A comparable-corpus based approach to the expression of obligation across English and French

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Abstract
A French-English comparable corpus of political discourse is used to investigate the expression of obligation across the two languages. The aims of the study are to look at the expression of obligation in the comparable genres in the two languages and to compare the contexts of use of deontic modal and semi-modal verbs, i.e. comparing their frequencies in contextual frames characterized by agentivity, polarity and event type. The focus is on the modal and semi-modal verbs *must*, *need to*, *have to*, *devoir* and *falloir*. While *have to* and *falloir* are more frequent than *must* and *devoir* respectively in the spoken languages, the reverse is the case in the political speeches. The five verbs are found to occur in similar contexts within and across the two languages in the genre in question. The study highlights the potential impact of genre on frequency and distribution and the interactions between genre-based patterns and ongoing change in the wider languages.

Keywords: deontic modality; obligation; contrastive genre analysis; comparable corpora; political discourse; French; English.

1. Introduction

The increased ease of creating genre-specific corpora, together with the recent 'revival' of contrastive analysis over the turn of the 21st century, have given a new impetus to contrastive genre analysis, shedding light on the functioning of genres across languages.

In his pioneering work on corpus-based genre analysis, Biber (1988:70) drew a crucial distinction between genre and text type. In essence, genres are defined by their sociocultural characteristics and text types by their linguistic characteristics. A genre is therefore to be conceived of, in an extensional definition, as the language actually used across events belonging to a recognized sociocultural event type. An event type in this context is some socially established, conventional task. It arises out of what Hyland (2009:211) calls "perceived repeated situations" and is characterised mainly in terms of form (the participants and the sequence of actions that compose the event), distribution (times, frequency, place) and purpose (objectives of the event). A text type, again extensionally, is a set of texts that share certain distributional

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patterns of linguistic features to a degree not found in other texts. This theoretical distinction between genre and text type is important in at least three respects. Most obviously, it is behind good practice in setting up the criteria for text selection when building genre-specific corpora; such criteria exclude linguistic features. A text belongs to a particular genre to the extent that its context of production and reception can be identified as an exemplar of some socially-recognized event type. Secondly, if it is in principle possible to independently establish genres and text types, we can discover to what degree they line up, how and to what extent a given genre is linguistically distinguished from others, or is homogenous or heterogeneous. And thirdly, of course, it is sociocultural parameters that provide the situational *tertium comparationis* that enables contrastive genre analysis to be done at all.

The present study focuses on the expression of obligation in the political speech genre across English and French. The aims are threefold: (i) to look at the distribution of the commonest expressions of obligation in the comparable genres in the two languages, (ii) to examine the contexts of use of these modal and semi-modal verbs of obligation, and (iii) in the light of the polysemy of the quasi translation equivalents *must* and *devoir*, to compare the use of these verbs in the genre.

Patterns of usage may be genre-dependent. Where there is a 'marked' or atypical distribution of modal markers in a particular genre, there may also be an atypical distribution in the 'equivalent' genre in another language. Testing such a hypothesis would require comparisons among a wide range of matched genres that are beyond the scope of this paper. We shall look out for discourse-pragmatic similarities across the two languages English and French in one matched genre, that of political discourse, to see how they interact with linguistic choice.

In the light of the above discussion of 'genre', it is clear that each genre belongs to a particular discourse community or 'community of practice', and that we cannot therefore strictly speak of a 'political-speech genre'. For the purposes of the present study, the term 'language genre' will be used for convenience to refer to 'equivalent' genres in different language communities.

2. Obligation markers in contrast

2.1 The notional area of obligation

This section considers the nature of obligation as an area of meaning, or semantic category, and the issues that arise in attempting cross-linguistic comparisons of the linguistic expression of obligation.

Obligation is traditionally studied under the rubric of modality. However, there is no general agreement among linguists on how to cut up the semantic space of modality into types of modality, or even on the boundaries of modality. A distinction is traditionally made between root modality, which pertains to the degree of necessity of the proposition in an utterance, and epistemic modality, which pertains to the degree of probability of the proposition (table 1). Other perspectives on modality have flourished, however, such as a division into internal and external modality, or into subjective and objective modality (v. van der Auwera and Plungian 1998, van der Auwera 2001, Palmer 2001, Heyvaert 2003:90ff; Depraetere and Reed 2006 provides a brief and useful summary). Likewise, within the traditional framework, there is no generally-agreed approach to the sub-categorization of root modality. Nevertheless, there is a fair consensus that it is useful to identify an area of modality that involves human-generated precepts about the desirability, or otherwise, of people bringing about particular states of affairs, and this area is usually referred to as deontic obligation and permission.[1]

[1] For convenience, we will use the term 'state of affairs' for the content of the proposition in the scope of the modality marker, 'situation' for a state of affairs presented as stative and 'event' for a state of affairs presented as dynamic, such as an accomplishment.

Table 1. The place of obligation in a traditional schema of types of modality

Root modality	Deontic necessity	Obligation
		Permission
	Non-deontic necessity	
	Dynamic modality	
Epistemic modality	Probability	
	Evidentiality	

From the perspective adopted here, obligation and permission can be seen as poles at either end of a continuum of desirability, stretching from moral necessity (obligatory) to moral acceptability (permissible). 'Moral desirability' can be thought of as a broad space ranging from legal requirements and widely accepted social norms to personal ethics, opinions and wishes. Obligation is then a scalar category, ranging from strong obligation to absence of obligation, and the other side of the coin is permission.

Deontic modality as a semantic category can be defined, according to Nuyts, "as an indication of the degree of moral desirability of the state of affairs expresed in the utterance, typically, but not necessarily, on behalf of the speaker" (2006:4). The 'deontic source', i.e. the creator of the obligation, has traditionally been considered an important parameter in modality studies (v. Lyons 1977:825ff), the distinction between speaker-created or 'internal-source' obligation and speaker-reported or 'external-source' obligation being potentially reflected in the linguistic expression. The speaker may identify more or less with the obligation expressed by using a more subjective or a more objective modal expression. This has often been applied to the use of *must* (subjective/speaker-source) on one hand and *have to* (objective/external-source) on the other. But the distinction is often blurred and its correlation with these lexical items is weak.

For van der Auwera and Diewald, the investigation of "which markers express which meanings and why", and the discovery of how much variation there is across languages is the most important reason for studying modality (2012:123).

2.2 The expression of obligation in English and French

Obligation in both English and French is semi-grammaticalized, being typically expressed by a range of grammatical and lexical means, most notably modal auxiliaries, semi-modals or modal verbs, modal adjectives and adverbs, as well as by imperatives and speech act verbs of the type *demand* or *require*.

Obligation, as seen above, stems ultimately from someone's desire or will that some state of affairs (event or situation) be (or not be) realized, and it therefore concerns unrealized situations, especially, arguably exclusively, future ones. As Lyons points out, "there is an intrinsic connexion between deontic modality and futurity" (1977:824). Once the desired action or event is realized, the modality is lost. A distinction is to be made, then, between an affirmation of obligation and a deontically modalized proposition of obligation. This distinction is partially grammaticalized in English by the choice of verbal expression, as can be seen in the following example constructions: [Subject *had to* V] (affirmation, past), [Subject *ought to have* V-en] (counterfactual, past) and [Subject *must* V] (deontically modalized, future). But there is no clear-cut correspondance between linguistic expression and the realized/unrealized divide. In French, the distinction may be made by the choice of verbal form, as can be seen in the following example constructions: [Subject *a dû* V]' (affirmation, past), [Subject *aurait dû* V] (counterfactual, past) and [Subject *doit/devra* V] (deontically modalized, future).

A major difficulty in contrasting expression of modality across languages is that of maintaining a coherent notional *tertium comparationis* (TC). The natural TC in this case is the notional space of deontic obligation, but, as is clear from the discussion above, the domain lacks clear-cut boundaries. First, both the more grammatical (e.g. modal verbs) and the more lexical expressions (e.g. modal adjectives) most closely associated with obligation tend to range over other domains too, and so are potentially ambiguous or vague. Such vagueness is often exploited by speakers to save face, or to implicate something without committing themselves. Second, speakers can employ expressions having as yet scant 'obligation' sense at all, but which in context can suggest the imposition of an obligation. This may be from considerations of politeness: expressing an obligation can be face-threatenting, so that a speaker may choose to use a weak-obligation expression, a neutral one or

even a permissive, for what she perceives as an obligation. Examples include such constructions as, in English, *be for <SOMEONE> to + V*, *involves V-ing*, *the time has come to +V*, and similarly in French *à <QUELQU'UN> de +V* (roughly 'up to <someone> to V'), *il s'agit de +V* ('it is a matter of V-ing'), *le moment est venu pour +V* ('the moment has come to V'). An example of this kind of inferred obligation is given in (1).

(1) *L'avenir consistera pour l'Europe à assumer des responsabilités difficiles.* [Alliot-Marie 2002]
'The future for Europe will consist of taking on difficult responsibilities.'

Depending on the contexts and the expressions, the 'obligation' implicatures can be strong; this situation, of course, can presage incipient grammaticalization of lexical constructions into markers of modality. Within deontic obligation, distinguishing internal from external obligation is especially tricky; in both English and French the same constructions serve for both, and the source of the obligation tends to remain vague.

This paper focuses on the 'central', semanticized modal markers. The aim is to look at high-frequency verbal expressions of obligation in each language and to examine their distribution in the texts, with a view to comparing the ways in which some semantic space is evoked by the verbs in each language genre, and the ways in which the aims of the speakers may be reflected in the linguistic patterns of the genre.

The high-frequency verbs most closely associated with obligation are, for French, *devoir* and *falloir* and for English *must, have to* and *need to*. All of them are also very frequent in the political speech language genres sampled here. The conceptual space occupied by these five verbs is wide; that is, they can all express a range of contiguous modal meaning and lend themselves to wider or narrower pragmatic interpretations depending on context. Occurrences that correspond solely or mainly to deontic obligation, therefore, are not always straightforwardly distinguishable in discourse. Figure 1 shows the polysemies of these five verbs by inserting them into van der Auwera and Plungian's (1998) semantic map of modality. (The arrows indicate the directions of probable diachronic developments.)

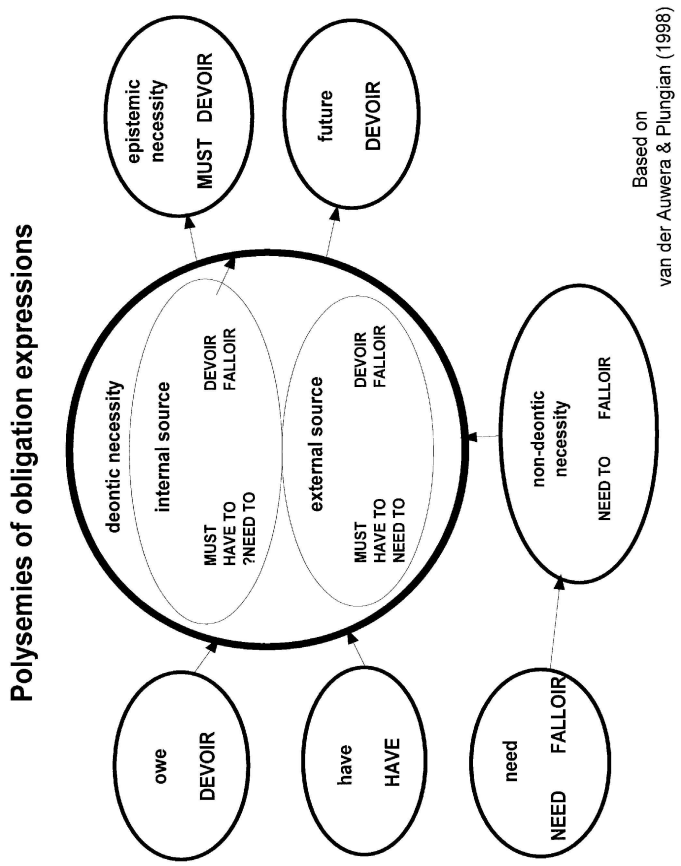

Figure 1. Notional areas of the five verbs, showing polysemies, partial synonymies and cross-linguistic mappings.

2.3 French 'devoir' and 'falloir'

French makes a basic grammatical distinction between the semi-modal *devoir* and the impersonal verb *falloir*, insofar as deontic *devoir* typically takes a human subject while *falloir* can only be used with dummy subject

il, as in *il faut que* 'it is necessary that' or *il faut* + V 'it is necessary to V' (originating from the sense 'want' as in 'be lacking'). But this personal/impersonal distinctioin does not carry over neatly to the semantics or the pragmatics of the two verbs. *Falloir* can be personalised by the use of one of two constructions: *il + OBLIQUE PERSONAL PRONOUN + faut/faudra* as in *il vous faut V* ('you have an obligation to V') and *il faut que + PERSON +*$V_{SUBJUNCTIVE\_MOOD}$ as in *il faut que Jean V* ('John has an obligation to V').

In usage, d*evoir* is said to be more solomn or more insistent than *falloir*, while *falloir* is more often used in 'subjective contexts' where *devoir* might be interpreted as epistemic or as expressing futurity (Larreya 2004:748-9). In fact, *devoir* has grammaticalized into a wide polysemous network of uses, so that ambiguous or vague uses abound. In addition to its non-modal sense 'owe', two main areas of usage beyond Obligation have developed: (i) epistemic modality (deduction, along similar lines to the development of English *must*) and (ii) future marking (roughly equivalent in sense to the English [*be [expected] to* V] or [*be due to* V] constructions).

Overall, deontic *devoir* is more associated with formal registers, while *falloir* is more colloquial: it is over twice as frequent in spoken language as *devoir* (Labbé and Labbé 2013).

2.4 English 'must', 'have [got] to' and 'need to'

By contrast, English *must* and *have to* are said to be distinguished along internal/external obligation lines, *must* being associated with speaker-created obligation, and *have to* with externally-imposed obligations (v. Palmer 2001:75). While *must* and *have to* are both deontic, *need to* primarily expresses 'objective' modality (non-deontic necessity) (Quirk et al 1985:226). This situation, however, is rapidly changing, so that the most salient fact about these obligation markers is the collapse of *must* over recent decades and its partial replacement by *have to* and *need to*.

This affects both written and spoken English, and both epistemic and root *must*.[2] For written English, Mair and Leech (2006) document a sharp

[2] The decline of *must* in spoken English seems to have affected the root and epistemic uses equally, root uses staying at around one third of all uses through the period 1960s – 1990s (Close and Aarts 2010).

decline in the use of *must* between the 1960s and the 1990s: -29% for written British English and -34% for American - while h*ave to* shows a very modest increase and *need to* increases in their data by a massive 249% for British English and 123% for American. Johansson (2013) shows that for American English *need to* has now overtaken *must* for obligation. Close and Aarts (2010) find a halving of the frequency of *must* in spoken British English 1960s-1990s.

It has been suggested that social factors, notably politeness, may be behind the decrease in the use of the 'subjective' forms such as *must* (Smith 2003). Yet the notion that *must* is subjective may need revising. Collins claims that "deontic *must* is more often used objectively than subjectively" (2009:37). His data suggest that 'objective' *must* conveys weak obligation, as in agentless passives "with an unspecified deontic source having no necessary connection with the speaker, where *must* merely expresses what is thought to be desirable" (2006:38). And Larreya (2004:743n) points out that *must* is particularly frequent in very formal registers such as political speeches. He suggests that announcements of the decline of *must* are therefore premature. But, as will be seen, it may be rather that the high frequency in political discourse and other formal registers is due to occurrences of *must* in particular construction types, and reflects a usage characteristic of the genre, resulting in local pragmatic effects.

In both languages, there is scope for a great deal of ambiguity and vagueness in the use of these modal and semi-modal verbs, due largely to wide-ranging polysemy in the case of French and to major ongoing change in the modal verb system in English.

3. The corpus

The study is based on a comparable corpus of political speeches from the United Kingdom and from France. The speeches were given by serving government ministers, including prime ministers and, in the case of France, presidents, of the countries. In each case, ministers belonging to governments of different political persuasions are included. The corpus is outlined in table 2.

Table 2. The composition of the comparable corpus of French and English political speeches

French part : 383,888 words	English part : 385,744 words
148 political speeches, 1-4 per speaker 53 speakers 1997-2002	132 political speeches, 1-5 per speaker 32 speakers 1995-2001

Although the corpus is balanced in terms of word count, there are fewer English language speeches, due to their being on average noticeably longer (2,922 words) than the French language ones (2,594 words). This is already an indication that there is no total match between the genres, and that the typical function of the political speech may vary across the different contexts.

Epistemic occurrences of *must*, *have to* and *devoir* were excluded. *Must* being modal only, comparison is restricted to deontic modal contexts (i.e. excluding *needed to, would have to, a dû*, etc.).[3] Discourse-marking and highly idiomatic uses, such as *I must say* or *dois-je le rappeler* were also excluded. For *devoir*, clear future-time uses were excluded; however, many uses were ambiguous between expectation and obligation and these were included on the grounds that an obligation reading was pragmatically possible in the context.

The figures for the occurrences of the relevant modal and semi-modal verbs of obligation that were extracted from the corpus using WordSmith Tools (Scott 2012) are given in Table 2. These are the occurrences that were analysed.

The occurrences were coded for the type of subject (of the proposition in the scope of the modal marker); voice; polarity; negative effect (i.e. whether the realization of the proposition affects anyone negatively).[4]

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[3] There is only one occurrence of the form *have got to* in the corpus, perhaps because of its association with informal speech.

[4] Politicians recycle sections of previous speeches into new speeches and such passages occur in the corpus. Where a whole sentence or clause complex is reused in a second speech, only one occurrence is counted; where a sub-sentential unit is reused in a different context, two occurrences are counted.

4. The expression of obligation in political speeches
4.1 Overall frequencies of the five verbs
Table 3 shows the raw and normalised figures for obligation occurrences in the corpus of all five verbs of obligation. These are the occurrences that are taken into account in the analysis.

Table 3. Raw and normalized (per 100,000 words) figures for the obligation occurrences in the corpus of the five verbs

English	n=	/10^5 words		**French**	n=	/10^5 words
must	697	181		*devoir*	1228	320
need to	435	113		*falloir*	512	133
have to	216	56				

The frequency of deontic (root) *must* is strikingly high, bucking the well-docmented trend described in section 2. It is more than ten times higher than that found by Close and Aarts (2010:176) for spoken 1990s English. Another salient finding is that *need to* is twice as frequent as *have to*. *Must*, then, is a preferred choice for political speeches, followed by *need to*.

Similarly for the French: while *falloir* is twice as frequent as *devoir* in spoken language, the reverse is the case for political speeches, where *devoir* is the favoured choice. These findings are consistent with those of Labbé and Labbé (2013) who, in a study of the use of modal verbs in the speeches of successive French presidents of the fifth Republic, found that *devoir* was on average considerably more frequent than *falloir*; and for the four commonest [modal + V] combinations, it was more than twice as frequent. The reverse tendency was found for spoken and literary French.

These frequencies may simply reflect a conservative style, but if the distribution of contexts also differs significantly from that of other genres, it may be seen as genre-specific rather than conservative.

4.2 The five verbs and speaker attitude
For French *devoir* and English *must*, obligation is by far the most frequent use: 90% of occurrences of *devoir* and 96% of occurrences of *must*. Again, this is markedly different from what has been found for

other registers of English. For written language, Collins (2009) found on average that one third of occurrences of *must* were epistemic, and for spoken language Close and Aarts (2010) found that only around 40% were root modality. The situation for *devoir* is complicated by the overlap betwen the obligation and future-time uses of the verb, so that many occurrences are ambiguous or vague between what is due to happen and what the speaker desires to happen. Only about 7% of occurrences were epistemic in the sense of speaker estimation of a truth value.

In their cross-linguistic study of obligation, Myhill and Smith rejected speaker attitude towards the proposition as an appropriate parameter for categorising obligation utterances in favour of what they term 'negative effect' (1995:247ff); that is, whether the carrying out of the obligation will have a negative affect on anyone. This proved also to be a more relevant parameter for the political speeches, where the contexts of *must* are overwhelmingly those where the speaker not only urges the rightness of bringing about the state of affairs, but where the state of affairs is couched in terms of universal desirability. *Have to* by contrast collocates with states of affairs that will affect some party negatively. This may be a 'necessary evil' externally imposed (2), or a speaker-created obligation that will be unpleasant for the agent to carry out (3). In about a third of cases (36%) the speaker can be interpreted as favourable to the obligation. This finding echoes what Myhill and Smith found for *have [got] to* in their late-twentienth century English drama data. They did not include *must* in their study, but found that negative effect was a significant parameter separating *have to* from other expressions of obligation. It is in the nature of political discourse to focus on the positive and the desirable and exclude the unpleasant; this in itself may go some way to explaining the relative infrequency of *have to* in speeches.

(2) *Anyone alleging a violation has to take his case to Strasbourg to obtain a remedy* [Irvine 1997]

(3) *These issues have to be addressed – to ignore them would stoke up fear* [Taylor 1996]

By contrast, *need to*, like *must*, almost always correlates with the speaker being favourable to the obligation (4), which is by implication external even where *we* is the subject (4b).

(4) a. *There are some old ghosts which need to be laid to rest* [Mowlam 1998]
b. We also need to sort out proper arrangements to appoint Special Envoys [Rifkind 1997]

In comparison, the French verbs cover a wider range of obligation types, and their contexts are rather more heterogeneous. Thus, *devoir* occurs in contexts of both very strong and very weak obligation, and in both speaker-created and external obligation, with much vagueness. The speaker is generally favourable to the obligation.

Likewise *falloir* gives rise to vagueness, but again the speaker is usually favourable to the obligation expressed. *Falloir* differs, of course, from the other four verbs in that it takes an impersonal construction with dummy subject *il*.

Negation, for the three verbs (*must*, *devoir* and *falloir*) that can be negated to produce a prohibition or obligation not to do something, is rare (less than 5%); speakers focus on the positive.[5]

4.3 Types of subject and agentivity

Deontic obligation is typically conceived of as agent-oriented, so that "examples of root *must* in English would normally be classified as prototypical examples of agent-oriented modality" (Coates 1995:57). Some source of obligation (typically the speaker) desires some agent to effect some state of affairs (typically a dynamic event). The prototypical example given by Coates is (5).

(5) *You must finish this before dinner*. [from Coates 1995:57]

[5] *Il faut bien*, which can be concessive and implies an unfavourable speaker stance, is rare: only one occurrence other than discourse markers of the type *il faut bien le dire* ('it has to be said').

The three elements that form the deontic obligation 'frame' are thus an implicit source of obligation (typically the speaker), an agent (typically the addressee) and a desired state of affairs (typically expressed by a dynamic verb phrase). In (5) these three elements are the speaker, 'you' and 'finish this before dinner'.

The aim of examining the types of subject is to look at how the agentivity of obligation is conveyed in political speeches. For all five obligation verbs, second person subjects and first person singular subjects are very rare. Four main types of subject account for the vast majority of occurrences. In order of animacy these are first person plural, collectivities (countries, institutions, companies, professions, and so on), agentless passives, and abstract or inanimate subjects (such as deverbal nouns, mental entities, measures, processes, time periods, and occasional metaphors). Figure 2 shows the percentages of each verb that are accounted for by these patterns. Figure 3 shows the same patterns as occurrences per 100,000 words.

A first person plural subject (6) is strikingly frequent across all five verbs, accounting for between 17% *(devoir)* and 49% *(need to)* of occurrences (fig. 2). For *devoir*, *must*, and *need to* 'we' represents between 54 and 74 occurrences per 100000 words (fig. 3).[6] For the impersonal verb falloir, occurences of il nous faut + V and il faut que nous + V are counted as 'we' subjects and account for over 20% of all falloir occurrences. The referent(s) of 'we' are rarely specified and by implication range from the speaker and their immediate entourage through governments, professions and socio-econimic sectors, countries, international fora, Europe and the world. This pattern with 'we' conforms to a typical agent-oriented obligation structure (self-obligation); it firmly includes the speaker in the source of obligation.

(6) a. *First we have to get agreement in the talks* [Mowlam 1997]
b. *We must achieve a sustainable consensus on pensions policy* [Harman 1997]
c. *We need to pursue agreement with the Russians* [Hurd 1995]
d. *C'est un vrai problème pour les citoyens européens, auquel*

[6] For the impersonal verb *falloir*, occurences of *il nous faut + V* and *il faut que nous + V* are counted as 'we' subjects and account for over 20% of all *falloir* occurrences (Fig. 2).

nous devons trouver des solutions. [Moscovici 2001]
'It's a real problem for European citizens, to which we must find solutions.'
e. *Il nous faut simplifier nos structures nationales pour les faire mieux coopérer au niveau européen.* [Fabius 2001]
'We need to simplify our national administrations to make them cooperate better at European level.'

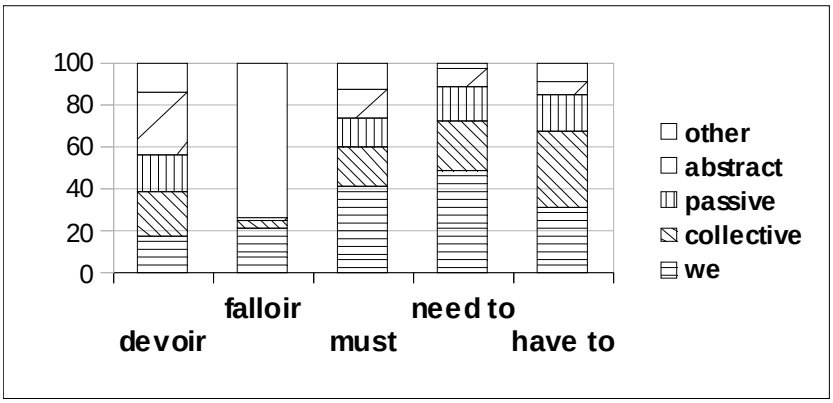

Fig. 2. Types of subject, %.

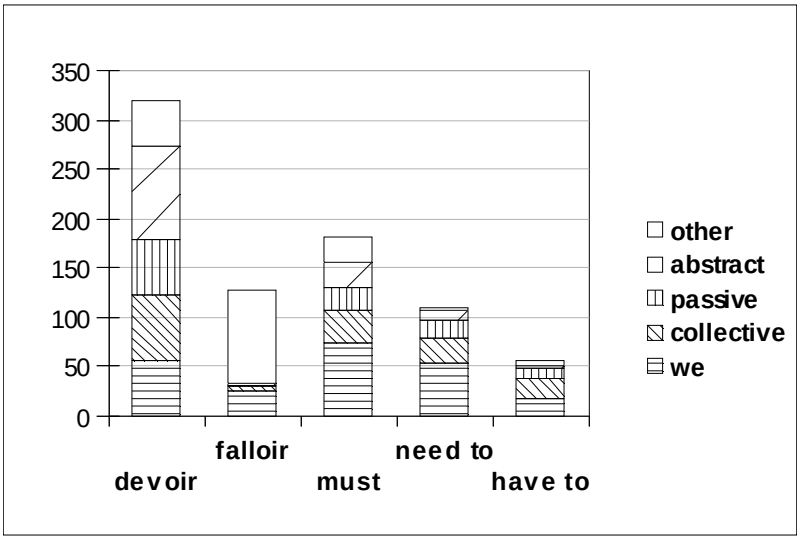

Fig. 3. Types of subject and frequencies per 100,000 words

The second most frequent subjects are collectivities. These include the political collective to which the speaker belongs (e.g. the government), the speaker together with his/her addresees, and/or wider social units such as sectors of the population, the country as a whole, Europe, or society generally. But there is a clear division between the unspoken source of the obligation in the speaker and the collective agent enjoined to carry it out. Excepting *falloir*, between a quarter and a third of occurrences of the five verbs specify a collective agent (7).

(7) a. .. *new democratic institutions have to be founded on agreement and consent. they have to command the support of both communities here* [Mowlam 1997]
b. *L'ESA doit rester au coeur du dispositif spatial européen* [Schwartzenberg 2000]
'The ESA must remain at the heart of European space activities.'

The third and fourth types of subject reflect two strategies for depersonalizing the obligation by removing the agent.

One is the use of the agentless passive construction (8).

(8) a. *Les problèmes doivent être évoqués ici, là où ils prennent leur source* [Sarkozy 2002]
'Problems must be raised here, where they originate'
b. *The fighting there must be brought to an end*. [Major 1995]
c. *First, the fighting needs to be brought to an end* [Hurd 1995]

The other is the use of an inanimate, abstract noun as subject of the modal verb. In a large proportion of the political speech occurrences of *must* and *devoir* not only is the source of obligation barely recoverable, but the agent is missing and unidentifiable from the context, and instead of a dynamic event, we find some situation. The data reveal three sub-types of abstraction.

One way of delinking the obligation from an agent is by nominalizing the state of affairs and using a copula or stative verb. Both *devoir* and to a lesser extent *must* lend themselves to this construction (9).

(9) a. *une meilleure coopération doit exister entre les acteurs* [Voynet 1999]
'better cooperation must exist between the participants'
b. *Cooperation in the fight against crime must be as instinctive as it is in foreign and defence policy* [Major 1994]

This strategy can result in an unusual form of redundancy (10).

(10) *L'exercise des missions de police doit également s'exercer au plus proche des citoyens* [Bartolone 1999]
'The carrying out of police duties must be carried out close to the public.'

A second sub-type of depersonalization consists of an abstract noun in subject position, such as an idea, process, rule, time or metaphor (11).

(11) a. *That is why an essential component of the future European construction must be flexibility.* [Major 1994]
b. *Le concept de police de proximité répond évidemment aux évolutions sociales, mais il doit avoir un contenu plus fort* [Sarkozy 2002]
'The concept of neighbourhood policing is of course a response to social change, but it must have a stronger component.'

The only element of the deontic obligation frame that is expressed is the verb itself which prompts the hearer to recreate an obligation scenario, filling in the missing elements. In (11a), hearers will infer a source as usual (such as the speaker and others) but also an agent (political actors, perhaps including the speaker and the hearers) as well as an event that can bring about the situation where flexibility is a component of the future European construction. The speaker's linguistic choice is to evoke obligation with *must*, but in an atypical *must*-construction, so that the usual frame can only be retrieved by pragmatic inferencing. The effect, and presumably the aim, is to depersonalize the utterance, so that the source can be everyone and the agent no one in particular. This is a face-saving strategy, perhaps, that does not involve abandoning the use of *must*. Similar strategies are also found with the other modal verbs.

The third strategy is to employ what looks like a reversal of semantic roles: rather than the usual Subject-Agent + Verb + Object-Patient we find Subject-Patient + Verb + oblique or evoked agent, as in (12).

(12) a. *the lead must come from the real experts* [Taylor 1996]
b. *cette question aussi devra trouver une réponse* [Sautter 1999]
'this question will also have to find an answer / an answer will also have to be found to this question'
c. *Et je demeure convaincue que la culture doit détenir une place particulière dans notre réflexion.* [Trautmann 1999]
'And I remain convinced that culture must hold a special place in our deliberations.'

In addition to the four main types of subject just outlined, there is a lower-frequency pattern in which the 'role reversal' involves an animate beneficiary. Sequences such as *devoir pouvoir* and *must be able to* or *have to be able to* are associated with this pattern, as in (13). In each case, the subject of the obligation verb is the beneficiary of the desired state of affairs and the unexpressed agent is pragmatically inferred.

(13) a. *People have to be able to protect their children* [Taylor 1996]
b. *We must instil confidence. The customer must be able readily to understand how to deal with government* [Freeman 1997]
c. *Le Haut-représentant désigné, M. Solana, doit pouvoir s'appuyer .. sur un Comité politiaue et de sécurité* [Chirac 1999]
'The High Representative designate, Mr Solana, must be able to be supported by a political and security committee'
d. *Toute personne doit pouvoir s'exprimer, créer et diffuser dans la langue de son choix* [Raffarin 2002]
'Everyone must be able to express themselves in the language of their choice'

Some 'beneficiary' uses are potentially ambiguous out of context, such as (14), where the modal verb comes to function in a way that recalls the mediopassive. This pattern is more frequent in the French data, rare in the English.

(14) a. *Le créateur doit conserver son lien intangible avec l'oeuvre une fois celle-ci diffusée.* [Jospin 1999]
'The creator must retain a tangible link with his/her work after it has been broadcast.'
b. *it is not enough to renew our political structures. The people must also be well-informed.* [Irvine 1998]

All of these patterns occur in other genres too, of course. But the parallels between the English and the French in their frequency and distribution are quite salient: 'prototypical', agentive expressions of obligation occur regularly only with the first person plural, where the speaker is part of both the source of obligation and the agent. Otherwise, non-agentive constructions of the four types outlined are preferred in both languages fairly consistently across different verbs of obligation (fig. 2).

Both French and English have, on the face of it, a more subjective modal expression for deontic obligation in *devoir* and *must*, and a more objective one in *falloir* and *have to*, which are both also associated with non-deontic necessity. In both language genres, speakers favour the use of the supposedly more formal and subjective expressions, but use them atypically in impersonalized constructions. The desired states of affairs tend to be presented in both languages through stative constructions, as situations to be brought about rather than as events to be accomplished.

5. Conclusion

Devoir in French and *must* in English are both associated with conservative or formal language, as seen in section 2. Both show unusually high frequency in the political speeches and both show distributions skewed strongly towards obligation, unlike the distributions in the wider language. Could it be the case that the very high relative frequency of *must* in the speeches at a time when *must* is declining is due to this formal register being conservative and slow to change? It looks unlikely. Perusal of some late nineteenth-century political speeches reveals a different pattern of use of *must* altogether: in addition to discourse-marking uses (*I must say*), *must* is used widely across epistemic (predictive) and logical necessity contexts as well as for obligation, with no apparent connotations of positive speaker attitude,

rather the opposite. Although this data is inadequate for firm conclusions to be drawn, a plausible hypothesis is that deontic *must* has undergone semantic shift (amelioration) and further subjectification (speaker-oriented desirability). Present-day usage of *must* in political discourse appears to be a recent, possibly genre-related development rather than a hangover from a period before *must* started to wane. Johansson (2013) found strong genre effects in American English, with *need to* almost twice as frequent as *must* in spoken informal language, but the order inversed for academic prose. The contextual overlap in the political speeches between *must* and *need to* may therefore reflect some colloquialization or modernization in the English speeches as *need to* takes over from *must* as part of a wider modal > semi-modal shift. Labbé and Labbé (2013) also found a strong genre effect for French presidents' speeches, which showed both less personalisation and a greater use of modal verbs than literary French. Our observation that *il nous faut* accounts for a fifth of *falloir* occurrences and appears in the same contexts as *nous devons* may also reflect a move towards a more colloquial style. At the same time it may be a way of emphasizing a strong obligation: the semantic expansion of *devoir* towards weak obligation and future time results in vagueness regarding degree of obligation.

Overall, we conclude that there are salient similarities in the ways in which each language genre handles the expression of obligation. Political discourse is characterized by a number of special features: it is often very carefully crafted, every nuance being analysed, and is designed for a wider audience than the immediate hearers; it aims to impress and persuade and may have a hortatory function; it has a ceremonial function that favours rhetorical routines; and above all it deals largely with unrealized states of affairs. Speakers are projecting a vision of realizable states of affairs and therefore have recourse to modal expression. It is perhaps not surprising then that the uses of the main deontic modal expressions in political speeches are similar across English and French. Such similarities are masked when register-diversified corpora are used to identify ongoing changes in the frequencies and distributions of linguistic patterns, or to compare some notional area or semantic field across two or more languages. It is therefore interesting to undertake contrastive-linguistic studies at a relatively fine-grained level of social context matching: a genre may have its own twist on an evolutionary

dynamic, stemming from the strategies and situational constraints guiding its speakers.

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