

HOW DID LANGUAGE PROFESSIONALS STUDY ENGLISH GRAMMAR IN ITALIAN UNIVERSITIES BEFORE 1980?

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In the introduction to a recently published Special Issue on Second Language Grammaticography of the journal *Studi Italiani di Linguistica Teorica e Applicata*, San Vicente (2017: 183) notes that – despite ‘pendulum swings’ in language teaching methodology and the great strides that linguistic science has made in the last hundred years – grammar «ha costituito fino ad oggi il fulcro del libro dedicato all’insegnamento delle lingue straniere». This statement seems to be particularly apposite to describe language learning materials aimed at language professionals (in particular, teachers of English as a foreign language) undertaking degree-level courses in European universities. It could be argued that grammar plays a key role for (would-be) teachers of English (or translators, interpreters, etc.) in two respects: on the one hand, accuracy in English language use is what often tells apart ‘specialists’ from those who have learnt English – even to a high level of proficiency – for a variety of practical purposes, but do not view themselves as ‘language professionals’; on the other, alongside a practical mastery of grammar, an English language professional is generally supposed to have acquired some familiarity with the language as a system, in other words she/he is expected to not only know the ‘what’ and ‘how’ of language usage but also the ‘why’, at least to a certain extent. It is for this reason that, as will be seen in more detail below, the 20th century saw the development in several European countries of the genre of university grammars of English, which sought to address the needs of advanced-level English language students reading degrees in Foreign Languages and Literatures.

The aim of this paper is to carry out an exploratory investigation into the materials used by university students to learn English grammar in Italy before the age of the so-called ‘mass higher education’ (e.g. Marengo, 2005) started in this country. Before illustrating the design and the findings of the study, I will cast a quick glance at the grammaticographical output aimed at English language professionals in other European academic contexts.

1. THE ‘GENRE’ OF EUROPEAN UNIVERSITY GRAMMARS OF ENGLISH

In the European context, particularly in north-western Europe, degrees in English language and literature originally developed out of the need to prepare language teachers (Haas, 2000; Loonen, 2000) and emphasized a ‘practical’ language learning component, including a strong foundation in English grammar. Starting from around the middle of

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the 20th century, the study of English grammar in many European universities came to be approached from a more theoretical (and scientific) perspective as non-literary research efforts shifted from an exclusive focus on philological investigations to the scrutiny of present-day English, taking advantage of insights from modern linguistics. 20th-century European anglicists such as R. W. Zandvoort played a trailblazing role in this respect. Zandvoort's *Handbook of English Grammar* represented the prototype of many university grammars aimed at students pursuing English language and literature degrees, a genre which thrived in several European countries in the latter half of the 20th century and beyond. What are the distinctive features of this grammaticographical genre?

Grammaticographical overviews often make a loose distinction between 'school' (or 'pedagogical') grammars and 'scholarly' ('descriptive') grammars, but this distinction does not capture the variety and complexity of grammar writing (Leitner, 1984; Linn, 2006; Anderwald, 2016), particularly in its modern instantiations. European university grammars, like pedagogical grammars for EFL/ESL teachers (Nava, 2008, 2017), seem to straddle both the 'pedagogical' and the 'scholarly' categories. Their addressees are mainly non-native advanced-level university students of English. The genre targets 'local' needs but 'international' editions of what were originally home-grown books have also been published. In its first, original Dutch edition (1945), Zandvoort's grammar contained «comparisons with and translations into Dutch» (Zandvoort, 1962: v), but the book's success led to the development of unilingual editions (as well as several other 'local' editions, e.g. Zandvoort 1949) which were meant to be of use not only to foreign students but also to «British [...] students to realize some of the peculiar features of the English language» (Zandvoort, 1962: v).

Unlike earlier examples of 'pedagogical' grammars of English (e.g. Palmer, 1924), European university grammars restrict their remit to English morphosyntax, excluding the analysis of phonetics/phonology and lexis (or rather whatever lexical aspect «belongs rather to idiom and is not amenable to general statement», Zandvoort, 1962: v). With regard to 'breadth' and 'depth' of coverage, these books usually deal with most aspects of English grammar, although they make no qualms about placing more emphasis on some specific issues deemed more relevant to their addressees. Declerck (1991: vi) points to the differences in treatment of English grammar topics between his university grammar and the 'mainstream' reference grammars of English:

Areas of the grammar which are interesting from a theoretical point of view but present no practical problems are only treated summarily. For example, the book does not go into the rules of word formation (except the ones that have to do with inflection) because a language learner does not need to be able to use these rules consciously: complex and compound words are normally learnt as a whole, not derived from other words by the conscious application of rules of derivational affixation or compounding. By contrast, the book pays considerable attention to the English systems of tense, aspect and modality. These systems are notoriously complex and difficult to learn, yet in virtually all English grammars I know they receive a treatment that is very much simplified. *The Comprehensive Grammar of the English Language* (Quirk *et al.* 1985), which is the most prestigious English grammar at this moment, devotes only 71 pages to tense, aspect and modality together. This is roughly the same number of pages as are devoted to word-formation, viz.

4.33% of the entire book. By contrast, the chapters dealing with the same subjects in the present grammar take up almost 50% of the whole work. This is a deliberate choice, since the systems of tense, aspect and modality are not only extremely intricate but also play a crucial role in English grammar. I have chosen to describe them in detail, rather than offer a simplified set of rough-and-ready rules.

Selection of topics is hence carried out according to a criterion of usefulness (what the prospective, advanced-level addressees will find most challenging to learn²) and is often claimed to be the result of a comparative/contrastive analysis of English and the addressees' L1s. However, the way the topics are organized, i.e. sequenced within each book is usually dependent on grammar-internal criteria (e.g. 'ascending' order, from word to discourse, or 'descending', the other way round, cf. Chafe, 1971; Chalker 1984, 1994; Swiggers, 2014), not necessarily according to the pedagogical criterion of 'from simple to complex (to learn)', as is typically the case in language teaching textbooks. Examples are often a mixture of authentic (drawn from a range of different – not exclusively literary – sources) and invented but carefully checked for reliability³.

An important feature that seems to keep apart university grammars from other types of non-specialist pedagogical grammars is the requirement that a 'dialogue' of sorts be established between the grammar book and the English grammaticographical and linguistic tradition. In other words, a university grammar book is viewed as a starting point for readers' more in-depth study of and investigations into English grammar. To this end, university grammars are supplied with suggestions for further reading either as self-standing paratextual sections or interspersed in the actual texts⁴. More specifically, university grammars attempt to adopt what Swiggers (2014: 270) calls «discurso reflexivo»⁵, aiming «not only to help the students to learn English but also to make them gain a clear insight into the structure of the language» (Declerck, 1991: v). That said, despite an emphasis being placed on a linguistics-based and research-inspired approach to grammar study, university grammars take a rather conservative stance when it comes to theoretical affiliation and terminology. Given that this genre is supposed to have an overarching pedagogical function, a trade-off needs to be established between theoretical innovation and pedagogical feasibility. This is how Depraetere and Langford (2012: vii) describe their 'compromise' approach:

Having used a number of course books, each of them very good in its own right, we had come to realize that none of them corresponded to the way we wanted to approach grammar with our students. On the one hand, we wanted to step up our discussion of certain areas of grammar in ways that

² In the preface to a recent instantiation of the genre, Depraetere and Langford (2012: vii) claim that their «aim is usefulness rather than comprehensiveness».

³ «Examples are primarily our own; we do however occasionally use authentic examples (primarily from the British and American press), often simply to give some variation to the voice behind the examples, but also when we feel that an authentic example illustrated our point particularly well» (Depraetere and Langford, 2012: viii).

⁴ «To impress upon the student the fact that a handbook is only a point of departure. If it has not roused his curiosity and encouraged him to further research, it has at least partly failed of its purpose» (Zandvoort, 1962: v).

⁵ «Gramáticas que proponen una reflexión sobre estructuras lingüísticas, más en particular sobre las 'causas' del funcionamiento mismo de las estructuras» (Swiggers, 2014: 270).

the more student-oriented manuals did not enable us to do optimally; on the other hand, the more linguistically oriented grammars were overwhelming in their completeness leaving students with little idea as to what was and was not essential in their quest to learn English. What we needed was something in the middle, a compromise between our students' concrete needs and our desire to demonstrate to them that there is a logical system underlying the rules they were learning by rote memorization.

This aspect is often pointed out by reviewers of the genre (not always in a positive light!), as in this quotation from Aarts's (1987: 69) assessment of Zandvoort's grammar within an article describing the long-standing contribution of Zandvoort to the development of English linguistics: «It is a traditional part-of-speech grammar which does not radically depart from the established grammatical framework of the time».

A final remark on how authors of university grammars of English 'position themselves' (what Swiggers, 2014: 267 calls «*positionamento (como lingüista, como gramático: descriptivo, contrastivo o didáctico)*»). The primary role an author of a European university grammar seems to take on is that of descriptive linguist. As is well-known, Zandvoort (1962: v) acknowledges his tribute to Kruisinga. Speaking of himself in the third person, he states in the preface of his grammar that «he confesses himself a pupil of Kruisinga, whose *Handbook of Present-day English* [...] is still the most original and stimulating treatment of English syntax». Declerck (1991: v) also refers to his background as being associated with the linguists of the Great Tradition:

The first version drew heavily on the well-known traditional grammars of people like Jespersen, Poutsma, etc. but also incorporated a number of insights and terms from structuralist and transformational grammar.

On the whole, despite aiming their works at non-native speaking students of English, authors of university grammars do not seem to view themselves as applied linguists. When pedagogical concerns are voiced, as shown in the quotations provided above, these are usually restricted to issues of content selection and presentation. By contrast, in the preface to his *Grammar of Spoken English*, Palmer presents himself in the roles of both descriptive and applied linguist – staking out the territory of descriptive grammar from the prescriptive tradition but also discussing at length how learning grammar can help overall language acquisition.

2. MATERIALS FOR LEARNING ENGLISH GRAMMAR IN ITALIAN UNIVERSITIES BEFORE 1980

Having originated in north-western European countries, university grammars of English also came to be a highly regarded (and very profitable) grammaticographical genre in several other European academic contexts in the second half of the 20th century and beyond. Can a genre of 'university grammars of English' within the pedagogically-oriented English language output of Italian anglicists from the end of the Second World War onwards be identified? Did English grammar teaching materials used in Italian universities enter a dialogue with the grammaticographical tradition and

the key 20th century breakthroughs in linguistic science? To answer these research questions, it has been decided to restrict data collection to the two decades following the end of the Second World War for two main reasons. Firstly, this is when dedicated degree courses in Foreign Languages and Literatures went from being offered by a limited number of institutions to being available throughout Italy, mainly as part of faculties of Education (*Magistero*), in newly established private or semiprivate university colleges (e.g. Genoa, Salerno). In 1947 a degree course in Foreign Languages and Literatures was also set up in the prestigious private *Università Commerciale Luigi Bocconi* in Milan, and in the early 1950s the go-ahead was given by the Ministry of Education for a self-standing faculty of Foreign Languages and Literatures to be created at Ca' Foscari University (Prat Zagrebelsky, 1991; Pellandra, 2004; Nava, forthcoming). Secondly, as illustrated earlier, it was in these two decades that the genre of university grammars of English started to thrive in several European countries.

The first stage of the study has involved an exploratory investigation into the pedagogically-oriented English language production of Italian university professors in the period under consideration. Although the results are to be viewed as tentative, it would appear that English language learning materials by Italian academics can be divided into three categories:

- Textbooks aimed mainly at secondary schools (e.g. Menascé, 1964; Ragazzini, 1964).
- Textbooks for an undifferentiated audience (schools, universities, adults) (e.g. Izzo with Gentili, 1967).
- Materials for dictation/translation/pronunciation/reading etc. practice aimed at university students (e.g. Sisto, 1954; Chinol and Frank, 1966; Menascé, 1968).

Although many of the texts from the above three categories feature the word 'grammar' in their titles, they appear to be rather more akin to 'English language teaching coursebooks' than actual 'grammar books' in the modern sense of the term. Indeed, as will be argued below, none of the books in the above categories seem to possess all the generic features that have been shown to be associated with European university grammars of English.

2.1. *Italian university grammars of English?*

Despite devoting their main research and publication efforts to English literature, Italian anglicists did write a limited number of English language learning/teaching materials in the two decades following the Second World War. A sample of two such books will be analysed in more detail to show how their textual features compare with those of the genre of European university grammars and to ascertain to what extent they mirror 20th century developments in English grammaticography and linguistics.

Zanco and Caliumi's (1957) *Grammatica della Lingua Inglese* and Chinol's (1966) *Grammatica dell'Inglese Moderno* have both been categorized as 'textbooks aimed at an undifferentiated audience', which appears to have been the most prolific of the three categories identified above. The former was long adopted as a main coursebook in the BA degree in Foreign Languages and Literatures at Milan's *Università Commerciale Bocconi*,

where both authors taught (cf. e.g. *Università “Luigi Bocconi”, Vademecum dello studente Anno Accademico 1958-1959*). The latter enjoyed considerable commercial success over three decades. It was published in its first edition in 1964; a second, slightly adapted edition came out in 1966 and a third and final edition was published in 1985, which is still in print.

A detailed content analysis of the paratextual and textual (descriptions, examples and practice exercises) materials has been carried out. Both texts have a similar macrostructure and organization: a short preface, an introductory section devoted to the International Phonetic Alphabet (‘Pronunciation rules’ follow the introductory section in Zanco and Caliumi’s book, whereas a section on ‘Elements of Phonetics’ is featured after the appendices in Chinol’s book), chapters (called ‘lessons’ in Zanco and Caliumi’s book) with explanations, examples, exercises, and lexical lists, appendices and indexes. In addition, Zanco and Caliumi’s text has a final section of ‘translation passages’ and a 60-page Italian-English, English-Italian dictionary.

The analysis of the paratexts of the two books shows that they adopt a different approach to the selection and organization of the subject matter from what is usually done by European university grammars of English. As mentioned above, while devoting the bulk to morphosyntax, both texts include – however succinct – sections on English phonetics. Lexis (in the form of new words, and including both single lexical units and multiword expressions) is also featured in each lesson/chapter. The sequencing of contents does not follow either an ascending or a descending directionality, but is carried out according to a ‘simple-to-complex’ (in terms of learning difficulty) approach («esposizione progressiva di regole», Zanco and Caliumi, 1957: 5), as is customary in language teaching textbooks. No information is, however, provided about the way the degree of difficulty of ‘rules’ was determined.

Table 1 shows the main contents of Zandvoort’s *Handbook of English Grammar* and Chinol’s *Grammatica dell’Inglese Moderno*. The ascending (word-to-sentence) directionality in the former book contrasts with the grammar external ‘simple-to-complex’ sequencing in Chinol’s book. While the whole of Part V in Zandvoort’s grammar is devoted to sentence structure, none of the chapter headings in Chinol (1966) refers to clauses and sentences.

Table 1. *Main contents of Zandvoort (1962) and Chinol (1966)*

ZANDVOORT (1962)	CHINOL (1966)p
PART I VERBS Introductory I Infinitive II Gerund and Present Participle III Past Participle – Passive Voice IV Present, Past, and Perfect Tenses V Auxiliaries VI Mood and Modality	INTRODUZIONE: L’alfabeto fonetico internazionale CHAPTER ONE: Il nome e l’articolo CHAPTER TWO: Il presente indicativo di ‘to be’ CHAPTER THREE: Aggettivi e pronomi interrogativi
PART II NOUNS Introductory I Use of the Number Forms	CHAPTER FOUR: Aggettivi e pronomi possessivi

<p>II Use of the Genitive III Use of the Definite Article IV Use of the Indefinite Article</p> <p>PART III PRONOUNS I Personal Pronouns II Possessive Pronouns III Compound Personal Pronouns IV Demonstrative Pronouns V Interrogative Pronouns VI Relative Pronouns VI Indefinite Pronouns</p> <p>PART IV ADJECTIVES AND ADVERBS Introductory Comparison</p> <p>PART V SENTENCE STRUCTURE I The Simple Sentence II The Compound Sentence III Sentence Groups IV Additional Remarks on Conjunctions</p> <p>PART VI Order of Words Order of Words</p> <p>PART VII Concord</p> <p>PART VIII Conversion</p> <p>PART IX Word Formation</p> <p>Appendix</p>	<p>CHAPTER FIVE: Il presente indicativo di ‘to have’</p> <p>CHAPTER SIX: Il presente indicativo dei verbi</p> <p>CHAPTER SEVEN: Il presente indicativo dei verbi</p> <p>CHAPTER EIGHT: L'imperativo</p> <p>CHAPTER NINE: Il passato</p> <p>CHAPTER TEN: Numeri</p> <p>CHAPTER ELEVEN: Tempo e luogo</p> <p>CHAPTER TWELVE: Passato prossimo e trapassato prossimo</p> <p>CHAPTER THIRTEEN: Il futuro puro</p> <p>CHAPTER FOURTEEN: Il futuro intenzionale</p> <p>CHAPTER FIFTEEN: Comparazione degli aggettivi e degli avverbi</p> <p>CHAPTER SIXTEEN: Comparazione dei sostantivi</p> <p>CHAPTER SEVENTEEN: Il condizionale</p> <p>CHAPTER EIGHTEEN: Verbi composti</p> <p>CHAPTER NINETEEN: I pronomi relativi</p> <p>CHAPTER TWENTY: I pronomi relativi nei complementi indiretti</p> <p>CHAPTER TWENTY-ONE: I pronomi interrogativi</p> <p>CHAPTER TWENTY-TWO: I verbi difettivi</p> <p>CHAPTER TWENTY-THREE: I verbi difettivi</p> <p>CHAPTER TWENTY-FOUR: I verbi difettivi</p> <p>CHAPTER TWENTY-FIVE: I verbi difettivi</p> <p>CHAPTER TWENTY-SIX: Verbi semidifettivi</p> <p>CHAPTER TWENTY-SEVEN: Continuazione e durata</p> <p>CHAPTER TWENTY-EIGHT: Il genere dei nomi</p> <p>CHAPTER TWENTY-NINE: Il plurale dei nomi</p>
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	<p>CHAPTER THIRTY: Nomi e aggettivi di nazionalità</p> <p>CHAPTER THIRTY-ONE: Uso degli articoli</p> <p>CHAPTER THIRTY-TWO: ‘Some’ e ‘any’</p> <p>CHAPTER THIRTY-THREE: Altri aggettivi e pronomi indefiniti, distributivi, quantitativi</p> <p>CHAPTER THIRTY-FOUR: Ancora il genitivo sassone</p> <p>CHAPTER THIRTY-FIVE: Pronomi e verbi riflessivi</p> <p>CHAPTER THIRTY-SIX: La forma passiva dei verbi</p> <p>CHAPTER THIRTY-SEVEN: Costruzioni gerundive e participiali</p> <p>CHAPTER THIRTY-EIGHT: Aggettivi e avverbi</p> <p>CHAPTER THIRTY-NINE. Verbi di percezione</p> <p>CHAPTER FORTY: Verbi attivo-passivi</p> <p>APPENDICE A, B, C</p> <p>ELEMENTI DI FONETICA</p>
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The way topics are identified is remarkably similar in Zanco and Caliumi’s and Chinol’s books. Topics mainly revolve around the traditional parts of speech (noun, article, verb, pronoun etc.), although semantic/notional categories are also used by Chinol (e.g. ‘Tempo e luogo’, ‘Continuazione e durata’). As the detailed contents list for the first lesson/chapter shows (cf. Table 2), aspects of different parts of speech are often presented together, starting from basic information about nouns and articles. In both books, the same part of speech may also be dealt with at two or more different stages. The gender and plural of nouns, for example, is introduced at the beginning and taken up and expanded in the second half of the books.

Table 2. *Contents of first lesson/ chapter in Zanco and Caliumi (1957) and Chinol (1966)*

ZANCO AND CALIUMI (1957)	CHINOL (1966)
Lezione prima – Vocabolario. Regole: I. L’articolo definito II. L’articolo indefinito III. L’aggettivo IV. Il plurale del nome V. Il genere del nome. Esercizio 1. Esercizio 2	Chapter One Il nome e l’articolo Il genere dei nomi; gli articoli; l’articolo determinativo; il plurale dei nomi; il presente indicativo di ‘to be’; i pronomi personali soggetto; l’aggettivo; uso degli articoli; soggetto sempre espresso; Espressioni con ‘to be’

The paratexts of the two Italian textbooks provide no information about the sources of the examples used to back up descriptions, nor are references supplied in the actual lessons/chapters. This is standard practice in language teaching textbooks, which traditionally rely on concocted examples. Zanco and Caliumi's text, however, does feature, as has been the norm in Italian language teaching materials for classical languages, a set of authentic passages for translation. Unlike university grammars of English, the two Italian books do not include bibliographical references or suggestions for further reading.

Despite not being very vocal about many aspects of the books' rationales, the paratextual material does supply us with some clues as to whether the books draw upon the English grammaticographical tradition or take account of 20th century developments in linguistics. Zanco and Caliumi (1957) highlight the pedagogical appeal of their book – clarity of exposition, step-by-step presentation of rules, large number of practice exercises, notably translation and dictation tasks, which represented the standard exam requirements for the practical language component in Italian degrees in Foreign Languages and Literatures up until not so many years ago, but make no reference to the grammaticographical tradition or any linguistic theory which may have played a role in the design and development of their book. The authors present their work as a 'practical grammar', pointing out that «esulano dal nostro compito sottigliezze teoriche, considerazioni erudite, dibattiti di problemi glottologici o linguistici, o altro» (Zanco and Caliumi, 1957: 5). By contrast, emphasis is placed on the need to focus on «lingua viva, quale essa è parlata e scritta oggi nei paesi anglosassoni» (Zanco and Caliumi, 1957: 5). As an innovative feature, the authors mention the use of IPA transcriptions for all the lexical items in the word lists in each lesson.

In the paratext of his book, Chinol too comes across as more of an applied linguist than a grammarian. The preface features a lengthy discussion of 'language teaching methods', in which the shortcomings of the 'traditional' (grammar-translation) and the 'direct' methods are illustrated and the advantages of the more recent (however not named as such) audiolingual method are highlighted:

Perciò i linguisti più autorevoli si trovano oggi d'accordo nell'affermare che l'insegnamento della grammatica non va abolito, bensì profondamente modificato. Si dovrà cioè insegnare a parlare, leggere e scrivere nella lingua straniera illustrandone i principi strutturali *dall'interno* (Chinol, 1966: 5).

What is presented as the main innovative feature of the book is the sets of structural patterns or 'frasi chiave' (cf. Table 3) exemplifying each of the topics dealt with in the chapters. These are meant to lead students to experience «uso vivo della lingua», by working on them «pensando e parlando in inglese, non in italiano» (Chinol, 1966: 5). In a conference presentation illustrating the rationale underpinning his *Grammatica dell'inglese moderno*, Chinol elaborates on the advantages of using 'frasi chiavi' as lead-ins to the explanation of grammatical points. The first advantage, as mentioned above, is that they enable students to experience English grammar 'from inside' without the mediation of Italian grammar:

Il punto di partenza non è più la domanda: come si traduce questo e quello, come si traduce ‘ne’ o ‘che’ o non so che altro. Il punto di partenza sono le strutture della lingua straniera (Chinol, 1965: 4).

Secondly, ‘frasi chiave’ shift students’ attention from single words to sentences - sets of words in specific contexts of use. Each structural pattern is meant to be used for oral repetition practice aimed at fostering memorization and is associated in the book with three types of exercises (substitution, transformation and sentence completion), including more ‘open-ended’ items (cf. Table 3), which are to be carried out first orally and only subsequently in writing. Connected to the ‘key sentences’ is also translation practice. Italian-English translation exercises are placed at the end of each chapter and are said to be meant more as ‘backtranslation’ activities testing students’ acquisition of the key structural patterns than as traditional translation tasks to be carried out using a dictionary.

Evidence of the author’s interest not just in present-day English but in *spoken* present-day English is provided by a quick perusal of the first chapters of the book. The contracted forms of the verb ‘to be’ are featured in the very first chapter, where the verb is introduced (cf. Table 2). In Zanco and Caliumi’s book, the full verb forms are first presented (in Lesson 2) but ‘contractions’ are not introduced until Lesson 5. According to Chinol (1965), this practice of delaying the presentation of contractions is evidence of the association that is routinely made between the written medium and a more formal register. Whatever is in the written form is automatically assumed to be an example of journalistic or literary prose. The author claims that, although conveyed in the written medium, examples and exercises in grammar books often mimic spoken language and hence should contain features of the spoken medium (such as contractions) from the very beginning.

Table 3. *Key sentences and exercises in Chinol (1966)*

KEY SENTENCES	EXERCISES
<p>Frase Chiave 74</p> <p>Will you open the window, please? It’s stuffy in here.</p> <p>Would you mind opening the window? It’s stuffy in here.</p> <p>Will you light the fire, please? It’s cold in here.</p> <p>Would you mind lighting the fire? It’s cold in here.</p>	<p>a. Si ricopino le domande che seguono aggiungendovi, in luogo dei puntini, risposte pertinenti</p> <p>Aren’t you a teacher?</p> <p>b. Tradurre in inglese usando, ogniqualvolta sia possibile, le forme contratte</p> <p>Chi è quel signore? E’ il signor Smith.</p>

It should be noted that although the term ‘structure’ is used several times by Chinol in the preface to his book, no reference is made to structural linguistics or any other linguistic theory and, as seen above, topics are mainly identified on the basis of a traditional part-of-speech categorization. However, unlike Zanco and Caliumi (1957), Chinol (1966: 6-7) mentions the main scholars who inspired the author, one of whom is

a descriptive grammarian (Jespersen) and the rest are applied linguists (Palmer, Hornby, Stannard Allen, C.M. and V. Edmondson):

In un lavoro di questa natura i debiti verso altri autori sono troppi perché li si possa particolareggiatamente ricordare, ma sento doveroso fare almeno i nomi di quelli che ho più spesso consultato, e cioè O. Jespersen, H. E. Palmer, A. S. Hornby, W. Stannard Allen, C.M. e V. Edmondson.

References to applied linguists are also made in the text of the conference presentation introducing the first edition of the book – M. West (Chinol, 1965: 8), A. S. Hornby (Chinol, 1965: 9), R. Lado and R. A. Close (Chinol, 1965: 10).

We have seen that a comparative/contrastive approach is a recurring feature of European English grammar teaching materials aimed at university students. This perspective, on the one hand, has an impact on content selection and, on the other, leads authors to foreground similarities and/or differences between English and the addressees' L1s in the actual presentation of the contents. With regard to this issue, Zanco and Caliumi's book seems to follow in the footsteps of Italian grammar-translation textbooks. Many aspects of English grammar are viewed and described through the lens of Italian grammatical categories. This is, for example, the case of 'preposizioni articolate', which are uncritically taken to be a grammatical phenomenon in English as it is in Italian: «In inglese le preposizioni articolate si formano con la preposizione semplice più l'articolo definito» (Zanco and Caliumi, 1957: 39). By way of comparison, it is useful to quote Chinol's description of the same topic: «In inglese, non esistono preposizioni articolate; le preposizioni, cioè, non si fondono mai con l'articolo, come avviene in italiano: *Sul tavolo = on the table*» (Chinol, 1966: 33).

This last quotation highlights what Chinol flags as one of the distinctive features of his book vis-à-vis previous English language teaching materials published in Italy – the presentation of English grammar on its own terms, eschewing what he calls «supina sottomissione alla grammatica italiana» (Chinol, 1965: 12). The mainstream approach of trying to fit English grammar within the straitjacket of Italian grammatical categories results, according to Chinol, in the fact that grammar comes across as much more 'complex' than it actually is (sic):

La grammatica inglese è infatti in sé stessa abbastanza semplice, ed è resa caotica da chi ne tratti partendo da una grammatica tanto più complessa e sostanzialmente diversa qual è quella italiana (Chinol, 1965: 4-5).

Chinol seems to take the tenets of Contrastive Analysis seriously and points out that Italian should be referred to mainly where there are aspects of contrast between the two languages as these are the main sources of mistakes. The following quotation shows how the fact that English is a 'non-prodrop' language, differently from Italian, is accounted for by referring to the different morphology of English-vis-à-vis Italian verbs:

I verbi inglesi, a differenza di quelli italiani, distinguono poco o punto le varie persone nella coniugazione, e senza un soggetto espresso spesso non se ne comprenderebbe né la persona né il numero (Chinol, 1966: 17).

It should, however, be pointed out that lapses from this principle do sometimes occur. For example, while the first two chapters devoted to ‘defective verbs’ focus respectively on the pairs *can/could* and *may/might*, the third chapter is organized around possible ways of translating ‘dovere’, as is shown in this quotation from the beginning of the chapter:

Il modo più comune di esprimere l'idea di 'dovere', nel senso di trovarsi nella necessità o di avere l'obbligo di fare qualcosa (devo andare a scuola, devo studiare, ecc.), è quello di ricorrere al verbo 'to have to' = 'aver da', 'dovere' (Chinol, 1966: 242).

The last aspect of the two Italian books that will be investigated is the extent to which they include ‘reflective discourse’. As seen above, a feature that may tell apart a university grammar from a pedagogical grammar for non-specialists is a presentation of the subject matter that is not simply descriptive but at least in part explicative. To address this research question, an analysis of how grammatical elements expressing modality in English are presented in Zanco and Caliumi’s and Chinol’s books vis-à-vis Zandvoort’s grammar has been carried out. The treatment of modality as a semantic-grammatical category is an innovative feature of Zandvoort’s grammar. According to the Dutch grammarian, modality expresses the meaning of ‘virtuality’, hence it is used to refer to a “non-fact”: «Modal (modality) [...] refers to grammatical expedients, such as the preterite of modality, to express non-fact, or at least a modification of fact» (Zandvoort, 1962: 342). The introduction of the concept of modality and the reflective discourse engaged in by the author with respect to this issue enable him to account for the semantic similarities of seemingly unrelated linguistic elements (the modal value of the past tense, which is shared by auxiliary and lexical verbs, and other modal uses of auxiliary verbs⁶).

Although the concept of modality is not featured in Jespersen’s (1933) *Essentials of English Grammar* (one of Chinol’s ‘sources’, as stated in the book’s preface), the Danish linguist does mention «the preterit of imagination», and a connection is made with *could, might, would, should, ought* (e.g. *could* as «a weaker and different variety of the present *can*», Jespersen, 1933: 257; «in all other applications, *should* is a preterit of imagination», Jespersen, 1933: 285). In both Zanco and Caliumi’s and Chinol’s books, however, no references to modality have been found nor was an attempt made to introduce reflective discourse with regard to the modal past. Modal auxiliaries are named “defective verbs” and are presented as anomalous not only from a morphosyntactic but also from a semantic point of view⁷. The common semantic feature shared by the modal preterite of ordinary verbs and the preterite of ‘defective verbs’ is not highlighted. In all fairness, it should nonetheless be pointed out that Chinol (1966) does make more of an effort to engage in reflective discourse – most times, as in the quotation below, this is placed in footnotes:

⁶ «When the preterite of an auxiliary is used with purely modal function, it is called an AUXILIARY OF MODALITY. [...] An auxiliary of modality is not necessarily a preterite» (Zandvoort, 1962: 89).

⁷ «*Can* ha la forma del passato ‘*could*’. Il valore più comune di *could*, tuttavia, è quello di un condizionale presente (potrei, potresti, ecc.) o di un congiuntivo presente (potessi, potesse, ecc.)» (Chinol, 1966: 222).

Nelle frasi interrogative *got* si sente ancora più necessario che nelle affermative. La ragione è che in una frase come *has he got a pen?* si ha lo stesso ordine delle parole che, come vedremo, si ha nelle comuni domande formulate con i verbi non ausiliari: *Does he want a pen?* (v. O. Jespersen *Essentials of English Grammar*) (Chinol, 1966: 47).

3. CONCLUDING REMARKS

In this paper, an exploratory investigation into English language teaching materials written by Italian academics before 1980 was carried out. In particular, a restricted sample of two books published in the two decades following the end of the Second World War was scrutinized with a view to identifying to what extent they may be associated with the genre of European university grammars of English and, more generally, reflect 20th century developments in English grammaticography and linguistics. Although neither of the two books appears to possess the generic features that have been hypothesized to identify university grammars of English as a self-standing grammaticographical genre, a change from the ‘mainstream’ approach taken by Italian grammar-translation textbooks in the way English grammar is presented vis-à-vis Italian grammar can be detected in the more recent book. Chinol (1966) departs from the practice of imposing Italian grammatical categories on to English and adopts a contrastive approach whereby differences with Italian are highlighted as, following R. Lado and other American applied linguists of the time, these are viewed as sources of errors. It could be tentatively argued that in the period under consideration insights from applied linguistics filtered down to and were taken up by Italian anglicists earlier than grammaticographical or linguistic advances. The authors of both Italian books indeed appear to cast themselves in the role of applied linguists rather than that of descriptive grammarians. Grammar study is mainly viewed as a ‘practical’ endeavour (enabling the acquisition of translation skills, in Zanco and Caliumi’s book, or as a basis for the development of the four language skills, in Chinol’s book) rather than as fostering the addressees’ language awareness and language analysis skills. As illustrated above, vis-à-vis the many applied linguists mentioned as sources of inspiration, Chinol only refers to one descriptive linguist (Jespersen) and in particular his 1933 *Essentials of English Grammar*. This is in spite of the great strides made by grammaticography and linguistics between the 1930s and the 1960s. Further evidence of this is the fact that, although undoubtedly innovative from an applied, language-learning perspective (e. g. adoption of ‘key sentences’), Chinol’s book still rests upon traditional grammatical categories, with an almost exclusive focus placed on parts of speech and no grammar analysis beyond the word level.

The Italian academic context in the middle of the 20th century was perhaps not yet ready to produce local counterparts of university grammars like Zandvoort’s much praised and much imitated book. As analysed elsewhere (Nava, forthcoming), English language was not acknowledged as an academic discipline and research (as well as career advancements) in modern languages departments revolved around literary scholarship. The teaching of whatever aspect of English studies that did not pertain to literature was offloaded on to native or near-native speaking *lettori* (language instructors), who had little (if any) linguistic training. In addition, unlike many other European academic

contexts where a good practical knowledge of English was a pre-requisite for applicants to English language and literature degrees, students who embarked on university-level English courses in Italy often only had a smattering of English at the outset of their degree programme.

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