

On Modal Interpretations of the French *Conditionnel**

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1. Introduction

The first goal of this paper is to pursue a uniform formal semantic analysis of different uses of the French *conditionnel* morphology, so named for its use in the main clause of counterfactual (aka remote or subjunctive) conditionals.

- (1) S'il n'était pas linguiste, il **serait** comédien.
'If he were not an actor, he **would be** an actor.'

It is possible to analyze the morphology as composed of future and perfective morphology (see Iatridou (2000)); however for the purpose of analyzing its interaction with certain modals and attitude predicates, I will treat it as a unit. I will also assume differences in person and number (*je mangerais* 'I would eat'; *ils mangeraient* 'they would eat') to be orthogonal.

The second goal will be an analysis of the related phenomena in English, including the morphologically preterite forms of modals (*should*, *ought to*, *might* and *could*) and the attitude verb *wish*.

Section 2 argues that the core shared meaning of the *conditionnel* is its possible counterfactuality. In the analysis proposed, *should*, for example, is a necessity modal embedded under a counterfactual operator like *would*. Section 3 proposes an account of the difference in meaning between, for example, *should* and *would have to*, based on certain characteristic discourse properties.

2. (Possible) Counterfactuality

2.1 Epistemic *doit* and *devrait*

Copley (2005) presents a contrast between epistemic *must* and *should* (see English

* Thank you to Mats Rooth, Dorit Abusch and members of the Cornell Semantics seminar.

glosses) which appears also to obtain in French. French *devrait* and English *ought to/should* are felicitous with a continuation that the speaker is ignorant of the truth of the embedded proposition (henceforth “prejacent”), while the same continuation following *have to/must* ‘doit’ is infelicitous, or at least more marked in comparison.

- (2) a. # La bière **doit** être froide maintenant, mais je n’ai aucune idée si c’est le cas.
 # ‘The beer **has to/must** be cold by now, but I have absolutely no idea if it is.’
 b. La bière **devrait** être froide maintenant, mais je n’ai aucune idée si c’est le cas.
 ‘The beer **ought to/should** be cold by now but I have no idea if it is.’

The same contrast holds for a continuation in which the speaker denies the truth of the prejacent.

- (3) a. # La bière **doit** être froide maintenant, mais elle ne l’est pas.
 # ‘The beer **has to/must** be cold by now, but it’s not.’
 b. La bière **devrait** être froide maintenant, mais elle ne l’est pas.
 ‘The beer **ought to/should** be cold by now, but it’s not’

Note that reordering the conjuncts does not remove the infelicity.

- (4) # Je n’ai aucune idée si la bière est froide, mais elle **doit** l’être maintenant.
 # ‘I have absolutely no idea if the beer is cold, but it **has to/must** be by now.’
 (5) # La bière n’est pas froide, mais elle **doit** l’être maintenant.
 # ‘The beer isn’t cold, but it **has to/must** be by now.’

Following Kratzer (1981, 1991), epistemic *have to/must* has an epistemic modal base, consisting of all possible worlds consistent with the speaker’s knowledge (e.g. worlds in which the speaker put beer in the fridge three hours ago), and a stereotypical ordering source, consisting of worlds that follow the normal course of events (e.g. worlds in which putting items in a fridge causes them to chill within a certain period of time). I assert *must p* because all my evidence tells me that *p*; therefore, it is unsurprising that the continuation I have absolutely no idea whether *p* is infelicitous. And asserting both *must p* and *not p*, Copley argues, amounts to a case of Moore’s paradox: *p* and *I don’t believe that p*. Epistemic *doit* and *have to/must* behave as expected. The utterances with *devrait* and *ought to/should*, in comparison, are perfectly acceptable.¹

The contrast also holds for the past forms of the modals (i.e. with perfect *avoir* ‘have’). Suppose we are attending a day-long workshop at a windowless venue. I haven’t left the building all day, but remember that the forecast was calling for quite a lot of rain and the sky was full of dark stormclouds. At the end of the day, I walk outside only to discover that the grass and pavement are bone dry. Uttering (6a) is infelicitous, while (6b) is quite natural.

¹ See also relevant discussion in Werner (2005). In Werner’s analysis, *must* entails *will* according to a hierarchy of ordering sources; by stipulation, *ought to/should* lies outside of the hierarchy.

- (6) a. # Il a **dû** pleuvoir, mais il n'a pas plu.
 # 'It **must/has to have** rained, but it didn't.'
 b. 'Il **aurait dû** pleuvoir, mais il n'a pas plu.
 'It **should/must** have rained, but it didn't.'

(6a) is another case of Moore's paradox: it asserts both that I know that it didn't rain and that among all the worlds consistent with my knowledge right now the closest stereotypical worlds are those in which it rained in the past.²

Since it is only the *conditionnel* morphology which distinguishes the French forms *doit* and *devrait*, and *a dû* and *aurait dû*, we will therefore pursue the hypothesis that the *conditionnel* (and something analogous in English) is responsible for this contrast.

2.2 Deontic *doit* and *devrait*

Ninan (2005) observes a similar contrast between deontic *must* and *should*, which also holds between French *doit* and *devrait*. In virtue of Sam's sins, Sam's mother utters one of the following:

- (7) a. # Sam **doit** se rendre à la confession, mais il n'y va pas.
 # 'Sam **has to/must** go to confession, but he's not going to.'
 b. Sam **devrait** se rendre à la confession, mais il n'y va pas.
 'Sam **ought to/should** go to confession, but he's not going to.'

The apparent infelicity of *doit* and *have to/must* persists despite reordering of conjuncts or change of person.

- (8) # Sam ne se rend pas à la confession, mais il **doit** le faire.
 # 'Sam isn't going to go to confession, but he **has to/must**.'
- (9) # Je **dois** me rendre à la confession, mais je n'y vais pas.
 # 'I **have to/must** go to confession, but I'm not going to.'

In Section 2.1, we found epistemic *must* and *doit* well behaved and epistemic *ought to/should* and *devrait* aberrant. Here, it seems at first that the situation is reversed. Since obligations can and often do go unfulfilled, we can imagine a possible world in which Sam has to go to confession and Sam isn't going to go to confession are both true. Indeed, Kratzer's analysis of deontic necessity is motivated by this potential conflict between what is required and what actually obtains. We analyze *must* or *have to* in this case with a modal base of worlds consistent with the circumstances (*viz.* Sam has committed sins) and an ordering source of worlds consistent with religious or moral norms (*viz.* sinners confess their sins). *Sam doit se rendre à la confession* can be true even if the modal base does not contain worlds in which Sam follows religious norms and goes to confes-

² Here I assume that an epistemic modal scopes above the perfect operator; see Iatridou (1991), Abusch (1997), Stowell (2004) and Haegeman (2006) for discussion.

sion. In other words, we do not expect an infelicity. *Ought to/should* behaves as expected. It is *must* (and *have to*) which, according to Ninan, requires special treatment. Ninan's move is to introduce epistemic content into the semantics of *must*—but not *ought to/should*. Rather than a circumstantial modal base, *must* would have an epistemic modal base and thus, just as we saw above for epistemic modals, the infelicity of examples like (7a) are reduced to a variation of Moore's paradox: in the first conjunct of (7a) Sam's mother implies that she does not know whether he will go to confession (her epistemic alternatives include both worlds in which he goes to confession and worlds in which he does not), yet in the second conjunct she asserts that he will not.

While the similarity of this account of deontic necessity to Copley's account of epistemic necessity is certainly striking, I'm not sure it is necessary to posit an epistemic modal base for deontic modals in order to maintain the symmetry. Given the non omniscience of a speaker, it seems plausible that a circumstantial modal base (the set of worlds consistent with the circumstances in the world of evaluation) must almost certainly be relative to the speaker and/or speech participants. A modal uttered by one of Galileo's contemporaries, for example, would arguably not have a modal base of worlds consistent with the world being round. The advantage of positing a circumstantial modal base is that we don't have to treat deontic *doit* and *have to/must* as special. All the deontic modals have a circumstantial modal base, and we can again ask why *devrait* and *ought to/should* behave differently with respect to Moore's paradox and what it is about the semantics of the *conditionnel* that gives rise to this behavior.

Turning to the past forms, English *have to* and *must* lack a deontic interpretation entirely (cf. (10a)) which is available with (and even the most natural reading of) *should/ought to have*. Ninan argues that the unavailability of the deontic reading is ruled out pragmatically: we cannot require that someone bring about a past event. Since the relative scope of *have to/must* and past *have* is fixed, the reading in which an obligation held in the past is also not available. The PAST > NEC deontic reading is, however, available for English *had to* and French *a dû*. Like the present forms, this reading too implies³ that the prejacent obtained, e.g. that Sam did in fact go to confession; English *ought to/should* and French *devoir* with the *conditionnel* in French again allow a reading in which the prejacent did not obtain.

- (10) a. Sam **a dû** se rendre à la confession.
 (i) #‘Sam **must/has to have** gone to confession.’
 (ii) ‘Sam **had** to go to confession.’
 b. Sam **aurait dû** se rendre à la confession.
 ‘Sam **should/ought to have** gone to confession.’

2.3 Propositional Attitude Verbs *veut* and *voudrait*

Heim (1992) observed what I will argue to be the same contrast for English *want* and *wish*, a contrast which also holds between the related French verbs *veut* and *voudrait*. In

³ Hacquard (2006) shows that in French the actuality is entailed.

(11) based on Heim's example, we get the strong impression in (b) that Karin believes it very unlikely or impossible that her husband will teach on Tuesdays and Thursdays.

- (11) a. Karin **veut** que son mari enseigne les mardis et les jeudis.
 'Karin **wants** her husband to teach Tuesdays and Thursdays.'
 b. Karin **voudrait** que son mari enseigne les mardis et les jeudis.
 'Karin's husband **wishes** that her husband would teach Tuesdays and Thursdays.'

The modal base is again doxastic: the set of worlds consistent with the speaker's belief; the ordering source is buletic, consisting of worlds in which the speaker's desires are met.⁴ Consider a truly impossible prejacent, one in which time stands still (example adapted from Heim).

- (12) a. # Je **veux** que ce weekend continue pour toujours.
 # 'I **want** this weekend to last forever.'
 b. Je **voudrais** que ce weekend continue pour toujours.
 'I **wish** this weekend would last forever.'

While some speakers may not reject (12a) outright, Heim suggests that there is an important sense in which the speaker of (12a) admits the impossibility of realizing her desire and the speaker of (12b) does not, perhaps in a metaphorical or schizophrenic way: "The reasonable part of me knows and is resigned to the fact that time passes, but the primitive creature of passion has lost sight of it" (200).

We arrive at another variant of Moore's Paradox, since there are, for any rational speaker, no doxastic alternatives in which a weekend lasts forever, and *veut* or *want* assert that the most desirable belief worlds are worlds in which the weekend lasts forever. *Voudrais* and *wish* are not paradoxical; therefore, they must be able to quantify over counterfactual worlds.

Since there are also syntactic *di want* and *wish*—the former takes an infinitival complement and the latter a finite complement with subjunctive morphology, it is worth noting that the semantic contrast in French exists independently of the syntactic category of the complement. The prejacent of (12) is finite; in (13), it is infinitival.

- (13) a. # Je **veux** être enceinte. [uttered by a man]
 # 'I **want** to be pregnant.'
 b. Je **voudrais** être enceinte. [uttered by a man]
 'I **wish** I were pregnant.'

2.4 Epistemic *peut* and *pourrait*

While epistemic *peut* and *may* often appear interchangeable with *pourrait* and *might*, respectively, many speakers intuit a difference in tentativeness or remoteness (see Palmer

⁴ Heim's original proposal was set in a dynamic framework but the spirit is, I believe, the same.

(1979, 1986) and Huddleston (2002) for English).

- (14) a. Vous **pouvez** avoir raison.
 ‘You **may** be right.’
 b. Vous **pourriez** avoir raison.
 ‘You **might** be right.’

It is also possible to find counterfactual examples which distinguish the two. Suppose we are in a game preserve located in France with African animals in a desert-like landscape. We know that we are still in France, but nearly all of the evidence available would suggest that we are in Africa.

- (15) a. # On **peut** être en Afrique. [uttered in France]
 # ‘We may be in Africa.’
 b. On **pourrait** être en Afrique. [uttered in France]
 ‘We **might/could** be in Africa.’ (English data from Huddleston (2002))

English *might have* and *could have* have received much more attention (cf. Condoravdi (2001), Stowell (2004)). Both *may/can have* and *a pu* on the one hand and *might/could have* and *aurait pu* on the other allow a present epistemic reading about a past event. Both (16a) and (16b) have readings on which it is now an epistemic possibility that Jules won in the past, with apparent scope POSS>PAST. What (16b) has that (16a) lacks is a reading in which there was a past possibility that Jules would win, even if we now know that he did not in fact win.

- (16) a. Jules **a pu** gagné.
 ‘Jules **can/may** have won.’
 b. Jules **aurait pu** gagner.
 ‘Jules **could/might** have won’ (English data modified from Condoravdi 2001)

Could/might have and *aurait pu* appear to contradict the generalization that epistemic modals cannot generally be interpreted below past tense (cf. fn 2). Condoravdi (2001) and others are therefore lead to introduce a metaphysical, historical or counterfactual modal base. Following our reasoning above, however, if we can consider the evidence in counterfactual worlds, worlds in which things turned out differently, the evidence in those worlds is in fact consistent with Jules’s winning. In (6b), we were able to overlook our knowledge of it having in fact rained; in (16b), we ignore our knowledge of Jules having won.

2.5 Deontic *peut* and *pourrait*

A similar difference in tentativeness/remoteness and sometimes politeness is observed between deontic *peut* and *can*, and *pourrait* and *can*.

- (17) a. **Pouvez**-vous passer le sel?
 ‘Can you pass the salt?’

- b. **Pourriez** -vous passer le sel?
‘Could you pass the salt?’

Ninan (2005) argues that one cannot require someone to bring about past events. It should be equally odd to give permission that someone bring about a past event, ruling out the scope POSS>PAST. The opposite interpretation is ruled out in English by its fixed scope, but is available in French. In fact, there is an actuality entailment in French: in (18a) you did in fact do the dishes. (18a) asserts that there is at least one closest normative belief world in which I did the dishes; it is therefore Moore-paradoxical if the speaker believes that you did not do the dishes. In (18b), however, both the French and English versions are consistent with your not having done the dishes. Note that (18b) is also special in that it seems stronger than mere permission. Huddleston (2002) suggests that a kind of pragmatic strengthening is present in such examples (see also Palmer (1979:159) and von Stechow and Gillies (2007:fn.4)).

- (18) a. Vous **avez pu** faire la vaisselle.
‘You **can/may have** done the dishes.’
‘You **were permitted** to do the dishes.’
b. Vous **auriez pu** faire la vaisselle!
‘You **could/might have** done the dishes!’
(English data modified from Huddleston 2002)

2.6 Counterfactual if necessary, but not necessarily counterfactual

As advertised, we want to pursue an analysis which takes the *conditionnel* to be a modal in its own right. Our starting point is Kratzer’s (1981, seq) analysis of *would* with an ‘empty’ modal base and ‘totally realistic’ ordering source. It is this modal which gives us the worlds of evaluation for an embedded modal, if any.

This is perhaps a good point at which to stress that purpose of this section has not been to show that all instances of modals with the *conditionnel* are counterfactual, i.e. that the modal force of the embedded modal never holds in the actual world. Rather, the worlds of evaluation are possibly, but not necessarily, counterfactual. We’ve known since at least Anderson (1951) that morphologically “counterfactual” conditionals are not strictly counterfactual in the sense that the prejacent is false. In (19), for instance, the prejacent of *would* is explicitly asserted to hold in the actual world.

- (19) If Jones had taken arsenic, he would be showing just exactly those symptoms he does in fact show. (Anderson 1951)

All possible worlds (modulo implicit or explicit restriction) are ordered according to their similarity to the evaluation world. Although an implicature of nonactuality may arise by competition of *would p* and its nonmodal counterpart *p* (a Gricean maxim of informativeness would militate towards simple *p* if the speaker is in a position to know that *p* is true), nothing in the semantics of *would* asserts nonactuality.

3. Modal Specific Indefinites

3.1 Distinguishing properties

In a review of French and other languages in which the meaning of ‘should’ is derived from a necessity modal and counterfactual morphology, von Stechow and Iatridou (2008) rightly observe that English *ought to/should* does not mean the same as *would have to*. The authors take this as evidence that *ought to/should* is not a necessity modal embedded under a counterfactual modal. However, we’ve now considered lots of evidence suggesting that it is. What we require, then, is an account of this meaning difference. Let’s begin by considering some distinguishing properties of so-called “transparent” interpretations (cf. *would have to*) and “opaque” interpretations (cf. *should*).

Perhaps the most salient difference is felicity in out-of-the-blue contexts. *Should*-type readings can be used in out-of-the-blue contexts; *would have to*-type readings cannot. Suppose you are at some social function where most people are strangers. You find yourself standing by a man you don’t know. (20a) is a natural opener; (20b) is decidedly odd.

- (20) Bonsoir, monsieur. Je **devrais** me présenter.
 a. ‘Good evening, sir. I **should** introduce myself.
 b. ‘Good evening, sir. I **would have to** introduce myself.

The *would have to* reading is only appropriate if some remote/counterfactual worlds have been evoked. In (21) this is achieved via negation.

- (21) Je suis heureux qu’on n’est pas dans une classe. Je **devrais** me présenter.
 ‘I’m glad we’re not in some class. I **would have to** introduce myself.’

Not only do possibly counterfactual worlds have to be evoked for the *would have to* reading, they must be available to all speech participants. Or at least a cooperative speaker must expect that such worlds are available to the listener (i.e. they are in the common ground). It is not sufficient for the reading (20b), for example, that *either* the speaker *or* the listener have possibly counterfactual worlds in mind. The speaker must believe that both she *and* the listener have access to them as well.

This discourse constraint on the *should*-type reading is not the same; the *should*-type allows a speaker-listener asymmetry. Suppose you have invited me to your dinner party, and that as I am about to leave at the end of the evening, I notice quite a significant mess in the kitchen. Given the circumstances, and the norms associated with being a polite and considerate guest, I utter one of the following.

- (22) a. Je **dois** vous aider.
 ‘I **have to/must** help you.’
 b. Je **devrais** vous aider
 (i) ‘I **ought to/should** help you.’
 (ii) ‘I **would have to** help you.’

(22a) is quite insistent: helping you is the only option and so help you, I will. In (22b) I allow for other options. It may be that I have such worlds in mind: perhaps you do not trust me with your china; perhaps I am due to pick up Aunt Hilda from the airport from her red-eye flight. Or, it may be that I am leaving it open for you to identify certain worlds: perhaps your dishes came from the caterer's; perhaps you are really tired and just want me to leave so that you can go to bed.

Finally, both the *would have to*- and *should*-type readings are felicitous with an irrealis *if*-clause restrictor. In the English *would have to* reading, it seems the modal force of the embedded modal holds over all of the counterfactual worlds; in the *should* reading, the modal force holds in some but not all of the counterfactual worlds. The English gloss of (23b) is inconsistent with the continuation 'but he would not have to': in *all* of the counterfactual police-officer worlds, he must arrest us. This same continuation is natural with gloss (23a): in *some but not necessarily all* of the counterfactual police-worlds does he have to arrest us.

- (23) S'il y avait un policier ici, il **devrait** nous arrêter.
 a. 'If there were a police officer, he **should** arrest us.'
 b. 'If there were a police officer **would have to** arrest us.'

3.2 Quantification and discourse

Let us suppose, then, that the *conditionnel* on its *would have to*-type reading has universal force, on analogy with the universal determiner *all* and the *conditionnel* on its *should*-type reading has existential force, like the determiner *some*. This analysis has a precedent in Klinedinst (2007), who argues that all weak/possibility modals such as *may* are plural distributive indefinites for worlds, i.e. analogous with *some*.

Universal quantifiers quantify over a contextually available domain, while existential quantifiers introduce entities into the domain. The *conditionnel* on its *would have to*-type reading requires an implicit or explicit restriction over worlds in the same way that *all apples* in (24a) requires either an implicit or explicit restriction over individuals; the *conditionnel* on its *should*-type reading introduces worlds into the discourse in the same way that *some apples* in (24b) can introduce individuals into the discourse. It is for this reason that both universal determiners and the *conditionnel* on its *would have to*-type reading are infelicitous in out-of-the-blue contexts.

- (24) a. **All** #(the) apples are on the table.
 b. **Some** apples are on the table.

As discussed for example (22), we are not introducing just any set of worlds into the discourse, but certain worlds in particular. Here is the trick I want to propose. Suppose that the *should*-type reading of the *conditionnel* is indeed a plural indefinite, but in fact a specific plural indefinite. A nominal specific indefinite introduces a specific set of individuals into the discourse. Similarly, a specific indefinite for worlds introduces a specific set of worlds into the discourse.

Nominal specific indefinites also have the property of speaker-listener epistemic asymmetry. It has often been noted the speaker must have a specific referent in mind (cf. (25b)), but the specific indefinite is licit even if the listener cannot recover it, as in (25a).

- (25) a. I'm going to buy some (particular) CDs. It's a surprise, so I can't tell you which.
 b. I'm going to buy some (particular) CDs: one of Brittany Spears, one of Feist, and one of John Coltrane.

This proposal has a precedent in work by Rullmann, Matthewson and Davis (2009) on St'at'imcets, a language in which the same modal is glossed with either universal or existential force, depending on context.⁵

- (26) lán-lhkacw **ka** áts'x-en ti kwtámts-sw-a
 already-2SG.SUBJ **DEON** see-DIR DET husband-2SG.POSS-DET
 'You **must/can/may** see your husband now.' (Rullmann *et al.* 2009: 12)

The authors argue that in fact all modals in the language are specific plural indefinites. On analogy with Kratzer's (1998) analysis of nominal specific indefinites, a contextually determined choice-function h selects a subset of worlds in the domain (i.e. modal base). If the choice-function selects a proper subset of worlds, the interpretation is existential. If the choice-function selects an exhaustive subset of worlds (i.e. the identity function), the interpretation is universal.

The idea for the French *conditionnel* is that it varies in the same way. In addition to an empty modal base f and totally realistic ordering source g , the *conditionnel* is evaluated relative to a contextually-determined choice-function h (type $\langle st, st \rangle$). In *would have to*-type interpretations, the choice-function selects an exhaustive subset; in the *should-type* interpretations, the choice-function selects a proper subset of worlds.

- (27) $[[COND \phi]]^{f,g,h,w}$ is defined iff
 (i) modal base f is "empty"
 (ii) ordering source g is "totally realistic"
 (iii) h is a choice-function
 (iv) $h(g(f(w))) \subseteq f(w)$
 If defined,
 $[[COND \phi]]^{f,g,h,w} = 1$ iff $\forall w' \in h(g(f(w)))$: $[[\phi(w')]] = 1$

3.3 *Conditionnel Journalistique*

We have discussed two interpretations of the *conditionnel* with an embedded modal: a *would have to*-type interpretation with universal force and a *should-type* interpretation with the force of a specific indefinite. If the *conditionnel* indeed varies according to a choice-function h , we would expect it to vary in this way even in the absence of an em-

⁵ I am not making any claim about the expression of notional 'should' in St'at'imcets.

bedded modal. As it turns out, there is reason to think that it does. Consider (28) which has not only a *would* reading, but also a reading something like (although we shall see not the same as) an evidential.

- (28) Le président **arriverait** aujourd'hui.
 a. 'The president **would** arrive/be arriving today.'
 b. '**Apparently** the president will arrive/ is arriving today.'

I will refer to this second interpretation as the journalistic *conditionnel* (JC) because it is often (but by no means exclusively) found in news reports. The most salient feature of the JC is the non-commitment of the speaker to the truth of the prejacent. Dendale (1993) offers the following continuation is appropriate in (29a), it is rejected following the variants with modal *devoir* (on its epistemic reading) (29b), and with the non-modal present (29c).

- (29) a. JC
 Les militaires de Buenos Aires **seraient** fort contrariés de la tournure qu'a prise l'affaire. #Vraie ou fausse l'annonce de leur réaction est significative de...
 'Military personnel in Buenos Aires **are (apparently)** strongly against the turn of events. True or false, the announcement of their reaction shows that...'
 b. *Devoir* 'must'
 Les militaires de Buenos Aires **doivent** être fort contrariés de la tournure qu'a prise l'affaire. #Vraie ou fausse, l'annonce de leur réaction est significative de...
 'Military personnel in Buenos Aires **must** be strongly against the turn of events. #True or false, the announcement of their reaction shows that'
 c. Indicative
 Les militaires de Buenos Aires **sont** fort contrariés de la tournure qu'a prise l'affaire. #Vraie ou fausse, l'annonce de leur réaction est significative de ...
 'Military personnel in Buenos Aires **are** strongly against the turn of events. #True or false, the announcement of their reaction shows that...'

Further, although the JC is often discussed as an evidential, unlike most evidentials, it is felicitous even when the prejacent is known to be false, as shown in the attested examples (30) and (31) from Dendale (my glosses).

- (30) Ce matin la flotte britannique **aurait quitté** le port de Portsmouth. Le gouvernement britannique a déclenché ainsi le compte à rebours pour la guerre des Malouines.
 'This morning, the British fleet apparently left the port of Portsmouth. The British government thus launched the countdown to the War of the Falklands.'
 (31) Je réfute fermement sa suggestion selon laquelle l'action gouvernementale **serait** influencée par des considérations électorales.
 'I strongly reject his/her suggestion, according to which government action is **supposedly** influenced by consideration of elections.'

In this respect, the JC behaves like other interpretations of the *conditionnel*. The prejacent

may or may not hold in the actual world. In our terms, the JC has an empty modal base with a totally realistic ordering source.

The JC is also felicitous in out-of-the-blue contexts and is often used this way in news reports. Like the *should*-type interpretation of the *conditionnel*, the JC does not require an explicit or accommodated secondary criterion (e.g. *if*-clause), in this case a set of report/belief worlds.

(32) Q: Qu'est-ce qui se passe? 'What's happening?'

A: Le président **arriverait**.

'The president is **apparently arriving**.'

'The president **would arrive**.'

We will say that the choice function *h* picks out a subset of worlds, namely those worlds in which the source of the report is reliable, from the empty modal base. In the case of 'should', the speaker can, but need not, make explicit the propositions which characterize the worlds. In the case of the JC, these worlds are distinguished by the source of the report. In (33), the source of the report is not explicit. To make the source explicit, we use a *selon* or *d'après* 'according to' phrase, as in (34).

(33) Il pleuvrait.

(Apparently), it will rain.'

(34) **D'après les prévisions météo**, il pleuvrait (mais j'en doute).

'**According to the weather forecast**, it will rain (but I doubt it).'

4. Final Remarks

It remains to be seen whether an analysis similar to the one sketched here can be extended to languages other than French and English, or whether this is even desirable. Due to considerations of space, I most also leave unanswered several questions, including the (un)availability of scoping between the *conditionnel* and an embedded modal, what if any constraints exist for the contextual parameter (i.e. choice-function) *h* and a discussion of other flavors of modality. What *should* be clear, however, is that the *conditionnel* in French and preterite modals in English are, despite previous assumptions to the contrary, and *modulo* important discourse properties, best analysed as modals embedded under a counterfactual operator.

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