LANGUAGE CHANGE AND SOCIAL MOBILITY IN 19TH CENTURY BRITAIN

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Abstract*: This paper derives new estimates of social mobility in England and Wales between 1851 and 1901, using a large new dataset of fathers and sons linked across censuses from 1851–1881 and 1881–1901. Mobility rates were substantially greater than has been previously estimated, to the extent that mobility in the 1850s was only slightly less than in the 1970s. The development of mass public education in England after 1870 thus had surprisingly modest effects over the long run. Earnings mobility increased moderately for the first generation under public education (1881–1901), but did not increase over the course of the twentieth century.*

Keywords*: income, status, language, dialect, mobility, Britain.*

Introduction

In assessing the level of equality in a society, it is natural to look first at the distribution of economic resources across the population. A high concentration of income or wealth indicates inequality in economic outcomes. However, it is equally important to consider the rate of social mobility, which indicates the equality not of outcome, but of opportunity. In a society that rewards skill and effort, which vary across the population, outcome inequality will always exist. The impact of that inequality, although, depends critically on the extent of social mobility—in other words, the extent to which occupation, class, and earnings are transmitted across generations and across the work life. Empirical studies of

economic equality and distribution have long been a mainstay of the economics literature. Recently, widespread scholarly interest in the empirical study of social mobility has brought our understanding of mobility in contemporary economies in line with our understanding of distribution.1 Economic history, on the other hand, has a long tradition of vigorous study and debate on the long-run trends in distribution, but a relatively less complete empirical understanding of social mobility before the twentieth century.

In this paper, I use a new dataset of fathers and sons linked from the population censuses of 1851–1881 and 1881–1901 to measure both inter- and intragenerational social mobility in nineteenth-century England and Wales. Unlike previous data sources, these data allow for father's and son's occupations to be observed at roughly equal ages. Controlling for life cycle in this way, I find that intergenerational social mobility was markedly greater than previous estimates have indicated. This difference is due to the presence of significant intragenerational mobility, which is measured here for the first time. A comparison with data from the 1972 Oxford Mobility Study (OMS) reveals that although social mobility increased slightly from 1851 to 1972, the increase is much less than has previously been estimated. Indeed, when long run changes in the wage structure are taken into account, it appears that the intergenerational earnings elasticity has changed very little in Britain from the second half of the nineteenth century to the second half of the twentieth. Considering the dramatic institutional change that occurred over this long time period, in particular Britain's large investment in public education, it is striking that the overall rate of mobility in late twentieth-century Britain appears to be largely unchanged from its level in the midnineteenth century.

The second half of the 19th century saw a great shift in approaches to modern foreign language learning and teaching in Britain. During this period, there was a rise in private foreign language learning due to sociocultural changes arising from the British Industrial Revolution with the rising middle class and

increasing travel to the Continent and Middle East. There was also expansion of access to and growing professionalization of education in both the private and public sectors. This was accelerated by the introduction of compulsory State education and expansion of the university sector from 1871 onwards. The second half of the 19th century was a period in which there was increasing interest in new pedagogical approaches to language teaching in schools and universities. There was also at this time a marked a shift away from Classical language learning by a select number of pupils to a growing number of school and university students with an interest in the study of French and German (Anonymous 1889).[1]

Past and present views of Victorian mobility

The scarcity of historical empirical mobility studies does not reflect a lack of interest in the subject, either currently or among nineteenth-century commentators. This is certainly true of nineteenth-century Britain, where the idea of the "self-made man" and the open society through which his industry, effort, thrift, and ability would propel him were potent conceptions of society at the time. Two famous statements convey a sense of the contemporary debate around these ideas. No doubt the best-known apologist for the rewards of hard work and the possibility of advancement was Samuel Smiles, who wrote in 1859 in his most famous work, Self-Help, that "great men of science, literature, and art—apostles of great thoughts and lords of the great heart—have belonged to no exclusive class nor rank in life. They have come alike from colleges, workshops, and farmhouses—from the huts of poor men and the mansions of the rich".[2] Perhaps the most famous contradictory position was voiced by John Stuart Mill, who wrote in Principles of Political Economy of a "demarcation between the different grades of laborers, as to be almost equivalent to an hereditary

[1] Anonymous. 1889. "Modern Schools, or Sides". Sonnenschein's Cyclopaedia of Education. Ed. by Arthur E. Fletcher, 224-225. London: Swan Sonnenschein & Co.
[2] SMILES, S. (2002). Self-Help. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

distinction of caste".[3] Subsequent scholars have emphasized the importance of openness and mobility in Britain's growth experience. David Landes (2003, pp. 48–50, 128–130, 544–547) cites limited class rigidities in eighteenth-century Britain relative to continental Europe as a positive factor in Britain's early industrialization.[4] Mancur Olson (1982, pp. 82–87), on the other hand, blames Britain's sluggish growth after World War II in part on its strong class rigidities compared with the more war-ravaged and hence more fluid continental economies.[5]

Until recently, there has been much more conjecture and speculation regarding social mobility in nineteenth-century Britain than broad empirical analysis. In the USA, Thernstrom's (1964, 1973) well-known studies of social mobility in Newburyport and Boston helped to foster a relatively active agenda of historical mobility studies. In Britain, on the other hand, historians have produced a less systematic body of work, tending to focus on recruitment to more specific occupational groups and on more narrowly local studies. Several studies from the 1990s took important steps toward providing a more comprehensive empirical picture of mobility in nineteenth-century England. Andrew Miles and David Mitch (1993) have provided most of what we know about social mobility patterns more broadly for nineteenth-century England through their meticulous studies of marriage registries.5 Miles examines 10,000 English marriage registries from 1839 to 1914 and shows that 38 percent of grooms over the period were in a different occupational class than their father at the time of marriage. He concludes that "in terms of its inhabitants' relative life chances [Victorian and Edwardian England was] a profoundly unequal society" (Miles 1999, p. 177). Mitch compares father/son mobility with father-in-

[3] MILL, J.S. (1904). Principles of Political Economy. London: Longmans, Green, and Co.
[4] LANDES, D. (2003). The Unbound Prometheus: Technological Change and Industrial Development in Western Europe, 1750 to the Present. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
[5] OLSON, M. (1982). The Rise and Decline of Nations: Economic Growth, Stagflation and Social Rigidities. New Haven: Yale University Press.

law/son-in-law mobility (endogamy) and finds that the latter process was somewhat more fluid than the former.[6]

Nearly all studies of social mobility in Europe in the nineteenth century rely on data from marriage registries. The English data are typical. Beginning with the 1836 Registration of Births, Deaths, and Marriages Act, Anglican churches in England were required to record the occupations of both partners and their parents at the time of marriage. These records provide a snapshot of father and son's occupations that can be used to measure the rate of intergenerational occupational mobility. The marriage registers are subject to well-known limitations, which both authors readily acknowledge. Of course, they exclude the nonmarrying population. In addition, they only include information from Anglican ceremonies. Neither of these biases is likely to be particularly serious early in the nineteenth century; only about 10 percent of 45-year-old males did not marry, and most weddings were Anglican. By 1914, however, over 40 percent of marriages occurred outside the Anglican Church, so late in the period the potential bias is more serious. Furthermore, the marriage registry sample includes information from only ten registration districts. The districts were selected to maximize the variation in economic and social characteristics; still, there were never fewer than 600 districts in England and Wales during the time period (there were 624 registration districts at the time of the 1851 census), so including data from only 10 districts should be expected to limit significantly the representativeness of the sample for England and Wales as a whole.

Each of the data limitations described above calls into question the degree to which the marriage registry sample is well representative of the population of England and Wales. But certainly, the most serious limitation of the source derives directly from the nature of each individual record. In observing father and son's occupation at one point in time—the time of the son's marriage, when

[6] MILES, A. (1999). Social Mobility in Nineteenth- and Early Twentieth-Century England. New York: St. Martin's Press.

the son is typically a relatively young adult—it is doubtful that one observes true occupational mobility over the course of two generations. It is quite likely that many sons would have changed job and social class after marriage and that upward mobility would dominate downward as sons gained skills and experience. This "snapshot problem" means that mobility measures derived from marriage registries would be likely to underestimate the true degree of intergenerational mobility, with estimates of upward mobility being particularly downward biased. This difficulty is directly related to the other fundamental and serious limitation of the marriage registries as a source for studying mobility: they offer no information at all on intragenerational mobility, that is, mobility over the course of the individual's work life. In this, the English marriage registry data are like virtually all data sources used to study social mobility in the nineteenth century. Without including information on specific people over time, nothing can be learned about the prevalence of individual, career mobility.8 The implication is that virtually everything we know about nineteenth-century mobility, at least generally and quantitatively, relates to changes across generations. Up to now, we have no rigorous quantitative information about mobility over the individual career for England and Wales as a whole.[7]

Analyzing mobility with linked census data

Despite their limitations, marriage registers have had the one clear advantage of being the only source available in large numbers for the entire country that contain occupational information for fathers and sons. Until now, they have been the only means available for the broad empirical analysis of social mobility, and then only intergenerational mobility. Recently, however, a

[7] Or for other countries in the nineteenth century for that matter. Referring to the difficulty of quantifying historical rates of career mobility, Miles (1999, p. 15) writes "most attention will be devoted to this aspect of mobility (intergenerational mobility), although this is partly because substantial and standardized material detailing career mobility is much harder to come by."

variety of extremely fruitful genealogical databases and research tools have been made publicly available that allow the large-scale linkage of individuals across censuses in Britain between 1841 and 1901. With these resources, I have constructed a large, nationally representative dataset of 54,218 males covering three generations of household heads from 1851 to 1901. This data source allows each of the main shortcomings of the marriage registry data to be addressed. Most importantly, by tracking individuals over a long time period, intragenerational mobility can be observed, and the life-cycle problem in measuring intergenerational mobility can be overcome by comparing fathers and sons at comparable ages. In addition, the dataset is large and covers essentially the entirety of England and Wales.

Three sources are used to perform the linkage: (i) a computerized 2 percent sample of the 1851 census, (ii) a computerized version of the complete-count 1881 census, and (iii) the complete-count 1901 census, accessible through Ancestry.com, a web-based genealogical research service.10 The first stage of the data creation process was the nominal linkage of 28,474 males from the 1851 census sample to the 1881 complete count census. Complete details of the linkage procedure and data construction process, including the matching algorithm, potential sources of bias, and expected versus actual linkage success rate, have been reported elsewhere and will not be repeated here.11 Briefly, individuals were linked based on first and last name and county, parish, and year of birth—information that should, barring error, remain constant across censuses. Some leeway in the matching algorithm was allowed for small discrepancies in reporting personal information across censuses 30 years apart. Names were allowed to vary slightly, as long as they matched phonetically, and reported age in 1881 was allowed to deviate by up to 5 years from the expected value based on reported age in 1851. 12 This linkage procedure produced a sample that is well representative of the young male population of England and Wales. The sample is younger than the population as a whole for the simple reason that men had to have survived 30 years to be found in the 1881 census.

Table 1 illustrates the representativeness of the data by comparing the linked individuals from the 2 percent sample of the 1851 census with the entire sample. Observable characteristics are compared across the two groups used to measure social mobility: sons under the age of 20 and males between the ages of 20 and 35.

Because the census records households together and because the 1851 sample preserves this household structure, it is simple to connect the young linked males who were sons living with their family in 1851 with their fathers. This provides the basic structure necessary to observe intergenerational mobility from 1851 to 1881, and it does so in such a way that both father and son are observed as mature adults, with approximately equal ages, at approximately the same point in the life cycle. For the 12,647 father/son pairs in which the son is aged 0–19 years and living with his family in 1851, the average age of the father in 1851 is 41.5 years, and the average age of the son 30 years later in 1881 is 38.0 years. An average age difference of only 3.5 years should have a negligible impact on observed mobility considering the advanced age of both father and son at the time of observation. It is impossible to compare directly this age pattern with that of the marriage registry data, as only two-thirds of the registries record the ages of groom and father; in fact, for the earliest time period (1839–1854), only one in three grooms recorded their age. We do know, however, that these sons typically would have been fairly young at the time of their first marriage. Wrigley and Schofield (1989, p. 255) give the average age at first marriage for males in England from 1840–1849 as 25.3 years.[8] Given both the large age gap that would have existed between father and son, and the early career stage of the son at time of marriage, the age pattern of the linked census data offers a substantial improvement in controlling for life-cycle effects relative to the marriage registry data. Again, this is true for the measurement of intergenerational mobility from father's mature occupation to son's mature

[8] WRIGLEY, E.A. and SCHOFIELD, R.S. (1989). The Population History of England, 1541–1871. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

occupation; in other words, the total or overall amount of mobility from one generation to the next. Insofar as our interest in mobility is primarily motivated by a desire to understand and quantify the degree of equity or fairness in the economy, this is probably the single most important mobility metric. But, it is not the only one. It is also informative to measure the extent to which father's occupation influences the son's first occupation, or "entry point" into the labor market, and the extent to which individuals experience mobility from that entry point to their subsequent mature occupation.

Prendergast's pedagogical ideas as set out in the Mastery

The initial sentence in the preface to Prendergast's first book Mastery (1864) frames an original and particular pedagogical approach: "The design of this treatise is to show by an analysis of the child's process […]. That the power of speaking foreign languages idiomatically, may be attained with facility by adults without going abroad". This clearly signals Prendergast's intention that his book is intended for adults' private study of foreign languages. Prendergast goes on to enumerate several other basic principles to his approach that represent original innovations in pedagogical approach: he rejected learning individual vocabulary items independent of sentences or any explicit study of grammar in the initial stages of language learning. Prendergast asserted that speaking "idiomatically" was achieved by oral repetition, and relied on memory rather than logic. Not only did Prendergast reject the then standard approach to language teaching using explicit presentation of grammatical structure and practiced through translation (Weihua 2013), but he also rejected the value of memorizing word lists. The commonly held assumption was that the best way to learn a new language was deductive. This meant beginning with lists of nouns, tables of the inflectional forms of verbs, and the explicit presentation of grammatical rules.

Prendergast's rational for his dramatically different approach was that these were not part of the natural language learning process in children, either for their mother tongue, or for additional languages. The acquisition of grammar was to be an inductive process. The sentence material Prendergast judged to be the most worthwhile for the beginning language learner to concentrate on from the outset were complex ones that represented exemplars of all the grammatical structures of the language. As for the type of sentences to be employed by the beginner, Prendergast emphasises that they should be comprised of between twenty and thirty words, being formed with the most common words in the language. Some sample sentences offered in English are:

Why did you not ask him to come, with two or three of his friends, to see my brother's garden? Can you let me have a sitting-room on the first floor at the front of the house, and two bedrooms on the second floor at the back? When the man who brought this parcel for me yesterday evening calls again, give it back to him, and tell him that this is not what I ordered at the shop. (Prendergast 1864: 165)

He describes his rationale thus (ibid., p.109):

The foreign language ought to be presented to the learner in such a manner as to show him, in the primary sentences, the most striking contrasts to the constructions in his own tongue, in order to accustom him, from the outset, to employ forms of expression which are quite at variance with his habits of thought.

He suggests that the practice of mastering the fluent production of these long sentences also leads to grammatical knowledge and insists that due to specific properties of memory and learning this must be instituted in a particular manner (p. 107):

Every well-chosen sentence that we 'master' in its integrity, puts us into possession of some of those items which are exhibited in grammars, and thus we

may gradually learn the whole of them. But those items which we learn first cannot be distinctly and practically retained, unless we can employ them with perfect freedom; nor will the genuine construction and collocation remain durably in the memory, unless recapitulation and imitative oral composition on a limited scale are practiced every day.

Prendergast's focus on the goal of producing fluent spoken utterances was another departure from the 'classical' language teaching methods of the day. He placed an emphasis on mastering the oral form of the language in contrast to the literary in contrast to the 'classical' tradition. Reading and writing were considered a later objective in more advanced stages of language learning, rather than a primary goal for Prendergast.

Moreover, as indicated in the quote above, his method was framed in terms of how memory functioned. This was another unique aspect of his approach. Throughout his books, he insisted that the beginning language learner would get the best results by the oral repetition of a small group of long sentences composed from high frequency words for a short duration several times a day. These technical strictures were grounded in psychological principles regarding the nature of memory function and the properties of the core lexicon. The originality of Prendergast's psycholinguistic ideas is striking. However, space here does not permit a fuller exposition on this topic.

Four years after the publication of the Mastery, Prendergast published the Handbook to the Mastery Series (henceforth: Handbook) that further developed the theoretical ideas behind his practical method. This was followed by five individual volumes dedicated to language learning materials for the main European modern and classical languages. Manuals for learning French and German also appeared in 1868, with the one on Spanish the next year. Manuals for languages of Hebrew (Prendergast 1871) and Latin (Prendergast 1872) followed in quick succession. While the first book was published in London by Bentley's, the Handbook and subsequent volumes on individual languages were

all published by the arguably more prestigious firm of Longmans, Green & Co. in England and Appleton's in the USA. Both the British and American editions continued to be revised and republished over the next four decades as will be detailed below.

Reception of Prendergast's Mastery Series

There are a variety of sources that have been located documenting the reception of Prendergast's new method of language learning: press reviews, testimonials printed by the publisher, and personal endorsements. These reflect many different constituencies, degrees of professional authority, and agendas. Taken together they help build up a picture of the audience for Prendergast's ideas.

When Prendergast's first book was published, there were advertisements taken out in many national and local British newspapers, and notices appeared in a variety of press outlets. For example, The Morning Post (London, England) (Anonymous 1864) published the announcement of the publication of his book The Mastery by Richard Bentley, Publisher in Ordinary to her Majesty for the price of 8 Shillings and sixpence. The book was given a brief notice in several of the London newspapers (e.g., The Examiner). These were repeated in numerous regional papers throughout England. There were also more scholarly notices such as that in The Athenaeum (1864) written by Augustus de Morgan (1806–1871), Professor of Mathematics at University College, London. Subsequent books by Prendergast, which were published by Longmans, were also advertised, received press notice, and review. For example, an anonymous review in the newspaper John Bull (Anonymous 1868a) noted:

Among the many educational books issued by Messrs. Longmans those of Mr. Thomas Prendergast are not the least valuable. We have before us two of his Mastery Series (French and German) and the Handbook. This plan is designed to secure economy of time and labour, by compressing a great deal of

the language into a small compass, and excluding everything not essential. We can heartily commend them.

The Handbook, and French and German manuals were also positively reviewed in The Athenaeum (1868) by James Elwin Millard (1823–1894), Headmaster of Magdalene College School, Oxford. However, not all notices of Prendergast's books were complimentary. One anonymous negative review of the German manual appeared in The London Review (Anonymous1868b: 188) which includes comments such as "There is nothing original in the plan". It continues by offering the complaint that the English phrases are idiomatic and unintelligible, and wholly "a disgrace".

At the same time, Prendergast's books were published by D. Appleton & Co. in the USA, cost 50 cents. The American publishers also issued many press advertisements of Prendergast's books. Press notices and reviews began to appear in the American newspapers as well.

Uptake by Contemporary School Educators

Although it was Prendergast's stated intention at the outset that his method be used by adults in self-study at home, transition to use in classroom settings with children came almost immediately. A version of the French Mastery manual specially adapted for use with children in British schools appeared in the same year as Prendergast's original. Its expressed intention was to aid in the passing of examinations, something with which Prendergast had not initially concerned himself. Alfred Coignou's adapted edition also includes notes to the teacher and detailed lesson plans. There are indications of a rapidly expanding school market for his books. Coignou's adapted version was published in a third edition in 1871, under the title The Public School Edition of the French Mastery Manual.[9] It is not clear whether Prendergast was directly involved in or authorised Coignou's work. At the same time, revised editions of Prendergast's own manuals began to acknowledge and sanction this change of use in the

[9] Coignou, Alfred. 1871. The Public School Edition of the French Mastery Manual. Manchester: John Heywood.

classroom. New editions of his books began to include advice to schoolteachers in the introductory pages of his manuals. The success of his method for the passing of exams apparently became a point of pride for Prendergast. According to William Spurrell (1813–1889) author of Practical lessons in Welsh in imitation of the natural method (1881), Prendergast advertised the fact that a Woolwich cadet passed examinations in colloquial Spanish, Italian, and Hindi8 by using his method of study for half an hour a day for a year. It appears that the spread of Prendergast's method was also appreciated in the United States early on. In a 20th-century review of the history of French language teaching, Watts (1963: 113) states, "The 'Mastery System' of Thomas Prendergast of London [sic] began to occupy an important place in American French instruction during the late 1860s". Unfortunately, Watts does not provide any substantiating evidence for this observation. We do know that all of Prendergast's books were published simultaneously in London and New York editions.[10]

Conclusion

Social mobility in Britain from 1851 to the turn of the century was greater than previous research has indicated. High rates of work-life mobility that have previously been unobservable result in a significant downward bias to estimates of intergenerational mobility that fail to account for differences in the life cycle of fathers and sons observed in a point-in-time snapshot. Insofar as previous low estimates of social mobility have been used to characterize Victorian Britain as an unequal, immobile society, our perception changes in favor of a more charitable view of the societyas one of substantial opportunity across the socioeconomic spectrum. Althoughit still appearsthat the frequency of dramatic upward moves from the lower, manual ranks into the professional and white-collar classes was low, overall a picture of higher mobility emerges. Interestingly, and perhaps surprisingly, by one measure at least,

[10] Watts, George. 1963. "The Teaching of French in the United States: A history". French Review 37:1.1- 165.

intergenerational mobility of earnings barely changed at all over the decades from the mid-nineteenth century to the late twentieth. While it seems clear that intergenerational social mobility across occupational classes increased from the time of the 1851–1881 censuses to the 1972 Oxford Mobility Study, it appears that earnings mobility has been roughly constant. I estimate IGE for 1851–1901 to be between 0.26 and 0.37 depending on time period and methodology. This range is extremely close to my estimate for the OMS data, 0.32, and to OLS estimates for late twentieth-century Britain, which typically range from 0.2 to 0.4. It is not entirely clear what should be expected a priori regarding the trend in mobility in Britain over this long time period. Miles (1999) finds that social mobility trended moderately, but consistently upward from 1839 to 1914. On the other hand, Erikson and Goldthorpe (1992) find a largely constant rate of social fluidity in Britain and other industrialized countries between the 1940s and the 1970s. These studies deal exclusively in class mobility, and their results are consistent with the finding here of increased class mobility over the long run. Nonetheless, given the dramatic changes that occurred in the British economy and in British institutions, we might expect to see a more pronounced increase in earnings mobility over this long time period. In particular, from the mid-nineteenth century to the late twentieth, Britain went from being a noteworthy laggard in terms of public education to adopting the norms of the developed world in providing mandatory, universal state-funded education through high school and subsidized post-secondary education thereafter. Standard models of human capital investment and accumulation over two generations provide clear predictions regarding how structural economic differences should influence intergenerational mobility.26 Among the characteristics that are expected to result in a more mobile economy are (i) lower heritability of “intrinsic” human capital, (ii) less productive avenues for human capital investment, (iii) lower earnings return to human capital in general, and (iv) more progressive public investment in children’s human capital. Although careful analysis of factors (i)–(iii) for Britain from the 1850s to the 1970s is beyond the scope of the current

study, factor (iv) does lend itself at least to preliminary consideration. Beginning with a series of Education Acts in 1870, Britain dramatically increased its public investment in education, causing a gradual increase first in primary school attendance and later in secondary education. Table 11 shows enrollment rates for Britain in comparative perspective from 1830 to 1910. Britain was significantly behind the USA, France, and most other industrial economies in public investment in education in the nineteenth century. As it closed this gap, rising rates of social mobility would be expected. Indeed, some evidence can be seen here that the Education Act of 1870 did have an effect on earnings mobility, which increased from the 1851–1881 cohort to the 1881–1901 cohort. However, given the similarity of IGE estimates for 1881–1901 and modern data, it appears that Britain experienced no overall increase in earnings mobility over the course of the twentieth century. In light of this finding, it may be concluded that the development of mass public schooling in Britain had a surprisingly modest effect over the long run, at least in terms of intergenerational economic mobility.

This case study investigation of the reception of Thomas Prendergast's innovative method also serves a wider purpose in providing a detailed picture of the 19th century landscape of foreign language teaching theory and practice. It documents how Prendergast's work influenced changes to the conventional deductive grammar-translation approaches that had long been the norm. His impact was registered from the first appearance of his books in 1864 in Britain and the Colonies, the USA, and more remote parts of the world. As such, Prendergast's work was well in advance of the so-called Reform Movement and the development of the Direct Method at the end of the 19th century. The results of this study suggest a re-evaluation of the assumed methods of language learning used in Victorian Britain. Prendergast's method emphasised inductive learning and placed a premium on oral fluency. Evidence presented here supports the notion that in the second half of the 19th century, educators began to value such an approach and used it in conjunction with other methods in a more pluralistic pedagogy. This study contributes to the development of a richer

and more nuanced picture of the history of educational innovation in language teaching. In a recent evaluation, Decoo (2011: 54) suggested that the 19th century history of language teaching is much more intricate one than current scholarship currently provides and offers the critique that "the attention given to new nineteenth-century methods from a contemporary research viewpoint seldom takes into account the impact of such methods". The present study contributes to rectifying such limitations.

The late 19th century saw a great rise in private foreign language learning and increasing provision of Modern foreign language teaching in schools. Evidence is presented to document the uptake of innovations in Thomas Prendergast's (1807–1886) "Mastery System" by both individual language learners and educationalists. Although it has previously been suggested that Prendergast's method failed to have much impact, this study clearly demonstrates the major influence he had on approaches to language learning and teaching in Britain and around the world both with his contemporaries and long after his death. This detailed case study illuminates the landscape of modern language pedagogy in Victorian Britain.

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