"HOW AM I TO ANSWER THIS IN ENGLISH?"
Pragmatic fluency in a nineteenth-century
English-language teaching text

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Abstract – In this contribution, I discuss the pragmatic dimension of a curious little volume entitled *Friends at Home and Abroad; or, Social Chat: A connected tale in a series of imaginary conversations, illustrative of English phraseology and idioms to facilitate the acquirement of English as a living tongue* (1890 [1876])*,* published by Theophilus C. Cann, a prolific and popular author of English language teaching materials. So far, only a handful of studies have examined the history of English language learning and teaching in Italy and my investigation aims to further our knowledge of how English was taught and learned in Italy in the second half of the nineteenth century. More specifically, in my analysis of *Social Chat* I am interested in identifying specific learning goals that were associated with the acquisition of pragmatic fluency, the uses of the text in the teaching and learning of English, and the type of learners who would have been *Social Chat*'s intended primary audience.

Keywords: ELT, EFL, conversation manual, pragmatic fluency, Theophilus C. Cann.

1. Introduction[1]

In 1891, school inspectors Francesco Torraca and Gianjacopo Agostini were sent by the Ministry of Public Education to audit examinations held at Primo and Secondo Educandato of Naples,[2] and the observations they recorded on the pupils' French and English levels were far from encouraging. Their final report expressed frustrated astonishment at the inability of the second-year pupils to write down simple sentences in French and English as dictated to them

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[1] I would like to thank Prof. Friederike Klippel and the two anonymous reviewers for their many insightful comments and suggestions on an earlier version of this paper.

[2] *Educandato* was a form of educational institution reserved for girls in post-Unitarian Italy. There were six such institutions in 1866 – one each in Milan, Florence, Palermo and Verona, plus the two educandati in Naples that were considered to be "elite colleges marketed as prestigious educational establishments to the most distinguished families of the new Kingdom" (Franchini 2005, p. 34; my translation here and elsewhere).

(Franchini, Puzzuoli 2005, p. 432).[3] They concluded that "none of them [the students] were able to write, or even speak fluently or correctly in French or English; indeed, only a handful of them were able to translate promptly and with sufficient accuracy a few brief excerpts into Italian from the textbooks of the syllabus" (Franchini, Puzzuoli 2005, p. 433). The main target of the inspectors' negative comments, found in brief observations on individual teachers at the institutions, became Mrs. Howard, the English teacher at Secondo Educandato, about whom Torraca and Agostini said the following:

> Concerning the teaching of English, it will suffice to say that the students in their final year have studied only 120 lessons in Cann's textbook. Mrs. Howard's pronunciation is good because she is English, but she is aged and afflicted by domestic pains and does not appear to possess the literary culture, didactic capacities or the energy [required for teaching]. Hers was the most unsuccessful examination. (Franchini, Puzzuoli 2005, p. 433)[4]

The bleak picture painted by Torraca and Agostini's report contains a precious reference to the specific textbook that was adopted (albeit in an apparently futile fashion) in the teaching of English at Secondo Educandato. "Cann's textbook", mentioned in the comment on Mrs. Howard, appears to be Theophilus C. Cann's *The Theoretical and Practical Grammar of the English Language, etc.*, first published in Florence in 1872.[5] This grammar, whose popularity can be deduced from its longevity[6] as well as from sources such as Torraca and Agostini's report, was the first didactic text Cann produced in an effort to supply nineteenth-century Italian learners of English with a rich inventory of English-language teaching (ELT) materials. A member of a conspicuous nineteenth-century Anglo-Florentine community, Cann lived in Florence for at least a quarter of a century until his death on 16 December 1894

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[3] "[N]essuna è in grado, non che di scrivere, di parlare correntemente e correttamente né il francese né l'inglese; anzi pochissime sono quelle che possono tradurre prontamente e con sufficiente esattezza, in italiano, qualche breve tratto de' libri di lettura adoperati durante il corso" (Franchini, Puzzuoli 2005, p. 433).

[4] "Dell'insegnamento d'inglese basti dire che le alunne dell'ultimo corso hanno studiato solo 120 de' temi del Cann. La signora Howard, attempata e accasciata da dolori domestici, pronunzia bene l'inglese, perché inglese; ma non pare abbia né cultura letteraria, né capacità didattica, né energia. Questo esame è stato il più infelice di tutti" (Franchini, Puzzuoli 2005, p. 436).

[5] This is confirmed by Franchini and Puzzuoli in a footnote to the quotation given in fn. 3: "Theophilus C. Cann was the author of numerous texts for the teaching of English to Italians, which were published in Florence and continued to be reprinted for many years elsewhere" (Franchini, Puzzuoli 2005, p. 436).

[6] A brief description of this textbook, with information on the different re-editions, can be found in Shvanyukova (2018, pp. 130-131). More recently, Andrea Nava (2019) has dealt with Cann's grammar in a presentation given at the 2019 CIRSIL conference in Varese, Italy.

in his residence in via Ricasoli 5.[7] His contribution to promoting the teaching of English in nineteenth-century Italy cannot be underestimated. Cann taught English at the Scuola Normale Femminile in Florence, at the same time producing a wide range of ELT materials between 1872 and 1894.[8]

So far, only a handful of studies have examined the history of English language learning and teaching in Italy (see Section 2). Investigating the activities of such a prolific and popular author of ELT materials as Theophilus C. Cann will enable me to offer an insight into how English was taught and learned in Italy in the second half of the nineteenth century. My specific focus will be on the ways in which Cann aimed to develop English as a foreign language (EFL) learners' "pragmatic fluency" – i.e., "a dialogic phenomenon that combines both pragmatic appropriateness of utterances and smooth continuity in ongoing talk" (House 1996, p. 228); at the same time, I will highlight some of the strategies employed to familiarise students with conversational patterns and routines in the target language. An increasing number of studies have looked at the pragmatic dimension in historical language learning texts, taking into consideration due methodological caveats (see Culpeper, Kytö 2010, pp.46-48, p. 60; McLelland 2018, pp. 30-32, as well as contributions in Mazzon, Fodde 2012). In this paper, I am concerned with the pragmatic dimension in one of Cann's ELT texts – a curious little volume entitled *Friends at Home and Abroad; or, Social Chat: A connected tale in a series of imaginary conversations, illustrative of English phraseology and idioms to facilitate the acquirement of English as a living tongue* (Cann 1890 [1876]; henceforth, *Social Chat*). In my analysis of *Social Chat* (Section 4), I will address the following three questions:

1. What specific learning goals were associated with the acquisition of pragmatic fluency; i.e., what kind of pragmatic information was intended to be transmitted and taught through the dialogues?

2. How was the text to be used in the teaching and learning of English?

3. What kind of learners were *Social Chat*'s intended primary audience?

Before presenting *Social Chat* in more detail (Section 3), I will provide some background to Cann's activities as an EFL teacher in nineteenth-century Italy.

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[7] I deduced the approximate date of Cann's arrival in Florence from the publication year of his first textbook (Cann 1872), while the year of Cann's death is given in his will, which is available at https://probatesearch.service.gov.uk/#wills (accessed in June 2019). He died in December 1894, however, 1895 needs to be entered as the year of death to retrieve the document.

[8] See Shvanyukova (2018, p. 131; pp. 151-152) for an overview and bibliography of the main ELT materials published by Theophilus C. Cann.

Lingue e Linguaggi

2. Materials for teaching and learning modern foreign languages in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries: trends and developments

In a recent paper, Nava and Pedrazzini rightly lament the fact that "[t]he history of language learning/teaching in Italy is to a large extent still uncharted territory" (2019, p. 296). They also point out that "[a]s in other European contexts, a trailblazing role in historical language teaching research carried out in Italy appears to have been played by studies of languages different from English" (Nava, Pedrazzini 2019, p. 295), such as (mainly) French and Spanish.[9] As far as the most recent period of the history of English language teaching and learning in the Italian context is concerned, Nava and Pedrazzini are in the process of setting up ITALY ELT ARCHIVE. This innovative physical repository, combined with an open access web portal, will contain twentieth-century English language teaching/learning materials produced in Italy and used in the Italian context (Nava, Pedrazzini 2019, pp. 305-311).

Nava and Pedrazzini's endeavour will hopefully help remedy the deficiency of attention by stimulating scholarly interest in the (yet) unwritten history of English language teaching and learning in the Italian context.[10] At this point in time, Vicentini's (2012/2015) study of the first grammars of English for Italian learners remains the main point of reference for those interested in the early history of ELT materials in Italy.[11] Vicentini meticulously examines six grammars that were published during the eighteenth century, a period in which Anglomania, or "British influence and admiration for things British" (Johns 1998, p. 151) started to manifest itself in Italy (Cartago 1994, p. 730-735), as well as elsewhere on the Continent.[12] The social, political and cultural changes brought about by intensifying

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[9] In the latest issue of *Quaderni del CIRSIL,* the publication of the Centro di Ricerca Interuniversitario sulla Storia degli Insegnamenti Linguistici, https://cirsil.it/, where Nava and Pedrazzini's paper was published, and at the most recent CIRSIL (2019) conference in Varese, a number of papers have also dealt with the history of teaching languages such as Russian, Polish, Serbo-Croatian, Bulgarian and Old Church Slavonic (Cifariello 2019), Chinese (Famularo, Hong 2019), Swedish (Meregalli 2019) and German (Spazzali 2019). Pellandra's (2004) invaluable introduction to the history of language teaching has to be mentioned here as it provides a general overview of the main stages of Pan-European development and focuses on the history of foreign-language teaching in the Italian context.

[10] These two authors have already taken important steps towards this goal, most recently in Nava (2018a, 2018b, 2018c, and 2019) and Pedrazzini (2018).

[11] A handful of other studies were published in the 1980s-1990s (e.g., Del Lungo Camiciotti 1983, Frank 1983, De Michelis 1995). In a more recent monograph Pireddu (2010) discusses a number of English grammars published in Italy in the first half of the nineteenth century.

[12] For instance, in Germany (cf. Klippel 1994, pp. 257-268) and in the Low Dutch area (cf. Loonen 1991, pp. 46-47).

international commercial and cultural networks fostered the Italian public's interest in the English language.

However, Italian readers mostly accessed translations of scientific and literary works written in English, which means that the demand for English instruction and the market for ELT materials would still have been relatively small in eighteenth-century Italy (cf. Loonen 1991, p. 55, on the similar situation in the Low Dutch area). The fact that teaching English was not a particularly lucrative business may help to explain why lack of originality and rigidity and repetitiveness have been identified as key traits of the first ELT materials addressed to Italian learners (Vicentini 2015, pp. 50-68):

1) lack of originality: with the exception of one textbook (Giuseppe Baretti's 1762 *Grammar of the Italian Language*), eighteenth-century English grammars for Italians tend to reproduce and recycle materials from two small groups of earlier sources, one represented mainly by seventeenth-century French grammars for English learners and English grammars for French learners, and the other comprising popular grammars of Italian as a foreign language;[13]

2) the rigidity and repetitiveness that characterise the formal properties of these early English grammars for Italians means that in their structure, organisation and, to a great extent, their specific contents, these textbooks followed easily recognisable patterns. They start with a chapter on the pronunciation of the letters of the alphabet, followed by a section dedicated to parts of speech and supplementary sections containing vocabulary (in five out of six grammars analysed by Vicentini), familiar phrases (in five out of six cases), dialogues (in three of the six textbooks), etc.[14]

At a first glance, Cann's *Social Chat,* published in the late nineteenth century, appears to be a very different kind of textbook when compared to the first ELT materials produced in Italy in the course of the eighteenth century. Composed entirely of dialogues, the book exemplifies a major development in the European tradition of language-learning materials. Klippel (1994, pp. 315-320) and Minerva (1996, pp. 137-156) agree that a rapid increase in the number of

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[13] That the recycling of language learning materials, especially parts extracted from the most popular dialogue collections, was a truly Pan-European phenomenon is confirmed in Betsch's (2019) study of the grammars and textbooks of several West and South Slavonic languages of the eighteenth and nineteenth century. Betsch here speaks of adapted and translated versions of pedagogical dialogues whose original material can be traced back to "[s]everal 'families' of dialogue collections [with the most important one] going back to an Italian-French textbook by Veneroni or a French-German textbook by des Pepliers." (Betsch 2019, p. 41) On the contrary, Romanelli (2019) shows how the authority of Giovanni Veneroni/Jean Vigneron and his famous *Maître Italien* (1678) was questioned at the turn of the nineteenth century.

[14] A useful summary introducing four of these six grammars, as well as their authors, can be found in Berti and Pinnavaia (2013).

textbooks published was accompanied by an extraordinary diversification of the range of language-teaching materials produced in the course of the nineteenth century.[15] According to Klippel (1994, p. 320), the phenomenon of diversification of ELT materials in the German context was articulated in three key trends: firstly, new types of textbooks started to reflect their different functions; secondly, individual textbooks could be subsequently combined to constitute a comprehensive multi-part coursebook, and, lastly, these new materials were easy to adapt/to grade and thus satisfy the needs of different target groups. In other words, the prototypical eighteenth-century comprehensive textbook containing separate grammar, reading, dialogue and various supplementary sections – such as the first English grammars for Italian learners analysed by Vicentini – transformed itself into a functional, graded, and structurally differentiated network of textbooks characteristic of the modern teaching system, which later, in the second half of the twentieth century, was further differentiated by integrating new media resources.[16]

Similar trends have been observed by Minerva in her examination of French textbooks produced in Italy in the second half of the nineteenth century. She indicates the diversification of textbooks and the addition of new target groups of learners as the main trends in the Italian context (Minerva 1996, pp. 137-156),[17] drawing a preliminary conclusion that

> on pourrait évoquer une sorte de sillon qui se creuse, au XIXe siècle entre deux objectifs, l'apprentissage de l'oral et de l'écrit. La baisse effective des textes comportant des dialogues, d'une part, et la parution des recueils de dialogues, d'autre part, font penser à deux chemins différent parcourus per l'édition, qui vise à se spécialiser, en proposant des outils différenciés. Si donc le poids de la section consacrée aux dialogues dans les manuels diminue sensibilement, l'intérêt pour la conversation ne s'en ressent pas pour pourtant. Tout au

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[15] In the absence of studies surveying the history of ELT materials in nineteenth-century Italy (cf. Shvanyukova 2018, pp. 123-125), here I refer to two different groups of studies in order to be able to contextualise Cann's works: in the first group Klippel (1994) examined the macro-trends in the production of ELT materials and methods in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Germany, while in the second group Minerva (1996, 2002) analysed the production of French textbooks in Italy in the same period. In Section 4 instead I draw on studies which examined the history of the teaching of Spanish as a foreign language (Sánchez Pérez 1987, 1992, 1997; Sáez Rivera 2004) in the Early and Late Modern periods.

[16] "Aus dem Gesamtlehrbuch des 18. Jahrhunderts, das Grammatik, Lesetexte und Gesprächsschulung enthielt, wuchs das funktional, niveaumäßig und strukturell differenzierte Geflecht eines modernen Lehrwerksystems, das dann viel später, in der zweiten Hälfte des 20. Jahrhunderts, noch um integrierte Medien erweitert wurde" (Klippel 1994, p. 320).

[17] Minerva here gives many interesting examples testifying to this expansion of target audiences, such as a textbook addressed specifically to railway employees (*La lingua francese: trattato elementare pratico ad uso dell'impiegato delle ferrovie,* M. Salari, 1878, quoted in Minerva 1996, p. 141). Minerva (2003) provides an extensive survey of the French textbooks for Italians produced between 1861 and 1922.

contraire, il paraîtrait accru, si l'édition s'y adonne avec un si bel élan. (Minerva
2002, p. 107)

As I will show, the production of Cann's *Social Chat* can be contextualised
within the larger nineteenth-century developments in the field of language
teaching discussed by Klippel and Minerva. I will provide a fuller description
of the text under investigation in the next section.

3. Theophilus C. Cann's *Social Chat* (1890 [1876])

> *Miss C[hambers]. - It is so nice to be able to*
> *speak two or three languages,*
> *and thus to converse with the people of*
> *different countries,*
> *with that ease which is essential to a true*
> *interchange of thought.*
> *Count [Danesi].- So it is, and the knowledge*
> *of foreign languages,*
> *makes all the world akin.*
> (Cann 1890, p. 63).

This brief exchange of thoughts on the importance of learning foreign
languages takes place between a young English lady, Miss Julia Chambers,
and an Italian aristocrat, Count Danesi, in the eighth chapter of Cann's *Social
Chat*. First published in 1876, the book appears to be Cann's fourth ELT
publication (cf. Shvanyukova 2018, pp. 130-133 for the full list of Cann's
publications). According to the Italian national library database, eleven
editions of *Social Chat* were published between 1876 and 1920, and the fifth
edition I am referring to in this paper came out in 1890. Thirty-one copies of
the book, according to the same database, are presently owned by different
Italian libraries.[18]

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[18] According to *Opac Sbn, Catalogo del servizio bibliotecario nazionale*,
https://opac.sbn.it/opacsbn/opaclib, nine copies of *Social Chat* are distributed among four larger
libraries (The National Library of Florence, The National Library Sagarriga Visconti of Bari, The
Sormani Library in Milan and The Cagliari University Library), while the remaining twenty-two
copies can be found in the libraries of some of the major Italian cities (Bologna, Genova, Livorno,
Napoli, Perugia, Sassari, etc.), in smaller towns (e.g., Assisi, Chieri and San Giovanni in Persiceto),
as well as in villages (e.g., Zollino in the province of Lecce). Such territorial penetration of the
volume can be taken as an indirect indicator of its popularity. Three copies of the book are owned
by the libraries of the secondary technical institutions (e.g., the historical section of the library of
the Istituto Secondario Superiore Boselli-Alberti in Savona) and one makes part of the private
collection of the Galimberti family in Cuneo (Biblioteca Museo Casa Galimberti), thus testifying to
the fact that schools and private individuals alike could be the intended users of the work.

In the preface to *Social Chat* Cann explains that his objective in writing this book "has been to furnish the Foreigner with an insight into the numerous Idioms of English conversation, and to show him how English is generally spoken at the present day" (Cann 1890, p. 7). To realise this goal and solve the learners' common problem of not being able to speak and understand spoken language, Cann offers his "connected Tale mostly in conversational, familiar dialogues, rendered perfectly English both in thought and expression" (Cann 1890, p. 7). Here "a connected tale" means that the book's twenty-one individual chapters, written in English only, without a parallel translation into Italian,[19] follow the events in the lives of the same thirteen characters, whose names are listed following the conventions of a dramatic text (Cann 1890, p. 9), with names and brief introductions given (e.g., *William Blake, Esq. …. A Gentleman of property*; *The Marchioness Dowager of Rawford……An elderly lady, fond of scandal, but who does not give credit to all she hears*; etc.). Ten characters are English and three are Italian, and all of them are members of the upper classes. The length of the individual chapters varies between two and twenty pages and the dialogues are enacted in a range of different situational contexts, in which smaller and larger groups of characters are shown in interaction.[20]

The story opens in Florence in May 1889, when Mr. Preston, an Englishman on a business trip to Italy, chances upon his old friend Mr. Blake. The events are brought to conclusion in London, in January 1890, when Mrs. Charles Preston (formerly Miss Julia Chambers, the young lady quoted at the beginning of this section, now the wife of Mr. Preston) sends a letter to Florence, to her dear friend Mrs. William Blake. In the eleven months between May and January, the group of English and Italian protagonists meet and spend time together in Florence – dining, going to the theatre, taking strolls, interacting at evening parties, etc. (Chapters 1 to 13). Some of them then travel together from Florence to London (Chapter 14 and 15). Once the party reaches England, the story focuses mainly on the two Italian characters, Count Danesi and Marquis Badini. In Chapters 16 to 19, the two Italians are seen sightseeing and making visits to their old acquaintances in London. They also have to deal with a number of practical issues, such as looking for suitable apartments to rent for the Marquis, buying clothes and watches, etc. While exploring London

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[19] Four years after its first publication, *Social Chat* was translated and published in the Italian version entitled *Amici in patria ed all'estero, ovvero Colloqui familiari: racconto connesso in una serie di conversazioni immaginarie del cav. Teofilo C. Cann* (Jannel – Cann 1880). However, a discussion of this translation, whose only two copies are found at The National Library of Florence and in Avellino, at Biblioteca Provinciale Giulio e Scipione Capone, is beyond the scope of this contribution.

[20] The only exceptions are Chapters 14 and 21, in which there is an epistolary exchange instead of a dialogue.

together, the two noblemen engage in lengthy and heated discussions about the English character and English customs. The final chapters bring the group back together at the Blakes' residence in London, on the eve of their return to Florence.

Social Chat can be read in a number of different ways. If one accepts Cann's suggestion, then the book is best read as a story – or, rather, a dialogue in book form (cf. "das thematisch *bivalente Dialogbuch"*, Franceschini 2011, p. 77), where the setting, as well as the specific protagonists involved, change from chapter to chapter. The coherence of the plot is supported, first of all, by its focus on the friendship between the two main English protagonists – Mr. Blake and Mr. Preston. It is further enhanced with a secondary romance plot, whose protagonists are Mr. Preston and Miss Julia Chambers.

The second reading option is to select individual chapters, which, when stripped of their narrative frame, reproduce the tried and tested format of the earlier compilations of conversational language-learning materials, realised as

> sequential passages of natural conversations, containing canonical, routine formulae such as greetings, leave-taking, opening and closing formulae, which serve to familiarise [the learner] with the oral conventions of the time concerning a number of topics: food, home and furniture, commercial activities, arts and professions. (Di Martino 1999, p. 25, my transl.)[21]

Moreover, *Social Chat* can be mined for practical travel information on how to find one's way around London and Florence, on what the top attractions in the two cities are, and on how one travelled from one city to the other in the late nineteenth century. The richness of this information connects *Social Chat* with the tradition of popular tourism phrasebooks (Mączak 2003; Hallett 2017, pp. 223-226). As Becker (2002, p. 275) explains, "dialogues [could….] just serve as pocket guidebooks in the style of those still bought today by tourists willing to acquire at least some rudiments of the language of their destination".[22] Furthermore, Cann's male protagonists eagerly demonstrate their erudition with prolonged monologues (resembling lectures, rather than chunks of spontaneous conversations) on various topics connected with English and

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[21] Di Martino describes this format on the example of William Caxton's 1483 *Dialogues in French and English, Adapted from a Fourteenth-Century Book of Dialogues in Frenche and Flemish*. To this list of elements, she also adds prayers and basic rules of conduct aimed at young readers and servants, two elements which are not found in *Social Chat* (1999, p. 25) .

[22] Klippel (2018, pp. 6-11) discusses the treatment of cultural contents in a number of popular eighteenth-century textbooks of English for German. In Johann König's (1755 [1705] *Der getreue Englische Wegweiser,* for example, we find "six bilingual dialogues, each about five pages long, which take the reader to a great number of London sights and offer him basic facts about England, Wales, Scotland and Ireland" (Klippel 2018, p. 6).

Italian literature, history and politics.[23] *Social Chat* is a treasure-trove not only of encyclopedic information on cultural and historical subjects, which most certainly would have been of interest to at least some Italian learners of English, but meticulously documents more mundane matters as well – thoroughly described menus and contemporary fashions for ladies are two such examples. Finally, as the following excerpt will show, *Social Chat* aims to fulfil the functions of conduct manual as well:

> Miss C[hambers]. - Mr. and Mrs. Leechwood also?
> Mrs. Blake. - How often must I tell you Julia, that society requires *many* sacrifices and exacts *much* from those who wish to be thought well of. You will understand these things better, my dear, some day, when you are married and have a position to keep up in society. Good bye, Emily and Clara, I shall look for you to-morrow. (Cann 1890, p. 100)

Here the young Miss Chambers is anxious to find out whether the Leechwoods, an English-Italian couple disliked by everyone – introduced as *Mr. Henry Leechwood...A learned Botanist, and a henpecked husband/Mrs. Henry Leechwood...A stuck-up Genoese person, wife of the former, who* affects *a life of unsullied virtue* (Cann 1890, p. 9, emphasis in original) - will be invited to "a literary conversation" at the Blakes'. Mrs. Blake, her more experienced friend, is quick to impart a lesson on proper conduct in good society, which requires the sacrifice of mingling with people one genuinely dislikes. Giving advice to the rising middle classes on "how they should act, speak, and write" (Mitchell 2010, p. 83) was a feature found not only in conduct manuals proper, but in a much wider range of Late Modern English texts, as Mitchell has shown on the example of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century dictionaries. Language learning texts partook in the conduct book tradition by attempting to "[guide] social etiquette, [provide] directives for public behaviours, [act] as a moral compass for readers, especially young women." (Mitchell 2010, p. 92)

In the next section I focus on the linguistic analysis of the text. I intend to pay specific attention to the presence of basic pragmatic routines and the ways in which Cann aims to develop his students' pragmatic fluency by familiarising them with these conversational patterns.

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[23] Ladies are occasionally allowed to express their opinion on a literary topic as well (Chapter 12, Cann 1890, pp. 102-108). It is more frequent, however, for them to interact (with each other) about topics associated with either love or lace.

4. Conversational routines in Cann's *Social Chat*

With *Social Chat*, Cann acknowledges his indebtedness to the tradition of conversational didactic materials for the study of foreign languages, whose roots can be traced back to antiquity, as shown by Dickey (2016). Among these different types of ancient language-learning materials, a prominent place in the teaching of spoken Latin was occupied by colloquia, i.e. "bilingual dialogues and narratives designed to be used at an early stage of language learning" (Dickey 2016, p. 10). Passages from colloquia, which have been preserved in medieval manuscripts, can be read as "vignettes about daily life in the Roman world; like their modern equivalents in French and German textbooks today, they contain cultural as well as linguistic information" (Dickey 2016, p. 10).[24] While the importance of spoken Latin gradually declined, it never ceased to be taught as a language of oral communication. Hence the production of didactic materials, which focused on oral competence by including dialogues, continued with such illustrious examples of later Latin-learning materials as Erasmus's *Colloquia puerilia*, as well as Juan Luis Vives's and Mathurin Cordier's works (Pellandra 2004, pp. 24-25).

In sixteenth-century Europe, "discussion and different views [...] regarding the teaching of foreign languages" (Sánchez Pérez 1987, p. 55) were reflected in two main methodological approaches, as shown in Sánchez Pérez's work (1987, 1992, 1997) on the example of the teaching of Spanish as a foreign language.[25] Sánchez Pérez argues that contemporary language-learning materials were representative of two well-defined models. The first model was deductive, grammar-based teaching (i.e., "learning a language through grammar"); however, this method "did not fulfil the expectancies that many learners had when starting with Spanish" (Sánchez Pérez 1987, p. 49). It was the second model, "based on the reading and memorisation of colloquial texts, speaking, learning of vocabulary, understanding of proverbs, sentences…; that is learning from practice (inductive method)" (Sánchez Pérez 1987, p. 49) that gained popularity as many learners of Spanish prioritised the acquisition of communicative skills in the target language. In real teaching/learning practice,

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[24] Cf. Dionisotti's presentation of medieval Latin *Colloquia* as "exercises in the vocabulary and idiom of everyday life, including dialogue, of course, but only as a component, not as their overall form […] the hero is a child, other scenes are depicted mainly through instructions to mute slaves, who fetch and carry, get food and clothes, dry one, dress one, reminding us of how much the ancient daily routing could consist of telling others what to do rather than doing it oneself." (Dionisotti 1982, p. 93, quoted in Di Martino 1999, p. 22)

[25] Cf. Tom McArthur's (1991) distinction between "a 'marketplace tradition' and a 'monastery tradition' [where the former] refers to traders and travellers learning as much of a foreign language as they need to conduct their business [while the latter] can be seen in the monastic schools and grammar schools, where the classical languages were taught so that the store of knowledge laid down in Latin and Greek writing could be unlocked" (Klippel 2018, p. 2).

these two extreme methodologies, the "grammatical" on the one hand and the "conversational" on the other, must have complemented each other (Sánchez Pérez 1987, p. 55).

Instead of Sánchez Pérez's "conversational method" label, Sáez Rivera introduces the term "didactic application" ("explotación pedagógica", Sáez Rivera 2004, p. 796) when discussing the different methodologies implemented in the teaching of Spanish as a foreign language between the sixteenth and the eighteenth centuries. Sáez Rivera's concept of didactic application helps distinguish between the various linguistic levels and the associated range of practical ways in which language-learning materials could be used in teaching:

1) the level of phonology (e.g., with the reading out load of the dialogues to practice pronunciation);

2) the level of morphology (e.g., using the texts to translate and analyse different parts of speech, inductively or deductively);

3) the level of syntax: even if textbooks of the period did not usually include a dedicated section on syntax, parallel translation provided in columns could help learners parse and distinguish between different syntactic patterns by comparing sentence structure;

4) the semantic level, by presenting thematic vocabulary in meaningful situational contexts;

5) the pragmatic level, by offering an opportunity to learn conversational routines, such as greetings and leave-taking formulae, inductively, as presented in meaningful situational contexts. (adapted from Sáez Rivera 2004, pp. 796-797).[26]

The main focus of my investigation into Cann's *Social Chat*, taken as an (atypical) example of nineteenth-century conversation manuals, will be on its pragmatic dimension (as described by Sáez Rivera above). More specifically, following Watts (1999, p. 217), I will address the following three questions in my analysis of *Social Chat*:

1. What specific learning goals were associated with the acquisition of pragmatic fluency; i.e., what kind of pragmatic information was intended to be transmitted and taught through the dialogues?

2. How was the text to be used in the teaching and learning of English?

3. What kind of learners were *Social Chat*'s intended primary audience?

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[26] Sáez Rivera also draws attention to the fact that both the grammatical and conversational methodologies are exemplified in the works of those authors whose portfolio of language-teaching materials included grammars (typically representative of the first methodology) and dialogue compilations (typically representative of the second methodology) (Sáez Rivera 2004, pp. 797).

Following Coulmas (1981), House describes conversational routines as "expressions whose occurrence is tied to particular, highly predictable situations, whose meaning is pragmatically conditioned and whose usage is motivated by the relevant characteristics of social situations" (House 1996, p. 225). Cann's "conversations […] on ordinary and familiar topics" (1890, p. 7) represent examples of exactly such particular, highly predictable situations, in which conversational routines – or, in Cann's terms, "the numerous Idioms of English conversation" (Cann 1890, p. 7) -   are presented to the learner in the context of a (simulated) meaningful interaction. In what follows, I analyse the inventory of conversational routines Cann introduces in his dialogues. As I will show, this repertoire includes a range of basic and more elaborated routines which a language learner would be required to master in order to be able to communicate efficiently and effectively in the target language.

Due to space constraints, I focus on a selection of such routines which include greetings, health, leave-taking and introduction formulae. I also look at topic-introduction structures and a group of different speech-like elements and structures (Culpeper, Kytö 2010, p. 84-99), as well as strategies of making, accepting and declining polite offers, which are focused on repeatedly in different chapters of *Social Chat*. I am interested here in offering a qualitative analysis of the range of conversational routines Cann presents in his text in order to "make the Reader acquainted with such idiomatic expressions, as are necessary to a complete knowledge of the language" (Cann 1890, p. 8).[27]

4.1. Basic conversational routines

In a prototypical bilingual or multilingual nineteenth-century conversation manual, the text of the dialogue is given in two or more languages arranged in parallel columns. Such manuals aimed to develop the learners' pragmatic competence by offering lists of basic conversational routines grouped according to the different communicative situations in which they were meant to be used. For instance, the section dedicated to "Easy Dialogues/Dialogues Faciles" in a popular French-English dialogue collection (Millhouse 1851, pp. 47-87) starts with a list of opening formulae, among which we find greetings and inquiries about one's health:

Visit.	La visite.
Good morning, Mr. Black.	Bon jour, Monsieur Black.
Good morning, Sir.	Monsieur, je vous souhaite le bon jour.
How do you do this morning?	Comment vous portez vous ce matin?

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[27] A discussion of quantitative findings is planned for a later stage in my project.

Very well, I thank you, Sir, and how are you?	Fort bien, Monsieur, je vous remercie, et vous-même?
Quite well, Sir, I thank you.	Fort bien, Monsieur, je vous remercie.
How have you been, since I had the pleasure of seeing you?	Comment vous-êtes porté depuis que je n'ai eu le plaisir de vous voir?
I am very glad to see you.	Je suis bien aise de vous voir.

(Millhouse 1851, p. 47)

Bilingual dialogues such as this one "could be translated from the target language to the learners' mother tongue, learned by heart, rehearsed as a kind of role play in the classroom" (Becker 2002, p. 275). Cann's approach, however, is different. Instead of simply providing the learner with a list of fixed expressions associated with a particular topic, the author expected him/her to extrapolate conversational routines from the dialogues, as is shown in the following extract from the first chapter of the book:

> (The Meeting. - Mr. Blake and Mr. Preston, two friends who meet unexpectedly, after a long absence.)
> Blake.(*)[28] - How do you do, my dear fellow? What a time it is since we met! Who *ever* would have thought of seeing you in Florence? What *has* brought you all this distance?
> Preston. - Yes, I dare say you are surprised to see *me* of all persons in the world. The fact is, I am just paying a flying visit to Italy on business, and I'm now on my way to Rome.
> Blake. - Why did you not write and tell me you were coming? I would have made arrangements to be free and have gone with you to the capital, where we might have spent a day or two together pleasantly.
> Preston. - Nothing would have given me greater pleasure, but a week ago I had no idea that I was coming; I received a telegram from Manchester which obliged me to set out at six hours' notice. And besides, I did not know you were still living in Florence. (Cann 1890, pp. 11-12)

The monolingual dialogues in *Social Chat,* as we can see in this extract, offer an extensive repertoire of formulae a language learner can use to start a conversation, introduce new people or new topics. The results of mining the text for basic conversational routines are given in Table 1:

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[28] Author's footnote in the text: "The author does not hold himself responsible for the views expressed on various subjects by the personages introduced, neither does he acknowledge that they are in unison with his own." (Cann 1890, p. 11).

Type of formula	Uses	Examples
1. Greeting formula	Tends to be used in combination with address terms and other formulae, such as *how do you do* or *how are you*	a. Good morning, Mrs. Blake, how do you do? b. Good morning, Count, how do you do?
2. Health formula	A more formal way of inquiring about someone's health, realised as a declarative, rather than an interrogative sentence, where the formula is introduced by the main clause containing *hope* or *trust*	a. I hope you are quite well, Mrs. Blake. b. I trust Lady Freeman is quite well.
3. Answers to the opening formulae	Can vary in length, from the shortest standard answer, the extended versions of the standard answer, to more creatives alternative answers, all testifying to Cann's efforts to familiarise his learners with the widest possible range of basic conversational routines	a. Very well, thanks / Quite well, thank you / All quite well, thank you; b. I am pretty well now, thank you / Thank you, my wife is rather poorly this evening, the children are pretty well […]; c. Capitally, thank you, my dear fellow/ I am first rate in health, thank you;
4. Introducing new people	Routinised expressions employed to introduce strangers to each other	a. This is my friend, Sir Charles Hannaford, one of the pillars of our commercial community. b. Apropos, let me introduce you to the Count, a very old Italian friend of mine. c. But allow me to introduce you to Miss Chambers, a young friend of my wife's.
5. Introducing new topics of conversation	Ways of starting a conversation or changing the topic by introducing a new one	a. What a delightful journey we shall have! b. What a pleasant evening we are having; are we not? c. What pretty fancy-work that is which you are doing, Julia; what is it?
6. Leave-taking formulae	Simple (examples a-d) vs. more elaborate ways (examples e-i) of bringing	a. Good bye, Count. b. Good bye until to-morrow evening. c. Good bye for the present, my dear

*L*ingue e
*L*inguaggi

	an interaction to a close	fellow. d. Good night. I shall expect to see you to-morrow. e. Good bye, mind and take care of yourself in the meantime […]. f. And now I must take my leave, for I have promised to join a party at my hotel to go for an evening drive. g. But in that case I think I must wish you good evening now, as I *must* write a letter home before I go to bed. h. We were just going to enjoy our cigars on a Thames boat, so we will leave you to finish your wine. Good day. i. Good bye, Mrs. Blake, I shall always remember how much I'm indebted to you for all the pleasure I have derived from my visit to Italy.

Table 1
Summary of basic conversational routines in *Social Chat*.

We see that, for instance, in (4a-c) learners are given three different structures to choose from, including the basic *this is a* construction and two more sophisticated - and challenging from the learner's point of view – structures introduced by *let me* and *allow me to* respectively. Differently, in (5a-c) Cann focuses on a particular construction employed to break the ice in the initial stages of the interaction. More examples (5d-e) of the same *what + adjective + noun* construction are found in *Social Chat* and, by varying the form of the noun (countable/uncountable, singular countable/plural countable), Cann makes sure the learner can deduce the grammatically correct way of using this construction:

(5)   d. What pretty flowers, Leechwood!
          e. What splendid fruit!

4.2. Speech-like elements and structures

While "the dialogic format [used as a teaching and learning aid] fulfilled the function of imitating and hence substituting the real language used in everyday situations"(Di Martino 1999, p. 19), these scripted conversations failed to reproduce a number of key elements and structures characterising real spoken language: "the protagonists [in these dialogues] do not need to utter Mhm to indicate that they have understood the message, there are no silent pauses or overlaps [...] no hesitation or mistakes which are immediately corrected" (Di

Martino 1999, p. 19, my transl.). Simon's inventory of elements and structures, whose goal is to "simulate the 'language of immediacy'" (the so called "Gesprächworter", Simon 2006, p. 13), includes pragmatic boosters, i.e., set phrases and rhetorical questions, structuring signals, interjections, question-answer-sequences, as well as a wide range of greetings (2006, pp. 11-18). In *Social Chat*, Cann's introduces some of these speech-like elements and structures in an attempt to mimic authentic spoken interaction (examples 7a-i):

(7)   a. Ah, how are you, Danesi?
        b. Apropos, have you heard […].
        c. By the bye, you said yesterday […]
        d. Dear me!
        e. Good gracious!
        f. For goodness' sake, Mr. Preston, don't talk *such nonsense.*
        g. Oh, well, if I'm late, […].
        h. Well, 'pon my word, […].
        i. Why! it is nearly seven o'clock!

In addition to a rich variety of pragmatic boosters, Cann's inventory includes pragmatic noise items (Culpeper, Kytö 2010, chapters 9-12, Culpeper 2012, pp. 33-35), such as AH (7a) and OH (7g), which, on the one hand, represent "a handy means by which attitudes, thoughts and emotions [of particular characters] can be signalled" (Culpeper 2012, pp. 35), and, on the other hand, remind us that "[l]anguage-teaching texts were not produced for silent readers: they anticipated a kind of 'noisy reading'. They provided language to be used in oral contexts." (Gallagher 2019, p. 66) Cann's occasional use of italics to indicate a prosodic change (e.g., "Count, I know what to send *you*. Miss Chambers, do let me pass you just a little more." 1890, p. 28) seems to confirm his attention to the level of phonology (cf. Section 4).

Speech-like elements and structures that are not reproduced in Cann's text include incomplete sentences and performance errors (Simon 2006, p. 17-18), false starts and self-corrections (Franceschini 2002, p. 145), ungrammatical sequences of words, inappropriate registers and varieties (Di Marino 2000, p. 248) or bad language.[29]

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[29] This last feature was not uncommon in early dialogue compilations. For instance, Critten (2015) briefly discusses vulgar language in the group of conversation manuals for the teaching of French in medieval England. In these manuscripts, collectively known as the *Manières de langage* (Kibbee 1991, pp. 78-83, Lambley 1920, pp. 35-40), it is possible to consult "a list of insults that might be drilled individually or practised dramatically as part of a classroom slanging match" (Critten 2015, pp. 929-930).

4.3. Making, accepting and declining polite offers

After successfully acquiring basic conversational routines, which have been described in the previous sub-sections, Cann's Italian learners would be well-equipped to a) start a conversation in English with an appropriate greeting, health or topic-introduction formula and b) bring the interaction to a close using one of the leave-taking options presented in *Social Chat*. How the conversation would develop between point a) and point b) would depend to a large extent on the specific interactional setting or activity its participants would find themselves engaging in. The topic of "Eating and drinking" has been identified as the most frequent activity presented in language learning dialogues in the period between 1396 and 1780, followed by "Small talk", "Sales talk", "Conversation with hosts", "Knowledge/acquisition of foreign languages", "Travelling", "Getting up in the morning/getting dressed", and "Going for a walk" (based on Radkte 1994, p. 134, quoted in Franceschini 2011, p. 73). Partaking of food or drink and the accompanying dinner-table conversations are represented as two important social activities in Cann's text. Two chapters are devoted to dialogues taking place at mealtimes: Chapter Five, where a dinner at the Blakes' is described in detail, and Chapter Eight, with another dinner this time at Mr. Preston's hotel.

In these dinner settings, the key group of formulae focused on is represented by the different strategies of making polite offers, i.e. offering something to eat or to drink to one's guest, and the polite ways of either accepting or declining the offer received. A typical (abbreviated) dialogue in *Social Chat* is shown in example (8) – here the host, Mr. Blake, is taking care of his guest, Miss Julia Chambers, with another guest, Mr. Preston, assisting him in this task:

(8)   (Blake) What soup may I send you, Miss Chambers?
         (Miss Chambers) Thank you, I will trouble you for a little ox-tail, but very little please […].
         […]
         (Blake) Miss Chambers, *do* let me pass you just a little more.
         (Miss Chambers) No, I had much rather not, thank you.
         (Blake) Which may I offer you: salmon, trout, or soles? Ah, you prefer soles, I know.
[…]
         (Mr. Preston) […] What wine may I offer you?
         (Miss Chambers) I will take sherry, thank you.
         […]
         (Blake) Which may I send you Miss Chambers, some roast-beef or some of the breast of a chicken?
         (Miss Chambers) I should prefer a little fowl and salad, please.
         […]
         (Blake) What pastry do you like; apple-pie and custard, rice pudding, or spongecake?

(Miss Chambers) I have made an excellent dinner. I won't take anything more, thank you.

(Blake) At all events, you must let me prevail on you to take a little Cheshire or Gloucester cheese.
(Cann 1890, pp. 27-31)

Cann here insists on the use of *which* or *what* interrogative structures followed by the name of the dish as the main strategy of making an offer. The repetitiveness of the answer formulae, typically realised with a standard set of constructions, is exemplified in (9a-e):

(9)   a. I will help myself to some of these young potatoes. I'll take a little asparagus, too, if you please, it is a plant I am very partial too.
        b. Thank you, I think I should prefer tea.
        c. I will take cream, if you please.
        d. Thank you, I won't take any.
        e. Thank you. I don't feel inclined for anything just now.

Examples of alternative ways of making offers are found in a number of other interactional settings in *Social Chat*. Table 2 provides an overview of the rich inventory of strategies of making offers and suggestions introduced by Cann:

Constructions used for making offers and suggestions	Examples from *Social Chat*
modal verbs	What […] may I send you / offer you? Which shall I give you […]? Will you not […]? You must […]
imperative sentences	do let me pass you just a little more; Allow me to […] Let me […] Permit me to […] Let us […]
questions	What […] do you like […]? What […] will you take? Which do you prefer […]? What do you say to […]? Why not […]?
other types of constructions	I want you to […] Suppose we […] You are going to […]

Table 2
Ways of making offers and suggestions in *Social Chat*.

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As this summary shows, the inventory is exceptionally varied. Whether or not Cann expected his learners to familiarise themselves with all of these strategies, he made the full repertoire available in the dialogues in *Social Chat*.

5. Concluding remarks

As I mentioned in the presentation of the text (Section 3), Cann's main stated objective with *Social Chat* was "to furnish the Foreigner with an insight into the numerous Idioms of English conversation, and to show him how English is generally spoken at the present day" (Cann 1890, p. 7). While it is true that the text could be used to realise other goals, including non-linguistic ones (e.g., extrapolating practical information on travelling or sightseeing), my analysis has shown that Cann went to great lengths in order to ensure that his learners were provided with the most extensive repertoire of basic and more elaborate conversational routines in English, and would thus acquire appropriate pragmatic competence.

A lot of the formulaic language in *Social Chat*, just like the topics presented in the dialogues, had been dealt with in numerous earlier language-learning texts (cf. Section 4.1). In this sense, then, Cann's *Social Chat* is a product of the phenomenon of diversification of language-learning materials, typical of the nineteenth century (cf. Section 2). However,, *Social Chat* is also an original piece of work which reworks the endlessly recycled materials of the earlier tradition of disconnected, artificial dialogues between unknown/unnamed characters into an engaging, connected story with a plot. To my knowledge, the only other example of a late nineteenth-century didactic text in which a foreign language (in this case Spanish for German learners) is taught through a series of connected dialogues is a conversation manual entitled *Don Basilio oder Praktische Anleitung zum mündlichen und schriftlichen Verkehr im Spanischen* (Verlag von G. A. Gloeckner, Leipzig, 1890, 2nd edn.). Authored by Julius Schilling, *Don Basilio* comprises twenty-six chapters in which the same group of characters assist the protagonist, Don Basilio, with preparations for a trip to Spain (Sáez Rivera 2012).[30]

As for the ways in which the text could be used in teaching and learning English, its versatility means that there were multiple possibilities. Most likely, its "didactic application" would depend on the specific teacher's/student's learning objectives: they could, for example, decide to use the dialogues to

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[30] I would like to thank Prof. Friederike Klippel for drawing my attention to another text, *Englisch per Dampf*! *Ganz neue Conversations-Methode*, *um* in *wenigen Tagen* ohne alle Vorkenntnisse geläufig *englisch* sprechen zu lernen. Hrsg. von Rob. H. Hoar, Sprachlehrer aus London, 1884, Berlin.

focus on one of the individual linguistic levels described by Sáez Rivera (cf. Section 4). Cann does not give any explicit indications in the preface on the ways in which he envisioned the use of his text - whether it would be more suitable for use in a classroom setting or for individual study, for instance - but handwritten glosses and annotations on the pronunciation of individual words in my second-hand copy of *Social Chat* are a testimony that it was indeed bought and used (at least by one English-language learner). In this particular case, the learner was interested in improving his/her pronunciation and speaking skills. Unfortunately, I have not been able to recover any information as to the identity of this learner. Had it been possible, the generic "Foreigner", whom Cann addresses in the preface as his target user, would have come to life.

In my previous investigation of a different ELT text by Cann, *The Comprehensive Letter-Writer*, etc., (Cann 1878), I observed how extraordinary Cann's linguistic intuitions were when it came to selecting specific linguistic features of the English commercial style of writing which had to be taught to his EFL learners in nineteenth-century Italy (Shvanyukova 2018, p. 150). With *Social Chat*, Cann confirms his credentials as an innovative language teacher by producing an original didactic text, which presents essential pragmatic information in an engaging and entertaining format. Indeed, that the pragmatic dimension had to figure prominently in the learning process is explicitly suggested by Cann himself through one of his Italian characters, Marquis Badini, who is made to ask his friend Count Danesi (Cann 1890, p. 188) for linguistic advice with a telling question, "How am I to answer this in English?". Perhaps ahead of his time, Cann had realized that communicative competence cannot rely exclusively on syntax, lexis, and morphology.

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