Modern English usage from Britain to America

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Bryan Garner follows Henry Fowler from A Dictionary of Modern American English Usage to Garner's Modern English Usage

1. Introduction

Garner's Modern English Usage (hereafter Garner4) was published by Oxford University Press USA in 2016. Appearing within a span of two decades, it is the fourth edition of Bryan Garner's dictionary of usage, originally published as *A Dictionary of Modern American Usage* (Garner, 1998, hereafter Garner1). It is also the second dictionary of English usage to be published during the last three years, following the latest edition of what is arguably its most direct British counterpart, *Fowler's Dictionary of Modern English Usage* (Butterfield, 2015, hereafter Fowler4).

Compared to the previous edition, Garner4 has increased in size from 1008 to 1120 pages, making it also almost 200 pages longer than Fowler4. As seems to be the case with many reference works, each new edition of Garner's guide is bigger than the last. And as in other usage guides, there are many entries in Garner4 that do not require a specialised dictionary of usage but that could have been dealt with in a traditional dictionary. The lengthiness of Garner's book was already noted in a review of Garner1 (Wachal, 2000: 203). Questions as to what to include in a usage dictionary have also been addressed by Chapman (2010) and Kaunisto (2017). I have suggested elsewhere (Straaijer, 2018) that one reason for this continuing increase, and the phenomenon of 'padding' or 'bloating', could lie in the desire to be comprehensive, or at least to appear to be so.

I suggest that the development of Bryan Garner's usage guide is following that of Henry Fowler's in the course of its subsequent editions. In this paper, I shall look at Garner's methodological approach, and at his attitudes towards prescriptivism, descriptivism and linguistics as

expressed in the introductory essays in the book. As part of this comparison, I will evaluate the advice he offers on a number of usage problems in the latest edition and compare it with that in the earlier ones, as well as with the advice in Fowler4. By looking at Garner's relationship to Fowler, I will also demonstrate the extent to which Garner is modelling himself and his work on Fowler.

2. Garner's lexicographic methodology

The most significant innovation in lexicographic methodology in Garner4 is the use of Google Books in combination with Google's ngrams application.[1] This deserves some attention since Garner

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dedicates a significant portion of the preface to discussing the innovation. The information that is obtainable through Google Books Ngram Viewer can be highly useful, but since it does not come without its complications, applying Google ngrams to quantitative lexicography should be done with caution. Although it can be used to calculate ratios of two or more variant uses, as Garner does, these ratios cannot always be taken at face value (as he seems to do).

Calculation of the ratios is affected when there is polysemy in one of the variant uses: the occurrence of words or forms with different meanings cannot be taken as simple variants of the usage problem under investigation. This has to be taken into account, and contextual information is needed to overcome this complication. However, both the required co-text and context are available only in a limited way, since Google Books was not designed for linguistic inquiry at this level of detail.

Another complication is that, although the Ngram Viewer should ostensibly make it 'possible to calculate ratios on word frequency and phrase frequency in [...] the two major sub-types: American and British English' (Garner, 2016: ix), we do not actually know what criteria Google employs to categorise the language variety of a book as American or British English (or other varieties of English for that matter).[2] And as mentioned, potential polysemy in one variety of English but not in the other renders the numbers unreliable. This obviously needs to be taken into account when commenting on usages across varieties of English.

First introduced as a methodological innovation in the third edition, *Garner's Modern American Usage* (Garner, 2009, hereafter Garner3), the Language Change Index (LCI) (see also Smits, 2017, and Peters, 2018) is also present in Garner4. This index describes five stages of language change and the spread of new forms, as represented in Table 1.

In order to compare the general level of acceptability of usage items between Garner3 and Garner4, I manually counted the number of times each stage occurs in the printed versions. The distribution of each of the five stages of the LCI in Garner3 and Garner4 is given in Figure 1.

Figure 1 shows two things: the occurrence of Stage 1 seems disproportionally high compared to the other four stages, and Garner's evaluation has not significantly changed between Garner3 and Garner4. Stage 1 means that the usage in question is 'widely rejected' (Garner, 2009: lv; 2016: li). The five stages are presented with analogies with several other domains, and one of these is moral behaviour, with Stage 1 representing a 'mortal sin' (Garner, 2016: xxxi). This seems to confirm Peters' assessment that the LCIs 'represent degrees of social acceptance [...] rather than the stage of assimilation which a new usage has attained' (Peters, 2018: 38). The disproportionally high relative frequency of occurrence of Stage 1 could thus suggest that, although Garner's ostensible purpose was to be descriptive, i.e. 'to measure how widely accepted various linguistic innovations have become' (Garner, 2009: lv), the attribution of Stage 1 to a particular usage seems to be a *de facto* proscriptive device.

3. Attitudes towards prescriptivism, descriptivism and linguistics

Since Garner generally appears to be reasonably accepting of the application of linguistic ideas to

Stage	Description	Shorthand
Stage 1	A new form emerges as an innovation (or a dialectal form persists) among a small minority of the language community, perhaps displacing a traditional usage.	Rejected
Stage 2	The form spreads to a significant fraction of the language community but remains unacceptable in standard usage.	Widely shunned
Stage 3	The form becomes commonplace even among many well-educated people but is still avoided in careful usage.	Widespread but . . .
Stage 4	The form becomes virtually universal but is opposed on cogent grounds by a few linguistic stalwarts (die-hard snoots).	Ubiquitous but . . .
Stage 5	The form is universally accepted (not counting pseudo-snoot eccentrics).	Fully accepted

Table 1: Key to Garner's Language Change Index (LCI) (Garner, 2016: xxi)
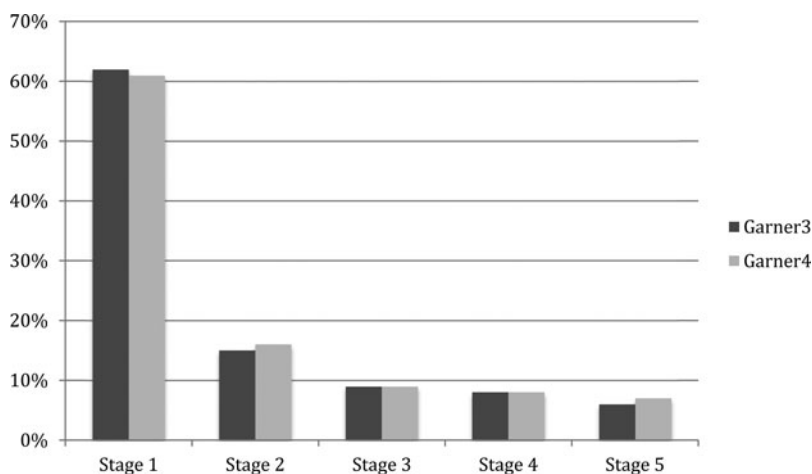
Figure 1. Relative frequencies of the LCI stages in Garner3 and Garner4 as percentages of total number of LCI attributions

lexicography, it is regrettable that the information he uses to support his points of view is at times considerably out of date. Just like its two predecessors, Garner4 contains two essays on what he calls 'language wars'. Both essays were written in response to linguists' reactions to earlier editions, and ostensibly meant to bridge the philosophical and ideological gap between prescriptivists (like Garner himself) and linguists. In essence, these two essays are defences of prescriptivism, and since they are informative of Garner's attitude as a prescriptivist writer, it is worth exploring them in a little more detail.

The essay 'Making peace in the language wars' first appeared in the second edition, *Garner's Modern American Usage* (Garner, 2003, hereafter Garner2), and was based on an article Garner published in 2001 as part of a brief polemic he was engaged in with the linguist Tom McArthur. Their argument centred around differing views on the actions and responsibilities of the two groups of people that Garner calls 'prescribers' and 'describers'. Garner puts the difference between descriptive linguists and prescriptivists as follows: '[e]ssentially, descriptivists and prescriptivists are approaching different problems. Descriptivists want to record the language as it's actually used', while '[p]rescriptivists [. . .] want to figure out the most effective uses of language, both grammatically and rhetorically' (Garner, 2016: xiv–xv). 'I am a prescriber who uses descriptivist methods – in effect, a descriptive prescriber,' Garner claims (2016: xliv).

Differences between these two groups still exist, and in some ways they are as great as they have ever been (see for instance Beal, 2009 on the rise of the 'new prescriptivism'). There has, however, been a considerable change in ideas about and attitudes towards prescriptivism among members of both groups since Garner's essay was first published, and a new edition of a usage guide should reflect this. Instead, describers' attitudes are represented by linguists' remarks from the last century. Citing Robert Hall's out-dated remarks from 1950 that there is no such thing as ungrammaticality as evidence of the position of present-day linguists can be seen as negligent, misleading and even irresponsible. At the very least, current, critical attitudes of linguists to important issues like this ought to be included.

There are other instances in which Garner does not take recent developments into account. One example is the suggestion that linguists do not recognise and accept the value of knowing and teaching Standard English (Garner, 2016: xxxvi). This is no longer the case (see for instance Carter, 1999: 163), and suggestions as to how to responsibly approach the teaching of Standard English had already been offered previously (e.g. Curzan, 2002). However, Garner writes that '[t]oday the teaching of standard English is being labeled discriminatory' (Garner, 2016: xliv), referring to James Milroy's chapter in *Language Myths* (1998) in which it is claimed that a person's use of language is one of the last remaining socially acceptable forms of overt discrimination. It is, of course, not so much the teaching of standard English itself that is considered discriminatory by linguists, as the teaching of the ideology that the standard is linguistically superior to other regional

and social varieties of English. Garner must at some level be convinced of this superiority, since it is clear from his LCI that he believes that some forms of English are better than others, and that some users are better than others as well, which is by definition discriminatory.

Another example is the charge that linguists have neglected to include prescriptivism in their research. Garner writes that he does not 'doubt the value of descriptive linguistics – up to the point at which describers dogmatically refuse to acknowledge the value of prescriptivism' (Garner, 2016: xliv). While this has been the case in the past, more recent studies have investigated the level of success of prescriptive efforts, thereby implicitly accepting that prescriptive efforts can actually be successful. Examples are Anderwald (2014), Curzan (2014) and Hinrichs, Szmrecsanyi and Bohmann (2015), which answer Garner's wish that if 'the prescribers have moderate success, then the describers should simply describe those successes' (Garner, 2016: xliv). In addition, there has been an increasing amount of research that describes prescriptivism as part of linguistic reality and therefore worthy of study.[3]

As a third example Garner mentions linguists' resistance to prescription exemplified by their apparent aversion to spell-checking applications in word-processing software. This notion is based on an article that allegedly argues that these applications are bad because they stifle experimentation in spelling, but the article about spell-checkers referred to was published in the late 1980s. Reference to an article from that period may have been acceptable at the time of Garner1, but attitudes have evolved since then. The main criticism that sociolinguists aim at spell-checking applications these days is that their prescriptivism is ubiquitous, rarely perceived as optional by the users of the application, and that the norms from which the prescriptions originate are hidden behind the technology (see Curzan, 2014: 64–92).

'Making peace in the language wars' was first published 15 years before the most current edition, and its sources have not been updated for any of the editions after those in which they were originally published, including Garner4. Garner is a lexicographer, not a linguist, and therefore may not be fully up to date on the developments discussed. But the developments concerned are important and reflect broad changes in attitudes in an area that he is interested in and about which he obviously cares. So, especially for a descriptive prescriber it would be useful to at least refer to more recent developments in the field.

Originally called 'The ongoing struggles of garlic-hangers' in Garner3,[4] the essay 'The ongoing tumult in English usage' seems to have been a reply to an article entitled 'Language wars truce accepted (with conditions)' in a legal journal (Tiersma, 2005). It is worth examining Tiersma's essay before discussing Garner's views in more detail.

Tiersma's central point is that 'it matters if Garner is a describer or a prescriber because he has become a force to be reckoned with in [...] what we might call "the style business"' (2005: 139), and that the criticism that linguists aim at 'typical prescribers is that, instead of acknowledging the existence of variation, they seem to have an almost irresistible urge to label one of the two variants as wrong or improper' (2005: 142). Tiersma argues that 'Garner is free to argue in favor of *proved* or *strove*. He can even prescribe it to those who seek his advice. He should do so, however, in light of solid descriptive evidence' (2005: 143). He concludes that 'what it boils down to is this, can we trust Brian [sic] Garner and other prescribers to decide for us what is correct English and what is not?' (2005: 141).

So it is a question of authority. Smits (2017: 224) notes that 'Garner's appeals to authority', that is 'the sheer enumeration of [...] different "authoritative devices"', are meant to convince (perhaps overwhelm) the reader to believe that his judgement can be trusted', adding, '[i]n that sense, Garner is particularly knowledgeable about the developments in the usage guide tradition'. To this I would add that Garner is also very much aware of his own place in that tradition as it is currently being shaped, which I will discuss in Section 5.

4. A discussion of some of Garner's usage problems

Some of the criticism of Garner's methodology may be illustrated by a number of well-known usage problems: *disinterested*, the 'new' *like*, *snuck*, singular *they*, and *unique*. In Garner's discussion of these usage problems, either the methodology on which his prescriptions are based is insufficient, or the information on actual, current usage is not up to date. However, these instances are also illustrative of how descriptive Garner can be.

Garner's prescription for the use of *disinterested* in the sense of *uninterested* has not changed since Garner1: 'the distinction is still best recognized and followed because *disinterested* captures a nuance

that no other word quite does' (Garner, 1998: 213). Garner3 added the LCI at Stage 4 (Garner, 2009: 266), and Garner4 adds: 'Current ratio (*uninterested children* vs. **disinterested children*): 1:1' (Garner, 2016: 290), indicating how frequent this alleged misuse is. Fowler4, also based on corpus data (Butterfield, 2015: viii), says that *disinterested* occurs slightly more often than *uninterested*, but that 'there is no reason whatsoever that [*disinterested*] should be prevented from having two different meanings; most words do' (Butterfield, 2015: 224). This polysemy of *disinterested* was already put forward as a linguistic fait-accompli in the corpus-based *Cambridge Guide to English Usage*: 'Given that **disinterested** carries several meanings, we effectively rely on the context to show which is intended - as is true of many words' (Peters, 2004: 158). The overlap in meaning noted by Butterfield and Peters is ignored when Garner represents usage as simply being a ratio of frequencies of occurrence. Also, by merely citing this ratio, Garner seems to implicitly comment on the 'erroneous' use of *uninterested* to mean 'impartial', even though this is a mistake that no one would make (which Garner does not mention, nor do most usage guides).

Garner discusses the various 'new' uses of *like* under *like* as a 'Vogue word and verbal tic' or 'space-filler' (LCI Stage 2), as he calls them (Garner, 2016: 566). This instance conflates various uses of *like* as a discourse marker or a discourse particle, which, rather than being random insertions into discourse, have been shown to have specific functions. One function of what is sometimes referred to as the 'new *like*' is its use as a quotative complementiser in the construction BE *like* (D'Arcy, 2007: 392). Although relatively new, the use of quotative *like* was already noted thirty-five years ago (Butters, 1982: 149) and has been studied fairly extensively since.[5] Garner acknowledges the history of this use of *like*: '[s]ince the 1980s, *be like* has also been a low CASUALISM equivalent to *said* in relating a conversation, especially among juveniles. [...] In teenagers, this usage is all but ubiquitous. In adults, it shows arrested development' (Garner, 2016: 566). However, he does not mention the word's actual function, or how it is used differently from *said*, since in its quotative function, according to D'Arcy, BE *like* 'performs the specialized role of introducing reported speech, thought and nonlexicalized sounds' (2007: 392). Moreover, its use is not limited to young people, since 'adults of all ages use them to some extent or another', D'Arcy claims, although 'adolescents use the vernacular

forms more frequently than adult cohorts' (2007: 411). Thus, the information Garner uses is not very up to date.

In Garner3, the use of *snuck* as an alternative form for the past tense and past participle of the verb *to sneak* (*sneaked*) had an LCI of Stage 3. Fowler4 reads that *snuck* 'is recognized as standard in AmE' (Butterfield, 2015: 756), though I have not been able to track down what that statement is based on other than its frequency in the *Oxford English Corpus*, which provides Butterfield with his data. In the fourth edition, Garner acknowledges the form's widespread currency and puts its LCI at Stage 4 (Garner, 2016: 841). This indicates that he has noted the increased use of *snuck*, which, as Smits shows, has overtaken the use of *sneaked* in American English from 2005 onwards (2017: 232). Despite this, however, and contrary to Fowler4, Garner still considers *snuck* 'a nonstandard past tense and past participle of *sneak* common in American speech and writing' (Garner, 2016: 840).

The discussion of *they* (and *them*) as a common-sex singular pronoun is given a descriptive approach in Garner4. It is discussed in the lemmas 'concord', 'pronouns' and 'sexism'. Under 'concord' Garner notes, as he already did in the first edition, that singular *they* 'is especially common in BrE', that it has become so common because it is 'the most convenient solution to the single biggest problem in sexist language – the generic masculine pronoun', and that '[i]n all varieties of World English, resistance to the singular *they* is fast receding' (Garner, 2016: 195–196). Under 'pronouns' Garner observes that many indefinite pronouns often combine with *they* despite being traditionally considered singular 'because *they* has increasingly moved towards singular senses' (Garner, 2016: 736). And under 'sexism', he notes that, although 'the masculine singular pronoun may survive awhile longer as a generic term, it will probably be ultimately displaced by *they*, which is coming to be used alternatively as singular or plural. [...] Speakers of AmE resist this development more than speakers of BrE', which is 'an unfortunate obstacle to what promises to be the ultimate solution to the problem' (Garner, 2016: 822).

Fowler4 reads that '[o]ver the centuries, writers of standing have used *they*, *their* and *them* with anaphoric reference to a singular pronoun or noun [...] to the point that [...] such constructions are hardly noticed any more or are not widely felt to lie in a prohibited zone', adding that '[t]he process now seems irreversible' (Butterfield,

2015: 814). Garner's assessment of the British situation thus seems correct, and his comments show that he describes singular *they* using up-to-date information with regard to its use and the attitudes towards its use.

The treatment of *unique* highlights the problem of basing usage arguments on logic. Garner discusses the use of modifiers with *unique* and other absolute adjectives in the essay entry 'adjectives',[6] as well as under the lemma 'unique'. The argument is based on logic (there is a cross-reference to the essay entry 'illogic') and on the unambiguous meaning of *unique*. He argues that 'uniqueness [...] is an absolute quality, something cannot logically be more or less unique than something else', and that '[u]nless the thing is the only one of its kind, rarity does not make it unique' (Garner, 2016: 930); 'something is either unique or not unique, there can be no degrees of uniqueness. Hence *more unique* and *very unique* are incorrect' (Garner, 2016: 20). If we accept this as logically sound, then the application of this logic to an adjective such as *perfect* would also disallow the use of *more perfect*. However, Garner does allow *more perfect* and even considers what is arguably a more logical phrase, *more nearly perfect*, to be pedantic, adding: '[a]lthough the Constitution [in which the phrase occurs] is not without stylistic blemishes, this probably isn't one of them' (Garner, 2016: 20). The reason for this may be the historical importance of the document mentioned.

Chapman, among others, argues that appealing to logic is not always the best approach to linguistic problems since 'language works on principles extending beyond logic' (Chapman, 2010: 149). Garner is aware of this as well, since under 'illogic', he writes that 'grammatical distinctions' do not 'necessarily reflect logical ones', and that '[o]ur language is full of idioms that defy logic, many of them literary and many colloquial' (Garner, 2016: 484). Thus, with regard to *unique* as a gradable adjective, Garner should probably have heeded his own advice more.

5. An American Fowler

Bryan Garner is a self-identified Fowlerian. As early as the 'Autobiographical Note' in the preface to Garner1, he wrote about how he became infatuated with *A Dictionary of Modern English Usage* (Fowler, 1926).

[O]n a wintry evening while visiting New Mexico at the age of 16, I discovered Eric Partridge's *Usage and Abusage.* I was enthralled [...] He kept mentioning another author, by the name of Fowler, so when I got back to Texas I sought out Fowler's *Modern English Usage.* And that book turned out to be even better. Suffice it to say that by the time I was 18, I had committed to memory most of Fowler, Partridge, and their successors: the Evanses, Bernstein, Follett, and Copperud. (Garner, 1998: xvii)

Garner's admiration of Fowler led him to found the H.W. Fowler Society in the United States in 1980. His identification with Fowler seems to have started when the linguist Tom McArthur opened his review of Garner1 with the following words:

Henry Watson Fowler, it would appear, is alive and well and living in Texas. Or at least his spirit thrives there in a way that proved impossible on home territory in 1996, when the *Oxford* Oxford University Press published *The New Fowler's Modern English Dictionary.*

McArthur made the comparison to Fowler because he found that Garner1 was 'quite astonishingly close in content, spirit, and layout to the original, published in 1926' (McArthur, 1999: 59). Garner replied to this by writing 'how pleasing it was to see the opening words of Tom admitting McArthur's review' (2000: 3), though acknowledging that 'McArthur didn't intend much, if any, praise in his comment' (Garner, 2000: 3). Nevertheless, Garner seems to have taken up Fowler's mantle eagerly, and appears to have been actively branding himself as the American version of Fowler since: 'The Fowlerian echo is purposeful [...] It's just that I'm writing from an American perspective' (Garner, 2000: 4). That perspective, however, seems to have changed in the most recent edition of his work.

Garner's pursuit of Fowler is particularly evident in the original title of his usage guide and in the ways in which it has changed over subsequent editions.[7] The title of the original 1998 edition, *A Dictionary of Modern American Usage*, clearly referenced Fowler's *A Dictionary of Modern English Usage* (1926). From Garner2 onwards, Garner's name was included in the title of his book, thereby echoing the titles of the later editions of Fowler.[8] From Garner1 to Garner3, the author and his book firmly remained an authority on specifically *American* usage. However, judging by the change in title for Garner4, the book is now officially about *English*, rather than merely American usage. Perhaps to pre-empt any ad-hominem attacks, Garner strategically mentions in the first

sentence of his Preface to this edition that this change was the publisher's choice:

> Oxford University Press has decided to rename the book *Garner's Modern English Usage* – using *English* instead of *American*. That change restores the idea that was behind the first edition. The implied global emphasis of English makes more sense today than ever before, given the book's inclusive approach to World English, not just to American English and British English. (Garner, 2016: ix)

It has not been possible to comprehensively analyse the book for references to other varieties of English, but it will be interesting to see to what extent norms of World English – insofar as these can be identified – are indeed included, or whether *Garner's Modern English Usage* still retains much of the existing British and American norms for correct usage of Fowler and Garner.

The change in Garner4 can, however, be illustrated by counting the number of references to BrE in the various editions of Garner's usage guide, as is shown in Figure 2. The graph clearly shows that Garner pays much more attention to BrE usage in the latest edition compared to the previous ones, as was to be expected by the change in the title.

I have argued elsewhere that the development of Fowler's usage guide has both mirrored and directed the historical development of the usage guide as a genre during the twentieth century (Straaijer, 2016, 2018). The evolution of Garner's book follows that of Fowler, though edited by three different writers in the course of its history. After the first edition, the second edition (Gowers 1965) remained largely unaltered (Busse & Schröder, 2010: 47), as in the case of Garner2; the third edition introduces a new method of gathering information or evaluation, such as a purpose-built corpus in the case of *The New Fowler's Modern English Usage* (Burchfield, 1996) and the Language Change Index in Garner3; and the fourth edition then sees an increase in sophistication of this method, as in the use of the Oxford English Corpus in the case of Fowler4 and Google Books in Garner4.

The timing of the publication of Garner4 is interesting. Considering that Garner has explicitly identified himself with Fowler since Garner1, that the two works are published by the same publisher, and that they now also ostensibly deal with the same variety of English, the appearance of Garner4 just a year after the latest edition of Fowler is unlikely to be a coincidence. It seems that 'Garner' is now so established in America as a brand that the book no longer needs to have 'American' in the title. This close following of Fowler is perhaps a reason why the four editions of Garner's dictionary have appeared in such a relatively short amount of time: while 90 years separate Fowler1 (1926) from Fowler4 (2015), there are only 28 years between the publication of Garner1 and Garner4.
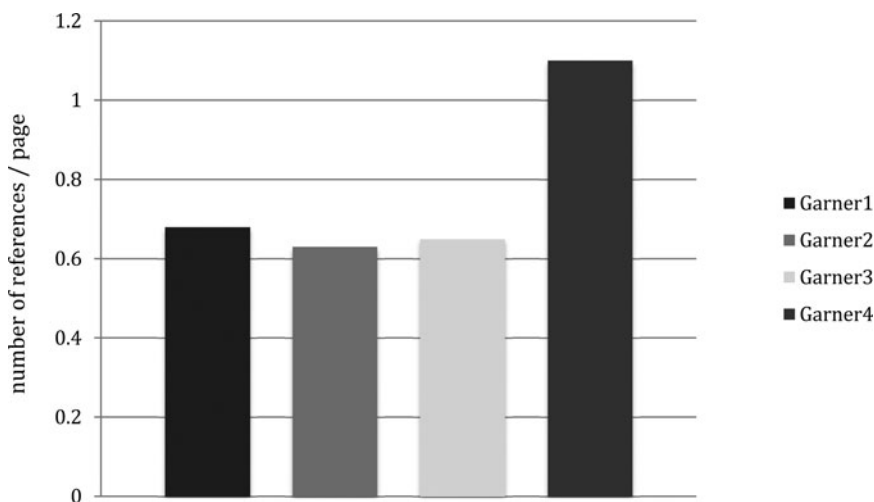

Figure 2. Number of references to BrE usage per page (of main text) in all four editions of Garner's usage dictionary

6. Discussion and conclusions

The discussion of the introductory essays in Garner4 showed that their contents are based on information that is at least partially out of date. Unfortunately, this want of up-to-date information continues in the discussion of usage items in the main text. A brief investigation of a selected number of usage problems showed that Garner is in some sense indeed a descriptive prescriber. He uses descriptions of actual usage to make his prescriptions, as in the case of singular *they*, and applies logic where he deems it to be appropriate (though not always consistently). But it also shows that perhaps equally often the information used is out of date and logic seems unfittingly applied.

Consequently, earlier criticism on Garner2 and Garner3 (Smits, 2017, Peters, 2018) is still valid for the most recent edition of Garner's usage guide. Smits criticised Garner3 for the lack of methodological transparency: 'he gives no indication how he weighed the surveys and corpus in formation' (Smits, 2017: 223). Particularly when corpus evidence is taken into account, Smits's evaluation that 'it should be concluded that Garner's judgements should be taken with a grain of salt [. . .] and may be based too much on personal preference' (Smits, 2017: 236) still seems to hold. In addition, the information used to arrive at or defend certain prescriptions is regrettably still often out-dated.

Consequently, there certainly is reason to agree with Garner's self-portrayal as a descriptive pre-scriptivist, and to tentatively support Tiersma's challenge for Garner to 'openly declare that he is, even in his role as usage or style guru, a careful observer of actual usage' (Tiersma, 2005: 144). But in the end, *Garner's Modern English Usage* seems mostly a typical, prescriptive usage guide, though admittedly a decently researched one. And this latest edition contains enough improvements and changes in both methodology and attitude to at least give linguists hope for the future of the genre. Garner is on the right track, but as a descriptive prescriber, his information should be more up to date, and he should concern himself more with the linguistic side of the work as part of 'a lifetime of serious linguistic study' (Garner, 2016: li).

The introductory articles suggest that despite his more descriptive approach and the proverbial olive branch he extends towards linguists, Garner still often speaks from entrenched values regarding usage and the standard language. In other words,

even though Garner's methodology has evolved and has become more rigorous, his core values seem to be static. In that sense, the difference between Burchfield's Fowler and Butterfield's Fowler is perhaps more significant than that between Garner3 and Garner4. But this lack of evolvement is perhaps not wholly unexpected considering the fact that the usage guide is generally a conservative genre.

Bryan Garner appears to be keenly aware of his place in the tradition of the genre as it continues to be shaped. He has taken up the mantle as a not quite self-proclaimed natural successor to Henry Fowler. His methodology has evolved, thereby allowing his guide to evolve along with the genre itself – and perhaps helping to shape it further. We can therefore perhaps ask whether it was a conscious endeavour to shift the authority on English usage from Britain to America.

Note

1 Online at https://books.google.com/ngrams.

2 I emailed Google Books to ask how this determination is made. A representative of the Google Support Team replied that it is 'an internal algorithm incorporated into the ngram viewer', the details of which Google is 'unable' to share (email correspondence 22 June 2017).

3 An example of this is the research performed by the project 'Bridging the Unbridgeable: Linguists, Prescriptivists and the General Public', which ran between 2011 and 2016 at the Leiden University Centre for Linguistics (http://bridgingtheunbridgeable.com).

4 Garner explains that the term garlic-hangers 'was a self-deprecating moniker for those who, despite some linguists' teachings, think that malapropisms occur' (reply to Lynne Murphy's tweet asking him about the origin of the term. Online at https://twitter.com/bryana-garner/status/482499885850038272).

5 D'Arcy notes that '[o]nly quotative be like can be defined as a late-twentieth century innovation' and that the other 'new' uses of like 'are complex and long-standing features of English dialects' (D'Arcy, 2007: 412).

6 Essay entries are longer entries that discuss related problems under a more general heading, as opposed to the regular lemmas, which usually discuss a single usage problem.

7 See also Tieken–Boon van Ostade (2018: 4–5).

8 Although Fowler's name was not explicitly mentioned in the title, the second edition of *A Dictionary of Modern English Usage* (Gowers, 1965) came to be informally referred to as *Fowler's Modern English Usage*. By the time the second edition was published, the *Dictionary of Modern English Usage* had apparently become such an institution that it could simply

be referred to as 'Fowler' (see for instance Busse & Schröder, 2010, and Tieken–Boon van Ostade, 2018: 2).

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