Disentangling evidentiality and epistemic modality in Romance

Mario Squartini

Dipartimento di Scienze del Linguaggio e Letterature moderne e comparate, Università di Torino, Via S. Ottavio 20, 10124, I-Turin, Italy

Received 6 February 2003; received in revised form 7 April 2003; accepted 7 April 2003

Abstract

In this article the semantics of the French, Italian and Spanish modals devoir/dovere/deber + infinitive will be analyzed, claiming that they not only express epistemic and deontic modality, but also reportive evidentiality. Comparing the three languages, it will be demonstrated that the reportive usage of devoir/dovere/deber + infinitive variously combines with the epistemic degree of assertiveness, thus providing relevant data in order to unravel the interaction between evidentiality and epistemic modality.

© 2003 Elsevier B.V. All rights reserved.

Keywords: Epistemic modality; Evidentiality; Romance modals

1. Introduction

The semantic relationship between evidentiality and epistemic modality is mentioned in Dendale and Tasmowski (2001: 341) as the first entry in their list of unsettled questions in the recent literature on evidentiality. Despite the fact that a distinction between marking the evidential source of the information and signalling the epistemic degree of certainty seems to be conceptually self-evident and also
empirically solid (De Haan, 1999; Comrie, 2000: 2), in most cases interpreting empirical data turns out to be not straightforward. As noted by Dendale and Tasmowski (2001: 345) the basic problem is that in several languages grammatical markers can be found showing different forms of cluster of the two notions, thus blurring the conceptual distinction. According to van der Auwera and Plungian (1998: 85–86), the cluster does not cover the whole domain of evidentiality, involving inferences but not reports. In this respect, Mortelmans (2000) has demonstrated that the interplay of evidentiality and epistemic modality can be more easily disentangled in the German reportive modal sollen, than in the inferential müssen. Nonetheless, the evidential interpretation of reportive markers is not less debated than the status of inferentials. Dendale and Tasmowski (2001: 345) refer to the French Conditional in a sentence like Il y aurait de nombreuses victimes (‘The are, it is said/it seems, many victims’) as a relevant case where the cluster of the reportive/quotative evidential meaning and the low degree of assertiveness is quite prominent. An additional problem posed by the French Conditional is that other hypothetical and temporal functions coexist with the evidential and epistemic uses (Dendale and Tasmowski, 2001: 345; see also Dendale, 1993). Due to the cluster of different functions the interpretation as epistemic or evidential turns out to be an arbitrary choice, ultimately depending on a priori assumptions. Just to stick to the French Conditional, its modal status has been divergently interpreted: While Lazard (2000: 214; see also Lazard, 2001) explicitly denies the import of evidentiality in the semantics of what he calls ‘l’emploi dubitatif du conditionnel (le président serait malade)’, the same form has been interpreted as a consistent quotative maker by Palmer (1986: 73). In fact, the coexistence of the two functions in the same form makes it hard to assess their mutual relationship, but failing to recognize the different roles of the two categories involved is tantamount to missing interesting generalizations on the nature and limits of the interaction between them. With this in mind, more insight could be gained by data in which the evidential nature of the information and the epistemic commitment on the degree of certainty can be kept more clearly distinguished. In what follows it will be claimed that the comparative appraisal of French, Italian and Spanish devoir/dovere/deber ‘must’ + infinitive provides empirical support for disentangling the two dimensions under scrutiny. In addition to an inferential use devoir/dovere/deber + infinitive also have what will be claimed to be an evidential reportive function. What is mostly relevant is that the latter function shows different degrees of interaction with the epistemic commitment on the degree of certainty, demonstrating the independence of the two dimensions, even in languages where they are closely intertwined.

2. French devoir + infinitive as reportive marker

As is the case with the English modal must, two main functions, deontic (1) and epistemic (2), have been traditionally described in the semantics of its French counterpart devoir + infinitive (Huot, 1974; Pottier, 1976; Sueur, 1979):
Epistemic modality has been traditionally considered as also comprising the so-called ‘futural’ usage of devoir + infinitive (3), expressing ‘probabilité, incertitude liée au futur’ (Huot, 1974: 14–15).

In contrast to the traditional interpretation of (3) as epistemic, Kronning (1996: 63–66, 115–118, 2001a,b) has recently analyzed it as expressing ‘alethic necessity’, which traditionally only comprises cases such as (4).

Unlike Dendale (1999, 2000), who emphasizes the similarity between (3) and the inferential usage of devoir (2), Kronning (2001a: 75–76) highlights their different contextual restrictions (what Kronning calls ‘propriétés discursives’). While the inferential devoir (5) is compatible with the contextual expression of direct evidence on which the utterance is based (prémisses in praesentia), the ‘futural alethic use’ (6–7) can only be based on prémisses in absentia:

Actually, these tests can be considered as not only showing discourse properties but intrinsic semantic restrictions on the verb form as well. From a semantic point of view the tests in (5)–(7) can be interpreted as prima facie evidence that devoir +
infinitive has both inferential and reportive functions, which are, according to the results of the tests, mutually exclusive. What Kronning calls prémisses in praesentia are perceptual data on which the speaker bases an inferential process, while the prémisses in absentia (see also Dendale, 1999: 21) are nothing else than an external source (D’après les prévisions météo), which is reported by the speaker.

The reportive nature of devoir + infinitive is corroborated by the parallel behaviour of the French Conditional, a form which, as mentioned above, also has a reportive function. Elaborating on Kronning’s tests in (5)–(7), it can be shown that the Conditional is not admitted in the inferential context in (8), parallel to (5)–(6), while being acceptable when the reportive interpretation is signalled by an external source (9).

(8) Le ciel se découvre. *Le temps s’améliorerait ‘The sky is clearing. The weather must be getting better [get better.COND]’
(9) D’après les prévisions météo, le temps s’améliorerait demain ‘According to forecasts, the weather will get better [get better.COND] tomorrow’

Kronning suggests that the futural usage of devoir + infinitive expresses a very peculiar kind of alethic necessity, which should be considered as only valid in the “univers modal restreint convoqué par devoir dans cet énoncé” (Kronning, 2001a: 73–75, 2001b: 107–109). In the reportive interpretation proposed in the present paper the restricted modal universe or “scenario” can be derived from the requirement of an external source vouching for the factuality of the information. What is basically correct in Kronning’s analysis is the distinction between what I call the reportive (5) and the inferential (7) usage of devoir. As underlined by Kronning (2001b: 108–109) only the latter can be considered as genuinely ‘epistemic’, intending by that the downgrading of the factual commitment. By contrast, Dendale (1999, 2000) insists on the evidential nature of devoir + infinitive in (5) as well as in (7), assuming both uses as instances of inferential modality (see also Dendale, 1994). While accepting Dendale’s conclusion on the evidential nature of these cases, in the present article it will be claimed that they are not both inferential. The term ‘inferential’ will be restricted to those cases such as (5) where, on the basis of external evidence, the speaker draws conclusions on a given state of affairs. On the other hand, (7) will be considered as reportive, provided that the speaker bases his/her utterance on previous knowledge, reporting that some given state of affairs was planned or supposed to happen.

The non-inferential nature of (10), which is parallel to (3) and (7), has been already pointed out by Salkie (1996), but his solution is not compatible with the reportive interpretation proposed here. Noting the relationship between French devoir and English should, Salkie (1996: 388) seems to suggest that (10) can be considered as expressing prediction:

(10) Une commission technique est arrivée le 6 août à Mogadiscio qui doit remettre son rapport le 15 de ce mois
‘A technical commission arrived in Mogadiscio on August 6, which should report back [must. PRES report back] on August 15’

Responding to Salkie (1996), Dendale (2000) has empirically demonstrated that the distinction inference/prediction cannot be applied as such to French devoir, also noting that interpreting inferences and predictions as two distinct forms of evidentiality is not straightforward. Whatever the interpretation should be, the relevant point here is that the term ‘prediction’ suggests that the speaker can be considered as the source of the information, while in (10), as in (3) and (7), the speaker is only reporting what is expected to happen, attributing it to an external source.

2.1. Devoir + infinitive as future marker?

The reportive usage presented in Section 2 has been traditionally described as a futural usage of devoir (Imbs, 1960: 58; Huot, 1974: 14–15) and the relationship to future temporal reference is also recognized by Kronning (1996: 115–118), who labels it ‘alethic future’. In fact, the contrast between (5) and (7) might also be interpreted as a temporal one, the inferential usage in (5) having present temporal reference, while the reportive usage (7) is futural. In addition, Fleischman (1982: 145–148) underlines the diachronic role of devoir + infinitive in the grammaticalization process of Romance future markers, considering the French construction as a “promising candidate for the next future auxiliary”. Now, the question arises whether the form should be considered as a temporal marker rather than modal.

The synchronic description of devoir + infinitive provided in Fleischman (1982: 145–146) would also lead to the conclusion that the construction can be more consistently described as a marker of “scheduled future”. Fleischman (1982: 145) notes that in many contexts, as in (11), devoir + infinitive still maintains its original obligative meaning “in attenuated form”, having “the added sense of something decided or agreed upon in advance, i.e. scheduled”.

(11) Je dois dîner avec Joseph la semaine prochaine
    ‘I’m to have dinner [must. PRES dine] with Joseph next week’

Nonetheless, there are several reasons why the interpretation as evidential marker should be preferred, from a general typological point of view and in a more restricted sense, deriving from the actual temporal properties of the French construction. Indeed, scheduling is documented among the functions associated with a future gram in a cross linguistic perspective (Dahl, 2000: 311).1 Nevertheless, the semantics of a prototypical future gram is described in Dahl (1985: 108) as “involving at least the three features intention, prediction, future time reference”. With respect to this

---

1 Scheduling is tested in Dahl’s (2000: 311) questionnaire by means of the following eliciting context:

(i) [According to the timetable] the train leaves at noon.
definition the French construction *devoir* + infinitive turns out to lack at least two of these major features (intention and prediction).

Looking more carefully at the behaviour of *devoir* + infinitive it can also be concluded that this form also lacks the third semantic feature mentioned in Dahl’s definition (*future time reference*) as well. Not all the occurrences of *devoir* + infinitive that can be considered as expressing reportive modality also have a futural reading. Consider (12), where the Imperfect of *devoir* refers to a past situation that cannot be defined as future in the past. In order to get a future in the past reading a past reference time should be provided, with respect to which the situation in (12) could be considered as posterior.

(12) Le Parlement *devait se réunir*, vendredi, pour tenter de trouver une issue à la crise (*Le Monde*, 13.1.2001: 2 [samedi])

‘The Parliament was to meet [must.impf meet] on Friday, to try to find a way to get out of the crisis’

Assuming that the time in which the reported situation was agreed upon or scheduled functions as past reference time, (12) might still be considered as a future in the past. Such an analysis, albeit conceivable from a diachronic point of view, is not tenable in a synchronic sense. The future in the past is a plausible original diachronic context giving rise to such a reportive usage of *devoir* + infinitive, but from a synchronic point of view the future in the past reading is not available anymore. Otherwise, any other reportive form, for instance the French Conditional (13), should be considered as a future in the past, assuming the time when the original source delivered the information as the required reference time.

(13) Aux dernières informations, les concurrents *auraient franchi* le Cap Horn (from Charaudeau, 1992: 464)

‘According to the latest information, the competitors passed [pass.cond.pf] Cape Horn’

The most conclusive clue confirming that the reportive *devoir* + infinitive has not to be considered as a futural marker is provided by cases such as (14) and (15).

(14) Selon les indications données par Max, nous *devons être* déjà là

‘According to the instructions given by Max, we should already be [must.pres be] there’

(15) Selon les indications données par Max, nous *devons être arrivés* (from Marque-Pucheu, 2001: 95)

‘According to the instructions given by Max, we should have [must.pres be] arrived’

In (14) the construction has present temporal reference and in (15) refers to the current result of a past situation, both these interpretations being incompatible with
the alleged futural value of *devoir*. Note that, unlike the Imperfect *devait* + infinitive (12), the Present and the Present Perfect in (14)–(15) cannot occur as future in the past in French.

Even if data such as (14)–(15) clearly show that reportive evidentiality and futural meaning are distinguished, a link between the two must be admitted. In most cases the two features coexist and it is reasonable to consider them as diachronically connected. It can also be added that there are in fact cases in which *devoir* + infinitive is only a future marker without any modal function. As noted by Fleischman (1982: 146), in (16) obligation is bleached out, the only meaning of the form being temporal:

(16) Il me faut beaucoup de courage pour vous dire la vérité. Mais cette vérité, je vous la dois! Même si vous devez ensuite me mépriser (Pagnol)

‘It will take a lot of courage to tell you the truth. But I owe it to you. Even if (it means that) you’ll despise [must.pres despise] me for it later’

As underlined by Fleischman (1982: 147–148), especially in those contexts where the French synthetic Future is barred or morphologically unavailable (Subjunctive, Future Infinitive, Future Participle, *if* clauses) *devoir* tends to be used in a pure futural meaning. Moreover, *devoir* + infinitive regularly occurs as future in the past:

(17) Affront qu’Adèle Machicourt . . . ne devait jamais lui pardonner (Chevallier, Clochemerle, from Sten, 1952: 153)

‘An insult that Adèle Machicourt . . . would never forgive [must.impf forgive] him’

Given these data, it can be concluded that *devoir* + infinitive can be both futural and reportive. In some cases the two functions coexist, but the occurrence of cases such as (14)–(15) allows us to consider futural meaning and reportive evidentiality as independent.

In what follows major attention will be paid to the reportive usage, but the relationship with futural meaning will be reappraised in Section 5, showing that the independence with respect to evidentiality can be corroborated by comparative Romance data.

3. French vs Italian

As in French, the Italian modal verb *dovere* + infinitive occurs as deontic (18), as well as epistemic (19):

(18) *Devo partire* domani

‘I must leave [must.pres leave] tomorrow’

(19) *Dovevano essere* le quattro

‘It must have been [must.impf be] 4 o’clock’
But, as far as the reportive function is concerned, the comparison between French and Italian provides a more varied picture. Take for instance French (20), which is a case of reporting future scheduled situations expressed by the Present of *devoir* + infinitive, comparable to (3) and (10) above. The relevant point here is that the Present of the modal *dovere* is not grammatical, if French (20) is translated into Italian (21).

(20) Les séparatistes d’Aceh et le gouvernement indonésien ont décidé hier en Suisse une prolongation d’un mois de la trêve actuelle, qui *doit expirer* le 15 janvier (*Le Figaro* 11.1.2001: 2)  
‘Yesterday in Switzerland the Aceh separatist organization and the Indonesian government decided on a one month prolongation of the current truce, that expires [must.pres expire] on January 15’

(21) ?? I separatisti di Aceh e il governo indonesiano hanno deciso ieri in Svizzera di prolungare di un mese l’attuale tregua, che *deve scadere* il 15 gennaio  
‘Yesterday in Switzerland the Aceh separatist organization and the Indonesian government decided on a one month prolongation of the current truce, that expires [must.pres expire] on January 15’

Note that the contrast in (20)–(21) cannot be interpreted as due to the future temporal location of the reported situations. As shown in (23), which is the translation of French (22), the Italian *dovere* + infinitive can also have future temporal reference, not differently from its French counterpart.

(22) Ce groupe d’experts […] *devrait rendre* ses conclusions début février (*Le Monde* 11.1.2001: 3)  
‘This group of experts should report back [must.cond report back] at the beginning of February’

(23) Questo gruppo di esperti *dovrebbe consegnare* il rapporto a inizio febbraio  
‘This group of experts should report back [must.cond report back] at the beginning of February’

The choice of the Conditional instead of the Indicative, seems to be relevant in making *dovere* + infinitive acceptable in Italian, as is confirmed by (24), where the Present Indicative, notwithstanding its futural temporal reference as in (22)–(23), cannot be automatically translated into the corresponding Italian Present Indicative form (25):

(24) Il avait également annoncé la semaine dernière son refus de comparaître à l’interrogatoire du juge Guzman, qui était initialement prévu ce mardi et *doit* à présent *se tenir* lundi prochain, selon le calendrier décidé lors d’un entretien entre ses avocats et le magistrat (*Le Monde* 11.1.2001: 3)
‘Last week he had also announced his refusal to appear at judge Guzman’s interrogation, which was originally scheduled this Tuesday and is now due to take place [must.PRES take place] next Monday, according to a schedule decided during a meeting of the judge with his lawyers’

(25) ?? L’interrogatorio, che era inizialmente previsto per martedì e che si deve tenere invece lunedì prossimo

‘the interrogation, which was originally scheduled this Tuesday and instead is due to take place [must.PRES take place] next Monday’

The different behaviour of French and Italian emerges clearly from examples such as (26), where a Present Indicative and a Conditional coexist in the same context. Consistently with what has been shown above, only the Conditional could be maintained in Italian, whereas the Present Indicative doit se dérouler should be rendered with a Future (si terrà ‘will take place’).

(26) Alfred Sirven devrait normalement comparaître détenu lors du procès en appel de l’“affaire Dumas”, qui doit se dérouler du 4 au 25 novembre (Le Figaro 18.7.2002: 7)

‘In principle, Alfred Sirven should already be imprisoned [must.COND be imprisoned] for the “affaire Dumas” trial, which is due to take place [must.PRES take place] from November 4 to 25’

The distinctive behaviour of the Conditional and the Present Indicative can be interpreted assuming that the epistemic degree of the commitment on the factuality of the situation plays a crucial role. This would explain why dovere + infinitive can be combined with the Conditional, a form which explicitly marks a lower degree of certainty, while excluding the Present Indicative. According to Dendale (1999, 2000) the distinction between the French Conditional devrait and the Present Indicative doit is not only due to the degree of certainty, being also linked to a subtle difference in the evidential mode of knowing. When using the Conditional the speaker wants to emphasize that the piece of information should be taken for granted only under the following condition: “Si toutes les données pertinentes ont bel et bien été prises en compte” (Dendale, 1999: 23; see also Kronning, 1996: 140: 2001a,b). To this it could be objected that it is not clear how such a condition could be interpreted in terms of the categories currently used in the typological classification of evidential systems. From an empirical point of view, there is also additional evidence confirming that it is the degree of certainty and not the alleged difference in the evidential mode of knowing which plays the major role. Consider the two French examples in (27)–(28), where the same form (Imperfect Indicative) occurs. Interestingly only (27) can be felicitously translated into Italian (29), while in the translation of (28) an Imperfect Indicative is not acceptable (30):
Cette série d’attaques contre le système financier a conduit le Fonds monétaire international (FMI) à repousser, le 31 mai, la signature d’un accord avec Bucarest. Le prêt de 500 millions de dollars que la Roumanie devait obtenir de cet organisme conditionne également le déblocage des fonds réservés au pays par l’Union européenne (Le Monde 8.6.2000: 3)

‘This campaign of attacks on the financial network led the FMI to postpone the signature of an agreement with Bucharest on May 31. The 500 million dollar loan that Romania should have obtained from this organization also has consequences on removing the suspension of funds reserved for the country by the European Union’

Il prestito di 500 milioni di dollari che la Romania doveva ottenere da questo organismo

‘The 500 million dollar loan that Romania should have obtained from this organization’

The difference between French and Italian can be easily explained if the degree of certainty, i.e. the epistemic degree of commitment on the factuality of the reported situation, is taken into account.² The context in (27) makes clear that the situation referred to

2 The restriction to non-factual situations could also explain why dovere + infinitive is not grammatical in the translation of (i) (??deve aver messo [must.PRES have put]), which is mentioned by Sten (1954: 264–265) as a particularly intriguing and unexpected occurrence of dovoir + infinitive. A case such as (i), being extracted from stage directions and therefore reporting what is expected to happen, can be interpreted as evidential. If this interpretation is correct (i) would be barred in Italian because the factuality of the situation is not questioned, provided that, generally speaking, the Romance Present Perfect does not admit a non-factual interpretation.

(i) On entends la voix d’un élève qui a dû appliquer sa bouche au trou de la serrure. Il crie: Panicault!

(Pagnol, Topaze, I, 5)

‘The voice of a pupil can be heard, who put his mouth on the key hole. He shouts: Panicault!’
(the loan to Romania) was expected to take place, but eventually did not. On the contrary, the situation in (28) is not presented as counterfactual: The journalist is simply reporting what, according to previous plans, was expected to happen (“selon la norme du plan” as glossed by Dietrich, 1985: 484 in a comparable example). As noted by Kronning (2001a,b: 108) the degree of certainty is not relevant in regulating the usage of what he considers as a marker of alethic necessity, this being the major difference with respect to the epistemic usage of devoir. The journalistic data here presented confirm that the French construction neutralizes semantic distinctions along the epistemic gradient, to which, on the contrary, the Italian construction is sensitive.

The data in (27)–(30) also show that the different behaviour of French and Italian is not due to a morphological restriction with respect to a given form, being rather a case of semantically driven restrictions. The acceptability of the Italian Imperfect Indicative is connected to the semantic interpretation of the form as expressing different degrees of factuality. This point is confirmed by the behaviour of the Present Indicative, which unlike French is not grammatical in reporting future scheduled situations. As demonstrated above, scheduled future (20)–(25) can only be combined with the Italian reportive marker dovere + infinitive if a form such as the Conditional is used (23), thus casting doubt on the factuality of the situation. Significantly, the Present Indicative becomes grammatical when referring to future situations which are intrinsically non-factual, as is the case in (31), denoting something which, while being expected, has not yet occurred at the speech time. In (31) the adverb ancora ‘yet’ stresses the fact that an expected situation has not occurred yet.

(31) Paolo deve ancora arrivare
   ‘P. has not come yet [must.pres still come]’

To sum up the whole set of data here presented, it can be concluded that both French devoir + infinitive and Italian dovere + infinitive occur as evidential markers signalling that the speaker reports a piece of information ascribing it to an external source. The common function as reportive marker is proved by a pair of examples such as French (32) and Italian (33), which are slightly modified versions of the real French journalistic passage in (24), using the Conditional of devoir/dovere as a means of reporting what is expected to occur according to a given source external to the speaker (the law court schedule).

(32) L’interrogatoire, qui était initialement prévu ce mardi et devrait à présent se tenir lundi prochain, selon le calendrier décidé lors d’un entretien entre ses avocats et le magistrat
   ‘The interrogation, which was originally scheduled this Tuesday and which should instead take place [must.cond take place] next Monday, according to a schedule decided during a meeting of the judge with his lawyers’

(33) L’interrogatorio, che era inizialmente previsto per martedì e che si dovrebbe tenere invece lunedì prossimo, in base al calendario deciso in un incontro tra il magistrato e gli avvocati
‘The interrogation, which was originally scheduled this Tuesday and which should instead take place [must.COND take place] next Monday, according to a schedule decided during a meeting of the judge with his lawyers’

On the other hand, the differences between French and Italian can be all attributed to the fact that in Italian the reportive function is restricted to those cases where a down-grading of the commitment on the degree of factuality is expressed, as is the case with the Conditional in (32)–(33), but not with the Present Indicative, which is grammatical in French (34) and ungrammatical in Italian (35). While the Present Indicative is neutral with respect to the commitment on factuality, the Conditional is a form which explicitly marks the non-factual character of the situation, not intending that the situation is necessarily counterfactual, but simply that the speaker casts doubt on its actual occurrence, the notion of non-factuality admitting different degrees of uncertainty.

(34) L’interrogatoire, qui était initialement prévu ce mardi et doit à présent se tenir lundi prochain, selon le calendrier décidé lors d’un entretien entre ses avocats et le magistrat
‘The interrogation, which was originally scheduled this Tuesday and is now due to take place [must.PRES take place] next Monday, according to a schedule decided during a meeting of the judge with his lawyers’

(35) L’interrogatorio, che era inizialmente previsto per martedì e che si deve tenere invece lunedì prossimo, in base al calendario deciso in un incontro tra il magistrato e gli avvocati
‘The interrogation, which was originally scheduled this Tuesday and instead is due to take place [must.PRES take place] next Monday, according to a schedule decided during a meeting of the judge with his lawyers’

The discrepancy between French and Italian can be represented as in Table 1, where the Italian form is labelled as ‘non-factual reportive’, due to its restriction to situations depicted as not completely factual, while the French form, being unrestricted with respect to factuality, is generally labelled as ‘reportive’.

4. Devoir/dovere + infinitive as subordinating moods

In Section 3 it has been demonstrated that non-factuality plays different roles in the semantics of the Italian modal dovere + infinitive as opposed to French

Table 1
Factuality and evidentiality in the semantics of devoir/dovere + infinitive

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Reportive</th>
<th>Non-factual reportive</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>French</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Italian</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**devoir** + infinitive. In this section the point will be corroborated by independent data based on other uses of the constructions **dovere/devoir** + infinitive.

As already mentioned in Section 2 **devoir** + infinitive marginally occurs in subordinate clauses with no distinct modal value. Even if it has been demonstrated that the subordinating contexts in which **devoir** shows a futural meaning were more extended in Old and Middle French than in Modern French (Gougenheim, 1929: 72–79), some of them are still grammatical (Grevisse, 1955: 937; Müller, 1964: 83–84). In particular, in complement clauses **devoir** still occurs marking futural location (32), or future of the past (33).

(36) Je ne crois pas que cela **doive arriver** (from Müller, 1964: 84)
   ‘I don’t think that this will happen [must.pres.subj happen]’

(37) Je savais qu’il **devait venir** (from Müller, 1964: 84)
   ‘I knew that he would come [must.impf come]’

In comparing French to Italian it can be noted that the corresponding Italian form **dovere** + infinitive seems to have a more restrictive usage. In complement clauses the construction is only admitted in a deontic meaning. This makes the non-agentive situation in the literal translation of French (36) hardly grammatical in Italian, unless it is interpreted as expressing deontic or dynamic necessity, as is explicitly signalled by the adverb ‘necessarily’ in (38). Similarly, Italian (39), which translates French (37), can only be interpreted as deontic (‘I knew that he had to come’) and not as a pure future in the past.

(38) Non credo che questo **debba** (necessariamente) **succedere**
   ‘I don’t think that this has to (necessarily) happen [must.pres.subj happen]’

(39) Sapevo che **doveva venire**
   ‘I knew that he had to come [must.impf come]’

Significantly, the future in the past reading becomes grammatical in Italian when the non-factual character of the situation is explicitly marked, as in the translation of (40), which can be felicitously rendered into Italian with an Imperfect Subjunctive (41).

(40) Il semblait que les forces révolutionnaires **dussent triompher** (Sartre, *Situations*)
   ‘It seemed that the revolutionary forces were to triumph [must.impf.subj triumph]’

---

3 In Old Italian the occurrence of **dovere** + infinitive as subordinating mood is more extended, since it is also used in complement clauses without any distinct modal value (similar examples in Old Occitan documented in Jensen, 1990: 301).

(i) Ora ti prego che mi **debba mostrare** ed aprire la natura delle dette quatro virtú principali (Bono Giamboni, *Il Trattato di Virtù e Vizi*, 126.1, 13th c.)
   ‘Now I beg you to show [I beg that you must.pres.subj show] me and unveil the nature of the aforementioned four main virtues’.
(41) Sembrava che le forze rivoluzionarie dovessero trionfare
‘It seemed that the revolutionary forces were to triumph’

These data suggest that in complement clauses only French admits the usage of devoir + infinitive as marker of futurity, while in Italian this usage is combined with other modal meanings such as deontic or dynamic modality (38)–(39) or non-factuality (41).

This generalization is more conclusively demonstrated by the behaviour of devoir/ dovere in conditional clauses, where the French construction also occurs as futural rather than reportive marker (see also Section 2.1):

(42) Si cela doit se reproduire, je serai (from Grevisse, 1955: 937)
‘If this happens again, I’ll be very strict’

(43) Si je ne dois pas vous voir bientôt, je vous enverrai l’objet par la poste (from Fleischman, 1982: 148)
‘If I don’t see you again soon, I’ll send the thing to you by mail’

Similar occurrences of dovere + infinitive do exist in Italian as well, and are indeed still productive, but they are restricted to those forms which explicitly mark non-factuality (in particular subjunctive forms). Thus, the literal translations of French (42)–(43) containing a Present Indicative are not grammatical in Italian (44)–(45), unless they are interpreted as deontic or dynamic, which is quite marginal in these cases.

(44) ?? Se questo deve succedere, procedero con rigore
‘If this happens again, I’ll be very strict’

(45) ?? Se non vi devo rivedere presto, vi manderò la cosa per posta
‘If I don’t see you again soon, I’ll send the thing to you by mail’

Nevertheless, (44)–(45) become grammatical if a form, such as the Imperfect Subjunctive signalling the non-factual character of the situation, is chosen (46)–(47).

(46) Se questo dovesse succedere, procedero con rigore
‘If this should happen again, I’ll be very strict’

(47) Se non vi dovesse rivedere presto, vi manderò il pacco per posta
‘If I don’t see you again soon, I’ll send the thing to you by mail’

Note that the contrast between (44)–(45) and (46)–(47) is due to the combination of the dovere-construction with the Present Indicative, and not to the Present
Indicative as such, which can be quite naturally used in conditional clauses with future temporal reference in Italian (48).

(48) Se non vi rivedo, vi mando il pacco per posta
‘If I don’t see [see.PRES] you again soon, I’ll send the thing to you by mail’

The data on conditional clauses conclusively show that in Italian dovere + infinitive is only admitted if combined with non-factuality, thus confirming the intrinsic non-factual value of the construction. As shown in Section 2.1 reportivity and futurity can be demonstrated as independent features in the semantics of devoir + infinitive, even if in many contexts they coexist. What is mostly interesting in the data presented in this section is that they parallel the results based on the reportive usage in Section 3. What is demonstrated there with respect to the cluster of reportivity and non-factuality, which is obligatory in Italian, but not in French, is equally true for the futural usage, which necessarily clusters with non-factuality in Italian, but not in French.

5. Deontic modality and non-factuality in Spanish deber + infinitive

In Spanish, as in Italian, deber + infinitive occurs as a reportive marker when combined with verb forms expressing a lower degree of assertiveness, as shown by the counterfactual interpretation of the Indicative Imperfect (49) and Conditional (50).

(49) Debió haber llegado a casa hace una hora (from Olbertz, 1998: 395)
‘He should have arrived [must.IMPF arrive.PF.INF] home one hour ago’

(50) No deberías estar en Madrid hasta dentro de quince minutos por lo menos (from Olbertz, 1998: 395, 506)
‘You should not have been [not must.COND be] in Madrid any earlier than at least fifteen minutes from now’

Apart from these data, which show the same cluster of non-factuality and report as in Italian, Spanish becomes more relevant if the deontic function of deber + infinitive is put into the general comparative picture. As its French and Italian counterparts, the Spanish modal deber + infinitive also occurs as a deontic marker, coexisting with other two deontic constructions (tener que ‘(lit.) have to/possess’, haber de ‘(lit.) have to’). The interesting point is that deber + infinitive is the only one among these three constructions showing a cluster of deontic modality and non-factuality. When used with the perfective aoristic past (Spanish Simple Past or Preterito Indefinido) tener que (51) and haber de (52) are interpreted as deontic, whereas deber is interpreted not only as deontic but also as non-factual (53), as shown in the translations (Gómez Torrego, 1988: 84; see similar data in Togeby, 1953: 130).
(51) El profesor "tuvo que castigarme" porque no estudié
    ‘The professor had to punish [must.PPFV punish] me because I didn’t study’

(52) El profesor "hubo de castigarme" porque no estudié
    ‘The professor had to punish [must.PPFV punish] me because I didn’t study’

(53) El profesor "debió castigarme" porque no estudié
    ‘The professor should have punished [must.PPFV punish] me because I didn’t study’

The relevance of these data in the present discussion hinges on the occurrence
of a cluster between non-factuality and a modal domain that had not been dis-
cussed, i.e. deontic modality. So far, only the cluster of evidentiality and non-
factuality was taken into account, demonstrating that the two notions can be
kept distinguished by comparing French and Italian. Now, the behaviour of the
Spanish deber confirms that non-factuality is an independent feature in the
semantics of deber not only, as shown by the French data in section 3, because
the two dimensions do not necessarily cluster together, but also because non-
factuality admits the cluster with other semantic notions such as deontic modality.

6. Devoir/dovere/deber + infinitive and the Romance Conditional

The data presented so far have shown different degrees of cluster of non-fact-
uality and reports, demonstrating the semantic independence of the two notions.
Nonetheless, it could be objected that the behaviour of devoir/dovere/deber +
infinite in French and Italian raises additional questions as far as the interplay of
evidentiality and other semantic notions is concerned. As mentioned in section 1,
Dendale and Tasmowski (2001: 345) have pointed out that the French Conditional
not only shows a cluster of non-factuality and evidentiality, but also that other
modal (hYPOTHETICAL) and temporal (future in the past) functions coexist in one
and the same form. The same could be maintained in describing the semantics
of the constructions under scrutiny in the present article. As noted in sections 2–
5 devoir/dovere/deber are not restricted to the reportive function described so far,
being also (or mainly) used as deontic and inferential markers. As shown in sections
2.1 and 4, devoir and dovere also have the same temporal (future in the past) and
hYPOTHETICAL functions (in protases of conditional clauses) as the French Conditional.
As to the hypothetical function, the Italian dovere + infinitive clearly demon-
strates the similarity with the Conditional. As shown in section 4 the construction
can be found in protases of conditional clauses (54), in the same context where a
hypothetical Subjunctive (55) occurs and where, in substandard varieties of Italian
(Berretta, 1993: 218; Berruto, 1993: 61), as well as in other Romance languages
(for regional varieties of Spanish see Silva-Corvalán, 1985), a Conditional can
also occur (56).
Now, pursuing the same methodology followed so far, the question raised by the cluster of hypothetical and evidential functions can be solved if other Romance languages are comparatively analyzed. The most intriguing point is that not all Romance languages show the same cluster of hypothetical and evidential functions. A case in point is again the comparison with the behaviour of Spanish 

\[ \text{si debía/ debiera/ debe llover, podríamos ir en coche} \]

\text{‘If it rains [must.impf./impf.subj/pres rain], we could go by car’}

The comparison between French and Italian on the one hand and Spanish on the other is also revealing if the cluster of evidentiality and futurity is taken into consideration. As shown in section 2.1, \textit{devoir} functions as future in the past and the same \textit{(58)} occurs in Italian \textit{(Bertinetto, 1991:160)}.

\text{‘(Later on) this attitude was to influence [must.impf/cond influence] the others’}

Interestingly, the future in the past reading is not admitted with the Spanish \textit{deber + infinitive} \textit{(59)}, another deontic construction \textit{(haber de + infinitive)} being used as futural marker \textit{(60)}.

\text{‘This attitude was to influence [must.impf/cond influence] the others’}

The behaviour of Spanish \textit{deber + infinitive} can now be summed up and compared to French and Italian as in Table 2, which is an extension of Table 1, including the usage as hypothetical and future in the past markers of \textit{devoir/dovere/deber + infinitive}. The relevant point here is represented by the non-compatibility of the latter functions with the Spanish construction, unlike its French and Italian counterparts.
If compared to the behaviour of the Romance Conditional, as sketched out in Table 3, the data provided by *devoir/dovere/deber* in Table 2 are much more revealing, allowing a clearer disentangling of the semantic functions involved. On the contrary, the Conditional shows a completely uniform picture, covering all the functions considered so far with no differences in the three languages. In French, Italian and Spanish the Conditional is a consistent temporal (as future in the past), hypothetical and reportive marker. As shown in Table 3, the distinction between reportive and non-factual reportive is not relevant for the Conditional, which occurs in both contexts, their disentangling being only possible if *devoir/dovere/deber* are taken into account.

The general conclusion is that virtually all the semantic functions of *devoir/dovere/deber* described so far can be proved independent if the issue is tackled from a comparative point of view. The fact remains that some basic modal uses of *devoir/dovere/deber* + infinitive, i.e. the inferential and the deontic functions, cannot be disentangled, for they consistently cluster together in the three languages considered. Nonetheless, in the perspective assumed in this article, which is mainly focused on disentangling evidentiality and non-factuality, inferentiality and deontic modality are not a proper hindrance. Even if the modal interpretation of inferences is a heavily debated issue (van der Auwera and Plungian, 1998: 86), they are consistently treated as evidentials in most classifications (Chung and Timberlake, 1985: 242–246; Willett, 1988: 54, 89 fn. 5; Frawley, 1992: 412–413; Botne, 1997; Plungian,

### Table 2
Semantic functions of *devoir/dovere/deber* + infinitive

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Future in the past</th>
<th>Hypothetical</th>
<th>Reportive</th>
<th>Non-factual reportive</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>French</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Italian</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spanish</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4 For the purposes of this article the Conditional is more revealing than the Romance modal *pouvoir/potere/poder* ‘can, may’, which lack a distinctive evidential function as reportive markers, thus making irrelevant the comparison with *devoir/dovere/deber* in order to unravel the interplay of reportivity and non-factuality.

5 As to the reportive function, Spanish normative grammars stigmatize such a usage of the Conditional (Molho, 1975: 316; Ferreres Masplà and Olivares Pardo, 2000: 183), but in fact it occurs in journalistic prose (Reyes, 1994: 25–37).
Thus, the cluster of inferences and reports in one and the same form is quite consistent with the interpretation of devoir/dovere/deber as evidential markers, provided that inferences and reports are recognized as basic semantic notions in the domain of evidentiality. Moreover, a similar cluster is also attested in other Romance modal forms such as the Future and the Conditional, which show a varied picture of interaction between inferences and reports (Squartini, 2001).

As to the cluster of deontic and reportive modality, this also does not directly impinge upon the topic of this article, which focuses on the mutual relationship between epistemic modality and evidentiality. The independence of deontic and epistemic modality is conceptually quite clear and not questionable, even if a diachronic relationship between the two has been recognized (Bybee and Pagliuca, 1987; Bybee et al., 1994: 195–205), so that the epistemic function can be considered as derived from the original deontic meaning of a given modal marker in a process of gradual subjectification (Traugott, 1989). In this respect it would be tempting to speculate which function (deontic or epistemic) the reportive usage of devoir/dovere/deber discussed in this article can be derived from. The issue will be briefly tackled in Section 7, trying to assess which is, on the basis of the data presented so far, the most plausible diachronic process.

7. On the grammaticalization of reports

Some tentative hints on the diachronic evolution of devoir/dovere/deber + infinitive can be derived from the comparison of Tables 2 with 3 above. The behaviour of devoir/dovere/deber (Table 2) demonstrates that the reportive function is not necessarily connected to the other functions considered (future in the past or hypothetical). Provided that in the Romance Conditional the future in the past and the hypothetical readings coexist with the reportive usage in one and the same form, it could be speculated that the latter is a derived side-effect of one of the former. In this respect, the Spanish data concerning the behaviour of deber + infinitive clearly demonstrate that the reportive reading can also independently appear. A priori, it could also be assumed that in Italian the non-factual interpretation which is always associated with the reportive reading is connected with (or derived from?) the hypothetical usage of dovere + infinitive. Also in this respect, Spanish data are revealing, showing that the non-factual reportive reading and the hypothetical usage do not necessarily coexist. Now, the question raised at the end of section 6 remains whether the reportive function of devoir/dovere/deber is more plausibly derived from the inferential or from the deontic function, which are consistently expressed by the three constructions.

At first sight the Spanish deber + infinitive seems to provide a reliable clue to the diachronic issue, based on the formal distinction between deber and deber de. Both

---

6 The uncertain status of inferences is also admitted by Palmer (1986: 57–60, 69–70), who treats inferences under the heading judgements when languages such as English or German are concerned (as in English John must be at home), while mentioning them in the section devoted to evidentials in a language such as Tuyuca.
constructions occur in Spanish and their distributions are described as mutually exclusive in normative grammars, the prepositional form being considered as inferential and \textit{deber} + infinitive as deontic. The alleged formal distinction between the two readings could be now capitalized on in order to assess which one of the two readings the reportive usage is derived from. Actually, investigations on colloquial corpora (Sirbu-Dumitrescu, 1988; Silva-Corvalán, 1995: 87–89; Olbertz, 1998: 153–154) have demonstrated that the distributional norm described in traditional grammars is not respected, both forms being interchangeably used in both functions, with a predominance of the non-prepositional form. Nevertheless, some selectional restrictions of the Spanish \textit{deber} can still provide interesting clues. According to Silva-Corvalán (1995: 69) and Gómez Torrego (1999: 3351), when \textit{deber} + infinitive is combined with the Conditional it can be interpreted as deontic and not as epistemic:

\begin{align*}
(61) & \quad \text{Juan deberí\text{\textia} hacerlo} \\
& \quad \text{‘John should do [mustCOND do] it’} \\
& \quad \text{Unacceptable reading: *‘It’s very likely that John would do it’}
\end{align*}

Provided that the Conditional occurs in a reportive context (see (50) above), it can be concluded that the reportive reading is more connected to (and presumably derived from) the deontic usage.

The analysis tentatively suggested by Spanish data is more conclusively confirmed if the diachronic development of the English modal \textit{should} is taken into consideration, which is reasonable, given the consistent semantic relationship with Romance \textit{devoir/dovere/deber}, particularly as a marker of non-factual reports. As documented in Traugott (1989: 41–42) the Old English forerunner of \textit{should}, the verb \textit{sculan}, originally had a deontic meaning, expressing like the Romance verbs financial and moral obligation, but soon developed a proper repor-

\footnote{A case such as (i), interpreted by Silva-Corvalán (1995: 99) as epistemic, apparently contradicts her own conclusion on the ungrammaticality of the epistemic reading for the Conditional of \textit{deber}, as well as the alleged incompatibility of the Conditional with \textit{deber de} (*\textit{Deberí\text{\textia} de estar aquí} vs. \textit{Deberí\text{\textia} estar aquí} ‘You should be [mustCOND be] here’) proposed in Gómez Torrego (1999: 3351):}

\begin{align*}
(i) & \quad \text{No vamos a saber exactamente las consecuencias, ¿no? [de entrar al Mercado Común Europeo]} \quad \text{En principio, deberí\text{\textia} de ser bueno} \\
& \quad \text{‘We won’t know exactly what the consequences will be, right? [of entering the Common Market]} \quad \text{In theory, it should be [mustCOND be] good’}
\end{align*}

According to the analysis provided in the present article, (i) can be more consistently interpreted as evidential rather than epistemic. In (i) there is no personal inference of the speaker, who is only reporting what, in principle (\textit{en principio}), is supposed to be. Note the adverb ‘in principle’, equivalent to French adverbs \textit{normalement} and \textit{en principe}, which are described as frequently collocating with the Conditional of \textit{devoir} + infinitive by Dendale (1999: 22–23).

\footnote{As shown by the corpus of parallel French–English texts studied in Salkie (1996), English \textit{should} often appears as counterpart to the French \textit{devoir}. The relationship is confirmed by our data (see (22–26) in particular), where \textit{should} is a viable translation of \textit{devoir}, especially in non-factual reportive contexts.}
tive function, and, what is more relevant, reportive cases show up earlier than the modern inferential ones. This means that reports can develop directly from deontic modality, not requiring inferentials as an intermediate step.

8. Conclusion

The data presented in this article have shown that an evidential reportive usage can be recognized among the modal functions expressed by *devoir/dovere/deber* + infinitive in French, Italian and Spanish. A comparative appraisal of the three constructions has demonstrated different forms of interactional cluster between the degree of assertiveness and the expression of reports, thus allowing us to disentangle non-factuality and evidentiality, two modal notions whose boundaries are often blurred. Some hints on the diachronic evolution have also been presented, suggesting the evolution of the reportive function out of deontic modality.

References


9 Unlike *devoir/dovere/deber*, reporting what is expected to happen, the examples documented by Traugott (1989: 41) are more properly quotative (i). However, both functions can be considered as subcategories of the more general evidential function labelled as ‘report’:

(i) 

\[ \text{mænige sæden þe hit geseon seoldan} \]

\[ \text{‘many said who supposedly saw it [that it see should]’} \]


