
“YOU MUST. PARDON, YOU SHOULD” — BEING POLITE ACROSS CULTURES

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Drawing on an empirical study undertaken in 1998—9 and 2008, this paper suggests a renewed and refreshing view (Micklos 2001: 5) on an ever-problem posing issue as is the role of modality in communicative and intercultural competence. In fact, this diachronic case study aims at reassessing some evidence on EFL learners'/undergraduates' reading habits in a FL context, grounded on empirical research undertaken in Madeira Island in 1998—1999 compared with data collected in 2008. The former involved a representative number of informants: 12th form Humanities students ($n = 197$) and first- and second-year undergraduates ($n = 57$) taking English — Joint Honours — at the University of Madeira. Their response to a questionnaire on reading habits, purposes, strategies and text types in English as a foreign language, has offered renewed insights on a changing trend in the use of modals by EFL undergraduates for global communication. The analysis of respondents' use of modals (1998/9—2008) unearths a shifting cline from the use of “must” to “should”. Consequently, it is necessary to ponder on how demands of a society associated with globalisation have affected patterns of education / instruction in both secondary and higher education. In this paper it is thus argued that fostering speakers' linguistic and discursive awareness with an emphasis on the grammatical, pragmatic and semantic levels, contrastively, contributes to speakers' awareness of specificities of both their mother tongue and foreign/additional language in a dialogic and dynamic way.

Key words: modality, intercultural competence, modal verbs, Portuguese, English, FL learning.

Introduction

In the twenty-first century, we have observed a renewed interest in understanding the role of the pedagogical context, especially in the teaching/learning of a foreign/additional language, concerning the development of communicative and intercultural competence towards multicultural literacy. This is highlighted by the wide number of publications in the area (cf. Byram and Grundy, 2003) and reflected, for instance, in the “Common European Framework of Reference: Learning, Teaching, Assessment” (official document issued by The European Council).

In so doing, many scholars claim that teaching/learning foreign/additional languages and their cultures ought to be interpreted not as “the other” but, learning another linguistic code implies the interaction with another worldview and culture perceived dialogically from the one in one's mother tongue. At the macro-level, the foreign language learner / speaker, also called “an intercultural speaker” (Morgan and Cain, 2000: 6), “must migrate from one language system to another” since mother tongue and foreign language operate “different discourse system[s] where lexical items often have different collocations or clusters of associated vocabulary”. Language inherently perceived as a system can not be dissociated from identity issues, cultural legacy and values (Byram, 1988: 41).

Indeed, choosing another language/world view to communicate globally (Chambers, 1995), and English has turned now one of the master codes, presupposes that individuals are aware of the multiple clashes encountered and experienced in everyday communication. In this regard, rightly posits Sinclair (1992: 217), using a language is more than exchanging information by making simple statements and asking questions. Commu-

nicative competence (and its linguistic, metalinguistic and textual clines) necessarily involves the study of modality (cf. Byram and Grundy, 2003, Howcroft and Gomes, 2006, Neff *et al.*, 2007, Ellis, 2008) underpinning polite and tactful behaviour, requests, offers, suggestions, or the expression of one's wishes or intentions as well as one's feelings towards what one is saying. And there is a wide range of carriers of modality across languages (Bybee *et al.*, 1994). In English, "these would include" both lexical elements, illustrates Hoey (1997: 3), for instance "modal idioms", "adjectives, such as possible, likely, sure", "nouns", "adverbs" and "modal lexical verbs" and grammatical elements (aspect, tense and mood). Hoey's research work on *Adverbs and Modality in English* (1997: 4), borrowing both from corpus analysis and a contrastive approach, has contributed to an understanding of modal-adverb collocations "which play a relatively central role on the expression of modality in English".

However, in the line of postulates by Halliday (1970), Lyons (1977), Coates (1983) and Palmer (1986), among other, Hoey reiterates that modality, "does not relate semantically to the verb alone or primarily but to the whole sentence", and that includes the analysis of prosody, as well. As such, the study of modals should not be separated from the study of language use (following, for instance Leech, 1983), namely by language learners who are already using the English code to communicate for authentic purposes in the context of the classroom or lecture setting, formerly perceived as an artificial context, having turned into a multimedia setting. This comes in the line of Leech's view of the study of language and communication, taking in form, meaning and context, within a pragmatic framework (1983: 11), "whereby the speaker is seen as trying to achieve his [her] aims within constraints imposed by principles and maxims of good communicative behaviour" both in L1 and in English use apart from patterns of effective interpersonal communication, following Grice's cooperative principle and other politeness issues, which play an important role.

Theoretical framework

It seems then rather pertinent to undertake a contrastive study between Portuguese and English, though briefly put, broadening horizons towards the interpretation of modals across languages. This way, speakers are likely to become aware of language idiosyncrasies and use appropriate linguistic (morphological, lexical and syntactic), discursive and strategic choices in differing contexts and for interpersonal, transactional and ideational purposes, thus developing social and intercultural competence. As is discussed in the theoretical overview offered in *Intercultural Language Use and Language Learning*, Soler *et al.* (2008) claim that further research ought to be undertaken in the scope of language acquisition and development with a focus on promoting intercultural competence in the context of language teaching and learning. And this involves a multidisciplinary field of research. They further contend that turning the spotlight onto the study of language in a people's culture contributes to learners' understanding that any successful communicative event, particularly in a foreign/additional language, also entails a process of negotiating social knowledge. At the core, argues Willems (1993: 7), seems to lie a possible stereotyping in the case of "using one's cultural background, one's own social knowledge in foreign language communication", thereby omitting negotiation skills or the so-called "metacommunicative awareness" (Op. cit., p. 16) between "I — me — my world" and "they — them — their world". Kramsch puts it simply as follows

(1994: 9): “in fact what is at stake is the creation, in and through the classroom, of a social, linguistic reality that is born from the L1 speech environment of the learners and the social environment of the L2 native speakers, but is a third culture in its own right”. This is so much true as, in the use of modal-verb system referred to by Hoey (1997: 13), “native speaker awareness of the linguistic choices” and “non-native speaker performance deviates from that of their native speaker counterparts” in this “area of modality”. Some of these modals are likely to offer communication clashes, especially concerning deontic modality, when English is the language of communication. A contrastive use of modals across languages has come to the fore in Handford’s research (2007) of business meetings¹, in which English is either used the *lingua franca*, or an international variety, tagging along Phillipson’s contention.

In fact, most research undertaken in the scope of second and foreign language acquisition and development is underpinned by a major concern with the way learners develop communicative competence, with a special interest on lexical and syntactic awareness, the way to foster pragmatic competence (see e. g. Kasper and Rose 2002) or conversational competence (Markee 2000). By focusing on learner corpora in a diachronic perspective may unveil ways and strategies for learners to acquire linguistic resources, such as the effective use of modals in between linguistic codes and cultures. In Ellis’s contention (2008: 4—22): “Indeed, pragmatic and conversational competence are realized primarily by means of linguistic resources, and thus (to my mind) it is inevitable that researchers will continue to focus on how these are acquired, irrespective of the theoretical paradigm that informs SLA”.

Study: corpus, method and methodology

The analysis of Portuguese respondents’ output to a questionnaire², in the scope of a large-scale study³ undertaken in 1998—9, among 12th formers ($n = 197$) and first- and second-year undergraduates ($n = 57$) in Madeira, by resorting to corpus analysis⁴,

¹ Cf. Handford, M. (2010). *The Genre of Business Meeting: A Corpus-Based Study*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. Among the data, at the lexico-grammatical level collected in several companies in the UK, and also in Eire, Germany and Japan, Handford analysed pronouns, deontic-modal expressions, certain keywords such as “problem”, “issue” and “if”, metaphors and idioms, as well as vague language. The study highlights consistent differences between internal and external meetings.

² The questionnaire focused on reading habits, purposes, strategies and text types in English as a foreign language. It involved the informants with questioning, prompting and reflecting, by means of open-ended questions. “Giving reasons”, also making part of item-dependent open-ended questions/answers, followed by short answers and multiple choice items.

³ This research (undertaken in 1998-9), ranging the ethnographic nature, attempted to uncover some relevant aspects associated with Humanities freshman’s differing degrees of engagement with the reading activity in an EFL context, from reluctance (only reading for mandatory reasons) to enjoyment. Bridging this diversity in terms of linguistic, cultural, social and varied levels of achievement, implies a reflection on theory, research and above all what real subjects, learners and practitioners (Bess Hinson, 2000) in a concrete situation know, think and do about reading.

⁴ In their anthology, Sampson and McCarthy (2004: 1) consider it crucial to define the concept “corpus linguistics”, i.e., “a collection of specimens of a language as used in real life, in speech or writing, selected as a sizeable ‘fair sample’ of the language as a whole or of some linguistic genre” [authors’ emphasis], owing to the fact that research methods and methodologies depend

made it possible to disclose recurrent language patterns, for instance, in the use of modals and semi-modals. It was possible to unveil that their use of modals in English evidenced a strong influence of L1 use (Howcroft and Gomes, 2006: 124), particularly shown in the use of the modal auxiliary “must”. This is evidenced in Table 1, displaying the occurrence of modals and semi-modals per group of informants, in which the modal auxiliary “must” stands out with a higher percentage of occurrences among undergraduates.

Table 1

Occurrence of Modals by School/Institution (Madeira 1998–9)

Modals	12 th Formers (Corpus: 32 394 words)	1 st - & 2 nd - Year Undergraduates (corpus: 11 390 words)
Must	10	11
have to	51	16
Should	21	9
Need	25	9

As such, this paper intends to reassess the way learners of English perceive the modals and the impact of the teaching/learning context in their acquisition and use, by comparing data of ethnographic nature in the scope of a large-scale study undertaken in 1998—1999 with data collected in 2008. In order to check whether “the language learning process” also played a role in students’ output, the concordance lines displaying the occurrence of the modal auxiliary “must” were translated into Portuguese (See Appendix 1). These were then translated by first- and second-year undergraduates ($n = 53$; 32, respectively) taking English at the University of Madeira in 2008. Respondents’ age ranged between 18—20 and more mature students as displayed in Figure 1.

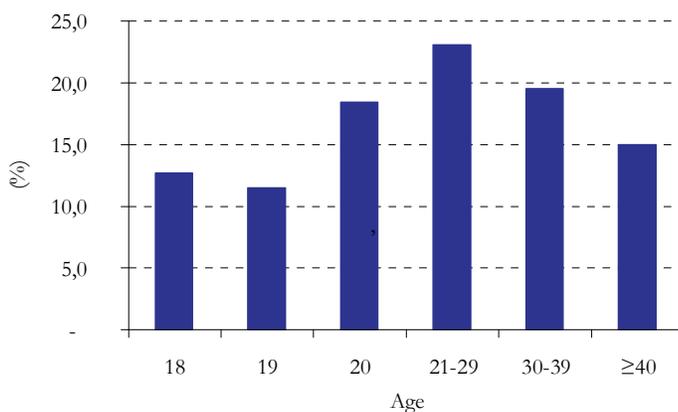


Figure 1. Respondents’ Age Range: Case Study 2008, March

to a greater extent on computer technology. This study: (1) comprises a digital corpus based on the transcription of respondents’ output to questionnaires; (2) resorts to a concordancing tool, Concapp 4, which displays automatically the context of occurrence of the lexical items under scrutiny, allowing for a quantitative and comparative analysis of both (Alan Partington, 1998: 65) “conceptual meaning of words and the connotational significance of lexis” in the *corpus* and *corpora*.

The latter involved respondents (out of which 69,3% female and 30,7% male) studying more “umbrella-like” degrees¹, or those offering an ESP language course, which were on offer then at the university, namely: Communication, Culture and Organizations ($n = 22$), Cultural Sciences ($n = 55$), and English for Nursing ($n = 11$). Concerning the number of years in English instruction, most respondents had learnt English for 4 or more years (cf. Figure 2).

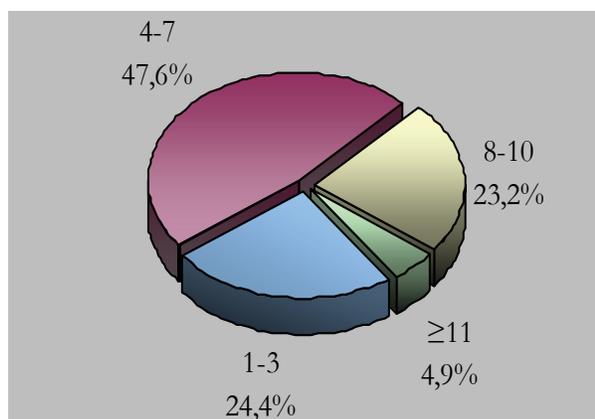


Figure 2. Respondents' Number of Years of English Instruction: Case Study 2008, March

The translation technique followed the line of research described by Hoey (1997: 13), also citing Quirk and Svartvik, as an important tool for “enlarging upon corpus-derived information and for investigating features not perhaps found in the corpus at all”. Indeed, there is a wide number of studies linking up contrastive and learner corpus research (for example Gilquin, Papp and Díez-Bedmar, 2008) in several languages, namely English and French, German, Dutch, Spanish, Chinese and Brazilian Portuguese. By acting upon learner corpora², indeed the other side of the mirror, this paper intends to: i) give an account of the pedagogic discourse on EFL students’ written and spoken output; ii) shed some light on the impact of speakers’ mother tongue (Portuguese) in their linguistic choices in foreign/additional language use in intercultural communication. Concurrently, another goal of this paper is to acknowledge the relationship between theory and practice in the production of scientific knowledge as far as applied research to education is concerned.

Given the theoretical framework and the problem posed at the outset, this case study focused on the following variables: sex, age, form/year, degree/course, number of years of instruction in English so as to inquire if there were relevant data.

¹ Although there is another degree of this sort at the University of Madeira, namely English and Business Studies, this group of students did not make part of the sample because they already had been exposed to a thorough instruction on modality in English at the time of data collection. Hence, B2.1 Level has been a prerequisite level to attend first-year courses in the same degree.

² The benefits of relying on learner corpora in language analysis come in the line of these arguments by Biber et al. (in Partington, 1998: 9-10): “the strengths of corpus-based approaches in investigating language use cannot solely rely on intuition, anecdotal evidence, or small samples; they rather require empirical analysis of large databases of authentic texts”.

As for the methodology, the case study of diachronic nature consisted in comparing the frequency of occurrence of modals by item having the version of the questionnaire implemented in 1998—9 in mind and the respondents' use of modals; crisscrossing the number of years in English instruction by item in the questionnaire and respondents' course/degree by item in the questionnaire.

Having briefly pointed to the problem, relevance, aims and methodology, this paper will focus, first on modality and its relevance for speakers' development of the communicative and discursive competencies before entailing the presentation of results of the case study followed by their short but thorough discussion.

Modality: linguistic and intercultural competence

Speakers convey (Wales, 1997: 302) "their attitudes and perspectives towards the propositions they express" by means of, for example, pragmatic and linguistic choices, commonly associated with modal verbs, adverbs, clauses and mood. Given the wide array of lexical and grammatical choices involved in this (Wales, 1997: 302) "subjective and qualifying process", as is modality, this paper, nonetheless, analyses some modal verbs, particularly those related to meanings of obligation and necessity (deontic modality) used by learners of English at intermediate and upper-intermediate levels.

In order to shed some light on the relevance of modality in effective communication across linguistic codes, it seems relevant to draw on Sinclair's (1992: 218) bearings. Accordingly, when a speaker uses another language, he / she is both exerting some kind of impact on and responding to a particular person or audience. Similarly, adds Sinclair (Op. cit, p. 228), the modal selected depends on several factors such as: the relationship the speaker has with the listener; the formality and informality of the situation; the importance of what participants in the communicative event are saying; and the degree of politeness the speakers want to show [Adapted Mine]. Empirical research has disclosed (c.f. Howcroft & Gomes, 2006, Viana, 2006) that most grammars and textbooks in English either display usage or use without a consistent explanation of their complexity. This explanation requires, adds Thomson (2002), its "translation into meaningful rules, explanations, and experience that students can take advantage of in the moment" regarding: i) their form (grammatical and syntactic form); ii) semantic scope (ambiguity and modal auxiliaries and semi-modals in English); iii) differing uses (dialects and regional varieties); iv) modals and modality.

Hence, states Hoey (1997: 38), "There are many languages other than English where modal concepts are signalled by inflecting the verb", of which Portuguese is an example. Drawing on the studies by the Portuguese linguists Campos and Marques, it is possible to draw a contrastive view on the semantic scope of modals in Portuguese and English. In the Portuguese language, the modal auxiliaries "*poder*" and "*dever*" are marked grammatically by mood (i.e., indicative, subjunctive and imperative). The subjunctive is used to "convey a wide range of attitudes on the part of the speaker towards the factual content of his utterance, such as doubt, certainty, vagueness, and possibility", advances Hoey (1997: 39) which "have come to be conveyed in English by modal expressions, including the modal auxiliaries (can/could, may/might, will/would, shall/should) and the semi-modals (have to, ought to, need to, dare, used to), as is briefly displayed in Figure 3.

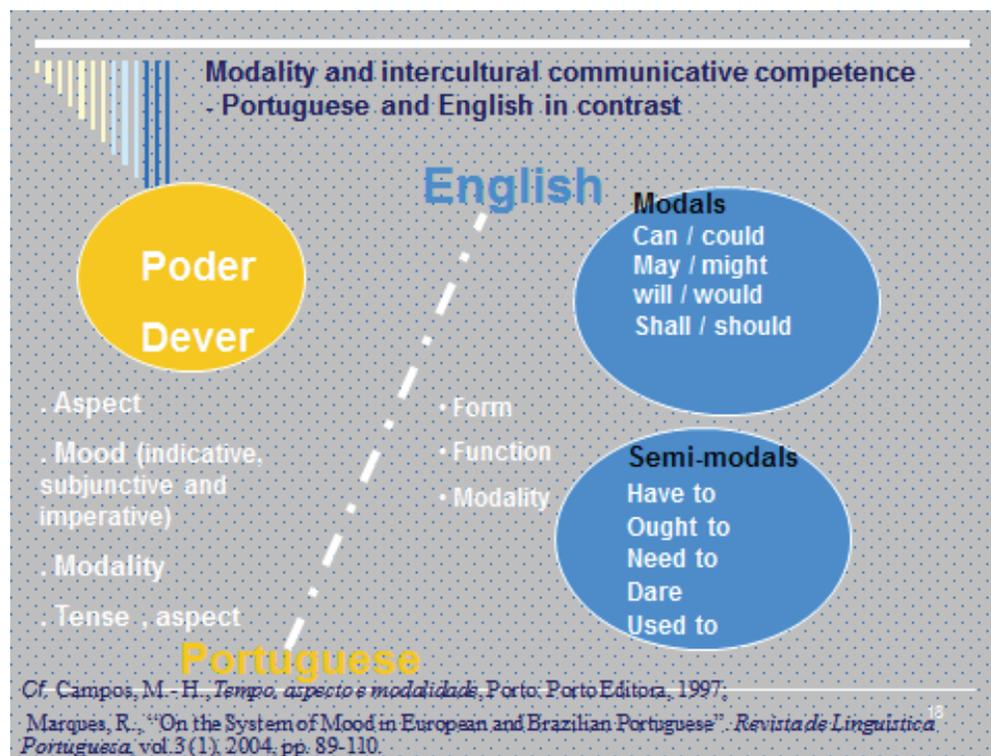


Figure 3. Modals: Contrastive analysis (Portuguese/English)

Moreover, the use of various modal entities depend on other features like register (Viana, 2006), as is graphically displayed in the *Longman Student Grammar of Spoken and Written English* (Biber et al., 2004: 177). Modals have been associated with academic and news genres and there is a slight increase in the use of semi-modals in fiction and conversation genres. Hence, modals conveying volition, prediction, ability, possibility (like “will”, “would”, “can”, “could”, “may”, respectively) occur more frequently than the ones expressing obligation, necessity and deduction (“should”, “must”, “might” and “shall”).

Therefore, “modal auxiliaries are one of the most difficult structures... ESL/EFL teacher[s] will have to deal with”, rightly contend Celce-Murcia & Larsen Freeman (1983: 80).

Concerning research on modality, it has been stated that: “EFL rely as much as native speakers do on lexical and grammatical patterns which they think can be used to introduce claims” (Neff *et al.* 2007: 562—571); learners’ misuse of modals in English owe to (Thompson, 2002): generalization of formal aspects in the process of English learning in the pedagogic context; generalization of formal aspects by speakers/learners themselves; L1 interference in learners’ oral and written production (Howcroft and Gomes, 2006: 124); teaching / learning process evidenced in the way native and non-native speakers perceive language, language use, registers, varieties and culture (Howcroft and Gomes, 2006: 124).

Case Study: Results

The analysis of the context of occurrence of modals and semi-modals in informants’/undergraduates’ translations of the set of statements under scope, in 2008, made it possible to account for respondents’ lack of knowledge concerning their form and structure (cf. Table 2). It further evidenced a wide array of:

- i. modals “must”, “should” (both of which with a higher frequency per item), “can”, “could”, “may”, “mustn’t” and “shouldn’t”;
- ii. semi-modals, (“have to” / “had to” and “need” / “don’t need”);
- iii. other verbs such as “obliged to”, “have”, “do”, or even the adverb “only”, preceded by a copulative verb.

Table 2

Occurrence of Modals by Item (Respondents’ Output in 2008)

Occurrences / Item		1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.	7.	8.	9.	10.	11.
Modals	must	29	33	29	31	27	4	20	36	30	21	26
	should	42	27	38	40	41	6	29	36	46	43	46
	mustn’t						10					
	shouldn’t						44					
	can’t						3					
	can				1	1		1	1		1	
	could	1	2									
	couldn’t						1					
	may	1										
will			1									
Semi-modals	have to /had to	3	2	5	5	4		10	1	1	4	1
	haven’t / don’t have to						2					
	need	1	11	4	4	7		9	2	3	3	2
	obliged to							1				
	does/don’t need						2		1			

Yet, the modal “should” occurred more frequently than “must”, in most of the items selected, except in items 2 (“Because when I read I must be in silence.” — 1998) and 8 (“no preference I just read the ones I must — 1998”), in which undergraduates used both “should” and “must” indistinctively.

The close analysis of the occurrence of both modals per item, bearing in mind the variables under scrutiny, was carried out so as to disclose any possible differences. The contrastive analysis between respondents’ use of the modals “must” and “should” with reference to items 1 and 2 in the questionnaire, disclosed significant differences bearing in mind respondents’ form/year or level of instruction at the university (cf. Fig. 4).

Concerning the first item ($\chi^2 = 4,269$; $df = 1$; $p < 0,039$), likely to be translated as “children should / have to be aware of the importance of reading”, but previously rendered as “Children must be aware of the importance of reading”, there is a shift from obligation, the duty premise, to a moral obligation. The former is still evidenced among first-year undergraduates’ output. Second-year undergraduates use “should” more frequently than the other group.

The same occurred in item 2 ($\chi^2 = 5,592$; $df = 1$; $p < 0,018$). First-year undergraduates still resort to the modal “must” more often whereas second-year ones use “should”

more often. Yet, the original statement “Because when I read I must be in silence” ought to be translated by resorting to the semi-modal “need to”, since it points to necessity rather than obligation or duty.

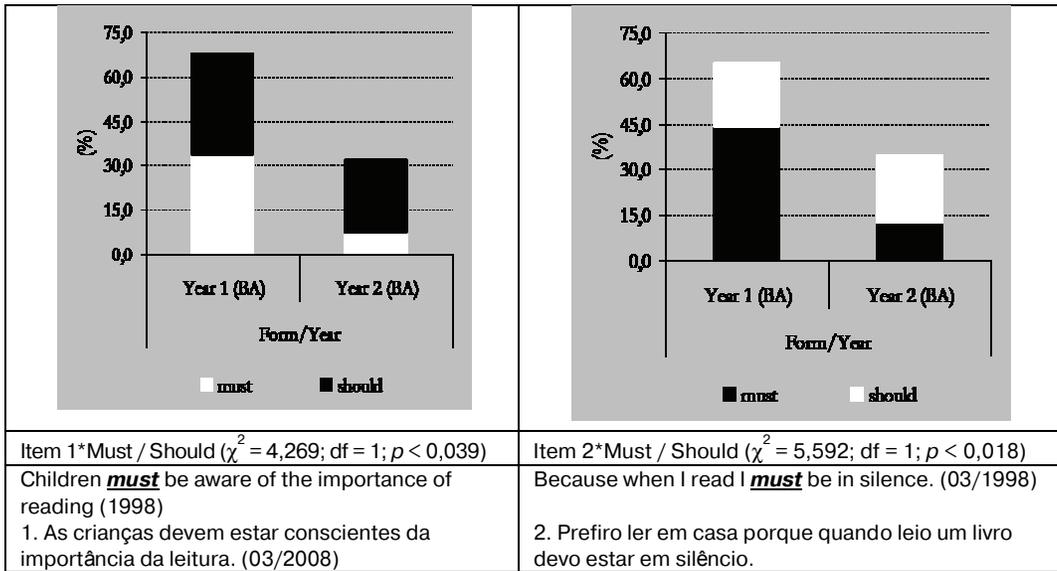


Figure 4. Use of “Must” and “Should” by Year/Form in Items 1 and 2 (Respondents’ Output in 2008)

As for item 6, there are significant differences between male and female informants’ use of the modals “should” and “must” ($\chi^2 = 3,916(b)$; $df = 1$; $p < 0,048$). Male respondents used the modal “should” in the statement: “Because I must study and read books of literature”. Female respondents used “must” more frequently than in the former study implemented in 1998 (cf. Fig. 5).

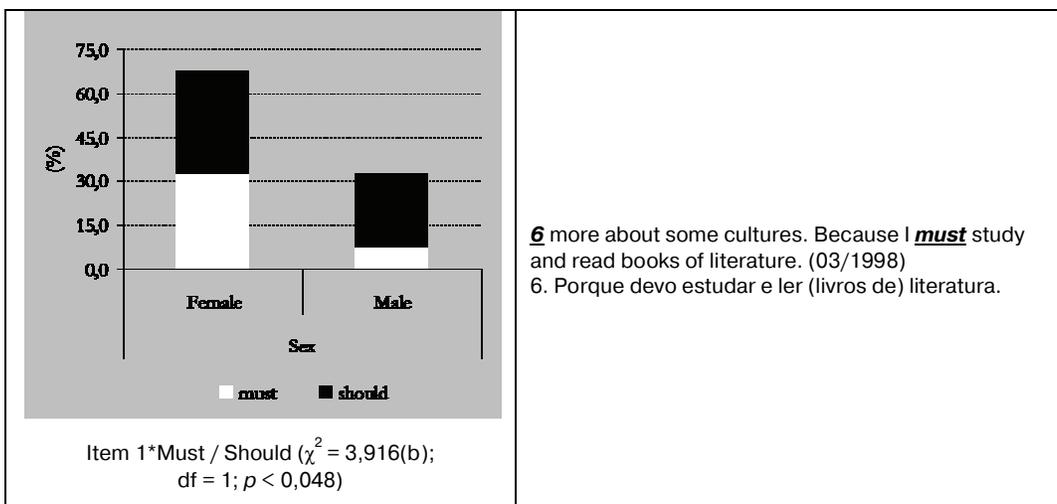


Figure 5. Use of “must” and “should” by Sex in Item 6 (Respondents’ Output in 2008)

On the whole, in the corpus selected in 1998—9 (March-June), stands out respondents’ frequent use of “must”. On the contrary, the 2008 (March) sample displays an overriding occurrence of the modal “should” per item, except in items 2 and 8, in which there is the same amount of instances concerning “must” and “should” (cf. Figure 6).

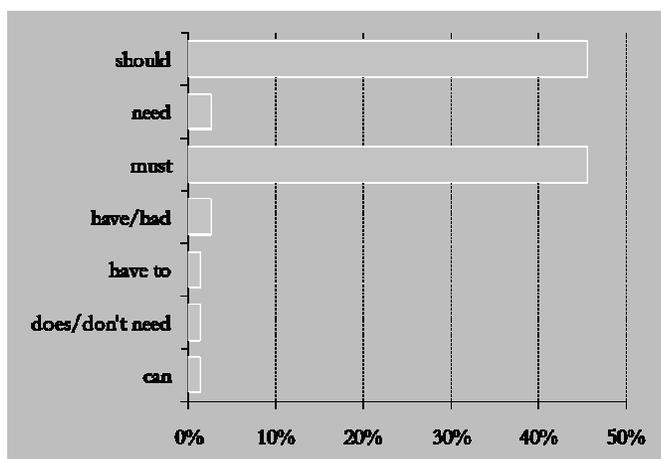


Figure 6. Respondent’s use of modals in Item 8 (Case Study, 2008)

Discussion

In the discussion of the results, several issues have to be taken into account of semantic and pragmalinguistic nature. Second-year undergraduates resort more often to the modal auxiliary “should” in the translation of the statements.

On the one hand, comes to the fore the topic of the statements rendered in English, i.e. “reading”, envisaged as a necessity or moral obligation in contrast with the overriding sense of duty explicit in the former group of respondents’ output one decade earlier (as briefly displayed in Table 3, transcribed from *Longman Student Grammar of Spoken and Written English*, by Biber et al., 2004: 176).

Table 3

Modals (LSGSWE, 2004:176)

Name of category	Meaning	Modals	Semi-Modals
Obligation	Personal / intrinsic meaning	must should ought to	had better have (got) to need to be supposed to
Necessity	Logical/extrinsic meaning		

The former group of respondents’ use of “must” (1998—9) is likely to be explained as a “logical necessity in conversation due to the strong impression *must* makes when used in face-to-face interaction” (Biber et al. 2004: 181), a categorical imperative, or taking the pedagogical context, as stating that something is required by a rule or law also evidenced in the academic prose (evidenced in item 8). And this pragmatic value may

underpin its use in items 2 and 8, displaying an equal amount of instances of both modals:

2 7H;112 home Because when I read I **must** be in silence. 7H;113 home because (03/1998)

2. Prefiro ler em casa porque quando leio um livro devo estar em silêncio.

9 use like a text studied in school one **must** to read it carefully. 7H;112 Fernan (03/1998)

8. Um texto estudado na escola deve ler-se cuidadosamente.

In item 2, the utterance “Because when I read [at home] I must be in silence” points to a personal intrinsic necessity related to respondents’ reading styles and personal way of meaningfully process information in their reading of any text in depth. Those who have used “should” in the translation of the same items may be accounting for the sort of strategy advised by parents and educators so as to undertake their reading activity, or personal/private meaning (obligation) and necessity.

The internal/external obligation clines are also evidenced in the sort of output by male and female respondents’ translation of the statement “Porque devo estudar e ler (livros de) literatura.” (item 6). Male respondents opted for the translation “because I should read books of literature”, as an activity they are advised to do to learn and interact with other cultures whereas more female respondents in 2008 see it more as an obligation. Reading interests and styles come to the fore among students taking Humanities and Science degrees.

On the other, in the scope of interlanguage strategies, respondents seemed to have borrowed patterns from L1, expanding patterns from the knowledge of English in a non-systematic way and expressing meanings using the words and “grammar” which are already known. The strong influence of the possible close translation of the Portuguese *dever* as “must” might give a reason for respondents’ output, which points to respondents’ lack of awareness of the semantic and pragmatic value of “must” and “should” as compared to its use in Portuguese, which is may be gradually overcome via a longer exposure to instruction in English and Linguistics courses, at the university (flushed out in 1st- and 2nd-year undergraduates’ response), along with the conscious use of English for global communication fostered by the media and computer-mediated communication across media. This is reinforced by: a systematic EFL instruction at the university on modals and the number of years studying English, implying the knowledge of L1 and EFL linguistic and discursive specificities; and promoting familiarity with English in several registers and genres (English as *lingua franca* and as an international language) given their daily contact on the Internet, in media, films, for scientific and technological purposes, among other.

Furthermore, the diachronic case study has allowed to account for respondents’ distinctive linguistic choices across times, when comparing late nineties to a decade later which point to a discursive and pragmatic change in their production marked by the use of “should”, “have to” perceived as less threatening ways to express obligation in conversation (Biber et al. 2004:181), thus coming in the line of the maxim of manner.

In his study on "Recent grammatical change in English: data, description, theory", Leech (2004: 67) refers to an apparent decline in modal use, drawing on a descriptive study, due to the "rise, in recent centuries, of the so-called semi-modals, such as *be going to* and *have to*". The scholar further claims that "altogether, the semi-modals are very much less frequent (in written English) than the modals". Likewise, in the case study undertaken in 2008, the use of *have to/had to* stands out.

This case study equally confirmed: lack of knowledge of use and usage of modals in English related to (Thompson, 2002) form and structures, semantic and pragmatic levels, L1 interference, evidenced in respondents' written output (Howcroft and Gomes, 2006: 124), as well as register and use.

Drawing on this case study, it is clear that the English instruction at the University, particularly striking in the second year, together with the fact that a larger number of students learnt English in intermediate levels (B1), also had an impact on the changing pattern of respondents' written output, contributing to their awareness of the socio-cultural and pragmatic features of modality in English bearing in mind their response in contrast with the one by the group of respondents one decade later.

Conclusion

Despite the time span between data collected a decade ago, compared to data gathered in 2008, the case study corroborates many scholars' contention that learners/speakers should be conscious of and develop language and discourse awareness by focusing, for example, on the analysis of modals (be it in the grammatical, pragmatic or semantic clines), within a contrastive approach (L1 and FL / additional language), that is between Portuguese and English, because it contributes to learners'/speakers' understanding of language specificities and mechanisms, (whether their mother tongue or the target language), in a dynamic, dialogic and necessarily enriching way. This underpins speakers' development of communicative and intercultural competence, both in the scope of reception and production of spoken and written texts, underlying successful communication in the global context.

Similarly, benefits might be drawn from a contrastive analysis in as much as it allows for a further outlining of effective strategies facilitating non-native learners'/speakers' acquisition and development of communicative skills in English. The appropriate use of modal auxiliaries contributes to the effective development of intercultural competence required in professional, vocational and interpersonal communication. Acting upon students' data, in fact the other side of the mirror, gives an account of a changing trend in terms of speakers' use of modals likely to be related to shifts in the formal setting of teaching/learning of English for real communicative purpose worldwide.

Bearing in mind previous research in crisscrossing domains related to the empirical study of literature, stylistics and reading research, among other, speakers ought to interact with authentic texts including literary texts (intensively and extensively) in English. So argues Byram (1988: 41): "Because of its symbolic and transparent nature language can stand alone and represent the rest of a culture's phenomena — most successfully in the literary use of language — and yet it points beyond itself and thereby

constantly undermines its own independence.” These are meant to facilitate the encounter between mother tongue (L1) and foreign language (FL) promoted in the teaching/learning context for aesthetic, ethic and cultural purposes, thus enabling individuals to interact with broader communicative contexts in the global world. Even though modal auxiliaries are widely used across registers (i.e. conversational, fictional, news and academic register), Biber et al. (*Longman Student Grammar of Spoken and Written English*, 2004: 176) account for a higher frequency of occurrence of semi-modals in conversational and fictional registers. Learners’/speakers’ familiarization with the use of semi-modals, for instance, those implying deontic modality, like “have to”, “have got to”, “had better”, might foster their linguistic and intercultural competence. These imply the resource to less intimidating ways of expressing obligation across cultures/linguistic codes and, consequently, avoiding communication clashes.

These are but some of the pillars of intercultural and multilingual communication which promote the encounter of multiple identities, of the “same” and “the other”, in as much as, advances Byram (1988: 41) “language pre-eminently embodies the values and meanings of a culture, refers to cultural artefacts and signals people’s cultural identity”. Failure to do so (an instance of negative transfer) will mean that the non-native speaker/learner may face misunderstandings in real life communication (in FL / Additional Language) when English is the *lingua franca* or the international language for communication.

Finally, this paper points to further research as follows: analysing (1) the way modals are presented in manuals, and student grammars, either designed on a national or international level, (2) specificities of European Portuguese and Brazilian Portuguese reflected upon non-native speakers’ use of English so as to uncover any changing patterns owing to major influence exerted by English as an international language for professional and global communication. Moreover, it evidences the role the English and Portuguese languages play now in the context of world languages and unearths their living uses and structures.

Corpora analysis of authentic communicative events among native speakers, followed by a systematic study of modality in a contrastive perspective would offer solid ground for the speakers’/learners’ finding their own voices and developing critical abilities not to mention strategic competence. In the process, speakers are believed to develop the procedural knowledge of “social groups and their products and practices in one’s own and in one’s interlocutor country”, to tag along Sealey and Carter (2004: 143), as well as of “the processes of societal and individual interaction”.

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APPENDIX 1. Modals: Contrastive analysis (1998 AND 2008) — Occurrence of the modal auxiliary "must" in respondents' corpus (1998) and its translation into Portuguese (2008)

is a problem of education. Children must be aware of the importance of reading

1. As crianças devem estar conscientes da importância da leitura. (03/2008)

2. 7H; 112 home Because when I read I must be in silence. 7H; 113 home because (03/1998)

2. Prefiro ler em casa porque quando leio um livro devo estar em silêncio.

3 o Pessoa Because when I read a book i must concentre me, and books are more int (03/1998)

3. Porque quando leio um livro, devo concentrar-me.

5 19 Because are big 2B20 Because I must read. 2B21 I try to understand the (03/1998)

4. Porque devo ler.

6 more about some cultures. Because I must study and read books of literature. (03/1998)

5. Porque devo estudar e ler (livros de) literatura.

7 how to answer and when I don't know I ***must*** to put any thing that I don't feel.
(03/1998)

6. Quando não sei, não devo pôr algo que não sinta.

8 no preference I just read the ones I ***must***. 7H; 118 texts which are easy to in
(03/1998)

7. Só leio os que devo.

9 use like a text studied in school one ***must*** to read it carefully. 7H;112 Fernan
(03/1998)

8. Um texto estudado na escola deve ler-se cuidadosamente.

10 er the questions provided 9K;178 We ***must*** read atentivly and understand the
tex (03/1998)

9. Devemos ler atentamente o texto para o perceber.

7 purpose Reading is something that we ***must*** do if we want to pass our degree
10 (03/1998)

10. A leitura é algo que devemos fazer se queremos passar o ano.

8 and we must read it and after that we ***must*** explain what we have understood
10L (03/1998)

11. Devemos lê-lo e depois explicar o que entendemos.