

Frequency differences in reportative exceptionalism and how to account for them

A case study on verbal reportative markers in French, Dutch and German

Tanja Mortelmans
University of Antwerp

Reportative evidential markers are – in contrast to other evidential markers – compatible with distancing interpretations, in which the speaker denies the truth of what is being reported. This exceptional behaviour of reportatives is termed ‘reportative exceptionalism’ (AnderBois 2014). In this paper, which addresses French, Dutch and German reportative markers, we argue that they differ with respect to the frequency with which such distancing interpretations actually arise. The French reportative *conditionnel* most frequently occurs with distancing interpretations, whereas German *sollen* hardly occurs with this function. Dutch *zou* takes up an intermediate position. It is claimed that the higher compatibility of the *conditionnel* with distancing interpretations can be accounted for by a number of factors: its general preference for contexts in which other perspectives than the speaker’s are highly salient; the fact that it has past tense morphology; and its general semantic make-up in which the marking of hypotheticality is a key function.

Keywords: reportative evidentiality, reportative exceptionalism, contrastive linguistics, modal verbs, polyfunctionality

1. Introduction

The West-Germanic languages German and Dutch as well as French – as a representative of a Romance language – feature verbal reportative markers, i.e. evidential markers which express that the speaker has obtained the information from a third source (another speaker, rumours, folk tales). German uses a present indicative form of the modal auxiliary *sollen* (in the following referred to as *soll_{IND}*) with an infinitive in this function, Dutch has an auxiliary construction which consists

of *zou* – the past tense form of modal/future *zullen* – combined with an infinitive, whereas French uses the *conditionnel*, i.e. an inflectional marker.

GERMAN

- (1) *Der [...] 65-Jährige [...] soll seine Bezüg-e bei dem Unternehmen jahrelang zu niedrig angegeb-en und Firmengeld-er veruntreu-t hab-en.*
 ART.DEF 65-year.old REP.3SG his earning-PL at ART.DEF company
 for.years too low report-PTCP.PST and company.fund-PL
 embezzle-PTCP.PST have-INF
 ‘The 65-year-old is **alleged to** have underreported his earnings at the company for years and to have embezzled company funds.’
 (Süddeutsche Zeitung 02.01.2020, p.15)

DUTCH

- (2) *De Bonvoisin zou neo-facistische organisatie-s financieel hebb-en gesteun-d*
 De Bonvoison REP.SG neo-fascist organisation-PL financially have-INF
 support-PTCP.PST
 ‘De Bonvoisin **allegedly** supported neo-fascist organisations financially.’
 (De Standaard, 1998)

FRENCH

- (3) *Olivier Dubois, qui travail-e [...] pour Libération [...], aurait été enlev-é [...] à Gao, au Mali.*
 Olivier Dubois who.REL work-PRS3SG for Libération have.COND3SG
 be.PTCP.PST kidnap-PTCP.PST at Gao in.the Mali
 ‘Olivier Dubois, who works for “Libération” was **reportedly**¹ kidnapped in Gao, Mali.’
 (Le Monde, 5.5.2021)

Although German and Dutch are typologically and genetically more strongly related and have a similar means to express reportative evidentiality – a cognate auxiliary construction –, the usage differences between German reportative *soll*_{IND} and Dutch reportative *zou* are in fact quite stark, as I will argue in this paper (see also Mortelmans 2009). Somewhat surprisingly, the Dutch reportative construction featuring *zou* + INF seems to be far more similar to the French

1. According to Celle (2007), the French *conditionnel* is not standardly translated in English by means of reportative adverbs like *reportedly* or *allegedly*, which, as Celle claims, are used under different conditions than the *conditionnel* (see also Celle 2009). In fact, it seems that speakers of English often choose not to translate the reportative marker at all. In this paper, however, I will explicitly translate the *conditionnel* by means of *reportedly/allegedly* (or by a passive evidential construction like *be said to*) for reasons of clarity.

conditionnel than to its German counterpart, also with respect to the degree in which both constructions are associated with so-called reportative exceptionality (in the remainder of this paper also referred to as RE). This term was coined by AnderBois (2014) to refer to the cross-linguistically valid observation that “an evidential-marked claim can be felicitously denied by the same speaker only if its evidence type is **reportative**” (AnderBois 2014: 240, original emphasis), as in the following example from Finnish:

FINNISH

- (4) *Liisa on kuulemma jo lähtenyt mutta en*
 Liz AUX.PRS3SG REP already leave.PTCP.PST but NEG
usko näin
 believe.PRS1SG.CNEG like.this
 ‘I’ve heard that Liz has already left, but I don’t believe it’

(from AnderBois 2014: 238)

Although it cannot be denied that all three reportative constructions allow RE, as will also be shown in this paper, this use seems to be much more common with the French and (to a somewhat lesser extent) Dutch reportative markers than with the German one. A number of obvious factors can be hypothesized to have an influence on the closer association of the French and Dutch reportative constructions with denial interpretations: they both contain a past tense morpheme (see Section 3.2), which is intrinsically linked to unreality (see for instance Larreya 2012), whereas the German reportative marker is a present tense form. Moreover, both the French *conditionnel* and Dutch *zou* are most often used with hypothetical or even counterfactual meaning (e.g. in unreal conditionals), which can easily be associated with denial, whereas *sollen* in its most frequent use expresses deontic modality (obligation or intention) – a meaning that does not naturally associate with denial. A number of other influencing factors, however, might be less straightforward, and this is what the present paper sets out to explain: study the reportative uses of Dutch *zou*, German *soll*_{IND} and the French *conditionnel*, focus on reportative exceptionality in the three languages and find out in which way functional differences (i.e. an increased presence of denial readings) are matched by syntactic differences or different pragmatic preferences between the markers.

The paper is organized as follows. In Section 2, I will address the notion of reportative evidentiality, present the concept of reportative exceptionality in more detail, and look into the difference between reportative markers, quotatives and markers of indirect speech, as these distinctions will be important for the present paper. In Section 3, the present-day semantics and diachronic development of the three markers will be investigated. In Section 4, I will present the results of a contrastive corpus study of reportative (and other) uses of Dutch *zou* + INF, German

*soll*_{IND} + INF and the French *conditionnel*, on the basis of a self-compiled newspaper corpus. I will specifically zoom in on denial uses and the syntactic/pragmatic contexts in which they occur. Section 5 will present the main conclusions.

2. Reportative evidentiality vs. quotative markers; reportative exceptionalism

In the abundant literature on evidentiality (see Aikhenvald 2004; Aikhenvald, ed., 2018 for seminal works on this topic), a number of often competing terms pop up to refer to those evidential markers that express that the speaker has accessed the information indirectly via some kind of report. The most widely used terms are reportative, hearsay and quotative; the notion of ‘reported speech’ is also often mentioned in connection to these phenomena (see e.g. Michael 2012; Spronck & Nikitina 2019; Vanderbiesen 2015).

Let us start with the notion of ‘reportative’ (‘hearsay’ is often used as a synonym). Three main features of reportative evidentiality can be distinguished. First, reportative evidentials – like other evidentials – are said to have scope over propositions, i.e. units which refer to something in the actual world and thus have a truth value. I follow Boye (2012, this volume) in that reportative evidentials concern (epistemic) justification for a particular proposition. Second, the justification offered consists in the fact that the current speaker refers to indirect reported evidence (in the sense of Willett 1988). And third, reportative evidentials construe the present speaker (or writer) as the deictic origo (instead of the original speaker, in case a genuine speech act can be identified). In this sense, reportative evidentiality is a deictic category centred around the reporting speaker. It is important to stress that the speaker, when using a reportative evidential, may also refer to rumours as the indirect evidence for his or her proposition. Reference to a concrete speech act with an identifiable speaker is therefore not necessarily implied. This also accounts for the observation that reportative evidentials differ with respect to the degree of concreteness and specificity with which the original speaker is portrayed (see also Vanderbiesen 2014, 2015). In an utterance like (5) containing the German reportative marker *sollen*, it is unclear who the original speaker was and what he/she has actually said.

GERMAN

- (5) *Die Polizei soll da gewesen sein und ihn abgeholt hab-en*
 ART.DEF police REP.IND.PRS3SG there be.PTCP.PST be.INF and 3SG.ACC.M
 pick.up.PTCP.PST have-INF
 ‘The police is said to have been there and picked him up/ **Allegedly**, the police was there and picked him up.’ (example from Diewald & Smirnova 2013: 451)

The same is said to hold for the reportative use of the *conditionnel* (Dendale 2018), which is primarily associated with situations in which the identity of the original speaker is unknown (Dendale 2018: 68; “le CE₁ ne donne aucune indication sur l’identité du LS” [= *locuteur source* ‘original speaker’]) and hence the original speaker is often not explicitly coded, as in the following example.

FRENCH

- (6) *Il y aurait eu une explosion au centre ville*
 EXP there have.COND3SG have.PTCP.PST ART.INDF explosion in.the centre city
 ‘**Reportedly**, there was an explosion in the city centre.’ (from Dendale 2018: 63)

Also for Dutch reportative *zou* + INF it has been claimed that it is compatible with situations in which the original source is quite general and not identifiable (Mortelmans 2022). In the same vein, Diewald & Smirnova (2013) write the following with respect to reportative *soll*_{IND}:

Mithilfe von *sollen* markiert der aktuelle Sprecher, dass der geäußerte Inhalt aus einer oder mehreren anderen Äußerungssituationen stammt. Es ist dabei unerheblich, wer genau die Äußerung tatsächlich getätigt hat. Wichtig ist, dass der aktuelle Sprecher die Original-Äußerung gehört, gelesen oder in irgendeiner anderen Weise wahrgenommen hat, d.h. dass er die Information über den beschriebenen Sachverhalt aus einer anderen Kommunikationssituation bezieht. [The current speaker marks by means of *sollen* that the uttered content originates from one or more other utterance situations. It is irrelevant who exactly actually made the utterance. What is important is that the current speaker has heard, read or in some other way perceived the original utterance, i.e., that he or she obtains the information about the described facts from another communication situation] (Diewald & Smirnova 2013: 454, my translation)

Reportatives thus focus on the perspective of the reporting speaker who accesses the information in his/her role as a recipient. As such, the use of a reportative may give rise to epistemic meanings or overtones, typically to the extent that the speaker distances him- or herself of what he/she has heard (Wiemer 2018; see e.g. for the *conditionnel*, Dendale 2018; for distancing uses of German *soll*_{IND}, Letnes 2008; Mortelmans 2000; for distancing uses of Dutch *zou*, Mortelmans 2009,

2022).² As a distancing interpretation seems to be typical of reportative evidential markers – it does not (or hardly) occur with inferential evidentials, for instance – it is referred to as reportative exceptionality (RE) (see also Faller 2019).

In summary, we find that cross-linguistically it is (at least) nearly universal that an evidential-marked claim can be felicitously denied by the same speaker only if its evidence type is reportative. (AnderBois 2014: 240)

Following AnderBois, it is the “salience of another perspectival agent” (AnderBois 2014: 242), which allows for denial interpretations. Such interpretations thus occur in “‘perspectivally-rich’ contexts”, and a reportative context can indeed be considered such a context. As I will show in this paper, however, denial interpretations do not arise with all reportative markers to the same extent. For instance, the French reportative *conditionnel* is used considerably more often in denial contexts than its German counterpart *soll*_{IND} + INF, which hints at the fact that other elements in the (formal, semantic or pragmatic) make-up of the *conditionnel* make it particularly prone to denial interpretations. More concretely, it will be hypothesized that (a) the compatibility of a reportative marker with linguistic elements that explicitly introduce another speech participant in the context increases the tendency towards denial interpretations as well as (b) its general association with hypotheticality or irrealis.

With respect to (a), the conceptual distinction between reportative evidentials, on the one hand, and quotative³ markers, on the other, might be relevant. A number of authors (e.g. Diewald & Smirnova 2010, 2013; Vanderbiesen 2016) have used the term quotative to refer to (various kinds of) reported speech markers whose main function lies in the “indication of a shift to an embedded commu-

2. The fact that reportatives typically give rise to negative epistemic overtones is in line with the observation that reportative evidentials do not generally evoke any commitment of the speaker to the truth of what s/he reports. By contrast, direct evidentials (expressing that the speaker has directly witnessed the proposition) typically express the speaker’s full commitment, whereas inferential markers are associated with only partial commitment to the truth of the utterance (see e.g. Mélaç 2014: 56–59). The general absence of speaker commitment with reportatives is fully compatible with interpretations of doubt and denial.

3. The term ‘quotative’ is used in many ways. Aikhenvald (2004: 177ff.) subsumes quotatives under the reportative category. If a language has two (grammatical) reportatives, she argues, the usual distinction is between source unknown (= reportative) and source known (quotative). The term quotative thus refers to a reportative marker indexing an identifiable source. In another tradition (see e.g. Buchstaller & Van Alphen 2012; Güldemann 2008, 2012), the label quotative is restricted to dedicated (i.e. conventionalized) markers of (typically direct) speech, thoughts, attitudes or physical activity that function as “a typification of a situation, a group of people or an individual” (Buchstaller & Van Alphen 2012: xv) rather than as “the exact depiction of an individual speech act in a particular situation” (Buchstaller & Van Alphen 2012: xv).

nicative scene” (Diewald & Smirnova 2010: 71); the speaker brings “some previous speech situation into play”, whereby “the deictic origo [is shifted] from the present speaker to a secondary speaker (Diewald & Smirnova 2010: 68–9). Diewald & Smirnova (2010) consider both direct quotation and different forms of indirect speech to belong to the quotative category, which they do not regard as evidential. Interestingly, it is not always feasible to classify particular markers of verbal report as genuinely reportative or genuinely quotative, as they may combine features of both categories. For the German construction *wollen* + INF, for instance, Vanderbiesen (2014) argues that it is more of a hybrid, as it has both reportative and quotative traits. An analysis along the same lines has been proposed for the Dutch reportative construction *zou* + INF, which is said to be more strongly oriented towards the original speaker than its German counterpart *sollen* + INF (Mortelmans 2009). It could therefore be expected that reportative markers with quotative traits potentially highlight another perspectival agent – the original speaker – to a greater extent than reportative markers without quotative traits. As a consequence, the former might be more prone to reportative exceptionality than the latter.

With respect to (b) – the general association of a particular marker with the expression of irrealis – we have already noted that both the *conditionnel* and *zou* + INF most often occur in hypothetical (conditional) contexts (see Section 3.1). Moreover, both markers carry past tense morphology, which is often associated with the expression of irrealis. Thus, the general association with irrealis might have an effect on the semantics of their reportative use as well. We will come back to this issue in Section 5.

3. French *conditionnel*, Dutch *zou* + INF, German *soll*_{IND} + INF: An overview

In this section, I will first look at the present-day semantics of the three constructions (3.1), before going into their diachronic development (3.2).

3.1 Present-day semantics and use

I will start with the French *conditionnel*, to which a high number of publications have been devoted (for a good overview and other references, see Bres 2018; see especially also Bres et al. 2012; Dendale & Tasmowski (eds.), 2001; Dendale 2001; Patard 2017).

The French *conditionnel* – formed by means of the suffix /ʁε/)⁴ – is a poly-functional marker with four⁵ different meanings in present-day French (Dendale 2001 terms these four meanings “emplois canoniques” ‘canonical uses’). First, it can be a tense marker expressing anteriority in the past, typically in contexts of indirect speech like (7). The past element refers to a speech event situated before the actual moment of speech/writing, as *a dit que* ‘has said that’ in (7).

FRENCH

- (7) *Enfin, le M..P. [...] a di-t qu=il*
 finally art.def M.P. have.PRS3SG say-PTCP.PST COMP=3SG.NOM.M
repasserait me cherch-er le lendemain et il
 come.COND3SG 1SG.ACC look.for-INF ART.DEF next.day and 3SG.NOM.M
m=a oubli-é bien sûr.
 1SG.ACC=have.PRS3SG forget-PTCP.PST well surely
 ‘Finally, the M.P. [...] said he would come back for me the next day and he forgot me, of course.’

(Jean Duvigneaud, *L’Or de La République*, 1957, p.308, example from Azzopardi 2011)

Second, the *conditionnel* is used in hypothetical contexts to express that the described event is hypothetical or even counterfactual (Bres 2018:12, Dendale 2001; Patard 2017). Note that in conditional environments, the protasis typically features an imperfective past tense form (the so-called *imparfait*, cf. *étaient* in Example 8), i.e. the French *conditionnel* does not normally occur in a conditional’s protasis, but only in its apodosis.

FRENCH

- (8) *Paris ne serait pas un capharnaüm [...] si les voiture-s*
 Paris NEG be.COND3SG NEG ART.INDF chaos if ART.DEF car-PL
n=y étaient pas si nombreuses.
 NEG=there be.PST3PL NEG so many
 ‘Paris would not be a chaotic mess [...] if there were not so many cars.’

(Evènement du jeudi 545, 1995, p.65, from Haillet 1998:67)

Third, the *conditionnel* can be used to soften or mitigate an utterance, as in (9). For some authors (e.g. Patard 2017), this use does not count as a separate mean-

4. The *conditionnel* originated in the combination of the infinitive and the verb *habere* in the past tense in late Latin (for more details, see Section 3.2).

5. In some accounts (e.g. Patard 2017:119–120) only three schematic meanings are distinguished. Although the attenuative meaning has its origins in the hypothetical one, it is claimed to have freed itself from this meaning in present-day French through the formation of lexical micro-constructions with verbs like *vouloir* ‘to want’ or *aimer* ‘to love’.

ing, but is merely a “meaning effect” (‘effet de sens’) of the hypothetical one and is tied to particular verbs in present-day French (see also footnote 5).

FRENCH

- (9) *Je voudrais rencontr-er le président.*
 1SG.NOM want.COND1SG meet-INF ART.DEF president
 ‘I would like to meet the president.’ (from Patard 2017: 106)

Fourth, the *conditionnel* also occurs with evidential meaning. Two types of evidential meanings are distinguished in the literature: a conjectural or inferential evidential one, as in (10), which typically occurs in questions in which the speaker infers that a particular situation holds, and a reportative one (11), in which case the *conditionnel* signals that the proposition stems from a different source. It is the latter use that will be central in this paper.

FRENCH

- (10) *Il n=est pas venu: serait-il malade?*
 3SG.NOM.M NEG=be.PRS3SG NEG come.PTCP.PST be.COND3SG-3SG.NOM.M
malade?
 ill
 ‘He didn’t come: could he be ill?’ (from Van de Weerd 2021)

FRENCH

- (11) *Le recours aux biocarburant-s serait un remède pire que le mal.*
 ART.DEF use to.the biofuel-PL be.COND3SG ART.INDF remedy worse
 than ART.DEF harm
 ‘Supposedly, the use of biofuels is a remedy worse than the disease.’
 (Le Monde 2011, from Bres et al. 2012: 39)

The first two meanings – ulteriority in the past and hypotheticality – can be viewed as central or core meanings, as they can be traced back to the origins of the French *conditionnel* (see Section 3.2) and occur with considerable frequency in present-day French (see also Section 4). The evidential meaning, on the other hand, is a more recent one – Van de Weerd (2021: 234) traces the first occurrence of the *conditionnel*’s reportative use back to 1507 – and is generally considerably less frequent in present-day French, although frequency differences related to register or genre are to be expected.

The literature on the reportative use of the *conditionnel* mainly concentrates on its origin and diachronic development, on the one hand, and on its exact semantics, on the other (see Van de Weerd 2021: 47ff. for an overview). Unfortunately, many studies concerned with the reportative semantics of the French *conditionnel* limit themselves to a theoretical positioning – backed up by some

uncontroversial examples – with respect to which meaning element in the reportative semantics of the *conditionnel* is essential: is the reportative *conditionnel* mainly an evidential marker (a position defended by Dendale 2018, for instance), or mainly alethic (in that the speaker first and foremost signals his/her so-called “non prise en charge”, i.e. a lack of commitment with respect to the information (see Abouda 2001), or mainly modal in that the speaker using a *conditionnel* denotes the uncertainty of the information (as argued in Merle 2004). Somewhat surprisingly, these questions are often addressed without contrasting the *conditionnel* with other reportative markers in French (like *paraît-il, il paraît que*) or in other languages, and without taking typical elements of its usage into account (like the fact that the reportative *conditionnel* often occurs in contexts of reported speech).

Authors who do explicitly address these issues, however, are Haillet (1998, 2002) and Celle (2007, 2009). Haillet uses the term “altérité énonciative” for the reportative use of the French *conditionnel*, and explicitly distinguishes between cases in which the reportative *conditionnel* in the context of indirect speech goes back to an original reportative *conditionnel* (12) or marks “la contestation” (1998: 77) of what is reported by the reporting speaker, as in (13). In the latter case, Haillet also points to the presence of quotation marks, which – by referring to the original source of the assertion – indicate that “il ne s’agit pas de l’avis du journaliste” [it is not the opinion of the journalist] (Haillet 1998: 77). What Haillet seems to be describing here is a potential case of ‘reportative exceptionality’. We will come back to such cases in the corpus study.

FRENCH

- (12) *Les service-s secret-s français ont fai-t savoir*
 ART.DEF service-PL secret-PL French have.PRS3PL make-PTCP.PST know.INF
au gouvernement qu=Américain-s et Irakien-s seraient en
 to.the government COMP=American-PL and Iraqi-PL be.COND3PL in
discussion pour défin-ir [...] les règle-s du jeu de la guerre
 discussion for define-INF ART.DEF rule-PL of.the game of ART.DEF war
du Golfe.
 of.the Gulf

‘The French secret services informed the government that the Americans and the Iraqis **reportedly** were in discussion to define [...] the rules of the game of the Gulf War.’ (Le Nouvel Observateur 1359, 1990, p. 43, from Haillet 1998: 75)

FRENCH

- (13) *Ils se sont fait leur opinion. Erwan aurait été un jeune homme “trop couvé” par ses parent-s [...] qui serait “tomb-é de haut” en arriv-ant à l=armée.*

ART.DEF=army

‘They formed their own opinion. Erwan is said to have been a young man “too sheltered” by his parents [...] who is said to “have fallen from the sky” when he arrived in the army.’

(Le Nouvel Observateur 1606, 1995, p.37, from Haillet 1998: 76)

Celle (2007) examines which English constructions match the reportative *conditionnel*; one of her main findings pertains to the fact that English writers prefer unmodalized assertive clauses to render the French reportative *conditionnel*. The main reason for this, Celle argues, is that English does not have a marker that is semantically similar to the *conditionnel*, which is regarded as a marker that does not only introduce a different point of view (i.e. the reported speaker), but also questions the trustworthiness of this alternative point of view. It is exactly this combination that, following Celle, distinguishes the French *conditionnel* from a reportative adverb like English *reportedly*, which – like the *conditionnel* – “detaches the speaker from his / her source” (Celle 2009: 284), but – unlike the *conditionnel* – “does not cast any doubt on the proposition” (Celle 2009: 284). Although Celle probably goes too far in ascribing dubitative features to the use of the reportative *conditionnel* in general, I do think the *conditionnel* easily associates with dubitative semantics. I will come back to this in Section 4.2.

Let us now turn to Dutch *zou*. Interestingly, it features exactly the same core meanings in present-day Dutch as the French *conditionnel* (and English *would*): it most frequently either expresses hypotheticality, on the one hand (see 14), or has a temporal meaning of ulteriority in the past, on the other (see 15) (see Harmes 2017: 153).

DUTCH

- (14) *Als ik geld zou hebb-en, zou ik op reis gaan*
if 1SG.NOM money IRR.SG have-INF IRR.SG 1SG.NOM on journey go.INF
‘If I had the money, I would travel.’

(example from ANS, <https://e-ans.ivdnt.org/topics/pid/ans2803030202lingtopic>)

DUTCH

- (15) *want ik dacht dat 't na een halfjaar wel*
 because 1SG.NOM think.PST.SG COMP EXP after ART.INDF half year well
geschied zou zijn. Maar 't is niet zo.
 happen.PTCP.PST FUT.PST.SG be.INF but EXP be.PRS3SG NEG like.that
 'Because I thought that it **would** have happened after six months. But it is not
 the case.' (example from CGN fnoo6966, taken from Harmes 2017:153)

In contrast to its French counterpart, the hypothetical use of *zou* + INF can occur both in a conditional's protasis and in its apodosis (whereas the *conditionnel* is typically used in the apodosis only).

This general parallelism between French and Dutch is less surprising if one considers the formal make-up of both markers: *zou* is the past tense form of the future/modal marker *zullen* 'will', and as such clearly parallels the French *conditionnel*, which also combines past tense morphology with future/modal meaning (see Section 3.2). The similarity between French and Dutch goes even further, as present-day Dutch *zou* can also be used as a hedging device to mitigate the force of the utterance (in this case: a directive; *zou* is combined with the modal verb *moeten* 'must') and features an evidential reportative meaning.

DUTCH

- (16) *Dat zou je 'ns aan iemand moet-en vrag-en.*
 that should.SG 2.SG.NOM once to someone must-INF ask-INF
 'You **should** ask that to someone.' (example and translation, Harmes 2017:153)

DUTCH

- (17) *Clinton zou haar [...] hebb-en aangezet tot meined.*
 Clinton REP.SG 3SG.ACC.F have-INF instigate.PTCP.PST to perjury
 'Allegedly, Clinton has instigated her to make false declarations.'
 (example and translation, Harmes 2017:153)

Some of the specific characteristics of reportative *zou* + INF are discussed in Mortelmans (2009), where it is claimed that *zou* is functionally somewhere in between German reportative *soll*_{IND} and the 'quotative' present subjunctive, which is used to mark indirect speech. On the one hand, we find that Dutch *zou* often equates German reportative *soll*_{IND} in main clause contexts, as instances from parallel corpora show (see Example 18–20, taken from <https://www.reverso.net/text-translation>).⁶

6. Last access 12 December 2023.

(18) **DUTCH**

Europa zou ook een enorme geldverslindende machine zijn.

GERMAN

Europa soll ferner ein Apparat sein, der immense Geldmengen verschlingt.

‘Europe is said to be a huge money-wasting machine.’ (Europarl Corpus)

(19) **DUTCH**

Hij zou voor tien miljoen gefraudeerd hebben.

GERMAN

Er soll die Regierung um zehn Millionen geschröpft haben.

‘He allegedly swindled the government out of 10 million.’⁷

(<https://opus.nlpl.eu/>)

(20) **DUTCH**

De huidige molen zou gebouwd zijn omstreeks 1640.

GERMAN

Die heutige Mühle soll etwa um 1640 gebaut worden sein.

‘The current mill is said to have been built around 1640.’⁸

(<https://paracrawl.eu/>)

On the other hand, however, Dutch *zou* + INF is generally more strongly oriented towards the reported speaker than German *soll*_{IND} + INF, as it easily combines with direct quotation that brings the utterance of the original speaker onstage. Dutch *zou* also occurs in contexts in which German typically uses the present subjunctive (which is regarded as a genuine quotative marker), as in journalistic prose. Example (21) nicely illustrates this. The Dutch and German online articles are based on the same press statement by Buckingham Palace, but use different grammatical means to render it. While the Dutch article (21a) uses *zou* (also in combination with direct speech fragments, but less frequently so than the German one), the German version clearly prefers present subjunctives (*spüre, wolle, werde*) to render the same press statement. The comparison thus shows that Dutch *zou* cannot only be equated with German reportative *soll*_{IND}, but also has traits of a quotative marker, and in this sense resembles the present subjunctive in German.

7. Last access 12 December 2023.

8. Last access 12 December 2023.

DUTCH

- (21) a. *De Britse koningin Elizabeth (95) heeft positief getest op Covid-19. Dat laat Buckingham Palace weten in een statement. De Queen zou last hebben van milde symptomen die overeenkomen met een verkoudheid. Volgens het paleis gaat Elizabeth komende week al opnieuw aan het werk. Al zou ze zich voorlopig focussen op “lichte” taken.*

‘Britain’s Queen Elizabeth (95) has tested positive for Covid-19. Buckingham Palace reveals this in a statement. The Queen is said to [zou] be suffering from mild symptoms consistent with a cold. According to the palace, Elizabeth will return to work as early as next week. Although she would [zou] focus on “light” duties for now.’

(<https://www.hln.be/royalty/koningin-elizabeth-95-test-positief-op-covid-19~aed3a05a/>, last access 12 December 2023)

GERMAN

- b. *Die britische Königin Elisabeth II. ist positiv auf das Coronavirus getestet worden. Die 95 Jahre alte Queen spüre “milde, erkältungsähnliche Symptome”, wolle aber schon in der kommenden Woche in Windsor wieder “leichte Aufgaben” ausführen, teilte der Buckingham-Palast in London mit. Sie werde medizinisch betreut und sich an alle Empfehlungen halten, hieß es weiter.*

‘Britain’s Queen Elizabeth II has tested positive for the coronavirus. The 95-year-old queen is experiencing [spüre] “mild symptoms similar to a cold” but intends [wolle] to return to “light duties” in Windsor as early as next week, Buckingham Palace in London announced. She receives [werde] medical attention and will adhere to all recommendations, the statement added.’

(<https://www.dw.com/de/k%C3%B6nigin-elisabeth-positiv-auf-corona-getestet/a-60847679>, last access 12 December 2023)

Turning to German *soll*_{IND} + INF, we find that the present indicative form of *sollen* ‘shall, should’ – the one denoting reportative evidentiality – mainly functions as a modal verb expressing (some kind of) deontic modality (see e.g. Baumann 2017; Diewald 1999). Typical of *sollen* – in contrast to the related modal verb *müssen* – is the fact that its deontic use evokes an external source of obligation, i.e. it is a third instance (neither speaker nor subject) that calls for a particular action (cf. Baumann 2017: 136: “eine Notwendigkeit mit einer dritten Person als modaler Quelle” [a necessity with a third person as modal source, my translation]).

GERMAN

- (22) *Doch nicht nur beim Sparverhalten sind die Eltern Vorbilder. „Die Gelderziehung läuft auch durch das Vorleben der Eltern.*

*Wenn ich 25 Pulli-s kauf-e, ist es natürlich schwer zu
if 1SG.NOM 25 sweater-PL buy-PRS1SG be.PRS3SG EXP of.course difficult to
vermittel-n, dass mein Kind nur ein-en kauf-en soll“, sag-t
convey-INF COMP my child only one-ACC buy-INF shall.3SG say-PRS3SG
Kühn
Kühn.*

‘But parents are not only role models when it comes to savings behaviour.

“Money education also runs through the example set by parents.

If I buy 25 sweaters, it is, of course, difficult to convey that my child **should** only buy one,” Kühn says.” (U20/JAN.00316 SZ, 04.01.2020, p. 27)

Note that in actual present-day use, *soll*_{IND} is often used not so much to refer to a strong obligation, but rather denotes a third person’s intention, goal or plan (cf. Baumann 2017: 140), as in the following example, and as such has an outspoken future orientation.

GERMAN

- (23) *Australiens Regierung kündigte am Mittwoch an, den Menschen mit Seelan-*

*dungsbooten zu Hilfe zu kommen und Nahrungsmittel und Wasser zu bringen.
Die Hilfe soll am Donnerstag [...] in Küstenstädten der
ART.DEF aid shall.IND.PRS.SG on.the Thursday in coastal.towns of.the
Staat-en New South Wales und Victoria ankomm-en. Zudem
state-PL New South Wales and Victoria arrive-INF in.addition
sollen Menschen auch mit Hubschrauber-n in Sicherheit
shall.IND.PRS.PL people also with helicopter.PL-DAT in safety
gebracht werd-en.
bring.PTCP.PST AUX.PASS-INF*

‘Australia’s government announced on Wednesday that it would come to the aid of the people with sea landing boats, bringing food and water. The aid is to arrive in coastal towns in the states of New South Wales and Victoria on Thursday. In addition, people **are also to be** brought to safety by helicopter.’

(U20/JAN.00037 SZ, 02.01.2020, p. 8)

The reportative use of *soll*_{IND} is described from many different theoretical points of view. Diewald (1999) focuses on the increased degree of formal grammaticalization of the reportative use, whereas Mortelmans (2009) and Diewald & Smirnova (2013) address the differences between the reportative use of *soll*_{IND}

9. All the references use the characterization of DeReKo (Deutsches Referenzkorpus), with U referring to “Süddeutsche Zeitung” and “20” to the year 2020.

and the ‘quotative’ use of the German present subjunctive to mark indirect speech. Following Mortelmans, *soll*_{IND} distinguishes itself from the present subjunctive in that it is strongly oriented towards the perspective of the reporting speaker, whereas the present subjunctive more strongly integrates the perspective of the reported speaker into the discourse. Another observation concerning reportative *soll*_{IND} relates to the fact that it hardly occurs in subordinate contexts, and when it does, typically evokes its reportative meaning: “In keinem Fall [...] ist eine konkrete Person das Subjekt des Matrixprädikates, der die Aussage zugeschrieben werden kann.“ [In no case [...] is a concrete person the subject of the matrix predicate to which the statement can be attributed] (Diewald & Smirnova 2013: 459, my translation). In his (formally oriented) study of reportative *soll*_{IND} in embedded contexts, however, Schenner (2010) distinguishes three different interpretations of embedded reportative *soll*_{IND}: an assertive one (24), in which reportative *soll*_{IND} has its normal meaning, a concord reading (25), in which reportative *soll*_{IND} is in semantic agreement with its context (cf. *Anna erzählte* ‘Anna told’ in the matrix clause) and does not contribute extra meaning elements, and a so-called global reading (26), in which the evidential is claimed to be outside the scope of the embedding predicate. The latter reading typically occurs with denial and doubt predicates. Note that Schenner (2010) – in contrast to Diewald & Smirnova 2013 – acknowledges the use of *soll*_{IND} in more quotative-like contexts like (25), in which the original speaker is the subject of the matrix clause. It should be noted that embedded uses like (24) to (26) – the examples are taken from Schenner (2010) – are rare; my corpus of 200 *soll*_{IND} occurrences does not feature any instance.

GERMAN

- (24) *Anna weiß, dass die Frau bereits im Ausland
 Anna know.IND.PRS.3SG COMP ART.DEF woman already in.the foreign.country
 sein soll.
 be.INF REP.IND.PRS3SG
 ‘Anna knows that it is said that the woman is already abroad.’*

GERMAN

- (25) *Anna erzähl-te, dass Bernhard sein-en Scheck zurückgeschick-t
 Anna tell-IND.PST3SG COMP Bernhard his-ACC check send.back-PTCP.PST
 hab-en soll.
 have-INF REP.IND.PRS3SG
 ‘Anna said that Bernhard (reportedly) sent back his check.’*

GERMAN

(26) *Es ist schwer zu glaub-en, dass Bernhard der Vater dieses Kind-es sein soll.*

of.this child-GEN be.INF REP.IND.PRS3SG

'It is hard to believe that Bernhard is the father of this child (as it is alleged).'

Let us recapitulate the main findings of this section. Despite their morphological differences, the *conditionnel* and *zou* + INF are remarkably alike, not only with respect to their general meanings (which share the functions of expressing hypotheticality, mitigation and ulteriority in the past), but also – albeit to a somewhat lesser extent – regarding their reportative use. As for their reportative use, both the *conditionnel* and *zou* + INF seem to have quotative features as well, in that both are to some extent also oriented towards the perspective of the reported speaker: in contexts of reported speech, the reported speaker's words may appear onstage, in the form of direct speech between quotation marks, as in examples (13) and (21a). For the *conditionnel*, this combination with direct speech has also been described as having dubitative effects in that the speaker distances him/herself from the content of what is being reported (Haillet 1998).

The semantic make-up of *soll*_{IND} + INF is of a completely different nature: in its most frequent use, the modal verb *sollen* is a deontic marker which expresses obligation (Example (22)) and intention (Example (23)). The reportative use of *soll*_{IND} is strongly tied to main clause contexts and hardly occurs in embedded contexts of indirect speech, which builds a clear contrast with the *conditionnel* (there are no clear findings regarding *zou* in this respect). Reasons for these similarities and differences can be found in the diachronic development of the respective markers, to which we will turn in Section 3.2.

3.2 Diachrony: A contrastive analysis of French, Dutch and German

For French, the development of the *conditionnel* and especially the origin of the reportative use has been described by Patard & De Mulder (2012); Patard (2017) and Van de Weerd (2021), among others. It is well-known that the *conditionnel* can be traced back to a Late Latin periphrastic construction consisting of the infinitive combined with *habere* 'have' in the imperfect tense (*habebat*). According to Patard (2017), the *conditionnel* has two distinct sources of usage in Late Latin, as [*habebat* + INF] not only expressed past predestination, i.e. a particular situation inevitably had to be true ("alethic necessity"), but was also used with hypothetical meaning in conditional contexts with *si* 'if', in which case the construction stressed the necessary connection between a particular condition and

its consequence. In Old French, two¹⁰ clearly distinct meanings of the *conditionnel* develop out of these two Latin usages: a (much more frequent) meaning of hypotheticality, on the one hand, and the (less frequent) temporal meaning of ulteriority in the past, the latter being tied to contexts of (free) indirect speech (as in *She said that she would come*). It is the latter use of the *conditionnel* in the context of indirect speech which is hypothesized to have given rise to the reportative use in the 16th century (Patard 2017: 119); the first instances with reportative value frequently occur in indirect speech contexts.

Le mécanisme à l'œuvre dans la formation de COND-Empr peut être décrit [...] comme l'intégration du sens contextuel d'emprunt présupposé par le DI (une information rapportée est nécessairement empruntée) dans le sémantisme de la Cxn. Parallèlement, la valeur d'ultériorité s'efface (mais peut-être réintroduite co(n)textuellement [...] et l'énonciation antérieure, reléguée à l'arrière-plan, n'est plus que présupposée. [...] La Cxn a ainsi été réanalysée comme un authentique marqueur évidentiel exprimant l'information empruntée.

[The mechanism at work in the formation of the reportative *conditionnel* can be described [...] as the integration of the contextual sense of borrowing presupposed by indirect speech (reported information is necessarily borrowed) into the semantics of the construction. At the same time, the value of ulteriority fades away (but can be reintroduced co(n)textually [...] and the anterior enunciation, relegated to the background, is only presupposed. The construction has thus been reanalysed as an authentic evidential marker expressing the second-hand information] (Patard 2017: 119, my translation)

For Dutch, the main study on the diachronic evolution of *zou* is conducted by Harmes (2017). Unfortunately, reportative meanings are hardly present in her older corpus data (Early Modern Dutch, Early New Dutch) so that no robust findings emerge from her analysis. Interestingly, though, she refutes the thesis that the reportative meaning might have emerged from the future- in-the-past use of Dutch *zou* (Harmes 2017: 164), but rather assumes that the reportative reading has developed from either the dynamic-situational or the hypothetical use of the verb (Harmes 2017: 166). At the same time, however, the future-in-the-past example that is discussed in the article occurs in the context of indirect speech. Moreover, Harmes notes that temporal uses of Dutch *zou* are frequent, with proportions of over 20% in most language stages. It is therefore difficult to judge the validity of Harmes' claims on the basis of her material.

10. Patard & De Mulder (2012) also discuss a third use of the *conditionnel* in Old French – attenuation – which is “extrêmement peu fréquent [‘extremely infrequent’]” (Patard & De Mulder 2012: 30) and clearly related to the hypothetical reading of the *conditionnel*. The attenuative reading is an Old French innovation, as Latin prefers the subjunctive to signal attenuation.

For German, Diewald (1999) argues that the reportative meaning of *soll*_{IND} arose in a very specific context, in which the modal verb was used in the past tense and combined with a perfect infinitive, as in the following example from Middle High German.

MIDDLE HIGH GERMAN

- (27) *sölch ellen was ûf in gezal-t: sechs ritter*
 such courage be.PST3SG on 3SG.ACC ascribe-PTCP.PST six knights
solter hân gevalt [...]
 shall.PST3SG have.INF killed
 ‘Such a pugnacity was ascribed to him: **he was said** to have killed six knights.’
 (Parzifal 4, 197, 17ff, from Diewald 1999: 420)

At the same time, Diewald also notes that this reportative use of *sollen* considerably differs from reportative *sollen* in present-day German. For one thing, present-day reportative *sollen* is exclusively tied to the present tense indicative form *soll(en)* and does not occur in the past tense form *sollte(n)* – in fact, the original use is much closer to Dutch *zou*. And second, present-day reportative *soll*_{IND} clearly prefers main clause contexts, whereas the Middle High German occurrences are mostly found in subclauses introduced by verbs of thinking or speaking (e.g. *gezal* in Example 27). Apparently, *sollen* by itself could not unambiguously express the reportative reading in Middle High German, but depended on the presence of other explicit lexical markers in the context (i.e. a *verbum dicendi*) (Diewald 1999: 421). Interestingly, even in Early New High German, reportative *sollen* is still often found in embedded contexts with an explicit reference to an evidential source, as in (28) and (29) – the examples are from the year 1609 and are discussed in Diewald (1999: 422), with reference to Fritz (1991: 34f.). Note also that Fritz explicitly mentions that reportative *sollen* often occurs as a subjunctive form in his corpus material (rather than in the indicative, the form *solle* in (29) is a present subjunctive), hence blurring the picture even more.

EARLY NEW HIGH GERMAN

- (28) *Es ist die sage / das vorgestern in 300. Reutter umb Gûlich angelangt sein sollen.*
 ‘It is said that the day before yesterday about 300 horsemen **are said** to have arrived in Gûlich.’

EARLY NEW HIGH GERMAN

- (29) *wie man sagt solle der Graff [...] das beste und schönste Silbergeschmeid... verschenckt [...] haben.*
 ‘As one says the count **is said** to have given away the best and most beautiful silver.’

To sum up, while the first occurrences of German reportative *sollen* also involved past tense uses of the auxiliary (and hence are highly comparable to the Dutch modal/future auxiliary *zou*), there are mainly present tense uses of reportative *sollen* from Early New High German onwards. Many of these early present tense uses are in the subjunctive, however, rather than in the indicative, which brings up the question to what extent the mood marker has influenced the development of reportative *sollen*. What remains unclear is how exactly German evolved from past tense reportative *sollte* – quite alike to Dutch *zou* – to present tense reportative *soll*_{IND}. What the reportative markers seem to share, however, is that the first instances are found in subordinate contexts, whereby the matrix clause makes explicit reference to a reportative source (be it vague or more concrete). This seems at least to be the case for French and German, while the Dutch data are less conclusive in this respect.

4. Reportative markers in French, Dutch and German: A comparative case study

To draw a relevant comparison of the three markers in present-day French, Dutch and German, I conducted a corpus study of the three markers in a similar written genre, namely journalistic prose. More specifically, I analysed 200 instances of the *conditionnel*, *zou(den)* + INF and *soll*_{IND} + INF (respectively) in a self-compiled newspaper corpus. To keep the register as homogeneous as possible, I restricted the corpus to high-quality newspapers that are neither outspoken left wing nor right wing. For French, I manually collected occurrences of *aurait/auraient* (present *conditionnel* 3rd person singular/plural of *avoir* ‘have’) and *serait/seraient* (present *conditionnel* 3rd person singular/plural of *être* ‘be’) in *Le Monde* (April–May 2021), a centre-left French newspaper. For Dutch, an automatic search for *zou(den)* in the Belgian-Dutch newspaper *De Standaard* (a liberal-conservative newspaper) was conducted on the basis of the CONDIV-Corpus. In a majority of these instances, *zou(den)* is a 3rd person form (187/200; 10 instances contain *zou(den)* as a 1st person form, 3 instances are 2nd person; all reportative instances have 3rd person *zou(den)*, though). For German, I analysed 200 instances of *soll*_{IND} from the *Süddeutsche Zeitung* (a left-liberal newspaper), which is part of the *Deutsches Referenzkorpus* (DeReKo) and can be electronically consulted via the *CosmasII*-platform (<https://cosmas2.ids-mannheim.de/cosmas2-web/>, last access 13 December 2023). I restricted the search to the singular form *soll*, as the plural form *sollen* is syncretic with the infinitive and hence would yield too many irrelevant instances. Only one instance of *soll* is 1st person, all other 199 instances are 3rd person. Again, all reportative instances are 3rd person.

For each of these instances, I tried to establish the semantics of the marker (with the main values being ‘hypothetical’,¹¹ ‘ulteriority in the past’, ‘deontic’, ‘reportative’ and ‘inferential’) and collected a number of properties of the context in which the marker appeared, the most relevant ones being ‘main clause’ or ‘sub-clause’, ‘type of subclause’, and ‘combination with modal verb’.

I also coded for the tense form of the *conditionnel* (either present or past) and the form of the following infinitive for *zou* and *soll* respectively (either present or perfect). Note that a past *conditionnel* in French equals the combination of *zou/soll* with a perfect infinitive (French *il aurait dit*_{COND.PST} = German *er soll*_{IND} [*gesagt haben*]_{INF.PERF} = Dutch *hij zou* [*gezegd hebben*]_{INF.PERF} ‘he allegedly said’). The tense coding revealed a certain imbalance between the French data, on the one hand, and the German/Dutch ones, on the other, in that the former show up a much higher amount of past *conditionnel* forms (see Table 1), whereas a clear majority of the Dutch and German data contain combinations of *zou/soll* with the present infinitive.

Table 1. Tense forms of the *conditionnel* / dependent infinitive

	Present <i>conditionnel</i> <i>zou / soll</i> + present infinitive	Past <i>conditionnel</i> <i>zou / soll</i> + perfect infinitive
French (<i>n</i> = 200)	97	103
Dutch (<i>n</i> = 200)	177	23
German (<i>n</i> = 200)	173	27

The reason for this clear imbalance probably lies in the search procedure for French, which uses *serai(en)t* ‘would be’ and *aurai(en)t* ‘would have’. These verb forms not only function as either copulae ‘to be’ or full verbs ‘to have, to possess’ in the present *conditionnel*, but also as auxiliary verbs to build the (periphrastic) past *conditionnel*. Still, the imbalance – especially between French and German – is strongly reduced when we restrict our focus to the reportative instances, which in all three languages have a stronger (and in French and German an outspoken) preference for past tense forms or the combination with perfect infinitives. Possible functional differences between the reportative *conditionnel* in French and reportative *soll*_{IND} in German can therefore not be accounted for on the basis of tense differences in the data.

11. Attenuative uses were classified as hypothetical.

Table 2. Tense forms of the *conditionnel* / dependent infinitive with reportative uses

Reportative uses only	Present <i>conditionnel</i>	Past <i>conditionnel</i>
	<i>zou / soll</i> + present infinitive	<i>zou / soll</i> + perfect infinitive
French ($n = 43$)	10	33
Dutch ($n = 37$)	19	18
German ($n = 37$)	11	26

For the reportative uses, I also coded for distancing, i.e. whether the reportative marker was used in a context in which the speaker explicitly codes his/her scepticism, uncertainty or more outspoken non-belief of what is being reported. The most important general findings will be reported in Section 4.1, whereas Section 4.2 will zoom in on denial readings and the (syntactic, pragmatic) contexts in which they occur.

4.1 French *conditionnel*, Dutch *zou* + INF, German *soll*_{IND} + INF: Similarities and differences

For all three markers, the reportative reading is considerably less frequent than the hypothetical one (in the case of French and Dutch) or the deontic one (in the case of German). Compared with the future-in-the-past use, however, the reportative is somewhat more frequent in French, and somewhat less frequent in Dutch. Table 3 provides a first overview of the distribution of the main uses.

Table 3. Distribution of uses of *conditionnel*, *zou* + INF, and *soll*_{IND} + INF

	Hypothetical	Ulteriority in the past	Deontic	Reportative	Inferential
<i>conditionnel</i> ($n = 200$)	115 (57.5%)	37 ¹² (18.5%)	/	43 (21.5%)	5 (2.5%)
<i>zou</i> + INF ($n = 200$)	123 (61.5%)	40 (20%)	/	37 (18.5%)	1 (0.5%)
<i>soll</i> _{IND} + INF ($n = 200$)	/	/	163 (81.5%)	37 (18.5%)	/

12. Note that ulteriority-in-the-past instances mostly occur in contexts of reported speech, whereby the verb in the conditional or in the infinitive after *zou* denotes a future event from a past perspective or anchoring point (the original speech event). Such instances account for the majority of French instances in this category ($n = 32$). They are also quite frequent in the Dutch material ($n = 14$).

As has already been indicated, the numbers found are not entirely comparable. To compile the corpus for the French *conditionnel*, I only used the high-frequency forms *serai(en)t* ‘would be’ and *aurai(en)t* ‘would have’, but did not include frequent modal verb forms like *pourrait* ‘would be able to/could’, *voudrais* ‘(I) would like’ or *devrait* ‘would have to/should’, which in their attenuative use serve important communicative functions in present-day French. For Dutch *zou* + INF, however, I did not exclude combinations of *zou* with modal infinitives like *kunnen* ‘can’, *moeten* ‘must’ and *willen* ‘want’, which in fact make up 43 instances, i.e. 21.5% of all occurrences found. All these ‘modal’ instances are classified as hypothetical. An example is provided in (30):

DUTCH

- (30) *Zo=n openbaar bod zou de Rug 880 miljoen frank kunn-en*
 such=ART.INDF public bid IRR.SG ART.DEF Rug 880 million franc can-INF
kost-en.
 cost-INF
 ‘Such a public bid **could** cost Rug 880 million francs.’ (CONDIV, DS961104.txt)

A striking observation from Table 3 is the similar proportion taken up by the reportative use in all three languages: it accounts for about one fifth of all uses. The *conditionnel*, *zou* + INF and *soll*_{IND} + INF preferably serve other functions than the reportative one – also in a genre (journalistic prose) in which the reportative use can be expected to occur with high frequency. We also learn from Table 3 that the *conditionnel* and *zou* + INF are remarkably similar with respect to the **frequency** of their main uses, whereby the hypothetical is clearly the most frequent one in both French (31) and Dutch (32), accounting for about 60% of all uses.

-
- (i) Il a ajouté que la généralisation des caméras-piétons individuelles **serait** mise en œuvre “cet été”.
 ‘He added that the generalisation of individual pedestrian cameras **would** be implemented “this summer”’.
 (Le Monde, 7.5.2021)
- (ii) Zo’n beslissing werd niet getroffen, alleen werd er aangekondigd dat er zoiets **zou** voorgesteld worden op een volgende ANZ-vergadering.
 ‘No such decision was taken, only it was announced that something like this would be proposed at a future ANZ meeting’
 (CONDIV, DS961104.txt)

FRENCH

- (31) *Avant la perestroïka, elle n=aurait eu aucune chance d=être rendue publique [...].*
 before ART.DEF perestroïka 3SG.NOM.F NEG=have.COND3SG have.PTCP.PST
 no chance of=be.INF make.PTCP.PST public
 ‘Before perestroïka, she **wouldn’t have had** a chance of being published.’
 (Le Monde, 1.5.2021)

DUTCH

- (32) *Indien we half zo goed zou-den zijn als ‘de’ muziek, dan hadden we een betere wereld.*
 if 1PL.NOM half as good IRR-PL be.INF than ART.DEF music then
 have.PST.PL 1PL.NOM ART.INDF better world
 ‘If we were half as good as ‘the’ music, we’d have a better world.’
 (CONDIV, DS961105.txt)

It should be noted that hypothetical uses, especially when they occur in sub-clauses, may also involve the presence of another speaker, and can thus be claimed to have quotative features as well. The following examples in French and in Dutch refer to a merely potential, unreal situation. At the same time, the proposition comes from another source than the speaker. Such instances are classified as hypothetical, a decision based on the observation that loss of the quotative meaning would not lead to a change of mood or the omission of *zou* (French: $n = 18$; Dutch: $n = 42$).

FRENCH

- (33) *Il nous a di-t que si on rejoign-ait le mouvement de désobéissance civile, on serait arrêt-és à l=aéroport par les militaire-s, [...].*
 3SG.NOM.M 1PL.OBL have.PRS3SG tell-PTCP.PST COMP if one join-PST3SG
 ART.DEF movement of disobedience civil one be.COND3SG arrest-PTCP.PST at
 ART.DEF=airport by ART.DEF soldier-PL
 ‘He told us that if we joined the civil disobedience movement, we **would** be arrested at the airport by the military [...].’
 (Le Monde, 4.5.2021)

FRENCH

- (34) *Dans le cas contraire, Pékin aurait choisi l=option nucléaire [...], croi-t il savoir.*
 in ART.DEF case opposite Beijing have.COND3SG choose.PTCP.PST
 ART.DEF=option nuclear believe-PRS3SG 3SG.NOM.M know.INF
 ‘Otherwise, Beijing “**would** have chosen the nuclear option” [...], he believes.’
 (Le Monde, 6.5.2021)

DUTCH

- (35) *Deze kwantitatieve norm over heel Vlaanderen toepass-en zou op het platteland tot onaanvaardbare toestand-en leid-en [...] zeg-t de*
 this quantitative norm over whole Flanders apply-INF IRR.SG ON ART.DEF
 countryside to unacceptable situation-PL lead-INF say-PRS3SG ART.DEF
organisatie.

organisation

‘Applying this quantitative standard across Flanders **would** lead to unacceptable conditions in rural areas [...], **the organization says.**’

(CONDIV, DS961102.txt)

DUTCH

- (36) *Niet iedereen denkt echter dat het om zulke enorme aantallen gaat. David Black [...] zei dat hij niet verbaasd zou zijn als*
 David Black [...] say.PST3SG COMP 3SG.NOM.M NEG surprised IRR.SG be.INF if
het “maar” om tien procent gaa-t.

EXP only about ten percent go-PRS3SG

‘Not everyone thinks such huge numbers are involved, however.

David Black said that he **would** not be surprised if it is “only” ten percent.’

(CONDIV, DS961104.txt)

These examples point to the fact that the meanings of the French *conditionnel* and Dutch *zou* + INF may contain hypothetical, future/prospective and quotative/reportative features at the same time.

The French and Dutch cases classified as genuinely reportative, all pertain to present or past situations that are (allegedly) real, that is the speaker reports on a situation from his/her point of view, which is either occurring (37–38) or has already occurred (39–40); in the latter case, the so-called *conditionnel passé* (e.g. *aurait été*) or a combination of *zou* with a perfect infinitive (*hebben/zijn* ‘have/be’ + past participle) is used.

FRENCH

- (37) *Le journaliste français indépendant Olivier Dubois [...] serait en*
 ART.DEF journalist French independent Olivier Dubois be.COND3SG in
vie, mais désormais aux main-s du [...] GSIM, branche locale
 live but from.now.on in.the hand-PL of.the GSIM branch local
d=Al-Qaida.

of=Al-Qaeda

‘French freelance journalist Olivier Dubois [...] is **reportedly** alive but now in the hands of the GSIM, a local branch of Al-Qaeda.’ (Le Monde, 5.5.2021)

DUTCH

- (38) *Het Antwerpse parket stuurt binnenkort een rogatoire commissie naar het Afrikaanse Guinea. De speurders willen er de Duitser Victor Z. ondervragen.*

Hij zou één van de verzender-s zijn van de drugscontainer-s
 3SG.NOM.M REP.SG one of ART.DEF sender-PL be.INF of ART.DEF drug.container-PL
 drug.container-PL

‘The Antwerp public prosecutor’s office will soon send a letter rogatory to African Guinea. The investigators want to question the German Victor Z. there. He is said to be one of the senders of the drug containers.’

(CONDIV, DS961102.txt)

FRENCH

- (39) *Le châtement, qui aurait été administr-é en public à trois présumé-s voleur-s [...] soulign-e l=absence de contrôle de l=Etat dans cette partie du pays.*

control of ART.DEF=state in this part of.the country

‘The punishment, **reportedly** administered in public to three alleged thieves highlights the lack of state control in this part of the country.’

(Le Monde, 5.5.2021)

DUTCH

- (40) *Volgens de krant zou kolonel Luyten [...] hebb-en nagelat-en een internationaal opsporingsbevel tegen Swennen te verspreid-en.*

distribute-INF

‘According to the newspaper, Colonel Luyten has (**reportedly**)¹³ failed to distribute an international search warrant against Swennen in the Netherlands.’

(CONDIV, DS961102.txt)

Before turning to the reportative cases in more detail, let us have a quick look at the German data. It is quite clear that *soll*_{IND} + INF behaves completely differently from the French and Dutch markers. It does not occur in hypothetical or future-in-the-past contexts, but rather has a deontic modal meaning (comparable to the deontic meaning of its cognate *shall* in English). Note that most often in this spe-

13. The combination of a reportative adverb (‘reportedly’) with a source preposition (‘according to’) is odd in English. I have only added the adverb as a pendant to *zou*. See also Example (44).

cific genre, *soll*_{IND} + INF does not so much express a strong obligation, but denotes a third person intention or plan, and as such has a clear prospective orientation. Such intention or goal-oriented uses account for over 80% of the data in my sample. Typically, *soll*_{IND} is rendered by ‘to be meant/expected/intended to, to be to’ in English, as in the following examples.

GERMAN

- (41) *Der Deal mit einem Major Label soll den Sänger
ART.DEF deal with ART.INDF major label shall.IND.PRS.SG ART.DEF singer
endgültig in die Fußstapfen von DJ Arafat katapultier-en.
for.good in ART.DEF footstep.PL of DJ Arafat catapult-INF
‘The deal with a major label is meant to catapult the singer into the footsteps
of DJ Arafat once and for all.’ (U20/JAN.00052 SZ, 02.01.2020, p.11)*

GERMAN

- (42) *Am Neujahrstag gaben beide Seiten gemeinsam ihre jüngsten Personalentscheidungen bekannt.
Das Verteidigungsministerium soll [...] Klaudia Tanner (ÖVP)
ART.DEF ministry.of.defense shall.IND.PRS.SG Klaudia Tanner (ÖVP)
übernehm-en [...] Innenminister soll der bisherige
take.over-INF minister.of.the.interior shall.IND.PRS.SG ART.DEF former
ÖVP-Generalsekretär Karl Nehammer werd-en.
ÖVP-secretary.general Karl Nehammer become-INF
‘On New Year’s Day, the two sides jointly announced their latest personnel
decisions. The Ministry of Defence is to be taken over by Klaudia Tanner
(ÖVP) [...] Karl Nehammer, the former secretary general of the Austrian People’s Party (ÖVP), is to become Minister of the Interior.’
(U20/JAN.00002 SZ, 02.01.2020, p.1)*

Reportative uses account for about 18.5% of *soll*_{IND} + INF instances in the corpus.

GERMAN

- (43) *Atletico Madrid soll sich nun für den spanischen
Atletico Madrid REP.IND.PRS.SG REFL now for ART.DEF Spanish
Nationalspieler stark interessier-en.
international strongly be.interested-INF
‘Atletico Madrid is said to be strongly interested in the Spanish international
now.’ (U20/JAN.00093 SZ, 02.01.2020, p.25)*

The question we want to pursue here is whether and in what respect the use of reportative *sollen* differs from *zou* and/or the *conditionnel*. One potential difference is the likelihood of reportative exceptionality, which we will turn to in the following section.

4.2 Reportative exceptionality (RE)

Although the relative proportion of reportative uses is quite comparable in the three language samples, an interesting difference arises when we focus on those cases in which the speaker distances him/herself from the content of what is said. Note that the notion of ‘distance’ is given a wide interpretation, since it does not only refer to explicit denial by the speaker (44–45), but also applies to contexts in which the speaker sheds doubt on the truthfulness of what is being reported – e.g. by indicating that its veracity has not yet been verified, as in (46).

DUTCH

- (44) *Volgens* *verscheidene parlamentsled-en zou-den* *magistrat-en* *slecht*
 according.to several MP-PL REP-PL magistrate-PL badly
word-en betaal-d.

PASS-INF pay-PTCP.PST

Die bewering strookt geenszins met de werkelijkheid.

‘According to several MPs, magistrates are (reportedly) poorly paid. This allegation is in no way consistent with reality.’ (CONDIV, DS961102.txt)

FRENCH

- (45) *Mais il est* *hors de question de laiss-er pens-er, de laiss-er dire,*
 but EXP be.PRS3SG out of question to let-INF think-INF to let-INF say-INF
que notre société serait *fond-ée* *sur une* *logique de*
 COMP our society be.COND3SG found-PTCP.PST on ART.INDF logic of
domination et de discrimination institutionnalisée.

domination and of discrimination institutionalised

‘But it is out of the question to let people think, to let them say that our society is allegedly based on a logic of domination and institutionalized discrimination.’ (Le Monde, 30.4.2021)

GERMAN

(46) *Bislang ist zudem nicht völlig sicher, ob die angeblichen Crispr-Babys wirklich existieren. Zwar hatte Xinhua bereits im Januar dieses Jahres die Geburt der Zwillinge Nana und Lulu bestätigt;*

inzwischen soll auch ein drittes Baby aus der
 in.the.meantime REP.IND.PRS.SG also ART.INDF third baby from ART.DEF
Versuchsgruppe geboren word-en sein.
 experimental.group born AUX.PASS-INF be.INF

Doch eine unabhängige Untersuchung der Kinder durch internationale Experten ist noch nicht erfolgt.

‘So far, moreover, it is not entirely certain whether the alleged Crispr babies really exist. Xinhua had already confirmed the birth of the twins Nana and Lulu in January of this year; in the meantime, a third baby from the experimental group is also said to have been born. But an independent examination of the children by international experts has not yet taken place.’

(U20/JAN.00059 SZ, 02.01.2020, p.14)

Although the absolute numbers are small, it is striking that the *conditionnel* features the highest amount of denial uses (8/43), which amounts to almost 20% of all reportative uses in the Le Monde-corpus. Dutch *zou* + INF occurs 4 times in a denial context (out of 37 reportative instances, which amounts to 10.8%), whereas only 1 distancing use (out of 37 reportative uses, 2.7%) can be found for *soll*_{IND} + INF (see Example 46 above).

If we look at the particular contexts in which the distance reading of the reportative marker occurs, we find that for French, the denial reading is almost exclusively restricted to uses of the *conditionnel* in subordinate clauses, more in particular to occurrences of the *conditionnel* in complement constructions, in which a reportative source different from the reporting speaker is explicitly mentioned in a matrix clause and as such brought onto the linguistic scene. Note that the source – in keeping with reportative semantics – is often vague and not identifiable (it can be a collective NP ‘les démolisseurs de notre civilisation’ (47), unconfirmed announcements (48), or someone’s unlikely hypothesis (49)), although more concrete and identifiable sources (a specific journal in 50) are possible as well.

FRENCH

- (47) *En instrumentalis-ant le débat sur la colonisation et by exploit-PTCP.PRS ART.DEF debate on ART.DEF colonisation and l=esclavage, les démolisseur-s de notre civilisation cherch-ent à ART.DEF=slavery ART.DEF demolitionist-PL of our civilisation try-PRS3PL to impos-er l=idée que l' Occident se serait impose-INF ART.DEF=idea COMP ART.DEF West REFL be.COND3SG construit sur l=asservissement et le crime, [...]. build.PTCP.PST on ART.DEF=subjugation and ART.DEF crime*
 ‘By exploiting the debate on colonization and slavery, **the demolitionists of our civilization** are trying to impose the idea that the West was **allegedly** built on subjugation and crime, [...].’ (Le Monde, 4.5.2021)

FRENCH

- (48) *Il rappell-e d'ailleurs que la motivation vien-t 3SG.NOM.M recall-PRS.SG also COMP ART.DEF motivation come-PRS3SG aussi d=annonce-s de 2018, toujours pas confirm-ées, also from=announcement-PL of 2018 still NEG confirm-PTCP.PST indiqu-ant que le détecteur AMS-02 aurait détect-é indicate-PTCP.PRS COMP ART.DEF detector AMS-02 have.COND3SG find-PTCP huit noyau-x d=antihélium: eight nucleus-PL of=antihelium*
 “Si c'était vrai, cela bouleverserait totalement nos modèles!”
 ‘He recalls that the motivation also comes **from announcements in 2018, still unconfirmed**, indicating that the AMS-02 detectors **allegedly** detected eight antihelium nuclei: “If this were true, it would totally upset our models!”’ (Le Monde, 4.5.2021)

FRENCH

- (49) *Toutefois, précis-e l=auteur, et ce à rebours “d=une however specify-PRS3SG ART.DEF=author and this contrary to to=ART.INDF construction médiatique défavorable”, “la commission d=enquête construction of.the.media unfavorable ART.DEF commission of=inquiry réfut-a la thèse d=une lutte barbouzarde que refute-PST3SG ART.DEF thesis of=ART.INDF struggle barbarian that.REL les homme-s du SAC auraient men-ée contre ART.DEF man-PL of.the SAC have.COND3PL lead-PTCP.PST against l=OAS”. ART.DEF=OAS*
 ‘However, the author specifies that, contrary to “an unfavorable media construction”, “the commission of inquiry **refuted the thesis of a barbarian struggle that the men of the SAC allegedly** led against the OAS”’ (Le Monde, 30.4.2021)

FRENCH

- (50) *Par méconnaissance ou par perfidie, le journal commet aussi une curieuse imprécision en assurant qu'Annick Girardin aurait un jour revendiqué son "âme de pirate".*
 by ignorance or by perfidy ART.DEF journal commit.PRS3SG also
 ART.INDF curious inaccuracy by assure-PTCP.PRS COMP=Annick Girardin
 have.COND3SG ART.INDF day claim-PTCP.PST her soul of pirate
En fait, dans un article de Paris Match datant de 2019, la ministre de la mer, native de Saint-Malo, évoquait son âme « de corsaire »
 'Through ignorance or perfidy, the newspaper also **commits a curious inaccuracy** by stating that Annick Girardin once **allegedly** claimed to be a "pirate".
In fact, in a 2019 Paris Match article, the Minister of the Sea, a native of Saint-Malo, spoke of her "privateer's" soul. (Le Monde, 6.5.2021)

The fact that distancing uses often occur in complement clauses suggests that such contexts foster reportative exceptionality, in that they typically enable different perspectives on what is being reported (e.g. *x's statement that y_{COND}*). It must be noted that the *conditionnel* in general favours such contexts more strongly than both *zou* + INF and *soll_{IND}* + INF, as Table 4 makes clear. In the corpus, the French *conditionnel* often occurs in complement contexts (46 out of 200 instances), 7 cases of which have reportative meaning. Of these 7 cases, 5 instances evoke a distancing interpretation. Dutch *zou* takes up an intermediate position (33 instances of *zou* occur in complement contexts, only one of which with reportative meaning, which is also distancing, see Example (54) below). Finally, German *soll_{IND}* hardly occurs in complement contexts (only 6 instances out of 200), only one of them being reportative (without a distancing interpretation).

Table 4. Subordinate contexts with *conditionnel*, *zou* + INF, *soll_{IND}* + INF

REP marker in subordinate clause	Subordinate clauses	Of which: complement	Complement/+ reportative
<i>conditionnel</i> (n = 200)	100	46	7
<i>zou</i> + INF (n = 200)	67	33	1
<i>soll_{IND}</i> + INF (n = 200)	54	6	1

In line with this finding is the observation that the *conditionnel* – at least in the material taken from Le Monde – often combines with sentence fragments in direct speech (marked by quotation marks), which bring another voice than the speaker's/writer's onto the linguistic scene. In view of the following examples, one could be tempted to claim that the reportative *conditionnel* behaves more like a quotative marker here in that it strongly shifts the perspective to another speaker,

who is quoted. This happens in the following examples, which – to be clear – do not evoke a distancing interpretation, i.e. they do not feature reportative exceptionality. We mainly observe the intrusion of the original speaker’s perspective in what is being reported, intrusions that seem to be ‘typical’ of the *conditionnel* (in general and in its use as a reportative marker).

FRENCH

- (51) *Dans un bref communiqué diffusé lundi soir, la représentation permanente russe a, de son côté, affirmé que les deux parties avaient évoqué l'état de leurs relations et "exprimé des regrets" quant à leur détérioration.*

M. Chizhov aurait apporté des commentaire-s

M. Chizhov have.COND3SG make-PTCP.PST ART.INDF comment-PL
supplémentaire-s en réponse à ce que la diplomatie russe
additional-PL in response to that REL ART.DEF diplomacy Russian
appel-e les "décision-s unilatérale-s de L=UE".

call-PRS3SG ART.DEF decision-PL unilateral-PL of ART.DEF=EU?

‘In a brief statement issued on Monday evening, the Russian Permanent Representation said the two sides had discussed the state of their relations and “expressed regret” at their deterioration. Mr Chizhov has **reportedly** made “**additional comments**” in response to what Russian diplomacy calls the “unilateral decisions of the EU”’
(Le Monde, 4.5.2021)

FRENCH

- (52) *Trois des quatre fonctionnaires qui l'avaient interpellé avaient assuré à la barre qu'ils n'avaient pas reconnu le rappeur, qui s'était montré "agressif" et les avait insultés à de nombreuses reprises.*

Un policier avait fait part des

ART.INDF police.officer have.PST3SG make.PTCP.PST public ART.INDEF

"menace-s" qu'il aurait reçues sur les

threat-PL REL=3SG.NOM.M have.COND3SG receive.PTCP ON ART.DEF

réseau-x sociaux de la part de nombreux fan-s appel-ant à

network-PL social from ART.DEF part of several fan-PL call-PTCP.PRS to

"retrouv-er" les policier-s.

find-INF ART.DEF police.officer-PL

‘Three of the four officers who had stopped him had assured the court that they had not recognized the rapper, who had been “aggressive” and had insulted them on numerous occasions.

One police officer had reported “**threats**” that he had **allegedly** received on social networks from numerous fans calling to “**find**” the policemen.’

(Le Monde, 30.5.2021)

Example (53) features the use of direct speech attributed to the opposition (“le camp opposé”), whose arguments are characterized as “rocambolesques” (‘incredible’). It seems therefore warranted to consider this instance of the reportative *conditionnel* (*répandrait*, *aurait fait*) as a distancing one as well: the reporting speaker does not agree with the statement that the accused has spread lies or that the school had done the same with its textbooks.

FRENCH

(53) *Et l’interprétation peut être large, si l’on se fie aux arguments parfois rocambolesques qui ont été avancés par le camp opposé lors des plaidoiries.*

L=accusé répandrait [...] le “mensonge”, comme

ART.DEF=accused spread.COND3SG ART.DEF lie like

l=aurait fait l=école avec ses manuel-s

3SG.OBL.M=have.COND3SG do.PTCP.PST ART.DEF=school with its textbook-PL scolaire-s.

educational-PL

‘And the interpretation can be broad, if one relies on the sometimes incredible arguments put forward by the opposing side during the pleadings. The accused thus allegedly spread “the lie”, as the school had allegedly done with its school books.’ (Le Monde, 30.4.2021)

Such combinations with direct speech sentence fragments are typical of the *conditionnel* in all of its uses, whereas they occur much less frequently with *zou* and are absent in the corpus with *soll*_{IND}.

Table 5. Combinations of reportative markers with direct speech sentence fragments

	<i>conditionnel</i> (<i>n</i> = 200)	<i>zou</i> + INF (<i>n</i> = 200)	<i>soll</i> _{IND} + INF (<i>n</i> = 200)
+ direct speech fragments	43	5	0

If we turn to the distancing reportative cases in Dutch (*n* = 4), we find that one instance occurs in a subordinate complement context, in which the matrix verb (*ontkennen* ‘deny’) lexically expresses distance.

DUTCH

- (54) *Wittevrongel zelf ontken-t formeel aan De Standaard dat Wittevrongel himself deny-PRS3SG formally to De Standaard COMP hij de stakingsbeslissing vorige week zou hebb-en 3SG.NOM.M ART.DEF decision.to.strike last week REP.SG have-INF goedgekeur-d. “Ik heb op het bureau approve-PTCP.PST 1SG.NOM have.PRS1SG ON ART.DEF committee tegengestem-d [...]” vote.against-PTCP.PST*
 ‘Wittevrongel himself formally denies to De Standaard that he has – as was reported – approved the strike decision last week. “I voted against it on the committee” [...]’ (CONDIV, DS961102.txt)

A closer look at the three other distancing reportative instances in Dutch also reveals perspectival multitude, either marked by the presence of the source preposition *volgens* ‘according to’ (in Example (44) above) or by the explicit reference to other, more trustworthy sources (*volgens US-bronnen* ‘according to US sources’), whose claims contrast with the *zou*-marked statement (Example 55). Note also the presence of direct speech fragments in the immediate context of *zou* (*ongegrond* ‘unfounded’).

DUTCH

- (55) *Een Iraakse woordvoerder noem-de het Amerikaanse bericht ART.INDF Iraqi spokesman call-PST.SG ART.DEF American report “ongegrond” – in het Iraakse luchtruim zou geen enkel incident unfounded in ART.DEF Iraqi airspace REP.SG no single incident hebb-en plaats gevonden. have-INF place find.PTCP.PST – maar volgens VS-bronnen was er wel degelijk een incident boven Zuid-Irak, ten zuiden van de 32ste breedtegraad.*
 ‘An Iraqi spokesman called the US report “unfounded” – no incident had allegedly taken place in Iraqi airspace – but according to US sources there was an incident over southern Iraq, south of the 32nd parallel.’ (CONDIV, DS961104.txt)

In the fourth instance, the speaker explicitly contrasts his/her position with the one presented in a story. The reportative is used in an indirect question; the doubt of the speaker is explicitly coded (*is niet duidelijk* ‘is not clear’).

DUTCH

- (56) *Dit verhaal gaat-t ervan uit dat de boekhandelaar een
this story go-PRS3SG from.it out COMP ART.DEF bookseller ART.INDF
filantroop is. Waarom een boekhandelaar dit zou zijn
philanthropist be.PRS3SG why ART.INDF bookseller this REP.SG be.INF
is niet duidelijk.
be.PRS3SG NEG clear*
*Is het niet beter ervan uit te gaan dat hij zijn extra winst op zak zal steken in
plaats van een geschenk te geven aan een elite van lezers?*
'This story assumes that the bookseller is a philanthropist. Why a bookseller
should be like this, **is not clear**. Is it not better to assume that he will pocket
his extra profits rather than give a gift to an elite of readers?'
(CONDIV, DS961105.txt)

The only instance which was classified as an instance of reportative exceptionality in German is the following one (Example 46 repeated here as 57). The reportative verb *soll*_{IND} is used in a main clause; doubt with respect to the truth of the proposition is expressed lexically, both in the preceding and following context: it is not entirely certain whether these Crispr-babies really exist; there has not been an independent examination.

GERMAN

- (57) *Bislang ist zudem nicht völlig sicher, ob die angeblichen Crispr-Babys wirklich
existieren. Zwar hatte Xinhua bereits im Januar dieses Jahres die Geburt der
Zwillinge Nana und Lulu bestätigt;
inzwischen soll auch ein drittes Baby aus der
in.the.meantime REP.IND.PRS.SG also ART.INDF third baby from ART.DEF
Versuchsgruppe geboren word-en sein.
experimental.group born AUX.PASS-INF be.INF*
*Doch eine unabhängige Untersuchung der Kinder durch internationale
Experten ist noch nicht erfolgt.*
'So far, moreover, it is not entirely certain whether the alleged Crispr babies
really exist. Xinhua had already confirmed the birth of the twins Nana and
Lulu in January of this year; in the meantime, a third baby from the experi-
mental group is also said to have been born. **But an independent examination
of the children by international experts has not yet taken place.**'
(U20/JAN.00059 SZ, 02.01.2020, p.14)

Let us briefly summarize the main findings of this section. Although reportative markers are in principle compatible with distancing interpretations, we have found differences with respect to the frequency with which such distancing interpretations actually occur. The French *conditionnel* is the marker which (relatively speaking) most frequently occurs in contexts in which the speaker explicitly

doubts the content of what is being reported, whereas German *soll*_{IND} is hardly found with this meaning. Dutch *zou* takes up an intermediate position. The high compatibility of the French *conditionnel* with distancing interpretations can be linked to its general preference for contexts in which other perspectives than the speaker's are highly salient, like embedded complement contexts and in combination with direct speech fragments. It was shown that the French *conditionnel* in general is used with a relatively high frequency in such multi-perspectival environments (see Tables 4 and 5). By contrast, reportative *soll*_{IND} is strongly tied to the reporting speaker in that it does not generally allow combinations with direct speech fragments nor does it occur often in embedded contexts (there was only one (non-distancing) reportative instance in my sample).

5. Conclusion

It has become clear that reportative exceptionality does not affect reportative markers to the same extent. A number of factors seem to influence the propensity for a particular reportative marker to evoke a denial interpretation, among which its formal make-up (e.g. past tense vs. present tense forms), general usage elements (e.g. whether a particular marker is often combined with linguistic elements that bring (the words of) another speaker onto the linguistic scene; whether the marker often pops up in subordinate complement contexts), and the more general semantic configuration of the particular marker (reportative markers that express irrealty/hypotheticality as their main meaning can be expected to be more keen with respect to expressing a position of denial than those which express other meanings). Interestingly, the degree of formal grammaticalization cannot itself predict the function of a marker with regard to an evidential category. German *sollen* and Dutch *zou* are both auxiliaries while the French *conditionnel* is an inflectional marker, but the semantic and discursive behaviour of *zou* happens to be slightly closer to that of the French *conditionnel* inflection than to its German cognate.

With respect to the three reportative markers we have looked at in this paper, the French *conditionnel* clearly sticks out as the marker that often, i.e. in 20% of its reportative uses, evokes a denial reading. This is fully in line with the observations we have made concerning the *conditionnel*'s relatively stronger preference for combinations with direct speech fragments, on the one hand, and its frequent occurrence in subordinate complement clauses, on the other, which make another person's perspective more salient and therefore possibly in contrast with the main speaker's perspective. To illustrate this once more: in (58a), the perspective of another speaker (inherent in the use of a reportative marker) remains more or less

implicit, whereas it is made more explicit in (58b), and hence (58b) is more prone to evoking a denial reading.

- (58) a. *Il serait un ami du président.*
 3SG.NOM.M be.COND3SG ART.INDF friend of.the president
 ‘He is said to be a friend of the president.’
- b. *le mythe / l=idée qu=il serait un ami du président.*
 ART.DEF mythos ART.DEF=idea COMP=3SG.NOM.M be.COND3SG ART.INDF
 friend of.the president
 ‘the mythos/the idea that he is **allegedly** a friend of a president.’

The fact that the French *conditionnel* is a multi-perspectival marker (see in this connection e.g. Bres (2010) on the “dialogic” or “polyphonic” nature of the *conditionnel*), does not warrant an equation of the reportative *conditionnel* with genuine quotative markers like the German Konjunktiv I (‘present subjunctive’), which has grammaticalized into a marker of indirect speech. In this respect, I refer to Celle (2006), who stresses that the present subjunctive in German preserves the **neutrality** of the reporting speaking, whereas the *conditionnel* is used by the reporting speaking to **comment** on the reported event.

Le subjonctif I [en allemand] localise une situation fictive coupée du plan de l'énonciation-origine par rapport à laquelle la situation est validable, **ce qui maintient l'altérité et préserve la neutralité de l'énonciateur.**

[The subjunctive I [in German] locates a fictional situation cut off from the plane of the original utterance against which the situation can be validated, thus maintaining otherness and preserving the neutrality of the enunciator.

(Celle 2006: 85, my translation and emphasis)]

Ce n'est pas la reprise du point de vue de l'autre qui est au premier plan avec le conditionnel, mais **le commentaire de l'énonciateur-origine.**

[It is not taking-up the other's point of view that is foregrounded with the conditional, but the commentary of the originating enunciator

(Celle 2006: 84, my translation and emphasis)]

We can conclude that the reportative *conditionnel* is indeed an evidential deictic marker, which is crucially connected to the reporting speaker as deictic origo. The reporting speaker can use the *conditionnel* to express neutral commitment (the normal function of the reportative), but also to distance himself or herself from what he or she reports, a function which Dutch *zou* can also perform. German reportative *sollen*_{IND}, however, mostly expresses neutral commitment and is hardly used as a distancing device.

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Abbreviations




1, 2, 3	first, second, third person	IRR	irrealis
ACC	accusative	M	masculine
AUX	auxiliary	NOM	nominative
ART	article	NEG	negation
CNEG	connegative	OBL	oblique
COND	conditionnel	PASS	passive
COMP	complementizer	PERF	perfect
DAT	dative	PL	plural
DEF	definite	PRS	present
EXP	expletive	PST	past
F	feminine	PTCP	participle
FUT	future	REFL	reflexive
GEN	genitive	REL	relative
IND	indicative	REP	reportative
INDF	indefinite	SG	singular
INF	infinitive		

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Address for correspondence

Tanja Mortelmans
University of Antwerp
Prinsstraat 13
B-2000 Antwerp
Belgium
tanja.mortelmans@uantwerpen.be
<https://orcid.org/0000-0001-7448-785X>

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