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SCALING DEONTIC MODALITY IN PARLIAMENTARY DISCOURSE

Abstract: *In the paper we apply the scalarity principle to deontic modality and classify it into strong, medium and weak, with the ends of the spectrum suggesting the highest and the lowest degrees of imposition and necessity. We study the two extremes, the strong and the weak deontic modalities, in two parliaments – that of the UK and of Montenegro. We identify the linguistic devices used to express these types of deontic modality in both parliaments, measure their frequencies and then, having normalised these to 1,000 words of the corpus, we compare them in the two parliaments. We also discuss the functions of the individual devices in their context and seek patterns regarding their use. The results point to a substantial use of deontic modality in the genre of parliamentary debate and its significantly larger presence in the UK parliament. In addition, this type of modality was mostly expressed via verbs, commonly conjoined with the we-subject, so as to reduce the speaker's responsibility in the imposition of obligation and save "face".*

Keywords: *strong deontic modality, weak deontic modality, scalarity, parliamentary debate*

Introduction

Among the most pervading discourse strategies employed in parliamentary discourse are those of intensification and deintensification – two discourse strategies used for the purpose of either strengthening, assuring and convincing, on the one hand, or hedging, assuaging and defending, on the other. An array of linguistic means are involved and exploited in these strategies – among them, deontic modality expressing various degrees of obligation and necessity which it entails, belongs to the commonly used instruments and modes. At the same time, this aspect of parliamentary discourse has been substantially underexplored and merits much more additional investigation across genres.

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1. Theoretical background

Our theoretical overview starts by defining deontic modality within the system of modality and the degrees thereof, whereas the second part of the paper is devoted to the investigation of deontic modality in political discourse. The last part of this overview presents a brief look at parliamentary discourse in general.

1.1. Deontic modality and its degrees

Modality is one of the few slippery notions employed in linguistics that resists any satisfactory formal definition. Nevertheless, we shall adhere to the account provided by Bybee and Fleischman (1995: 2) in an effort to provide a framework for the endeavour we aim to undertake:

„Modality ... is a semantic domain pertaining to elements of meaning that languages express. It covers a broad range of semantic nuances – jussive, desiderative, intentive, hypothetical, potential, obligative, dubitative, hortatory, exclamative, etc. – whose common denominator is the addition of a supplement or overlay of meaning to the most neutral semantic value of the proposition of an utterance, namely factual and declarative.”

Many divisions of modality have been proposed, but bearing in mind that the purpose of this paper is not to add to the theoretical argumentation on the type of modality in question, we shall simply employ a common and straightforward division following Palmer (1988), who defines three types of modality – namely, apart from epistemic modality (dealing with a speaker's evaluation of, degree of confidence in, or belief of the knowledge upon which an utterance is based), there are two additional types of non-epistemic modality: deontic modality (expressing obligations and necessity or indicating how the world should be according to certain norms, expectations or speaker's desire) and dynamic modality (expressing capability and competency, a factual possibility or necessity). Evidentiality (concluding based on evidence) is often considered part of epistemic modality.

Deontic modality has commonly been defined in terms of the concepts of obligation and permission, whereby it is usually noted that verbs with deontic meanings are often also polysemous in the modal domain, with dynamic and epistemic meanings in addition to the deontic ones (van Linden and Verstraete, 2011: 151). Much attention in all types of modality has been devoted to verbs in English, whereas other parts of speech have been neglected modality-wise. Nyuts warns that there is virtually no functional linguistic literature specifically devoted to deontic modality and that what has been written about it, is

nearly exclusively a 'by-product' in the context of analyses of the formal category of modal auxiliaries (Nuyts et al., 2010: 16). Additionally, the account of its realisation and functions in discourse is next to non-existent.

A distinction must be made between 'kinds' of modality (referred to above) and 'degrees' of modality (Palmer, 1988: 97). Scalarity in the domain of modality has first been specifically referred to by Horn (1972). Following Horn, the terms *strong* and *weak* have customarily been applied in the epistemic realm, but very rarely in the deontic one, which the authors do not tend to quantify. Verstaete (2005: 1401) argues that, while scalarity may be applied to deontic modality, the scale cannot be 'perfect', as the expressions of permission and obligations differ in two dimensions – commitment to desirability on the part of some authority and presuppositions about the willingness of the modal agent to carry out the action in question, which "disrupts the implicature mechanism that works well for the weaker and stronger degrees of epistemic modality". However, the imperfection of deontic scalarity has not stopped authors from applying it – thus, Finetel and Iatridou (2008) use the following terms: *strong necessity modals*, which imply that the underlying proposition is true in all of the favoured worlds, and *weak necessity modals*, which imply that the underlying proposition is true in all of the very best (by some additional measure) among the favoured worlds (Finetel and Iatridou, 2008: 4). Strong and weak deontic modality are the terms used by most authors (among others de Haan, 1997; de Haan, 2002; Jankowski, 2004; Haskell, 2013; Nicholas and Leech, 2013). What is common to all the studies is that the English verb *must* is used as a prototypical strong deontic modal, whereas opinions differ when it comes to weak modality. Namely, this depends on how many degrees are seen on the deontic scale – in this paper, we adhere to the scale containing three degrees and therefore involving the medium degree, following Huddleston and Pullum (2002: 175-177).

1.2. Deontic modality in political discourse

Deontic modality may be of particular interest in the study of political text as it "seeks human action, but also seeks commitment to bringing that action about" (McKenna and Waddell, 2007: 394) – the key concepts underlying and making politics. However, as stated above, it has not been explored much at the level of discourse. Still, papers which do deal with the subject suggest a significant presence of deontic modality throughout political genres and especially in comparison to other genres (see for example Maks and Vossen, 2010 – the case of Dutch election manifestos).

A study which merits special mention here refers to the paper authored by Dona Lillian (2008), in which mainstream conservative

and far right conservative political texts were compared in terms of the modality employed, whereby a huge difference was found when it came to the distribution of deontic modality. Namely, obligation was far more frequent in the far right conservative discourse. Based on the examples and findings from her corpus, Lillian argues that the more frequent expression of obligation is the result of the intention of the author to make the reader adopt his/her stance and that this is a feature of propaganda texts. A fair degree of obligation is expected in a persuasive text, however, its overuse is frequently associated with manipulation (Lillian, 2008: 12-13).

A similar conclusion was drawn by Dontcheva-Navratilova (2009) in her study of deontic modality in political speeches. The author notes that within political discourse, morality and legality, which are commonly expressed through deontic modality, are inevitably related to an ideological point of view which correlates with institutional beliefs and norms of conduct and a biased representation of a constructed discourse world in terms of 'right' and 'wrong' (Dontcheva-Navratilova, 2009: 17).

In most papers dealing with political discourse, however, the study of modality, including the deontic one, has been a sporadically used assisting methodology used to point to "ideological differences and expectations" (Bhatia, 2006: 187) and not more than that. Systematic overviews are absent from the literature on political discourse, including the literature on parliamentary debates.

1.3. Parliamentary discourse

Parliamentary debate is said to be a prototypical instance of deliberative genre, whose aim is to persuade the addressee to take action, although it is mixed with forensic genres (asserting guilt or innocence) and, to a somewhat lesser extent, epideictic genres (ceremonial discourse) (Ilie, 2004: 46). The genre is considered to be "an influential and authoritative genre" (van der Valk, 2003: 315) and its research is becoming ever more abundant (Gelabert-Desnoyer, 2008: 410), in the context of the increasingly significant role that politics plays in society.

In the research conducted so far, most of the attention has been devoted to the UK House of Commons (Ilie, 2003b: 73); however, more national parliaments have received attention as of late (among others – Ensink, 1997; Frumuselu and Ilie, 2010; Sauer, 1997; Elspass, 2002; Bijeikiene and Utke, 2007), whereby various aspects have been analysed, such as the use of key words (for example, Bayley, Bevitori and Zoni, 2004), various argumentation discourse strategies (for example, Van Dijk, 2000; van der Valk, 2003), and pragmatic aspects including politeness (for example, Ilie, 2004; 2005; David et al., 2009),

interruptions (for example Bevitori, 2004; Carbo, 2004), metadiscourse (Ilie, 2000; 2003), etc.

Deontic modality has not been studied directly within the context of parliamentary discourse, which is why this paper aims to provide a modest contribution to the study of the topic.

2. Data and methodology

The corpus for this study comprises the transcripts of first and the second day of the budget debate held in the Parliament of Montenegro in December 2009 and the transcripts of the first day of the budget debate conducted in the House of Commons in March 2010.

The phonographic transcripts of the parliamentary sessions in Montenegro are published online and are very true to their oral original. This is why we did not additionally edit the transcripts, having in mind that additional editing would have no bearing on the investigation on deontic modality.

The details of the corpus follow:

| | |
|------------------------------|--|
| Parliamentary session | Sixth sitting of the second regular session |
| Debate | Budget debate for 2010 |
| Corpus source | Authorised phonographic transcripts ² |
| Date | 15/12/2009 and 16/12/2009 |
| Word count | 45,435 |

Table 1 The Montenegrin corpus

However, editing on the basis of the video available on the website of the UK parliament was needed in the case of the House of Commons budget debate. The details of this part of the corpus follow:

| | |
|------------------------------|------------------------|
| Parliamentary session | Session 2009-2010 |
| Debate | Budget debate for 2010 |
| Corpus source | Hansard ³ |
| Date | 24/03/2010 |
| Word count | 61,255 |

Table 2 The UK corpus

The method we applied consisted of the following:

² Taken from: http://www.skupstina.me/cms/site_data/AKTI%202010-1/FONOGRAFSKI%20ZAPIS%206_sj_2_red_zas_15,16_i%2017_12_2009_.pdf

³ Taken from: <http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200910/cmhansrd/cm100324/debindx/100324-x.htm>

- identification of deontic modality tokens in a subsample of the corpus on the basis of the words and phrases that were found to convey deontic modality in the relevant literature (including modal verbs, modal adjectives, modal adverbs and modal nouns);
- determining the frequency of the tokens concerned, using the software AntConc 3.2.1® (Anthony, 2007);
- normalising the frequency, i.e. calculating the frequency per 1,000 words of the corpus so as to allow a precise comparison of the Montenegrin and the UK corpus;
- analysis of the tokens in the context, so as to determine whether they convey strong, medium or weak deontic modality. The problems and issues encountered at this point will be discussed in the analysis;
- comparing the results for strong and weak deontic modality in the two corpora;
- qualitative analysis of the most frequent tokens in the co-text they were used in.

The overall aim of the investigation was to determine whether more strong or weak deontic modality was employed in general, whether the Montenegrin or the UK MP's used more deontic modality of a certain type and what the reasons for that might be, as well as to identify the most frequent deontic modality markers (words and phrases) which the MP's from both countries used.

3. Analysis

The analysis section of the paper consists of three parts – strong and weak deontic modality in the Montenegrin part of the corpus, strong and weak deontic modality in the UK corpus, and the discussion section with the contrastive analysis of the results.

3.1. Strong and weak deontic modality in the Montenegrin parliament

We start the overview of deontic modality in the Parliament of Montenegro by dealing with strong obligations first, which are expressed through a limited set of linguistic devices – words and phrases that imply a full degree of obligation, duty, necessity, commitment, liability, need, etc. These devices can most easily be categorised by the part of speech they belong to, into strong deontic verbs, strong deontic adjectives, strong deontic adverbs and strong deontic nouns. Those found in our corpus are presented in Table 3, along with their raw and normalised frequencies:

| STRONG DEONTIC VERBS | Total | |
|--------------------------------------|------------|-------------|
| | RF | NF |
| morati | 72 | 1.59 |
| smjeti | 2 | 0.04 |
| obavezati | 2 | 0.04 |
| obavezivati | 1 | 0.02 |
| primorati | 1 | 0.02 |
| natjerati | 1 | 0.02 |
| ukupno | 79 | 1.74 |
| STRONG DEONTIC ADJECTIVES | Total | |
| | RF | NF |
| neophodan | 13 | 0.29 |
| obavezan | 5 | 0.11 |
| dužan | 4 | 0.09 |
| nužan | 2 | 0.04 |
| ukupno | 24 | 0.53 |
| STRONG DEONTIC ADVERBS | Total | |
| | RF | NF |
| neophodno | 8 | 0.18 |
| obavezno | 2 | 0.04 |
| nužno | 1 | 0.02 |
| ukupno | 11 | 0.24 |
| STRONG DEONTIC NOUNS | Total | |
| | NF | RF |
| obaveza | 30 | 0.66 |
| neophodnost | 3 | 0.07 |
| dužnost | 1 | 0.02 |
| ukupno | 33 | 0.73 |
| TOTAL STRONG DEONTIC MODALITY | 147 | 3.24 |

Table 3. Strong deontic modality in the Parliament of Montenegro

The total frequency of strong deontic modality in our Montenegrin part of the corpus is just 3.24 words per 1,000 words of the corpus. Our earlier research (Vuković, 2014) on the same corpus resulted in the finding that about 12 words per 1,000 words of the same corpus belong to the words expressing strong epistemic modality – which is four times as much. Our first conclusion is that the discourse of the Montenegrin parliament is more about expressing confidence than about imposing.

More than half of these devices fall into the group of strong deontic verbs, which seem to be central to expressing this type of modality. Furthermore, most of these modality rests on just a couple of words: the verb *morati* (have to/must) (NF 1.59), the noun *obaveza* (obligation) (NF 0.66) and the adjective/adverb pair with the same root *neophodan/neohodno* (necessary) (NF 0.47).

A look into the concordances of the most central strong deontic verb in the Parliament of Montenegro – *morati*, discovers the following most frequent collocations: *morati biti/da budem/-o iskren/-i*, *morati priznati/da priznamo*, *moram da kažem*, *morati glasati/da glasamo*, *morati mijenjati*, *morati učiniti*, *morati raditi/da radimo*, *morati dati*. The conclusion is that one part of these collocations belongs to metadiscourse, whereas the other part refers to collocations inferring that something must be done or changed, i.e. for suggesting policies and course of action.

We now turn to the weak deontic modality in this corpus.

Our investigation showed that weak deontic modality seems to be very little grammaticalised. We have already stated that the modal verb *must* is the prototypical representative of the strong epistemic modality. In the same vein, *should* is here taken to be the central member of the medium epistemic modality. However, when it comes to weak deontic modality, it seems that we are left without a prototypical representative which one could easily come up with. Instead, it appears that weak deontic modality is covered by a wider array of linguistic expressions. Namely, we may take weak deontic modality to be the same as volitive modality, which suggests that it is desirable that something be done, but not in the strong or explicit terms as with *should* or *must*. Volitive modality, thus, does not impose a real obligation, which is the case with strong and medium deontic modality (e.g. *You have to do this!* or *You should do this.*), but expresses desiderative meaning, which can be deconstructed through pragmatic implicatures (e.g. *I want you to do this / I hope you will do this / It would be good if you could do this*, etc.). These expressions contain a hedged instruction, whereby the speaker defends the negative face of the other, giving them an opportunity 'not to recognise' the obligation, if they choose to do so. The understanding of these expressions is contextually conditioned, whereas threat to face is far smaller compared to that expressed by true deontic modality (strong and medium).

Volitive modality is usually considered part of deontic modality (together with commissive and directive deontic modality) – a stance also held by Palmer in his earlier papers (Trbojević-Milošević, 2004: 26-27), however, he later corrected his views in saying that this type of modality is partly deontic and partly epistemic (Palmer, 2001: 13). In the literature there is no consensus – this modality is sometimes taken to be separate and sometimes considered part of deontic modality or even dynamic modality. In this paper, we adopt the stance which considers volitive modality part of deontic modality of the weak degree. The phrases used to express it may be considered a distant replacement for those expressing strong and medium deontic modality.

Table 4 summarises the results relating to the frequency of the verb *moći* (~may) in its uses of giving counsel and suggestions on

which course of action the collocutor is to take, as well as other volitive expressions with this meaning from our corpus:

| WEAK DEONTIC MODALITY | Total | |
|--------------------------|-----------|-------------|
| | RF | NF |
| moći | 6 | 0.13 |
| očekujem, očekujemo | 2 | 0.04 |
| nadam se | 2 | 0.04 |
| dobro bi bilo | 2 | 0.04 |
| bolje bi bilo | 2 | 0.04 |
| korektno bi bilo | 2 | 0.04 |
| poželjno je | 2 | 0.04 |
| predlažem da | 2 | 0.04 |
| volio bih, voljeli bi* | 1 | 0.02 |
| ne bih željela | 1 | 0.02 |
| bio bih najzadovoljniji | 1 | 0.02 |
| bilo bi kvalitetnije | 1 | 0.02 |
| najbolje je | 1 | 0.02 |
| pametnije bi bilo | 1 | 0.02 |
| Total | 26 | 0.61 |

Table 4 Weak deontic modality
in the Parliament of Montenegro

The only real modal verb on the list is *moći*; however, its frequency when it carries deontic meaning (giving advice, suggestions, recommendations and permissions) is very low. In our corpus, this verb was primarily used in its dynamic meaning and could therefore be rephrased with *be able to* or *have the possibility to*, pointing to the fact that something is dynamically possible. Thus, the dynamic meaning of the verb *may*, which is neutral when it comes to grading modality, seems to pervade the parliamentary discourse.

Another conclusion drawn from table 4 is that the list of volitive phrases is long, but that they measure very low frequencies.

In the phrases presented in the table, we find a few volitive verbs used in the first person (*očekivati* (expect), *voljeti* (love/like), *nadati se* (hope)), as well as copulative impersonal constructions featuring the verb *biti* (to be) and adjectives and adverbs mostly pointing to what is preferable, i.e. having positive meaning. It is no coincidence that the dominant verb form is the potential, which is distancing and hedging on its own, thus adding to weak modality. All of them have obvious modal meaning as they function as a sentence-frame, followed by declarative *da*-clauses (*that*-clauses):

- (1) DAMJANOVIĆ: ... Dobro bi bilo da to građani znaju... (It would be good that people know this...)

(2) KONJEVIĆ: ... nadam se da će Vlada dodatno povesti računa... (I hope that the Government will additionally take care...)

(3) PEKOVIĆ: ... Očekujem od predstavnika predlagača da nam posebno obrazloži... (I expect that the representatives of the petitioner additionally explain...)

(4) SEKULIĆ: ... mislim da bi bilo korektno da možda i oni sami predlože... (I think it would be right that perhaps they themselves propose...)

An interesting finding is that strong deontic modality (NF=3.24) is three times more present than its weak counterpart (NF=0.97) in the Parliament of Montenegro. Such results are in accordance with the ratio found for strong and weak epistemic modality in the same parliament, which is about 4:1 (Vuković, 2014).

The modal verb *trebati* (~should/need) is rarely used epistemically in this part of the corpus. Unlike *morati* (~must), which suggests that the obligation must be fulfilled in all possible scenarios, the verb *trebati* implies that the best scenarios are those in which it is fulfilled (Fintel and Iatridou, 2008: 119). Actually, sometimes this verb implies that the obligation will not be fulfilled at all (e.g. *Trebalu bi da se stidiš / You should be ashamed of yourself*). In relation to *morati* (NF=1.59), *trebati* is used twice as much (NF=3.3). Therefore, the MP's use more frequently neutral than strong obligations, stating what is desirable to be done, but not completely mandatory. In this way, they protect each other's face, i.e. face-threat is much smaller than it would be with the verb *morati* and *smjeti* (~can) used with a negation:

(5) LUKŠIĆ: ... smatram da direktori agencija treba da budu tu ... (I think that the directors of the agencies should be there...)

(6) DAMJANOVIĆ: ... ministar finansija... treba da zavede red u politici zarada... (the Minister of Finance... should bring order into the wage policy...)

(7) LUBURIĆ: ... Država treba da nastavi poboljšanje sveukupnog infrastrukturnog ambijenta... (The Government should keep improving the total infrastructural environment...)

The low frequency of weak deontic modality suggests that the MP's do not like to hedge the demands they present, i.e. if it is necessary to demand, they would rather present the demand as an obligation, either strong or medium, than as a possibility, desire or hope.

3.2. Strong and weak deontic modality in the UK parliament

Our analysis of deontic modality in the UK parliament starts with Table 5, which presents a list of the words found to convey strong deontic modality in our corpus, along with their raw and normalised frequencies.

| STRONG DEONTIC VERBS | Total | |
|--|------------|-------------|
| | RF | NF |
| need | 127 | 2.07 |
| have (got) to | 101 | 1.65 |
| must | 43 | 0.70 |
| cannot | 38 | 0.62 |
| be allowed | 2 | 0.03 |
| impose | 4 | 0.07 |
| force | 1 | 0.02 |
| total | 316 | 5.16 |
| STRONG DEONTIC ADJECTIVES | Total | |
| | RF | NF |
| necessary | 13 | 0.21 |
| needed | 3 | 0.05 |
| compulsory | 2 | 0.03 |
| bound | 1 | 0.02 |
| total | 19 | 0.31 |
| STRONG DEONTIC ADVERBS | Total | |
| | RF | NF |
| necessarily | 3 | 0.05 |
| total | 3 | 0.05 |
| STRONG DEONTIC NOUNS | Total | |
| | RF | NF |
| obligation | 7 | 0.11 |
| need | 10 | 0.16 |
| necessity | 4 | 0.07 |
| duty | 2 | 0.03 |
| total | 23 | 0.38 |
| TOTAL STRONG DEONTIC MODALITY | 361 | 5.89 |

Table 5 Strong deontic modality
in the UK parliament

The presence of this type of deontic modality is fairly greater in the UK parliament (5.89 vs. 3.24). Much of the difference can be accounted for by the use of verbs, whereas the differences in the use of

nouns and adjectives seem to be slight. The most frequent strong deontic verbs in the UK parliament are *need, have (got) to, must* and *cannot*, which alone account for 5.04 of the words per 1,000 words of the corpus.

We will also compare our findings with the results presented in the *Longman Grammar of Spoken and Written English* (Biber et al., 1999: 489) (Table 6):

Distribution of modal verbs across registers; occurrences per million words

each ■ marks c. 200 □ marks less than 100

| | CONV | FICT | NEWS | ACAD |
|--|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| permission/possibility/ability: | | | | |
| <i>can</i> | ■■■■■■■■■ | ■■■■■■■■■ | ■■■■■■■■■ | ■■■■■■■■■ |
| <i>could</i> | ■■■■■■■■■ | ■■■■■■■■■ | ■■■■■■■■■ | ■■■■■ |
| <i>may</i> | ■ | ■■ | ■■■ | ■■■■■■■■■ |
| <i>might</i> | ■■■■■ | ■■■■■ | ■■ | ■■■ |
| obligation/necessity: | | | | |
| <i>must</i> | ■■■■■ | ■■■■■ | ■■■ | ■■■■■■■■■ |
| <i>should</i> | ■■■■■ | ■■■■■ | ■■■■■ | ■■■■■■■■■ |
| <i>have to</i> | ■■■■■■■■■ | ■■■■■ | ■■■■■ | ■■■ |
| <i>(had) better</i> | ■■■■■ | ■ | □ | □ |
| <i>(have) got to</i> | ■■■■■ | □ | □ | □ |
| <i>need to</i> | ■ | □ | ■ | ■ |
| <i>(be) supposed to</i> | ■ | □ | □ | □ |
| <i>ought to</i> | □ | ■ | □ | □ |

Table 6 Use of deontic verbs in English
(taken from: Biber et al., 1999: 489)

In table (7) we will normalise the frequencies per 1,000 words, so as to obtain comparable results. We had to exempt the verbal form *cannot* as the results from the *Longman Grammar* cumulatively present the results for *can* (which is not deontically strong) and *cannot* (which is deontically strong). The values are given in approximations.

Generally speaking, we can note that there is much more deontic modality in the UK parliament than in general English, and in the English as used in literature, media and academic discourse, for instance (twice as much or even three times as much). This speaks for the language of parliament as being highly argumentative and strongly convincing.

| Strong deontic verb | NFL_{UKparliament} | NFL_{Gspoken} | NFL_{GLiterature} | NFL_{Gmedia} | NFL_{Gacademic} |
|----------------------------|-----------------------------------|------------------------------|----------------------------------|-----------------------------|--------------------------------|
| need | 2.07 | 0.2 | 0 | 0.2 | 0.2 |
| have to | 1.65 | 0.9 | 1.00 | 0.8 | 0.4 |
| must ⁴ | 0.70 | 0.80 | 1.00 | 0.4 | 1.2 |
| Total | 1.47 | 0.63 | 0.66 | 0.46 | 0.66 |

Table 7. Strong deontic verbs in the UK parliament and in various registers

Smaller differences can be noted in the use of the modal *must*, whereas the greatest differences are found in the use of *need* and *have to*.

Need is mostly found with the subject *we*, which is used inclusively (designating the political party and the state as one category), and that it is most often followed by the infinitive or *that*-clauses (in our debate to project the UK's needs and plans):

- (1) GARDINER: ... It is important because we need to see is young people getting training, skills and qualifications in those sectors, which are going to represent the jobs of the future...
- (2) TAYLOR: ... And we need to encourage more people to take those scientific subjects, which means offering better teaching in the schools that are the feedstock of our higher education institutions...
- (3) DARLING: ... Secondly, we need to identify savings across every part of the public sector by delivering services more efficiently...
- (4) McFALL: ... At the moment, basic bank accounts for such people are meaningless, and that's why we need to do more work – so simply having a basic account is not just the answer...

On the other hand, *have to* is also frequently used with the subject *we*, but also with the subject *I*, almost always in the metadiscourse phrase *I have to say*:

- (5) HEATH: ... I hope we are coming out of the recession, but I have to say I see the scars left behind...
- (6) MARRIS: ... But I have to say, I was somewhat heartened by the Chancellor's predictions today...
- (7) GARDINER: ... I have to say that for the first time ever I agreed with some of the things that the right hon. Member for Hitchin and Harpenden (Mr. Lilley) said, as well...

⁴ *Must* which expresses obligations and necessity.

An obvious pattern is that the strongest deontic modality is found with the subject *we* – probably to deflect from personal responsibility in the obligations and impositions expressed.

As implied before, deontic modality can be represented as having three degrees on the scale of strength of the obligation/necessity it implies – the strong, the medium and the weak. Whereas *must* is prototypically representative of the strong, *should* would represent the medium one, which is more neutral as it allows more space for the obligation not to be met, and *can* would be prototypical of the weak modality, as it is used to give suggestions, advice and permissions. Of course, the weak deontic modality would also include the volitive modality, as explained above. What follows is Table 8, which gives an overview of the phrases and words found to convey weak deontic modality in our corpus:

| WEAK DEONTIC MODALITY | Ukupno | |
|--------------------------|-----------|-------------|
| | SF | NF |
| can | 11 | 0.18 |
| I hope | 8 | 0.13 |
| could | 7 | 0.11 |
| may | 5 | 0.08 |
| I would like | 2 | 0.03 |
| I/we want | 2 | 0.03 |
| I would be grateful if | 1 | 0.02 |
| I suggest | 1 | 0.02 |
| I would suggest | 1 | 0.02 |
| I am suggesting | 1 | 0.02 |
| What I have suggested is | 1 | 0.02 |
| Total | 39 | 0.63 |

Table 8. Weak deontic modality in the UK parliament

The frequency of the weak deontic modality in the UK parliament is more or less at the same level as in the Montenegrin parliament, i.e. it is very low. We find a limited number of linguistic devices used to these purposes, even though it is a well-known fact that English has a very developed system of indirect commands (phrases such as: *why don't we*, *If I were you, I would*, *don't you think*, *I recommend/advise* etc.). Here we must add that with the indirect commands, only the locution is weak, whereas the illocution, depending on the context, may be even the most direct command. Any division in terms of scalarity does not mean much outside the context, as the same linguistic devices may be used to entirely different purposes in different contexts. In our uniform parliamentary context, the weaker locution was generally chosen as it

reduced the chances for it to be attacked or countered by the other MP's.

Another reason for the low frequency of weak deontic phrases was the fact that many of these expressions are commonly used with the subject *you*, and the direct addressing of other MP's in the UK parliament is not very common as a matter of convention.

Three modal English verbs can be used in this meaning – *can*, *could* and *might*, i.e. two, if *could* is considered as part of the paradigm of *can*. These verbs are generally used to give advice and suggestions or ask for a permission. What follows are examples of the use of these verbs with the weak deontic meaning:

(8) BELL: ... If we really want to understand Conservative party philosophy, we can look across to the United States and the Republican party in America, which has fought tooth and nail to prevent a national health service of some description from entering their country and economy...

... But, if I may use a phrase used by a Conservative Chancellor in another capacity, a "price well worth paying" to save the nation from what would have been a very, very serious depression...

(9) TODD: Perhaps he could develop this point a little further and set out his view of our obligations to the shareholders who are not the taxpayer in the two institutions he is suggesting a direction for.

A few *verba voluntatis*, i.e. verbs of will, are also found on our list (*I hope, I would like, I/we want, I would be grateful*), mainly coupled with the subject *I*. In the table we also find the verb *suggest*, with the same subject:

(10) TYRIE: ... I very much hope that in the next few weeks, when we have, I hope, a new Government, we will get back to calling the salaries of teachers and doctors, for example, expenditure rather than investment...

(11) JONES: ... I am sorry that the Chancellor did not mention the launch of a people's bank, as the press suggested he would. I very much welcomed the nationalisation of Northern Rock; it was the right thing to do, and was opposed by the party opposite. It should be used as way to relaunch the mutual sector in financial services, and I would like a people's bank developed in the Post Office...

(12) REDWOOD: ... What I would suggest is that instead of mouthing the words "countercyclical regulation" but doing the opposite, they should try some countercyclical regulation...

We end the paper with the conclusion which summarises our main findings.

4. Discussion and conclusion

The scalarity principle seems to be applicable to deontic modality. Although it is much more associated with epistemic modality, deontic modality also seems gradable. Strong deontic modality seems to be more easily distinguished, whereas the latter end of the deontic spectrum, the end belonging to weak deontic modality, is more of a gray area. Our analysis of the corpus pointed to the need to include volitive modality as part of the weak deontic modality.

In terms of the parts of speech used to express deontic modality, we find that in both languages it was mostly expressed via the verbs. Particularly interesting was the observation that strong modality was more frequently associated with the plural *we* subject, so as to deflect responsibility onto the group rather than attach it to an individual, which would be the case with the *I* subject.

As noted above, there was much more deontic modality in the UK parliament than in the Montenegrin. At this point, given the limitation of our study, we cannot account for the reasons why, but the answer might have to do with the cultural scripts (Goddard and Wierzbicka, 2007), present in the UK and Montenegro. Previous studies showed that very present deontic modality could be indicative of manipulation, as the receiver of the message is “compelled” to adopt the view of the sender, which is common in propaganda. Given the fact that parliamentary debates are a political genre, argumentative in nature, the high presence of deontic modality in our two parliaments did not surprise.

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