11 The Development of Attitudes to Foreign Languages as Shown in the English Novel

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It was in Sweden that his career was finally doomed. For some time past he had been noticeably silent at the dinner table when foreign languages were being spoken; now the shocking truth became apparent that he was losing his mastery even of French; many ageing diplomats, at a loss for a word, could twist the conversation and suit their opinions to their vocabulary; Sir Samson recklessly improvised or lapsed into a kind of pidgin English.

Evelyn Waugh *Black Mischief* (1932) chapter 2

1. Introduction

Societies are characterized by the patterns of language knowledge and language use which are studied in the "sociolinguistics of society" (Fasold 1984). One aspect of this is the languages people know and use at a given time and place, part of the local 'language ecology' (Haugen 1971). Haugen's term has been used of all the languages used in an environment and their mutual relations. Thus Smalley (1994) discusses all the Tai, Mon-Khmer, Malay and Chinese languages of Thailand and their status and uses in different environments in the country. In the era of globalization it can appear that what is missing from his study is the omnipresence of English (or at least the Latin alphabet) and the place of that language high up in the hierarchy. Just as alien species find a place in biological ecology, so do foreign languages play a part in language ecology.

Thus discussions of language ecology need to take account of the languages that are learned in an environment as well as those that

are spoken as first language. There is quite a large literature on the history of language teaching and learning in Britain and the rest of Europe (Hüllen 2006; McLelland 2005). Recently, for example Nicola McLelland and Richard Smith have launched a co-ordinated research project exemplified by the papers they have collected in a recent issue of *Language and History* (Glück 2014; Besse 2014; Sanchez 2014). But this type of institutional and method-oriented history tells us little about the attitudes and assumptions of English-speakers in Britain and elsewhere to the foreign languages they were taught. These attitudes and assumptions can, however be inferred from the surviving documents in a straightforward way. The twelfth-century writer Orm (e.g. Johannesson 2008) decided to write the *Ormulum* in English and this implies that he intended to address an audience for whom English was the primary language. The fact that his sources are in Latin and not Greek or Hebrew implies that he could read Latin but not the other two languages. Johannesson (personal communication) reports that when Orm noticed that he had used a Romance or Latin loanword in his writing he often replaced it with a Germanic equivalent. This tells us both that monks like him were familiar with words of this type and that ordinary lay people could not be assumed to know all of them.

Language attitudes can also be inferred from fiction, since writers can use the reader's assumed knowledge of them to characterize their creations. A well-known example is Chaucer's Prioress, who spoke French "After the scole of Stratford-atte-Bowe,/ For Frenssh of Parys was to hire unknowe" (Robinson 1957: 18). The contemporary reader had a clear idea of what was meant by Stratford French, and could infer something about the Prioress's personality from it. The modern reader has to infer the language ecology that Chaucer is referring to and might assume that her variety of French was a learner variety like modern school French or some kind of vernacular Anglo-Norman *patois*, or even an East London dialect. At any rate the reference is often taken as showing that her French was somehow inferior – if she had known Paris French she would have used it in preference. By looking at many documents and their language forms, Rothwell (1985) is able to reconstruct the place of 'insular French' in the language ecology of the time. Interestingly, it was an autonomous second-language variety like Indian English nowadays – acquired at school but needed in everyday life.

> The French used in England from the early thirteenth century to the end of the fourteenth is the only variety to be on a par with francien

in the sense of being an official language of record widely used by the dominant classes in a vigorously developing nation. (Rothwell 1985: 47)

Even so, one kind of insular French seems not have had a high status for Chaucer. Thus references in fiction can illuminate what we know from other sources and in turn are illuminated by that knowledge.

In this note I attempt to retrieve attitudes and assumptions about foreign languages from incidental observations made while reading nineteenth-century novels and then attempt a more systematic investigation of a corpus of eighteenth and nineteenth-century novels. The aim is to try to infer the wider (foreign) language ecology of these centuries in Britain as it appeared to contemporaries and to see how the changes that took place in the nineteenth century are reflected in fiction.

Language knowledge and attitudes are local and class-based. Sailors know a different set of languages from monks and prioresses – the oceans have their own language ecology. In the seventeenth century, alongside French, a poet like Milton knew the classical languages and Italian but in the repertoire of an adventurer and seaman like Edward Coxere French was accompanied by Dutch and Spanish (Meierstein 1946). Literary works from the past may be more likely to tell us about the language repertoires of writers and high-status individuals than about those languages of the majority on which language ecology studies have focused. In particular, the choice in this chapter of mainstream, predominantly English, sources means that the focus is on references to foreign-language knowledge, rather than local low-status ones. I do not consider references to Greek and Latin, although they are fairly frequent, of course, and typically gendered as male accomplishments.

As noted, a framework for the investigation is first built up by describing anecdotal observations from the work of several novelists, and then the value added by a corpus approach is assessed.

2. Pre-systematic observations

Jane Austen

References to modern language knowledge in Austen's novels seem to be confined to French and Italian, although translated German literature is mentioned (notoriously *Lovers' Vows* in *Mansfield Park*). French seems to be common knowledge. In *Emma* (1816) Mr Knightley can comment

to Emma on the supposed difference in meaning between French *aima-ble* and English *amiable* in words that suggest both are equally familiar with the language. The impression that girls could be expected to know the language is strengthened by the rich young Miss Bertrams' contempt for their poor cousin Fanny's ignorance of French (*Mansfield Park* 1814) and Austen's assurance that Fanny learned the language once she had a governess to teach her ("Miss Lee taught her French[1].").

Italian is different. Vulgar Mrs Elton (*Emma)* irritates Emma by her references to her *caro sposo*, flaunting her knowledge of at least some of the language, while the thoughtful Anne Elliot (*Persuasion* 1818) attracts admiration for the quality of her translation of song texts despite her modest denial of proficiency. Knowledge of French seems unmarked and it is ignorance of it that is commented on in Austen, whereas knowledge of Italian is an accomplishment to be commented on and, by the vulgar, flaunted, and perhaps particularly a typically female accomplishment.

Charlotte Brontë

Thirty years on or so, it is French and German that figure in Charlotte Brontë's novels. Interestingly, there is a good deal of untranslated French (from Adèle in *Jane Eyre* (1847) and from various Belgian characters in *Villette* (1853)), which presupposes that the reader understands the language rather as Mr Knightley presupposes a knowledge in Emma. Teaching French is clearly an essential requirement for a governess. *Villette* suggests some degree of mutuality in the English-French relation, for the franco-phone little girls in Mme Beck's school (in a thinly disguised Brussels) are learning English from Lucy Snowe, the heroine. Furthermore, German has apparently replaced Italian as the desirable extra accomplishment. In Brussels Lucy has a colleague who teaches German, and when Jane Eyre finds her cousins they start learning this language. This is a hint of the situation around 1900 suggested in Shaw (2005) where everyone educated read all three of French, German, and English.

One other language is mentioned in *Villette,* Dutch/Flemish, but it does not share the same status. One character is so uneducated that she can only speak Dutch: ("the aboriginal tongue")

> This was no more than a sort of native bonne, in a common-place bonne's cap and print-dress. She spoke neither French nor English,

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[1] Given the variety of editions of the classic novels referred to, I do not give page numbers. All examples can be located by searching the Gutenberg Project electronic editions available at http://www.gutenberg.org/.

and I could get no intelligence from her, not understanding her phrases of dialect.

Still, it is notable that a local middle-class friend who up to now has only spoken French (and English) could in fact speak Dutch:

Addressing the aged bonne, not in French, but in the aboriginal tongue of Labassecour [Belgium], he….

Finally, in *Jane Eyre* (1847), Hindustani (what is now called Hindi/Urdu) figures as the language St John Rivers wants Jane to learn rather than German so that she can join him as a missionary.

Anthony Trollope

Writing perhaps with a wider audience in mind, Trollope never breaks into French, but the language is often called upon for characterization. In *Can you forgive her?* (1865), it is part of Burgo Fitzgerald's fecklessness that he cannot speak the lingua franca of Baden well enough to inhibit a switch to English. Plantagenet Palliser has been established as an exemplary figure, and his French is in keeping.

Burgo, … walked up to him, and, speaking in bad French, desired him to leave them. "Don't you see that I have a friend with me?"
"Oh! a friend," said the man, answering in bad English. "Perhaps de friend can advance moneys?"
[…]
"Misther, Misther!" said the man in a whisper.
"What do you want of me?" asked Mr Palliser, in French.
Then the man spoke in French, also. "Has he got any money? Have you given him any money?" (Trollope 1938 [1865]: 454, 457)

So a superior person like Plantagenet knows French well. Not to know French indicates social inadequacy like Burgo's or lack of education like that of Dorothy Stanbury (*He Knew He Was Right* 1869), who says 'I can't play, or talk French, or do things that men like their wives to do.[2]'

By contrast, by the 1860s and 70s knowing German indexes a kind of (male) cleverness associated with outsiderhood. Figures who are described as knowing both French and German well are often young men who have been educated at the superior German universities. These are people whose place in England is insecure like Lucius Mason,

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[2] See below for this association of music and French.

denouncer of British legal unreason and heir of ill-gotten wealth in
Orley Farm (1862), or Ralph Newton in *Ralph the Heir* (1871) who is
illegitimate (and "spoke German and French as if they were English").
This dialogue from *The Prime Minister* (1876) between the outsider
Lopez and his crustily conventional father-in-law illustrates the point

> [Lopez] had been at a good English private school........Thence at the
> age of seventeen he had been sent to a German University,
> [Lopez:] 'I was sent to a German university with the idea that the
> languages of the continent are not generally well learned in this
> country...'
> [Father-in-law:] 'I dare say French and German are very useful. I
> have a prejudice of my own in favour of Greek and Latin'
> [Lopez :] 'But I rather fancy I picked up more Greek and Latin at
> Bonn than I should have got here....'

The alienness of outright scoundrels like Melmotte in *The Way We
Live Now* (1875) is marked by their not merely knowing French and
German but actually speaking German to people in England. Madame
Max, in several novels including *Phineas Redux* (1874), is a posi-
tive character although she has the same central European capitalist
background, and she is never shown committing this solecism, despite
having an apparently German maid.

In Trollope's later novels knowledge of German seems to have
become a normal product of education for girls. As early as 1873 the
Fawn sisters are planning to carry on conversations in French and
(with difficulty) German among themselves (*The Eustace Diamonds*).
In *Ayala's Angel* (1881) two sisters are characterized by their language
knowledge: pretty Ayala "had been once for three months in Paris
and French had come naturally to her", whereas sensible Lucy knows
"something of French and German, though as yet not very fluent with
her tongue". An intriguing detail in this connection is that we are told
in passing that Alice Vavassor in the earlier *Can you Forgive Her* (1865)
was educated in "Aix-la-Chapelle" – Aachen. She must have been sent
to this relatively fashionable stage on the grand tour to learn German.
In the 1860s this aligns her with the young outsider men and relates to
her interest in politics and resistance to conventional female roles.

Knowledge and use of Italian, on the other hand, usually indexes the
deep depravity and often the suspected bigamy of aristocratic insiders –
earls and marquises, mostly. The Stanhope family in *Barchester Towers*
(1857) are merely the least unpleasant and wealthy of this group. There

is little trace of the status of the language as an accomplishment that can be seen in Jane Austen.

Only French really worked as an international language of science. In *Orley Farm* (1862) there is a big international conference on the law in Birmingham. Lectures are given in English, French, German and Italian (and not, for example, Spanish or Dutch or Russian). The characters and the narrator comment on the ineffectiveness of German and Italian in this context, but do not mention French. Students and practitioners of the law treat French as the unmarked option for international communication, but baulk at German and Italian.

Two occluded languages are mentioned, and the attitudes expressed are similar to those of Brontë to Flemish/Dutch. Trollope's remarkable first novel *The Macdermots of Ballycloran* (1847) is set in the west of Ireland. When Macdermot, a Catholic small landowner, accidentally kills a policeman in the middle of a panic about terrorism, he makes the mistake of running away to the wild boys in the mountains. There he meets an old man who can only speak Irish – but it turns out that like Brontë's Belgian character, Macdermot himself spoke the language in his youth and can communicate effectively. In *Phineas Redux* (1874) Madame Max finds a key witness in Prague and brings him over to London. The narrator observes that he "naturally did not speak English and unfortunately did not speak German either". Not to speak English is normal for a Central European, but not to speak one of the major languages is a marker of lack of education.

George Eliot

The most famous person not to know German in nineteenth-century literature is Mr Casaubon in *Middlemarch* (1872), whose academic efforts were pointless because he did not read the cutting-edge publications in that language. We are told this by his nephew Ladislaw – an angry young outsider, like Trollope's German-speaking Englishmen of the period.

Matthew Arnold

Arnold is not of course a novelist but his comments fit into the pattern. In 1864 he observes

> How much of current English literature comes into this 'best that is known and thought in the world'? Not very much I fear, certainly less, at this moment, than of the current literature of France or Germany ("The Function of Literature at the Present Time")

As a young-ish intellectual he has access to French and German, but does not mention Italian. In 1887 he makes it clear that he reads French as easily as English, but does not make the same claim for German, and shows that no one can be expected to know Russian or Swedish.

> I take *Anna Karénine* as the novel best representing Count Tolstoi. I use the French translation.....*Anna Karénine* is perhaps .. a novel which goes better into French than into English, just as Frederika Bremer's *Home* goes into English better than into French. ("Count Leo Tolstoi")

Discussion

Mention of language knowledge or learning very often has the purpose of placing a fictional character, and is rather rarely merely a plot device. By this I mean, for example, that we are told that St John Rivers is studying Hindustani because it serves to define his dedication and thoroughness, not because later on a mysterious Indian will appear and the plot requires someone to understand him. Possible exceptions are the francophone Belgian and anglophone Irishman who happen to recall the occluded languages, and thus enable the ignorant figures to play their part.

The incidental observations give a picture of a nineteenth-century Britain in which knowledge of French was to be expected of every educated person and it was rather lack of it that was to be commented on. German became more widely known and developed into a pre-requisite for scholarship, but was never a pre-requisite for being considered educated. Nor did knowledge of the language correlate with high social status, somewhat the opposite in fact. Italian seems to have lost status, so that German rather than Italian is the extra accomplishment. Not to know one of English, French, or German is a mark of total lack of education. As in Shaw (2005), it is unclear whether or not Italian belongs to this group of required international languages.

3. Corpus investigation

Incidental observations may be influenced by priming for what one expects to notice, but corpus investigations only turn up what the search items reveal. The incidental observations showed the range of lexical items that occurred when the investigator noted references to languages by eye and knowledge of this range made it possible to create a list of items for a more extensive search. I compiled a corpus of

English novels by downloading plain-text versions from the Gutenberg Project (n.d.). 64 novels were taken from 34 novelists (mostly two each) (see Appendix 1). In addition five less fictional works were included: Borrow's autobiographical *Lavengro* (1851) and *Romany Rye* (1857), George Moore's *Confessions of a Young Man* (1888), Swift's satirical *Tale of a Tub* (1704) and Defoe's (or Nathaniel Mist's) *General History of the Pirates* (1724). The aim was to include a wide range of novels but focus on those which draw on the contemporary reader's own knowledge of the contemporary language ecology, rather than informing about the ecology of another time (historical novels) or place (novels set in exotic locations). The notion of a historical novel proved rather difficult to operationalize. Is *Vanity Fair* (1847) historical when it deals with Waterloo (1815)? And if not is *Redgauntlet* (1822) historical when it deals with a fictional uprising of the 1760s? Four novels (those by Scott and Stevenson) deal with other times and non-metropolitan spaces, and four (Haggard's *King Solomon's Mines* 1885, Kipling's *Kim* 1901, Conrad's *Nostromo* 1904, and Doyle's *The Lost World* 1912) are clearly "exotic". Many others deal at least in part with British characters travelling in Europe, but these generally focus on the cultural-insider characters rather than the non-British environment. The most recent writer examined was Virginia Woolf, represented in the Gutenberg Project by the early works *Night and Day* (1919) and *Jacob's Room* (1922). There were about 1,480,000 words in the sample.

Once the corpus was assembled the program AntConc (Anthony 2007) was used to search for instances of the words listed in Table 1, which are mainly nationality adjectives/language names. The aim was however not to observe forms but to use the corpus to find instances

Table 1. Items searched for via Antconc.

Bantu	Irish/Erse/Gaelic	Ro/umanian/
Chinese	Italian	Russian
Czech	Japanese	Saxon
Danish	language(s)s	Serbian
Dialect(s)	[Latin]	Siamese
(low) Dutch (cf. German)	Malay	Spanish
French	Norse	Swedish
German/High Dutch	Norwegian	Turkish
[Greek]	Persian	Welsh

of reference to foreign languages. The method has obvious weaknesses. Instances of actual use of French (which seemed quite frequent in Charlotte Bronte at least) or potentially German or Italian (cf. *caro sposo*) could not be captured in this way, nor was any attempt made to search, for example, for instances of the numerous Indian languages probably mentioned in *Kim*. The anecdotal survey just described suggested, however, that a high proportion of relevant text-segments could be identified in this way. To simplify the task, the numerous references to Greek (all ancient as far as I could judge), and Latin, were neglected in the analysis.

All the instances of these words found were then examined by eye and those which did not refer to language use (the majority) were excluded. Although the search was for words, the aim was to find instances of reference to languages, and it is the instances that are classified not the actual use of the word. So the example "Again, there was the little French chevalier opposite, who gave lessons in his native tongue" is classified as a reference to the teaching of French, and the example "She had a French master, who complimented her upon the purity of her language" is classified as a reference to language quality, even though the word *French* does not refer to the language in either case.
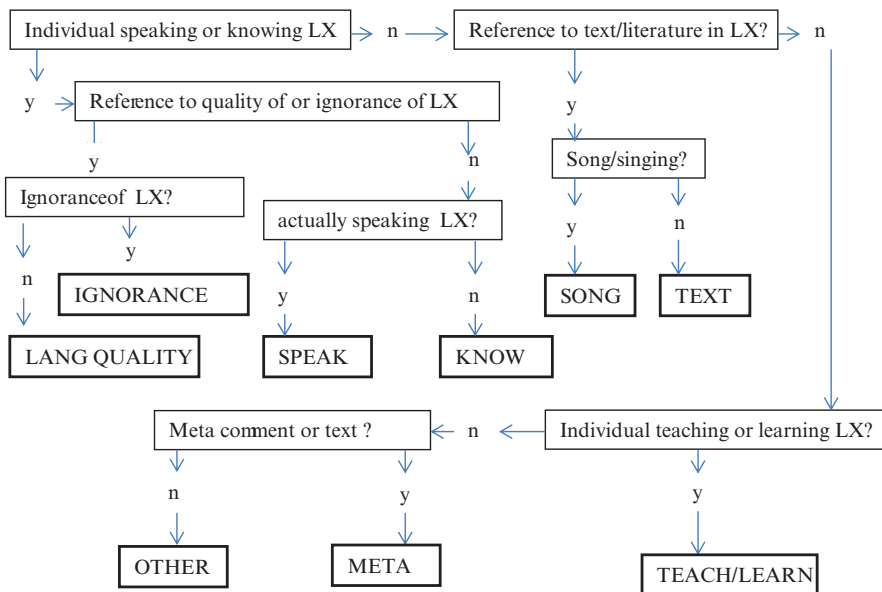

Figure 1. Flow diagram of criteria and categories for classifying instances of language reference.

The incidental survey suggested several hypotheses. First, French, German and Italian would predominate among the languages mentioned. Second, there would be rather frequent reference to the quality of the language used as a means of characterizing fictional figures, and this would be disproportionately focused on French, since knowledge of this language was an index of general education. Third, diachronically, where there was reference to knowledge of or learning a language, instances would mainly refer to French, German, and Italian, with French predominant throughout the period, and Italian gradually giving way to German. Finally, other languages would mainly be mentioned in other contexts than as being spoken or known by characters in the novels.

In order to produce some quantitative support for these hypotheses, the collected instances of reference to language were examined by eye and an attempt was made to develop categories likely to illuminate these hypotheses (Figure 1). While the categorization does indeed support the incidental observations, as I show below, its main value is to add more examples for qualitative analysis[3]. As Figure 1 shows, in some areas the categorization is rather fine, in others quite coarse, reflecting areas judged to be interesting and others judged to be less so. There is no suggestion that the categories are mutually exclusive. Thus all categories are ordered with features judged to be most interesting for the present study coming first, such that if the relevant feature is found, the instance falls into that category and potential membership of other categories is not considered. Five primary criteria were used: the first was whether or not the reference was to an individual actually knowing or speaking a foreign language. Where this was met cases were first isolated in which there was reference to someone's ignorance of the language in question and then those where there was reference to the quality of knowledge or production, and the remaining cases were subdivided into references to production and knowledge. Thus " 'X' she said in bad French" and "Her French was bad" would be in the QUALITY category while " 'X' she said in French" and "She knew French" would be respectively SPEAK and KNOW. The same procedure was followed for subsequent criteria and categories (denoted by capitalized labels in Figure 1). Examples are shown in Table 2.

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[3] Thus it turned up the first recorded backpacker English teacher: the Vicar of Wakefield's son set off to Holland to teach English to the Dutch with only a 'satchel' as his luggage, but was frustrated when he realized that he would need to know Dutch first; the Direct Method did not occur to him.

Table 2. Examples from the analytical categories.

IGNORANCE	1	They asked me what I was, in Portuguese, and in Spanish, and in French, but I understood none of them. *Robinson Crusoe*
	2	"If Mr. Casaubon read German he would save himself a great deal of trouble." *Middlemarch*
LANGUAGE QUALITY	1	peecoly Rosiny," says James, in a fine Scotch Italian, "e la piu bella, la piu cara, ragazza ma la mawd." *The Newcombes*
	2	was genteel and extremely polite; spoke French well, and danced to a miracle; *Amelia*
	3	my bungling half-English horrid French, *Harry Richmond*
SPEAK	1	chattering to each other in the Gaelic. *Kidnapped*
	3	He promptly replied in French, "No. Not this one." *Little Dorrit*
	3	QUE VOULEZ VOUS? as the French valet said to me on the occasion. *The Absentee*
KNOW	1	And have you learnt French?" "Yes, Bessie, I can both read it and speak it." *Jane Eyre*
	2	"Of course I know French," says the other; "but what's the meaning of *this*?" *The Newcombes*
SONG	1	Percy sings a Spanish seguidilla, or a German lied, or a French romance *The Newcombes*
	2	Diana sang alone for the credit of the country, Italian and French songs, Irish also. *Diana of the Crossways*
TEXT	1	if he had to sacrifice one it would be the French literature or the Russian? *Jacob's Room*
	2	they are nothing more nor less than Chinese writing expressing something, though what I can't say *Romany Rye*
TEACH/ LEARN	1	Tibby put a marker in the leaves of his Chinese Grammar and helped them. *Howards End*
	2	kept a school in town, where he taught the Latin, French, and Italian languages; *Roderick Random*
	3	passed third in algebra, and got a French prize-book at the public Midsummer examination *Vanity Fair*
META	1	those sensations which the French call the *mauvaise honte Amelia*
	2	might be well called *den wild zee,* as the Dutch call the sea in a storm. *Robinson Crusoe*
	3	some gibberish, which by the sound seemed to be Irish *Roderick Random*
OTHER	1	"Do you think French useful in a military education, sir?" *Harry Richmond*
	2	I declare I'd as soon teach my parrot to talk Welsh *Evelina*

The example under TEACH/LEARN illustrates the principle: the reference is actually to a META text, but the higher-ranked category TEACH/LEARN is chosen because the quotation shows that Tibby is learning Chinese. The OTHER/META distinction is the least reliable. Generally, because the categories have not been intersubjectively verified, they are best regarded merely as giving a general idea of the range of uses. As noted above, the most useful data from the concordance lines are the added examples for qualitative analysis.

4. Results

Frequency of language references overall

The number of works referring to a particular language is a better measure than the number of references, since for example, the sixteen references to Danish all refer to a single item, Borrow's decision to learn Danish to study Danish folk-songs (1851). Borrow's enthusiasm also accounts for many of the references to Welsh. Similarly there are

Table 3. Overall numbers of references to languages, by occurrences and works.

	Occurrences	Works	% of all works
French	487	52	78
Italian	114	31	48
German/High Dutch	215	29	43
Spanish	34	14	21
Erse/Gaelic/Irish	92	11	16
Dutch/Low Dutch	20	11	16
Chinese	70	11	16
Arabic	24	10	15
Persian	9	7	10
Portuguese	9	6	9
Welsh	51	6	9
Hindustani etc.	21	5	7
Norse	8	2	3
Danish	16	1	1
Polish	1	1	1
Indian (Amerindian)	1	1	1

several references to Tibby's study of Chinese in *Howard's End* (1910) but what is significant is that Forster makes him study that language (and not Amharic or Hittite, for example), not how many times it is referred to.

Table 3 gives the numbers of references to languages and the number and percentage of works referring to languages. Since *Erse* may refer to Irish or Scottish Gaelic, the numbers for *Irish, Erse,* and *Gaelic* are merged. *High Dutch* and *German* are assumed to be synonyms[4].

As expected, references to French predominate. Four out of five of the works consulted mention the French language, and only half the next most frequently mentioned language, Italian. As expected, German and Italian are close to one another in frequency and the rest are far behind. The four languages that occur in as much as one-sixth of the works examined are mentioned in very different contexts. Irish/Erse/Gaelic (both in Scotland and in Ireland) occurs surprisingly frequently but this is often period colour (*Kidnapped, Redgauntlet, The Antiquary*) or expression of personal antiquarian interest (*Romany Rye, Lavengro*). Otherwise Dutch and Spanish are mentioned mainly in seafaring contexts and Arabic and Chinese in a wide variety. The Swedish, Norwegian, Serbian, Romanian, Turkish, Siamese and Japanese languages happened not to be mentioned, although there were occurrences of the words *Swedish,* etc. with other reference.

Categories of use of various languages

Table 4 shows the number of references to various languages classified by the content of the reference. It is moderately surprising that languages show relatively similar profiles across the various uses. That is, for example, the largest numbers are found in the LANGUAGE QUALITY, SPEAK, TEXT and META columns for French, and also for German, Italian, and Irish/Erse/Gaelic.

French predominates in all categories, most in references to texts (*French novel*, *French saying*), confirming, perhaps, that texts in French are regarded as accessible and valuable. It predominates greatly in judgements about quality of knowledge or performance of language, but relatively less in statements of outright ignorance. This confirms the view that some knowledge of French is conceived of as widespread, and that (as for the Prioress) a social judgement is often made on the basis of the quality of one's French.

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[4] Although by 1873 the meaning of *High Dutch* was lost and the Fawn sisters in *The Eustace Diamonds* use it to mean 'double-dutch'.

Table 4. Numbers of works containing specific types of reference to languages.

	IGNORANT	LANG QUAL	SPEAK	KNOW	SONG	TEXT	LEARN/TEACH	META	OTHER
French	6	28	24	17	9	35	17	26	18
High Dutch/German	6	12	15	10	2	11	11	10	9
Italian	2	9	11	4	3	11	8	9	11
Irish Erse/Gaelic	2	5	5	2	3	4	2	3	4
Spanish	1	2	2	2	3	6	2	5	
Welsh		3	1	2	1	1	1	2	
Portuguese	1		3			3		2	
Arabic, Chinese, Hindustani (etc.), Persian	3	2	6	3		7	5	4	10
Danish, Dutch, Russian, Norse		2	6	4	1	5	3	5	4

This social significance of French, or the widespread extent of knowledge and therefore of ascribed ability to discriminate, is shown by the types of adjective applied to it. In the category QUALITY terms like *pure, excellent, faultless, exquisite, to perfect oneself,* are frequently applied to French but not to German or Italian. On the other hand *tolerable, bad, broken, have a smattering, clumsy* apply to all three. Not only is French more frequently referred to than other languages, knowing it well is highlighted in a different way.

A suggestive exposure of similar values appears in a few of the instances turned up by the concordance but unclassified above, where the reference is to a foreign accent in English. Thackeray refers to "the sweetest French accent," "that charming French English" (both *The Newcombes* 1855) and "Her pretty French accent" (*Vanity Fair* 1847), Gissing to "fluent French-English, anything but disagreeable" (*Born in Exile* 1892) and James to "a queer little dialect of French-English"

Table 5. Percentage of works containing reference to selected languages, by period.

Period	1 (up to 1830)	2 (after 1830)
French	85	81
German	15	60
Italian	55	47

(*Portrait of a Lady* 1881). It sounds as though a French accent can be judged positively, as further evidence of the social status of the language. Attitudes of this kind to German seem more mixed, by contrast. Although Thackeray also allows (ironically?) that one can have a good German-accented French ("said the courier in a fine German French", *Vanity Fair*), a German accent in English annoys George Eliot's characters ("suddenly speaking in an odious German fashion" (*Daniel Deronda*), "some disgust at the artist's German accent" (*Middlemarch*)). Attitudes to accent reflect the high status of French and the somewhat ambiguous position of German.

Change over time

Chaucer and Spenser read Italian, and Milton wrote in that language. But, as we have seen, by Matthew Arnold's time, German had become the literary Englishman's second foreign language. To show that this is reflected in the novels, I divided the works in the corpus into two periods – up to 1830 and after 1830. The date was chosen to put Jane Eyre (1847) learning German clearly in Period 2, and Anne Elliot (*Persuasion* 1818) using her Italian in Period 1. Table 4 shows percentages of works referring to French, Italian, and German. There was indeed a large increase in references to German, which did indeed become part of general education. From Period 1 (*Lady Susan* 1793) comes the interesting transitional observation "It is throwing time away to be mistress of French, Italian, and German, music, singing, and drawing." References to Italian in the novels did not decrease correspondingly to the rise in German, but Italian became exotic in a new way. Characters in novels visit Italy much more than in Period 1 (*Portrait of a Lady, Room with a View, Daniel Deronda*) and Italian characters are frequent (*Nostromo*). In Period 2 references to Italian arise mainly in references to this travel, while those to German make it part of a general education.

5. Further Observations

In this section I note, qualitatively, two usages where the special position of French is very noticeable, both of which seem to be commonplaces in earlier novels but less frequent in later ones, and one that might show the Celtic languages becoming even more occluded.

From "French and dancing" to "French and German"

In texts from Period 1 it is common for French to be mentioned along with dancing and music as a polite accomplishment, but such references are much less frequent in Period 2.

Moll Flanders (1722) is made to say "in short, I learned to dance and speak French as well as any of them, and to sing much better". In *Amelia* (1751) we can read "the gentleman was genteel and extremely polite; spoke French well, and danced to a miracle; ......". In *Humphrey Clinker* (1771) we read: "the girl's parts are not despicable, and her education has not been neglected; that is to say, she can write and spell, and speak French, and play upon the harpsichord; then she dances finely, ..." In *Evelina* (1778) the ill-bred Captain Mirvan rejects both dancing and French as possibilities for himself: "What, I suppose you'd have me to learn to cut capers? and dress like a monkey? and palaver in French gibberish? hey, would you?" French and dancing are part of a non-academic training for polite life suitable perhaps especially, though not exclusively, for women. Italian does not occur in these contexts; it is not basic in the same way.

Similar quotations, again not always referring to female education, can be found from the later nineteenth century. Thackeray writes: "She could not play on the piano; she could not speak French well; she could not tell you when gunpowder was invented:..." (*The Newcombes* 1855), and also "Tom was absent taking his French and drawing lesson of M. de Blois." Quite a bit later George Eliot gives Gwendolen Harleth's qualifications to be a governess: "your French, and music, and dancing – and then your manners and habits as a lady, are exactly what is wanted" (*Daniel Deronda* 1876). But in the course of the nineteenth century modern languages became part of an academic syllabus (Archer 1921) and examples like those above become less frequent. Two things happen. First, knowledge of German appears as an accomplishment. Ann Brontë describes an unsatisfactory pupil: "everything was neglected but French, German, music, singing, dancing, fancy-work, and a little drawing", ...(*Agnes Grey* 1847). And Charlotte lets a similar character describe herself: "I know nothing--nothing in the world – I

assure you; except that I play and dance beautifully, – and French and German of course I know, to speak; but I can't read or write them very well." (*Villette* 1853). Second, mention of learning French in connection with artistic and aesthetic skills seems to become less frequent, and the associations of French seem to be more those suggested by Moore's "Neither Latin, nor Greek, nor French, nor History, nor English composition could I learn" (*Confessions of a Young Man* 1886) – a school subject like others. It is possible that when Trollope makes Dorothy Stanbury say "I can't play, or talk French, or do things that men like their wives to do." (*He Knew He Was Right* 1869) he is characterizing her as someone whose idea of a sophisticated education itself is a bit old-fashioned.

In general, references to learning French decrease and those to the quality of French knowledge certainly do not increase[5]. *Portrait of a Lady* (1881) has a reference to perfecting one's French and one to a character's imperfect French while the otherwise rather similar *The Good Soldier* (1915), also set mainly in continental Europe and very concerned with social distinction, never refers to the French language.

"As the French have it"

In the corpus it is not uncommon to show knowledge of a language by citing a word or phrase and naming the source language as in "T, on the left arm of the dead man, signified the Italian word 'Traditore,'" (*The Woman in White* 1860) or " ... must be my amende honorable, as the French have it" (*Clarissa* 1748). Borrow uses phrases or literal translations from Welsh, Irish, and Chinese like this; otherwise Dutch occurs in *Robinson Crusoe* (1719) and *Humphrey Clinker* (1771), Italian in *The Woman in White* (1860) and *A Room with a View* (1908), and German in *Confessions of a Young Man* (1886) and *The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes* (1892). French is much more common: no less than fourteen of the works examined use it in this way, from "those sensations which the French call the *mauvaise honte*" in *Amelia* (1751) to "Bon voyage, my dear sir – bon voyage, as the French say." in *The Woman in White* (1860). Again the references seem clustered in the earlier works, and to be less frequent later in the nineteenth century.

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[5] The social and geographical range covered by the novel as a form also changed, so that we are not always comparing like with like.

"All Greek to me"

Some languages are marked as incomprehensible, in occasional usages like "Most of the matter might have been written in Chinese for any definite meaning that it conveyed" (*The Lost World* 1912) or "as intelligible to me as if he had spoken in Arabic or Irish" (*Roderick Random* 1748) or "I declare I'd as soon teach my parrot to talk Welsh." (*Evelina* 1778). These few examples suggest a greater presence of the Celtic languages in Period 1, but also their status as strange and difficult. No one says "It could have been French/ German/ Italian/ Spanish for all I understood."

6. Conclusion

Use of a corpus does indeed confirm the special status of French and the rise of German. It also confirms that Italian was the only other language that was widely known or referred to. It confirms that some knowledge of French was presupposed, perhaps especially later in the period, and that the quality of one's spoken French was a significant index of one's status as a cultured person, for both sexes, perhaps especially earlier. We can probably see a shift in the status of modern languages from polite accomplishments along with dancing and music to school subjects along with History and Geography, and this may be associated with increasing identification of all education (and not just the classics) with the institution of the school.

Use of a corpus implies quantification and led me to attempt to classify references to languages in terms of their content. This proved difficult to do reliably, but nonetheless produced the unexpected finding that similar proportions of references to most languages fell into each category. Apart from particular usages (such as the identification of Chinese, Arabic, Welsh and Irish as incomprehensible, or the co-occurrence of French with dancing) similar sorts of thing seem to be said about all the languages mentioned; it is frequency of reference that differs dramatically, not content. The "linguicist" attitudes towards minor European languages noted from Brontë and Trollope, the condemnation of those who cannot manage English, French German, or Italian, are not prominent in the corpus, but on the other hand the minor languages are not mentioned much at all.

Though knowledge of German is represented as having spread quite rapidly after, say, 1830, the language never acquired the position of French, and speaking German could be used for negative categorization in a way that speaking French could not. While French was clearly

the main lingua franca in Europe in the nineteenth century, the corpus data perhaps suggest a weakening in its position as a status symbol from the second half of the nineteenth century. Nonetheless the fate of Sir Samson in the passage used as an epigraph to this chapter is worth noting: humiliated by his inability to speak French in Stockholm, he was exiled to the remotest of outposts. From Chaucer to Evelyn Waugh, characters' French defines their status.

Appendix

Period 1	21 works
Daniel Defoe	*General History of the Pirates* 1724, *Moll Flanders* 1722, *Robinson Crusoe* 1719
Jonathan Swift	*Gulliver's Travels* 1726, *Tale of a Tub* 1704
Henry Fielding	*Tom Jones* 1749, *Amelia* 1751

Period 1	21 works
Oliver Goldsmith	*The Vicar of Wakefield* 1766
Samuel Richardson	*Clarissa* 1748
Tobias Smollett	*Peregrine Pickle* 1751, *Humphrey Clinker* 1771, *Roderick Random* 1748
Fanny Burney	*Camilla* 1796, *Evelina* 1778
Jane Austen	*Lady Susan* 1793, *Mansfield Park* 1814, *Persuasion* 1818
Maria Edgworth	*Castle Rackrent* 1800, *The Absentee* 1812
Walter Scott	*Redgauntlet* 1824, *The Antiquary* 1816

Period 2	48 works
Ann Brontë	*Agnes Grey* 1847
Charlotte Brontë	*Jane Eyre* 1847, *Villette* 1853
Emily Brontë	*Wuthering Heights* 1847
WilliamThackeray	*The Newcombes* 1855, *Vanity Fair* 1847
George Borrow	*Lavengro* 1851, *Romany Rye* 1857
Anthony Trollope	*Framley Parsonage* 1861, *The Way We Live Now* 1875
Benjamin Disraeli	*Sybil* 1845, *Tancred* 1847
Charles Dickens	*Little Dorrit* 1857, *Our Mutual Friend* 1865
Elizabeth Gaskell	*Cranford* 1851, *North and South* 1855

George Eliot	*Middlemarch* 1872, *Daniel Deronda* 1876
George Gissing	*Born in Exile* 1892, *Henry Ryecroft* 1903
George Meredith	*Diana of the Crossways* 1885, *Harry Richmond* 1871
George Moore	*Esther Waters* 1894, *Confessions of a Young Man* 1886
Henry James	*Portrait of a Lady* 1881, *What Maisie Knew* 1897
Oscar Wilde	*The Portrait of Dorian Gray* 1890
Rider Haggard	*King Solomon's Mines* 1885
Rudyard Kipling	*Kim* 1901, *The Light that Failed* 1890
Thomas Hardy	*Jude the Obscure* 1895, *Tess of the Durbervilles* 1891
Wilkie Collins	*The Moonstone* 1868, *The Woman in White* 1860
Robert Louis Stevenson	*Kidnapped* 1886, *Treasure Island* 1881
Conan Doyle	*Adventures of Sherlock Holmes* 1892, *The Lost World* 1912
Period 2	**continued**
E.M. Forster	*A Room with a View* 1908, *Howards End* 1910
Ford Madox Ford	*The Good Soldier* 1915
H.G. Wells	*Ann Veronica* 1909, *Tono Bungay* 1909
Joseph Conrad	*Nostromo* 1904, *The Secret Agent* 1902, *Under Western Eyes* 1911
Virginia Woolf	*Jacob's Room* 1922, *Night and Day* 1919

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