How inventive could French 17th century linguistics be

Gilles Siouffi

HAL Id: hal-03124666

https://hal.science/hal-03124666

Submitted on 28 Jan 2021

9.

How Inventive could French 17th century Linguistics be?

Gilles Siouffi
University Paul Valéry - Montpellier 3 / I.U.F.

Modern linguistics heavily depends on the idea that it is possible to draw a line between the proper, serious, scientific, institutional linguistics and various forms of illegitimate activities: folk linguistics, ideological linguistics, mythological linguistics and inventive linguistics. This partition is in theory to be questioned, but was all the more so in the 17th century, a century when legitimate linguistics occupied a position which was still relatively marginal compared with all the fields that dealt with language (philosophy, rhetoric, grammar, physics…). At that time, language itself was above all a philosophical object, as it was thought to be doomed, one day, to be "reduced" to principles that relied on philosophy.

At the very beginning of the 17th century (1620), the English philosopher Francis Bacon thought that language was one of the reasons why philosophy made so little progress. In his *Novum Organum*, he thought that words could be the idols of the public place (*idola fori*). Hence, he opened the path to a form of "inventive linguistics," so to speak, that sees in languages in use patterns that have to be reformed before they can convey proper philosophical ideas. Hence a direction towards what can be called "language therapy." By the end of the century, John Locke gathered a whole philosophical momentum around the idea of the "abuse of words," an idea that had a strong impact on the political decisions made towards language during the French Revolution. To the modern eye, these statements can be seen as decisive points in the development of a new version of philosophy, and have been widely used from the 18th century on to analytical philosophy.

The 17th century can also be seen as a century when extensive work was accomplished in the field of philology, so as to fix the canons of grammatical description, concerning especially modern languages. Such is the undertaking of Du Cange on Latin, of Nicod and Ménage on French, and of Duret and Leibniz on European and non-European languages.

Furthermore, it is a century when linguistic utopias have been very seriously examined.

Let us think of Mersenne's, Wilkins's and Leibniz's dreams of a universal philosophical language.

The 17th century appears therefore as a particularly rich time for the exploration of the various aspects of "inventive linguistics."

And yet a question immediately arises. Isn't there something of a contrast between the expansive speculations that have been applied to language and the results that can be historically evaluated?

In France, when comparing the achievement of the 17th century with what was so decisively proposed during the Revolution, one can be legitimately disappointed. High ideals were attached to language, but minor changes were put to the actual way the idiom looked.

This paper will provide an attempt:

- to show that there was a constant interconnection between the various forms of inventive linguistics at the time, and serious speculation, both on the actual languages and on the identity of this somehow new object that is language in itself.

- to show that the different aspects of "inventive linguistics" were so diversely interpreted in the 17th century that all form of action was ultimately neutralized for the sake of "usage," a final deity for French linguists of the time. This fact probably contrasts the French context with the English context, hence two different ways of viewing natural languages. In France "linguistics" appears as a possible place for the imaginary.

I. From the inventive to the fantastic

As a start, attention needs to be drawn to the inevitable ambivalence of the expression *Inventive Linguistics*, a stimulating and rather rare phrase. Indeed, *inventive* can be considered as a synonym for "creative" or "innovative". In that respect, *inventiveness* can be regarded as a quality in scientific method, or as Sandrine Sorlin proposed, a proof of open-mindedness towards interpretation.

But *inventive* can also mean that a linguistic discourse or theory is not rooted in empirical data or is deprived of practical usefulness. In that respect, *inventive linguistics* can be considered as a form of linguistics where theory and myth are preferred to facts.

A first aspect of what could be called inventive linguistics could thus be *Fantasy*, meaning the creation of purely imaginary languages, consequently subject to a type of *ad hoc* linguistics. In that respect, 17th century France is undoubtedly rich in fantasy. Imaginary idioms and codes abound in novels as well as in philosophical enquiries. In Cyrano de Bergerac's *Les Etats et empires de la lune* (1659), the narrator designs a self-powered

machine that enables him to land on the moon. There, despite slight incoherence—he seems to communicate rather well with a creature that speaks a completely different language, to the point of discussing complex philosophical issues. He discovers that society there is organised in two different spheres, each using its own language. Here is the well-known excerpt in which these two languages are described:

> Vous aurez que deux idiomes sont usités dans ce pays: l'un sert aux Grands, l'autre est particulier pour le peuple.
>   Celui des grands n'est autres chose qu'une différence de tons non articulés, à peu près semblable à notre musique, quand on n'a pas ajouté les paroles ; Et certes c'est une invention tout ensemble bien utile et bien agréable ; car quand ils sont las de parler, ou quand ils dédaignent de prostituer leur gorge à cet usage, ils prennent tantôt un luth, tantôt un instrument, dont ils se servent aussi bien que de la voix à se communiquer leurs pensées ; de sorte que quelquefois ils se rencontreront jusqu'à quinze ou vingt de compagnie, qui agiteront un point de théologie ou les difficultés d'un procès, par un concert le plus harmonieux dont on puisse chatouiller l'oreille.
> Le second, qui est en usage chez le peuple, s'exécute par les trémoussements des membres, mais non pas peut-être comme on se le figure, car certaines parties du corps signifient un discours tout entier. L'agitation, par exemple, d'un doigt, d'une main, d'une oreille, d'une lèvre, d'un bras, d'une joue, feront chacun en particulier une oraison ou une période avec tous ses membres. D'autres ne servent qu'à désigner des mots, comme un pli sur le front, les divers frissonnements des muscles, les renversements des mains, les battements de pied, les contorsions de bras. (Cyrano de Bergerac 65-66).

As can be seen, Cyrano's plot is very rich in interpretations.

1. In a sociolinguistic fashion: significantly, music is reserved to the high class, as "harmony" is regarded as a positive value in languages as well as in communication, whereas gestures have often been interpreted, since the Middle ages, as a distinctive sign of low class (the villains). Cyrano's plot conveys the idea that there is no "common" language in society, but rather a language for each class. Here, Cyrano draws his inspiration from Charles Sorel who had shown in the picaresque adventures of his *Francion* (1626) how large the scope of linguistic varieties could be in society.

2. In a linguistic fashion: a parallel can be drawn between Cyrano's description of a musical language and the contemporary interest in Chinese, a tone-modulated language. Likewise, Cyrano's description of gestures can be seen as close to the contemporary research on hieroglyphs and ideograms.

3. In a semiotic fashion: Cyrano's conclusion is that there can be language in music as well as in gesture. The wish to understand music and gesture as languages is part of the semiotic program of the 17th century. The idea is to extend what is

regarded as language beyond its traditional limits. As was already the case in Francis Godwin's *The Man in the moon* (1638), which was a model for Cyrano: places such as rivers, are named in music notes transcribed in small scores by Cyrano (127).

4. In a philosophical or anthropological fashion: for many philosophers, considering speech as the only language seems an unsatisfying limitation. Some of them put forward the advantages of gesture over speech. Music and gestures appear as the two "common languages of humanity," and they seem to bear an expressive capacity that is absent from speech. Hence the idea that the necessity of thought may have deprived us of a part of our nature and the dream that the original language of visual and vocal signs could be recovered through the creation of an artificial language. Later, Diderot and Rousseau thought that gesture and intonation were the most powerful means of expression for human beings. Verbal language was regarded as too profuse.

At the end of the 17th century, such reunion of scientific and philosophical interests inside the particular shape of a linguistic fantasy is common. There seems to be a kind of fashion in such general social fictions that can easily be more thought-provoking than scholastic treatises. In Foigny's *Les Aventures de Jacques Sadeur dans la découverte et le Voyage de la Terre Australe* (1676), gestures are the ordinary language, whereas words are used for reasoning and abstract discourse. In Vairasse d'Allais's *Histoire des Sevarambes* (1677 and 1678), the idiom of the Sevarambes is only composed of what is necessary for a language (1702, II, 250-251). Every unnecessary element is withdrawn, and what is deemed missing is added. All that is accomplished by a single person who is none other than King Sevarias. He is writing a Dictionary which consists in a new graphic system, based on sounds, and is supposed to follow "nature." Its study reveals a serious analysis of morphemes. A special attention is given to simplicity in the paradigms of verbs, harmony in sounds (a regular preoccupation at the time). In Sevarias's system, intonation reflects the speaker's feelings. Vairasse was perfectly aware of the scientific literature on language of his time; he later wrote a full and perfectly scholastic French Grammar himself (1682).

What is striking in these attempts for modern readers is that in all these cases, the imaginary languages thus created bear something of the ideal. But also, the languages are exposed to the conditions of political life. They are languages in use. Some important questions concerning natural languages are thus addressed through fiction:

- Are languages related to nature, or to some kind of institution?

- Are languages governed by reason or by usage?

- Is there a possible reason behind usage?

- Who has authority over language?

II. The problem of usage

Indeed, in the 17th century, inventive linguistics largely relies on a philosophical wish to create a new usage. Hence a utopian flavour to the attempts then made to define the characteristics necessary for a perfect language. What can be the conditions of a new usage? What are the features of a language that would have chances to become of universal use?

These questions are addressed by Descartes in his famous letter to Father Marin Mersenne (1588-1648) on the contemporary project submitted by Des Vallées, where he examines the sheer possibility of a universal language. Here is a large excerpt from that famous letter.

> Au reste, je trouve qu'on pourrait ajouter à ceci une invention, tant pour composer les mots primitifs de cette langue, que pour leurs caractères ; en sorte qu'elle pourrait être enseignée en fort peu de temps, et ce par le moyen de l'ordre, c'est-à-dire, établissant un ordre entre toutes les pensées qui peuvent entrer en l'esprit humain, de même qu'il y en a un naturellement établi entre les nombres ; et comme on peut apprendre en un jour à nommer tous les nombres jusques à l'infini, et à les écrire en une langue inconnue, qui sont toutefois une infinité de mots différents, qu'on pût faire le même de tous les autres mots nécessaires pour exprimer toutes les autres choses qui tombent en l'esprit des hommes. Si cela était trouvé, je ne doute point que cette langue n'eût bientôt cours parmi le monde ; car il y a force gens qui emploieraient volontiers cinq ou six jours de temps pour se pouvoir faire entendre par tous les hommes. Mais je ne crois pas que votre auteur ait pensé à cela, tant parce qu'il n'y a rien en toutes ses propositions qui le témoigne, que parce que de cette langue dépend la vraie philosophie. […] Or je tiens que cette langue est possible, et qu'on peut trouver la science de qui elle dépend, par le moyen de laquelle les paysans pourraient mieux juger de la vérité des choses, que ne font maintenant les philosophes. Mais n'espérez pas de la voir jamais en usage ; cela présuppose de grands changements en l'ordre des choses, et il faudrait que tout le monde ne fût qu'un paradis terrestre, ce qui n'est bon à proposer que dans le pays des romans (Descartes 76).

The philosophical aspects of this letter have often been commented upon in relation with the establishment of an alphabet of thoughts, as will later be examined by Leibniz as well. Here, the point will rather be the confrontation of the ideal look on language with the more realistic evaluation of the functioning of language in real life. Descartes agrees that any ideal language would have to rely on properly established philosophical ideas. But all his reasoning seems to be eventually swept away when he raises the point of usage. Here,

Descartes's viewpoint seems to be that in any language already in use, there is some kind of *force* that cannot be achieved through artificial means.

In a famous statement, the Latin author Quitilian said: "Sermo constat ratione, uetustate, auctoritate, consuetudine" (Inst. Orat., I, 6, 3), which means that "language is based on reason, antiquity, authority and usage". Should Quintilian be trusted, two parameters, *vetustas* and *consuetudo*, are derived from the condition of natural languages, whereas the other two, *ratio* and *auctoritas*, can pretty well apply to a fictional or an artificial language. The question will thus be: is it possible to isolate them? It must be said that *consuetudo* has gradually gained momentum in law as well as in language.

This new ideology of habit will be exemplified by Vaugelas, who considered "l'Usage" as "maistre des langues viuantes" (Vaugelas 470). Here is a text where Vaugelas elaborates on this new, more powerful, understanding of *consuetudo*:

> De tout ce discours il s'ensuit que notre langue n'est fondée que sur l'usage ou sur l'analogie, laquelle encore n'est distinguée de l'usage, que comme la copie ou l'image l'est de l'original, ou du patron sur lequel elle est formée, tellement qu'on peut trancher le mot, et dire que notre langue n'est fondée que sur le seul usage ou déjà reconnu, ou que l'on peut reconnaître par les choses qui sont connues, ce qu'on appelle analogie. D'où il s'ensuit encore que ceux-là se trompent lourdement, et pêchent contre le premier principe des langues, qui veulent raisonner sur la nôtre, et qui condamnent beaucoup de façons de parler généralement reçues, parce qu'elles sont contre la raison ; car la raison n'y est point du tout considérée : il n'y a que l'usage et l'analogie. Ce n'est pas que l'usage pour l'ordinaire n'agisse avec raison, et s'il est permis de mêler les choses saintes avec les profanes, qu'on ne puisse dire ce que j'ai appris d'un grand homme, qu'en cela il est de l'usage comme de la foi, qui nous oblige simplement et aveuglément, sans que notre raison y apporte sa lumière universelle ; mais que néanmoins nous ne laissons pas de raisonner sur cette même foi, et de trouver de la raison aux choses qui sont par dessus la raison. Ainsi l'usage est celui auquel il se faut entièrement soumettre en notre langue, mais pourtant il n'en exclut pas la raison ni le raisonnement, quoiqu'ils n'aient nulle autorité. Ce qui se voit clairement en ce que ce même usage fait aussi beaucoup de choses contre la raison, qui non seulement ne laissent pas d'être aussi bonnes que celles où la raison se rencontre, que même bien souvent elles sont plus élégantes et meilleures que celles qui sont dans la raison, et dans la règle ordinaire, jusque là qu'elles sont une partie de l'ornement et de la beauté du langage. (Vaugelas, préface, non paginée.)

Vaugelas's theory of *usage* is, as many commentators have put it (see Ayres-Bennett 13-40 for a summary of the discussion), derived from Quintilian, with a strong influence of the Latin grammarian Varro, especially on the question of "neology" and grammatical norms, but also introduces a new pragmatic vision of usage (derived from *usus*) that appears superimposed onto *consuetudo*. Indeed, the pragmatic conditions of speech (who, when, where, to whom, in what circumstances, with what purpose, etc., a discourse is enacted) are

added, in Vaugelas's reasoning, to any treatment of *consuetudo*.

Indisputably, the primary aim of Vaugelas was to record usage. He wrote his observations on language in bits and pieces and decided to publish them in random order, so as to make clear that his book would be in no way a "Dictionary" or a formal "Grammar." Furthermore, in a famous statement, he considers that what he gives to the public is bound to last a maximum of 30 years. In his opinion, language renovates itself every 20 or 30 years.

His work has been interpreted in very different ways. His attitude has been opposed by some commentators to the "rationalist" approach of Port-Royal. On the contrary, some have seen in Vaugelas a grammarian looking for order, who did not hesitate to correct good usage to make a more regular construction. In fact, throughout his *remarques* Vaugelas is more than often forced to accept changes in usage. This position is sustained by a fundamental belief in the regularity of usage. Thus, usage and reason can be reconciled.

Another important ambiguity in Vaugelas's work resides in the fact that, whereas his book can be seen as a vast empirical enquiry on *consuetudo*, the questions of *auctoritas* and *ratio* are always within reach. Vaugelas was a member of the first Academy. He played an active part in writing the Dictionary. As a matter of fact, his *Remarques* are full of observations on who first used a word. He continually assesses the chances of survival of a word. Some authorities were in his mind better than others in the process of maintaining "le bon usage" in use.

After his *Remarques* were published, two different types of reactions were expressed. Some like La Mothe Le Vayer or Dupleix thought that Vaugelas's attitude was too prescriptive, and contradicting what Dupleix called the "liberté" of the tongue. Others, conversely, considered Vaugelas's constant invocation of usage as a way of dismissing the possibilities of action. The "tyrannie de l'usage," as Arnauld put it, was considered as a plague for grammar, a way of giving good marks to intolerable mistakes. "Quelques soins que l'Académie Françoise veuille bien y donner, elle a bien de la peine à faire revenir le Public de ses erreurs. Et en vérité j'ose dire que tant qu'on donnera l'usage pour regle, il sera presque impossible de s'accorder sur l'arrangement des termes," wrote Grimarest at the beginning of the 18th century, acknowledging that the normative power of the Academy remained limited, confronted with a general submission to usage (Grimarest 297).

For rationalists, the ideology of usage proves to be unsatisfying. Two problems remain unsolved: the problem of "reason" and the problem of "authority." More and more grammarians think the search for *principes* more valuable than constant reference to usage. This shift in representations can be seen as a major reason why the 18th century has a much

bolder attitude toward neology than the 17th century, sometimes abusively considered as the age of norms in France.

In Vairasse's *Histoire des Sévarambes*, Sevarias himself has the power to create words and establish grammar. Someone has to rule over language. This dictatorial vision of language contradicts the discourse on language published in France at the time. A famous anecdote that can be found in Suetone says that for him a king was omnipotent, but did not have the power to create a word. This saying was repeated over and over, from Amyot's *Projet d'une eloquence royale* to Vaugelas and to the first edition of the *Dictionnaire de l'Académie* (1694). It was even repeated in a law treatise of the end of the 17th century. The language is hence closely associated with customary law. But is customary law enough? The question is raised by the linguistic fictions of the late 17th century. There seems to be a strong and rather utopian desire for authority at that time, and a major interrogation on what is called "institution." Who decides in matters of language? The political power or grammarians?

III. From the inventive to the imaginary

In this final part I will try to show that during the 17th century, one of the effects of the attention to usage was an inclination towards the imaginary rather than actual action.

Generally speaking, indeed, the word *inventive* can be connected with the general field of subjectivity. Today, the impact of subjectivity on representations and in language use is the object of extensive study and concern. It is common to estimate that a part of the activity of discourse is directed by subjectivity, and thus can be considered as a spontaneous inventive linguistic activity. In the 17th century, the role of the speaker in the production of language is subject to new speculations. As the relationship between language and the universe or the divine is no longer the centre of representations, as was the case in the Middle Ages, the capacity for human beings and even machines, to produce a language in itself, becomes a new field for investigation. It is well known that Noam Chomsky took much of his early inspiration (1966) from 17th century texts where the creative aspect of language use was stated, though sometimes in a quite ambiguous way. As a matter of fact, many of 17th century great philosophers or writers of fiction joined in their systems considerations on the mechanical aspects of speech production (see Seris 1995, especially 51-117) and considerations on the semiotic functioning of signs. These speculations can be intellectually fascinating, but can also prove of little use when applied to the consideration of real languages.

A "natural" consequence of the 17th century tendency towards the general or the abstract

can thus be the overestimation of some characteristics in actual languages. Generally speaking, from an epistemological perspective, we can apply the word *inventive* to the peculiar distortions that can be observed in linguistic descriptions when these theories prefer, rather than dutifully complying with attested discourse, to comment upon a different, slightly altered version that fits better with the theory or the ideal. This can be the third and last aspect of what could be called *inventive linguistics* during the 17th century. The problem of "rules" is one of the oldest in the history of grammar. In many grammatical descriptions, we observe that some linguistic features are opposed to others, and are often privileged. Some form of value is superimposed onto them. In that respect, the ideal (in the sense of the easiest) objects for linguists can be, more than fantastic languages, *idealized versions* of real languages. Once they have been rearranged and contemplated with magnifying glasses, natural languages can well become objects for inventive linguists.

French language, for example, differs from Latin, a long-time model and only inspiration for grammarians, in several aspects:

1. word order;
2. the use of ellipsis;
3. the presence of articles, absent from Latin;
4. the presence of "particles," apparently necessary in syntax.

All of these points represent challenges to grammarians used to deal exclusively with Latin. The article, for example, is difficult to explain if one uses only the reference terminology and methods of classical grammar. The French article does not come from the Latin language, as Scaliger noted. It is obviously not taken from the Greek either. So, it must have been *invented*. But obviously, there is no clear *author*. So is language itself a spontaneous inventive linguist? And why? Why does the French language use it? It is interesting to note that, in his fictional language, Vairasse wanted to remove articles, because they may be part of these useless categories that curiously abound in real languages, but should be absent from ideal languages. Conversely, according to Lamy (1715) a troop of illiterate people that would be released in the forest would be forced to find the path to articles while reinventing language, as articles help the discourse to be "clearer." And for Regnier-Desmarais, the "necessity" of articles to any linguistic system is so obvious, that there is no need to waste time while demonstrating it:

> Il ne s'agit point icy de montrer que l'Article est necessaire, par rapport à nostre
> Langue, & à toutes celles qui s'en servent : car à l'égard de celles qui le reçoivent,

l'usage suffit pour en establir la necessité. Il s'agit seulement d'examiner si de luy-mesme il est tellement necessaire qu'il manque en effet quelque chose à la perfection d'une Langue qui en est privée ; & cette question peut estre diversement agitée. (Régnier-Desmarais 151)

This special *value* given to some linguistic features of actual languages can sometimes lead to a possible final destination of inventive linguistics: ideological linguistics. In those cases, linguistic description is distorted, not only by theoretical biases, but by nationalist preconceptions. In some special historical contexts, a form of inventive linguistics can give birth to a whole set of values designed so as to support political decisions. Forged identities (national, ethnic, religious…) can sustain the way idioms are considered. John Joseph as well as Patrick Seriot have described some of these historical attempts to reconstruct the appearance of actual languages, to reshape history, morphology, grammar, so as to make languages comply with non linguistic factors.

And of course, we observe that there are frequent links between two or more of these aspects of inventiveness in linguistics. The political consequences of such an interweaving are that some idioms being judged more "perfect" than others, linguistics can become a justification for nationalism, colonialism or imperialism.

In this paper, we hope to have shown that "Inventive Linguistics," in the 17th century, can hardly be separated from the effort to build a rationalist vision of language. When reading purely fantastic or fictional linguistics of that time, we tend to see in these texts prefigurations of future similar literary achievements, based on imagination, enjoyment, and possibly transgression. While doing so, we probably forget that these texts had strong links with was thought of real languages at the time. For example, the readers of Cyrano in his time, could not but establish connections between what was described as the language of the *Grands* and social stratification at the time, or link what they read with contemporary speculations on signs.

There is always a utopian flavour behind all these "fantasies." These novels are not anticipation novels, in which an element of fear could nurture inspiration: they are other ways of expressing philosophy. Hence the surprise of the modern reader, sometimes, when s/he confronts the reality of older texts. To the modern reader, the works of Cyrano, despite their charm and inventiveness, seem crammed with philosophical pursuits verging on the scholarly disquisition. Philosophers, grammarians and novelists, if we accept this inappropriate partition, share a common goal: a better understanding of language as a vector of emancipation. Bacon's idea of an inventive linguistics was more lexical. The grammarians'

imaginative vision was more syntactic. The vision of former fantastic novelists included intriguing pragmatic parameters. On the whole, all of these efforts carried a value in themselves, but were also supposed to have a real effect on the use of language.

Nevertheless, as previously shown, in the case of French at least, in the 17th century the quasi-Darwinian view of usage prevented potential inventive linguists to make their dreams come true; the theory of *usage*, as stated by Vaugelas, is hardly compatible with any political ambition on language. Words seem to appear by themselves, unguided by any principle or decision; and the sole power of a grammarian seems to record them, once they have been used by reasonably authoritative speakers (the "bon usage"); hence the development of imaginary models applied on natural languages.

The attempt at Political Correctness of the *Précieuses* (another aspect of inventive linguistics) was mocked, and practically no new word was coined, even in sciences, during the 17th century. The only words which were considered inappropriate were thought so because they were outdated, disharmonious, or used only by the lower classes.

This contrasts with the image we have of Inventive Linguistics in the 20th century, after a long series of language planning experiences, when pure exotic fictions, or fantasies, often appear as ways of escaping from overly rational authoritative and intelligible languages. Indisputably, the 20th century has accomplished part of the program of Des Vallées or Leibniz by realizing purely abstract artificial languages deprived of common use such as the languages used in maths, logic, and computer engineering. The second part of the program namely the use by actual human beings of a different language, envisaged as disalienating— or differently alienating—because of its obscurity or uselessness, has obviously been left open.

Works Cited

Sources

CORDEMOY, Géraud de. *Discours physique de la parole*. P. Clair et F. Girbal (eds.), Paris : P.U.F., 1968. [Paris : F. Lambert, 1668]

CYRANO DE BERGERAC, François Savinien.. *Les États et empires de la lune et du soleil*. M. Alcover (éd.), Paris : Champion classiques, 2004. [1659 et 1662]

DESCARTES, René. *Œuvres*. Ch. Adam et P. Tannery (eds.), 13 vols, Paris, Cerf, 1897-1913.

FOIGNY, Gabriel de. *Les Aventures de Jacques Sadeur dans la découverte et le Voyage de la Terre Australe* [1676], P. Ronzeaud (ed.), Paris, STFM, 1990.

GRIMAREST, Charles-Honoré Le Gallois de. *Éclaircissements sur les Principes de la Langue Françoise*. Genève : Slatkine Reprints, 1973. [Paris : Le Gallois, 1712]

LAMY, Bernard. *La Rhétorique ou l'art de parler*. C. Noille-Clauzade (ed), Paris : Champion, 1998. [1715]

LEIBNIZ, Gottfried Wilhelm. *Opuscules et fragments inédits*. L. Couturat (ed), Paris : Alcan, 1903.

LEIBNIZ, Gottfried Wilhelm. *L'Harmonie des langues*. M. Crépon (ed), Paris : Le Seuil, Points Essais, 2000.

REGNIER-DESMARAIS, François-Séraphin., *Traité de la grammaire françoise*, Paris, Coignard, 1706.

VAIRASSE D'ALLAIS, Denis. *Histoire des Sevarambes*. Amsterdam, Etienne Roger, 1702, 2 vol. [Paris : Michalet, 1677 and 1678],

VAUGELAS, Claude Favre de. *Remarques sur la langue françoise*. J. Streicher (ed), Paris : Droz, 1934. [1647]

References

AUROUX, Sylvain (ed). *Histoire des idées linguistiques.* vol. II, Liège : Mardaga, 1992.

AUROUX, Sylvain, Jean-Claude CHEVALIER, Nicole JACQUES-CHAQUIN, Christiane MARCHELLO-NIZIA (eds). *La Linguistique fantastique.* Paris : Denoël, Joseph Clims, 1985.

AYRES-BENNETT, Wendy. *Vaugelas and the Development of French Language*. London: MHRA, 1987.

CHOMSKY, Noam. *Cartesian Linguistics*. New York: Harper & Row, 1966.

DOMINICY, Marc. *La Naissance de la grammaire moderne*. Bruxelles : Mardaga, 1984.

ECO, Umberto. *La Recherche de la langue parfaite*. Paris : Le Seuil, 1994.

PELLEREY, Roberto. *Lingua e Utopia nel Settecento. Un secolo di lingue perfette*. Bari: Schena, 1992.

ROBINET, André. *Le Langage à l'âge classique*. Paris : Klincksieck, 1978.

SERIS, Jean-Pierre. *Langages et machines à l'âge classique*. Paris : Hachette, 1995.

SIOUFFI, Gilles. « Le 'Génie de la langue française' »*, Études sur les structures imaginaires de la description linguistique à l'âge classique*. Paris : Champion, 2009, à paraître.

SIOUFFI, Gilles. "Les Ambiguïtés de la rationalité dans le discours linguistique : l'exemple de l'époque classique (XVIIe-XVIIIe siècles)". In *Actes du XXI° Congrès de linguistique romane*, Bruxelles (1998), Niemeyer, 2000, I : 139-149.

SIOUFFI, Gilles et Agnès STEUCKARDT (eds). *Les Linguistes et la norme. Aspects normatifs du discours linguistique*. Berne : Peter Lang, 2007.

YAGUELLO, Marina. *Les Fous du langage : des langues imaginaires et de leurs inventeurs*. Paris : Le Seuil, 1984.