113, 202 & 66).

3.2.2. *Cooking recipes*

Cooking recipes are also abundant in Wellcome MS 7113. They are scattered among the manuscript pages and do not seem to follow a specific order. First, the reader finds how *To make Spanish Creame*,

Take 2 gallons of new Milke and a quart of sweet Creame & make it scalding hott, and putt it into 3 milke panns, & hauing stood 6 houres then skimme of the top of 2 panns, & ½ y^e third, & putt it into a dish and beat it with Sugar, untill y^e [illegible] be broke. If You like the taste putt it into y^e Dish you into to seve it up in, & take the topp of the reserued pann thicke Leumme & lay it upon it (Wellcome MS 7113, 278).

The next recipe to which a Spanish origin has been ascribed is *To make lemmon Nautho the best way* (Wellcome MS 7113, 299). Valent (2018,168) interprets *Nautho* as an English attempt to reproduce the final part of the word *lemonado*, as this is a type of lemonade. The recipe calls for Rhenish wine, water, and bitter water—which Valent (2018, 168) believes is citrus fruit water, as the writer often uses the terms interchangeably—along with the juice of two lemons, thin slices of the rind, enough leaf sugar to sweeten the mixture, and two spoonfuls of orange flower water. These ingredients must be stirred together, with “a little Sprig of Rosemary” (Wellcome MS 7113, 299) added, and left to stand for an hour. No further instructions are provided. It is also possible that the recipe as a whole was considered flawed, though this is difficult to determine, as the crossing-out mark is not as pronounced as others found in the volume.

3.2.2.1. “To adobado Porke”

This recipe presents an unusual title, which is made up of the English preposition *to* followed by a past participle rather than an infinitive in Spanish (*adobar*).

Take Pork, new killid what joint you please, fur[?] of y^e skin, & put it into any Earthen pan, shred a handfull of sage very small & put it into a stone Morter, put thereto two cloves of garlick rub them very well with y^e sage with y^e Pestle put thereto a pint of sharp claret wine, then poure all this vpon y^e pork put in likewise vnder a [??] y^e pork a pint of vinegar & a pint of water-mingled together & straw some bay



salt finely beat ouer it all when y^e Meat hath layn in it 2 days & a night it must be rosted, & you may eat it hott or cold as you please with mustard or else with oyle & vinegar which is y^e most proper sauce (Wellcome MS 7113, 320).

3.2.2.2. Drinks

The next recipes are instructions to prepare different drinks: *To make lemonado* meant “only for the summer time” (Wellcome MS 7113, 331) shares with the following recipe the same process: the reader is instructed to use “the best fountain water” to be later enriched by some ambergris, is a compound of the juice of “3 large lemmons” while the second one *to make sinamon water* adds cinnamon as well as sugar (Wellcome MS 7113, 331). Several pages later, the reader will find out how to make almond milk.

In the directions to make *Garapiña de Leche de Amendas*, the recommended ingredients are “fountaine water”, whole cinnamon and some blanched almonds beaten and later amalgamated with “orange-flower water” as well as the “best white sugar”. The drink is not ready for consumption until passed through a canvas strainer and left to settle for four hours. Some ambergris could have also been added to the drink which, in any case, if kept in a “great glasse bottle and sett in a Coole sellar” would have lasted “good 2 days, & 2 nights but noe longer”, as can be read:

Boyle 5 qtr [quarters ?] of y^e best fountaine water with a quart of an ounce of whole Sinamon in it, a quarter of an houre then poure it into an Earthen pan in which there is 3 pounds of Almonds beat small after baummy them been blanched & beat with Orange flowre water stirr them well together & lett them stand 2 houres & put into it a pound of fine best white sugar well beat, & straine it through a thick Canvas strainer, & putt in a dragm eof Ambar Greece if you like it, put it into a great glasse bottle & sett it in a Coole sellar you may drinke it after 4 houres standing there, it will keep good 2 days, & 2 nights but noe longer (Wellcome MS 7113, 332).

3.2.2.3. “To dresse Chocolate”

While the spread of chocolate took some time in Europe, in Spain its consumption was well established when the Fanshawes contacted Spanish traditions. Through her *Memoirs* we learn that in 1664 they had been given chocolate as a present:

On the 1st of April, the English merchants of Seville, with their Consul, presented us with a quantity of chocolate and as much sugar, with twelve fine sarcenet napkins laced thereunto belonging, with a very large silver pot to make it in, and twelve very fine cups to drink it out of, filigree, with covers of the same, with two very large salvers to set them upon, of silver (Fanshawe 1830, 181).

This is one of the first recipes on chocolate found in an English recipe book, dated “Madrid 10 August 1665”. It is interesting for its contents but also because it is



accompanied by a sketch of a chocolate pot, with the comment “the same chocalary pottes are made in the [illegible] Indis”.

Take a pound of Chocolate & halfe a pound of y^e best white sugar, cut y^e chocolate in peeces, neer an Inch bigg, mingle it with y^e sugar, haue ready on y^e fire your Chocolate pott, & a large Quart of y^e best fountaine water, which. As soon as you perceiue to be just ready to boyle, take itt off & put it in y^e Chocolate & sugar stirring it very well with. A Chocolate stick made for yt purpose a quarter of an houre, setting y^e pott all y^e while vpon hot Embers or hot Ashes, you must serve it up in little cups of China yt hold neer a qe [quarter ?] of a pint stirring it very well at y^e putting of it into every Cup yt it may lye frothe at the top taking care always that it be serued up as hot as is possible to be done you must serue up as many Cupps as there are people [grethered?] the more/ The best Chocolate that ys of y^e Indies is made in Siuill in Spaine (Wellcome MS 7113, 332-333).

Soon after, the first Earl of Sandwich, who succeeded Richard Fanshawe as ambassador to Spain in 1666, will record another recipe for chocolate in his journal in 1668 (Loveman 2013, 27).

3.2.2.4. “To make an olla podrida”

In Wellcome MS 7113 (333-334) an extensive text on how to make *olla podrida* is found. Regarding its origin, Sevilla (2019, 254) claims that this dish has a medieval origin. The *Dictionary of the Spanish language (Diccionario de la lengua española, 2025, s.v. olla)* defines this dish as “a stew that, in addition to meat, bacon and vegetables, contains an abundance of ham, poultry, sausages and other succulent ingredients”.¹¹ The name of the dish is odd, since *podrida* means “rotten”, but this adjective may refer to *poderida* (“potent”), according to Covarrubias-Orozco s.v. *olla* (1611, 568 s.v. *olla*). The present form may have originated by syncopation of the <e> in *poderida*.

In turn, Notaker (2017, 79), referring to this dish, states that printed cookbooks appear to have served as a significant source of inspiration for women to experiment with recipes, leading them to modify dishes and, in doing so, create new versions. An illustration of this type of modification is found in *Arte de cocina* (1611) by the Spanish royal cook Martínez Montañón, who, instead of providing the traditional recipe for *olla podrida*, introduced his readers to a novel version: *olla podrida en pastel*.

¹¹ Author’s translation of the original: “olla que, además de la carne, tocino y legumbres, tiene en abundancia jamón, aves, embutidos y otras cosas suculentas”, *Diccionario de la lengua española, 2025, s.v. olla*.



3.2.2.5. “To dry porke like spanish bacon”

This recipe seems plausible and the final product, which is suggested to be kept in a dry room, resembles the way in which Spanish ham (*jamón*) was produced to be consumed by wealthy Spaniards in the early modern period:

Cut a leg of porke round in the shape of a Spanish gammon of bacon lay it upon a board high in the middle that the brine may run of, rub it well with halfe bay salt and halfe salt peeter, & let it lye ten days then hang it up in a Chimne where wood is burnt and the heat is not to great, when it is through dry for your use keepe it in a dry roome for your use (Wellcome MS 7113, 338).

3.2.2.6. “To make Icy Cream”

On page 339 the reader finds one of the first recipes in Katherine’s hand and must have been written soon after she inherited the manuscript, possibly as early as 1678. She was born on the 30th of July 1652, which means she was about to turn twelve when the Fanshawe’s started living in Madrid for the second time. Surely, Katherine needed her mother’s help to remember this recipe that may have been acquired during their time in Spain:

Take three pints of the best cream, boyle it with a blade of Mace, or else perfume it with orang flower water or Amber-Greece, sweeten the Cream, with sugar let it stand till it is quite cold, then put it into Boxes, ether of Silver or tinn then take, Ice chopped into small peeces and putt it into a tub and set the Boxes in the Ice covering them all over, and let them stand in the Ice two hours, and the Cream Will come to be Ice in the Boxes, then turn them out into a salvar with some of the same Seasoned Cream, so sarve it up at the Table (Wellcome MS 7113, 339).

3.2.2.7. “To make Jelly & manjor blanco together”

Wellcome MS 7113’s contribution to Spanish cuisine ends with several recipes in different hands, such as one to make *manjar blanco* (Wellcome MS 7113, 341-342). *Manjar blanco* nowadays is a sweet dessert popular throughout Europe, but in Ann Fanshawe’s manuscript the recipe is a bit different. It begins with a broth made from veal and hen,¹² initially simmered in water, and later reduced with white

¹² Drumond-Braga (2024, 197) notes that *manjar branco* was prepared by the eighteenth-century Portuguese cook Francisco Borges Henriques with milk, sugar and chicken breast. Thus, meat must have been an old ingredient which is not present in present-day recipes, since it must have evolved from being a sweet main course to being a proper dessert. Likewise, Sevilla provides evidence of this dish being prepared in Italy, France and, in Spain, since the Middle Ages and includes *manjar blanco* among the dishes cooked with poultry (2019, 109).



wine. Sugar, cinnamon water, salt, a peeled and deseeded lemon, and egg whites beaten with their shells are then added to create the jelly mentioned in the title. The final steps of the recipe emphasise its proper serving: the mixture should be strained into the intended serving dish and is best consumed within six hours once cooled. If the jelly has not set properly, an additional lemon can be squeezed and strained over it to enhance its texture, highlighting the lemon's role as an astringent.

In her *Memoirs*, Ann specifically recalls *manger blanc* as one of the culinary delights she encountered during her travels. "I have eaten many sorts of biscuits, cakes, cheese, and excellent sweetmeats I have not here mentioned, especially manger-blanc" (Fanshawe 1830, 209).

3.2.2.8. Other recipes

The final recipes from Spain are *To make Spanish eggs* (Wellcome MS 7113, 401) and *To make the Spanish bikets* (Wellcome MS 7113, 407). The recipes were written by Katherine and, notably, attributed to a certain Lady Turnor, who appears in Wellcome MS 7113 under the name Isabella Turnor. *The Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* records that Sir Edward Turnor married Lady Isabella, daughter of William Keith, seventh Earl Marischal, in May 1667. They had seven children and lived at Great Hallingbury, Essex, purchased in 1660 by Turnour's father. Lady Isabella was buried there in 1690. Little else is known about Isabella Turnor, except that she belonged to the Scottish nobility and that her husband accompanied Sir Richard Fanshawe on various diplomatic missions to Spain and Portugal. Since she passed away in 1690, these recipes attributed to her by Katherine must have been written sometime between 1678 –when she inherited the recipe book from her mother– and Isabella's death in 1690.

On the one hand, *To make Spanish eggs*, the reader is instructed to mix six well-whisked egg yolks with sugar and boiled until they reach a consistency close to crystallised sugar, a process that requires continuous stirring for an extended, though unspecified, period. The result resembles a sweet omelette, not intended for direct consumption but as a base for other dishes. When warm, it serves as a layer for additional preparations, and once cooled, it is used to top jellies and cold salads, typically served after hot dishes and before the *posset*.

On the other hand, *To make Spanish bikets* requires for four well-beaten egg whites to be combined with an equal number of well-beaten yolks, instructing to "beat it very well for a good while with a spoon" (Wellcome MS 7113, 407). Next, half a pound of fine sugar is added, and the mixture must be "beaten and beaten and beat [them] together for almost an hour" (Wellcome MS 7113, 407). After this vigorous process, half a pound of fine flour is incorporated, requiring an additional fifteen minutes of beating to ensure thorough amalgamation.

Once the mixture is ready, it is shaped into small, elongated biscuits, lightly dusted with sugar, and prepared for baking. Notably, from a material culture perspective, the instructions specify that the biscuits should be placed "in a baking fann if you have one; if not, in a gentle oven" (Wellcome MS 7113, 407).



4. CONCLUSIONS

This study has delved into Lady Fanshawe's writings as a lens on seventeenth-century Anglo-Spanish cultural exchange and the personal and diplomatic obstacles she faced. It has presented her unique perspective on the people, traditions, geography, architecture, and cuisine of Spain, as viewed by a seventeenth-century British noblewoman. Thus, Lady Fanshawe's writings document the hardships of exile, diplomatic challenges, and personal losses, including the deaths of several of her children, but they are also evidence of her fascination for the Spanish geography, culture, cuisine and people of the time. Taken her *Memoirs* and recipe book as sources, we gain insight into how Spain influenced her personal and intellectual life, as well as the broader significance of cross-cultural interactions in the seventeenth century.

One of the key conclusions drawn from the text is the transformative impact of Spain on Ann Fanshawe's identity and writing. Her *Memoirs* not only document her travels but also reflect her evolving perspective on Spanish society. Despite being an English Protestant, she developed an appreciation for Spanish customs, food, and traditions, integrating them into her own experiences. This suggests that travel and exposure to unfamiliar cultures can shape one's worldview, fostering a sense of adaptability and curiosity.

Another significant aspect is the role of Lady Fanshawe as a recorder of knowledge. Her recipe book, Wellcome MS 7113, serves as more than a collection of culinary instructions; it reflects her engagement with medical, domestic, and cultural practices of the time. The inclusion of Spanish recipes highlights how she actively documented and transmitted foreign knowledge, reinforcing the idea that recipe books were not merely household manuals but also intellectual repositories that connected women to larger social and political networks.

Additionally, the text underscores the challenges and resilience of Ann Fanshawe. Throughout her life, she faced financial struggles, personal losses, and the hardships of constant travel. However, her ability to navigate these difficulties, maintain her family's legacy, and preserve cultural knowledge demonstrates her strength and resourcefulness. Her writings provide a valuable female perspective on historical events, enriching our understanding of aristocratic life in the seventeenth century.

Overall, this article illustrates the importance of Ann Fanshawe's contributions to literature, history, and culinary traditions. Her experiences in Spain were not only personally transformative but also historically significant, offering a unique lens through which we can explore cultural exchanges, gender roles, and intellectual life in the early modern period. Thus, the analysis contributes to a deeper understanding of women's literary contributions within the historical context of British Spanish relations. Thus, the study is meant to be a vindication of Lady Ann Fanshawe life and writings.

Reviews sent to the authors: 15/11/2025

Revised paper accepted for publication: 31/01/2026



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MAPPING INTERPERSONAL MEANING IN HANNAH WOOLLEY'S RECIPES AND MANUALS (1670-1672)*

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ABSTRACT

This article analyses interpersonal markers in Hannah Woolley's *The Queen-like Closet* (1670) and *The Ladies Directory* (1672), two of the earliest domestic manuals authored by an Englishwoman. Drawing on Systemic Functional Linguistics and Appraisal theory, it examines mood, modality, polarity, pronouns, conditionals, and graduation, combining quantitative frequencies with close exemplification. Results show that both works are grounded in imperatives, though Woolley tempers categorical directives with *let*-frames, permission modals, and hedges. Strong obligation markers (*must, shall*) dominate in 1670, while the later text shifts toward advisory forms (*you may*) and politeness hedges (*if you please*). Predictive *will* often functions as a promissory device, assuring readers of efficacy. The pervasive *you* casts the reader as active agent, while authorial *I* surfaces chiefly in evidential claims. These strategies reveal Woolley's negotiation of female authority in print, where interpersonal resources both assert expertise and foster solidarity.

KEYWORDS: Hannah Woolley, Interpersonal Meaning, Modality & Directives, Women's Instructive Writing, Historical Pragmatics, Corpus-based Analysis

CARTOGRAFÍA DEL SIGNIFICADO INTERPERSONAL EN LAS RECETAS Y MANUALES DE HANNAH WOOLLEY (1670-1672)

RESUMEN

El artículo examina los marcadores interpersonales en dos manuales domésticos de Hannah Woolley (1670, 1672) desde la Lingüística Sistémico-Funcional y la *Appraisal Theory*. El análisis muestra un predominio de imperativos atenuados mediante estructuras con *let*, modales de permiso y estrategias de cortesía. Entre ambas obras se observa una evolución desde una directividad más fuerte hacia fórmulas de consejo. El uso de *will* cumple una función promisorio, *you* sitúa al lector como agente y *I* construye autoridad basada en la experiencia.

PALABRAS CLAVE: Hannah Woolley, significado interpersonal, modalidad y directivas, escritura instructiva femenina, pragmática histórica, análisis basado en corpus

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.25145/j.recaesin.2026.92.13>

REVISTA CANARIA DE ESTUDIOS INGLESES, 92; abril 2026, pp. 269-287; ISSN: e-2530-8335
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1. INTRODUCTION

Hannah Woolley (fl. 1670s) is generally acknowledged as the first Englishwoman to make a profession of publishing domestic manuals, thus asserting authority in a domain long framed by male voices (Soares 2023). *The Queen-like Closet* (1670) and *The Ladies Directory* (1672) were produced at a moment when the vernacular market for cookery, household management, and medical advice was expanding rapidly, and they soon became touchstones for later women writers. These works were never simply collections of recipes; they are rhetorical artefacts in which Woolley presents herself as both instructor and companion. At the centre of this negotiation stands her use of interpersonal language, the grammatical, lexical, and pragmatic resources by which she directs, grants or withholds permission, mitigates risk, asserts knowledge, and addresses an imagined readership of women managing households.

The study of interpersonal markers in early modern instructive prose sheds light on how authority and solidarity were balanced in a genre that demanded prescriptive clarity yet also courted persuasion and courtesy. Systemic Functional Linguistics (Halliday & Matthiessen 2014) provides a suitable framework, treating mood, modality, and polarity as central resources for positioning self and addressee. Appraisal theory (Martin & White 2005) complements this view by examining how evidentials, conditionals, hedges, and boosters calibrate commitment and foster alignment. Through this lens, Woolley's manuals appear less as static guides than as dialogic exchanges revealing gendered strategies of stance-taking in seventeenth-century England.

This article addresses three questions. First, which interpersonal markers occur most frequently, and how are they distributed across sections of the two books? Second, how do the 1670 and 1672 profiles compare, and do they suggest subtle shifts in Woolley's rhetorical positioning? Third, how do these features reflect broader cultural and gendered expectations surrounding female instructive authority?

Answering these questions allows a baseline description of interpersonal resources in Woolley's prose. Such a description clarifies her authorial voice and provides a point of departure for diachronic comparison with eighteenth- and nineteenth-century domestic writing by authors such as Acton, Beeton, or Haslehurst. In this way, the article contributes to scholarship on modality, politeness, and stance in historical discourse while foregrounding Woolley's pioneering role in shaping the interpersonal dimension of women's domestic prose. Critics of early modern women's writing have long remarked on the rhetorical balancing acts such authors performed to preserve credibility (Wall 2002; McDowell 1998), and Woolley's texts offer a particularly vivid case of how such authority was fashioned linguistically.

* The research conducted in this paper has been supported by the Agencia Estatal de Investigación, Plan Estatal de Investigación Científica, Técnica y de Innovación 2021–2023, under award number PID2021-125928NB-I00. I hereby express my thanks. Unión Europea · Fondo Europeo de Desarrollo regional “Una manera de hacer Europa.”



2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The present study reads Woolley's *The Queen-like Closet* (1670) and *The Ladies Directory* (1672) through a systemic-functional perspective, complemented by Appraisal theory, historical pragmatics, and politeness research. This combination is not accidental. It makes possible an analysis that is at once linguistic and socio-historical, attentive both to the grammar of recipes and to the conditions under which a woman could claim instructive authority in seventeenth-century print.

Systemic Functional Linguistics (Halliday 1970, 1976; Halliday & Matthiessen 2014) conceptualises language in terms of three metafunctions: ideational, textual, and interpersonal. Here the focus is on the interpersonal, since it is through this layer that Woolley positions herself in relation to her readers, negotiates authority, and manages alignment. Mood offers the basic grammatical choices: declarative, imperative, and interrogative. Imperatives are of course expected in recipe discourse, establishing an asymmetry between writer and reader. Yet Woolley rarely leaves them bare. She cushions them with modal verbs, conditional framing, or polite formulae. Declaratives also carry instructive or promissory force, as in *you shall boil it, this will keep all the year*, showing that the boundary between command and assurance is porous. Interrogatives, though scarce, appear in prefaces or paratexts, where they anticipate objections or create a semblance of dialogue. Modality adds a second layer of interpersonal work. Following Halliday's division between modalisation (probability, usuality) and modulation (obligation, inclination), one can trace how Woolley moves between categorical prescription (*must, shall*), advisory permission (*you may*), and epistemic hedging (*might, perhaps*). Predictive *will* is especially interesting: in her hands it becomes a promissory device, securing trust by assuring results. Polarity plays its part as well. Negatives such as *not, never, no more than* act as prohibitives, while conditional negatives ("if you do not stir it, it will spoil") project authority by anticipating potential mishaps.

Appraisal theory (Martin & White 2005) shifts attention to evaluative stance. Two subsystems matter most here. The Engagement system captures how Woolley admits or closes down alternative voices. She entertains possibility through markers like *may, perhaps, or it is said*, but she also proclaims certainty with boosters (*surely, certainly*) and assurances (*it will never fail*). At times she invokes external authority, "physicians say," handing epistemic responsibility to collective expertise. The Graduation system tracks intensity. She heightens it through *very good* or *exceedingly fine*, and lowers it with *a little, somewhat, about*. Focus expressions, "the best sort of sugar," "almost clear," either sharpen or blur categorical boundaries. Even Attitude, though less pervasive, surfaces in adjectives such as *proper* or *negligent*, which extend her role beyond cookery to that of moral guide.

Historical pragmatics reminds us that these are not neutral stylistic choices but historically embedded strategies (Jucker & Taavitsainen 2013). Vocatives (*Ladies, Gentlewomen*) and frequent second-person pronouns construct a community of female readers; occasional *we* draws author and audience into shared domestic labour. Politeness studies add another dimension. Formulae like *if you please*, permissive *you may*, and conditional hedges soften the force of directives, minimising imposition



(Brown & Levinson 1987; Culpeper 2011; Jucker 2020). Conversely, promissory assurances (*this will certainly cure*) act as positive politeness, securing solidarity by guaranteeing success. In other words, Woolley walks a careful line between directive authority and affiliative engagement, precisely the balancing act demanded of a woman asserting expertise in her time.

Taken together, these frameworks provide a layered toolkit. SFL anchors the structural analysis of mood, modality, and polarity. Appraisal illuminates stance and dialogic space, while historical pragmatics and politeness research situate these linguistic choices in cultural context. This integrated approach shows that imperatives, modals, or vocatives are not isolated quirks but components of a patterned interpersonal style, one that allowed Woolley to present herself as both knowledgeable instructor and sympathetic companion.

3. CORPUS AND METHODS

The analysis is based on two works by Hannah Woolley, both published in London:

- *The Queen-like Closet, or Rich Cabinet* (first published 1670; second edition 1672, which is the text used here, transcribed from the University of Barcelona's Fons Antic collection).
- *The Ladies Directory, in Choice Experiments & Curiosities of Preserving in Jellies, and Candying both Fruit and Flowers* (1672).

These two texts were chosen because they are consecutive works by the same author, appearing within the same decade yet aimed at somewhat different audiences. *The Queen-like Closet* is expansive, containing recipes for food, medicine, and household management, while *The Ladies Directory* is more specialized in confectionery and preserves. Together, they provide an ideal dataset for comparing Woolley's interpersonal strategies across registers and rhetorical contexts. Both works are examined in their entirety, including paratextual material (title pages, dedications, addresses to the reader, tables of contents), which often contains overt interpersonal positioning. To capture the full range of authorial voice, the analysis treats paratexts as distinct but complementary to the recipe and advice sections.

For analysis, the texts were segmented on two levels. At clause level, each finite clause was coded for mood (imperative, declarative, interrogative) and for the presence or absence of modals and stance adverbs. At discourse level, each recipe or advice entry, typically marked by its heading and sequence of steps, was treated as a bounded unit in which directive strategies, evaluative lexis, and assurance moves could be studied in context. Paratexts were analysed in the same way, though their rhetorical style differs from the instructional sections. This two-tier segmentation makes it possible to combine distributional counts with sensitivity to the discourse coherence of each text.



Annotation followed the categories established in the theoretical framework. Mood distinctions separated imperatives from declaratives (further classified as informational, prescriptive, or promissory) and interrogatives. Modality was divided into modulation (*must, shall, should, let*), and modalization (*can, could, may, might, predictive will*, stance adverbs such as *perhaps, surely*). Polarity was tracked through negatives (*not, never, by no means*) and conditional prohibitives (“if you do not X, Y will fail”). Engagement resources included evidentials (*I have tried; it is said*), attribution to authority (*as is usual; physicians say*), and hedging devices (*if you please; it may be*). Graduation markers were coded as boosters (*very, certainly, exceedingly*) or mitigators (*a little, somewhat, about*), and as sharpeners or softeners of category boundaries (“the best sort of sugar”, “almost clear”). Address strategies included vocatives (*Ladies, Gentlewomen*) and personal pronouns (*I, we, you, ye*). Evaluation was captured through stance adjectives and adverbs (*good, excellent, proper, careless*). Finally, assurance moves, “this will keep all the year”, “it will never fail,” were identified as promissory constructions guaranteeing results. Ambiguous cases, such as *will* functioning either as an instruction or as a prediction, were resolved through close reading of surrounding context.

Frequencies were calculated in both raw numbers and normalised counts per 10,000 words, enabling comparison between texts of different length. Sub-register contrasts (recipes, paratexts, household and medical sections) were also tracked. Keyness analysis (log-likelihood) was applied to modal verbs and stance adverbs to identify items statistically salient in one text compared with the other. For selected contrasts, imperative versus modulated directives, for instance, chi-square tests and effect sizes (Cramér’s V) were used to test significance. Quantitative trends, however, were never treated in isolation. Representative passages were chosen to illustrate how interpersonal resources worked *in situ*, whether softening a directive, bolstering authority, or appealing to collective knowledge. These qualitative readings give depth to the statistics, highlighting the dialogic and rhetorical labour performed by Woolley’s language.

Although the study is primarily synchronic, it benefits from the near-contemporary nature of the two works. The brief interval between 1670 and 1672 makes it possible to trace subtle preferences in Woolley’s stance, for example, whether the later *Ladies Directory* relies more heavily on *should* and *may*, or intensifies its promissory rhetoric through assurances. Such micro-shifts are interpreted in light of the cultural pressures on women writers and the competitive print marketplace of the Restoration. The following sections present results by linguistic category, before moving to a broader discussion of Woolley’s authorial positioning.

4. RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

This section reports the distribution and interpretation of interpersonal markers in Woolley’s *The Queen-like Closet* (1670) and *The Ladies Directory* (1672). Results are presented by category, mood and directive design, modality, address and person, polarity and conditionals, and stance adverbs with graduation, before moving



to a comparative synthesis. Counts are given in both raw numbers and normalised frequencies (per 10,000 words) to allow comparison across texts of different length.

4.1. MOOD AND DIRECTIVE DESIGN

Both works confirm the dominance of imperatives in recipe discourse. In the *Queen-like Closet* (1670), clause-initial imperatives are everywhere: *take* occurs 446 times, while *let*-constructions (*let it stand*, *let them be*) appear 239 times, or about 36.9 per 10,000 words (Table 1). Prohibitives supplement the directive repertoire, with *do not* (36 instances) and *never* (6 instances) marking procedural warnings. Modalised directives are also attested: *you must* (47 cases), *you may* (105), and more occasional *you shall* (2) and *you should* (1). Table 1 summarises the distribution of directive forms across the two texts.

TABLE 1. DISTRIBUTION OF MOOD AND DIRECTIVE TYPES

DIRECTIVE FORM	1670 <i>QUEEN-LIKE CLOSET</i> (PER 10K)	1672 <i>LADIES DIRECTORY</i> (PER 10K)
Imperatives (<i>take</i>)	446 (-)	287 (-)
<i>let</i> -imperatives	239 (36.9)	134 (42.9)
Prohibitives (<i>do not</i> , <i>never</i>)	42 (6.5)	23 (7.3)
<i>you must</i>	47 (7.2)	18 (5.8)
<i>you may</i>	105 (16.2)	62 (19.9)
<i>you shall</i>	2 (0.3)	1 (0.3)
<i>you should</i>	1 (0.2)	2 (0.6)
<i>you will</i>	12 (1.8)	7 (2.2)

The *Ladies Directory* (1672) continues this imperative foundation, with *take* recorded 287 times and *let* 134 times (42.9 per 10,000 words). Prohibitives remain stable, though less numerous (*do not* 21; *never* 2). What shifts is the balance of modulated directives. Instances of *you must* fall sharply to 18, and *you shall* drops to 1. *You may* remains comparatively frequent (62 occurrences), keeping the advisory option in circulation. The decline of obligation markers from 1670 to 1672 suggests that Woolley was experimenting with a less categorical stance. In the earlier work she leans on the force of *must* and *shall*, while the later volume privileges softer options, offering permission (*you may*) or hedged advice. Imperatives still dominate, but the pattern points to a recalibration of directive force, away from compulsion and towards guidance.

Figure 1 illustrates these contrasts. The bar chart compares the normalised frequency of core modals across both texts. Modulated forms (*must*, *shall*) decline, while permissive *may* holds steady and predictive *will* remains high. Visually, the contrast underlines the textual shift. The *Ladies Directory* softens its prescriptive voice, adopting a more consultative and advisory tone without abandoning the imperative backbone of recipe writing.



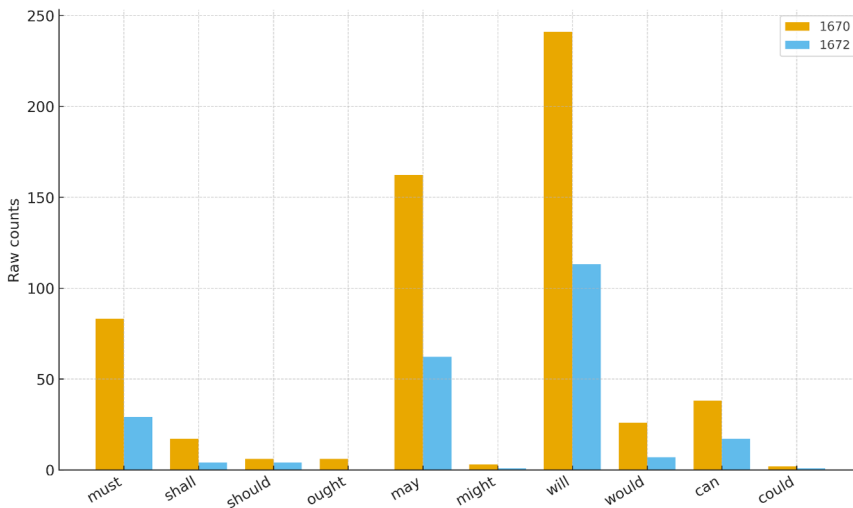


Figure 1. Modal profiles of Woolley's 1670 and 1672 texts (normalized frequency per 10,000 words).

This bar chart compares core modal verbs, showing a decline in strong deontic modals (*must*, *shall*) from 1670 to 1672, while the permissive *may* remains frequent and predictive *will* stays at a high level in both. The visual comparison confirms the trend described above: Woolley's later text uses fewer categorical obligation modals, therefore affiliating a more consultative tone that relies on suggestion and assurance rather than command.

4.2. MODALITY

Modal usage offers one of the clearest windows into Woolley's interpersonal style. Table 2 shows the distribution of the main forms across the two works. In the *Queen-like Closet* (1670), deontic markers are conspicuous: *must* appears 83 times (12.8 per 10,000 words), *shall* 17 times (2.6 per 10k), while *should* and *ought* occur six times each (0.9 per 10k). These items typically signal obligation or necessity, often where accuracy or safety is at stake. Alongside them, modalised and predictive forms are highly frequent: *may* registers 162 instances (25.0 per 10k), *might* 3, and *will* 241 (37.2 per 10k). The predictive *will* is especially salient, frequently carrying promissory or assurance value, "it will keep all the year," "this will certainly cure," phrases that guarantee the efficacy of her instructions and build reader trust.

In the *Ladies Directory* (1672) the overall profile is similar, but categorical obligation is notably reduced. *Must* drops to 29 occurrences (9.3 per 10k), *shall* to 4, and *should* to 4. *May* appears 62 times (19.9 per 10k), and *will* remains consistently high with 113 instances (36.2 per 10k). Here too, predictive *will* acts as a warranty, especially in recipes for preserving and candying where durability is essential ("it will



TABLE 2. DISTRIBUTION OF CORE MODAL VERBS		
MODAL FORM	1670 <i>QUEEN-LIKE CLOSET</i> (PER 10K)	1672 <i>LADIES DIRECTORY</i> (PER 10K)
<i>must</i>	83 (12.8)	29 (9.3)
<i>shall</i>	17 (2.6)	4 (1.3)
<i>should</i>	6 (0.9)	4 (1.3)
<i>ought</i>	6 (0.9)	-
<i>may</i>	162 (25.0)	62 (19.9)
<i>might</i>	3 (0.5)	-
<i>will</i>	241 (37.2)	113 (36.2)

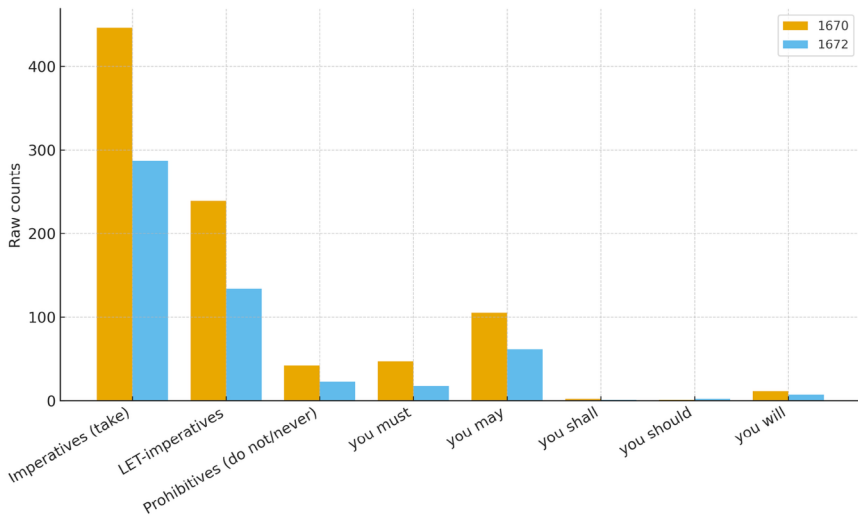


Figure 2. Distribution of directive types in 1670 and 1672 (absolute frequencies). Each bar is segmented into imperative forms (bottom, gold) versus modalized directives (top, orange).

keep,” “this will last”). The decline in *must* and *shall* between the two works points to a deliberate softening of prescriptive force. Rather than pressing obligation, Woolley increasingly frames her expertise through assurances of outcome.

Across both texts, then, the data suggest that interpersonal weight in both works rests less on categorical obligation than on the interplay of permissive *may* and promissory *will*. The resulting voice is both authoritative and reassuring. Woolley issues guidance, but couples it with promises of success. Such calibration seems designed for her female readership, asserting control without sounding heavy-handed, and cultivating an approachable stance as a knowledgeable companion (Wall 2002; Soares 2023).

Figure 2 visualises directive types across the two texts. Each bar is divided into imperatives (bottom, gold) and modalised directives (top, orange). The pattern

confirms what the tables suggest: imperatives account for more than 80% of directives in both works, while modalised forms are fewer overall in 1672. The core profile remains firmly imperative-centred, but the reduction of *must* and *shall* in the later text underscores a shift away from categorical commands toward gentler, outcome-oriented guidance.

4.3. ADDRESS AND PERSON

The pronoun distribution shown in Table 3 reinforces just how central the addressee is in Woolley’s instructive discourse. In the *Queen-like Closet* (1670), *you* appears 623 times (96.1 per 10,000 words) and *your* 770 times (118.7 per 10k). The *Ladies Directory* (1672) shows slightly higher proportional values: *you* occurs 317 times (101.6 per 10k) and *your* 412 times (132.1 per 10k). Across both works, then, the second person decisively establishes the reader as the grammatical and rhetorical agent of the text.

PRONOUN	1670 RAW (PER 10K)	1672 RAW (PER 10K)
<i>you</i>	623 (96.1)	317 (101.6)
<i>your</i>	770 (118.7)	412 (132.1)
<i>I</i>	64 (9.9)	22 (7.0)
<i>we</i>	2 (0.3)	3 (1.0)

By contrast, Woolley largely backgrounds herself. The pronoun *I* appears only 64 times in 1670 (9.9 per 10k) and 22 times in 1672 (7.0 per 10k). Inclusive *we* is almost absent, with two occurrences in the earlier text and three in the later. When Woolley does use *I*, it tends to occur in paratexts or in evidential remarks, “I have tried this,” which serve to bolster her ethos as a practitioner without disturbing the impersonal rhythm of the recipes. In effect, the addressee is consistently cast as the active performer of the domestic “drama,” while Woolley herself remains a largely invisible prompter, stepping on stage only to authenticate a recipe through personal experience. This balance produces a striking asymmetry.

As Figure 3 shows, in 1670 reader-oriented pronouns (*you, your*) outnumber author-oriented pronouns (*I, we*) by roughly 21:1; in 1672 the ratio widens to about 29:1. Such figures highlight Woolley’s deliberate strategy of foregrounding the reader and minimising the authorial self. This pronoun configuration is not accidental. It aligns with contemporary expectations that women writers should present themselves as modest, even while they claimed authority in print. Woolley frames the reader as agent and herself as a discreet guarantor, thereby positioning her instructive voice in an inclusive, “you”-centred mode that empowers readers while preserving the expected modesty of female authorship. (Jucker & Taavitsainen 2013).



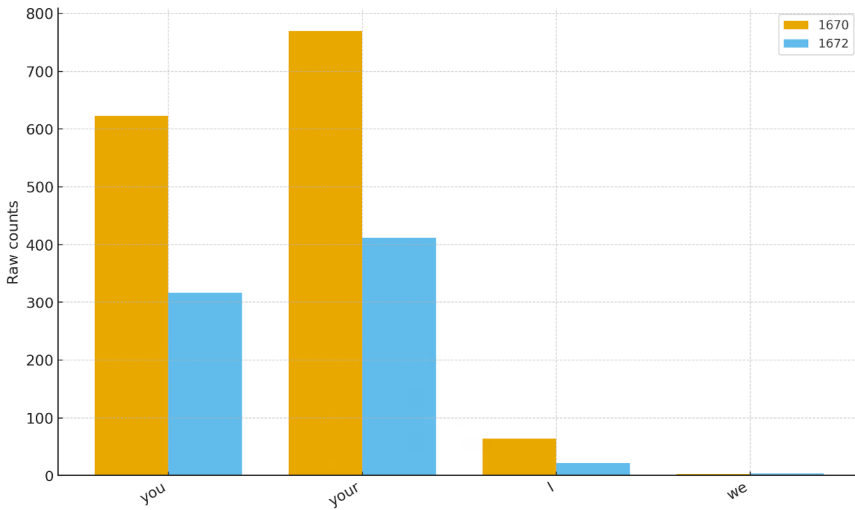


Figure 3. Reader-centered vs. author-centered pronoun usage.

4.4. POLARITY, CONDITIONALS, AND WARNINGS

Negation and conditionals are among the most persistent resources in Woolley’s manuals, as shown in Table 4.

Form	1670 <i>QUEEN-LIKE CLOSET</i> (PER 10k)	1672 <i>LADIES DIRECTORY</i> (PER 10k)
<i>not</i>	152 (23.4)	74 (23.7)
<i>never / no</i>	occasional (—)	occasional (—)
<i>if</i>	119 (18.4)	62 (19.9)
<i>when</i>	414 (63.8)	201 (64.4)

In the *Queen-like Closet* (1670), *not* appears 152 times (23.4 per 10,000 words), with a handful of *never* and *no*. Conditionals are equally present: *if* occurs 119 times (18.4 per 10k) and *when* an impressive 414 times (63.8 per 10k). The *Ladies Directory* (1672) shows a strikingly similar profile: *not* 74 times (23.7 per 10k), *if* 62 (19.9 per 10k), and *when* 201 (64.4 per 10k). Each of these items pulls weight in different ways. Negatives act as warnings; “do not let it boil over” is a typical phrasing, shielding readers from missteps and at the same time signalling the author’s foresight. Conditionals, by contrast, allow room for manoeuvre. “If it be not boiled enough, it will not keep” is less an instruction than a safety net, equipping the reader to judge results for herself. The heavy use of *when* reflects something different again: the time-bound logic of recipes, moving stage by stage, “When you see X, then do Y.”



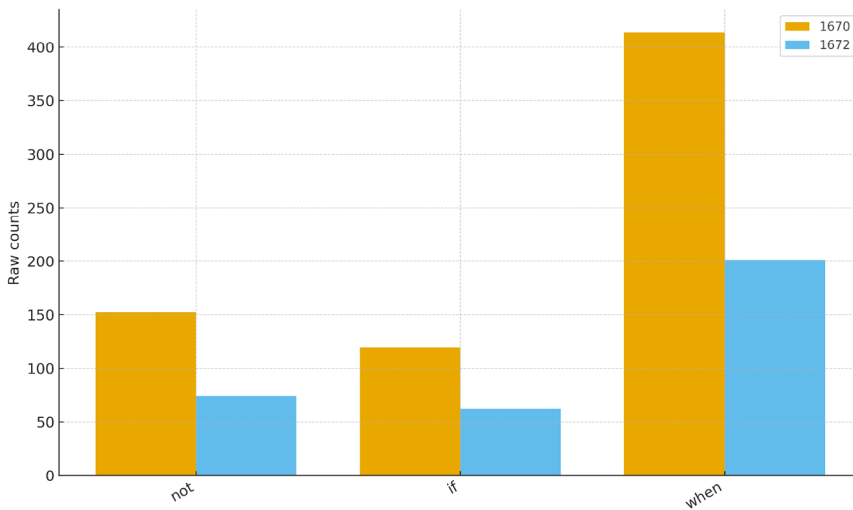


Figure 4. Frequency of negatives vs. conditionals in 1670 and 1672 (normalized per 10,000 words).

Figure 4 plots these patterns. What it shows is stability rather than change: both works register roughly 23-24 negatives per 10,000 words and more than 80 conditionals (*if* and *when*) per 10,000. Woolley's practice, then, is consistent. She devotes as much space to telling her readers what *not* to do, and how to avoid failure, as to spelling out the main procedures. Read this way, the interplay of negatives and conditionals is more than a technical feature. It projects an authorial stance steeped in care, as Woolley appears as someone who anticipates trouble, warns against it, and reassures her audience that pitfalls can be avoided. That protective voice fits neatly with cultural expectations of women as guardians of domestic safety, while also enhancing her credibility as an experienced guide.

4.5. STANCE ADVERBS AND GRADUATION

Table 5 illustrates a striking contrast: explicit stance adverbs are rare in Woolley's manuals, yet graduation markers occur with great frequency. In the *Queen-like Closet* (1670), *very* appears 369 times (56.9 per 10,000 words) and *well* 320 times (49.3 per 10k). Mitigating forms are also prominent: *little* registers 582 tokens (89.7 per 10k), *about* 50 (7.7 per 10k), and *almost* 33 (5.1 per 10k). The *Ladies Directory* (1672) shows the same tendency. Here *very* occurs 183 times (58.6 per 10k), *well* 167 (53.5 per 10k), *little* 311 (99.6 per 10k), *about* 24 (7.7 per 10k), and *almost* 17 (5.4 per 10k). The raw proportions differ slightly, but the overall profile is stable across the two works.





TABLE 5. DISTRIBUTION OF STANCE ADVERBS AND GRADUATION MARKERS		
Form	1670 <i>QUEEN-LIKE CLOSET</i> (PER 10k)	1672 <i>LADIES DIRECTORY</i> (PER 10k)
<i>very</i>	369 (56.9)	183 (58.6)
<i>well</i>	320 (49.3)	167 (53.5)
<i>little</i>	582 (89.7)	311 (99.6)
<i>about</i>	50 (7.7)	24 (7.7)
<i>almost</i>	33 (5.1)	17 (5.4)
Epistemic stance adverbs (<i>perhaps, surely</i>)	2 (0.3)	1 (0.3)

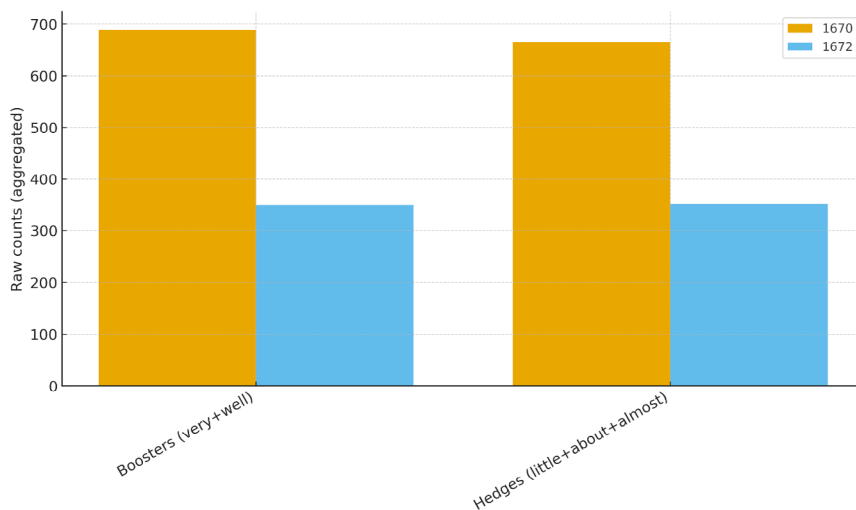


Figure 5. Use of boosters vs. hedges in Woolley's texts (normalized per 10,000 words).

Boosters such as *very* and *well* enhance quality and success, “a very fine jelly,” “boil it well,” infusing the prose with confidence and, at times, enthusiasm. By contrast, hedges like *a little*, *about*, or *almost* loosen the strictness of instruction. To ask for “a little sugar” or “about half a pint” acknowledges variability and leaves space for readerly judgement. These hedges do more than soften commands. They make the text feel practical, attentive to the contingencies of domestic work. Equally telling is what Woolley does not do. Explicit epistemic adverbs such as *perhaps* or *surely* are almost absent, two cases in 1670, one in 1672. Rather than verbalising uncertainty, Woolley relies on predictive futures (“it will keep,” “this will last”) or on conditional framing to manage risk. She prefers categorical instructions or contingency planning to hedged statements of probability.

Figure 5 compares the normalised frequency of boosters (*very* + *well*) with hedges (*little* + *about* + *almost*). Both texts show a near balance, roughly 105-112

instances per 10,000 words in each category. This equilibrium suggests a consistent rhetorical strategy. Woolley stresses excellence and precision through intensifiers, while also building tolerance into her discourse through mitigators. The result is a style that is prescriptive yet accommodating. This duality can be read as a “tolerance” strategy. Woolley insists that recipes be done properly, nothing in her discourse is slapdash, but she simultaneously acknowledges the unpredictable realities of the kitchen. In doing so, she models what Soares (2023) has described as an “epistemology of care” in women’s domestic and medical writing. Authority is exercised firmly, yet flexibly, always with the well-being of the practitioner in view.

4.6. COMPARATIVE SYNTHESIS

Read side by side, the *Queen-like Closet* (1670) and the *Ladies Directory* (1672) bear a familiar fingerprint. The structure is the same. This means the recipes are controlled by imperatives, predictive *will* ensures the reader the outcome is safe, and negatives or conditionals serve as a safety net. Toss in the consistent interplay between *very fine* and *a little salt*, hedges supported by boosters, and there exists an interpersonal tone which had been resolved by 1670 and remained essentially intact two years later. And yet the later book sounds different by subtle but significant touches. The older book depends more frequently upon blunt obligation, and so *must* and *shall* come into play with enough emphasis to stamp the author as a strong authority. In the *Ladies Directory*, these diminish. Instead comes a heightened dependence upon *may*, or upon hedging terms such as *if you please* and *a little*. Permission and mitigation come into play more frequently, and the reader’s presence comes through by the more frequent use of *you* and *your*. The tone is just as directive, but less dogmatic, more advisory.

Why is this softening? It could be that Woolley, with one successful book behind her, felt less need to insist. Or the shift may owe something to genre. Confectionery and preserves invite experiment, and readers would expect room for judgement. In either case the adjustment does not undo her core strategy. She continues to instruct with confidence but tempers that authority with reassurance and care. The thread running from 1670 to 1672 is clear enough, as Woolley commands, but always with an eye to protecting and encouraging her readers.

5. DISCUSSION

The foregoing analysis of interpersonal markers in Woolley’s *The Queen-like Closet* (1670) and *The Ladies Directory* (1672) shows how she carefully balanced directive authority with affiliative and mitigating strategies. We have seen that imperatives and other directives position Woolley as a confident instructor, even as various softening techniques ensure that her voice does not become overly peremptory. In this section, we delve deeper into these patterns through close readings of exemplary passages, and we consider their broader implications for the interpersonal dynamics of seventeenth-century women’s instructive writing.



5.1. DIRECTIVES AND THE NEGOTIATION OF AUTHORITY

Imperatives dominate Woolley's prose, and they leave little doubt about who instructs and who follows. A recipe in the *The Ladies Directory* begins bluntly:

- (1) *Take* a quart of cream and boil it with a blade of mace. (Woolley 1672, 174)

The verb *take* here functions as a command, establishing a hierarchy between author and reader. Yet the tone shifts in passages such as:

- (2) *Let it stand* till it be reasonably cool, then beat it with a wooden Slice till it be very white (Woolley 1670, 62)

The form *let* softens the directive. The instruction is still clear, but the framing turns a command into an allowance, as if Woolley were permitting the process to unfold. This alternation between direct imperatives and *let*-forms marks her sensitivity to the risks of sounding too peremptory. In a culture where female assertiveness in print could be censured, Woolley's oscillation between firmness and deference kept her authority intact while signalling modesty (cf. Brown & Levinson 1987; Culpeper 2011).

The *Ladies Directory* two years later reveals a further shift. Instead of *do X*, Woolley often prefers modalised forms:

- (3) *You may if you please* put the juice of a Limon into it when it is beating. (Woolley 1670, 126)

Here *may* and *if you please* present the act not as compulsion but as option. The reader is cast as agent, free to decide. This is more than politeness, as it reconfigures the author-reader relationship into something closer to advice than command. In this respect the 1672 text edges towards an advisory register, reflecting both market demands and gendered expectations of tact. The result is a voice that can still command when precision is vital, but that also knows when to retreat, granting the reader autonomy.

5.2. MODALITY AND THE DISCOURSE OF CARE

Obligation and assurance often sit side by side in Woolley's discourse, producing what might be described as a grammar of care. A recipe in the *Queen-like Closet* makes the point vividly:

- (4) *You must* first boil them with their weight in Sugar and some Water, *or else they will not* be sweet enough. (Woolley 1670, 103)

The obligation in *you must* is sharpened by the prediction *or else they will not*. The effect is not simply to command but to advise since the reader is told what



must be done, and why it matters. The necessity of stirring is justified as a safeguard. In SFL terms, modulation (*must*) joins modalisation (*will*), creating a double force, authority coupled with concern for the reader's success.

Woolley also deploys predictive futures as promissory devices, casting herself as guarantor of results.

(5) Set them in a cool place, *it will keep* a Month. (Woolley 1670, 119)

The phrase *it will keep* is not a neutral forecast but a guarantee. The text assures the reader that the recipe's efficacy is long-lasting, provided the instructions are followed. Similar examples abound in the *Ladies Directory*:

(6) *It will make* your skin fair if you wash therewith. (Woolley 1670, 12)

Here the repeated *will* builds confidence, as the skin will be fair, and the method of washing it with the preparation described earlier in the recipe will not fail. Readers had to trust the author's word in cases like this. Promissory futures became a rhetorical currency for securing that trust (see Alonso-Almeida and Cabrera-Abreu 2002 on promises in recipe discourse). All these patterns show Woolley's skill in modulating authority. She does not simply issue orders; she provides guarantees and rationales. This blend of firmness and reassurance reflects current cultural expectations of women as household caretakers. Her instructions are binding, but they are framed as protections. In this way Woolley's modal choices project both competence and care, reinforcing her authority while also aligning it with a feminine ethos of nurture.

5.3. PRONOUNS, SOLIDARITY, AND READER ALIGNMENT

Pronoun choice offers another window onto Woolley's stance. As the counts already showed, the second person (*you, your*) far outweighs any reference to the self. The effect is immediately felt in passages such as:

(7) when *you see* the Sugar harden on the sides of the Skillet, and on the Spoon, take them off the Fire, and keep them with stirring in the warm Skillet, till *you see* them part. (Woolley 1670, 137)

The repetition of *you* creates a sense of presence, almost as if the writer were leaning over the reader's shoulder. The act of seeing, removing, and then evaluating is all mapped onto the reader's agency. The instructions feel like a dialogue in which the practitioner's perception matters: "when you see... till you see."

By contrast, Woolley's *I* is scarce and carefully deployed. It surfaces mainly in prefaces or notes where she vouches for her experience:

(8) The Books which before this *I* have caused to be put in Print, found so good an acceptance, as that *I* shall still go on in imparting what *I* yet have so fast as *I* can. (Woolley 1672, 341)



This kind of statements bolsters credibility without intruding on the impersonality of the recipe. The author steps briefly into view to certify a method, then retreats again. In the recipes themselves, the “I” is nearly invisible, an absence that conforms to expectations of feminine modesty in print. At the same time, those rare intrusions matter, as they remind readers that Woolley writes from lived practice, not borrowed authority. The inclusive *we* is rarer; only two cases reported in these books. The effect of minimizing the presence of the first-person pronouns is a discourse that empowers readers while allowing the author to remain modest yet credible. In this way Woolley manages to teach authoritatively without appearing self-assertive, a balance that women writers of her time had to strike with particular care (Jucker & Taavitsainen 2013).

5.4. RISK, CONTINGENCY, AND INTERPERSONAL SAFEGUARDS

Woolley’s prose is laced with warnings. Negatives and conditional clauses function not just as grammatical devices but as interpersonal safeguards, anticipating the things that might go wrong. In the *Queen-like Closet* she cautions:

(9) If you add the Juice of a Limon to the white Wine, it *will* be the better. (Woolley 1670, 66)

The structure is simple enough: *if+ will*. Yet its force lies in the way it blends instruction with foresight. The reader is not only told what to do, but also what to avoid. The risk is spelled out explicitly, and the consequence, spoiling the entire dish, is made vivid.

The later manual offers similar guidance:

(10) for if you turn them too soon, it will hinder the rising. (Woolley 1672, 232)

Again, the recipe voice is less about strict prohibition (“do not...”) and more about conditional consequence. The logic is clear; if a step is neglected, failure follows. This form of warning keeps the tone impersonal and practical, while still placing responsibility on the reader. These constructions serve several interpersonal purposes. First, they heighten vigilance by signalling where things can go wrong. Second, they project expertise. A competent instructor knows not only the correct procedure but also the common pitfalls. In effect, Woolley reassures her readers that she has already thought through the hazards so that they do not have to learn by error.

There is also a politeness dimension. A conditional such as “if you turn them too soon...” sounds less scolding than a bald “do not turn them too soon.” The warning is framed as a logical outcome rather than a personal rebuke. In this way even Woolley’s prohibitions maintain a cooperative tenor. The net result is a discourse of protection. Readers are not left to stumble in the dark; the text pre-empts their mistakes and shields them from failure. This stance aligns with the broader cultural expectation of women as caretakers, but Woolley turns it to her advantage.



She emerges as the competent guide who has anticipated difficulties and provides a safety net through language.

5.5. WOOLLEY'S PLACE IN THE INSTRUCTIVE TRADITION

The patterns we have traced put Woolley at a hinge point in the history of women's instructive prose. Her style blends firmness (imperatives, strong modals, categorical assurances) with gestures of affiliation (permission, hedging, direct address). The mixture speaks to the two pressures she faced. On the one side, she had to turn domestic know-how into a commodity for a paying readership; on the other, she had to keep her authority palatable within a culture that expected women to temper expertise with modesty and care. Writers who came later, namely, Eliza Acton, Mrs Beeton, Elizabeth Haslehurst, adopted the same dual stance, but in a different publishing landscape. By the mid-nineteenth century there were established houses and conventions that could carry a woman's claim to authority. Woolley had no such scaffolding. Every ounce of credibility had to be won in the texture of her prose, through the fine calibration of directives, mitigations, and reassurances.

For that reason, she can be read as a transitional figure. Earlier recipe culture was plentiful, but most of it circulated anonymously or in manuscript. Woolley puts her name to her work and speaks directly to her "Ladies and Gentlewomen" (Woolley, 1670, A4v). In doing so she crafts a persona that is doubled: the skilled expert and the sympathetic neighbour. She knows the procedures, but she delivers them in a voice that invites solidarity and trust. The implications reach further than the kitchen. Through keeping *you* in the foreground and pushing *I* to the margins, she casts her readers as capable agents. The effect is to validate women's domestic labour as skilled practice, work that demands judgement and deserves recognition. Tasks that might otherwise have been dismissed as trivial appear here as knowledge to be recorded, shared, and respected. This balancing act, i.e., commanding without arrogance, guiding without condescension, proved influential. It offered later women writers of household texts a template. Authority could be exercised through care, and modesty, far from a handicap, could be a rhetorical resource. Woolley's place in the tradition is therefore both foundational and exemplary. She shows how interpersonal language could secure credibility for a woman in print, and in doing so she cleared a path for those who followed.

6. CONCLUSION

What emerges from this study is a close look at the interpersonal machinery of Woolley's prose in *The Queen-like Closet* (1670) and *The Ladies Directory* (1672). The survey of mood, modality, pronouns, polarity, conditionals, stance adverbs, and graduation shows a writer who does not simply list recipes but constantly calibrates her voice. The imperative is everywhere, yet it rarely stands alone as obligation is softened with permission or hedged with *if you please*. Stark rules are backed by



promises. That mix of command and reassurance is the heart of her style. Across the two books there is continuity but also a small shift in emphasis. In 1670 the force of *must* and *shall* is more audible, and the tone at times feels brisk, almost brusque. Two years later, those markers thin out. Instead, *may* and conditional hedges rise in frequency. It seems Woolley had moved toward an advisory voice, which is still firm, but less categorical. The predictive *will* remains constant, working as a guarantee of success and anchoring the trust between writer and reader.

Pronouns tell a similar story. *You* and *your* dominate both texts, positioning the reader as the one who stirs, boils, and tastes. The authorial *I* slips in only occasionally, often in a preface or in claims of proof. The effect is deliberate as Woolley effaces herself in the body of the recipes, yet she still signals experience where credibility is at stake. Modesty and authority run side by side. Her risk management strategies are equally revealing. Warnings like “do not let it boil over” or “if it be not boiled enough, it will not keep” are more than technical notes. They frame Woolley as the caretaker who has anticipated mishaps, e.g., burnt cream, spoiled preserves, before they happen. Woolley’s instructions are careful, flexible, protective.

If we seen against the background of seventeenth-century print, Woolley’s achievement is striking. She inherits a manuscript tradition of anonymous household recipes but moves it into the commercial press under her own name. Later writers, Acton, Beeton, Haslehurst, would operate in a market that offered women stronger institutional backing. Woolley had none of that. She had to build her ethos within the sentences themselves, balancing assertion with deference, clarity with tact. The value of this study lies in making that balancing act visible through a corpus-based functional analysis. The numbers and examples together show that interpersonal markers are not surface ornaments but the very means by which Woolley fashioned herself as both expert and companion. They also give us a baseline for following the instructive genre forward, i.e., how women’s voices in print shifted from the seventeenth to the nineteenth century, how care and command were recombined in different proportions. Woolley’s manuals remind us that recipes are rhetorical artefacts. They teach, but they also negotiate authority, build solidarity, and they quietly assert that women’s domestic knowledge was skilled, valuable, and worthy of the printed page.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS. I am grateful to the University of Barcelona’s *Fons Antic* archive for granting access to the copies of Hannah Woolley’s works that were transcribed for the corpus used in this study. El treball de transcripció va ser un veritable plaer gràcies a les facilitats ofertes pels bibliotecaris i per les bibliotecàries, així com pel personal de biblioteca, que em van facilitar la feina i van respondre amb diligència i amabilitat a les preguntes que vaig plantejar.

Reviews sent to the authors: 11/12/2025

Revised paper accepted for publication: 29/01/2026



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ADVISORY SUGGESTIONS IN LADY CATHERINE FITZGERALD'S RECIPE BOOK (1703)*

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ABSTRACT

This study examines Lady Catherine Fitzgerald's eighteenth-century recipe book to explore the linguistic and pragmatic features of advisory suggestions in women's culinary writing. In line with Alonso-Almeida's (2025) work on stance and politeness in historical directives, the analysis shows that recipe books function not only as instructional guides but also as spaces where authority, expertise, and social decorum are negotiated. Advisory suggestions appear selectively rather than systematically, signalling deliberate communicative choices. When present, they typically offer optional guidance that balances directive force with politeness. Linguistic forms such as *if you please* and *you may* reveal how female authors strategically combine deference with epistemic authority. Functionally, advisory suggestions enhance the writer's expertise, invite reader agency, and reinforce contemporary norms of politeness. These findings confirm that eighteenth-century women's recipe books are culturally meaningful artefacts in which subtle forms of linguistic authority are exercised.

KEYWORDS: Advisory Suggestions, Women's Writing, Eighteenth Century, Recipe Books, Politeness, Stance, Authority

ADVISORY SUGGESTIONS EN EL LIBRO DE RECETAS DE
LADY CATHERINE FITZGERALD (1703)

RESUMEN

Este estudio analiza un recetario femenino del siglo XVIII para explorar las *advisory suggestions* en la escritura culinaria. El análisis muestra que estas sugerencias aparecen de forma selectiva y funcionan como orientación opcional que equilibra autoridad y cortesía. Expresiones como *if you please* y *you may* combinan deferencia y autoridad epistémica, reforzando la competencia de la autora y la iniciativa del lector. En conjunto, los resultados confirman que los libros de recetas femeninos del siglo XVIII actúan como espacios culturalmente significativos de negociación de autoridad lingüística.

PALABRAS CLAVE: *advisory suggestions*, escritura femenina, siglo XVIII, libros de recetas, cortesía, posicionamiento, autoridad.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.25145/j.recaesin.2026.92.14>

REVISTA CANARIA DE ESTUDIOS INGLESES, 92; abril 2026, pp. 289-303; ISSN: e-2530-8335
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1. INTRODUCTION

English recipe books written by women during the 18th century stand as texts loaded with social, cultural and interpersonal information (Leong 2013; Alonso-Almeida 2013). These texts have been extensively studied by linguists from the perspective of historical pragmatics focusing on genre conventions, interpersonal meaning and the linguistic expression of domestic authority (DiMeo & Pennell 2013; Kernan & Müllneritsch 2024). In this study, we dive into a particular section of culinary recipes, the advisory suggestion, which may be included, or not, towards the end of the recipe. The way in which it is offered is closely related to the concept of social politeness typical of the time the recipe book was written. In this case, it is present through forms like, for instance, *If you please*, (Alonso-Almeida 2025) and their function consists in advice or suggestions to improve a particular dish, rather than an explicit order to be followed. This is something quite unexpected to be done by a woman in the 18th century, as it was assumed that only men could give orders. The reason for this social convention stems from the understanding that they were the ones who owned enough knowledge to instruct.

Our main objective in this paper is to identify and analyse the advisory suggestions found in our corpus of culinary recipes. For this, our research questions are the following: (1) Is the advisory suggestion offered to improve the dish present in all the recipes in the book? (2) In the instances in which it is, indeed, included, is the reader offered the choice to follow the advisory suggestion? (3) What are the mechanisms deployed by the writer to express this optionality to the reader? (4) Which are the prototypical forms of advisory suggestions found in our corpus? (5) What are the functions of advisory suggestions?

In this context, the paper is organised as follows: in section 2, we include the definition of *advice* followed by the identification of notions such as *purpose* and *intention*, since it is understood that the action of giving advice to someone departs from an intentionality to do so by a given individual. In the case of Lady Catherine Fitzgerald's recipe book, the author is in possession of some knowledge (she knows that the advice will improve the recipe) which she intends to share as she takes it to be beneficial for the reader. After a short discussion about the notions of *advice* and *suggestion*, we propose to unify these two terms into the single expression *advisory suggestion*. Also, we ponder briefly on the notion of *speech acts* (Searle 1969), as we keep unfolding the notion of *advice*, in which it is commonly understood that there is an inherent intention of the person giving the advice to persuade the individual receiving it to perform an action. In this sense, the benefit of following such an advice lands on the receiver. The final step towards framing the notion of

* The research conducted in this paper has been supported by the Agencia Estatal de Investigación, Plan Estatal de Investigación Científica, Técnica y de Innovación 2021-2023, under award number PID2021-125928NB-I00. I hereby express my thanks. Unión Europea · Fondo Europeo de Desarrollo regional “Una manera de hacer Europa.”



advisory suggestion linguistically leads us onto the concept of stance since it allows for the characterisation of the relationship between the author (as the owner of some knowledge who is in a position to evaluate it) and the reader (as its recipient). Section 3 offers a description of the corpus we have analysed: 224 culinary recipes authored by Lady Catherine Fitzgerald from the subcorpus of the *Corpus of Women's Instructive Texts in English* (COWITE 18) (Alonso-Almeida et al. 2025). After that, in section 4 we offer the results of our analysis beginning with the layout of the forms attested, and then, this is followed by a detailed inspection of their functions. The paper ends with some conclusions.

2. LINGUISTIC DESCRIPTIVE BACKGROUND

2.1. DEFINITION OF A PIECE OF ADVICE

According to the *Cambridge Dictionary*, a piece of advice is defined as “an opinion that someone offers you about what you should do or how you should act in a particular situation” or “an opinion given to help somebody make a decision”. In the *Oxford English Dictionary* (OED), most of the meanings associated with the word *advice* relate to opinions, considerations, notices, information given, or counsel. This suggests that advice texts may express a point of view or an idea, but they also carry an intrinsic or inherent meaning conveyed through the term *counsel*. The OED defines *counsel* as “an opinion as to what ought to be done given as the result of consultation; aid or instruction for directing the judgement” (OED).

Since advice involves an opinion given by someone based on their experience or judgement about what one should or should not do, it is inherently linked to a subsequent action. Therefore, the words *purpose* and *intention* are also related to a piece of advice: *purpose* refers to the aim that guides the action, or the goal of accepting the advice to achieve an objective, whereas *intention* indicates the determination to act in a certain way, as well as the degree of effort involved in following the advice (Ortega-Barrera 2009). Advice carries several inherent meanings:

- a) practical help since they are meant to be useful by helping people avoid mistakes, make better choices, or gain clarity;
- b) care and concern as giving advice often indicates that the adviser cares about the other person's well-being or success;
- c) wisdom sharing since it implies a transfer of experience, knowledge, or judgement; and
- d) non-obligation, because, unlike instructions or orders, advice leaves freedom; it suggests rather than commands.

Martínez-Flor (2003, 144), adapting the information from Alcón and Safont (2001, 10) and Hinkel (1997, 11-12) distinguishes four different strategies for giving advice: direct, indirect, conventionally indirect, and other types of strategies. The direct strategy is shown through the use of performative verbs (*suggest*, *advise*,



recommend), nouns of suggestion (*my suggestion would be...*), imperative (*Try...*), negative imperative (*Don't try...*). The indirect strategy involves the use of impersonal constructions such as *one thing you can do*, *here's one possibility*, *it would be helpful if you...*, *it might be better to...*, *a good idea would be...*, or *it would be nice if*. The conventionally indirect strategy is expressed through specific formulae like *why don't you...?*, or *have you thought about...?*, as well as through modals of possibility or probability (*you can*, *you should*, *you may*), and the use of conditional sentences such as *if I were you*, *I...*). Finally, other types of strategies include expressions as *I've heard that...*, that introduce advice indirectly through reported information or hearsay (Martínez-Flor 2003).

2.2. DEFINITION OF SUGGESTION

Suggestion is defined as “the action of prompting one to a particular action or course of action; the putting into the mind of an idea, an object of thought, a plan, or the like; an instance of this, an idea or thought suggested, a proposal” (*Oxford English Dictionary*). In this definition, it appears the idea of encouraging or influencing someone to do something, and also the action of introducing an idea or thought into someone’s mind, so a suggestion is both, the act of influencing someone’s thoughts or actions and the idea or proposal that results from an act. In the case of the *Cambridge Dictionary*, suggestion is defined as “an idea, plan, or action that is suggested or the act of suggesting it”. In the definition of suggest, we find “to mention an idea, possible plan, or action for other people to consider”, “to say something to influence somebody’s actions or decisions” or “to recommend as being appropriate” (*Cambridge Dictionary*).

Liu & Zhao (2007) describe the most common structures to express suggestions, which include patterns such as “you + modal verbs (*should*, *can*, *could*, *may*, *might*)”, conditional sentences (*if...*), performative expressions (*I suggest... or my suggestion is that...*), and imperatives (*Do/Don't...*).

2.3. ADVISORY SUGGESTIONS

From the previous definitions, advisory suggestions can be understood as a communicative act that combines advice, which is primarily oriented towards providing guidance or instruction, and suggestions, which serve to introduce ideas and prompt consideration. Together, these communicative strategies show how the author of the recipe book not only has procedural knowledge but also manages interpersonal relationships, guiding the reader in the decision-making process. Drawing from the definitions provided by the *Oxford English Dictionary* and the *Cambridge Dictionary*, in this paper, an advisory suggestion refers to a recommendation or proposal intended to guide someone’s actions towards a particular objective without imposing obligation or command. It involves the transmission of an opinion or idea aimed at orienting another person in decision-making, while leaving the final choice to the receiver.



In this sense, an advisory suggestion embodies both purpose and care from the speaker's side, as they pursue to aid or direct through shared knowledge or experience. It also projects a degree of freedom on the hearer's side, since it constitutes a proposal rather than a mandate. It involves a degree of influence motivated by expertise, combining the counsel characteristic of advice with the prompting essence of suggestion. Therefore, the function of an advisory suggestion is to advise, guide, or encourage someone towards a particular action or decision without imposing obligation, combining the instructive role of advice with the invitational tone of a suggestion.

The advisory suggestions appear in our corpus as a distinct section that will be analysed in sections 4 and 5. In the following subsection, we turn to a description of the linguistic framework in which the concepts of advice and suggestion are included, within the speech acts theory (Austin 1962; Searle 1969). In the following subsections, we turn to unpack the linguistic concepts which subsume our understanding of advisory suggestion.

2.4. SPEECH ACTS

Advising and suggesting are two closely related types of speech acts that involve the potential risk of seeming opinionated, that is, of giving the impression of imposing one's views on others (Leech 2014).

The theory of speech acts was first introduced by Austin (1962) and later developed by Searle (1969), who classified and categorised them. For Austin (1962), speech acts are statements produced by speakers with the intention of prompting actions from the listener (Hakeem Barzani 2023). He divided them into three different types: locutionary, illocutionary, and perlocutionary acts. The locutionary act refers to the literal meaning of the words or utterances used; the illocutionary act represents the speaker's intended purpose (like a command or request); and the perlocutionary act is the actual effect the utterance has on the listener.

Searle (1969) further classified speech acts into five categories: representatives (or assertives), directives, commissives, expressives, and declarations. Representatives, also called assertives, involve the speaker's commitment to the truth of a statement (affirm, assert, state, describe, conclude, believe). Directives aim to get the listener to perform an action (ask, order, command, request, beg, entreat, permit, advise). Commissives express the speaker's commitment to do something in the future (promise, threat, refuse, shall, intend, offer). Expressives entail the speaker's feelings or attitudes (thank, congratulate, apologise, forgive, welcome). Finally, declarations are speech acts that involve the speaker in changing the existing situation through their statement. They need an institutional or conventional framework to be valid (announce, declare, name, marry, pronounce).

Both advice and suggestions belong to the directive category of speech acts, as the speaker intends the hearer to perform a particular action. For this reason, they are also related to requests; however, the distinction lies in the direction of benefit. Advice is generally intended for the benefit of the hearer (Al-Aadeli 2013), while a



request benefits the speaker, since it involves asking the hearer to perform an action that fulfils the speaker's need or wish.

According to Rahim Dhahirin 2022-23), advice “has the illocutionary power to suggest to the hearer a future action that, in the adviser's opinion, will be to their advantage” (4). In contrast, Searle (1976, as cited in Leech 2014) defines a suggestion as a speech act in which “the speaker's purpose is to get the hearer to commit him/herself to some future course of action” (168). For this reason, most of the times they are interchangeable.

Advice and suggestions are part of the broader group of advisory speech acts, which also includes recommendations. These acts are oriented towards the hearer's benefit rather than the speaker's (Searle 1976). The speaker may also anticipate or hope that the hearer will act upon the advice in the future, implying a future action on the part of the hearer (Brown & Levinson 1987).

According to Hinkel (1997), giving advice should be softened to avoid offending the hearer. At the same time, the speaker assumes a certain degree of authority, as they claim to know what is best for the hearer. Consequently, giving advice leaves the recipient with the responsibility to consider the advice seriously, since it is not a command, but rather a suggestion of what action may be most appropriate (Locher 2006; Hussein & Jameel 2020). Suggestions, on the other hand, “are regarded as an imposition upon the hearer” (Leech 2014, 169).

2.5. ADVICE AND SUGGESTION AS STANCE EXPRESSIONS

Both advice and suggestions can be understood as forms of stance expression, as they reveal the speaker's attitudes, evaluations, and interpersonal positioning within communication. Following the definitions proposed by Biber et al. (1999), Hyland (2005), Du Bois (2007), Johnstone (2009), and Dzung Pho (2013), Alonso-Almeida (2023) defines stance as “the way in which speakers appraise people, objects, and ideas, but it also covers self-evaluation” (1). In this sense, giving advice or making a suggestion reflects how speakers evaluate a situation and position themselves in relation to the listener.

When giving advice, speakers usually express a clear evaluation of what they believe is beneficial or appropriate, often implying authority or expertise. Typical linguistic realizations include modal verbs such as *should* or *ought to*, which indicate the speaker's assessment of the most suitable course of action. Consequently, advice reflects a stance that combines evaluation and interpersonal influence, as it not only conveys an opinion but also encourages the hearer to act accordingly (Locher 2006; Hussein & Jameel 2020). To avoid sounding overly imposing, speakers may mitigate advice through hedges such as *maybe*, *I think*, or *perhaps* (Matsumura 2002).

Similarly, suggestions also embody stance, but they tend to be less forceful and more collaborative. When making a suggestion, the speaker expresses a personal viewpoint while leaving greater space for action to the hearer. Expressions such as *you could*, *why don't you*, or *it might be better if..* illustrate how speakers project their evaluations while simultaneously acknowledging the hearer's freedom to either



follow the suggestion or not. As Leech (2014) and Hinkel (1997) note, suggestions are often tentative and politeness-oriented, allowing speakers to express stance in a socially sensitive manner.

Thus, both advice and suggestions function as evaluative and interpersonal expressions of stance, though they differ in strength and degree of imposition. Advice tends to carry stronger authority and a clearer expectation of compliance, while suggestions express opinion in a more mitigated and collaborative way. In both cases, speakers reveal their positioning towards an issue and towards their hearer. In this way, the link between stance-taking, evaluation and interpersonality is established. Once we have presented the linguistic concepts which support our definition of advisory suggestion, in the following subsection, we turn to their identification in culinary recipes from the eighteenth century.

3. ADVISORY SUGGESTIONS AS A SECTION IN CULINARY RECIPES

In our corpus, the advisory suggestions appear embedded within recipes included in a cookbook. A recipe is a genre that follows a specific and recognisable structure. We will use the Medieval and Renaissance medical recipes structure established by Alonso-Almeida (2013) as the starting point. In this case, medical recipes are divided into different stages:

(Title) * Ingredients * (Preparation) * (Application) * (Evaluation / Efficacy) * (Storage) * (Expiry date) * (Virtues). Parentheses show optional stages, whereas the asterisk marks variations in order (Alonso-Almeida, 2013).

In the case of the cookbook, the structure follows a similar pattern. Domínguez-Morales (2025), following Alonso-Almeida (2013) identifies the following sections in an eighteenth-century cookbook:

Title - Ingredients - Preparation instructions - Cooking instructions - Serving suggestion

The stages found in our corpus closely resemble those of medical recipes and those described by Domínguez Morales (2025).

In Fitzgerald's cookbook, the structure of the recipes can be outlined as follows:

Title – Ingredients – Preparation instructions – Cooking instructions - *Advisory suggestion - * Serving suggestion

* The asterisk indicates that they are optional sections.

In the recipes analysed, advisory suggestions and serving suggestions are optional, as they do not appear in every recipe. The advisory suggestion section usually appears towards the end of the recipe, but not in every case. In some instances, the recipes combine features typical of both medical and culinary traditions, showing



an overlap between practical cookery and early domestic medicine. The following example serves to illustrate the stages found in the corpus:

To dry Cheryes [Title]

Take your cheryes and stone them, and take to $\frac{1}{2}$ ^{lb} of sugar 6 pound of Cheryes [Ingredients], and as you stone them fling them into the sugar [Preparation instructions]; put your sugar into the preserueing pann, wett it first w.th a little Juice of Cheryes, and boyle them till they be pretty tender, then take them of the fire and let them stand Close couered all night, then take y^m out of the Liquor, and lay them on the bottom of siues, one by one Let them stand till the syrup be quite drained from them, set them in a warme ouen not too hott, for too much heat spoiles them, when they are a little dry, turne them on cleane siues, to drye y.^m up [Cooking instructions], if the Liquor be not too sharp, you may put in more cheryes and more sugar to them [Advisory suggestion]

In this recipe, we follow the definitions of the different sections found in recipes as established by Alonso-Almeida (2013) and Domínguez-Morales (2025). According to these authors, the *Title* specifies the dish and describes a cooking method (*to dry*). The *Ingredients* section enumerates all the components necessary for its preparation, including quantities and preparation instructions (*Take your cheryes and stone them, and take to $\frac{1}{2}$ lb of sugar 6 pound of Cheryes*). The *Preparation instructions* section gives information about how to cook it (*and as you stone them fling them into the sugar*). The *Cooking Instructions* stage outlines the specific procedures required to cook the dish (methods, times, and temperatures) (*put your sugar into the preserueing pann, wett it first w.th a little Juice of Cheryes, and boyle them till they be pretty tender, then take them of the fire and let them stand Close couered all night, then take y^m out of the Liquor, and lay them on the bottom of siues, one by one Let them stand till the syrup be quite drained from them, set them in a warme ouen not too hott, for too much heat spoiles them, when they are a little dry, turne them on cleane siues, to drye y.^m up*). The *Serving Suggestions* stage provides guidance on the appropriate presentation of the finished dish on how to present it. In the example above, this section is not included. The *Advisory suggestion* section offers supplementary recommendations or optional considerations intended to enhance the overall preparation of the recipe (*if the Liquor be not too sharp, you may put in more cheryes and more sugar to them*).

4. CORPUS DESCRIPTION

This book includes a collection of 325 cookery recipes, along with some medical receipts written by Lady Catherine Fitzgerald, which forms part of the 18th-century subcorpus of the *Corpus of Women's Instructive Texts in English* (COWITE18) (Alonso-Almeida et al., 2025). The recipes under survey are the culinary ones, comprising a total of 224 cookery recipes, while the remaining recipes are left for future research.

Lady Catherine Fitzgerald was an upper-class English woman of the 18th century whose recipe book contains a variety of medical, domestic, and culinary



recipes written between 1703 and 1707. According to Leong (2013, 83) “recipes, both medical and culinary, were the main medium for the recording and transmission of information and knowledge in pre-modern households”. The compilation of medical knowledge in the form of short, concise recipes has a long tradition that extends from antiquity to the late nineteenth century, when Victorian English families still brought their personalised recipes to local pharmacies to be “made up” (Leong 2013). Moreover, as Leong (2013) notes, “Household recipe books highlight the complex gendering of inheriting and bequeathing household knowledge” (90).

5. RESULTS

After analysing the 224 culinary recipes in Lady Catherine Fitzgerald’s book, we identified several types and functions of advisory suggestions, which are presented in the following subsections (5.1. and 5.2.).

5.1. FORMS

The following table (Table 1) shows, in the first column, the forms attested in the text together with examples extracted from the recipes, in the second column. The forms in the examples are highlighted in bold for ease of identification.

FORM	EXAMPLE
1. Imperative + relative clause or subordinate	a) then season it as you think fitt with a quantity of Nutmegs, Cinamon, Ginger, Cloues & mace b) Cutt them in quarters, or thinner which you think fitt c) Putt the stalkes into water that you think will cover them d) Twist or tye them in what sheap you please
2. If-conditional clause with <i>please, like, intend</i> + imperative or modal	a) If you intend to keep it longer, fill it with clarified butter b) If you please, cleane picked & shred, a piece of lemon pill c) If you like it you may add the Yolks of 2 or 3 Eggs
3. If-conditional clause + future clause <i>will</i> or imperative	a) If it be double refind, it will make them look much better b) If you would have it look red, let it lie in fair water 24 hours.
4. Declarative with modal <i>may</i> or if-clause + modal <i>may</i> or subordinate clause	a) You may Boyle it more after the quinces be taken up. b) If the Liquor be not too sharp, you may put in more cheryes. c) You may make it as strong as you please

As it can be observed, the first form is an imperative (*season, cutt, putt, twist, tye*) followed by a subordinate clause (*in what sheap you please*) or a relative clause (*which you think fitt*). In the second row, the form *If-conditional clause with please, like, intend* (*If you intend, if you please, if you like*) can be followed by either an imperative verb (*fill*) or a modal verb (*may*). In the third row, the *If-conditional*



clause (*If it be*) is followed by a future clause with *will* (*it will make them look much better*). Finally, in the fourth row, we include the form declarative with the modal verb *may* (You *may* Boyle it) or with an *if*-clause located before the declarative (*If the Liquor be not too sharp*) followed by a modal *may* (*you may put in more cheryes*), or a subordinate clause.

5.2. FUNCTION

The forms presented in Table 1 illustrate the four different types of advisory suggestions found in our corpus, whose function is explained in this subsection. Following the definition of advisory suggestion provided in section 2.3, its function is, in summary, to advise, guide, or encourage a particular action or decision without imposing obligation, including the directive role of advice with the invitation tone characteristic of a suggestion.

A close inspection of the contextual setting of the recipe book reveals that the author (Lady Catherine Fitzgerald) has the knowledge of cooking, and as such, she owns the authority as an expert. She shares this with her readers to the extent that she provides advisory suggestions. These are not part of the core group of instructions to cook a meal; instead, they add extra indications that may be optional, or they may contribute to an improvement. There is no direct imposition on the reader to incorporate them, so there is no obligation, but a latent intentionality by the author towards guiding the reader to follow the instructions, as she knows, for sure, that they will improve the dish because, most probably, she has already tried them herself. In this sense, we wish to claim that the writer mitigates her authorial force, something which complies with the social conventions of the eighteenth century. Let us now turn to analyse some examples from the corpus.

a) then season it as you think fitt with a quantity of Nutmegs, Cinamon, Ginger, Cloues & mace

This advisory suggestion is presented by the author as a demonstration of culinary expertise while allowing the reader a certain degree of autonomy. The expression *as you think fitt* functions as a mitigating clause that softens the imperative *season it*. Through the invitation to determine the quantity, the author acknowledges the reader's practical knowledge and judgement. This linguistic strategy transforms what would otherwise be a direct command into a cooperative suggestion in which the writer is asking for the collaboration of the reader. The expert authority of the writer remains implicit in the use of the imperative *season*, yet the comparative clause *as you think fitt* reduces the directive force, creating a balance between instruction and the reader's freedom to make their own judgement or decision based on individual knowledge, experience, or preference, rather than following a strict command.

Similarly, the writer guides the reader on how to season it, but the quantities of each ingredient (*Nutmegs, Cinamon, Ginger, Cloues* and *mace*) are not specified. The reader can decide the amounts to use and even has the freedom to omit one or



any of the ingredients. Thus, the advisory suggestion keeps its instructive purpose while softening the directive: the reader is expected to season the dish with the listed ingredients, but the expression *as you think fitt* invites them to do so without imposing exact measurements or the specific seasoner.

b) if you please, cleane picked & shred, a piece of lemon pill

This advisory suggestion is offered by the writer as an expert to improve the recipe. The author is aware of the benefit that the recipient may have access to. The use of the *if-clause* together with *please*, *like* or *will* is a strategy to turn an order into a suggestion. Thus, mitigating the force of the message. The actual force is clearly present in the use of the following imperative. The verb *cleane* expresses a command, reflecting the expert authority of the writer. Although the imperative indicates direct advice, it is preceded by the conditional clause *if you please*, which softens the directive tone.

These expressions have been studied by Alonso-Almeida (2025), as discursive strategies used as interpersonal mitigation. This author establishes that “construcciones como *If you...* permiten introducir opciones y sugerencias de manera menos directa, reduciendo el impacto de una posible orden” (16). We must consider that in the 18th century this kind of strategies was frequent in instructive texts as they “sirven como marcadores de interacción que ayudan a estructurar la relación autor-lector, creando un ambiente de cooperación y respeto.” (17).

c) If you like it you may add the Yolks of 2 or 3 Eggs

In this case, the use of the modal verb *may* softens the direct action manifested by the verb *add*, and introduces a sense of possibility, giving some freedom to the reader to take the advisory suggestion or not, but this last option is not explicitly expressed. In this context, *may* transmits a real possibility that is authorized by the writer and, at the same time, she offers some degree of flexibility which can be understood by the reader as an invitation to try different options. The use of the conditional *if you like* mitigates the impositive force of the imperative *add*, signaling permission and politeness and turning the order into an advisory suggestion.

d) if it be double Refind it will make them look much better

This example illustrates an indirect strategy of advice-giving, that is an advisory suggestion. The conditional structure (*if it be... it will...*) allows the author to present her recommendation not as an explicit command but as a hypothetical consequence, which mitigates the directive force of the statement. Instead of directly instructing the reader to refine the ingredient twice, Lady Catherine forms the advisory suggestion as an experiential observation. Refining it twice *will make them look much better*. This conditional form functions as a politeness device, softening the imposition while still expressing the superiority of the suggested method. The use of the comparative adjective *much better* introduces an element of gradation and



persuasion, implying an improvement on a scale of quality. This strengthens the pragmatic intention behind the advisory suggestion, that is that the reader follows it by emphasising the benefit of doing so.

e) You may make it as strong as you please

This sentence functions as an advisory suggestion that is presented by the author as a demonstration of culinary expertise while allowing the reader some autonomy in preparation. The modal verb *may* is used to show that the action is optional rather than obligatory, so it can be chosen by the reader. The phrase *as you please* further mitigates the imperative force, offering the reader the freedom to adjust the intensity according to personal judgement or taste, transforming the potential directive into an advisory suggestion, respecting the reader's experience and practical knowledge. The author's expertise is implied, while the sentence reduces the force of the command and allows the reader to make their own judgment (*as strong as you please*). In this way, the advisory suggestion maintains its instructional purpose while softening the tone.

As seen in the instances and following Alonso-Almeida (2025) the use of the advisory suggestions serves as a form of mitigation to establish a polite relationship between the writer and the reader. Alonso-Almeida, making reference to the construction *If you...* considers that "Este patrón discursivo refleja un enfoque en la cortesía y la relación interpersonal, fundamental en un contexto en el que las mujeres tenían un rol central en la gestión doméstica y debían adherirse a normas sociales que valoraban el decoro y la deferencia." (Alonso-Almeida 2025, 26)

6. CONCLUSION

The analysis of Lady Catherine Fitzgerald's recipe book provides valuable insights into the linguistic and pragmatic features of advisory suggestions in women's culinary writing of the eighteenth century. Our findings confirm that these texts function as more than mere instructional manuals; they serve as sites of negotiation of authority, knowledge, and social decorum (as already stated by Alonso-Almeida 2025).

Advisory suggestions are not consistently present across all recipes in the corpus, which indicates that their inclusion responds to a deliberate communicative choice rather than to a prescriptive convention of the genre. When present, these suggestions often appear towards the end of the recipe, and perform the pragmatic function of offering optional guidance for improving a dish rather than issuing an obligatory command.

The linguistic analysis of advisory suggestions reveals a careful balancing of authority and politeness. Some of the expressions in the corpus, such as *if you please, you may, that you think, which you think fitt*, among others, allow the author to position herself as knowledgeable yet deferential, maintaining the social expectations of female modesty while still asserting epistemic authority, confirming and extending



the findings in Alonso-Almeida (2025). This reflects a strategic use of stance, where politeness operates as a mechanism to mitigate the directive force of advice and to construct a cooperative relationship between writer and reader.

From a functional perspective, advisory suggestions fulfil several interrelated purposes: (1) they display the author's expertise and experiential knowledge; (2) they invite the reader's participation and agency in the cooking process; and (3) they reinforce the social values of politeness and respect characteristic of eighteenth-century female discourse. The interplay of these functions demonstrates that Lady Catherine Fitzgerald's language choices are both socially conditioned and pragmatically effective.

Finally, by unifying the notions of *advice* and *suggestion* under the broader category of *advisory suggestion*, this study contributes to refining our understanding of directive speech acts in historical contexts. It shows that women writers of the period could exercise subtle forms of authority through language, challenging contemporary gender norms while adhering to the conventions of politeness. The findings thus support the view that eighteenth-century women's recipe books are rich linguistic and cultural artefacts that encode not only culinary knowledge but also complex patterns of social interaction and self-representation.

Future research could build on these findings by expanding the scope of analysis to include a wider range of eighteenth-century women's recipe books and other domestic texts, enabling comparative studies that evidence patterns of advisory language across authors. Such investigations would help determine whether the pragmatic balance between authority and politeness observed in Lady Catherine Fitzgerald's work represents a broader trend in women's linguistic practices or an individual preference. Additionally, corpus-based and diachronic approaches could be employed to examine how advisory suggestions evolved over time. Such approaches will certainly offer enough data to perform a quantitative analysis which would further support our qualitative results.

Reviews sent to the authors: 14/11/2025

Revised paper accepted for publication: 29/01/2026



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HEDGING AS INTERPERSONAL DESIGN IN WOMEN'S INSTRUCTIVE WRITING: THE CASE OF *MRS JOHNSTON'S RECEIPTS* (1740)*

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ABSTRACT

Drawing on a diplomatic transcription of *Mrs Johnston's Receipts* (1740), this article examines explicit hedging as interpersonal design in women's instructive writing. I operationalise Hyland's model (1996, 1998, 2005) through an SFL/Appraisal lens and confine analysis to overt markers, epistemic modals, if-frames, approximators, and reader-judgement phrases. A rule-based regex inventory yields normalised counts and micro-examples. Results point to an accuracy-plus-engagement profile: approximators (e.g., *a little, about*) dominate to encode tolerances of measure, time and doneness, while if-frames and permission/optative modals (may, would) license options and manage contingency. Tokens of can mostly express ability/availability rather than epistemic caution. Writer-protective and attributional hedges are scarce; credibility is enacted through procedural plausibility paired with courteous flexibility. Methodologically, the study offers a replicable baseline for diachronic and cross-domain comparison. Substantively, it reframes hedging in domestic-technical prose as a pragmatic technology for trustworthy guidance under material variability, rather than evasiveness.

KEYWORDS: Hedging, Appraisal (SFL), Recipe Discourse, Women's Instructive Writing, Approximators, Eighteenth-century English.

LA ATENUACIÓN COMO DISEÑO INTERPERSONAL EN LA ESCRITURA INSTRUCTIVA DE MUJERES: EL CASO DE *MRS JOHNSTON'S RECEIPTS* (1740)

RESUMEN

A partir de una transcripción diplomática de *Mrs Johnston's Receipts* (1740), este artículo analiza la atenuación explícita como diseño interpersonal en la escritura instructiva femenina. El estudio se apoya en el modelo de Hyland desde una perspectiva SFL/Appraisal y se centra en marcadores visibles como modales epistémicos, estructuras condicionales y aproximadores. Los resultados muestran un perfil que combina precisión y implicación: los aproximadores dominan para gestionar márgenes de medida y tiempo, mientras que los condicionales y modales permisivos abren opciones y manejan la contingencia. Lejos de ser evasiva, la atenuación funciona aquí como una estrategia pragmática de orientación fiable en contextos materiales variables.

KEYWORDS: atenuación, valoración, recetas, escritura instructiva por mujeres, aproximadores, inglés del siglo XVIII.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.25145/j.recaesin.2026.92.15>

REVISTA CANARIA DE ESTUDIOS INGLESES, 92; abril 2026, pp. 305-320; ISSN: e-2530-8335
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1. INTRODUCTION

Eighteenth-century English recipe books are not merely household aids. They are indeed textual sites where knowledge is made credible, authority is negotiated, and readers are guided through action under conditions of uncertainty. In this sense, recipes are a distinctive register of instructive prose whose success depends as much on *how* a writer modulates commitment to claims as on *what* techniques are prescribed. While scholars of historical food writing have charted the material, social, and epistemic worlds of the kitchen (Leong 2018; Pennell 2016; Wall 2016), comparatively little attention has been paid to the microlinguistic devices, especially hedges, by which women recipe writers temper assertion, offer options, and invite cooperation from readers. Hedging, in Ken Hyland's terms, is the family of resources that qualify commitment and open a space for negotiation with readers, and it is relevant to the understanding of how instruction and interpersonal alignment co-operate in written discourse (Hyland 1996; 1998; 2005).

Hyland's work, developed largely on research articles, shows that hedges (e.g., modal verbs like *may/might*, stance adverbs like *probably*, conditional framing with *if*) are not mere markers of indecision but strategic means to calibrate risk and collegiality in public knowledge-making (Hyland 1996; 1998; 2005). In recipe discourse, where domestic practice meets contingent materials and variable kitchens, one expects hedges to manage both epistemic contingencies (ingredients, heat, timing) and interpersonal relations (respecting the reader's agency while maintaining instructional clarity). Bringing this lens to women's instructive writing enables a finer-grained account of how authority is exercised with tact, via permissions, options, and approximations, rather than simply that authority is present.

At the same time, work in Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) and Appraisal theory gives us a principled way to link hedging to interpersonal meaning, i.e., modality and graduation resources scale commitment, while engagement resources acknowledge alternative positions (Halliday and Matthiessen 2014; Martin and White 2005). Read alongside Hyland, this perspective foregrounds hedging as a patterned set of choices that mediate between procedural necessity (the "do this" of recipes) and social attunement (the "as you please / if you like" of domestic negotiation).

This article offers a corpus-informed, close-reading analysis of explicit hedging in *Mrs Johnston's Receipts for all sorts of pastry, creams, puddings, custards, preserves, marmalets, conserves, geillies, syrups, wines, wet and dry confections, biskets, sauces, pickles, and cookery* (1740). We operationalize Hyland's categories to capture only overt devices, lexical and constructional forms that are recoverable without contextual

* The research conducted in this paper has been supported by the Agencia Estatal de Investigación, Plan Estatal de Investigación Científica, Técnica y de Innovación 2021–2023, under award number PID2021-125928NB-I00. I hereby express my thanks. Unión Europea · Fondo Europeo de Desarrollo regional "Una manera de hacer Europa."



inference, namely: (i) epistemic modals (e.g., *may, can, would*); (ii) conditional frames (*if*-clauses) that render steps optional or contingent; (iii) approximators (e.g., *about, almost, a little, a few*); and (iv) reader-judgment phrases (e.g., *as you think / as you please*). We deliberately exclude implicit softeners (e.g., passives without agents, generic *you*, bare conditionals of necessity) to keep the taxonomy transparent and replicable. This focus responds to two gaps: first, the lack of systematic hedging accounts for historical cookery prose in English (most hedging studies focus on scientific or medical genres); second, the need to connect interpersonal design in women's instructive writing to measurable linguistic patterns that can be compared across texts and periods (Hyland 1996; Salager-Meyer 1994).

Our approach is anchored in the historiography of recipes as everyday knowledge (Alonso-Almeida 2013). Studies show that recipe books sit at the nexus of household science, material practice, and print culture, with women often positioned as both compilers and experimenters (Leong 2018; Pennell 2016; Wall 2016). On this view, hedging is not a defect but a *feature* of credible instruction, as it encodes tolerances, accommodates variability, and signals respectful guidance over authoritarian command, precisely the interpersonal balancing act expected in stratified households and local networks of expertise. By tracking hedges across the entire text (paratext and recipes), we also attend to whether stance work clusters in particular sections (e.g., optionality in ingredient lists versus method steps) and whether culinary domains (pastry, preserves, pickles) differ in their reliance on approximators versus conditionals.

This study asks, first, which explicit hedging devices occur in *Mrs Johnston's Receipts* (1740) when coded through Hyland's taxonomy. Second, it examines how these hedges are distributed across textual zones, the prefatory or other paratextual materials versus the recipe bodies, and across culinary domains such as pastry, preserves, and pickles. Third, it investigates the interpersonal work these forms do in women's instructive writing, including licensing permission, signalling optionality, marking approximation, and managing contingency (e.g., "If it should prove too strong, add..."). Finally, it explores how such explicit hedges co-exist with the imperative backbone of recipe discourse, asking how procedural authority is tempered without loss of clarity and stepwise control.

Empirically, the article offers a reproducible coding protocol for explicit hedges in an eighteenth-century women's recipe book, reports normalised counts, and supplies exemplification adequate for diachronic comparison. Methodologically, it brings Hyland's hedging taxonomy into conversation with an SFL-Appraisal reading of interpersonal meaning in instructive prose, as also evinced in Alonso-Almeida (forthcoming) affiliating categories with resources of engagement and graduation (for example, *you may, perhaps, about*). Substantively, it reframes domestic recipes as a domain in which calibrated tentativeness is not ancillary but constitutive of credible guidance; this calibration accommodates contingent materials, tacit household know-how, and the reader's agency while keeping the instructional line intact.



2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Following Hyland, I treat hedging as any linguistic choice that signals less-than-full commitment to a proposition or frames a claim as opinion rather than categorical fact, and I take it as a principled way of managing knowledge and relationships with readers rather than a strategy of obfuscation (Hyland 1998; 2005). In practical terms this includes modal auxiliaries, stance adverbs, parenthetical frames such as *it seems* or *I believe*, approximators, permissive constructions such as *you may*, and conditional cushions of *the if it should...* or *if you find...* type. In historical science writing, hedging sits alongside stance and evidentiality, as writers temper commitment while signalling sources and calibrating alignment with their audiences, and the same nexus is relevant to instructional prose. Hyland's polypragmatic model provides the functional scaffold I adopt for *Mrs Johnston's Receipts* (1740), a model already applied to historical writing (cf. Alonso-Almeida forthcoming). Content-oriented hedges regulate the fit between words and world, for instance when quantities or outcomes are left elastic (Álvarez-Gil & Quintana-Toledo 2022). Accuracy-oriented hedges come in two forms: (a) attribution hedges that flag possible model-data slippage, and (b) reliability hedges that grade confidence in a claim's truth value. Writer-oriented hedges manage face and reduce vulnerability to criticism, often through first-person or impersonal stance frames. Reader-oriented hedges invite acceptance, soften directives, and open space for participation, as when options are licensed with *you may* or outcomes are qualified with *perhaps*. I situate hedging within a wider stance-evidentiality net work in which hedges constitute one subset of epistemic marking alongside evaluative stance and source-telling evidentials; this integrated view helps prevent category creep and keeps annotation stable for an eighteenth-century cookbook or receipt genre (Hyland 1998; 2005).

Diachronic work on scientific prose consistently shows hedging as a central resource for negotiating knowledge, protecting face, and managing uncertainty. Typical cues, e.g., "it may be supposed...", "it seems...", "perhaps," permit authors to keep claims mobile while maintaining a cooperative stance towards readers. In one well-documented line of research on astronomy, hedges tend to increase over the eighteenth century and cluster in writer-oriented self-protection and reader-oriented engagement. Authors shade predictions, distance themselves from possible error, and bring readers along with calibrated invitations to assent. The same pressures obtain, in genre-specific form, in culinary-medical instruction, as ingredients vary by season and storage, hearths run hot or cool, and measures are elastic. Hence the recurrent comforts of "you may," "if it prove too strong, add...", "about a quarter of an hour," or "as you think fit." Such wording keeps procedural control intact while acknowledging material contingency and domestic know-how.

For women's specialised writing, highly relevant to Mrs. Johnston's context, stance work sits alongside strategic directness. Authors balance mitigation with assertion to claim authority in a male-dominated community of practice. In this context, permissive frames and approximators co-occur with boosters and even face-threats where needed to secure compliance or to rebut competing expertise. A recipe that offers "you may strain it finer if you please" may also insist that a step



“must be done immediately” or that a mixture “will certainly fail” if altered. That oscillation is not inconsistency; it is a rhetorical design. In our framework, hedging is one pole in a larger stance system (alongside boosters, evidentials, and evaluative cues), and its interpersonal value is clearest when read against that system as a whole. Put differently, hedges do not weaken instruction; they licence permission, mark optionality, register approximation, and manage contingency, thereby legitimising a female author’s guidance without sacrificing procedural clarity.

Receipt books are procedural and prescriptive, yet they hedge in patterned ways that make the instructions credible and usable in real kitchens. Writers routinely acknowledge measurement and process variability through approximators that bracket precision (*about, near, almost, as much as will, until it be enough*) because spoonfuls are not standard, eggs differ by size, fires run hotter or cooler, and seasonal produce shifts in strength and yield; such wording keeps claims tractable without overpromising. Directives are also softened with permissive or advisory framings, *you may add..., it should be..., it is best to..., if you find...,* which preserve procedural control while licensing the reader’s choice. Knowledge is sometimes attributed rather than owned, *it is said/it is thought, some advise...,* to manage responsibility for outcomes and to acknowledge a community of practice. Following research on vague and elastic language in instructional and historical recipe discourse (Alonso-Almeida & Quintana-Toledo 2022), I treat these devices as explicit, interpersonal hedges whenever they mitigate commitment or soften instruction, rather than as mere noise. This motivates an accuracy-oriented subcoding for approximators in the present corpus, distinguishing their locus (quantity, time, process), their form (premodifying vs. sentential adverbials, comparatives like *at least*, scalar add-ons like *or so*), and their interpersonal force (calibrating confidence vs. cushioning a directive). The coding protocol and worked examples are documented alongside the dataset.

In this study we annotate only overt hedging forms, i.e., items that are textually present and lexically recognisable, setting aside purely contextual or passive softening that lacks an explicit hedge token. Operationally, and aligning categories with Hyland’s functional account (1998; 2005), our inventory for *Mrs Johnston’s Receipts* (1740) comprises six families. First, epistemic modals are coded when they signal less-than-full commitment or offer options; we disambiguate non-epistemic uses (e.g., bare ability or routine futurity) and, where relevant, label their interpersonal orientation as writer- or reader-oriented, with a reliability tag when they grade confidence (e.g., “it may preserve...”, “you may add...”). Second, epistemic adverbs and adjectives (*perhaps, possibly, likely, probable, uncertain*) are treated as reliability hedges, marking the degree of commitment attached to a proposition rather than the procedure itself (“perhaps the syrup will thicken”). Third, stance verbs (*seem, appear, believe, suppose, suggest, think*) are coded as writer-oriented hedges when they attribute a claim to the author’s judgement and thereby protect face (“it seems best to...”; “I suppose you...”). Fourth, approximators and quantifiers (*about, near(ly), at least, a little, to taste*) receive an accuracy–attribute label, since they acknowledge elastic measures or variable processes; we subcode their locus (quantity, time, heat, process) and form (premodifier vs. sentential), distinguishing, for instance, *about half a pint* from *at least an hour* or *stir a little*. Fifth, evidential and attributional



frames (*it is said/held, as is thought, according to N., some say*) are coded as content- or reader-oriented hedges when they shift responsibility to a source or community and invite acceptance without overclaiming (“some say it will keep longer”). Sixth, open alternatives and tempering conditionals are annotated when they explicitly soften commitment or license choice (*if you please; you may either...or...*), thereby engaging the reader while preserving procedural control.

A few boundary rules keep the scheme stable. Multiword strings (e.g., *if you please, according to N.*) are counted as single hedge events. Negated or intensified forms are coded for their hedging function when the polarity still mitigates commitment (e.g., *not quite done* under approximation). Generic passives, nominalisations, or the generic *you* are excluded unless accompanied by an explicit hedging token. We lemmatise across historical spellings for searching (e.g., *near/nearer/nearly; probable/probably*), but report surface forms in examples; likewise, we sense-disambiguate modals so that *can* (ability) is not conflated with epistemic *can* (plausibility). Each instance is assigned a single primary Hyland-aligned label (content, accuracy-attribute vs. accuracy-reliability, writer, reader) with optional secondary tags for orientation and locus, enabling reproducible counts and fine-grained comparisons across paratext and recipe bodies, and across culinary domains.

Our coding rests on four complementary lenses that keep the scheme functional, historically sensitive, and reproducible. First, Hyland’s account of hedging (1998; 2005) supplies the backbone. I treat hedges as interpersonal resources with potentially polysemous work, so we allow dual tags when a single token plausibly does two jobs in context (for instance, *you may* can both grade reliability and invite reader choice). Second, we use Crompton’s commitment-increase test (1997) for borderline decisions. If a clause can be restated with higher commitment without altering its propositional content, the original counts as hedged. In recipes this is often easy to demonstrate, e.g., *it may thicken* is *it will thicken*; *about a quarter of an hour* is *for fifteen minutes*; *if you please, add sugar* is *add sugar*, and the test helps separate genuine mitigation from mere variation in phrasing. Third, we embed annotation in a historical stance–evidentiality ecology. Early Modern prefaces routinely mix effective (deontic) and epistemic stance to position author and audience; cues such as first-person disclaimers (*I have found...*), community attribution (*it is said..., some advise...*), and status appeals (*according to N.*) are therefore read as patterned resources, not incidental politeness. We leverage these diagnostics in paratexts and headnotes so that, for example, it seems best is coded as writer-oriented hedging while a bare imperative in the same preface is read as a deliberate assertion of procedural authority. Fourth, we keep disciplinary and cross-cultural variation in view: contrastive work shows that hedging choices track community norms and communicative purpose. Directive prose aimed at getting things done must still manage rapport; hence our particular attention to reader-oriented devices (*you may, if you please, either...or...*) that temper instruction without loosening control. Together, these lenses let us tag only overt forms while remaining alert to polysemy, guarding against category creep, and preserving comparability across paratext and procedure.

We proceed on four related hypotheses tailored to the interpersonal ecosystem of *Mrs Johnston’s Receipts* (1740). First, reader-oriented hedges will be most visible in



imperative strings, typically following a base command to licence variation without relaxing control; patterns like “you may add a spoonful of...” or “you may either strain or settle it” are expected to cluster after core steps such as take, boil, skim, where they temper face-threat while keeping the procedure on track. Second, accuracy-attribute hedges will concentrate around measures, timing, heat, and doneness cues, reflecting material variability: “about half a pint,” “near a quarter of an hour,” “a little sugar,” “to taste,” “until it be enough,” and cognate signals of endpoint recognition in preserves and confectionery, for instance “till it come to a jelly.” Third, attributional or evidential hedges should appear chiefly in paratexts, headnotes, and remedy-like entries where knowledge is framed as communal or sourced rather than strictly authorial, using formulae such as “it is said,” “some advise,” or “according to N.” to diffuse responsibility and invite assent. Fourth, writer-oriented hedges will surface in prefaces and at points where alternatives are introduced or generalisations are made, with frames like “it seems best,” “I believe,” or “I suppose” managing accountability and pre-empting criticism in a manner consistent with contemporary scientific prose. All these expectations predict a distribution in which permission-granting and optionality markers co-occur with imperatives in the recipe bodies; approximators cluster around quantities, time, heat, and process; source-attribution concentrates in paratextual zones; and author-stance cues appear where the writer negotiates choice or defends judgement. We also anticipate local pairings of hedges with boosters or necessity markers, “you may...,” alongside “must be well beaten,” for example, since authority and mitigation frequently work in tandem to secure both compliance and cooperation.

3. CORPUS AND METHOD

This study examines the complete text of *Mrs Johnston's Receipts* for all sorts of pastry, creams, puddings, custards, preserves, marmalades, conserves, geillies, syrups, wines, wet and dry confections, biscuits, sauces, pickles, and cookery, after the newest and most approved method (s.n., [1740]). Analysis draws on a diplomatic plaintext transcription supplied by the project *Los mecanismos interpersonales en los textos instructivos especializados, domésticos y no domésticos, escritos por mujeres en inglés moderno* (PID2021-125928NB-I00). All textual zones are included, namely, title matter, paratext, recipe heads, ingredient lines, and directions, because hedging can surface at any point where claims are made or responsibility is distributed. The dataset comprises 22,011 running tokens, counted by a regex tokenizer that treats alphabetic strings with apostrophes and hyphens as single tokens (a choice that respects eighteenth-century compounding and elision). Orthography is not modernised: a lowercased working copy supports case-insensitive searching, but every quoted example retains the original spelling and punctuation. For counting, the book is treated as a single corpus; in the full paper we will add a secondary layer that leverages the work's internal headings to compare culinary domains (pastry, preserves, pickles, etc.). This is a focused case study rather than a claim to period-wide representativeness. Its aim is to deliver a replicable operationalisation of



explicit hedging in women's instructive prose that can be extended to other texts and compared diachronically, in line with corpus-based approaches to historical stance and mitigation (cf. Alonso-Almeida 2012; Carrió-Pastor 2016; Álvarez-Gil 2022; Quintana-Toledo 2024).

I adopt Hyland's (1996, 1998, 2005) account of hedging as the strategic modulation of commitment and reader engagement, interpreted through an SFL/ Appraisal lens for interpersonal meaning. In keeping with your specification, we confine the analysis to explicit hedges, i.e., overt lexical or constructional markers retrievable without broader discourse inference, so that coding remains transparent and reproducible (Hyland 1996; Crompton 1997; Alonso-Almeida 2012). Concretely, the inventory comprises, as already mentioned, epistemic modal auxiliaries *may*, *might*, *can*, *could*, *would*, *should*, counted only when they signal reduced commitment or license options; conditional frames that temper directives or open alternatives (*if you...*, *if it...*, *if the...*), subtyped by subject where relevant and included solely in their reader-oriented, contingency-managing uses; accuracy-oriented approximators in measurement and time, scalar items such as *about*, *almost*, *nearly*, *at least*, *or so*; vague-quantity phrases like *a little* and *a few*; and, where present, typicality/frequency adverbials (e.g., *often*), which are scarce in this text; and reader-judgement phrases that delegate choice (*as you please*, *as you think*). Multiword strings are treated as single hedge events; modals are sense-disambiguated so that non-epistemic readings are excluded; and boundary cases are resolved with Crompton's commitment-increase test. To avoid inflating counts with genre-typical indeterminacy, we exclude generic determiners (*some*, *any*) unless they form part of an included approximator, and we ignore implicit mitigation via passives, nominalisations, or generic you when no overt hedge token is present. Non-epistemic obligation modals (*must*, *shall*) are also excluded unless they unmistakably function with hedging force, which we did not observe here. Each attested hedge receives a Hyland-aligned functional tag, content-, accuracy-, writer-, or reader-oriented, alongside its formal class, with dual tags permitted where a single token plausibly performs more than one interpersonal job in context. This integrated, form-plus-function approach curbs category creep and keeps the boundary between hedging and routine recipe vagueness stable and comparable across eighteenth-century instructive prose (Hyland 1996, 1998, 2005; Crompton 1997; cf. Alonso-Almeida 2012; Carrió-Pastor 2016; Quintana Toledo 2024).

I proceeded in five steps. First, we created a lowercased working copy of the diplomatic transcription for search; no other normalisation was applied, and all quoted examples in the article retain original spelling and punctuation. Second, we designed a regex inventory keyed to Hyland's taxonomy so that every target was explicitly retrievable: modal auxiliaries were queried with `/\bmay\b/`, `/\bmight\b/`, `/\bcan\b/`, `/\bcould\b/`, `/\bwould\b/`, `/\bshould\b/`; conditionals with `/\bif\b/` plus subqueries that capture addressee and process contingencies (`/\bif you\b/`, `/\bif it\b/`, `/\bif the\b/`, `/\bif they\b/`); scalar approximators with `/\babout\b/`, `/\balmost\b/`, `/\bnearly\b/`, `/\bat least\b/`, `/\bor so\b/`; vague-quantity approximators with `/\ba little\b/` and `/\ba few\b/`; typicality with `/\boften\b/`; and reader-judgement phrases with `/\bas you please\b/` and `/\bas you think\b/`. Third, counts were extracted automatically,



then spot-checked in context to confirm a hedging reading in this genre. Ambiguous tokens were adjudicated conservatively: for instance, *would* was retained only when it encoded optionality or reduced commitment, as in “if you would have...”, and *can* was excluded where it meant bare ability. Fourth, we report both raw and normalised frequencies per 10,000 tokens, with $N = 21.609$. Fifth, each category is illustrated with brief, verbatim examples that show its interpersonal function, whether permission or possibility, contingency management, approximation, or delegated choice.

Reliability rests on full specification of the search space and on a transparent boundary policy. The complete query list is given above to facilitate replication, multiword strings are treated as single hedge events, and Crompton’s commitment-increase test guided edge cases. Manual checks targeted known pressure points, such as distinguishing *can* of permission from *can* of ability, or if as reader-oriented optionality from if as strict process condition. A second-coder pass can be incorporated in the full paper; given the explicitness of the inventory, agreement on overt markers should be high. We also draw a clear exclusion line to avoid inflating counts with recipe-typical indeterminacy: generic determiners (some, any) are ignored unless part of an included approximator; passive, nominalisation, or generic *you* are not counted as hedges unless accompanied by an overt hedging token; and non-epistemic obligation modals are excluded unless they unmistakably carry hedging force, which was not observed here.

Two limitations follow from this stance. Some intrinsic indeterminacy in recipes, phrases such as *to taste* or *till enough*, falls outside the present inventory where no explicit hedge token is present in the transcription; and, for economy of reporting, all *if* tokens are treated as potential reader-oriented hedges within imperative contexts, with the understanding that the full paper will subdivide instructional optionality (e.g., *if you please/if you prefer*) from process contingency (e.g., *if it be too thin*). The pipeline itself is portable, as the same queries and validation steps can be run over other eighteenth- and nineteenth-century women’s instructive texts to test diachronic and cross-genre hypotheses.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1. OVERALL PROFILE

Working from the full diplomatic transcription of *Mrs Johnston’s Receipts* (21,609 tokens), the search inventory (explicit forms only as explain the Method section) yielded 304 hedge tokens, i.e., 140.68 per 10,000 tokens. Approximators are the dominant type (68.1% of all hedges), with conditionals and modal auxiliaries forming a second tier. Reader-judgment phrases are present but comparatively rare.

Two facts are salient. First, accuracy-oriented hedging (Hyland 1998, 2005) is the workhorse of this cookbook. The cluster of approximators (esp. *a little*) accounts for 207/304 tokens (68.1%), with *a little* alone contributing 147 tokens (48.4%). Second, reader-orientation appears both via *if*-clauses (13.2% of hedges) and via



permissive/possibility modals (15.1%), mapping neatly to Hyland's interpersonal view of hedging as the management of risk and rapport rather than mere vagueness (Hyland 1996, 1998, 2005).

TABLE 1. HEDGING CATEGORIES IN MRS JOHNSTON'S RECEIPTS (RAW AND NORMALIZED)

CATEGORY	Raw	Per 10,000	Notes
Epistemic modals (<i>may, can, would</i>)	46	21.29	<i>may</i> 22; <i>can</i> 20; <i>would</i> 4; (<i>might/could/should</i> 0)
Conditionals (<i>if</i> -clauses)	40	18.51	<i>if you</i> 28; <i>if the</i> 6; <i>if it</i> 2; <i>if they</i> 1
Approximators – scalar (<i>about, almost, at least, or so, nearly</i>)	44	20.36	<i>about</i> 34; <i>almost</i> 7; <i>at least</i> 1; <i>or so</i> 2; <i>nearly</i> 0
Approximators – vague quantity (<i>a little, a few</i>)	161	74.51	<i>a little</i> 147; <i>a few</i> 14
Approximators – typicality (<i>often</i>)	2	0.93	<i>often</i> 2
Reader-judgment phrases (<i>as you think / as you please</i>)	11	5.09	<i>as you think</i> 7; <i>as you please</i> 4

4.2. CATEGORY-BY-CATEGORY FINDINGS

This section profiles the hedging repertoire in the book through rates and function, organised under four headings and one notable absence. Epistemic modals are modest (21.29/10k) and lean towards permission and possibility; conditionals are frequent and versatile (18.51/10k); approximators dominate the landscape (95.80/10k) and do most of the accuracy work; reader-judgement phrases are fewer but telling (5.09/10k). Together they sketch a domestic-technical register where precision and choice carry interpersonal weight: *may* and *would* license options, *if*-frames manage contingencies, and scalar or vague quantifiers calibrate measures and timings. For transparency I retain *can* within the explicit modal set, while signalling when tokens encode ability or availability rather than epistemic caution. Attributive or evidential hedges are absent, which suggests credibility is secured through procedural plausibility and alignment with the reader rather than appeal to named authorities. The subsections that follow illustrate each pattern with representative tokens and brief commentary.

a. Epistemic modals (21.29/10k)

The text favours permission/possibility rather than uncertainty modals. *May* (22) licenses optional actions and alternatives; *would* (4) appears in optative frames; *can* (20) often encodes ability/availability rather than epistemic possibility, a point I shall return to below. Typical realizations include the following:

- (1) You may make all these Tarts either of Puff, or cold Paste, as you please. (30)
- (2) You may do Barberries or black Rizers the same Way, if you please. (32)



- (3) You may candy them as you do Pears. (50)
- (4) Take the biggest Morala Cherries you can get. (31)
- (5) If you would have the red Geil very fine, do it the same Way. (42)
- (6) If you would have the Paste red, colour it with Cochineel ... If you would have it yellow, colour it with Saffron. (44)

In Hyland's terms, (1-3) are classic reader-oriented hedges, granting permission and thereby softening the imperative backbone of recipes. Tokens like (4) *you can get* are borderline, as they mark capacity/availability rather than epistemic caution. We have retained them under "explicit modals" for transparency but note that many *can* tokens are ability-oriented rather than hedging in a strict epistemic sense (cf. Crompton 1997). The *would*-conditionals (5-6) instantiate polite optionality (Hyland 1998), projecting desired outcomes without imposing them.

b. Conditionals (18.51/10k)

Conditionals are frequent and pragmatically diverse. Of the 40 instances, "if you ..." dominates (28), indexing reader choice; environment- and process-conditionals (*if the/it...*) also appear, as observed in the following instances:

- (7) If you please to do them with the Stalks, you may take fewer of bruised Currans. (32)
- (8) If the Syrup turn thin, boil it up again. (31)
- (9) If it be not the Time of Gooseberries, take Currans and Raisins. (31)

These are engagement/contingency frames in Hyland's sense. The instance in (7) negotiates optionality with the reader while (8-9) encode process tolerance and seasonal variability. In recipe discourse, such *if*-frames are an interpersonal analogue of scientific conditionality. They maintain procedural clarity while acknowledging real-world instability (Alonso-Almeida 2012).

c. Approximators (95.80/10k combined)

Approximators drive the hedging profile. Scalar approximators (*about, almost, at least, or so*) register measurement/time elasticity; vague-quantity forms (*a little, a few*) dominate seasoning and texture cues; typicality (*often*) is rare.

- (10) Cut them in pieces about 4 inches long. (4)
- (11) Boil it till it be almost candied... (47)
- (12) Let all boil two hours and a half at least ... (114)
- (13) Put in a little Vinegar; cut Parsly, and a few Oysters... (68)
- (14) Baste and turn them often. (104)

Following Hyland's "accuracy-oriented" hedges and subsequent work on elastic language (e.g., Quintana Toledo 2024; Álvarez-Gil 2022), these devices encode



tolerances. They invite the reader to calibrate quantities, textures, and doneness within safe bands. The overwhelming presence of *a little* is not mere imprecision. It is indeed a design solution in a pre-standardized measurement culture, simultaneously technical (specifying small increments) and interpersonal (polite guidance rather than fiat).

d. Reader-judgment phrases (5.09/10k)

These concise directives explicitly delegate choice to the reader:

- (15) ...take as much white-wine vinegar as you think will cover them... (58)
- (16) You may make all these Tarts ... as you please. (30)

These forms overtly respect reader agency, a recurrent strategy in women's instructive writing to balance authority and deference (Alonso-Almeida & Álvarez-Gil 2021). They dovetail with *may/if you* frames to create a recognizably collaborative instructional tone (Hyland 2005).

e. What is *not* found there

No attributive or evidential hedges (e.g., *it is said, according to...*) were attested in this corpus. That absence, which contrasts with the patterned sourcing found in scientific prefaces of the period (Alonso-Almeida & Mele-Marrero 2014), points to a different basis for credibility: not intertextual appeal to named authorities, but the felt plausibility of the procedure and an alignment with the reader's practical judgement. In other words, authority is constructed experientially, through tolerances (*about, a little*), contingency management (*if you.../if it...*), and permission frames (*you may*), rather than by outsourcing responsibility to external voices. For a domestic-technical community of practice, such cues are arguably more persuasive: they acknowledge variability in materials and equipment, grant controlled choice, and thereby display know-how that readers can recognise and test at the bench. The interpersonal economy is thus monoglossic in sourcing but dialogic in engagement: the writer "owns" the guidance while opening room for reader's decision.

4.3. GENRE IMPLICATIONS AND COMPARATIVE PERSPECTIVE

The hedging profile aligns with Hyland's polypragmatic view. Hedges calibrate accuracy, contingency, and interpersonal alignment rather than signal evasiveness (Hyland 1996, 1998, 2005). In this domestic-technical register,

- accuracy/graduation dominates (SFL/Appraisal: graduation/force), realized by approximators that encode process tolerances (Halliday & Matthiessen 2014; Martin & White 2005);
- engagement is realized by *if*-frames and reader-judgment phrases, which invite co-decision and soften directives without sacrificing procedural clarity; and



- authorial self-protection (writer-oriented hedging) is minimal, fitting a genre where authority is enacted through practical mastery and pragmatic flexibility rather than through explicit epistemic caveats.

Compared with scientific prose of the same broad period (e.g., astronomy texts; cf. Alonso-Almeida 2012), the mix differs, but the function converges. Both genres hedge to manage risk and credibility, but recipes do so via accuracy and choice (approximators, conditionals), whereas science leans more on epistemic verbs/adverbs and attributions. Cross-cultural and different fields of knowledge studies of hedging (Carrió-Pastor 2016, 2020a, 2020b, 2021, 2023) further highlight the community-specific nature of hedging inventories; here, the community practice is culinary-domestic, and the inventory is appropriately material-process oriented.

Two caveats qualify these findings. First, many tokens of *can* in this book read as ability or availability rather than as cautious commitment. We have retained them under “explicit modals” so as not to under-report permission/ability cues in directive prose, yet a stricter epistemic filter would down-weight *can* substantially and should be flagged as a sensitivity choice in any comparative analysis. Second, the inventory deliberately excludes implicit softeners (for example, passives) and common indeterminates (for example, *some*) to preserve replicability and operational clarity (Crompton 1997). A broader sample of women’s instructive texts from the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries will allow us to test whether this accuracy-plus-engagement profile holds across domains such as pastry, preserves, and pickles, and across periods, and to identify community-specific adjustments to the hedging repertoire (cf. Quintana Toledo 2024; Álvarez-Gil 2022).

5. CONCLUSION

This case study shows that *Mrs Johnston’s Receipts* (1740) organises its instructional voice around a compact yet telling repertoire of explicit hedges. Rather than signalling evasiveness, these devices, pre-eminently approximators (*a little, about, almost*), together with conditional frames (*if you... / if it...*) and permission/possibility modals (*may, would*; with some tokens of *can*), operate as a pragmatic technology for credible guidance under real-world variability. In kitchens without standard measures or thermostatic control, procedures must hold across uneven fuel, seasonal ingredients and household substitutions. Hedging meets that contingency on two fronts at once: it calibrates accuracy by encoding safe tolerances for time, measure and doneness (“about half a pint”, “a little longer”, “till it be enough”); and it manages interpersonal alignment by granting options and preserving reader agency (“you may...”, “if you please”, “as you think fit”). In SFL/Appraisal terms, graduation (scaling force and precision) and engagement (opening negotiable space) carry most of the interpersonal work, while attributional and overt writer-protective hedging remain muted. The book’s authority, in other words, is enacted less by invoking external voices and more by combining procedural plausibility with courteous flexibility.



Methodologically, the article contributes a replicable operationalisation of Hyland's taxonomy for historical instructive prose. The inventory is restricted to explicit forms recoverable from the string, no inference-heavy, purely contextual softening, which clarifies the boundary between hedging and the genre's routine indeterminacy. Accuracy-oriented approximators are separated from reader-oriented conditionals and modals so that counts reflect their distinct interpersonal jobs; raw and normalised frequencies are reported; and each category is anchored by short, verbatim examples that illustrate permission/possibility, contingency management, approximation and delegated choice. This explicit-only baseline offers a clean starting point for diachronic and cross-genre comparison without folding in everything vague. It also surfaces a pattern that later studies can test at scale: in domestic-technical writing, the canonical hedging mix appears to be accuracy plus engagement, whereas the attributions and epistemic verbs/adverbs typical of scientific prose are marginal or absent here.

Two qualifications matter. First, *can* often codes ability or availability rather than epistemic caution ("the biggest Morala cherries you can get"). I retain such tokens under "explicit modals" to avoid under-reporting permissive/ability cues in directive contexts, but a stricter epistemic filter would down-weight *can* and should be handled explicitly in comparative work. Second, by design, we exclude implicit softeners (agentless passives, nominalisations, generic *you*), which almost certainly carry interpersonal weight in this register; adding them would broaden coverage but at some cost to coding transparency and inter-coder reliability. A staged approach therefore, seems prudent: begin with explicit, low-ambiguity hedges; then layer in more inferential categories with independent checks.

The findings open several lines for further research. A domain-sensitive analysis (pastry vs preserves vs pickles) could test whether tolerance-encoding hedges cluster where process variability is greatest, sugar setting, syrup reducing, and fats emulsifying. A diachronic extension across eighteenth- and nineteenth-century materials would show whether increasing measurement standardisation and the spread of thermometric technologies reduce reliance on approximators or simply shift their distribution and locus (from quantity to process, for example). Contrasts of authorship and audience (women- vs men-authored texts; professional vs household orientations) would clarify how communities of practice tune hedging to different forms of expertise and accountability. Finally, coupling hedges with boosters and face-work would capture the full interpersonal ecology: when writers grant leeway (*you may, as you please*), where do they also tighten control (*must*, bare imperatives), and how do these resources co-pattern within recognisable recipe "moves"?

All considered, the analysis reframes hedging in women's eighteenth-century recipe writing as design, not defect. Calibrated tentativeness is a principled response to material uncertainty and a way of maintaining rapport while getting things done. It is precisely by hedging, by scaling precision, articulating contingencies and delegating choice, that the text performs knowledgeable, trustworthy instruction.

Reviews sent to the authors: 15/11/2025

Revised paper accepted for publication: 28/01/2026



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“USEFUL, SUBSTANTIAL, AND SPLENDID”:
FRUGALITY, HEALTH, AND ADVICE IN
ELIZABETH MOXON’S ENGLISH HOUSEWIFRY (1749)*

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ABSTRACT

This article approaches *English Housewifry* (Moxon 1749) as a carefully calibrated system for giving advice rather than a mere collection of recipes. Drawing on a copy-text-based analysis of the title programme, Bills of Fare, index, and running prose, it shows how clause-level resources, imperatives, agentless passives, *let*-constructions, prohibitives, and permissive *you may*, create a graded directive logic sensitive to task and risk. Ethical concerns with frugality and health emerge through purpose clauses and evaluative lexis, turning procedure into reasoned counsel. Beyond the clause, layout and scheduling in the Bills of Fare encode seasonality and service order. Framed in Systemic Functional Linguistics, the study reveals a voice of experienced domestic governance: firm where safety matters, flexible where taste and expense allow.

KEYWORDS: Advice-giving, Bills of Fare, Domestic Print Culture, *English Housewifry* (1749); Modality, Paratext, Recipe Genre, Systemic Functional Linguistics

“USEFUL, SUBSTANTIAL, AND SPLENDID”: FRUGALIDAD, SALUD Y CONSEJO
EN *ENGLISH HOUSEWIFRY* (1749) DE ELIZABETH MOXON

RESUMEN

Este artículo analiza *English Housewifry* (Moxon 1749) como un sistema cuidadosamente calibrado de consejo, más que como una simple recopilación de recetas. A partir del programa del título, los *Bills of Fare*, el índice y la prosa continua, muestra cómo recursos clausales como imperativos, pasivas sin agente, construcciones con *let*, prohibiciones y el permisivo *you may* articulan una lógica directiva graduada, sensible a la tarea y al riesgo. Las preocupaciones por la frugalidad y la salud emergen a través de cláusulas de finalidad y léxico evaluativo, convirtiendo el procedimiento en consejo razonado. Enmarcado en la Lingüística Sistémico-Funcional, el estudio revela una voz de gobierno doméstico experimentada, firme ante la seguridad y flexible en cuestiones de gusto y gusto.

PALABRAS CLAVE: aconsejando, *Bills of Fare*, cultura impresa doméstica, *English Housewifry* (1749), modalidad, paratexto, género del recetario, Lingüística Funcional Sistémica

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.25145/j.recaesin.2026.92.16>

REVISTA CANARIA DE ESTUDIOS INGLESES, 92; abril 2026, pp. 321-339; ISSN: e-2530-8335
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1. INTRODUCTION

This article reads Elizabeth Moxon's *English Housewifry* (1749) as a hybrid advisory manual that fuses frugal domestic economy, health care, and social display. I argue that Moxon's book participates in, and helps to shape, an eighteenth-century culture of household expertise in which women marshalled practical knowledge to steward bodies, budgets, and reputations. As a printed artifact, *English Housewifry* straddles manuscript household traditions and an increasingly commercial print marketplace; as a discourse, the recipe genre's imperative voice and stance-marking create a distinctive "advisory" authority that is at once intimate and normative. (Raven 2007; Vickery 2009; DiMeo and Pennell 2013; Leong 2018).

Socio-historically, *English Housewifry* sits in a moment when domestic knowledge was both intensely local and newly mobile in print. The book was printed for Moxon by the Leeds printer James Lister, and sold from Pontefract as well as regional outlets, before enjoying later London circulation, an instance of provincial authorship circulating nationally (and a good example of how subscription, reprinting, and regional booksellers expanded cookbook audiences). The title pages and peritext promise "cuts for the orderly placing the dishes," monthly Bills of Fare, and an index, paratexts that guide readers through the social choreography of meals as much as the kitchen labor that produces them. (Grub Street/ECCO entry noting Bills of Fare and index; Raven 2007; *English Housewifry* title and imprint data).

In eighteenth-century Britain women's recipe books were collaborative, accumulative, and instrumental repositories of what Elaine Leong calls "everyday knowledge," where cures, cosmetics, and foods coexisted, and where kin and neighbourhood networks were crucial channels of authority. Moxon's collection aligns with those practices while leveraging print to codify and standardize know-how. As contemporary comparators Eliza Smith's *Compleat Housewife* (1727) and Hannah Glasse's *Art of Cookery* (1747) show, printed housewifery routinely combined culinary instruction, household physic, and table display, embedding Bills of Fare and carving diagrams as social advice by other means (Smith 1727; Glasse 1747; DiMeo and Pennell 2013; Leong 2018).

In this socio-cultural context, frugality and health run through these texts as ethical as well as practical commitments. Historians of food culture (Lehmann 2003; Thirsk 2007) and of domestic interiors (Vickery 2009) show how kitchens and pantries became sites of calculation, procurement, and bodily care, that is, domains in which a competent housewife was expected to be economical, wholesome, and fashion-conscious at once. Reading Moxon against this scholarship allow us to see how recipe selection, sequencing, and the inclusion of seasonal tables double as advice about provisioning, seasonality, and polite display.

* The research conducted in this paper has been supported by the Agencia Estatal de Investigación, Plan Estatal de Investigación Científica, Técnica y de Innovación 2021–2023, under award number PID2021-125928NB-I00. I hereby express my thanks. Unión Europea · Fondo Europeo de Desarrollo regional "Una manera de hacer Europa."



Accordingly, this study treats recipes as a recognizable genre with characteristic linguistic resources for “giving advice” in the sense indicated in Alonso-Almeida (2013). The register is procedural and highly directive (marked by imperatives and agentless passives), but it also manages risk and contingency via modality (*may, must, should*) and evaluation. Tools from register and genre analysis (Biber and Conrad 2009), systemic-functional linguistics (Martin and White 2005; Halliday 2014), and stance/metadiscourse studies (Hyland 2005) help unpack how Moxon constructs authority while addressing multiple implied users (mistresses, “lower women servants”). Historical pragmatics and work on early modern medical writing further illuminate how directives and evidentials travel across household and learned domains (Martin and White 2005; Hyland 2005; Biber and Conrad 2009; Taavitsainen and Pahta 2011; Halliday and Matthiessen 2014).

The essay proceeds by framing *English Housewifery* within the eighteenth-century British book trade and domestic culture; developing a genre-analytic account of its recipes and paratexts; and reading frugality and health as intertwined advisory paradigms that ground Moxon’s authority. Comparative glances to Smith’s and Glasse’s similar works illuminate what is distinctive in Moxon’s northern, provincial positioning, and her balancing of usefulness with “splendour” (Smith 1727; Glasse 1747; Moxon 1741/1749 imprint and peritext).

2. SOCIO-HISTORICAL PERIOD AND RECIPE-BOOK PRODUCTION AND DISSEMINATION

Mid-eighteenth-century Britain did more than multiply recipes: it consolidated a domestic knowledge economy in which provisioning, preservation, household physic, polite hospitality, and display became touchstones of middling-sort identity, rehearsed daily at hearth and table (Vickery 2009; Pennell 2016). Rising urbanisation and expanding markets, along with smoother distribution chains, put printed how-to genres within easier reach. These books did not simply instruct, they patterned the year and schooled taste. Housewifery manuals and cookery books offered seasonal drill and menu architecture, setting out what to buy, when to serve it, and how to make it look right on the plate and on the cloth (Lehmann 2003; Thirsk 2007). In that print ecology, *English Housewifery* (1749) reads as a hinge between prudential economy and polite sociability. Its lexicon of frugality and health frames an ethics of domestic management; its “Bills of Fare” and table “cuts” teach the choreography of ordered display for guests who will notice if service falters or variety thins (Wall 2016; Leong 2018).

What also hardens in this period is a programme of taste and labour: technique, timing, and tool are rationalised with a view to repeatability, then mapped onto the calendar and its ceremonies so that thrift and elegance pull together rather than apart (Lehmann 2003; Pennell 2016). Thus, tables of weights and measures, cues about fuel and fire, and instructions for salting, drying, or potting make the kitchen legible as a site of planned work; adjacent chapters and appendices translate that work into sociable outcomes, courses sequenced, dishes balanced, carving signalled



to the carver with labelled “cuts.” It can be argued, then, that the effect is quietly disciplinary and aspirational at once: these texts standardise practice while opening a pathway for readers to perform competence, good judgement with money and materials, and good form in company, within the idiom of the polite home (Thirsk 2007; Vickery 2009; Leong 2018).

In this context, cookery and housewifery books circulated through a mixed print economy that knitted together metropolitan houses with provincial presses, chapmen on the road, and regional booksellers at fairs and shop counters. Reprint culture did the rest, and so titles grew by accretion, with new editions folding in indices, carving tables, and monthly menus as compilers learned from readers’ habits of use and from rivals’ novelties (Gaskell 1995; Feather 2006; Raven 2007). What emerges is not a static handbook but a platform that expands iteratively, its architecture trimmed for consultation, quick look-up, seasonal planning, and the steady training of taste. In this sense, paratexts sit at the centre of that architecture rather than at the margins. Indices promise efficient retrieval for the hurried practitioner; Bills of Fare encode temporal and course sequencing; and “cuts” translate spatial instruction into line and label for the carver who must portion neatly and without delay (Genette 1997; McKenzie 1999; Pennell 2016). None of this is decorative. It is the working apparatus that turns printed advice into reproducible practice at table and in kitchen.

Provincial imprints make the point particularly clearly. Moxon’s Leeds-printed book projects regional expertise into national markets, blending local practice with the smoothing effects of commercial standardisation so that Yorkshire knowledge reads as common currency from Leeds to London (Feather 2006; Raven 2007). Comparative exemplars such as Smith (1727) and Glasse (1747) follow the same compendial logic: culinary instruction, confectionery, and household physic sit under one advisory umbrella, a single binding engineered for repeated consultation and reuse across the year (Trusler 1788; Lehmann 2003). The result is a genre that couples reach with routine and so, networks move the books whereas paratexts make them work.

Evidence suggests that women’s recipe books were not just private jottings: they were social instruments. Compiled over years, they gathered culinary, cosmetic, and medical receipts under one cover, with entries sourced from kin, neighbours, and the occasional practitioner, being thus tested, annotated, and re-filed for later use. The page often records that social traffic featuring attributions, initials, a brief note on where the knowledge came from or for whom it worked, so authority travels through relationships as much as through print (Leong and Rankin 2011; DiMeo and Pennell 2013; Leong 2018). All this results in an accumulative repository of everyday knowledge fitted to domestic time as it was determined by the seasons of the year: preserves when fruit gluts, syrups ahead of winter, ointments when supplies and quiet converge.

Importantly, once in print, that social authority is re-keyed as an authorial ethos of practice, and the persona is tuned to the household’s chain of command. Appeals to years of experience, to economy at the market, and to care for bodies map cleanly onto the mistress’s managerial role. Similarly, procedural clarity and scullery-level detail answer to servants who must execute without hesitation (Vickery 2009;



Pennell 2004a). This has clear consequences at textual level: the discourse addresses two audiences at once. On the bench, instructions must be doable: so, categorical imperatives secure safety-critical steps in preservation or boiling, with timings and signs of doneness that can be recognised under steam and noise. In the ledger, they must be defensible: advisability markers, graded recommendations, and named alternatives handle matters of taste and expense: fresh herbs if in season, a cheaper spice if the purse tightens, a second-best cut when the market is thin (Lehmann 2003; Pennell 2016; Wall 2016). That is actually the key rhetorical balance achieved: firmness where failure risks spoilage or harm, and discretion where preference and cost legitimately vary. In that sense, women's domestic authorship reads as normative governance in print as much as standard-setting and accountability for household work, rather than just passive transcription (Vickery 2009; DiMeo and Pennell 2013).

Consequently, I treat the recipe as a conventionalised instructional genre organised into recurrent moves that ease uptake in a busy kitchen: naming or target; resources; procedure; contingency or correction; outcome or serving (Biber and Conrad 2009; Pennell 2016). Thus, a typical entry signals the dish at the head, lists quantities and kit in a compact cluster, and then moves through short action steps. Significantly, it reserves space for what might go wrong and how to fix it, and it closes with a cue to taste, texture, or presentation. Even a simple preserve recipe shows this pattern: title and fruit; sugar, vessel, heat source; sequential actions; an *if/when* clause to manage scum or over-boil; and finally, a storage note or serving hint. As a result, readers learn the rhythm quickly, which seems to be Moxon's point.

It is also important to notice that, linguistically, recipes compress work through forms that privilege action over actor. The consequence is that imperatives dominate; agentless passives keep attention on process rather than on who does it; non-finite clauses pack stages into tight chains; and dense material process sequences carry the labour from bench to fire to board with minimal fuss (Biber and Conrad 2009; Halliday and Matthiessen 2014). Typography and numeration do real cognitive work and so, headings mark targets cleanly; Arabic numerals, fractions, and unit labels stabilise measure; line breaks and small clusters help the eye locate the next step. In effect, layout becomes a silent assistant who points, counts, and keeps time.

From an SFL perspective, the genre is a compact showcase of mood, modality, engagement, and graduation (Martin and White 2005; Halliday and Matthiessen 2014). Mood choices calibrate authority and solidarity: bare imperatives for routine actions and declarative-imperatives of the "you put ..." type where the writer adopts a more companionable voice. Modality and modulation grade necessity and allowance: *must* for safety or spoilage risks; *should* for good practice; *may* for permission, substitution, or thrift; *let*-imperatives for coordinated action with helpers. On their part, engagement resources acknowledge alternatives and contingencies, sometimes with a quiet warning: *or else* marks a consequence the cook will want to avoid, and *you may* signals legitimate variation. Graduation sharpens or softens intensity through adverbs and comparatives: *finely*, *gently*, *very clean*, *a little longer*. These adjustments guide sensory judgement where scales and thermometers do not.

Two genre-internal features are especially salient for Moxon. First, contingency management: *if/when* staging linked to heat, thickness, or freshness that teaches



a cook to read the material world in real time. Instructions pivot on observable signs a mid-eighteenth-century kitchen recognises, like change of colour, the way a syrup falls from the spoon, or the first simmer rather than a rolling boil, and they place the *if/when* clause exactly where decision points occur. Second, non-verbal orchestration through paratext. Monthly Bills of Fare align labour with the calendar, balancing expense, season, and company size; similarly, “cuts” translate spatial knowledge into diagrams that cue plating and carving without a word (Genette 1997; Pennell 2016; Wall 2016). Taken together, the verbal and graphic layers deliver a tightly engineered advisory system designing for a working environment: procedures one can execute under steam and noise, and planning aids one can consult at a glance (Biber and Conrad 2009; Pennell 2016).

My approach models advice-giving as guidance that balances authority with solidarity while assigning responsibility across the household. In SFL terms, authority is realised through obligation, marked by *must* and *should*, alongside categorical process instructions that leave little room for deviation; impersonal and passive forms keep the focus on the work rather than the worker; *let*-constructions distribute agency across participants in the kitchen – “let it stand,” “let the pan be well scoured” – (Martin and White 2005; Halliday and Matthiessen 2014). The surface effect is brisk and executable: “boil to the height,” “strain very clear,” “set by to cool.” Responsibility is therefore allocated cleanly, task by task.

In turn, stance is tuned more finely. Advisability formulas (“it is best to...”) and permission markers (“you may...”) open space for choice. Likewise, engagement with alternatives (“or else...”) warns of failure modes that a competent cook will wish to avoid; evidentials (“I have found...,” “it has been proved...”) fold experience into instruction without theatrics (Martin and White 2005; Halliday and Matthiessen 2014). Metadiscourse helps capture how writers justify and hedge procedure: boosters anchor non-negotiables where spoilage or safety is at stake, while downtoners soften matters of taste and expense. Likewise, attitude markers register prudence, care, or thrift where audiences are stratified between mistress and staff (Hyland 2005; Hyland and Jiang 2021). The page thus speaks both firmly and companionably, as circumstances require.

In the same line, ethical warrants supply the telos of counsel. Frugality and health give reasons to comply, and they surface in purpose clauses (“to keep,” “that it may keep”) as well as in evaluative lexis (“clean,” “wholesome,” “saving”), that legitimises directive force without bluster (Lehmann 2003; Thirsk 2007; Pennell 2016). A line such as “skim very clean, or it will turn” does two jobs at once: it secures safe keeping and codes the moral economy of good householding.

Operationally, it can be claimed that authority and stance in *English Housewifery* function as distribution and calibration of modality across recipe bodies and paratext. We expect stronger obligation where risk and preservation are salient, salting, boiling to a point, sealing against air, etc., and greater advisability or permission where taste and cost dominate, seasoning, garnishing, substitutions (Martin and White 2005; Taavitsainen and Pahta 2011). Monthly Bills of Fare and carving “cuts” support this system: the bills coordinate prudence with sociability at calendar scale, and the diagrams externalise spatial instruction so that agency can be



shared and timing kept. In short, obligation does the safety work, whereas advisability and permission manage preference and purse.

3. ELIZABETH MOXON (FL. 1740-1754): THE AUTHOR

Very little about Elizabeth Moxon can be stated with confidence beyond what her book lets slip (cf. Pennell 2004b). The evidence keeps her within the Leeds-Pontefract milieu in the 1740s and 1750s. Early title pages report that copies were sold “by the Author at Pontefract,” a formula that implies residence or at least regular presence there. Her authorial ethos rests on practical mastery, as it is stated that the book is “the result of thirty years practice and experience,” and on a declared reach to two audiences, namely “Mistresses of Families” and “higher and lower Women Servants.” That dual address frames the work throughout: managerial counsel at the top of the household; executable procedure at the bench.

On the other hand, print-historical summaries align on the broad outline. *English Housewifry* first appears in Leeds with J. Lister in 1741. Editions circulate beyond Yorkshire since 1743, and reprints continue into the later eighteenth century—in fact, a London issue surfaces as late as 1808. Interestingly, local histories and library notes emphasise Moxon’s provincial authorship and ties to the Leeds trade, and likewise references to Lister and notices in the *Leeds Mercury* recur, while conceding that the usual biographical anchors (birth, marriage) remain uncertain (according to records in secretlibraryleeds.net). Recent public-history work has fixed Moxon more visibly in place: a blue plaque in Pontefract now commemorates the book and its author, a small but telling sign of her standing within women’s print culture. It cannot be claimed more than the record allows, yet the pattern is clear enough: provincial expertise, a national readership, and a persona built on long practice and shared domestic labour.

4. *ENGLISH HOUSEWIFRY* (1749): THE BOOK

The book emerges from a provincial printer-bookseller network. First issued at Leeds by James Lister in 1741, it was sold locally, by J. Swale in Leeds and “by the Author at Pontefract,” before later impressions were increasingly marketed in London, including Griffith Wright’s Leeds-London circulation in the 1760s/1769, and a London issue of 1808 with added introductory matter on fish seasons. Surviving catalogue records confirm multiple Leeds states and subsequent metropolitan reprints, a pattern that speaks to the title’s long tail and broad uptake across regions and decades (name.umd.umich.edu).

The 1749 Leeds printing with James Lister lays out its programme at the threshold. The title page inventories scope and apparatus with unusual candour: above four hundred and fifty receipts; “cuts” for the orderly placing of dishes and courses; monthly Bills of Fare; an alphabetical index. It also states the book’s ethic



in plain terms. Content is explicitly “confined to things useful, substantial and splendid,” “calculated for the preservation of health,” and governed by “the measures of frugality,” all presented as “the result of thirty years practice and experience.” Paratext works here as a contract with the reader as the tools for consultation and performance are named upfront, and the value frame, health, economy, display, is spelled out rather than implied.

As said above, the same title page identifies a stratified readership of “Mistresses of Families” and “higher and lower Women Servants,” which goes a long way towards explaining the text’s calibrated directive force. Where safety and keeping are at stake, the language settles into obligation and categorical process; where taste or expense legitimately vary, the voice admits advisability and permission. The apparatus thus aligns with that dual address. Bills of Fare coordinate planning at the household level, and the “cuts” externalise spatial know-how for smooth service. In effect, the threshold text signals both what the book contains and how it expects to be used: both as a manual of practice that serves managerial oversight and bench-level execution at once.

As a compendial domestic manual, *English Housewifry* gathers culinary, confectionery, and household physic under one cover, *soops, made-dishes, pastes, pickles, cakes, creams, jellies, made-wines*, but its distinctiveness lies in the paratext that turns scattered advice into coherent working systems. Three components do the heavy lifting: table “cuts” that diagram spatial arrangement and the order of service; monthly Bills of Fare that encode seasonality and course sequencing; and an alphabetical index that supports quick retrieval and routine recombination in everyday practice. These features, already present in the Leeds printings and copied forward in later reissues, show how provincial manuals operationalised counsel through layout and scheduling as much as through wording. The effect is eminently practical: a reader plans the month, sets the table to pattern, and finds the relevant receipt in seconds, which is useful, repeatable, delegable.

5. METHODS AND CORPUS

This study takes the 1749 Leeds printing of Elizabeth Moxon’s *English Housewifry* by James Lister as its copy-text. Evidence is drawn from two strata: the paratext, the title programme, monthly Bills of Fare, and the alphabetical index, and the running recipe prose. The aim is straightforward: to read the manual both as a system of guidance (signalled at the threshold) and as a body of procedures that users could execute under pressure at hearth and board.

For searchable text and stable line anchoring, I work with the Project Gutenberg diplomatic transcription (images edition), which preserves eighteenth-century spelling, punctuation, lineation, and page breaks. Citations report the recipe headword and the relevant page/line span as reproduced there; where hyphenation occurs at line ends, I record tokens as printed and note any modernised reconstructions in square brackets only when necessary for quantitative counts. Long *f*, *u/v* and *ij* conventions are retained in quoted examples; and numerals, weights, and measures



are transcribed verbatim. Ambiguous readings are checked against the page images bundled with the edition, so examples can be verified without access to a separate facsimile.

Analytically, the paratext is treated as functional infrastructure rather than ornament: the Bills of Fare are read for calendar mapping and course sequencing; the “cuts” (where present) for spatial and service cues; the index for the book’s retrieval logic and opportunities for recombination in everyday practice. Within the recipe bodies, I annotate move structure (target, resources, procedure, contingency/correction, outcome/serving), mood choices (imperative and declarative-imperative), and the calibration of modality and engagement at decision points (*must/should/may; if/when; or else; you may*). Contingency markers tied to heat, thickness, colour, freshness, or keeping are flagged in situ, alongside attitude and evaluative lexis where health and frugality supply warrants for compliance. All examples are keyed to the Gutenberg lineation to keep the analysis auditable and, I hope, easy to replicate.

Two units of analysis are distinguished:

1. Clause-level instruction in the recipe body (imperatives; declaratives used imperatively; let-constructions; passives; modalized clauses).
2. Paratextual advice systems that organise action beyond the clause: monthly Bills of Fare (calendrical sequencing) and “cuts” for table placement (spatial instruction).

Drawing on SFL and stance/genre work (Hyland 2005; Martin and White 2005; Biber and Conrad 2009; Halliday and Matthiessen 2014), I coded: (a) mood: imperative; declarative-imperative (“you put...”); *let*-imperative (“let it.../let them...”); impersonal/passive (“it is...”, “to be...”); (b) modality/modulation: obligation (*must/should/must not*), advisability/permission (*it is best/you may*), ability/enablement (*can*); (c) engagement: alternatives (“or else”), conditionals (“if/when”), evidentials (“I have found”), audience design (“to your taste”); (d) graduation: downtoners/boosters (*gently, nicely, very, a little*); (e) ethical warrants: lexis of frugality/*saving* and health/*wholesome*; purposive clauses (*to keep [it] from...*); and (f) paratextual orchestration: monthly menu architecture; index labels that encode keeping/preserving and seasonality. The aim is not to provide a full count of every token in the book but a profile of directive and advisory resources that grounds the interpretive discussion which follows.

6. RESULTS

This section maps the machinery that turns Moxon’s advice into action. I begin at clause level with the forms that carry work through the kitchen: imperatives that chain material processes in quick succession; declarative-imperatives that construe option rather than duty; *let*-constructions that hand timing to materials and schedules; and prohibitives keyed to points of risk. I then track how contingency is taught in situ through *if/when* staging, and how engagement cues such as “you may...



the same way” license reuse across ingredients and occasions. Ethical warrants of frugality and health give reasons to comply, while the Bills of Fare and the promised “cuts” relocate part of the guidance into layout and calendar so that necessity is implied by design as much as by verbs. Read together, all these resources plot a gradient of directive force calibrated to hazard, taste, purse, and role, yielding a voice that is firm where it must be and permissive where it can be.

Imperatives carry the procedural spine. A head clause sets the action in motion, and short clauses then chain material processes in quick succession: take, put, boil, skim, strain. Time is managed locally with *let*-clauses that hold the pace where needed, as in “Take a neck of beef... [then] let it stew ’till the meat is tender” (Vermicelly Soop). The result is a rhythm the bench can follow: do this now, allow that to develop, return when a recognisable sign appears. Also, declarative-imperatives soften command by addressing the performer as a generic you. Forms such as “you may broil a few slices of the beef” or “you may make asparagus-soop the same way” construe permission and option rather than duty. They often come after a base method to license variation, economy, or reuse: thus, the cook can shift cut, substitute vegetable, or scale the number of dishes without breaching the core procedure.

Drawing on *let*-constructions, we see that they distribute agency to the process itself, which is especially useful in brewing, confectionery, and other long procedures: “Let it work a night and a day in the tub”; “let them have one boil... so let it stand six or eight days.” Here the schedule is the actor. Responsibility is offloaded to ferment, cool, rise, and settle procedures. This reduces face-threat for subordinates and stabilises timing across a household where tasks run in parallel. Prohibitives cluster where risk is salient. In turn, obligation is calibrated by hazard using *must not* or *don’t*, typically with an explicit rationale that teaches cause and effect: “You must not let it boil... it will discolour it” (green pea soup); “you must not baste it with the water at all” (hare). The warning is often coupled with an alternative path by employing either *or-* or an *or else*-clause, so that failure modes are named and avoided before they occur.

Likewise, evaluative declaratives codify etiquette and plating norms rather than technique, as for example in “It is proper either for a side-dish or bottom dish.” Such statements align a dish with the service map taught elsewhere by Bills of Fare and cuts. They fix social placement, portioning, and course order, so that procedural success in the kitchen translates into orderly display at table.

All these choices trace a clear gradient of guidance. Imperatives do the heavy lifting of process; declarative-imperatives and *you may* formulas open room for choice; *let*-constructions hand timing to materials and mechanisms; prohibitives secure safety and appearance at critical junctures; evaluatives anchor the result in service conventions. The result is that authority is notably strongest where spoilage or harm is at stake. In contrast, permission grows where taste and purse legitimately vary.

As observed, Moxon grades directive force with care by using modality (Alonso-Almeida forthcoming), moving along a clear scale from obligation to permission. At the firmer end sit *must* and *must not*, typically where timing and chemistry are unforgiving: so, “you must make it about half an hour before you want it” fixes posset to service time; “you must not let it boil” warns against curdling or



discolouration. In the middle ground, advisability and permission open controlled latitude: “you may lard your turkey with fat bacon”; “you may put in a little horse-radish and some mushrooms.” Finally, open-textured frames devolve calibration to the performer: “salt it to your taste,” “season it to your taste.” The sequence actually reads like a lesson in risk management. Non-negotiables protect keeping qualities and appearance; options accommodate palate, purse, and market availability.

What follows is a layered authority that suits the book’s dual address. Thus, categorical forms secure safety-critical stages and public-facing finish; permissive and taste-based cues license substitution, embellishment, and thrift without loss of face. The pragmatic effect is kindly but firm governance meaning something along “do this, or the dish fails”; consider these variants, if supplies or guests demand it; adjust seasoning to the table you know. In short, obligation handles the hazards as much as permission and taste handle preference and cost.

Thanks to her expertise, Moxon is also able to manage contingency as part of the method rather than as an afterthought. Conditionals recur at the precise points where judgement is required, modelling how a competent cook reads heat, colour, thickness, freshness, or age of meat and then acts accordingly: “if you think the soup not green enough, boil a handful of spinach...”; “if it be too stiff put in a spoonful or two of cream”; “if the turkey be young, an hour and a quarter will roast it.” As seen, the clause pairs do two jobs at once. The conditional *ifs* diagnose a state and also prescribe a fix. In effect, the page teaches the habit of noticing and correcting.

From an SFL perspective, these *if/when* clauses are the genre’s key logical scaffolding. They introduce conditional relations that tie observable cues to next steps, and they also carry interpersonal work. “If you think...” recruits the performer’s perception, legitimising local assessment in a way that a bare imperative cannot. Graduation terms such as enough and too stiff set scalar thresholds the eye and hand can calibrate; time triggers with when organise attention across parallel tasks, keeping the cook oriented to moments that matter. The lexis of repair is tellingly modest (“add a handful,” “loosen with cream,” “extend” or “reduce time”) so that correction is incremental and thrifty.

Clearly, in Moxon’s book placement is part of the pedagogy. Contingency clauses sit exactly where the decision point arises, adjacent to the material process they govern, which minimises searching and reduces error under pressure. Repairs are framed as first resorts rather than admissions of failure; they keep labour and ingredients in play. What emerges is, arguably, a proceduralised reasoning system: perceive, evaluate, and adjust, exactly as in modern days for both professional and amateurish cooks. The recipe does not simply tell you what to do: it scripts how to think in the kitchen.

Related to this is engagement which, here, is both persuasion and pedagogy, Moxon’s text widens the solution space with licensed alternatives: “You may make lobster soup the same way”; “You may stew part of a brisket, or an ox cheek the same way”; “You may make olives of veal the same way,” so the reader learns to treat methods as portable across ingredients and occasions. The phrasing does more than offering variety. It exploits the book’s compendial design so that one master procedure spawns a family of dishes. Redundancy is conscientiously avoided, print



space is saved, and the user is encouraged to recombine techniques with what the market or larder will bear. In practice, this is a lesson in economy of description that becomes economy at the stove: keep the base method, swap the core item, adjust seasoning to context.

Again, from an SFL perspective these are classic engagement resources that expand the dialogic space. The permissive *you may* entertains options rather than imposing duty; on their part, *the same way* and *as before* act as endophoric pointers that knit entries into a network, thus signalling cohesion and reducing cognitive load at the point of action (Martin and White 2005). That is, in metadiscourse terms, such cues behave like code glosses and frame markers, guiding interpretation of what follows and how to apply it elsewhere, which strengthens the book's claim to usability across audiences and tasks (Hyland 2005). The commercial effect is not incidental, as readers who can re-use a method for brisket, ox cheek, or lobster will return to the volume as a working tool. The rhetorical effect is equally clear, and authority is shown as methodical competence that invites collaboration, not as fiat.

In fact, ethical warrants in Moxon's discourse are not decorative commonplaces. They organise what counts as good advice. The title page sets the programme in plain terms, "confined to things useful, substantial and splendid... calculated for the preservation of health... upon the measures of frugality," and the recipes keep faith with it. Purpose clauses make the telos explicit at the point of action: to keep [it] from running (stability), to keep all the year (storage), to keep it sound (safety). Evaluative labels do similar work (wholesome, clean, saving) so that procedural steps read as care for bodies and prudence with materials, not mere technique. Even the index encodes this ethic as a retrieval logic: multiple *to keep* entries ("Barberries to keep...", "Cake... to keep all the Year") invite the reader to search by outcome, i.e., longevity, and thrift, rather than by ingredient alone.

Rhetorically, these warrants licence the book's directive force. Where keeping and health are in play, obligation hardens; *must* and *must not* are easy to accept when the alternative is spoilage or harm. Where the stakes are taste and purse, advisability and permission take over, but still under the same ends of saving and preserving. The effect is a teleological style of counsel: do this so that it keeps; avoid that so it stays clean and wholesome. In short, we can claim that in Moxon's text economy and health are not, in effect, afterthoughts. They are the reasons one is given to comply, and they are built into the very grammar and navigation of the book.

It is also observable that there is organisation above the clause. The Bills of Fare operate as calendrical algorithms that compose courses month by month, and they do so with a syntax of placement rather than a grammar of *must* and *should*. Thus, a line such as "At the Top Gravy Soop... At the Bottom a Ham... For the four Corners..." instructs without overt modality; order, symmetry, and seasonal fit do the normative work. What the cook and server learn is not only what to make but how to distribute labour and dishes across a table that *must* read correctly at a glance. In SFL terms, periodicity and staging are pushed into the paratext: the bills set macro-theme and sequence for the meal so clause-level commands can stay local and procedural.



Lastly, the promised “cuts for the orderly placing the dishes and courses” complement this calendrical script with spatial instruction. The diagrams externalise the service map as a simple graphic that a carver or footman can follow under pressure. They stabilise roles, reduce hesitation, and encode the social script of politeness through geometry and adjacency. Necessity is therefore redistributed. It sits in the layout and in the service code rather than in the verb phrase. Follow the bill and the cut, and the household performs competence: as the hot arrives where it should, the show pieces hold the eye, and the sequence moves cleanly from top to bottom and out to the corners.

7. DISCUSSION

The foregoing shows Moxon running a careful economy of directives, tuned to task and risk rather than delivered at a single pitch. Where preservation, curdling, or discolouration threaten, obligation rises to the surface: *must* and *must not* carry the weight, sometimes with an explicit consequence to secure compliance. Where taste, expense, or substitution are in play, the voice relaxes into advisability and permission (*you may, it is proper*) so option space opens without loss of guidance. This pattern sits neatly with SFL accounts of modulation (obligation vs. inclination) and engagement (expanding or contracting the dialogic field), the text contracting decisively at hazard points and expanding where preference and purse legitimately vary (Martin and White 2005; Halliday and Matthiessen 2014).

The *let*-construction deserves particular emphasis. It allocates agency to processes, e.g., *let it work, let it rise, let it stand*, which shifts the interpersonal load from persons to schedules and materials. Two things follow. First, face-threat is softened meaning that the mistress can direct without sounding peremptory, and servants can act under the authority of time and process rather than an ever-present “do this now.” Second, temporal discipline is encoded in the grammar itself. The construction parcels labour across hours or days, coordinates parallel tasks, and makes deference to the clock a shared norm in a stratified household. In SFL terms, it calibrates modulation while keeping engagement open: duty where safety is at stake; allowance where judgement and circumstance ought to decide. Governance, in short, is established without confrontation, i.e., firm where it must be, permissive where it can be (Martin and White 2005; Halliday and Matthiessen 2014).

It appears Moxon had in mind an intended audience for his book, and so these “Mistresses of Families” and “higher and lower Women Servants” force a bifocal design for *English Housewifery*. Cooks receive executable chains of action, short imperatives that move from bench to hearth with minimal friction; mistresses are offered rationales they can stand over in the ledger and in company, with economy, health, and seasonality set out as reasons for doing things this way rather than that (Vickery 2009; Pennell 2016). Phrases such as *to your taste* and *which you please* hand the final calibration to the user. That stance fits delegated management: authority sets boundaries and outcomes, while day-to-day judgement sits with the performer who is close to the materials.



The paratext and the prose divide labour accordingly. Bills of Fare speak to the mistress's remit for hospitality and display, laying out a month's sequence of courses, placements, and seasonal fit so that a meal reads correctly before a guest lifts a spoon. "Cuts" externalise the service map for carver and attendants, fixing roles and order without fresh instruction at table. Within the recipes, procedure chains, contingency cues, and time holders such as "let it stand" support the executant who must keep several processes in motion at once. According to SFL principles, tenor is calibrated for each role, and modality therefore tightens to obligation where keeping and safety are at stake; permission and advisability expand the dialogic space where taste and purse can vary. The result is readable in two directions at once, defensible from above and doable below, which is exactly what a stratified household requires.

It emerges from the previous discussion that Moxon's month-by-month menus and the index are working parts of the manual, not decoration. The menus translate social and seasonal norms into sequences that can be reproduced, so the cook can stage a dinner in January or June with the same assurance. The index, for its part, turns keeping and preserving into search paths that mirror the book's own values of frugality and health. In Genette's terms, the paratext helps produce the illocutionary force of the work itself, since it does some of the instructing rather than merely pointing to it (Genette 1997). Actually, Moxon's promise of "cuts" reinforces this diagrammatic counsel. Even if some digital copies omit the figures, they are integral to the title programme. Advice can be given in lines and placements as surely as in clauses, and, when it is, procedure becomes easier to recover, to delegate, and to repeat.

Interestingly, read against near-contemporaries such as Smith (1727) and Glasse (1747), Moxon's northern imprint and bifocal address look entirely conventional. However, what distinguishes *English Housewifry* is the way Bills of Fare, an Index keyed to outcomes, and extensive brewing and keeping repertoires work together to make economy and storage the organising principles of the book. The indexing of "to keep all the year" is telling. It presumes readers who plan across seasons, who shop outside metropolitan markets, and who must stretch ingredients through gluts and lean spells, which aligns with middling-sort provisioning habits beyond London (Lehmann 2003; Thirsk 2007). In practical terms, the menus translate seasonality into reproducible sequences; the keeping sections stabilise preservation techniques; and the index turns longevity into a search path. Therefore, advice here is not only a list of steps: it is a system that helps a household store, retrieve, and redeploy work.

What emerges is a distinctive authorial ethos: long practice as warrant, obligation calibrated to risk, and an ethics of care that binds health to thrift. Rather than issue bald commands, Moxon reasons procedurally. She embeds diagnostics and repairs in *if-then* frames, licenses variation with you may, and reserves must or must not for those junctures where failure carries a cost in spoilage, safety, or display. The effect is guidance that feels authoritative without sounding peremptory, a negotiated mode of advice-giving consistent with women's household print in the long eighteenth century (DiMeo and Pennell 2013; Leong 2018).

As a matter of fact, read against its paratext and procedures, *English Housewifry* sounds like a seasoned provincial housewife-manager. A seasoned



practitioner who claims long experience, Moxon curates a repertoire that runs from soups and made-dishes to preserving and home-made wines, and addresses a stratified household of mistresses and women servants. Her managerial horizon is plain enough in the mix of cost-sensitive choices, health-oriented justifications, and table choreography. Advice is never purely technical, it is yoked to prudence (frugality), care (wholesomeness), and display (orderly placing). In sociolinguistic terms, this is not just a courtly chef's register but the calibrated speech of domestic governance (Vickery 2009; Pennell 2016; Thirsk 2007), pitched to instruct without unnecessary face-threat and to travel across roles in the household.

Interestingly, the book also makes the supporting female knowledge network visible. Later additions foreground "gentlewomen" contributors, and so the procedural grain presupposes the bench-level labour of maids and dairywomen who execute steps and enact the writer's prudential reasoning. Print does not erase that collectivity but, on the contrary, it formalises it. Men of the trade, printers and booksellers, supply the apparatus that renders domestic know-how consultable and recombinable: indices with "to keep all the year" entries, monthly Bills of Fare that map season to sequence, and "cuts" that diagram service. Yet the epistemic warrants remain feminine and local, i.e., experience, thrift, season, and care (cf. DiMeo & Pennell 2013; Leong 2018; Genette 1997; Raven 2007).

At the level of language, Moxon's ethos coheres with the advisory profile established earlier. Obligation and prohibition surface where risk or spoilage is salient; advisability, permission, and analogy ("the same way") open option space where taste and expense govern; *let*-constructions distribute agency to processes and time. This is the grammar one expects when authority is experiential rather than institutional, and when audience design must satisfy both the planner's ledger and the performer's bench. In SFL terms (Martin & White 2005; Halliday & Matthiessen 2014), the text continually calibrates modality and engagement to manage risk, delegate judgement, and keep the social relation smooth (Hyland 2005).

Crucially, some things remain indeterminate. Biographical particulars about Elizabeth Moxon are thin, as discussed above, and hypotheses about civil identity or a publisher-engineered persona cannot be settled on present evidence. That uncertainty does not undercut the practitioner profile the text performs or the collective authorship it stages; if anything, it sharpens the methodological point. Here, authority rests less on named biography than on textualised practice and networked validation implying the convergence of shared procedures, seasonal scripts, and reproducible layouts (Lehmann 2003; Raven 2007; DiMeo & Pennell 2013).

All these strands, namely, seasoned practitioner ethos, collaborative female networks, calibrated directive language, and paratextual infrastructures, clarify what kind of "woman behind the book" the evidence supports. *English Housewifery* reads best as a collective apparatus of women's domestic expertise: authored by a practised housewife speaking to a stratified household, augmented by neighbouring gentlewomen, operationalised by women servants, and typographically engineered by the eighteenth-century book trade so that prudence, care, and display become portable. On that ground, the conclusion can rest its claim that advice-giving, for instance, in this mid-eighteenth-century domestic print is a form of governance.



8. CONCLUSION

This article has read *English Housewifry* (1749) as a deliberately calibrated apparatus for giving advice. At clause level, Moxon balances obligation, *must/must not* for risk-sensitive stages, with advisability and permission, *it is best/you may* where taste, expense, or substitution are in play, while distributing agency through *let*-constructions and impersonal voice. That grammar is underwritten by explicit ethical warrants of frugality and health: purpose clauses (*to keep...*, *that it may keep*) and evaluative lexis (*wholesome, clean*) convert procedure into reasoned counsel. The contrasts are easy to hear on the page: “you must not let it boil... it will discolour it” sits alongside “you may lard your turkey with fat bacon,” and storage aims such as “to keep all the year” anchor the rationale rather than decorate it.

Organisation above the sentence does its share of the work. Monthly Bills of Fare translate social and seasonal norms into reproducible sequences; promised “cuts” turn table geography into diagrams. In effect, some interpersonal labour moves from modality to design: order, symmetry, and calendar logic guide compliance without another *must*. Audience design explains the tone. Named readers require bifocal readability: cooks are given doable chains of action; mistresses are offered defensible reasons in the ledger of economy, health, and seasonality. Devices such as “to your taste” and “which you please” relinquish final calibration to users in a way that fits delegated management. Contingency clauses teach how to reason with materials, tools, and seasons, so diagnosis and repair become part of the craft.

Methodologically, an SFL-informed coding of mood, modality, engagement, and graduation, integrated with paratextual analysis, yields a compact map of advice-giving as household governance. Obligation concentrates where failure is costly, while permission and advisability widen the solution space where preference and purse may legitimately vary; and *let*-constructions encode temporal discipline without unnecessary face-threat. Read this way, *English Housewifry* speaks with the voice of experienced domestic authority. As said above, it is firm where it must be, permissive where it can be.

This study is anchored to a single mid-century Leeds printing, and privileges a functional profile over exhaustive counts. That choice yields a clear map of guidance, but it narrows claims about variability across impressions and decades. A further constraint lies in the survival of graphical matter: the full suite of “cuts” is inconsistently reproduced in digital surrogates, which limits close analysis of spatial advice. Finally, comparative points to Smith and Glasse remain just that, glances, since no cross-title statistics are reported here.

Future work may proceed along six linked tracks: edition tracing will collate early Leeds impressions against later reprints, including London issues, to test stability and change in modality, permissive option and paratext, concretely, by comparing modal density (per 10,000 words), the proportions of *must/should/may*, and the presence, placement, and wording of Bills of Fare and “cuts”. Comparative baselines will build like-for-like profiles for Eliza Smith and Hannah Glasse to locate Moxon on an obligation-advisability continuum, adding a targeted lexicon for keeping/wholesome as a measurable warrant set and reporting log-odds or proportion



differences with confidence intervals; similarly, corpus integration will scale the analysis to a tagged dataset (e.g., CoWITE, Alonso-Almeida 2025a, 2025b) to obtain normalised frequencies for directive types, conditionals, and evaluative adverbs across decades, with move-annotation (target/resources/procedure/contingency/outcome) so rates can be reported by move as well as by text; paratext modelling will encode Bills of Fare and “cuts” as structured data (course position, namely Top/Bottom/Corners/Removes, season, dish type, service order) to quantify layout-encoded advice, with network visualisations to display recurrent menu pairings and seasonal substitutions. In the same way, socio-material linkage will correlate contingency cues with seasonal price series and availability (meat, sugar, butter, fresh greens, etc.) to test how external constraints shape interpersonal calibration, anticipating stronger obligation where inputs are costly or perishable. In turn, reception evidence will integrate ownership marks, marginalia, stains, and probate inventories to triangulate actual use with the advisory design inferred here, aligning annotated pages, where possible, with the most frequently consulted index entries.

All these steps together would turn the present profile into a comparative, data-rich account of advice-giving in eighteenth-century household print, clarifying how women’s domestic authority was grammatically staged, typographically engineered, and historically circulated.

Reviews sent to the authors: 23/11/2025

Revised paper accepted for publication: 28/01/2026



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CONDITIONAL PRACTICE IN HASLEHURST'S *THE FAMILY FRIEND* (1814)*

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ABSTRACT

This article examines *if*-sentences in Priscilla Haslehurst's *The Family Friend* (1814) as a case study of women's recipe writing within instructive prose. Combining Sweetser's functional domains with Martin and White's Appraisal framework, it analyses both what conditionals do and how forcefully they are expressed. Using targeted *CasualConc* searches and manual checking, 109 conditionals were identified: 88 content and 21 speech-act tokens, with no epistemic uses, an absence that fits the procedural logic of the genre. Content *if*-clauses mainly realise Engagement as entertain, shifting to disclaim or proclaim in categorical contexts, while Graduation operates through modals, thresholds, and quantification. Overall, the analysis shows a clear functional division: content clauses organise action and outcome, whereas speech-act clauses manage interpersonal stance, offering a replicable model for comparison across women's instructive texts.

KEYWORDS: *If*-Conditional Sentences, Appraisal Theory, Women's Instructive Prose, Historical Recipe Discourse, Evaluative Language

EMPLEO DEL CONDICIONAL EN EL LIBRO DE RECETAS DE HASLEHURST: *THE FAMILY FRIEND* (1814)

RESUMEN

Este artículo analiza las oraciones condicionales con *if* en *The Family Friend* (1814) de Priscilla Haslehurst como ejemplo de escritura instructiva femenina. A partir de los dominios funcionales de Sweetser y la Teoría de la Valoración de Martin y White, se estudia su función y grado de fuerza expresiva. El análisis identifica 109 condicionales, 88 de contenido y 21 de acto de habla, sin usos epistémicos, en línea con la lógica procedimental del género. Las cláusulas de contenido realizan *engagement* como *entertain*, con desplazamientos hacia *disclaim* o *proclaim*, mientras que la graduation se articula mediante modales y cuantificación. Los resultados muestran una división clara: las cláusulas de contenido organizan la acción y el resultado, y las de acto de habla gestionan la postura interpersonal.

PALABRAS CLAVE: oraciones condicionales con *if*, teoría de la valoración, prosa instructiva de mujeres, discurso histórico de recetas, lenguaje evaluativo

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.25145/j.recaesin.2026.92.17>

REVISTA CANARIA DE ESTUDIOS INGLESES, 92; abril 2026, pp. 341-360; ISSN: e-2530-8335
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1. INTRODUCTION

This article examines the *if*-conditional sentences in Priscilla Haslehurst's *The Family Friend, and Young Woman's Companion; or Housekeeper's Instructor* (1814), hereafter *Family Friend*, a single-author recipe book. The study is situated within the wider *Corpus of Women's Instructive Texts in English* (1800-1899), hereafter CoWITE19 (Alonso-Almeida et al. 2025), but narrows its lens to one author so that patterns of conditional usage can be traced consistently across a unified stylistic and pragmatic context.

Written recipes often offer more than bare instructions. Authors anticipate readers' likely needs and calibrate guidance accordingly: choices of presentation, degree of technicality, and the staging of procedures all reflect an assessment of audience knowledge (Wharton 2010, 68-69). In this sense, recipe prose is typically less mannered than the language of a treatise because it addresses a broad readership who may not favour elevated expression. As a flexible genre that adapts to its users, the recipe can register changes in social and cultural codes and show how language is recruited to secure a practical effect on the reader (Alonso-Almeida 2013, 68-69). It is unsurprising, then, that recipes often tell us as much about expectations and norms as about cuisine itself (Pennell 2009, 15; see also Griffin & Ryley 2024).

The notion of genre applied here follows a functional-grammar perspective in which categories are established according to use rather than form (Eggs 2004; Biber 1988, 170). By contrast, text types are defined through internal linguistic criteria, including morphosyntactic and lexical features (Alonso-Almeida & Álvarez-Gil 2020, 64-65; Biber 1988, 70; Carroll 1999, 28). Although many recipes are strongly paratactic, complex subordination is common, including clauses of time, cause, condition, and concession (Álvarez-Gil and Sánchez-Cuervo 2024; Sánchez-Cuervo 2025). Distinctive traits of the register include headings, variable sentence realisation (from full sentences to 'telegram' style), imperative and other verbal choices, possessive reference to ingredients and implements, object omission, temporal sequencing, sentence complexity, and the presence of loanwords and polite refinements. Technical specification covers weights and measures, required instruments, temperatures, and timings. A conventional organisation into 'title', 'ingredients', 'procedure', and 'how to serve' is well attested (Görlach 1992, 746; 2004, 124-125), yet authors frequently extend this template with storage advice, 'use before' guidance, and other context-specific sections (Alonso-Almeida 2013, 2024, forthcoming; Álvarez-Gil & Soto-Déniz 2024; Carroll 2003, 2009; De la Cruz Cabanillas 2017; Griffin & Ryley 2024; Mäkinen 2011; Ortega-Barrera 2010; Taavitsainen 2001).

Against this backdrop, Haslehurst's book offers a compact setting in which to observe how conditionality guides instruction. We classify each *if*-clause by

* The research conducted in this paper has been supported by the Agencia Estatal de Investigación, Plan Estatal de Investigación Científica, Técnica y de Innovación 2021-2023, under award number PID2021-125928NB-I00. We hereby express our thanks. Unión Europea · Fondo Europeo de Desarrollo regional "Una manera de hacer Europa."



function and relate that function to stance using Martin and White's Appraisal framework (2005), and we also read the clauses through Sweetser's domains (1990). In practice, we distinguish conditionals that link a state of the world to an action or outcome (Sweetser's content domain) from those that manage reader choice and convenience (Sweetser's speech-act domain). This mapping supports a functional split, since content *if*-clauses do the ideational work of modelling processes and results, while speech-act *if*-clauses do the interpersonal work of offering options, softening directives, and addressing the reader's purposes. Although all three domains (content, epistemic, speech-act) were considered, no epistemic instances were found in this book, so the analysis focuses on content and speech-act conditionals. This study addresses three questions: (1) how 'content' and 'speech-act' conditionals are distributed in *Family Friend*; (2) which 'Engagement' values they realise, given the domain defaults and override rules; and (3) how 'Graduation' resources ('Force', 'Focus', 'Quantification') modulate instruction. We treat 'content' as modelling world-states linked to outcomes and 'speech-act' as offering options to readers.

Focusing on a single author has two advantages. First, it reduces variation from different house styles or editorial habits, which in larger corpora can hide how a single writer handles conditional meaning in a consistent way. Second, it lets us give a closer account of how lexico-grammatical choices (for example, modals in either protasis or apodosis, negation and focusers like 'only') adjust the writer's Engagement and Graduation values while keeping Attitude mostly practical and explicit. In Haslehurst, these resources signal readiness tests, warnings, remedies, and procedural branches, and they also mark optional paths when reader preference is invited.

The results below show how conditional resources are distributed in Haslehurst's collection and how they balance procedural clarity with interpersonal flexibility. They also show that nineteenth-century instructional prose persuades not only by telling readers what to do, but by managing likelihood, choice, and degree for the reader. The article is organised as follows. Section 1 sets out the framework (Appraisal) and how it is used with conditional analysis. Section 2 describes the corpus and method, the analytic stages, and the coding protocol used for the commentary on *if*-sentences. Section 3 presents the analysis and discussion, grouping instances into 'content' and 'speech-act' cases. The conclusions follow.

2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1. THE APPRAISAL THEORY

'Evaluation' refers to the linguistic means by which writers signal attitudes, judgements, and stances toward entities, events, or propositions. It ranges from lexical choice to grammatical patterning and discourse organisation, shaping both interpersonal and ideational meaning (Hunston and Thompson 2000). Through evaluation, authors position themselves, negotiate values, and either affiliate with or distance from readers, by explicit or implicit means.



Appraisal provides a framework for analysing these resources within Systemic Functional Linguistics (Martin and White 2005). Halliday treats language as a social semiotic that realises three metafunctions at once: ideational, interpersonal, and textual (Halliday 1978, 1994). Appraisal elaborates the interpersonal metafunction and is conventionally described in three subsystems: 'Attitude' (affect, judgement, appreciation), 'Engagement' (sourcing and dialogic scope), and 'Graduation' (force and focus). These categories allow a fine-grained account of how writers manage stance and value in context. The theory comprises three interconnected domains: 'Attitude', 'Engagement', and 'Graduation'.

1. 'Attitude'. The 'Attitude' system operates through three linked evaluative domains that structure how writers position themselves towards experience, behaviour, and phenomena. It includes the linguistic resources for expressing emotions ('Affect'), ethical assessments of behaviour ('Judgement'), and aesthetic valuations of phenomena ('Appreciation') (Martin and White 2005, 35-52). 'Affect' deals with resources for construing emotional reactions, registering positive and negative feelings in response to events (Martin and White 2005, 42). This dimension includes various types of emotional response, realised through modification of participants, affective mental and behavioural processes, and modal adjuncts (Martin and White 2005, 45). 'Judgement' involves attitudes towards behaviour, distinguishing between social esteem (normality, capacity, tenacity) and social sanction (veracity and propriety) (Martin and White 2005, 52-53). These assessments move beyond personal reaction to involve institutionalised feelings about how people should behave. Social esteem is typically policed through oral culture and social networks, whilst social sanction is more often codified as rules, regulations, and laws administered by formal institutions, such as church and state (Martin and White 2005, 52). 'Appreciation' concerns evaluations of semiotic and natural phenomena according to their value within particular fields, encompassing reaction, composition, and valuation as core dimensions (Martin and White 2005, 56). Like 'Judgement', 'Appreciation' represents institutionalised feelings, but as propositions about the worth of things rather than behaviour, often formalised through awards, prizes, grades, and similar systems of assessment (Martin and White 2005, 45).
2. 'Engagement'. This system manages dialogic space in discourse, distinguishing 'monoglossic' utterances (presenting propositions as absolute truths) from 'heteroglossic' ones that acknowledge alternative voices and viewpoints (Martin and White 2005, 97-99). In practical terms, 'Engagement' offers resources that either open space for alternatives ('dialogic expansion') or restrict that space ('dialogic contraction').

Under expansion, 'entertain' ('possibly', 'might') presents a reading as one among several, and 'attribute' ('X claims', 'according to ...') assigns a source. 'Entertain' signals that the writer treats a proposition as one possibility among others, typically through modals ('may', 'might', 'could', 'would'), modal adjuncts ('possibly', 'perhaps',



‘probably’, ‘apparently’), and evidentials (‘it seems/appears’, ‘it would seem’), thereby opening dialogic space (Martin and White 2005, 104-16).

Under contraction, ‘disclaim’ rejects or counters alternatives (negation, ‘even if’), and ‘proclaim’ presents a view with heightened certainty (‘clearly’, ‘of course’). ‘Contraction’ restricts alternatives through ‘disclaim’ (denial/countering) and ‘proclaim’ (heightened certainty). Negation often intensifies contraction: negated *if*-clauses (‘if not ...’, ‘unless ...’) realise ‘disclaim’ by denial, raising a negative condition as the trigger for the main instruction. Concessives (‘even if ...’) realise ‘disclaim’ by countering, acknowledging a contrary case while maintaining the point. ‘Proclaim’ closes space with stance markers such as ‘clearly’, ‘obviously’, and ‘of course’ (Martin and White 2005, 117-35).

3. ‘Graduation’. The third domain, ‘Graduation’, adjusts evaluative meanings by providing resources for amplifying or attenuating both the intensity and the categorical boundaries of attitudinal assessments. It modulates evaluative force through scaling intensity (‘Force’) or adjusting categorical boundaries (‘Focus’) (Martin and White 2005, 135-60). ‘Force’ operates through intensification (‘very sad’, ‘extremely difficult’) and quantification (‘many’, ‘few’, ‘most’) to amplify or diminish the degree of evaluation (Martin and White 2005, 140-44). ‘Focus’ sharpens or softens categorical boundaries, creating prototypical or peripheral instances of categories through resources such as ‘true’, ‘genuine’, ‘real’ (sharpening) or ‘sort of’, ‘kind of’, ‘about’ (softening). Additionally, a structure like ‘only if ...’ is an instance of ‘Graduation’ through focus-sharpening, as it sharply defines a necessary condition and excludes others (Martin and White 2005, 137-39). This system recognises that evaluation is gradable, with meanings that can be intensified, compared, and scaled across a continuum from low to high intensity (Martin and White 2005, 140).

2.2. APPRAISAL FRAMEWORK FOR CONDITIONAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS

The systematic framework for evaluating language provided by ‘Appraisal’ proves particularly helpful when applied to hypothetical discourse, which comprises structures concerned with reasoning, possibility, and consequence. Conditional sentences are ideal sites for ‘Appraisal’ analysis because their speculative nature creates dialogic spaces where speakers negotiate epistemic stance through both ‘Engagement’ and ‘Graduation’ resources. Although all three domains (‘content’, ‘epistemic’, ‘speech-act’) were considered (Sweetser 1990), recipe conditionals typically encode either world-states linked to procedures or options for readers, not hypotheses about the truth of propositions. This helps explain the absence of epistemic tokens in *Family Friend*.

The study of conditional sentences in English has evolved considerably from traditional grammatical frameworks to contemporary corpus-linguistic investigations, revealing significant discrepancies between prescriptive models and authentic usage patterns. The foundational work of Quirk et al. (1985, 1086) established conditionals



within the broader category of adverbials, emphasising their semantic role alongside other meanings such as purpose, result, and concession. Their systematic distinction between direct and indirect conditions, with direct conditions subdivided into open and hypothetical conditions (Quirk et al. 1985, 1088-91), has dominated pedagogical approaches for decades. The traditional grammatical paradigm, also exemplified by Thompson et al. (2007, 255), draws a semantic distinction between 'reality' conditionals, referring to 'real' present, 'habitual/generic', or 'past' situations, and 'unreality' conditionals, which designate 'unreal' situations, including imaginative and predictive subtypes.

The functional approach established by Sweetser (1990, 113-21) challenged traditional classifications by introducing a cognitively oriented framework that considers conditional constructions within three domains: 'content', 'epistemic', and 'speech-act' conditionals:

1. The content domain includes conditionals expressing real-world cause and effect.
2. The epistemic domain concerns conditionals reflecting processes of logical reasoning and inference.
3. The speech-act domain focuses on conditionals that negotiate the felicity or appropriateness of a communicative act.

Scholars show that conditionals work interpersonally. Warchal (2010, 141) treats them as a rhetorical means to secure uptake of claims, with evidence across domains (Carter-Thomas and Rowley-Jolivet 2008; Lastres-López 2020; Links 2018; Puentes-Castelo 2017, 2023; Reuneker 2023). They often hedge by making a claim's validity contingent on other factors (Crompton 1997; Hyland 1994; Warchal 2010, 142). They also act as stance markers via evaluative adjectives and adverbs, obligation modals, common-knowledge cues, and inclusive 'we' (Graff and Winn 2006, 2011; Hyland 1998, 2001; Koutsantoni 2004; Myers 1989). These uses manage politeness, humility, uncertainty, and doubt, improving reception of claims (Puentes-Castelo 2023, 74). Interpersonally, they support argumentative force by linking premises to conclusions (Horsella and Sindermann 1992, 138; Katzav and Reed 2004, 242). We argue that historical recipe writing uses the same strategies: conditional frames give clear instructions while engaging readers (Álvarez-Gil and Sánchez-Cuervo 2024; Sánchez-Cuervo 2025). This research emphasises the evolution from purely formal grammatical analysis towards discourse-functional approaches that recognise the rhetorical and interpersonal functions of conditional constructions in authentic communicative contexts.

The integration of Martin and White's (2005) tripartite system of 'Attitude', 'Engagement', and 'Graduation' offers a clear account of how conditional sentences position writers and readers within their discourse communities:

1. Attitude. Attitude is only lightly used here. We treat Attitude as explicit evaluation of processes and outcomes, chiefly as 'Appreciation' ('proper degree', 'sufficient', 'good coloured'), with 'Judgement' and 'Affect' effectively absent in this book.



2. Engagement. For this book, content conditionals are ‘entertain’ by default, opening a possible path (‘if P, then Q’). They shift to ‘disclaim’ with negative or concessive triggers (‘if not’, ‘unless’, ‘even if’) and to ‘proclaim’ when the main clause is categorical (‘must’/‘never’/‘always’). Speech-act conditionals also read as ‘entertain’, since they present options tied to reader goals or preferences. No ‘epistemic’ tokens were found.
3. Graduation. Conditional clauses regularly scale meaning. ‘Force’ appears in modals and intensifiers (‘will’, ‘may’, ‘must’; ‘a little’; ‘very’). ‘Focus’ sharpens or softens boundaries through thresholding and exclusives (‘enough’; ‘only if’; ‘proper’). ‘Quantification’ provides times and measures. Modals in the protasis are logged under ‘Graduation: Force’ and do not change the domain when the protasis still names a world state; modals in the apodosis set stance (‘must’ → ‘proclaim’; ‘may’ → ‘entertain’; ‘will’ → predictive force). This pattern shows how conditional sentences manage the logical link between states and results while calibrating interpersonal pressure with minimal ‘Attitude’.

This theoretical convergence shows how functional linguistics moves beyond traditional taxonomies and frames the analysis that follows, leading into the description of the corpus and method.

3. CORPUS DESCRIPTION AND METHODOLOGY

This study employs a mixed-methods approach that integrates corpus-linguistic analysis with ‘Appraisal’ theory (Martin and White 2005) to examine *if*-conditionals in early nineteenth-century women’s instructional writing. The research follows established protocols for evaluative language (Hunston 2010), combining quantitative distributional analysis with qualitative discourse analysis to identify both general patterns and specific interpersonal functions. We cite the 1814 imprint of *The Family Friend, and Young Woman’s Companion; or, Housekeeper’s Instructor*. Examples retain original spelling and capitalisation in citations; normalisation is limited to obvious typographic defects. Page references are to the printed edition.

3.1. CORPUS DESCRIPTION

The data source consists of Priscilla Haslehurst’s *The Family Friend, and Young Woman’s Companion; or, Housekeeper’s Instructor* (1814), selected from the CoWITE19 subcorpus (Corpus of Women’s Instructive Texts in English, 1800-1899) database (Alonso-Almeida et al. 2025). CoWITE represents a comprehensive diachronic corpus of instructional and technical texts authored by women in English between 1550 and 1899, containing approximately 1.75 million words, organised by decade, and encompassing excerpts from printed books and manuscripts related to cookery, domestic economy, health, and dietetics. This project, developed by



the Discourse, Communication and Society research group at the University of Las Palmas de Gran Canaria under the leadership of Francisco J. Alonso-Almeida, comprises four distinct subcorpora, with CoWITE19 (1800-1899) containing approximately 500,000 words and focusing particularly on women's contributions to knowledge transmission in domestic and semi-professional domains. The database entries derive from primary sources accessed through institutional repositories, particularly the Wellcome Collection, the University of Leeds Library, and national repositories in the UK and US. The corpus is accessible through the DiCoS-LA web-based platform and is archived in Zenodo, with comprehensive metadata documentation providing structured information on authorship, dates, genres, topics, and transcription provenance to support research into historical patterns of modality, stance, politeness, and textual authority.

Haslehurst's text is a strong choice for this study due to the author's extensive professional experience spanning more than two decades in domestic service and confectionery instruction. She served as a housekeeper for twelve years in prominent households, such as those of 'Wm. Bethell, Esq., of Rise Park near Beverley, and Mrs. Joddrell of Manchester', as indicated both in her book and documented in historical records (Whitaker 1913, 132). This position within upper-middle-class and aristocratic homes gave her firsthand knowledge of both elaborate entertaining and efficient household management, before she later established an independent confectionery and instructional practice in Sheffield that she maintained for more than two decades.

The work enjoyed considerable commercial success, first issued in Sheffield in 1802 by J. Montgomery and subsequently reprinted, culminating in a seventh enlarged edition of 215 pages, with illustrations, including a frontispiece on carving techniques. The cookbook's subscription model, documented by more than 300 advance orders, indicates strong local support and recognition of Haslehurst's expertise within Yorkshire's regional domestic economy networks. Such subscription patterns were typical of specialised instructional texts authored by practitioners rather than literary figures, reflecting the professionalisation of domestic management in the early nineteenth century.

The text contains more than 350 entries, including recipes, culinary techniques, confectionery methods, meat-carving procedures, and preservation methods. It covers a comprehensive range of early nineteenth-century domestic practices and is arranged systematically into thematic categories, such as soup cookery, meat preparation, and food preservation. The techniques reflect contemporary French influences while maintaining distinctly English characteristics. The pedagogical approach shows Haslehurst's instructional background through a systematic presentation and detailed explanatory notes, including precise timing, temperature guidance, and troubleshooting advice. The subtitle, 'Housekeeper's Instructor', signals an intended audience of domestic professionals and serious practitioners, reflecting the period's recognition of domestic management as a skilled profession.



3.2. ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK AND PROCEDURE

The analysis was conducted in two integrated stages and a coding protocol:

3.2.1. *Functional classification*

Conditional constructions were identified using CasualConc (Imao 2022), combining targeted searches for ‘if’-constructions with manual verification to remove false positives and non-conditional uses. Each instance was classified functionally according to Sweetser’s (1990) tripartite model into three domains, and, as noted in the introduction, no ‘epistemic’ tokens were found in this book. The analysis thus focuses on ‘content’ conditionals, which encode causal relations, and ‘speech-act’ conditionals, which set the felicity conditions for a communicative act.

3.2.2. *Appraisal analysis.*

Interpersonal meaning was examined using ‘Appraisal’, with a focus on the ‘Engagement’ subsystem. As a working rule:

- ‘Content’ conditionals typically realise ‘entertain’ within ‘Engagement’ (they open a possible path), shifting to ‘disclaim’ with negative or concessive triggers (‘if not’, ‘unless’, ‘even if’) and to ‘proclaim’ when the main clause is categorical (‘must’, ‘never’, ‘always’).
- ‘Speech-act’ conditionals are also ‘entertain’ by default, because they open an option rather than close debate.

3.2.3. *Coding protocol.*

The coding was systematic and grid-based, with four passes:

1. Domain. Assign Sweetser domain (‘content’ / ‘speech-act’).
2. Engagement. Start from the domain default (typically ‘entertain’), then override on lexical or modal cues:
 - ‘disclaim’ with forms like ‘unless’, ‘if not’, ‘even if’;
 - ‘proclaim’ with categorical modals (‘must’, ‘never’, ‘always’) or exclusives (‘only if’);
 - Modal placement rule: modals in the protasis (‘should’, ‘can’, ‘may’) are recorded under ‘Graduation: Force’ and do not change the domain if the protasis still describes a state; modals in the apodosis set stance (‘must’ → ‘proclaim’; ‘may’ → ‘entertain’; ‘will’ → predictive force).
3. Attitude. Note any explicit evaluative language (‘A±’ for ‘Appreciation’; ‘J±’ for ‘Judgement’) about outcomes or reader conduct.



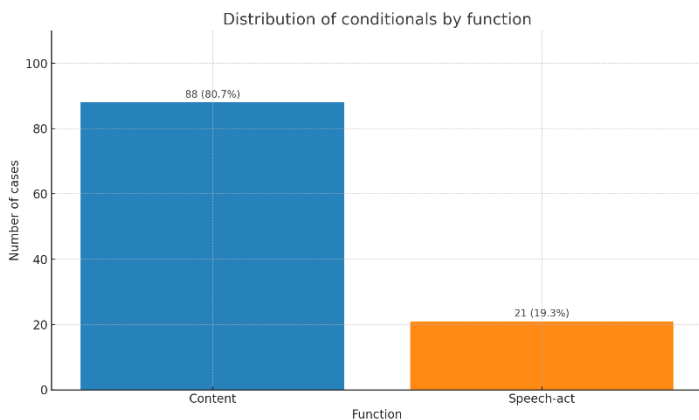


Figure 1. Distribution of *if*-conditionals within *The Family Friend, and Young Woman's Companion; or, Housekeeper's Instructor* (1814).

4. Graduation. Record tokens that scale intensity ('Force'), sharpen or soften categories ('Focus'), or quantify time/amount ('Quantification'). Domain checks used throughout:

- (1) If 'whenever'/'because' paraphrases read naturally → 'content'.
- (2) If the protasis names a world state → 'content'; if it names a reader goal or permission → 'speech-act'.

Within the 'speech-act' domain, we use 'offer' for preference-based options ('if you like/choose/want ...') and 'politeness' when the protasis sets a serving purpose or convenience ('if it is to be served hot'; 'if you please'). Both are coded as 'entertain' within 'Engagement'.

The following table shows the distribution of tokens, types, and lemmas within *The Family Friend* corpus extract:

TABLE 1. TOKENS, TYPES, AND LEMMAS IN PRISCILLA HASLEHURST'S <i>THE FAMILY FRIEND, AND YOUNG WOMAN'S COMPANION; OR, HOUSEKEEPER'S INSTRUCTOR</i> (1814)			
FILE	TOKENS	TYPES	LEMMAS
Haslehurst, Priscilla 1814	46417	2254	2172

4. ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION OF THE RESULTS

This section examines how *if*-conditionals operate in Priscilla Haslehurst's *Family Friend* (1814), combining Sweetser's domains with the 'Appraisal' framework to describe function and stance in context. As Figure 1 shows, the distribution is

clear, dividing into 88 content cases and 21 speech-act occurrences; no epistemic tokens were found. This pattern suits recipe writing, where conditionals mainly link observable states and procedures to actions and results.

4.1. CONTENT: READINESS TESTS

These items teach readers to recognise stages and thresholds. The ‘protasis’ names a state that can be seen, touched, or otherwise checked in practice, and the ‘main clause’ states a conclusion about sufficiency or attainment. In Appraisal terms, the stance is Engagement: ‘entertain’, carried by predictive futures or plain present. Attitude appears only when evaluation is explicit, typically as positive Appreciation (‘enough’, ‘proper degree’, ‘sufficient’). Graduation gives the fine control: threshold words such as ‘enough’, focused descriptors such as ‘clear’, and occasional comparatives. These tests are central to the genre because they transfer know-how without specialist instruments. The three examples in this group follow the pattern closely and show how simple signals license reliable conclusions.

- (1) “When you have so done, first shake it over the pan, then give it a sudden flirt behind you, and *if* it is enough, the sugar will fly off like feathers”. (Haslehurst 1814, 87)

We read this as a readiness test. The ‘*if*-clause’ sets a checkable threshold, and the ‘main clause’ gives the sign that confirms it. In Sweetser’s terms the domain is ‘content’, since the condition concerns a property of the mixture. In Appraisal we code Engagement as ‘entertain’, supported by the predictive ‘will’. Attitude is positive because ‘enough’ signals success, and ‘Graduation’ is carried by the threshold word ‘enough’ and by the future that marks the prediction. The sentence teaches recognition of a successful stage, not merely the next operation.

- (2) “Draw off the sugar that hangs to the stick into the water, and *if* it becomes hard, and snaps, it has acquired the proper degree”. (Haslehurst 1814, 87)

Here the writer pairs two simple signals with a conclusion about attainment. This is again in the ‘content’ domain, because the condition names a state in the world rather than a conversational choice. The stance is ‘entertain’. ‘Attitude’ is positive through ‘proper degree’, which we take as Appreciation of the result, and ‘Graduation’ sharpens the standard with ‘proper’. The inference is presented as routine practice knowledge that the reader can verify.

- (3) “In order to know if it is done, dip a pen into it, write on white paper, and *if* it shows the colour clear, it is sufficient”. (Haslehurst 1814, 88)

This example uses a visual signal to judge whether the colour of refined sugar is sufficient. The domain is ‘content’, since the *if*-clause describes what the substance



looks like. We code the stance as 'entertain'. Attitude is positive in 'sufficient', and 'Graduation' sharpens the judgement through 'clear'. The line calibrates judgement by linking an observable sign to adequacy.

4.2. CONTENT: WARNINGS AND REMEDIES

Here the conditional flags a risk or a fault and pairs it with either a predicted problem or a corrective step. Negative protases narrow the trigger and therefore contract the dialogic space ('disclaim > deny'), while 'must' in the main clause signals obligation ('proclaim'). When no deontic appears, the stance remains 'entertain' and the strength of the step is recorded under 'Graduation' (for instance 'a little' as lowered 'Force'). This balance of firm triggers with scaled fixes suits household practice, where the writer needs to warn clearly yet avoid overstating amounts or times. The cases below show all three levers at work: process logic ('If you let it boil, it will curdle'), a small remedy for a colour fault, and a necessary remedy once dryness is observed.

- (4) "Then set it over a slow fire, and stir it till it looks white and thick; *if* you let it boil, it will curdle". (Haslehurst 1814, 10)

We read this as a causal warning. The 'if-clause' names an action in the world, and the 'main clause' states the likely consequence. In Sweetser's terms the domain is 'content'. In Appraisal we code Engagement as 'entertain', supported by predictive 'will'. Attitude is negative because 'curdle' marks an undesirable result, and Graduation sits in the certainty of the prediction. The pressure on the reader comes from process logic rather than from deontic wording.

- (5) "Cut the nicest part or two heads of celery, and cayenne pepper, and salt to your taste; *if* not good coloured, put to it a little browning". (Haslehurst 1814, 2)

Here a negative condition activates a small remedy. The reading is 'content', since the trigger is a fault in appearance. For Appraisal, the negated protasis contracts the dialogic space and we code it as 'disclaim > deny'. Attitude is negative in the fault expression. Graduation records 'a little' as a downscaler of force. The balance is typical of the genre, with a firm trigger coupled with a modest correction.

- (6) "*If* the skin appears dry in roasting, you must have a little butter in a cloth and rub over it". (Haslehurst 1814, 35)

Observation of dryness when roasting a pig triggers action. The domain is 'content' because the condition is a property of the meat during roasting. In Appraisal the stance tightens through 'must', which we code as 'proclaim'. Attitude remains negative around 'dry'. Graduation shows a mixed profile: obligation is strong, but amount is restrained by 'a little'. The sentence states necessity without excess.



- (7) *If* the sugar should not appear very fine, give it another boil before you strain it. (Haslehurst 1814, 87)

In clarifying sugar, a tentative trigger meets a clear remedy. The domain is ‘content’, since the protasis describes what the substance looks like. In Appraisal we mark the negated protasis as ‘disclaim > deny’; ‘should’ registers under ‘Graduation: Force’ as a reduction in strength. Attitude is negative in ‘not ... very fine’. Additional Graduation appears in ‘another’ for iteration and in ‘before’ for sequencing. The line acknowledges uncertainty in the test while keeping the corrective step straightforward.

4.3. CONTENT: TIMING AND METHOD

These conditionals map a trait or a technique onto time or ease. In Sweetser’s terms the domain is ‘content’ when size drives roasting duration, method predicts how easily a joint separates, and a two-branch schedule balances precision with flexibility. Stance is usually ‘entertain’, with ‘proclaim’ only where timing is categorical (‘must boil eight minutes’). The older ‘be’ in the protasis is a stylistic choice rather than a stance shift. Overall, they set expectations and prevent over- or under-cooking by linking observable properties to procedural timing.

- (8) “Tie it well to keep the paste from falling; *If* it be a large one, it will take four hours roasting”. (Haslehurst 1814, 11)

While roasting a haunch of venison, we read this as a timing rule that ties size to duration. In Sweetser’s terms the domain is ‘content’, since the condition names a property of the joint. In Appraisal the stance is ‘entertain’ through the predictive ‘will’. There is no Attitude. Graduation lies in the precise measure ‘four hours’. The older ‘be’ is a stylistic form and does not alter the analysis. The mapping of size to time is presented as stable practice knowledge.

- (9) “*If* they are large, they must boil eight minutes; *if* small, not so long”. (Haslehurst 1814, 16)

Here the writer gives a two-branch schedule in her instructions for pickling oysters. The domain is ‘content’ in both branches. In the first apodosis the stance is ‘proclaim’ through ‘must’ with an exact duration; in the second it returns to ‘entertain’ with an open comparative. There is no Attitude. Graduation appears as quantification in ‘eight minutes’ and as a comparative downscaler in ‘not so long’. The pair shows how precision and flexibility are coordinated.

- (10) “In the boiled fowl the leg should be separated from the drumstick, at the joint, which is easily done, *if* the knife is introduced in the hollow, and the thigh bone turned back from the leg bone”. (Haslehurst 1814, 94)



This is a method condition that yields ease of execution. The domain is ‘content’ because the *if*-clause sets a technique. The stance is ‘entertain’. Attitude is positive through ‘easy’, which we take as Appreciation of process. Graduation is not central. The line encodes procedural know-how as a conditional technique that turns a difficult task into a manageable one.

4.4. CONTENT: AVAILABILITY AND EQUIPMENT

Here the conditional ties a step to what the cook has to hand. Because the protasis names inventory or tools, the domain remains ‘content’. The stance is ‘entertain’, and ‘Graduation’ records quantification or gentle scaling (‘any’, ‘a little’). This wording respects kitchen realities and leaves room for sensible substitutions or extra protection, for example laying something over the meat to prevent burning when enough material remains.

- (11) “Stuff it under the two fleshy parts of the meat, and *if* you have any left, lay it over to prevent the meat from burning”. (Haslehurst 1814, 4)

We read this as a precaution that depends on the meat available when dressing a turtle. The protasis names a resource state rather than a preference, so the domain is ‘content’. In Appraisal we code Engagement as ‘entertain’. Attitude is implicitly negative, since ‘burning’ is to be avoided. Graduation appears in the quantifier ‘any’. The instruction respects kitchen realities while protecting the result.

- (12) “*If* you have any oval tins bake a little light paste with a little bread in the inside”. (Haslehurst 1814, 29)

Here the step is conditional on the tools to hand for cooking veal patties. The trigger is equipment on hand, not a reader choice, which keeps the reading in the ‘content’ domain. The stance is ‘entertain’. There is no Attitude. Graduation lowers force through the repeated ‘a little’, signalling delicacy rather than excess. The sentence tells the cook to adapt method to what is available.

- (13) “*If* you have no Rhenish wine, white will do”. (Haslehurst 1814, 45)

This is an inventory-based substitution in the preparation of hartshorn jelly. The domain is ‘content’, since the protasis concerns stock, not taste. We code the stance as ‘entertain’, with predictive force carried by ‘will’. There is no Attitude. ‘Graduation’ is marked by the polarity item ‘no’ and by the future ‘will’. The alternative is framed as sufficient, which suits the economy of recipe writing.



4.5. CONTENT: POLARITY, ‘UNLESS’, AND CONCESSIVES

Negation in the protasis (‘if not ...’, ‘unless ...’) produces ‘disclaim > deny’. Concessives (‘even if ...’) would be coded as ‘disclaim > counter’, but they do not occur in this corpus. In all such cases the domain remains ‘content’ because the *if*-clause still encodes a state of affairs in the world. The single ‘unless’ item is paired with an anaphoric instruction that includes ‘must’, which raises the stance of the main clause to ‘proclaim’. This pairing shows how exception-handling and obligation combine in a compact way that suits recipe prose.

- (14) “A goose is seldom quite dissected, *unless* the company is very large, in which case the method must be pursued”. (Haslehurst 1814, 95)

We read this as an exception rule. The ‘unless’ clause functions as a negative conditional and sets the special case where full dissection becomes appropriate. The domain is ‘content’, since the condition names a worldly circumstance (party size). In Appraisal we code the ‘unless’ part as ‘disclaim > deny’, and the follow-up instruction as ‘proclaim’ through ‘must’. There is no Attitude. Graduation appears in ‘very large’ and in the categorical force of ‘must’. The pair shows how exception-handling and obligation work together in recipe prose.

- (15) “Let them stand a day or two, and *if* they are not then properly dried, put them in for a day or two longer”. (Haslehurst 1814, 90)

Here a negative trigger extends the drying time for damsons. The reading is ‘content’, because the condition is the state of the items. In Appraisal we mark the protasis as ‘disclaim > deny’. Attitude is negative in ‘not properly’. Graduation lies in the time expression ‘a day or two longer’ and in the focus term ‘properly’. The line refines timing by recognising variability and prescribing a measured extension.

4.6. SPEECH ACT: OFFER

These items make a step appropriate when the reader adopts a preference or goal. The ‘protasis’ presents taste or intention, and the ‘main clause’ provides the corresponding adjustment. The stance is ‘entertain’ because the option is opened rather than enforced, and ‘Graduation’ records permission words such as ‘may’ and amount words such as ‘a glass’. This phrasing gives control to the reader without losing practical detail.

- (16) “*If* you want any for the table, make them smaller”. (Haslehurst 1814, 43)

We read this as an interpersonal conditional. The ‘protasis’ presents a serving goal for French bread that belongs to the reader, and the instruction follows only if that goal is adopted. In Sweetser’s terms the domain is ‘speech-act’, since the condition



regulates the appropriateness of the directive rather than a property of the bread. In Appraisal we code Engagement as ‘entertain’, because the clause opens an option rather than enforcing it. There is no Attitude. ‘Graduation’ appears in ‘any’ and in the comparative ‘smaller’. The effect is to give control to the reader while keeping the guidance practical.

- (17) “You may put a glass of wine in the sauce *if* you like the taste”. (Haslehurst 1814, 24)

This is an offer framed by preference in the preparation of a sauce. The condition is taste, not inventory or process, so we read it as ‘speech-act’. In Appraisal the stance is ‘entertain’ through the permission verb ‘may’. There is no Attitude. ‘Graduation’ includes the downscaled force in ‘may’ and the precise quantity ‘a glass’. The option reduces imposition while keeping the instruction exact.

4.7. SPEECH ACT: POLITENESS

A second small group frames the action as entirely at the reader’s discretion (‘if you please’) or ties it to a serving purpose (‘if it be to eat hot’). The domain is ‘speech-act’ because the condition regulates the suitability of the next move, not a property of the dish. Stance remains ‘entertain’, and precise weights and measures preserve clarity. They keep the method clear and let the reader choose.

- (18) When you work it up with the second liquor, you may, *if* you please, break in two ounces of butter. (Haslehurst 1814, 101)

We read this as a polite option embedded in the procedural frame for making French bread. The relevant conditional element is ‘if you please’, which places the decision with the reader rather than in the state of the mixture. In Sweetser’s terms the domain is ‘speech-act’, since the condition regulates the suitability of the act rather than a property of the recipe. In Appraisal we code Engagement as ‘entertain’, supported by the permission verb ‘may’ and the polite marker. There is no Attitude. ‘Graduation’ appears in the exact quantity ‘two ounces’ and in the reduced force carried by ‘may’. The sentence offers courtesy without sacrificing procedural precision.

- (19) “*If* you would have it eat hot, stick it with cloves, rub it over with the yolk of an egg, strew over it breadcrumbs, baste it with butter”. (Haslehurst 1814, 83)

This ties the step to a serving plan that belongs to the reader. The ‘protasis’ states a preferred mode of service rather than a world state, so we take the domain as ‘speech-act’. We code the stance as ‘entertain’, since the line opens an option rather than enforcing it. There is no Attitude. ‘Graduation’ sits in the contextual marker ‘hot’ and, in the first line, in the softening ‘would’. The pathway is optional and depends on the reader’s plan, not on the behaviour of the dish.



4. CONCLUSION

This study has shown how conditionality organises instruction in Haslehurst's *Family Friend* by combining a functional reading of *if*-clauses (after Sweetser) with an Appraisal account of stance. Across 109 instances, 88 'content' conditionals predominate over 21 'speech-act' uses limited to options and polite instances. No 'epistemic' tokens were found. This distribution suits the genre, where recipes link observable states and procedures to consequences, while the conditional is reserved for interpersonal work only when a reader's goal or preference is at issue.

In Appraisal terms, Engagement is typically 'entertain' for 'content' conditionals, shifting to 'disclaim' with negative or concessive triggers and to 'proclaim' when deontic wording presents a step as categorical. 'Graduation' does most of the fine work, with 'Force' expressed through modals and intensifiers, 'Focus' through thresholding and precision, and 'Quantification' through times and measures. 'Attitude' is scarce and concrete, usually limited to Appreciation of results or processes. The single 'unless' item behaves as a negative conditional ('disclaim > deny') paired with a 'must' instruction ('proclaim'), illustrating how exception-handling and obligation can be compactly combined in recipe prose.

Methodologically, coding the domain by the 'protasis' and the stance by clause, and reporting the 'apodosis' stance as primary when a single label is needed, proved practical and transparent. The result is a clear functional split, with 'Content' conditionals carrying ideational work (diagnosis, warning, remedy, timing, method), whereas 'speech-act' conditionals carry interpersonal work (offers and polite instances). The results also suggest that stance economy, with minimal 'Attitude', calibrated 'Engagement', pervasive 'Graduation', is a hallmark of nineteenth-century instructional style. Future work should test these patterns across additional authors and decades within CoWITE19, and across adjacent subgenres of domestic and technical writing, to assess how far this balance between procedural clarity and interpersonal flexibility generalises.

Reviews sent to the authors: 15/11/2025

Revised paper accepted for publication: 28/01/2026



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MISCELLANY

MARGARET ATWOOD IN SPANISH ACADEMIA: THEMES, APPROACHES, AND CRITICAL EVOLUTION

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ABSTRACT

This article provides a comprehensive review of Margaret Atwood's academic reception in Spain over the past four decades, tracing thematic trends and evolving critical approaches. Since Canadian literary studies emerged in Spain in the 1980s, Atwood has been a key figure, with over two hundred scholarly studies investigating her and her works. Initially, research focused on postmodernism, feminism and Canadian identity led by a group of young female researchers. Over time, interest has expanded to include her dystopian narratives, intertextuality and the representation of power structures. Notably, interest in Atwood's work has intensified, stimulated by the TV series adaptation of *The Handmaid's Tale*. Transmedia and audiovisual analyses have been conducted amidst a deeper engagement with contemporary socio-political issues such as ecocriticism, posthumanism, and feminist debate.

KEYWORDS: Margaret Atwood, Canadian Literature, Academic Reception, Feminist Studies, *The Handmaid's Tale*.

MARGARET ATWOOD EN LA ACADEMIA ESPAÑOLA:
TEMAS, ENFOQUES Y EVOLUCIÓN CRÍTICA

RESUMEN

Este artículo revisa exhaustivamente la recepción académica de Margaret Atwood en España durante los últimos cuarenta años. Desde el comienzo de los estudios literarios canadienses en España en los años ochenta, Atwood ha sido una figura clave; más de 200 trabajos académicos versan sobre ella y su obra. Inicialmente, la investigación se centró en el posmodernismo, feminismo e identidad canadiense, liderada por un grupo de jóvenes investigadoras. Actualmente, estos enfoques se han ampliado para incluir temas como sus distopías, la intertextualidad y la representación de estructuras de poder. El interés por su obra se ha intensificado tras la adaptación televisiva de *The Handmaid's Tale*, lo que ha generado análisis transmedia o audiovisuales auspiciados por un mayor compromiso con cuestiones sociopolíticas contemporáneas, como la ecocrítica, el poshumanismo y el discurso feminista.

PALABRAS CLAVE: Margaret Atwood, literatura canadiense, recepción académica, estudios feministas, *El cuento de la criada*.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.25145/j.recaesin.2026.92.18>

REVISTA CANARIA DE ESTUDIOS INGLESES, 92; abril 2026, pp. 363-396; ISSN: e-2530-8335
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ATWOOD STUDIES IN SPAIN: THEMES AND APPROACHES

Since the beginnings of Canadian literary studies in Spain in the 1980s, Margaret Atwood has aroused considerable interest in a broad sector of Spanish academia (Darias-Beautell 2013; Somacarrera 2013b). Forty years after the first printed mention of Margaret Atwood in Spain –Bernd Dietz’s poetry anthology *Antología de la poesía anglocanadiense contemporánea* (1985)– and more than two hundred academic works published since, this essay seeks to review the entire body of Spanish scholarly practice and inquiry on an author who has long been a significant presence in Spanish academia. A presence that has recently become more vibrant, inspiring new research themes and topics while deepening long-standing approaches. Particularly noteworthy are studies framed within postmodernism and feminism, as well as those dealing with her contribution to the construction of Canadian identity. Although these three elements form the backbone of academic production on Atwood, given her experimentation with different literary genres and sub-genres, there are a multitude of themes and characteristics that also give rise to research. Indeed, not only have her novels been analysed, but also her short stories, poetry and essays. Her dystopias and their representation of power structures have received ample critical attention, alongside her neologisms, gender focus, rewritings and intertextual references to the canonical and popular literary tradition, which have been frequently examined, as well as her concern for the environment, amongst others.

Margaret Atwood was received in the late 1980s and 1990s as an established and representative Canadian author. From the sources collected, it can be affirmed that she was particularly welcomed by a group of young female researchers specialising in Canadian, postcolonial, or women’s literature, who were amidst completing their doctoral theses or had recently defended their dissertations within a five-year timeframe. There are exceptions, such as the work of María Luisa Dañobeitia Fernández, María Teresa Gibert Maceda, Pilar Hidalgo and Socorro Suárez Lafuente. These researchers shared the aforementioned research interests, but they were already established in the field and had extensive experience.¹

Research on Atwood in Spain has been growing steadily over time. However, interest in her work has increased exponentially since the broadcast of the TV adaptation of *The Handmaid’s Tale*. Its popularisation within a socio-political context of uncertainty and involution has attracted young researchers and fostered approaches aligned with the zeitgeist and contemporary sensibilities, such as transmedia studies and the growing inclusion of ecocritical and posthumanist theories.

The corpus for this literature review was compiled by searching “Margaret Atwood” in various repositories, including MLA, LiOn, Dialnet, JSTOR and Eureka (the library catalogue of Universidad Pablo de Olavide) as well as Google Scholar.

¹ Of the texts collected for the period 1987-1999, only two are signed by a male researcher: Urbano Viñuela Angulo in co-authorship with Socorro Suárez Lafuente (1999); and José Antonio Zabalbeascoa Bilbao (1992).



Additionally, the emblematic reference guide by McCombs and Palmer (1991), later expanded by Hengen and Thomson (2007) and continued by the Margaret Atwood Society through the “Annual Atwood Bibliography”² section of their journal *Margaret Atwood Studies*, were thoroughly scrutinised. These periodic bibliographies meticulously document a wide range of publications related to Atwood, encompassing translations, interviews, reviews, academic and journalistic articles, monographs, and doctoral theses, amongst others. While not claiming to be exhaustive, these journal compilations are noteworthy for their comprehensiveness, with their most recent volume included in this study (2024) covering works published up to 2022. Consequently, a thorough collection of all scientific publications within the Spanish context has been assembled.

This bibliographical review is organised according to thematic nodes, while it simultaneously provides a glimpse of the chronological evolution, thus offering a panoramic view of Atwoodian studies in Spain. It is worth noting, however, that certain overarching issues—such as gender, feminist, and postmodernist approaches—permeate the forty years of scholarly production reviewed. This article aims to shed light on and evaluate the role played by Margaret Atwood as both an object of research and, where relevant, a teaching subject within Spanish academia, and thus to observe the thematic developments, trends, fluctuations and constituent elements involved.

2. ATWOOD AND ROMANCE

Gender has been a central concern in Atwood studies as from the earliest academic works on the author. The first traced academic text was Lourdes Divasson Cilveti's doctoral dissertation *La novelística de Margaret Atwood: The Edible Woman y Surfacing, dos romances contemporáneos* (1987). In its published version, Divasson Cilveti (1988) argues that Atwood breaks with the archetypal romance model theorised by Northrop Frye: Atwood's female heroine never receives the expected recognition (*anagnorisis*) due to her womanhood. This failed ending, according to the researcher, highlights the injustice faced by women and advocates for the reinvention of humanity. A similar conclusion is achieved by Martín Santana (1995): since there is no apparent social change and women are trapped in an oppressive pattern, humour becomes a tool employed by Atwood as a means of escape in both *The Edible Woman* and *Lady Oracle*.

Cuder (1991) also examined romance, specifically gothic romance, in her doctoral thesis (1993). She claims that the gothic elements of Atwood's novels function as a strategy to explore female discourse and the socio-political barriers that women have historically suffered. Sánchez Calle (1997), applying Atwood's victim

² Specifically, the bibliographies made by Thomson and Hengen (2008; 2009; 2010; 2011; 2012; 2013), Thomson and Ganz (2014; 2015; 2016; 2017; 2018; 2019; 2021; 2022; 2023), and Humphries and Ganz (2024).



theory, argues that Atwood employs the gothic trope of the innocent and powerless protagonist to illustrate that passivity in the face of power abuse offers no immunity against it. Villegas López (1999a; 1999b) incorporates insights from anthropology, theology and feminist literary criticism to study the construction of female identity through religious discourse. Women writers like Atwood in *The Handmaid's Tale* have subverted the patriarchal phallogocentrism promoted by religious discourses through the use of an autobiographical self that represents an act of disobedience.

3. ATWOOD AND CANADIAN IDENTITY

Canadian identity has been a recurring theme as well. The following areas have been analysed: the relationship between feminism and Canadian and Quebecois nationalism (Gibert Maceda 1992; 1993); Canadian identity in confrontation with American identity (Zabalbeascoa Bilbao 1992); the link between nature and national iconography (Carmona Rodríguez 2003; Martín Párraga 2018); travel as a postmodern vector (Carmona Rodríguez 2001); and the unmasking of the images that Canada projects on other countries and on itself (Díaz Dueñas 2006; 2010), with special emphasis on postmodern literature and its carnivalesque elements (Darias-Beautell 2006).

Atwood's reinterpretation of Susanna Moodie (1803-1885), a Canadian pioneer and one of the country's first women writers, is analysed by Dañobeitia Fernández (1990) in terms of intergenerational, cultural and, above all, class contrast. Martín Párraga (2018) also discusses Moodie's figure, arguing that the nineteenth-century writer both inspires and informs Atwood's search for her own identity and the myth of Canadian identity, aspects which he emphasises succinctly in 2020.

There are also scholarly works that intertwine the study of Francophone and Anglophone Canadians, with Atwood serving as one of their references: while Gibert (1992; 1993) focuses on feminism and its links to nationalist movements, Divasson Cilveti (1990) compares Margaret Atwood with Hubert Aquin through the lens of their shared interest in identity. These contrastive studies between Anglophone and Francophone Canada are not revisited in the case of Atwood until twenty years later, with a comparison of her works and those of Marie-Claire Blais (Pich Ponce 2013; 2014).

Midway through the first decade of the twenty-first century, Darias-Beautell (2006) observes a paradigm shift: cultural nationalism is being overcome as the global and the local inevitably converge. In the same vein, Díaz Dueñas (2006, 135) notes that debates on national identity seem to be of less interest to Canadian intellectuals at the end of the century and the beginning of the millennium, although publications on the subject continue. This tendency can also be observed in Spanish academia.



4. THE USE OF LANGUAGE AND POWER IN ATWOOD

Atwood's lexical and discursive uses have been explored from the perspective of both metatextuality and identity enunciation in several of her works. Her female protagonists struggle to find their own forms of expression, given that the inherited and imposed patriarchal language is neither sufficient nor valid (Carrera Suárez 1989; Llantada Díaz 1998; Rodríguez López 2012). Research addressing this analysis is grounded in 1970s feminist linguistic theories, which sought counter-narratives and unprecedented forms of individual expression aimed at dismantling the subjugation of women through language.³

In this sense, it is also worth reviewing the work of Moreno Álvarez (2005; 2006; 2009; 2011), who, through feminist and psychoanalytic poststructuralist theories, explores the protagonists' search for a language of their own through food in *The Edible Woman* and *Lady Oracle*. Women, traditionally passive objects deprived of a language of their own, use food as a means of self-expression and to gain control, thus becoming active subjects who are masters of their own destiny. This notion, mentioned by Calamita and Richart-Marset (2022), is further developed by Duarte (2022) from the perspective of animal studies.

Similarly, López Sánchez-Vizcaíno (2012) employs Foucault's theories of power, punishment, and surveillance and observes that the protagonist of *Alias Grace*, in her marginality, can only articulate her truth through an indirect, symbolic and ambiguous language: "which is the language of the quilt and the language of literature itself" (174). This relationship between language and quilting is further expanded by Torrejón-Tobío (2023) as a representation of female resistance.

The novel *Alias Grace* has inspired research about literature as a platform for marginalised voices. Arias Doblás (2005) examines spiritualism as a postmodern metaphor for the Victorian anxieties present in today's society. Like Carmona Rodríguez (2006), Arias Doblás considers the resignification of the past as a way of understanding the present. Through metafictional dialogue and from their intersectional marginalisation, the women of the past depicted in the novel narrate their own truths and, through this action, delegitimise and challenge official historical narratives (Carmona Rodríguez 2006; López Ramírez 2020; Calvo de Mora Mármol and Sánchez Espinosa 2021). Paradoxically, for Grace Marks, silence is also a tool

³ For Llantada (1998), the protagonist of *Surfacing* strives to find a language that allows her to express her reality until she concludes that, even if not effectively, she needs to communicate. In contrast, for Carrera (1989) the narrator of "Giving Birth" assumes and appropriates this expressive imperfection represented through her fragmentation. Carrera draws on Cameron's theory (1985), which postulates that meanings are neither universal nor immutable, but that it is the user who creates and modifies them. Regarding identity expression, Rodríguez López (2012) explains from Lacanian precepts that the gap between the signifier, the signified and the referent allows the protagonist of "Loulou; or, the Domestic Life of Language" to keep alive the erotic attraction that men feel towards her, a condition that she accepts despite the fact that this language does not represent her.



of resilience (Cores Antepazo 2024) useful for modulating the representation of her own identity by the press (Calvo de Mora Mármol 2021).

In addition to López Sánchez-Vizcaíno (2012), Foucault's theories on power mechanisms have inspired several studies, some of which offer a panoramic overview, such as those of Somacarrera (2006a; 2006b; 2021a). Similarly, the examination of the concept of power in Atwood's oeuvre is the subject of a brief but substantial monograph entitled *Margaret Atwood (1939-): poder y feminismo*, which was the first monograph on Atwood in Spain (Somacarrera 2000c). Somacarrera has also explored the relationship between power and monstrosity in another monograph, *Poder y monstruosidad en la narrativa de Margaret Atwood* (2021b), and in an article on the relationship of monsters and the pandemic in the *MaddAddam* trilogy (2023), both in the wake of *Monster Theory* (Cohen, 1996), whose central hypothesis is that monsters and monstrosity encode present-day anxieties and fears.

Amongst the more specific studies grounded in Foucauldian theories, research has explored how the Republic of Gilead establishes its oppressive system to subjugate handmaids in *The Handmaid's Tale* (Cerezo Moreno 2004) and its creation of heterotopic spaces to indoctrinate teenage girls in the TV series adaptation and *The Testaments* (Tabuyo-Santaclara 2024b); the use of the medical gaze as a tool of patriarchal control in *The Edible Woman* (Cerezo Moreno 2014); the creation of neologisms by power groups to manipulate the population in *Oryx and Crake* (López Rúa 2005) and, especially women, in *The Handmaid's Tale* (López Rúa 2019; 2021). Romero Polo (2021) briefly refers to Foucault's *Surveiller et punir* (1975) in her study of violence in *Cat's Eye* from a feminist perspective, examining the mechanisms of punishment and control of female behaviour.

Beyond Foucault's theories, Díaz Dueñas (2013) highlights the power exercised through language in the *MaddAddam* trilogy, while Martín Párraga (2019) examines phallogocentrism, arguing that the dystopian world and its destruction respond to and are shaped by male sexual desires. Martín Párraga, like Sánchez Calle (2013) in her analysis of the trilogy's characters, reflects on the roles of science and art in this dystopian context. The use of language in *The Handmaid's Tale* is tangentially addressed by Galán Rodríguez (2007) and further explored by Álvarez Sánchez (2021) through the theoretical frameworks of Luce Irigaray and Judith Butler: body and language are wielded as tools of control but also as means of resistance to such control—a notion that gains further depth in the graphic novel adaptation.

5. REWRITINGS, INTERTEXTUALITY AND METAPHORS

Studies on rewritings and intertextuality in Margaret Atwood's work have been particularly fruitful, thanks to the author's compelling and continuous dialogue with mythological, canonical and popular texts. Atwood is renowned for her reinterpretations of these texts from a contemporary perspective that disrupts and challenges inherited patriarchal, colonial and anthropocentric foundations. Within Spanish academic research, Suárez Lafuente (1997) analyses the intertextual references in *The Robber Bride* through a feminist approach. From the same perspective, Navarro



López (2019) studies the references to folk tales and the Bible in *The Handmaid's Tale*. Mendoza Fillola (2008) highlights the significance of hypotextual references in the metafictional rewriting of “The Little Red Hen” and how they forge a connection with Atwood’s readership. Additionally, her metafiction has inspired didactic proposals for teaching English as a second language (Pérez Valverde 2001).

Furthermore, Atwood’s rewritings of Shakespeare have been studied: from her feminist retelling of *Hamlet*, “Gertrude Talks Back,” in which a determined Gertrude takes the floor and dismantles sexist prejudices (Cuder 2001), to the contemporary transposition of *The Tempest* articulated in *Hag-Seed*, a doubly original reinterpretation, as the author displays her (original) wit, but is also faithful to the primary (or original) source (Muñoz-Valdivieso 2017).

However, if there is a postmodern and feminist rewriting that gives voice to the silenced, questions and dismantles official narratives, constructs new inclusive discourses with intersectional perspectives and undermines the foundation of the oppressive, binary patriarchal structure, that work is *The Penelopiad* (2005). This retelling of the *Odyssey* from the perspective of Penelope and her twelve murdered maids has been extensively studied (Cabanilles 2007; Beteta Martín 2009; Fernández Hoyos 2011; Martín Gutiérrez 2012; Rodríguez Salas 2015; González Villafaña 2016; Caballero Artigas 2017; Romero Lorenzo 2021; Zalbidea-Paniagua 2024). More recently, this framework has been expanded through dialogue with other reinterpretations of Penelope, such as those by Begoña Caamaño (López Gregoris 2018), Patrizia Monaco (Martín Clavijo 2018) and Madeline Miller (Díaz Morillo 2020). These writers seem to respond to Atwood, modifying and challenging her work while continuing to critique patriarchal structures. Additionally, *Atwood's Penelope* has inspired comparisons with other female characters, such as Molly Bloom from Joyce’s *Ulysses* (Rodríguez-Trinado 2024). Notably, *The Penelopiad*, due to its very nature, has also been examined within the field of classical reception studies. Indeed, Nisa Cáceres and Moreno Soldevila (2023) consider *The Penelopiad* a foundational work in the twenty-first century rewriting of the Trojan myths from a feminine perspective.

Atwood’s poetic rewriting of classical Graeco-Latin myths has also been critically analysed, such as the myth of Eurydice (Cabanilles 2007; Pérez Romero and Oliva Cruz 2011).⁴ Within the field of classical studies, Muñoz García de Iturrospe offers significant contributions by linking the knowledge and use of Latin to phallogocentrism (2009; 2012). This scholar briefly explores the role of Latin in Atwood’s work, portraying it as a symbol of women’s appropriation of the classical tradition –and by extension, knowledge– in *The Blind Assassin* (2009). Furthermore, she examines the engravings and other metalinguistic elements in *The Handmaid's Tale* as references to the traditional male dominance over language and power (2012).

Gibert Maceda traces the rewritings and intertextual references to *Frankenstein* (2018c) in Atwood’s work, as well as her allusions to *The Wizard of Oz*, both from L. Frank Baum’s 1900 novel and Victor Fleming’s 1945 film adaptation (Gibert

⁴ Amparo Arróspide translated several poems for the literary journal *Espéculo* (1999) in which Atwood’s connection with classical mythology stands out.



Maceda 2019). She studies the metaphorical language used by Atwood, arguing that the metaphors in *Life Before Man* and *The Handmaid's Tale* reveal the contrast between fantasy and reality (Gibert Maceda 1990; 1991). Similarly, this researcher explores Atwood's metaphorical language from several perspectives: the aesthetics of old age (2005), health and illness (2010), childhood (2018d), and representations of world wars and the suffering of their victims (2014; 2018a; 2018e).⁵ These images often challenge or parody societal preconceptions. Finally, she also scrutinises the presence of metaphor in Atwood's short stories (Gibert Maceda 2012), highlighting how it enhances and intensifies semantic interpretation, while simultaneously provoking reflection in the reading public through metatextual and metafictional elements.

Similarly, López-Rodríguez (2023) examines the metaphorical representations of women's bodies as machines and animals in *Surfacing*. These metaphors depict the experiences of the female characters and expose the limitations and control imposed on their bodies by Western patriarchy.

6. POETRY, ESSAYS AND SHORT STORIES

Considerable critical attention has been devoted in Spanish academia to the poetry of Margaret Atwood. As previously stated, she was included in the first Canadian anthology compiled and translated by Bernd Dietz (1985).⁶ Atwood's poetry has also been analysed from a variety of perspectives. In addition to the aforementioned studies on poetry about classical myths and Susanna Moodie, there is the notable critical work of Pilar Somacarrera, who identifies heterosexual and power relations as highly relevant themes in Atwood's poetry and prose (1999; 2000a; 2000b; 2000c; 2001; 2006a; 2006b; 2007; 2021a). For instance, Somacarrera (1999) examines power relations in the poetry collection *Power Politics* (1971), a study she later expands by analysing rhetorical figures (2000a) and metaphors (2001). Additionally, she has explored Atwood's political stance through her most vindicative poetry, produced between 1970 and 1980 (Somacarrera 2007; 2012).

Recently, Atwood has been compared to the Spanish poet and contemporary Juana Castro (1945-) in terms of their shared struggle against phallogocentrism (Martín Párraga 2022), thus continuing the transnational trajectory that has been observed, albeit modestly, since 2010. Sánchez Calle, for her part, examines the

⁵ Gibert Maceda (2014; 2018a; 2018e) and Díaz Dueñas (2006; 2010) concur that Atwood's oeuvre is characterised by anti-war sentiments and avoids capitulating to the trope of portraying soldiers and victims as heroes. Atwood distances herself from the conventional Canadian perspective on the world wars as sacrifices for the common good and, instead, she emphasises the futility and profound suffering experienced by both direct and indirect victims of war.

⁶ MacDermott (1985), in her review of Dietz's anthology, highlights the underrepresentation of Canada in literature translated into Spanish, as well as other countries of so-called Commonwealth literature, which may have received slightly greater representation thanks to the international awards won by their authors.



poems in *The Door* in light of the author's theories on writing, age, and death (2018a; 2018b), as well as the representations of nature and the environment in a selection of recent poems, including the collection *Dearly* (Sánchez Calle 2024). While the essay *Negotiating with the Dead: A Writer on Writing* serves as a tool from which to analyse Atwood's positioning towards writers and writing (Muñoz-Valdivieso 2017; Sánchez Calle 2018a; 2018b), it has been the subject of a study on the autobiographical genre and a reference for transnational and gender-genre comparisons in Durán (2009; 2019).⁷ Cuder (2008) studies the interconnection with the writer, the reader and the text addressed in Atwood's essay applied to the metafictional storytelling in *The Blind Assassin* and *Oryx and Crake* from a narratological point of view.

In the context of short stories, the works previously cited⁸ can be expanded with Pérez Valverde's (2012) revisions in terms of gender and genre through metafiction in "women's novels"; and those of López Ramírez (2021a; 2021b; 2022) on the stereotypical elements and characters of gothic noir literature in "The Freeze-Dried Groom," the female monster or vampire in "Lusus Naturae" and "I Dream of Zenia with the Bright Red Teeth." Also noteworthy is the article by Núñez-Puente (2020), in which she reflects on female heterosexual relationships through the study of a transnational selection of short stories by women writers produced between 1936 and 2016, including "Rape Fantasies." Short stories and micronarrative are approached by Saponjic-Jovanovic (2018) in her dissertation, also from a transnational perspective. It is also worth mentioning that monographs such as Somacarrera (2000c) and Cuder (2003), in their review of Atwood's generic bibliography, take this concise form of text into account, as does Gibert Maceda (2004) in her volume on Anglophone Canadian literature.

7. MOTHERHOOD, DYSTOPIAS, POSTMODERNITY AND PEDAGOGICAL MATERIAL

Several researchers have subjected the representations of motherhood and mother-child relationships to analytical scrutiny, with a clear interest in the female figures, which, as Gibert (1994, 334) points out, are much more developed by the

⁷ It should be clarified that Durán distances herself from any form of essentialist feminism and rejects the notion that women write autobiographies with common characteristics that are completely unrelated to male autobiographies. Her 2009 gender analysis includes male writers with a twofold aim: first, to remind us that men are also a gender and, therefore, any gender study must take them into account; second, to dismantle the assumption that the two sexes write radically different autobiographies. In 2019, Durán focuses solely on women's autobiographies, examining the transnational dialogue within the autobiographical genre or "autocritography," as the chosen corpus blends literary criticism with autobiographical elements.

⁸ Carrera Suárez (1989; 1994), Divasson Cilveti (1989b), Cuder Domínguez (2001), Carmona Rodríguez (2003), Díaz García (2005), Díaz Dueñas (2006), Darias-Beautell (2006) and Gibert Maceda (2012), who also considers Atwood's short stories in her search for image repetitions in other articles.



author and studied by critics than their male counterparts. This researcher also demonstrates the recurrence of the motif of motherhood in Atwood from a critical position towards prejudices and idealisations of the relationships between mothers and daughters. Hidalgo's (1990) study on the maternal figure and feminine identity is equally panoramic, and in a sense, it can be considered a precursor to Arias Doblas' research on the maternal figure. Arias Doblas (1999; 2001; 2004; 2006) employs an interdisciplinary approach, integrating psychological, psychoanalytical and sociological feminist studies, particularly those of Nancy J. Chodorov in her analysis of Atwood's maternal-filial relations.

Analogously, Cerezo Moreno (2007) in her study of *Lady Oracle* sheds light on the transmission of gender violence from mothers to daughters and how it reproduces male dominance and female submission. Recently, Muñoz-González (2021b; 2023) and Velasco-Montiel (2024b) have studied motherhood from a posthuman and ecofeminist perspective while, in a similar vein, Duarte (2024b) highlights the parallels between the maternal experiences of handmaids and those of domesticated non-human animals. Moreover, in his review of pregnancy and childbirth in Anglophone literature from the nineteenth century to the present, Cortés Vieco (2021) uses *The Handmaid's Tale* as a reference for the twentieth and twenty-first centuries and concludes that

female empowerment or powerlessness in sexual reproduction and maternity are indicative of the progression or the regression in terms of gender equality, and that literature—together with its retrospective critical analysis—provides barometers not only to mark and honor women's (pro)creative victories, but also to alert them to the reappearance of patriarchal revenants, seeking to usurp their (un)maternal freedom and their uniquely resonant voices narrating pregnancy and childbirth. (236-237)

Arias Doblas (2006) was the first to apply trauma theory to Atwoodian studies in the context of Spanish academia, interpreting *Cat's Eye* as a work that anticipates the interest of the contemporary Anglophone novel on this subject. Building on this premise, Romero Polo (2021), in her analysis of violence between women through the feminist theories of Butler and Witting, examines the novel and demonstrates that violence can be conceived as a tool for enforcing the performativity of gender. The protagonist ultimately overcomes her trauma through literature and forgiving her aggressors, breaking, thus, the cycle of violence and subverting patriarchal law. Gibert Maceda (2016) also explores the theme of trauma extensively in *The Blind Assassin*, particularly in relation to memory, through a narrator who mutates and splits into multiple selves—the self that remembers and the remembered selves, a division that recalls the fragmentation portrayed in "Giving Birth" (Carrera Suárez 1994).

The dystopian subgenre has proven to be a fertile ground not only for developing theories about power and the use and creation of language, but also for reflecting on forms of survival, such as irony (Divasson Cilveti 1989a); ethical dilemmas, including the ease with which we can become the 'other' (Clemente Bustamante 2008); the harmful ways in which communities attempt to defend themselves from dangerous environments (Díaz Dueñas 2013); the complex



relationship between human beings and science, as Atwood employs scientific innovation to warn of the dangers inherent in contemporary society (Clemente Bustamante 2009); and transnational intersections with other novels and current concerns regarding women and the use of the past (Elices Agudo 2023).

In recent years, on an ethical level, studies of an anthropocene or posthumanist nature have offered significant insights. Researchers such as Cuadrado Payeras (2019) examine these themes in works like the *MaddAddam* trilogy and *The Heart Goes Last*. Similarly, Muñoz-González (2021a; 2021b; 2021c; 2022b; 2023; 2024) links ethical enquiry in the framework of the Anthropocene to social, gender and environmental issues. However, credit for inaugurating the posthuman ethical review in Atwoodian studies must again be given to Arias Doblas (2011) focusing on the relationship between literature and science. This link is evident in *Cat's Eye*, where the scientific method together with biology and physics structure the narrative and the work of the protagonist (Sánchez Calle 2010), a relationship that Arias Doblas (2004) also observes in *Life Before Man*, although in this case the scientific emphasis is on palaeontology, which symbolises the need to travel to the past in order to understand the present—a theme consistent with her earlier observations.

Spectrality and the spectral turn occupy a relevant place in Arias Doblas' aforementioned study of *Alias Grace*, where she values the “archeological project of digging out the past” (2005, 102), as it provides a clarifying vision of the present. Gibert Maceda (2018b) also reflects on spectrality as a trope in the story “Death by Landscape” and relates it to nature and debates about Canadian identity and literature. Finally, it is worth mentioning the study by Alonso-Breto (2009), who analyses *Surfacing* and *Lady Oracle* as two novels in which modernity and postmodernity intertwine; she confirms the theories of Jean François Lyotard, who argues that postmodernity emerges within the broader context of modernity.

Atwood's work has also inspired the creation of teaching/learning materials and the application of new methodologies. In addition to the previously mentioned work by Pérez Valverde (2001), Pilar Cuder's *Margaret Atwood: A Beginner's Guide* (2003) and Gibert Maceda's *Canadian Literature in the English Language* (2004) are noteworthy contributions. Monographs of interest to both students and scholars include Pilar Somacarrera's *Margaret Atwood (1939-): Power and Feminism* (2000c) and *Poder y monstruosidad en la narrativa de Margaret Atwood* (2021b). Strategies such as close reading from a gender perspective have been reviewed by Calvo de Mora Mármol and Sánchez Espinosa (2021) for the study of *Alias Grace*, and have also been applied within the framework of ‘feminist new materialist pedagogy’ to *The Handmaid's Tale* (Revelles-Benavente 2023; Revelles-Benavente and Lorente Acosta 2024). The latter two works combine both the *The Handmaid's Tale* novel and its series adaptation, as does Velasco-Montiel (2023), who examines Canadian literature and dystopia from a gender perspective for high school students while providing instructional material.



8. TRANSLATION AND RECEPTION STUDIES

The study of Atwood's works in translation began in 1998 with Pilar Somacarrera's research, motivated by a lecture on English-speaking women poets, for which she had to translate Atwood's poetry (Somacarrera 2005, 162). Since then, she has translated and analysed Atwood's poetry (1999; 2000a; 2000b; 2001; 2005; 2007; 2012), documenting her approach to translation, the challenges she faced, and the elements she prioritised in her translation through her research (2005; 2013a) and the prefaces to the poetry collections⁹ she has translated.

Regarding the translation of Atwood's fiction, Díaz García (2005) provides a critical analysis of her own rendering of *Murder in the Dark* (1983), while Fernández Agüero (2007) and Hernández Rodilla (2023) focus on Atwood's dystopias and the creation of neologisms in *Oryx and Crake* (2003) and *The Handmaid's Tale* (1985), respectively. These studies reach similar conclusions, emphasising the importance of recognising and preserving the author's characteristic style in translation. Velasco-Montiel (2024a), for her part, applies a Feminist Translation Studies approach to three editions of *The Handmaid's Tale* in Spanish (1987, 2001 and 2017) and concludes that, over time, the revised texts have a more inclusive perspective and better reflect the author's assertions about (in)equality between men and women.

In 2009, in the wake of von Flotow and Nischik's groundbreaking study (2007), Somacarrera began to take an interest in researching the reception of Canadian literature, including Atwood (Somacarrera 2009). As a result, in 2013 she published *Made in Canada, Read in Spain*, a volume on the evolution and situation of Canadian literature in Spain, which provides an overview of the reception of Canadian literature (2013b), as well as a chapter on Atwood (2013a). Thus, Somacarrera analyses the factors and actors –i.e., “authors, translators, publishers, editors, readers, publicity officers, reviewers, and cultural and political institutions” (2013a, 109)– that influenced the transfer of Atwood's work from *The Handmaid's Tale* publication in Spanish in 1987 (109-114) until 2012, when *Tengo hambre de ti (I'm Starving for You)* was published. In the early days, Atwood was presented in Spain as an alternative, rather than canonical, author within science fiction and women's literature, but her symbolic capital grew over time (Martín-Lucas 2012; Somacarrera 2013a, 114-15, 127; 2017a, 146). Martín-Lucas (2012, 301) notes that Atwood's beginnings in Spain coincided with the rise of feminist literature and acknowledges, as Somacarrera (2013a) does, that as she received awards such as the Booker Prize (2000) and the Prince of Asturias (2008), her work gained further promotion. In the press, Atwood has received preferential treatment compared to other Canadian authors. She is presented as an intellectual figure in the Spanish literary system, and her status as the most prominent Canadian author, along with her numerous awards and perennial candidacy for the Nobel Prize, is repeatedly emphasised (Somacarrera 2013a).

⁹ Specifically, *Power Politics*, *The Door* and *True Stories*.



Similarly, Pascual Soler (2013) examines paratexts by using Genette's (1997) theory, i.e., flaps, advertisements, etc., alongside critical reviews, to examine the conditions under which Canadian women authors are promoted. These authors are framed within a cosmopolitan context that minimises or obscures any trace of their nationality.

As for Atwood's reception in other official Spanish languages, Alonso-Breto and Ortega-Sáez (2013) have conducted studies on the Catalan reception, stating that Atwood is one of the most translated Canadian authors into Catalan. In this language, Atwood has enjoyed a privileged position, with some of her titles being translated into Catalan before being translated into Spanish, particularly in the case of children's literature. In this regard, Carné's (2012) study of the anthology *Cares a la finestra: 20 dones poetes de parla anglesa del segle XX*, in which Atwood appears, edited and translated from English into Catalan by Montserrat Abelló, is particularly relevant. Carné shows that, with this anthology, Abelló intended to champion women's poetry in Catalan literature, as their presence was lacking both in quantity and quality (2012, 860). Notably, Atwood's works were not translated into other co-official languages, such as Galician and Basque, until after 2017.

In March of 2017, Margaret Atwood was awarded the degree of Doctor *Honoris Causa* by the Universidad Autónoma de Madrid. Somacarrera played a pivotal role in proposing Margaret Atwood, and she served as her doctoral godmother. This recognition was bestowed in acknowledgment of Atwood's "role as an advocate of human rights and environmental protection" (Somacarrera 2017b, 16). That year, 2017, marked a shift in the reception of Atwood, as attested by Somacarrera (2019), who reviews the impact and international reception of the dystopian series, analyses journalistic articles, and connects these phenomena to the social and political processes taking place at the time, as well as the ideological appropriation of the work. Velasco-Montiel (2024a) builds upon Somacarrera's research (2013 and 2019) to study the reception and translation of Atwood's work up until 2023. While the perception of Atwood as a feminist author has been strategically utilised by various critics and journalists (Somacarrera 2013a), from 2017 onward, her association with feminism has become an enabler of her celebrity status.

9. RECENT LINES OF RESEARCH AND STUDIES OF AUDIOVISUAL ADAPTATIONS OF ATWOOD'S WORK

The *Handmaid's Tale* phenomenon has resonated in Spanish academia, leading to a stream of studies on Atwood in general and on her dystopian novels in particular. A third of all academic research on Atwood has been published since 2019, and of this fraction, more than half deals with her dystopias. It should be clarified that only those studies specifically centred on Margaret Atwood are considered in this section. This is due to the primary objective of this work which is to analyse the reception of the Canadian author, not the transmedia products derived from her literary work. Such is the case of *The Handmaid's Tale* TV series which, in its sixth season, already has an (id)entity almost independent from its creator. Nevertheless,



studies such as Aguado-Peláez (2019), Piñeiro Otero (2019), Martínez-García and Rubio-Hernández (2020), Arocena Badillos (2021), Cortés-Selva and Martínez-Guillem (2021), Gámez Fuentes and Maseda García (2021) and Giménez Mateu (2021a; 2021b; 2022; 2023) prioritise the audiovisual format and share a gender-focused perspective, while remaining partially connected to the author. These studies reflect a new trend: an increasing emphasis on the audiovisual medium. However, the novel and its filmic adaptation had already been studied in Spain by Florén Serrano (1994). In her comparison between *The Handmaid's Tale* and the 1990 film directed by Volker Schlöndorff, Florén Serrano highlights the chronological changes as well as the erotic emphasis that trivialises the sexual violence of the novel. Within hybrid or transmedia works, we can highlight Muñoz-González (2019a), Revelles-Benavente (2021), Tabuyo-Santaclara (2024a; 2024b), as well as the monograph *El cuento de la criada: ensayos para la incursión en la República de Gilead* (Mead et al. 2019).

Revelles-Benavente (2021) conceptualises the “intra-mat-externality” methodology—which combines Barad’s intra-action theory with Kristeva’s metatextuality—as a strategy of feminist resilience to counteract the neoliberal takeover of the movement. She applies this framework to the case study of what she describes as “*The Handmaid's Tale* phenomenon,”¹⁰ which encompasses “the novel, the television series, and the political demonstrations inspired by the book and the show that have been organised around the world” (2021, 192). Tabuyo-Santaclara (2024b), analyses the subversive behaviours of teenage girls in Gilead, both in *The Testaments* and in the series, from the perspective of girlhood studies and affect theory. Additionally, she examines (2024a) the socio-political and abortion contexts of *The Handmaid's Tale* and compares the novel’s setting to the Reagan era and the series’ setting to the Trump presidency. She also explores the limits of representation in the use of the handmaid’s uniform as a protest symbol, an element that transcends both cultural products.

Indeed, since 2019, *The Handmaid's Tale* has attracted significant scholarly attention. Particularly, the series fuelled current reproductive debates,¹¹ especially around surrogacy¹² (Serón Navas 2020; Aparicio Rodríguez 2021)¹³. Duarte (2024b) explores, through the absent referent theory, the objectification of the female reproductive body in the novel and compares it with the exploitation of non-human animals. In this regard, the studies conducted by Muñoz-González (2019a, 2019b) merit specific attention due to her critical examination of surrogacy

¹⁰ Similarly, Fiona Tolan (2023, 149-151) draws on the concept coined by Huggan (2001) known as the “Atwood phenomenon” to develop the multidimensional scope and expansion of Atwood’s later work.

¹¹ López-Rodríguez (2023) also highlights the contemporary relevance of *Surfacing* in relation to women’s sexual and reproductive rights, which are still actively challenged today by the conservatives and their defense of the “traditional family.”

¹² While the term *surrogacy* appears in recent academic discourse, Divasson Cilveti (1990, 212) had already used the expression “vientres de alquiler” (“wombs for hire”) in reference to this dystopia.

¹³ In the same vein, and pointing to the success of the series, Casas Janices (2019) studies fertility and reproduction (including surrogacy) in dystopian novels written by women in Spanish.



as a method characterised by systemic racism, classism, and colonialist ideology that effectively undermines the autonomy and legal legitimacy of women to make decisions regarding their bodies. The researcher undertakes a thorough evaluation of the dystopian elements in the series and interrogates the emphasis placed on its perceived contemporary resonance.¹⁴ Although she does not deny this relevance and conducts an illuminating analysis of the parallels between the handmaids and surrogate mothers –women reduced to “two-legged wombs” dependent on male seed, which she analyses in depth (Muñoz-González 2019b)– she concludes that the series has undergone updates in certain aspects, such as technology, sexual orientations, and race, reflecting the progress that has been made since 1985:

[L]a serie, a pesar de no mantener intacta la complejidad de la novela, es una exitosa evolución de la misma, capaz de adaptarse y sobrevivir porque mantiene aún vivo uno de los más importantes mensajes de la obra original: no podemos rendirnos ni tolerar ningún recorte en los derechos civiles ni humanos en favor de ninguna pretendida seguridad, privilegio o ideología. (2019b, 82)

Muñoz-González also examines the concept of “feminist dystopia” in relation to *MaddAddam* (2013) and *The Handmaid’s Tale* (1985). While *MaddAddam* includes certain emancipatory achievements, its portrayal of women and their actions ultimately reinforces patriarchal patterns. In contrast, labeling *The Handmaid’s Tale* as a feminist dystopia would be reductive, as the novel conveys “multilayered meanings since it aims at numerous other targets in its social criticism agenda” (Muñoz-González 2022a, 192). She further develops this topic in her monograph *Posthumanity in the Anthropocene: Margaret Atwood’s Dystopias*, where she examines this and two other key dimensions: “images of posthumanism that express concerns about technology, engagement with environmental humanities and critique of the Anthropocene, and genre questions related to the dystopian form” (2023, 4).

As already stated, in recent years there has been a notable surge in the number of anthropocene or posthuman studies undertaken by researchers such as Cuadrado Payeras (2019), Muñoz-González (2021a; 2021b; 2021c; 2022b; 2023; 2024), Somacarrera (2021b; 2023), Revelles-Benavente (2023) and Velasco-Montiel (2024b). These scholars highlight gender, social and environmental issues, the latter being one of the main reasons she was awarded the degree of Doctor *Honoris Causa* by the Universidad Autónoma de Madrid, alongside her advocacy for human rights. This recognition underscores academia’s growing concern for environmental matters. The ecocritical perspective in *The Handmaid’s Tale* has been the subject of scholarly investigation by Rodríguez Avis (2021), while being a contributing factor in Pina Arrabal’s (2019) study of *Surfacing*, gender, and victimization. Additionally, Martín Párraga (2019) examined this perspective in *Oryx and Crake*, while Carmona Rodríguez (2023) briefly mentioned it in relation to the story “Age of the Lead.”

¹⁴ Somacarrera (2019) emphasises the creators’ interest (and even Atwood’s, albeit unconsciously) in accentuating the topicality of the text as a means of promoting the series.



Less critical attention has been paid to racial issues. In this sense, Alegría-Hernández's (2022) work on the zombifying male gaze in *Oryx and Crake* from a post-racial perspective opens up a new space of analysis that challenges conventional perceptions and delves into the complex intersection between racial identity and Atwood's dystopian narrative, an issue also noted in Tabuyo-Santaclara (2022; 2024a). From a Jungian and LGBTQ+ perspective, Pardillos Rodríguez (2022) explores Atwood's female narrators, concluding their female companions are counterparts that reflect their fears and repressions.

The concept of resilience has been examined from various theoretical perspectives: affect theory in *The Heart Goes Last* (Fraile-Marcos, 2021), silence in *Alias Grace* (Cores Antepazo 2024), and the posthuman (Revelles-Benavente, 2021). The theory of affect is also reflected in Revelles-Benavente's (2023) pedagogical pilot plan, as well as Tabuyo-Santaclara's (2024b) analysis, in which she concludes that teenage girls use affect to break free from the illusion of happiness imposed by Gilead's regime in order to seek their own forms of happiness.

The Covid-19 pandemic also influenced Atwood studies. Velasco-Montiel (2021) and Somacarrera (2023), amongst other topics, reflect on the parallels between the pandemic and the *MaddAddam* trilogy.¹⁵ Machado-Jiménez (2021) examines how a global health crisis like the coronavirus pandemic can be a fertile ground for increasing gender inequalities and misogyny –which she terms a “gender pandemic” caused by the “*patriarcavirus*.” She draws connections between these contemporary issues and the experiences of women in *The Handmaid's Tale*, where patriarchy justifies its oppressive policies toward women and their bodies by virtue of epidemics and environmental disasters. Biology and society thus combine to reinforce female subjugation. Her study gives rise to reflections on Spanish politics and feminism, connections that have also been made in the debates on surrogate motherhood (Serón Navas 2020), the gang rape trial known as La Manada case (Núñez-Puente 2020), and the establishment of the Ministry of Equality along with the Spanish far right's reaction to it (Revelles-Benavente 2021).

Finally, although they have been cited throughout the text, it is worth mentioning once again the doctoral theses on Atwood in Spain. These demonstrate both the constant interest in the author evidenced in Spanish academia and the multifaceted nature of her work, which allows her to be studied from numerous perspectives and themes, although it should be noted that most of the following research has a strong gender or feminist focus. In chronological order, the theses defended in Spain on Margaret Atwood have dealt with the application of the narrative concept of romance in her work (Divasson Cilveti 1987; Cuder Domínguez 1993), religious discourse and women (Villegas López 1999a), mother-daughter relationships (Arias Doblas 2001), eating disorders (Moreno Álvarez 2005), Homeric rewritings (De la Riva Fort 2016), short stories and flash fiction (Saponjic-Jovanovic

¹⁵ Similarly inspired, González-Campos (2022) includes *Oryx and Crake* in his article on the broader context of pandemics and dystopian fiction in English.



2018), the posthuman (Muñoz-González 2021a; Cuadrado Payeras 2023), the audiovisual adaptation of *The Handmaid's Tale* (Giménez Mateu 2022), ecofeminist and animal studies (Duarte 2024a) and Atwood's reception and translation in Spain from a feminist approach (Velasco-Montiel 2024a).¹⁶

There is also a larger presence of the term “feminist” and similar terms in Spanish academic production from 2019 onwards. However, its use is not new: Somacarrera (2000c) and Arias Doblas (2001) had already used this term, and Carrera Suárez (1989) openly applied feminist linguistic theories even earlier. This recent increase, nonetheless, is evidence of a renewed and growing social and academic interest in approaching and studying the author from a feminist perspective. Paradoxical in this sense is Núñez-Puente's statement: “my theoretical and critical approach is not only feminist, but also socially committed” (2020, 108, my translation); or Calvo de Mora Mármol and Sánchez Espinosa's assertion, which is categorical: “The overall perspective of this article is feminist” (2021, 2). This explicitly feminist stance has gained strength in recent years, probably, as Revelles-Benavente (2021, 190) points out, as a consequence of the massification of feminism, which requires a constant redefinition of the movement and an open stance that contradicts the false idea of scientific neutrality.

The latest academic works perceive the risk of feminism being diluted amidst its growing popularisation and of patriarchal positions infiltrating gender studies under a false pretence of equality, which is why they adopt a more militant position. Similarly, critiques of neoliberalism and capitalism are also reflected in these studies on dystopian fiction (Cuadrado Payeras 2019; Fraile-Marcos 2021; Revelles-Benavente 2021; 2023; Muñoz-González 2022b; Alegría-Hernández 2022; Duarte 2024b; Velasco-Montiel 2024b). This dystopian shift, alongside advancements in feminist thought, expands beyond traditional theories like Kristeva's and Irigaray's explorations of identity and language, incorporating more recent contributions such as Judith Butler's gender deconstruction and posthuman theories by Donna Haraway and Rosi Braidotti. Feminist inquiries in Atwoodian studies are not novel but rather build upon existing currents within the discipline. Female scholars conscientiously continue their resistance against phallogocentrism, generating knowledge from a perspective that seeks to denounce inequality and promote inclusivity.

¹⁶ Additionally, at least three new doctoral research projects are, at the time of writing, still in progress: an intersectional feminist analysis of *The Handmaid's Tale* (Tabuyo-Santaclara, 2022); the motif of sewing in contemporary literature, explored by Celia Torrejón-Tobío in her PhD thesis *Tirando del hilo: el motivo de la costura en la literatura contemporánea*, within the PhD program in Languages, Texts, and Contexts at the University of Granada (in progress); and Sara Calvo de Mora's research, *Servants and Peddlers: Multiplicity of Identities and the Working-Class “Other” in Margaret Atwood's Alias Grace* (in progress).



10. CONCLUSIONS

Over the past four decades, Margaret Atwood's presence in Spanish academia has evolved from an initial focus on gender, Canadian identity, and postmodernism to a more diverse and interdisciplinary body of research. The diversity of her work is reflected in academic research, although her novels have been particularly favoured, especially in the last five years following the resurgence of interest sparked by the TV adaptation of *The Handmaid's Tale*. Gender and feminism have remained central themes, though recent scholarship indicates a resignification of feminism from an activist perspective.

After reviewing the cited works, it is evident that research on Atwood in Spain has been predominantly conducted by young female researchers since the early days of her academic reception. This trend has continued, with many of these scholars continuing to engage with Atwood's work while new young female researchers delve into her writings. Of the 202 texts analysed, 172 were authored solely by female researchers, 26 by male researchers, three co-authored by both genders, and one book dedicated to Atwood featuring contributions from both male and female scholars.

Whereas the relevance of gender and postmodernism has persisted, interest in Canadian identity declined in the 2000s, paralleling trends in Canadian academia (Darias Beutell 2013) and Atwood's own thematic shifts. The study of language and power in her works remains a constant, often intersecting with metatextuality and identity, particularly regarding the agency of her female protagonists. Spanish academia has maintained a steady interest in these themes over the past four decades, focusing on how repressed and marginalised characters express themselves—whether through food, silence, quilting, or, most significantly, by telling their own stories.

Over the past five years, however, her speculative works have garnered significant attention, aligning with her shift towards dystopian fiction, a trend also observed internationally (Howells 2021, 8). Since the publication of *Oryx and Crake* (2003), the Canadian author has primarily engaged with dystopian themes, alongside two commissioned retellings of classical works: *The Penelopiad* (2005) and *Hag-Seed* (2016). The former work has inspired studies on rewritings and intertextuality, which gained traction after its publication in 2005 and has been embraced by English scholars, classicists, and those exploring transnational perspectives. Among the genres Atwood explores, essays have received relatively little attention. When studied, they are often used for contextualising her fiction rather than as standalone subjects.

The 2017 TV adaptations have amplified scholarly interest. New research on Atwood has attracted a broader range of scholars, expanding approaches and subjects of study. While women have always been a focal point, recent studies have begun to address other marginalised subjects, including girls and non-human animals. Ecocriticism, always present in Atwood's work but previously underexplored in Spanish academia—which has traditionally prioritized themes like power, language, metatextuality, intertextuality, and motherhood—is now regaining recognition. A shift reflected in the honorary doctorate she received in 2017 from the Universidad Autónoma de Madrid, which recognised her advocacy for human rights and environmental protection. More importantly, this dictinction also acknowledged her



exploration of what it means to be human –a recurring theme in her works– which remains a significant focus in recent academic studies, underscoring the enduring social relevance of her literature.

The increasing scholarly attention on Margaret Atwood's works in Spanish academia, particularly since 2019, reflects a growing intersection between feminist literary studies, dystopian fiction, and audiovisual adaptations. The surge in research, especially on her dystopias, highlights not only Atwood's relevance in contemporary debates on gender, reproductive rights, and power dynamics but also the shifting academic landscape toward transmedia narratives and posthuman perspectives.

Despite these advancements, some gaps remain in Atwood studies. Recent research, for example, has just begun to address racial issues and intersectionality. While feminist theory continues to be a central framework, newer perspectives are emerging to enrich it, such as affect theory, queer theory, critiques of neoliberal feminism, and posthuman and ecocritical feminism. These approaches expand the conversation to include environmental and non-human concerns, while maintaining a strong commitment to social justice and inclusivity.

Ultimately, Atwood's work relentlessly mirrors contemporary anxieties, its interdisciplinary potential being fully embraced by Spanish academia. The current proliferation of feminist, posthuman, ecocritical, and audiovisual research signals a sustained and evolving engagement with her narratives. Future Atwood studies will likely continue to further inquiry into what it means to be human and how to face present threats without losing our humanity.



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