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Competing Methodologies in Early 19th-Century Foreign Language Teaching: Moses Santagnello (and Others) vs James Hamilton[1]

Abstract
This paper presents and compares the teaching methodologies of Moses Santagnello and James Hamilton, two foreign language teachers working in England in the first half of the 19th century. Santagnello and Hamilton were among the firsts to reconsider traditional methods of foreign language teaching, so that their criticism anticipated some of the issues later raised by the Reform Movement and later SLA researchers. The methods they developed differed considerably from one another; Santagnello was a supporter of a meaningful acquisition of foreign grammatical structures in the students' native language, while Hamilton believed grammar to be a hindrance on acquisition and suggested that language learning should start from reading practice. Common to both methods was the use of translation, although in different ways. Finally, worthy of consideration are also the authors' observations and ideas on the features of language learning and teaching of their time; indeed, both authors dealt with issues that are still highly debated in present-day language teaching.

1. *Introduction*

> Languages – a Gentleman of a Liberal and Classical Education, who has resided for several years in Italy, Portugal, France, and Holland, and acquired the knowledge and true accent of the different Languages of those Countries, so as to have passed for a native in each of them, begs leave to offer his Services to the Nobility and Gentry who may wish to learn Italian, Portuguese, French or Dutch, and to any Foreigner of Distinction who may desire to learn English. The most respectable references can be given in every respect. Address to A.B. No. 65, Cheapside.
>
> (*Public Advertiser*, London, February 12, 1756; Issue 6644)

1 This paper was jointly conceived, prepared, and written by the two co-authors, with Giovanni Iamartino responsible for section 2 and Lucia Berti for the remaining ones.

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In the 18th and 19th centuries the study of foreign languages in Britain – French, Italian, German and Spanish especially – became increasingly popular among the British middle and upper classes. Moreover, starting from 1724 modern languages were introduced in the university curricula of Oxford and Cambridge and continued (not without interruptions) throughout the 19th century (Firth 1929). Grammar schools also proposed a renewal of their overly classical curricula in order to include more practical subjects, among which was the study of modern languages (Tompson 1971). Some schools instead offered lessons in a foreign language as an extracurricular activity, although the presence of modern languages beyond elitarian education continued to face strong difficulties up until the 20th century (McLelland 2017: 39-85).

Of course, the reasons for studying a foreign language are varied and variable in time, and so is the choice to study one language over another. In the early modern period, for instance, German became popular in England for political reasons, namely the accession of the Hanoverians to the throne in 1714; French was the main studied language due to the strong cultural and political ties that had long existed between England and France; and interest in learning Spanish was renewed with the War of Spanish Succession and later with the Spanish War of Independence (1807-1814), which also inspired British romantics to read Spanish literature (Firth 1929: 3, McLelland 2017: 9-24). For Italian, instead, it was the *Grand Tour*, the Opera and classic Italian literature that spurred wealthy boys and girls, as well as adult learners, to try and master the language of the *Bel Paese* (Brand 1957, Thorne 1958, Tosi 2020). In general, the reasons behind the learning of a foreign language at this time could either be for personal educational accomplishment – for instance to be able to travel, read foreign literature and learn about other cultures – or more practical – for commerce, politics and war.

In the case of the Italian language, the presence of numerous teachers, who often taught two or more (generally cognate) languages, made the language teaching market rather competitive in Britain. Indeed, teachers and grammarians bitterly attacked each other in the prefaces to their books and in newspapers. Gradually arguments moved from being focused on quantity and comprehensiveness of the contents of one's didactic offer to focusing on the quality of one's method. Towards the end of the 18th century and the beginning of the 19th, grammars of the

Italian language developed from being simply arranged according to clear and easy methods, often highlighting conciseness and possibility of acquiring the foreign language in a short time[2], to being increasingly detailed and theorising on the best way to learn Italian according to the opinion of their compilers. Common at this time, for instance, was the teaching of Italian by means of the French language, a method exploited in the grammars of David Francesco Lates (1762), professor of languages at Oxford, of John Soilleux (1793), and in the anonymous *Dialogues in the Italian language* (1776)[3]. The basic assumption was that knowledge of the French language, which was more commonly known among the educated and affluent spheres of society, should ease the acquisition of the Italian language given their common Latin ancestry. Hence, these manuals explain Italian rules in English but report examples in both Italian and French[4].

Another aspect that emerges in this period is an increased need for practice material[5] – often absent in earlier grammars – and a tendency to balance practice against grammatical instruction. Authors of grammars tended to highlight the importance of practicing the language in order to

2 This is for example the case with Evangelista Palermo's *A Grammar of the Italian Language* (1755, 1768, 1777) or Gaetano Ravizzotti's *A New Italian Grammar* (1797); according to its title page, the latter grammar book was arranged "On a Plan different from any hitherto published, pointing out, in a clear and concise Manner, the best Rules, and the easiest method for the attainment of that elegant and harmonious language" and it was "Equally Calculated for the Use of Schools, and Private Instruction".

3 This book consists of a short basic grammar in the form of tables followed by a series of dialogues in Italian without interlinear translations. The dialogues were taken from *Italian Dialogues, Consisting of Familiar Expressions upon Various Subjects* published in 1774 by Agostino Isola, professor of Italian at the University of Cambridge.

4 Other grammars of the Italian language were moreover published directly in French, such as Vicenzo Peretti's *Grammaire italienne* (1795), Giovanni Veneroni's *Nouvelle methode pour apprendre la langue italienne* revised by Joseph Stanglini (1724) and Angelo Vergani's *Grammaire italienne* (1831), of which an English version (*A New and Complete Italian Grammar*, Birmingham, 1791) had also been available for forty years. Veneroni's grammar was originally published in France in 1678 and published in England for the first time in 1711 translated into English by Thomas Uvedale (a second edition of Uvedale's translation came out in 1729). The grammar was then newly translated in 1763 and was republished many times through the 18th and 19th centuries. Veneroni's grammar was the most referenced Italian language manual of the time and was used by many language teachers during their lessons.

5 Ferdinando Bottarelli, for instance, published his *Exercises upon the Different Parts of Speech* (1778) consisting mainly of English sentences to translate into Italian and meant to function as a workbook to the 1763 edition of Veneroni's grammar. The book provides exercises arranged according to three levels of difficulty with explicit page references to the grammar.

master it, while authors of practice books, who were in some cases the same authors of the grammars, would stress the importance of having some grammatical knowledge first. Some also attempted to grade their practice material for different levels of language skill. Yet, the continuing tendency to propose easy and concise methods shows that some rejection towards excessive grammatical instruction was already taking place before the 19th century, although, as Vincenzo Peretti put it:

> Vi sono alcuni di nostri [maestri di lingue], che, quasi annojati dal nome di grammatica, come troppo antico, volendo adattarsi alla schifiltà di coloro cui un tal nome potrebbe riuscir fastidioso, e farsi credere ritrovatori di cose nuove, si danno a screditarlo, e promettono di seguire gli studiosi all'acquisto della lingua Italiana, senza che abbiano a far uso della grammatica; e intanto d'altro non ragionano ne loro scritti che del nome, del verbo, e dell'altre parti componenti la grammatica. (1798: 7)[6]

This is the context in which the Italian Moses Santagnello developed as a teacher, and in which the Irish-born James Hamilton found himself when he arrived in England in 1823. In the early 19th century, Santagnello devised a method that was rooted in the deep understanding of grammatical structures followed by abundant and graded practice. For this purpose, he would exploit English by providing literal translations of Italian clauses in order to allow his students to view and understand the functioning of Italian syntax in their own native language. Hamilton's method was also based on a particular form of literal translations but, according to him, language learning was to start from reading practice without grammatical instruction – at least initially. Their methods, which were developed from their own teaching and learning experiences, will be the subject of the present paper. By considering both authors' pedagogic texts and Santagnello's treatise, *An Impartial Examination of the Hamiltonian System of Teaching Languages,* the purpose of the following pages is to present, compare and comment on the two authors' foreign language teaching methodologies.

6 'There are some of us [language teachers] who, somewhat tired of the word grammar, which they perceive as too ancient, and willing to adapt to the finicalness of those to whom such word could sound tedious, and to pass for discoverers of new things, discredit it, and promise to guide learners in the acquisition of the Italian language without making use of grammar; yet, in their writings, they speak of nothing else but nouns, verbs, and the other parts of grammar' (our translation).

2. *Santagnello's Method*

Moses Santagnello was an Italian-born language teacher, who settled in England (first in Plymouth and then in London) around the late 1700s or early 1800s. He privately taught Italian, Spanish and French, and published, between the 1810s and the 1840s, a varied and extensive collection of books for the learning and teaching of the Italian language[7]. His publications included two grammar books, which ran through several editions; two exercise books, one of which had a separate key that could also serve as a reading book on its own; a dictionary of peculiar grammatical constructions and a revised French-Italian dictionary; a phrase book; a series of anthologies and novels in Italian for reading practice; and the above-mentioned treatise discussing Hamilton's teaching method.

In most of his publications Santagnello inserted short advertisements for private lessons clarifying from the start that he taught the language 'grammatically'[8]. The importance he attributed to grammatical competence is seen not only in the comprehensiveness of his grammars – which provide both grammatical rules and explanations on the syntactic construction of each part of speech[9] – but also throughout his practice books, which are rich in grammatical clarifications.

A first feature of Santagnello's approach to grammar teaching was the ample exemplification of rules, something that is generally taken for granted today but was often absent or limited to minimal phrases in earlier, 18th-century grammars. Santagnello tended to insert examples from Italian prose writers and privileged a more contemporary use of language over the ancient classics – with the exception of Giovanni

7 For more on Santagnello's life see Iamartino & Berti in print, and on his publications see Iamartino & Berti 2018.

8 For instance: "Signor Santagnello teaches the Italian language grammatically. 26, Shouldham-Street, Bryanston-Square" (Santagnello 1820b: IV).

9 Santagnello's grammars, moreover, show a similar development to what was stated above on other late 18th- and early 19th-century grammars; namely that while his earlier grammar (Santagnello 1813b) followed the popular trend and market requirement of being "compendious and easy", the second grammar (Santagnello 1828) wants to be a "complete" grammar and consists of a much more mature work of 468 pages (against the 166 plus exercises of the earlier grammar) in which he first systematically deals with pronunciation (part I) and all of the parts of speech (articles, nouns, adjectives, pronouns, verbs, participles and adverbs) with contrastive explanations on the structural differences between English and Italian (part II), to then move onto syntax (part III) with numerous examples of usage extracted from Italian authors and presented in both Italian and English.

Boccaccio, whose prose he frequently cited. Further, he highlighted the rules under study by graphically distinguishing them in the examples. See for instance the following extract on the syntax of passive verbs from the fourth edition of his *Complete Grammar of the Italian Language*:

> Sometimes verbs passive, instead of *essere*, are conjugated, only in their simple tenses, with the following verbs, viz. *venire*, to come; *restare* or *rimanere*, to remain; *vedersi*, to see one's self.
> Buommattei. *Ma siasi una lingua nobile, poco le gioverá mentre ch'ella non* venga *usata da famosi scrittori*; but let a language be noble, it will be of little use if it is not adopted by celebrated writers. *Venga* for *sia*.
> Goldoni. *Voi non sapete da chi mi* vengano *somministrate*; you do not know by whom they are given to me. *Vengano* for *siano*.
> Goldoni. *Se non mi sará lecito di sposarlo, procurerò almeno che* resti *impiegato in questa cittá*; if I am not allowed to marry him, I shall at least endeavour that he may be employed in this city. *Resti* for *sia*.
> Boccalini. *Egli* rimase *maravigliato della brutta invenzione*; he was astonished at the bad invention. *Rimase* for *fu*.
> Soave. *E il giovane infelice* si vide *tosto da una squadra di satelliti circondato e tratto in prigione*; and the unhappy youth was soon surrounded by a squadron of guards and taken to prison. *Si vide* for *fu*[10]. (Santagnello 1828: 395)

Santagnello's method became fully developed by 1820, his *annus mirabilis,* when he published his *Dictionary of the Peculiarities of the Italian language* (Santagnello 1820c), the third edition of his *Practical Exercises* (1820a), and the *New Set of Exercises* (1820b). A closer look into these manuals will allow us to understand Santagnello's approach.

The exercise books are meant to follow the rules of Santagnello's *Complete Grammar* and contain English sentences to translate into Italian. To ensure that the learners focus on a given grammar rule, Santagnello already inserts those Italian parts of speech which are not directly related to the rule. Hence, for instance, in one of the first exercises on the object ("relative") pronouns Santagnello provides beforehand the Italian parts of speech whose functioning would yet be unknown to his students, while

10 The examples quoted here are taken from the following Italian authors: Benedetto Buonmattei (1581-1648), Carlo Goldoni (1707-1793), Traiano Boccalini (1556-1613), and Francesco Soave (1743-1806).

he leaves it to them to translate and correctly insert the object pronouns – the rule under study –, the articles and the subject pronouns, which the learners should have already studied and practiced in the preceding chapters. He also avoids the inclusion of 'easier' parts of speech such as conjunctions and the verbs *to be* and *have*, which are among the earliest subjects that learners study. See for instance the following example:

> EXERCISE VI.
> On the relative pronouns, (*a*) *il* or *lo*, *la*, *gli* or *li*, *le*, page 27. Explanation 2.
>
> […] In the following Exercises the scholar is to practise the Articles and the Pronoun Relatives: the other words are not to be altered.
>
> I am loved by the master, and the other scholars will not believe it.
> (*b*) *amáto* *áltri*,m.p. *vógliono* (*c*) *crédere*
> –The young ladies are (*d*) in the hall, and you have not seen them.
> *Signoríne*, f.p. *in sála*, f. (*e*) *vedúte*
>
> ---
>
> *(a)* These words signifying him, it, her, them, that is to say, they being relative pronouns, are placed before the verb: as, I have them, *gli ho*; and if there be a negative with the verb, they are to be put between the negative and the verb: as, I have them not, *non gli ho*. […] (Santagnello 1820a:8)

As can be seen, a series of words have already been inserted in the correct Italian form (e.g. *amato*, masculine participle of *amare*, or the pronoun *altri*, already declined in the masculine plural form) and the learners have only to add them as such in their translation.

However, the more students progress with practice, the less help is given to them, until only a few words in their base form are provided. See for instance the following example taken from an exercise on moods and tenses further on in the book:

> I read English every day: but I have not opportunity of speaking it.
> *Léggere* *occasióne*
> – (b) One of my countrymen with whom *I got* acquainted at Bath, *told* me
> *compatriótto* *fáre conoscénza*
> he had been forty years in England, and that during all that time he had
> *duránte* *témpo*

not been able to learn English, and that he had forgotten his own language. […]
capáce (c) *dimenticársi próprio*

[…]
(b) Turn: *One my countrymen*.
(c) *Dimenticarsi* governs a genitive. (Santagnello 1820a: 90)

In the above extract, verbs such as *read* and *forget* are this time provided in the Italian infinitive (*leggere* and *dimenticarsi*) rather than being conjugated in the present simple and past perfect respectively, and it is up to the learners to conjugate them and correctly insert them in their translation.

From these examples another salient feature of Santagnello's approach can be seen, that is the frequent use of footnotes. These footnotes served various purposes: they might clarify grammar points, highlight exceptions to rules, comment on usage[11] and, most importantly, provide directions to the learners on how to transform the English sentence in order to translate it into correct Italian. Indeed, Santagnello wanted to make sure that his students truly understood the syntactic rules that governed the Italian language and was aware that grammar rules did not always serve this purpose but, on the contrary, were often found to be confusing by learners. Hence, to overcome the obscurity of metalanguage, he thought of showing, rather than telling his students, how Italian was constructed. He would thus transfer Italian syntactic structures onto English, such as the above "one my countrymen" in footnote *b*, which literally translates – in the plural, though – the Italian "un mio compatriotto". By doing so, Santagnello consciously made negative transfers from Italian to English, but these ungrammatical English sentences, which he himself defined as "bad English", would have two positive outcomes: first, that learners could view and understand Italian structures in their own native

11 As anticipated above, Santagnello gave importance to a contemporary use of language. He believed that students should learn the everyday spoken language first. However, as one of the most common reasons to study Italian was to read and understand classic Italian literature, he too provided some examples and reading material that were extracted from classic Italian authors. However, in his works he generally pointed out any instances of language use which had become obsolete. Accordingly, he would also highlight cases in which the spoken language deviated from the norm; he did not altogether reject non-standard uses as he believed that "where custom prevails, every thing must give way to it" (Santagnello 1828: 427).

language; and, second, that they were prevented from making negative transfers themselves from English to Italian.

In his second exercise book, *A New Set of Exercises* (1820b), rather than sentences, the author inserts longer texts to translate, namely "little tales, anecdotes, statistical descriptions of several countries, cities, islands, &c. extracted from various English authors", which, he hopes, "will not fail to prove both useful and improving, and at the same time be productive of amusement and recreation" (1820b: vi). *A New Set* was meant to follow the *Practical Exercises* in that the students' preparation was here expected to be at a higher level, having already completed the study of the grammar and the *Practical Exercises*. The value placed on learning by stages is also seen in Santagnello's readers, which were graded in order to meet the students' different levels of skill and to allow them to gradually become more advanced in the Italian language. Santagnello would advise to start from contemporary prose authors, which the learners could find in his *Italian Reader* (1819, first published ca. 1815); only later could they move onto the reading of poetry in the *Sequel to the Italian Reader* (1818, first published ca. 1815). The contents of the two readers are moreover chronologically arranged, so that the learners would start off by reading more contemporary authors from the 19th and 18th centuries, and then gradually move all the way back to the most celebrated Italian authors of the 14th century (e.g., Boccaccio for prose and Dante for poetry). Indeed, Santagnello edited various anthologies of Italian literature and translated foreign-language novels into Italian to be used as reading practice material[12]; this was not only to allow learners to practice and gain some knowledge of Italian culture and literature, but also to make language learning and practice more amusing (Santagnello 1819: vii-x) – a point that was also shared by other language teachers of the time.

Based on his concept of "grammatically" teaching the language is also Santagnello's *Dictionary of the Peculiarities of the Italian Language* (1820c), which is, in actual fact, something in between a dictionary and a grammar. It consists of an English-Italian dictionary, whose wordlist

12 The former include *Bellezze dell'abate Pietro Metastasio* (1815) and *Novelle tratte dal Decamerone* (1827a), the latter *Elisabetta; ossia Gli esiliati nella Siberia* (1813a; 2nd ed. 1821), his translation of Mad. Sophie Cottin's bestseller.

is made up of words and phrases which frequently occur in the English language, but are generally not so easily translated by consulting a common dictionary; either because the patterns they occur in do not correspond in the two languages, or because the immediate Italian translation equivalent would not be used in the corresponding syntactical and phraseological context where the English word or phrase would. Hence, the *Dictionary* is the product of Santagnello's experience in teaching to English learners of Italian and aims at removing the difficulties which most learners encounter. For each English headword, the author provides the translation equivalent(s), notes on its syntactic construction in Italian, and examples; see for instance the following entry:

PUT A THING ON ONE'S LIMB (to), *mettere una cosa ad uno in*.

Then the Archbishop of Cologne put a ring on his finger: *turn*, put to him the ring in finger.

Allora l'Arcivescovo di Cologna gli mise l'anello in ditto.
CASTIGLIONE.

Then the three archbishops together put the crown on his head; *turn*, put to him the crown in head.

Allora i tre arcivescovi insieme gli misero la corona in testa.
CASTIGLIONE.
(Santagnello 1820c:227)

Here Santagnello provides the Italian equivalent and a couple of examples in the learners' native language ("The Archbishop […] put a ring on his finger"), then shows them how to "turn" the English sentence according to the Italian syntactic construction ("put to him the ring in finger"), and finally inserts the Italian translation ("l'Arcivescovo […] gli mise l'anello in ditto"). As was seen with the *Practical Exercises*, by transferring Italian syntactic structures onto English the grammarian is creating a kind of interlanguage between English and Italian; though the transformed English sentence is ungrammatical, it allows learners to view, in their own language, the differences between the English and the Italian constructions. More frequently Santagnello also includes syntactic clarifications on the differences between the English and

Italian word or phrase immediately after the translation equivalent, as in the following:

WANT (to), *mancare*. This verb, being impersonal, is construed by putting the English nominative in the dative in Italian, and *vice-versa*.

My misfortunes wanted this alone; *turn*, this alone was wanting to my misfortunes.	*Questo solo mancava alle mie sciagure.* METASTASIO.
Statues want many things which paintings do not; *turn*, many things are wanting to statues, which are not wanting to painting.	*Alle statue mancano molte cose, che non mancano alla pittura.* CASTIGLIONE. (Santagnello 1820c:289)

Aware of the prejudicially hostile attitude of his colleagues, Santagnello anticipated possible criticism to his method – something like the following question: if the master tells his students how to structure sentences according to Italian syntax, how can learners be able to transform a sentence they have never been exposed to, and for which they have not received their teacher's guidance? For Santagnello, the answer to this lies in practice:

> A student, who has turned a great number of phrases in the following Exercises [the *Practical Exercises* and the *New Set of Exercises*], must be very careless not to have acquired the mode of translating any phrase he may afterwards meet with; whereas it is impossible, by the help of rules alone, to translate with propriety one language into another. (1820a: vii)

Hence, according to the Italian teacher, if learners practice the language abundantly, they should become proficient enough to understand and produce new structures they have never met before. In other words, and possibly as a generativist would put it, practice leads learners to know more than they have been exposed to in the input, as finite resources can generate infinite new utterances (VanPatten & Williams 2007: 37-57).

Santagnello's works show that not only did he strongly believe in his method, but he was also well informed on other Italian language teaching practices of his time, such as the above-mentioned traditional method of teaching Italian by means of the French language. This method had

been and was still adopted by several masters of Italian in Britain for two different reasons: French was known by most members of the British elite; and since Italian was genetically related to French, and similar to it in some way, it might be easier for English learners to acquire Italian through their knowledge of French. Santagnello did not fail to express his own strong opinions regarding this practice: he argued that its popularity did not stem from its efficiency but rather from the convenience it had for the language masters, who, generally being foreigners not so well-acquainted with English, would find it easier to teach in French. He further pointed out that

> People in this country entertain an idea, namely, that by learning a foreign language through the medium of another which is likewise foreign, a person may become acquainted with both languages at once[13]. This, however, is an erroneous idea, and even if adopted by sensible persons, it is not the results of their own reflections, but the insinuation of foreigners, who, coming hither without knowing English, have introduced a new method of communicating the rules of the language they are to teach, in another more familiar to themselves than to the learner. (Santagnello 1828: v)

Indeed, various teachers of the Italian language had lived, taught and published grammars of Italian in France before coming to England. Hence, according to Santagnello, these foreign teachers

> in order to remove the difficulty which would attend their teaching Italian with an English grammar, persuade the inexperienced student to learn Italian by means of rules written in French; who, flattered by the hope of learning two languages at once, will perceive but too late that he has only learned at once to make Gallicisms in speaking Italian, and Italicisms in speaking French. (Santagnello 1828: vi)

For him, the best way to teach and learn a foreign language was through the students' native language.

13 Soilleux (1793: iv) for instance states that the purpose of his grammar is "to initiate the knowledge of the Italian into the minds of the rising Generation, and to renew the French, with the support of their own language".

Another method which Santagnello did not approve of was the one promoted by James Hamilton. In this case, rather than mentioning and condemning it in the prefaces to his works, he wrote a short treatise entirely devoted to Hamilton's approach, *An impartial Examination of the Hamiltonian System of Teaching Languages* (1827b), which will be considered in section 5.

In sum, Santagnello gave great importance to grammar and taught the language "grammatically", but he also highly valued practice which, according to him, should be abundant and proceed by stages. Grammar alone, he believed, is not sufficient to become proficient in a foreign language. His methodology also aimed to enable learners to thoroughly understand the foreign language through the native one, rather than simply require them to learn grammatical rules by heart.

3. *Hamilton's Method*

James Hamilton (1769–1829) was an Irish merchant, who lived and worked on the continent for some time before choosing to become a teacher of modern and classical languages. He moved to America in 1815 and only later, in 1823, he decided to go and work in Britain. He developed his own theories about language learning and teaching and his own method, known as the Hamiltonian system, which he applied in his courses and textbook materials. The system appears to have enjoyed great success with numerous classes which counted from a dozen up to a hundred students and was consequently adopted by other teachers in both American and English schools[14].

Hamilton was highly critical of traditional grammar teaching, so that his publicity campaigns stressed the advantages of his own approach against the traditional ones. His method too was based on personal experience not only as a teacher but as a language learner himself, and he provides a short account of its development in his *The History, Principles, Practice, and Results of the Hamiltonian System* (1829). When he was still a merchant, Hamilton had learnt some Greek, French and Latin in the

14 Apart from the biographical article by Wroth rev. Haigh (2004), most information about Hamilton's works and ideas is to be found in Hamilton (1829) and the prefaces to his books.

traditional way, until one day he was offered to be taught some German without a grammar. His master simply read to him some anecdotes translating them word-by word "parsing as he proceeded" (Hamilton 1829: 2). Hamilton found himself to have learnt "5 or 6 anecdotes in one hour" and was therefore persuaded to continue his lessons becoming able to read an "easy German book" in only twelve lessons. After a period of imprisonment and struggles to get back into trade, he decided, while in America, to have a go at teaching. With his first students he applied the same method of his former master, noticeably stating however that parsing was only helpful to "linguists", i.e. those who already had some knowledge of languages and grammar. He thus gradually deferred the grammatical parsing to a later stage of his courses as "the grammar was incomprehensible at this period to the greater number of my pupils" but after about half of the course they would have "met in their reading all the inflexions of the verbs, and changes of the other declinable parts of speech, thousands of times", so that, by this stage, "they found grammar an easy task" (Hamilton 1829: 5).

To properly evaluate Hamilton's system, his view of grammar and traditional language teaching must first be understood. According to Hamilton, requiring students to memorise grammatical rules meant that the students were not actually learning the language but they were first learning how to learn it, and how to use a dictionary:

> But the object of getting Grammar by heart, is not, as is usually supposed, to give the student a critical, a grammatical knowledge of the language; such an idea, at the outset of his labours, would be altogether preposterous, but it is – TO ENABLE HIM TO LOOK FOR HIS WORDS IN THE DICTIONARY! (Hamilton 1829:46)

In Hamilton's view, traditional grammar teachers were "throwing the whole burden of education upon the student himself while the pretended teacher becomes a task-master, with whip in hand, to enforce not instruction, but command" (Hamilton 1825 in Howatt & Smith 2000b: xxi). This way, students would become tired of studying a foreign language for a long period of time without seeing the results. Hence, the real way of acquiring a language for Hamilton was by knowing all the words and their forms before tackling the grammar and the dictionary, and the best

way to achieve this was through reading and translating. His system was founded upon the importance of reading and interlinear translations with an inductive rather than deductive approach to grammar[15].

Hamilton's rejection of the preliminary teaching of grammar led him to establish six principles of his own. The first principle was the necessity of providing instruction as opposed to "ordering to learn" (Hamilton 1829: 5). This stood in contrast to the more traditional belief that learners should master the grammar and lexicon of the language largely on their own (Howatt & Smith 2000b: xxi). According to Hamilton, it was up to the teacher to furnish his students with textbook materials containing word-by-word translations into their mother-tongue and to enable the students to memorise the correspondences between the two languages. Accordingly, the second principle claimed that if students were encouraged "to translate at once, instead of making them get a grammar by heart" (1829: 5), the burden placed upon them would be greatly eased. By translating, Hamilton stated, "I analyzed, and consequently taught the grammar of the language with every word I taught my pupil" (Hamilton 1829: 7); hence grammatical competence was not excluded from his approach but would be inductively achieved through the analysis of the reading materials. The third principle thus required that students should be furnished with purely literal word-by-word renderings, "for no translation can justly be called literal which is not analytical" (Hamilton 1829: 7); close but non-literal translations would not succeed in enabling the students to understand and memorise the lexical correspondences between the two languages. To put this principle in practice Hamilton published his own reading materials with literal translations according to his system: his first publication was the *Gospel of Saint John* in French with an English interlinear translation; this was followed by several other translations of the *Gospel* in various languages[16]. Hamilton's fourth principle was based on the assumption that "the words of all languages have, with few exceptions, one meaning only, and should be translated generally by the same word, which should stand for its representative at all times, and in all places" (Hamilton 1829: 8). The fifth and sixth principles, finally, concerned the learning and

15 Hamilton was not the only one to propose an inductive approach to grammar; inductive teaching had its roots in Romantic educational theory and in the experimental schools of Pestalozzi and his Swiss and German disciples (Woods 1986: 9).

16 Latin, German, Italian, Greek, French and Spanish.

teaching of pronunciation. According to Hamilton, the simple sounds of all languages were mostly the same and if correctly taught everyone could learn them (fifth principle), provided that the students were "*taught* in class by a person possessing himself a correct pronunciation" (Hamilton 1829: 9, original emphasis, sixth principle).

Simply put, in Hamilton's method the learner should be given and taught not a grammar and a dictionary, but "a dictionary for every book he reads" (Hamilton 1829: 48). In other words, students should read a book with interlinear translations and parse (with the teacher's help at first) every single word within the book:

> Give the pupil, instead of a Grammar and Dictionary on the common plan, a *Dictionary for every book* he reads, comprehending not simply the roots of the words, but every word; let such a Dictionary point out the mood, tense, and person of every verb, the case of every noun, furnish a perfect analysis of the phrase and of every word in it, so that the pupil shall not only be able to translate his book with infallible certainty in the tenth part of the time hitherto requisite, but be able, at the same time, to *parse* it, that is, to have a perfect knowledge of its Grammar also. Now this Dictionary is precisely a *Hamiltonian Tanslation*! (Hamilton 1829: 48-49)

While Santagnello only provided word-by-word translations for explanations, Hamilton's readers were always furnished with (mostly) word-by-word interlinear translations. Through parallel reading, Hamilton wanted his learners to view the correspondences between the lexical and grammatical items of both languages so that they could understand and acquire them. Santagnello's translations instead focused more on the differences between the native and foreign languages, but the ultimate aim of gaining a true understanding and acquisition of the foreign language was the same. Below is an example from *Robinson Crusoe* in German with Hamilton's interlinear translation in English:

> Es war einmahl eine zahlreiche Familie, die aus kleinen und grossen Leuten **bestand**. Diese waren theils durch di Bande der Natur, theils durch wechselseitige Liebe genau **vereinigt**. Der Hausvater und die Hausmutter liebten Alle […]

> Es war einmahl eine zahlreiche Familie, die **bestand** aus kleinen und grossen
> *There was once a numerous family which consisted out of little and big*
> Leuten. Diese waren genau **vereiniget**, theils, durch die Bande der Natur, theils
> *people These were closely united partly through the Bands of the Nature partly*
> durch wechselseitige Liebe. Der Hausevater und die Hausmutter liebten Alle
> *through mutual love. The housefather and the housemother loved all* […]
>
> (Hamilton 1829: 51)

As can be seen from the extract, Hamilton manipulates the source text through modification of the German syntax (which requires the verb in a subordinate clause – *bestand* and *vereiniget* in this sentence – to be in final position) in order to make it correspond to the English one; moreover, his English translations – not unlike Santagnello's – often appear to be incorrect from either the grammatical or lexical point of view; for instance, he translates "consisted out of" instead of the idiomatically correct "consisted of". Once again, these negative transfers are purposely made for the learners' understanding of each linguistic item of the foreign language. Hamilton too anticipates possible criticism to his use of ungrammatical English and to the possibility of it having a negative influence on the learners' use of their own native tongue. In answer to this, he claims that

> there is no fear that, in common discourse or writing, we shall substitute the barbarisms of a foreign idiom for that purity of diction and style which is acquired by reading the classical authors of our own country. There has hitherto been no instance of such an anomaly, and never will while the world lasts. (Hamilton 1829: 60)

> That the man who has been for years, and who still continues, in the daily habit of conversing in his own language, will not be often tempted to substitute for it the phrases illustrative of a foreign idiom; and that, if he does, the laugh or sneer of the person whom he addresses will soon make him sensible of his error; he will not, in short, address a friend with "*How himself carries he*," or ask him if he has "*led a wife*," because he has been taught to analyse the idiomatic phrases "*Comment se porte-t-il,*" and "*ducere uxorem*". (Hamilton 1830: vi)

Hamilton published a series of books with interlinear translations to be used during Hamiltonian language lessons and for self-study by the

students. According to him, it would take about 4-5 weeks to learn one of his books, and 15 months overall to acquire a sufficient knowledge of a foreign language – as opposed to the "4 or 5 years" of an average grammar-based course (Hamilton 1829: 60). He claimed that his system was proved efficient by more than 20,000 learners over his twelve years of experience (1829: 62).

Finally, Hamilton clarifies that his system does not exclude grammar, as his critics suggested (see section 4 below), but it integrates it only when the students have learnt the language to a sufficient degree, which he quantifies in terms of having learnt to read at least one of his books (1829: 61). To sum up, then, the Hamiltonian system taught foreign languages mainly through reading practice; the Hamiltonian teacher read books in the foreign language out loud and translated every single word into the students' native language in order to allow them to understand and acquire the foreign language's vocabulary and structures. Gradually, the analysis of the foreign words would also allow the learners to acquire a grammatical competence of the language. Key to the system was also repetition: both the teacher and the students were to repeat the words they were reading "as many times a day as could be given to the Language" so that they could be "indelibly printed" on their minds (Hamilton 1825: i, Hamilton 1826: v).

4. *Criticism towards Hamilton's Method*

Hamilton's method and his attacks on the teaching of languages through grammar provoked some harsh criticism from his contemporaries. John Hooper Hartnoll, for instance, wrote a pamphlet entitled *An Exposure of the Fallacy of the Hamiltonian System* (1823), reporting his opinion about Hamilton's lectures on the system, the inefficiency of his example lessons with the audience, as well as the absence of any names and surnames for the many students who Hamilton claimed had successfully learnt foreign languages through his method. Hartnoll provides examples to show that Hamilton was not the first to propose a system based on interlinear translations and focused on acquiring vocabulary before grammar[17], but

17 Precursors of this system were, among the most cited, Milton, Locke, Dumarsais, and l'Abbé d'Olivet. Hamilton however, while acknowledging that he was not the first to propose an inductive method based on interlinear translations, felt the need to clarify, in his later publications, that the translations of these authors were not purely literal as his own, in that they attempted to

states that, while it is true that one may learn a language without grammar – the examples of children learning to speak and adults living for some time in a foreign country are mentioned –, he believes that grammar is actually the key to speed up the process of learning a foreign language as only grammatical awareness can give sense to the "perplexities" that occur from the very beginning of one's studies (Hartnoll 1823: 26).

John Jones, in *An Exposure of the Hamiltonian System of Teaching Languages* (1826), makes similar points focusing on what are, according to him, the three main features of Hamilton's system, i.e. it consisted "first, in excluding the use of the grammar and dictionary; secondly, in affixing to each term one undeviating signification, however differently applied; and thirdly, in prescribing to the pupils a *Key*, containing a closely literal version" (Jones 1826: 4). Like Hartnoll, Jones comments on the impossibility of acquiring ten thousand words in ten one-hour lessons[18], adding that the *Gospel of Saint John*, which is the first text that Hamilton exploited in his lessons,

> is the simplest of all narratives, and consists not of many words, but of the same words, and those the most common, repeated some more or less in every verse from beginning to end. […] Reduce the repetition of every word, and the variety of terminations under which each appears, to one, and the ten thousand dwindle down to a few hundreds. (Jones 1826: 4-5)[19]

Jones further argues in favour of grammar by providing a good example to show how grammatical rules actually serve the purpose of making acquisition easier and faster, while Hamilton's method would only make it longer and more confusing:

maintain a grammatical correctness in translating and did not translate every single word literally, failing to enable the pupil "to make out the exact meaning of each word, which is the principal object of Hamiltonian translations" (Hamilton 1828: iv).

18 Both Hartnoll and Santagnello, instead, reported that according to Hamilton the students would acquire ten thousand words not in ten but in forty-eight lessons of one hour each.

19 From Hamilton's perspective, the *Gospel of Saint John* was specifically chosen by him as the first text of study exactly because it had "so many repetitions of the same words, and almost all the *inflexions* of the verbs it contains", and was therefore "the best selection that could have been made for a beginner" (Hamilton 1825: i).

> The article and relative pronouns [in Greek], with all the variety of case, gender and number, appear under at least forty forms, exclusive of poetic licenses; and according to Mr. Hamilton's computation, constitute forty distinct words: whereas the person who has learnt his grammar, regards them under all their varieties as only two words. He knows the connection which each form has with its theme; and by observing their analogy with the models of the first and second declensions, he has learnt them in the course of half an hour without difficulty and ever retains them with fidelity. Far different is the case with a scholar of Mr. Hamilton: notwithstanding their unity in respect to meaning, their difference to the eye makes them distinct words, all loose, all unconnected, and requiring forty different efforts of memory to retain them. (Jones 1826: 5)

After all the efforts to memorise the forty different terms, which grammatical rules summarise as two – Jones continues – the students are still eventually presented with a grammar to clarify the rules and the connections existing between words, thus "returning to the established method of learning a grammar" (Jones 1826: 5-6). Jones also focuses on Hamilton's fourth principle, clarifying what Hamilton "has expressed himself loosely" (Smith 1826 quoted in Jones 1826: 7). That a word has one meaning only, and can usually be rendered correctly into another by one word only, meant that the students should never adopt "metaphysical" meanings but only the "primary signification" of each word, but

> The meaning of words depends on the association of ideas; and to say that each word has but one sole idea, is to say that the idea at first annexed to a term cannot be altered by subsequent associations. All associations are in continued flux; and the same word, as it is associated with different words in different connections, must hence borrow a new shade which modifies its primary signification. (Jones 1826: 7)

Indeed, in the preface to the *Gospel of Saint John* in Latin, Hamilton seems to confirm Jones's interpretation of the fourth principle by stating that:

> *with few exceptions*, each word, in every language, has *one meaning only*, and can be rendered correctly into another language by *one word only*;—that, consequently, when a Dictionary gives *forty* meanings to one word, *thirty-nine* are false and wrong, as far as literal translation is concerned; these thirty-nine being at the utmost only the *implied* or

> *figurative* meanings of the word, with which the teacher of any Language has nothing to do, in the first three sections [of a Hamiltonian course]. The precise literal meaning of the word, according to the grammatical analysis of the phrase, is what must be always given, to the exclusion of every other. (Hamilton 1826: iii-iv, original emphasis)

Hamilton's specification that the figurative meanings are not to be given in the first three sections of his courses (each section corresponded to a different Hamiltonian book) would seem to hint at an attempt to avoid figurative meanings only initially due to the confusion that they could create for the beginners. Once learners have obtained a solid base of the foreign language, they will then be able to interpret the figurative meanings of words.

Both Hartnoll and Jones also point out how, despite Hamilton's objections to learning by rote, his method actually required his students to memorise words and texts. Further, the students were requested to continue their reading and memorising at home, thus lengthening the necessary time to learn the texts and making Hamilton's statements as to the learning ten thousand words in forty-eight hours false.

Similar criticism was targeted at the Hamiltonian system by F.X. Donato in his *A Parallel between the Hamiltonian System and that which Mr. Hamilton Calls the Old System* (1827); by two anonymous authors whose letters, published under the pseudonyms of 'Cantabrigiensis' and 'Verbeiensis', came out together with Hamilton's replies in *The Hamiltonian Controversy. Letters on the Hamiltonian System of Education* (1825); and finally by Moses Santagnello (1827b)[20]. The picture that emerges of Hamilton from these writings is that of a very self-confident man and a skilful salesman who succeeded in convincing the public of the miracles of his method, while, in the eyes of his critics, he was only a charlatan taking advantage of the ignorant.

Some credit to Hamilton's system was however given by Joachim de Prati in his *Outlines of an Improved System of Teaching Languages: Being an Attempt to Unite the Advantages of the Modern and the Ancient Methods* (1827). In his treatise, de Prati praises Hamilton's inductive approach, and especially the possibility of immediately acquiring

20 Howatt & Smith (2000b: xxi) also mention Christian Schwarz's *Kurze Kritik der Hamilton'schen Sprach-Lehrmethode* of 1837.

vocabulary through reading practice, rather than memorising what appear to be initially meaningless grammatical rules. He however criticises the little attention that the Hamiltonian system subsequently devotes to grammar, which is still, for him, important and necessary. Consequently, de Prati attempts to propose a system which includes the advantages of both the old 'scholastic' system and Hamilton's.

Another more positive review of the system was made by the Rev. Sydney Smith, one of the founders of *The Edinburgh Review*. Smith (1826) points out how common aspects of criticism addressed to the Hamiltonian system – such as the originality of the method, or the quality of the English translations – were irrelevant; what mattered was whether Hamilton's literal translations were of aid to the learners of languages. He admired the boldness with which Hamilton persevered in promoting and believing in his method in a period in which literal translations were "not only not used in our public schools, but are generally discountenanced in them"; literal translations of school books were a "contraband article in English schools, which a school-master would instantly seize, as a custom-house officer would a barrel of gin" (Smith 1826: 233). Focusing on the need to learn a language in order to be able to read and understand it (not to speak it or write it), Smith compares the traditional mode of teaching languages to highlight the potential of Hamilton's system, especially for young learners:

> Every one will admit, that of all the disgusting labours of life, the labour of lexicon and dictionary is the most intolerable. Nor is there a greater object of compassion than a fine boy, full of animal spirits, set down in a bright sunny day, with an heap of unknown words before him, to be turned into English, before supper, by the help of a ponderous dictionary alone. The object in looking into a dictionary can only be to exchange an unknown sound for one that is known. Now, it seems indisputable, that the sooner this exchange is made the better. The greater the number of such exchanges which can be made in a given time, the greater is the progress, the more abundant the *copia verborum* obtained by the scholar. Would it not be of advantage if the dictionary at once opened at the required page, and if a self-moving index at once pointed to the requisite word? Is any advantage gained to the world by the time employed first in finding the letter P, and then in finding the three guiding letters P R I? This appears to us to be pure loss of time, justifiable only if it is inevitable;

> and even after this is done, what an infinite multitude of difficulties are heaped at once upon the wretched beginner! Instead of being reserved for his greater skill and maturity in the language, he must employ himself in discovering in which of many senses which his dictionary presents the word is to be used; in considering the case of the substantive, and the syntactical arrangement in which it is to be placed, and the relation it bears to other words. The loss of time in the merely mechanical part of the old plan is immense. We doubt very much, if an average boy, between ten and fourteen, will look out or find more than sixty words in an hour […]. The interlineal translation of course spares the trouble and time of this mechanical labour. Immediately under the Italian word is placed the English word. The unknown sound therefore is instantly exchanged for one that is known. The labour here spared is of the most irksome nature; and it is spared at a time of life the most averse to such labour; and so painful is this labour to many boys, that it forms an insuperable obstacle to their progress. (Smith 1826: 234)

Consequently, Smith also found it useful for learners to focus on the "primary" meaning of words before the "secondary" ones (Hamilton's fourth principle): since meanings are generally presented together in a dictionary entry, learners might be puzzled as to what the appropriate translation equivalent of a given word is. Another positive aspect that emerges from Hamiltonian courses – compared to the "solitary wretchedness of a poor lad of the desk and lexicon, suffocated with the nonsense of grammarians" (Smith 1826: 235) – is that the teachers devoted continuous attention to their pupils challenging them not only to translate but also to join words together[21]. Finally, Smith reproduces part of another article reporting on an experiment carried out on eight parish boys in 1825, who had followed a Hamiltonian course for a few months. The experiment is reported to have been successful: the students were asked to read and translate from different Hamiltonian books and executed the task with ease. Smith further reminds his readers that not necessarily all learners of languages want to become skilful grammarians, for many the ability to understand and communicate in the foreign language is

21 This statement would seem to suggest that some form of active practice to produce the language did take place in Hamilton's classes; however, apart from making the students read and translate out loud, no other evidence was found of active practice taking place during Hamiltonian lessons.

sufficient. In his opinion, the Hamiltonian system enabled students to understand and construe the language, giving learners the means to move on and gain greater grammatical competence, if they desired it.

5. *Santagnello's* Impartial Examination of the Hamiltonian System

Despite its claim of impartiality, Santagnello's treatise (1827b) is much more sceptical of and unsatisfied with Hamilton's method than previous critics. Santagnello takes the Hamiltonian *Gospel of Saint John* in Italian, focuses on Hamilton's statements in the preface, and comments on them[22]. Initially, he provides further details as to how a Hamiltonian language course worked: the teacher is to read out loud the words of the *Gospel* and then, in the same loud and articulate voice, he should read the key[23]. In the first lesson the Hamiltonian teacher should not exceed the first 10 or 12 lines; by the second lesson he will continue up to 30 or 36 lines, and so forth. The material read in each lesson is to be repeated by the students enough times at home, and they are required to have learnt it before the following lesson. The teacher will then diminish the number of repetitions in class as the students become more familiar with the system[24].

22 Interestingly, the British Library copy of Santagnello's treatise is bound in a volume containing a series of other tracts on foreign languages, education, and pedagogic systems and methods, such as: *A Short Account of the System of the Pestallozian Academy*; *Observations on the Importance and Advantages of the Education of the People*, by Henry Martin; and de Prati's *Outlines of an Improved System of Teaching Languages, Being an Attempt to Unite the Advantages of the Modern and Ancient Methods*.

23 Hamilton himself (1826: v-vi) makes clear how the teacher should proceed. He should recite

> with a loud articulate voice, the first verse, thus: —*In* in, *principio* in beginning, *Verbum* Word, *erat* was, *et* and, *Verbum* Word, *erat* was, *apud* at, *Deum* God, *et* and, *Verbum* Word, *erat* was, *Deus* God. Having recited the verse once or twice himself, it is then recited *precisely* in the same manner by any person of the class whom he may judge most capable; the person copying his manner and intonations as much as possible.—When the verse has been thus recited, by *six* or *eight* persons of the class, the teacher recites the second verse in the same manner, which is repeated as the former; and thus continues until he has recited from ten to twelve verses, which usually constitute the first lesson of one hour.

24 The Italian Hamiltonian course is divided in the following sections: section 1, ten lessons in 5 weeks, *Gospel of Saint John*; section 2, twenty lessons in 10 weeks, *The Fables of Fabre* and the *Aneddoti of Rolandi*; section 3, two or three lessons on grammar; section 4, the teacher reads the entire *Gospel* only in Italian, allowing the students to translate. During this section of the course the students' written translations are corrected in class and grammatical clarifications are provided (Santagnello 1827b: 17-18).

At this point Santagnello raises some questions. Hamilton's classes, for instance, were very numerous, and learners – the experienced master of languages explains – are all very different from one other; Santagnello, therefore, wonders how all of these students could learn the same task in the same manner and at the same speed. Further, "to form a class of pupils a teacher must first become acquainted with the capacity of each pupil (which he may effect in three or four lessons) and then he is to sort them according to their talents" (Santagnello 1827b: 2). In Hamiltonian classes, with students ranging from a dozen to a hundred, it would be very unlikely for the teacher to engage with each one of them; this meant that, while some were given attention, others were "left to their own resources" (Santagnello 1827b: 2). Thus, to teach "a great many pupils at once is an erroneous proceeding, unless the pupils are endowed with the same capacity", which is however unlikely (Santagnello 1827b: 2). Santagnello continues to come back to this point – that the teacher must take into consideration the different learning abilities of his pupils – throughout the whole treatise.

After some analysis of the inaccuracies of Hamilton's directions on Italian pronunciation, and on the incorrectness of the claim that the students would acquire ten thousand words by studying the Hamiltonian *Gospel of Saint John* – in that, according to Santagnello, once the repetitions are eliminated, the *Gospel* will not contain more than two thousand words – a more relevant piece of criticism is put forward. In fact Santagnello points out that a method based on reading and interlinear translations could only help the learners acquire a passive knowledge of the language, not a productive one. Further, even admitting that the students have learnt all of the articles with their inflections after having repeated them innumerable times, their acquisition would be purely mechanical, without understanding their grammatical value – e.g. without distinguishing the different values of gender and number; or, at the syntactic level, without realising how the different lexical and grammatical items could be connected with each other in order to produce speech.

After the first two sections (30 lessons) of the Italian language course, where the class would learn the *Gospel of Saint John*, the *Fables of Fabre*, and the *Aneddoti of Rolandi*, Hamilton thinks that "the class should receive two or three lectures on the principles of grammar generally, and particularly the theory of verbs; a copy of which, in the form of a grammar should at this time be put in their hands". To this, Santagnello rather sarcastically replies:

"Mark reader! A pupil […] will be found at the end of the whole course of lessons, to speak and write grammatically, and that only by receiving two or three lectures on grammar in general!" (Santagnello 1827b: 15-16).

Despite all this, Hamilton claimed that his students would learn to speak and write with propriety depending on the number of books they read. But, again, Santagnello emphasises that language production requires active practice, which is completely absent in Hamilton's courses. Santagnello acknowledges a similarity in his and Hamilton's ways of literally translating texts. However, Santagnello explains that in his case the literal translations were only a small part of the whole system, which also included grammar and oral and written practice (both comprehension and production); in Hamilton's method, instead, the literal translations were the sole means to the end. Santagnello provides the example of his *Italian Phraseology* to showcase his point:

> This Phraseology of mine, which was published 1816, contains literal translations of phrases and proverbs, but in a very different manner from Mr. H.'s translation of the Gospel. He gives a mere interlinear translation of it, whereas, in my work, I have given a free translation, and a very strict literal one, of the same phrases, and likewise a grammatical analysis of the whole. But I executed this work, (which I imagined was the first of the kind,) especially for the benefit of travellers, who, being previously acquainted with the pronunciation, and knowing a little of the language, might, on their journey, commit to memory a number of phrases, and imperceptibly, as it were, learn not only to parse them, but enter gradually into all the rules of grammar; but it never entered into my mind that such a book would be sufficient to give a thorough knowledge of the language. (Santagnello 1827b: 23)

After this, Santagnello points out several mistakes in Hamilton's literal translation of the *Gospel* and concludes his treatise by providing his own ideas as to how foreign languages should be taught.

6. *Comparison between the Two Methods and Concluding Remarks*

The Hamiltonian system did not cease with the death of its author but continued with other Hamiltonian teachers, among them one of Hamilton's relatives and partner, his son-in-law John William Underwood, who continued to publish books based on the system and was head of a

Hamiltonian school at Mount Pleasant House, Upper Sunbury (Hamilton & Underwood 1848, Hamilton 1859). Santagnello's method also possibly continued for some time with his daughter Caroline, who is reported to have taught the language 'grammatically' just like her father (Santagnello 1828: unnumbered flyleaf); anyway, Santagnello and his method appear to have been forgotten soon after.

As has been seen, despite the opposition that both authors showed towards each other's method, their approach to foreign language teaching had some points in common. Firstly, they both believed in bilingual, rather than monolingual teaching, which would become one of the main tenets of the Natural Method (proposed by Gottlieb Heness and Lambert Sauveur) and the Direct Method (developed, among others, by Maximilian Berlitz)[25]. Santagnello and Hamilton in fact wanted to allow students to learn a foreign language through their own and exploited word-by-word translations to enable them to understand foreign words in their native language. The difference in their use of literal translations was that Hamilton exploited them mainly for semantic purposes, while Santagnello used them for syntactic purposes. Secondly, both Hamilton and Santagnello proposed to study the language through authentic texts; but while Hamilton purposely started from longer and more complex texts, Santagnello proceeded from single sentences to gradually longer and longer writings. Sentences had generally served the purpose to exemplify grammatical rules but were often far from representing real-life spoken discourse, which is the reason why Hamilton and others after him deliberately chose complex texts to start with. Thirdly and most importantly, despite Santagnello's rejection of the Hamiltonian system and Hamilton's rejection of the traditional grammar-based teaching of foreign languages, the two teachers shared one important and innovative view: language learning was not about mechanically memorising rules by heart but it was about putting learners in the condition to understand correspondences and differences between their native language and the foreign one they wanted to acquire. They both showed an awareness that grammar was the major point of difficulty for learners and attempted to overcome this hindrance in their own ways: Santagnello by accompanying grammatical explanations with transpositions of the foreign

25 On the Reformers see, among others, Howatt & Smith (2002), Howatt (1984), Cook (2010: 3-33) and McLelland (2017: 99-107).

syntactic structures in the students' native language, so that they could view, rather than be told, how the foreign language behaved; Hamilton, instead, enabled his students to warm to the structures of the foreign language before providing them with grammatical clarifications.

Hamilton's and Santagnello's partially shared views are counterbalanced by some major differences in their systems. Firstly, Santagnello adopted a deductive approach starting from and relying heavily on grammar, while Hamilton favoured an inductive one, which started from reading practice with the aim of acquiring a good bulk of vocabulary and only later integrating it with minimal grammatical teaching. Secondly, Santagnello insisted that his students practiced the language both actively and passively, and that is why he compiled a variety of textbooks aimed at all aspects of language learning and practice (speaking, reading, writing). Hamilton, instead, focused primarily on reading comprehension, as he believed that an active competence of the language would necessarily arise from the continuous exposure to writings in the foreign language, and could later be further perfected by conversation with native speakers or by travelling to the country of the studied language. Moreover, Hamilton always provided his students with the interlinear keys beforehand, to avoid the use of dictionaries, while Santagnello only provided interlinear translations for illustrative purposes and required his students to translate texts by themselves. Thirdly, Santagnello mainly taught individual students, believing that one-to-one classes were the best way to ensure that learners progressed in their study and received appropriate feedback. Hamilton, instead, taught foreign languages to classes with numerous students and, although he did engage with some of them during his lessons, possibly not all of them would be assessed on their progress. Fourthly and finally, the two teachers had different goals: Santagnello wanted to lead his students to proficiency, becoming able not only to speak, read and write, but also to obtain a full grammatical competence of the language; Hamilton's method, instead, aimed to lead learners to read and speak the foreign language to a sufficient degree, which he summarised as follows:

> To be able thus to translate with fluency and correctness, to read with a correct pronunciation, to write and speak with grammatical purity (though at first not wholly free from Anglicisms), to be able to read

> and understand any book whose subject in English would not be above the comprehension of the pupil, is what we call knowing a language; a knowledge certainly susceptible of addition, of greater fluency, facility, and perfection, but such as has hitherto never been communicated to whole classes, and rarely to individuals; such, in short, as is sufficient for every social and commercial purpose. (Hamilton 1830: xi)

Arguably, the difference between the two teachers' goals in foreign language teaching reflects the various motivations that prompted different members of society to learn a foreign language. Santagnello's method reflected the more advanced, hence more prestigious, knowledge of foreign languages, such as was desired by the upper classes wanting to travel abroad and read foreign classic literature. Hamilton's method instead met the need to learn a language faster, though at a more superficial level, in a practical and rapidly changing society.

Most of the points raised by the two authors and their critics are still matters of debate in present-day foreign language teaching, the role of grammar and translation being a most pertinent example. Though improved and tackled in different ways and with different levels of detail, grammar and translation – an inheritance of an earlier age – were still part of both authors' methods. And despite the constant condemnation that has been expressed since the late 19th century about grammar and translation in foreign language teaching, they are not forgotten at all, although they may not feature prominently. Today, like in the early 19th century, scholars propose them or camouflage them in different methods and approaches[26]. Currently, inductive approaches may be found to be more suitable – like Hamilton similarly suggested – to those less accustomed to grammar (e.g., children learners), while deductive approaches may be more helpful to those who have a greater level of education and can therefore reap the benefits of rules to learn the foreign language more rapidly. Distinguishing between beginner and advanced learners, as both Santagnello and Hamilton advocated, was itself a point of innovation which would later be recognised by Reform advocates (McLelland 2017: 100).

26 A recent survey of the definition and historical development of the Grammar-Translation method is found in Kirk (2018). Despite the Reformers' rejection, the use of translation into one's native language in foreign language teaching (bilingual teaching) is today being revaluated: see, among others, Cook (2010), Vermes (2010) and Porcelli (2008).

Hamilton's method, which attempted to base language teaching on 'natural' processes of acquisition, has been given more attention than Santagnello's (see Howatt & Smith 2000a) as it was conceptually closer to the ideas proposed, towards the end of the 19th century, by the Reform Movement that continued to influence foreign language teaching throughout the 20th century. Since Santagnello wanted to innovate without rejecting the traditional way of teaching languages through grammar, he left behind no lasting legacy: his language books would be considered just like all the other materials based on the grammar-translation method, and his grammars excessively "detailed with lists of exceptions longer and longer" making "the burden on memory become heavier, and the lessons less and less practical" (Howatt & Smith 2000b: xi); indeed, Moses Santagnello's name and works were completely forgotten after his time.

To conclude, it is hoped that this analysis – beyond its specific topic and scope – has provided a reminder of how attempts at innovation in second language teaching came (and possibly still come) very slow. Minor reactions to grammar teaching had already started as early as the late 18th century but its supporters continued to exist: some camouflaged it in claimed grammar-free methods, while others defended grammar and attempted to innovate and improve the teaching of it. Further, like today, different methods and ideas existed side by side, with the difference that from the late 19th century onwards there would be movements of scholars sharing the same view instead of individual thinkers.

It can finally be argued that past teaching materials should not be completely overlooked, even though they mention the words 'grammar' and 'translation' (or any other outdated terms and concepts) in their title pages or paratexts; the advocates of reform movements in language education found their roots in the works of their predecessors, among whom there were teachers passionate about their profession and able to create teaching materials that were thought through and based upon experience. To take Santagnello and Hamilton as examples, one will easily concede that the former's possibly excessive grammatical detail for beginners and the latter's observations on the learning of pronunciation, for instance, came to be rejected and may well be considered inadequate in present-day second language teaching; yet, their ideas and theories may still provide food for thought. Indeed, historians of foreign language learning and teaching should follow the suggestion that Evangelista

Palermo, another master of languages in early modern England and the author of *A grammar of the Italian language* (1777), took from the Prologue to *The Tragedy of Marcus Brutus*, a play by John Sheffield, the first Duke of Buckingham: "Each petty Critic can Objections raise, / The greatest skill is, knowing when to praise" (Palermo 1777: viii).

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