Modal verbs in *L'Étranger* and its Romance translations: old problems and new perspectives

Ana Bravo
University of Murcia

Introduction[i]

Modal systems differ from one language to another in significant ways, and at the same time, they share a few properties. Leaving aside the distinction between the two main classes of modal values, namely, epistemic modals on the one side and deontic and dynamic modals on the other (WALS, ch. 74 and 75), among the properties that can be safely considered to be present cross-linguistically – according to the literature- are the following two. Firstly, regarding semantics, epistemic modals always scope over any other auxiliary (modal or not). Secondly, modal assertions are gradable, ranging from very slight possibility to necessity

   In this contribution, however, I am going to concentrate on the differences between modal systems. Specifically, I will compare two Spanish translations of *L'Étranger* (*LE*) in order to shed light on the hotly debated issue of the relationship between epistemic modals and tense. In particular, I will focus on perfect tenses, a phenomenon to which I will refer here, following Laca (2012) as the 'linearization problem'[ii]. A contrastive methodology and a limited corpus will allow us to focus on a couple of questions that are normally overlooked in more theoretical studies dealing with the linearization problem, namely, the distribution of HAVE as a process of externalization (Haspelmath 1983 after Laca 2018) and its assumed optionality. Eventually, our research will add new data and empirical arguments to the theoretical discussion. Focusing in their role in *LE*, epistemic modals will also prove to serve both as a means to indirectly order the situations described in the foreground and to achieve the characteristic impression of vividness of *LE* due to their particular semantics. In particular, I will be assuming without any further discussion for space reasons Benveniste`s (1959) distinction between *Histoire* and *Discourse* and argue roughly that, as expected, Fr. epistemic modals belong to the Histoire dimension, while Sp. Modals contribute to the

Discourse, with qualifications. Mersault-narrator corresponds to the Discourse while Mersault-character stands for the Histoire (on this distinction between narrator and character see specifically Genette 1972, ch. 5)

This paper is organized as follows. Section 2 describes the linearization problem, the analyses proposed in the literature in order to solve it and their potential disadvantages. Section 3 tests these analyses against the Spanish translations of *L'Étranger*. Section 4 deals with the differences among modal verbs expressing necessity as well as with other differences. Our conclusions are presented in Section 5.

1. Tenses and epistemic modal verbs

2.1. The linearization problem

For the purposes of the present research, a descriptive definition of epistemic modality, along the lines proposed in Palmer (1986), or Lyons (1977), will do. Hence, I will take epistemic modality to be concerned with the qualification from the part of the speaker of the truth (or the factuality) of the proposition, according to what he knows. As it has been repeatedly stated in the literature[iii], epistemic modals are necessarily interpreted above tense, even in cases in which epistemic modals are inflected for tense and aspect. In these cases, tense locates the situation referred to by the proposition embedded under the modal, called the prejacent, as shown in (1), from Stowell (2004):

> (1)   *Jack's wife could not be very rich.*
> a.   'It <u>is</u> not possible that Jack's wife <u>was</u> very rich'
> b.   #'It <u>was</u> not possible that Jack's wife <u>was</u> very rich'

The modal, instead, has to be anchored to the utterance time in as far as the evaluation it introduces cannot be separated from the epistemic agent responsible for such an evaluation. Epistemic modal sentences are thus said to have two tenses (at least since Hoffman 1966): the modal time and the prejacent (or the event, after Laca 2012) time. In spite of (1), whether this epistemic judgement may be truly anterior to the utterance time or not is still a debated question (see Boogart (2007), Martin (2011), Laca (2005, 2012, a.o). Authors agree on the idea that the modal time may be located in the past, that is, allows for a back-shifted reading, if the epistemic evaluation holds within a situation that is itself in the past. Back-shifted readings obtain if the modal is contextually dependent on a verb of saying

or thinking in the past, be it explicitly stated, as in the reported speech (2), or not, as in (3), a case of free indirect speech:

(2)   *Tout **suggérait** que la lettre **pouvait** avoir été envoyée par un proche.* [Laca 2012: ex. (27b)]

(3)   *Pour la première fois depuis bien longtemps, j'**ai pensé** à maman.[...] Si près de la mort, maman **devait** s'y sentir libérée et prête à tout revivre.* [*LE*, p.]

In both cases the epistemic evaluation is simultaneous to the now of the agent responsible for the evaluation. Differences stem from the content attributed to the past morphology of the modal verb, which is the expression of a zero tense in Laca's proposal —it is a fake past, an anaphoric past-, but a fully interpretable form for Boogart. In addition to this, both in French and Spanish the two configurations PERF EPISTEMIC MODAL > INF and EPISTEMIC MODAL> PERF INF are available, so each of the two sentences in (5) and (6) are adequate renderings to the English sentence *Peter must have paid a huge fine* (see Laca 2012, examples (19) and (20)):

(4)   *Peter **must have paid** a huge fine.*

(5)   a. *P. **a dû payer** une amende importante.* PERF MODAL > INF
       b. *P. **ha debido pagar** una gran multa.* PERF MODAL > INF

(6)   a. *P. **doit avoir payé** une amende importante.* MODAL > PERF INF
       b. *P. **debe haber pagado** una gran multa.* MODAL > PERF INF

Perfects as in (5) are HIGH PERFECTS, and perfects as in (6) are LOW PERFECTS. In addition to these, there exists a third configuration in Sp. with HAVE above and below the modal, MODAL PERF > PERF INF), from Bosque y Torrego (1995: ex (24)):

(7)   *Ha debido haber llovido.*

(8)   **Il a dû avoir plu.*

For this construction, Laca (2016) suggests that it might be taken as an instance of the much more familiar process of externalization as described by Haspelmath (1993), such that the high perfect is a copy of the low perfect, which will eventually disappear, as in (5a) above.

2.2. The analysis. Predictions

Theories for languages with inflected epistemic modals propose some mechanism for reversing the scope of tense, which consists generally in having the temporal information reconstructed (or moving) into a lower structural position, but always

above the event (but see Carrasco Gutiérrez 2018 for a different analysis)[iv]. High perfects inherit the aspectual properties of the low perfect infinitives, according to Laca (2018). In any case, as Martin (2011) observes –and in Laca (2012) it is so reckoned-, what is predicted is that sentences in (5) are equivalent to and do not semantically differ from those in (6).

In the following sections we will analyse the different solutions given in the two Spanish translations for the epistemic modal verbs used in *L'Étranger*. If we consider a broader context, it seems to be the case that ancillary assumptions need to be made in order to fully understand the relationship between tense and epistemic modality, since the picture that emerges is that, as Martin (2011) defends, the available options are not always freely interchangeable.

3. Tenses and epistemic modals in *L'Étranger*

3.1. Perfect linearizations

The two conclusions that can be drawn from the very short description in Section 2.1 are (i) that French and Spanish present the same array of epistemic modal constructions, and (ii) that regarding their translation from French into Spanish, different solutions are available, all of them equally valid. However, this is not the case (see Laca 2005 for a detailed analysis). One important difference has to do with the preferred orders for linearization of the modal and temporal information. Thus, Fr. seems to strongly prefer high perfects (PERF MOD > INF), while in Sp. it is the other way round (MOD > PERF INF). Hence, Fr. prefers (9) but Sp. (10):

(9)   *Pierre **a dû payer** une amende importante.* PERF MODAL > INF (=5a)
(10)   *P. **debe haber pagado** una gran multa.* MODAL > PERF INF (=6b)

This is in fact the distribution we find in *LE* and in the two Sp. translations: all the cases of PERFECT TENSE + MODAL linearize as high perfects (PERF MOD > INF) in the original and as low perfects (MOD > PERF INF) in the Sp. versions[v]:

(11)   *Ils **avaient dû** nous **voir** prendre l'autobus avec un sac de plage.*
        PST.PERF MODAL > INF

(12)   ***Debían habernos visto****…* MOD IPFV> PERF INF   T1
(13)   *Nos **debían haber visto****…*MOD IPFV> PERF INF   T2
         'My impression was that they had seen us taking the bus and
         noticed Marie's oil cloth bathing bag'.

This pattern holds even in the case shown in (14), where the perfect is
exceptionally kept in T1 (15) as a low perfect, but not in T2 (16), with the simple
past, as in the rest of the text:

(14)   *J'ai **dû lire** cette histoire des milliers de fois.* PRF MODAL > INF
(15)   ***Debo de haber leído****…* MOD PRS> PERF INF   T1
(16)   ***Debí de leer****…* MOD PST.PFV> INF*…*   T2
         'I must have read this story a thousand of times'.

There is only one exception to this generalization. T1 keeps the high perfect of (17),
but not T2, but as explained in fn.ii, T1 is more close to the original:

(17)   *Il relatait un fait divers dont le début manquait, mais qui **avait dû***
         se passer en Tchécoslaquie. PST. PRF MOD > INF
(18)   *… que **había debido ocurrir***… PST.PRF MOD > INF   T1
(19)   *…que **debía de haber acontecido…***MOD IPFV> PERF INF   T2

3.2. High and low perfects in context

In this section we concentrate in a very few Sp. and Fr. epistemic examples focusing on the context where they appear. Sp. examples pose a few problems for the reverse scope theories. I will eventually accept for Sp. some version of the theories that allow epistemic modals to scope below tense (Steedman 2005: 3.1.3, Boogart 2007, Martin 2011) in conjunction with theories that argue for a decompositional analysis in terms of three different types of information: modal, aspectual, and temporal (Borgonovo 2011, Laca 2012). Following Martin (2011), I will also argue in favor of distinguishing between the time when the possibility takes place (the possibility time) and the time of the modal evaluation (the time when the modal judgement is made). In *LE* there are two moments from which the the realm of possibilities can be accessed: the Mersault-narrator's *now* and the Mersault-character's now. In the first case, the possibility time and the evaluation time might or might not conflate; in the second case, they do. Finally, we will show that epistemic statements also contribute to the ordering of the situations due to their particular meaning.

3.2.1 French high perfects in context
The first relevant example is in (20):

(20)   *A ce moment, le concierge est entré derrière mon dos. Il **avait dû** courir. Il a bégayé un peu.* PST.PRF MOD > INF
'Just then the keeper came up behind me. He'd (=had) evidently been running, as he was a little out of breath.'

In what pertains to the temporal interpretation of the epistemic modal in (20), as far as I can see, current theories predict that there is only one interpretation available: that in which the evaluation time is the now of the epistemic agent. This is because under the reverse scope analyses the temporal morphology on the modal is interpreted on the prejacent, irrespective of how this specific movement is attained. Hence, (21) is an appropriate gloss for (20) –see on this (1) above:

(21)   *'As I see it **now**, **it is** necessarily the case that **in the past he had run**'.* PRS.MOD> PST.PRF

where *now* refers to the now of the narrator, that is, to the moment when Mersault is already in prison and is (re)writing his story. The point here is whether in addition to this reading there exists another one according to which the evaluation is anchored to the moment when the situation holds. That is, whether (20) may also mean that Mersault evaluated it as necessary in a moment anterior to the

utterance time. This reading, shown by the gloss in (22), corresponds to the back-shifted reading interpretation of past epistemic modals (see Section 2.1 above):

(22)   '*As I saw it **then**, **it was** necessarily the case that **in the past he had run***'. PST.IMPF MOD*>* PST.PRF

It is my contention that in the French version there is only one reading available, namely, (21), that is, the non-shifted reading, the reading corresponding to Mersault-narrator, to the Discourse. In the Eng. translation, where the epistemic modal has been substituted for the epistemic adverb *evidently*, there is also only one reading available, the same as in Fr.:

(23)   *Just then the keeper came up behind me. **He'd evidently been running**, as he was a little out of breath.* PRS.MOD*>* PST.PRF

In fact, this is what we expect since, under the prevailing analyses, the back-shifted interpretation is completely ruled out with the pluperfect. Let's see why. On the one hand, the pluperfect is interpreted in the prejacent, so in (20) the *plus-que-parfait* 'descends', so to say, on to the complement of the modal, as shown in (24):

(24)   *Il **avait dû** + **courir** > Il **doit** + **avait couru***

On the other hand, these back-shifted readings are conveyed by an *imparfait* (Boogart 2007, Laca 2005, 2012), that is, by a present in the past, but there is none in this case. There is only one case in which the temporal configuration of (24) allows for a present in the past reading of the present: in the context of a relative clause. Relative clauses are temporally independent so they can scope out of the nominal phrase and be anchored to the utterance time, or, on the contrary, they can remain below the scope of the noun (Hudson 1973, and more recently, Stowell 2007, a.o.). The present of the past reading obtains in the latter, and it is the one that is preferred in (25) and (26) below:

(25)   *Il **relatait** un fait divers dont le début manquait, mais **qui avait dû** se passer en Tchécoslovaquie.*
(26)   ***Relataba** un hecho policial [...] que **había debido ocurrir** en Checoslovaquia.*

So in (25) the evaluation time and the possibility time coincide. They both are anchored to a past moment, simultaneous to another moment, also past. This is how the Eng. translator has, in fact, understood it:

(27)   *It was the story of a crime. The first part was missing, but I **gathered** that...*

As it can be observed, the semantic contribution of the modal is lexically expressed by means of the verb *gather*, and it is located in the past.

3.2.2 Spanish low perfects in context

As regards the Sp. translations, we will argue that the picture is slightly different. In fact, we will show that the back-shifted reading is the one that obtains in the Spanish versions, with the consequences for the narration that will be described. We argue that it is the fact that Sp. strongly privileges low perfects over high perfects (see section 3.1 above) that makes the difference. As a consequence of this preference, two past tenses may be realized on the modal, namely: (i) a simple past, aspectually perfective, and (ii) an imperfective past, or *imparfait*. This is illustrated in (28) and (29), respectively:

(28)   *En ese momento el conserje entró detrás de mí.* **Debió de haber corrido**. *Tartamudeó un poco.* PST.PFV MOD > PERF INF   T1

(29)   *[...]* **Debía de haber corrido**. *Tartamudeó un poco.* IPFV MOD> INF PERF   T2

As long as the two options are translations of the same sentence, they are expected to be interchangeable, but the truth is that T1 behaves parallel to the Fr. sentence, while T2 is an example of backward-shifted reading. I will begin by addressing (29), which features the *imparfait*.

As regards the modal, according to Laca (2012), there are two readings available under the reverse scope analysis. These two readings are dependent on whether the temporal information is read on complement (30) or, on the contrary, on the the modal (31). Schematically –elaborating on Laca (2012):

(30)   PRS MODAL > PST. PRFV INF ☺ present perspective on the modal: **debe** *+ había corrido* PRS MOD > PST.PRFV INF

(31)   IPFV MODAL > PERF INF ☺ present-in-the-past perspective on the modal: **debía** *+ haber corrido* PST.IMPFV MOD > PERF INF

The first reading locates the epistemic evaluation at the utterance time, hence, at the now of Mersault in prison, as in (20) and (21). The second reading is the backward shifted reading and, accordingly, the evaluation time is either past or present anaphoric to another higher past. In the former, the pluperfect on the prejacent orders the running of the keeper as anterior to his arrival. In the latter the temporal information is on the modal and the perfect only signals anteriority of the situation referred to by the prejacent to another situation, also past. Anteriority is conveyed by means of the aspectual information of the perfect. It is my contention, however, that if the two possibilities described in (30) and (31) hold, (31) cannot derived from (30) by tense rising. Graphically, (32) does not hold:

(32)   ***Debía*** + *haber corrido* **<** ***Debe*** + *había corrido*.

If this were the case, one would not expect a past tense with imperfect aspect on the modal. An imperfect on the modal implies that there is an imperfect on the pluperfect, but there is none. In other words, although the auxiliary verb *había* in the pluperfect *había cantado* shares the same morphology of imperfect *había* (Eng. 'had'), it is not a true imperfect (as García Fernández 2008 recalls). The alternative is to do away with the hypothesis that the tense in the modal is an imperfect. But if we assume this second analysis, the backward shifted reading in (31) is automatically ruled out, since this reading is dependent on the aspectual properties of the imperfect (Camus & García Fernández 2004, Leonetti 2004 and references therein), and does not obtain with any other tense. So, the imperfect on the modal does not come from the tense on the complement. And the other way round, that is, if it is the imperfect on the modal in (31) that descends resulting in the linearization in (30), is not better, as long as the *había* in the pluperfect is not a true imperfect. The conclusion, hence, is that as far as Spanish is concerned, and contrary to the general assumption, low perfect linearizations are independent of high perfects. In fact, if our analysis is on the right track, there's nothing on high perfects that allows for analyzing them as derived from low perfects plus a past modal, and vice versa[vi].

A second conclusion that follows from the preceding reasoning is that the Sp. version is compatible with just one reading, namely, the backward shifted reading. Furthermore, the contribution of the modal sentence to the rhythm of the story in (29) reveals that the imperfect is a real imperfect and not just a fake past or an anaphoric past. That this is the case and, hence, that the evaluation time is located on a moment previous to the utterance time can be shown because the evaluation time overlaps or includes the resultant state denoted by the present perfect of the preceding sentence. In order to prove that, we will compare the sequence as it stands in Fr. with its non modalized version, taking Eng. as the reference language for the ease of simplicity:

(20)   *[A ce moment, le concierge **est entré** derrière mon dos]$_{S1}$.[Il **avait dû courir**]$_{S2}$. [Il **a bégayé** un peu]$_{S3}$.*
(33)   *[The keeper has arrived]$_{S1}$. [He had run]$_{S2}$. [He has stammered]$_{S3}$.*

In (33) the same pluperfect that would order S2 before S1 would render it very difficult to obtain the rhetorical relation of Continuation such that S1 > S3 (de Swart 2007). At most, S2 is indirectly ordered before S3. Hence, without the modal the three situations would be presented to the reader as totally unrelated among them, although it can be inferred that pragmatically there's a relationship of OCCASION (after Hobbs 1995 and Altshuler and Varasdi 2015) between the

arrival and the running. In any case, this relationship is by no means evident, since the pluperfect can be interpreted as an Existential Perfect, and relies only on inference. The picture that obtains is represented in (34) —after de Swart (2007):

(34)   *Ce moment* [Topic]

$$S1 \qquad S3$$
$$S2$$
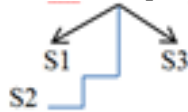
It is my contention that introducing S2 in (33) as an epistemic statement with a high perfect, as in (20), affects the ordering shown in (34). The modal judgement being a present tense (*doit + avait couru*) is subsequent to S1, but the event described in the prejacent (S2') is ordered as preceding S1. As a consequence S3 is ordered (by transitivity) after S1:

(35)   *Ce moment* [Topic]

$$S1 \rightarrow \quad S2 \rightarrow S3$$
$$S2'$$
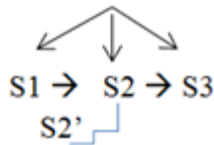
   With this description in mind, let's go back to the Sp. translation in (29). In that case, the modal evaluation is presented as overlapping with both the event of arriving and the event of stammering, which are in turn subsequent one to the other. This is the expected order if the imperfect on the modal is a real imperfect, so what we have is (31), and not (30), with the caveat the past is not a fake past, or a zero-tense:

(36)   *Ce moment* [Topic]

$$S1 \subset \quad S2 \supset S3$$
$$S2'$$
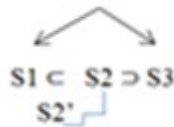
I am assuming the standard analysis, which goes back at least to Hopper (1979) – see also Binnick (1991: 378 and ff.), Declerck (1991) and Smith (2003) among many others, that takes the imperfect aspect to pertain to the background of the text, but perfective aspect to the foreground. Consequently, only situations aspectually perfective make the story advance, while statements in the background overlap with events in the foreground. Interestingly, according to Hopper (1979), one of the properties of the statements in the background is that they provide

reasons for understanding attitudes and motives in the foreground. Following Martin (2011) it can be defended that the imperfect anchors both the time when the possibility takes place and the time of the modal evaluation. And they both belong to the realm of the *Histoire*, not to the *Discourse*. The Sp. reader accompanies Mersault as a character, that is, it accesses the history as if from the inside. This is precisely the effect of the Sp. *imparfait*.

   This conclusion is confirmed by the analysis of the solution proposed in T1, repeated in (37):

> (37) *En ese momento el conserje entró detrás de mí.* **Debió de haber corrido**. *Tartamudeó un poco.* PST.PFV MOD > PERF INF   T1

The temporal configuration of the epistemic modal sentence in (37) makes an analysis in terms of reverse scope totally impossible since the expected tense, an anterior past *hubo corrido* (lit. have.PST.PFV run.PTCP), is excluded from main clauses in Sp. It is explained in terms of a reduplication of the perfective information in the prejacent (Bosque & Torrego 1995, Borgonovo 2011, Laca 2012). Hence, the modal is a present and what is anterior to the utterance time is the situation described in the prejacent. The following expressions are described as semantically equivalent in the literature:

> (38) PAST PERFECTIVE MODAL > INFINITIVE PERFECT ≈
> (39) PAST PERFECTIVE MODAL > INFINITIVE ≈
> (40) PRES MODAL > PAST PERFECTIVE

(40) being the basic linearization, only one reading should be allowed: that in which the epistemic evaluation is located at the utterance time, that is, at the *now* of Mersault in prison, since the simple past does not allow for the anaphoric reading:

> (41) 'It **is** evident for me **now** that in **that moment in the past the possibility existed that**…'.
> (42) #'**Now** I say that it **was evident** for me in **that moment** that…'.

Consequently the running is only indirectly ordered in this sequence. However, it is not impossible to consider that it is the modal evaluation itself what is ordered after the arrival and before the stammering: that is, it not impossible to defend that the simple past locates the interval during which the possibility takes place and the perfect infinitive orders the situation in the prejacent as anterior to the possibility time. This is, actually, the ordering expressed Sp. T1:

> (43) *Entró S1> Debió S2 > Tartamudeó S3*

Foreground is associated with saliency, so in (43) the inference is presented as salient, something that becomes evident if compared to T2, with an *imparfait* modal. In addition to this, one of the advantages of this proposal is that it allows for a unified analysis of the two Sp. solutions, as we can do away with the reverse scope analysis in both cases. Lastly, it is not clear that (39) and (40) above are equivalent, nor it is evident that (38) obtains by raising the tense in the prejacent. If this were case, S1 and S2 would present the same order, contrary to what happens:

(44)   *[El conserje llegó]$_{S1}$. [Él debió correr]$_{S2}$.*   S1 < S2

(45)   *#[El conserje llegó]$_{S1}$.[Él conserje corrió]$_{S2}$.*   S1 > S2, S1 > S2

It can be concluded that, while the perfect infinitive unambiguously orders the prejacent as anterior, the simple infinitive does it as a consequence of the meaning conveyed by an epistemic modal. If epistemic modals are described as a means for the speaker to signal the dependence of a certain claim on a particular piece of evidence, in (37) the keeper's running is dependent on the evidence of him being there. This dependence has as a temporal correlate the ordering of S1 as posterior to S2. But this is an inference. In another context the reverse order is also possible. This situation is completely unexpected if (38), being an instance of reduplication, is equivalent to (40).

3.3. The stylistic import of epistemic tensed modals

Finally, there is a second conclusion that the study of perfect epistemic modals shows and it is that they contribute to achieving the stylistic effect in the novel of apparently having two 'nows': that of the narrator in prison, and that of Mersault as a character. The former is static; the latter moves forward as the story progress. As we have shown in this section, the past modal in (29) is amenable of the two readings (as in (30) and (31)) due to, precisely, its condition of being anchored to the now of an epistemic agent. Or, to describe it in the terms defended here and following Martin (2011), due to the fact that it is possible to distinguish between a time for the reasoning and a time for the possibility to hold. Specifically, what we are expected to be able to move is the time for reasoning, the evaluation time.

    The present perfect modal's renderings in (46) clearly illustrate this split:

(46)   ***J'ai dû*** *lire cette histoire des milliers de fois.* PRS PRF MODAL > INF
            'I must have read this story a thousand of times'.

The preceding context is given in (47):

(47)   *J'avais trouvé, en effet, un vieux morceau de journal […]Il **relatait** un fait divers dont le début manquait, mais **qui avait dû** se passer en Tchécoslovaquie.*
'One day, […], I found a bit of newspapers. […]. It was the story of a crime. The first part was missing, but I gathered that its scene was in some village in Czechoslovakia'.

As we have just seen, translating perfect modals into Sp. is problematic because several options become immediately available. With respect to (46), Sp. offers the following two:

(48)   ***Debo de haber leído****…*   PRS. MODAL > PERF INF   T1

(49)   ***Debí de leer****…*   PST.PFV MODAL > INF   T2

According to the approach defended here, the present of the modal in (48) corresponds to a present perspective and anchors both the evaluation time and the possibility time to the now of the narrator, not to the now of the character. So it could be glossed as 'I realize now that it is possible now that in that moment in the past I read…'. This present perspective is lost in (49) and only the now of Mersault-character is available. (48) is *Discourse* while (49) is *Histoire*.

In fact, analyzing epistemic modals as signals of the dependence of a certain claim on particular evidence (Stone 1994) helps to understand why the use of epistemic modals contributes to reinforce the deictic impression, according to de Swart (2007), created with the use of the present perfect[vii]. Epistemic modals require contiguity of the epistemic agent and the evidence, the epistemic modal either introduces straightforwardly the character in the storyline or takes the reader to the now of the narrator (in Fr.). We find the following two uses as particularly illustrative of this property:

(50)   *Il relatait un fait divers dont le début manquait, mais qui **avait dû** se passer en Tchécoslovaquie.*

(51)   *A ce moment, le concierge est entré derrière mon dos. Il **avait dû** courir. Il a bégayé un peu.*

In the two cases the epistemic modal has the stylistic effect of converting a narrative discourse into a reflexive one. In the former the narrator is omniscient; in the latter, the voice of Mersault, either as a narrator or as a character, is introduced and, in doing so, the reader becomes a privileged witness both of his thoughts and of the scene, which is another way of describing the sense of presentness, of vividness, of the novel (on this see Otten 1975 and references therein).

4. Other issues

4.1. Weak and strong necessity cross-linguistically

French and Spanish also differ in the number of necessity modals available, irrespective of the type of modality expressed, epistemic or deontic. Thus, while in French there is only one auxiliary verb, namely, *devoir*, in Sp. there are several more or less grammaticalized verbs with this same meaning (Olbertz 1998: 7.2.2.4). The difference among them has been described in terms of strength: *deber* (lit. 'devoir') would convey weak necessity and *tener que, haber que* (lit. 'avoir que') strong necessity. In turn, strong necessity is defined as necessity externally imposed (RAE-ASALE 2009: 28.6l). However, the lack of uniformity in the translations does not support the existence of a distinction at least along these lines. Thus, although for the deontic *devoir tener que* ('have to') seems to be the best option in (54), in (57) sounds a little bit unnatural if understood as referring to an obligation externally imposed[viii]:

(52)   *…quand **j'ai dû** abandonner mes études.*
(53)   T1 > *debí*   WEAK MOD
(54)   T2 > *tuve que*   STRONG MOD
(55)   *…la natte où je **devais** me coucher.*

(56)   T1 > *debía*   WEAK MOD
(57)   T2 > *tenía que*   STRONG MOD

As regards this particular point, it has been recently defended that the difference might be an stylistic one, *deber* being more appropriate for a formal register while *tener que* would be more informal (Garachana 2018). This analysis, we think, would better account for the distribution of Sp. deontic modals *deber* and *tener que* in the text.

4.2. Modals added and modals suppressed

Finally, in this section we will show the effects on the general course of the story of either adding or suppressing a modal in the corresponding translation distinct from the temporal ordering of the situations, leaving aside the factuality meanings of dynamic modals, a widely studied phenomenon. (58) is an example of adding a modal, both in Sp. T2 and in Eng, in a context where there is none in the original version:

(58)   *J'ai couru pour ne pas manquer le depart.*
(59)   ***Hube de*** *correr para no perder el autobús*   STRONG MOD   T2
(60)   ***I had to run*** *to catch the bus.*

In (59) and (60) the content is not modified. This is the expected result if the original sentence expresses conditional necessity either as anankastic conditional or a teleological modal, since in both cases a necessity modal, overt or covert, is required:

(61)   *If you don't want to miss the bus, you (have to) run.*
(62)   *In order not to miss the bus, you (have to) run.*

(63) is an example of substituting a deontic modal for another linguistic expression lacking this meaning:

(63)   *On l'a couverte, mais je **dois** dévisser la bière pour que…*
(64)   *La voy a desatornillar…*   ALLER + INF   T1

In this case the change does affect the meaning conveyed, since in the Sp. versions the fact that the action ceases to be an obligation makes the situation less formal, contributing in this way to reduce the tension of the scene. In the Eng. version, on the contrary, the sense of asserting the existence of an obligation externally imposed is kept: "I was told to…".

3. Conclusion

In this paper we have focused on comparing cross-linguistically the contribution of tensed epistemic modals to the discourse in order to test the predictions of the current hypothesis on this particular issue. The Sp. versions for *L'Étranger* confirm Laca's (2018) hypothesis that Sp. is a low perfect language. Two conclusions are then drawn. Firstly, that high perfects and low perfects are independently generated. As a consequence, high perfects anchor the evaluation time and the possibility time to the utterance time. Low perfects, on the contrary, allow for a split and, hence, for anchoring the possibility time in the past. Secondly, we have defended that the temporal information in the modal in Sp. contributes to the narrative rhythm, locating either the possibility time alone or in conjunction with the evaluation time. Imperfect modals, as expected, locate the modal reasoning in the background, while simple past modal do it in the foreground.

As regards this externalization process, one possibility is to direct, as Laca (2017) does, the focus to the cross-linguistic differences in the meaning of the present perfect. Another possibility might be, however, to look into the epistemic modal itself. It could be the case that epistemic modals are grammaticalized up to a different degree and that there is a correlation between a low degree of grammaticalization and high perfects. Low perfects would correlate with epistemic modals as functional categories that denote the reference point in a sequence of tenses. This issue, however, goes far beyond the aims of this paper.

There are, finally, other less studied issues that are also addressed. Thus, we show that epistemic modals contribute decisively to attain both the sense of immediateness, of presentness, and of being more a re-narration, a reflexive discourse, than a mere narration, more in Fr. than in Sp. due to the fact that high perfects are anchored to the now of Mersault-narrator and, consequently, to the *Discourse*, and not to the *Histoire*. The former property is shared with the present perfect, but the second one is privative of epistemic modals.

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Abstract

Modal verbs in L'Étranger *and its Romance translations: old problems and new perspectives*

Epistemic modals in Romance languages show two interesting properties, contrary to Eng.: (i) they are inflected for tense and aspect (Tasmowsky 1980, Laca 2018 and references therein, a.m.o.); (ii) in Spanish, but not in Fr. nor in Port., temporal and aspectual information can show up in the modal (above), in the complement (below) o repeated above and below. In this paper we compare *L'Étranger* two Spanish translations in order to shed light with a limited corpus on the following two theoretical issues. Firstly, the externalization problem (Laca 2017 after Haspelmath 1983): where do temporal and aspectual auxiliaries realize preferably in Sp. vs. Fr.? Are high perfects related to low perfects? Secondly, perfect tenses raise a problem when it comes to

translate epistemic modal sentences from Fr. into Sp. In a configuration with a low perfect the modal may accept both the *imparfait* and the simple past. We show that each of the solutions have a particular contribution on discourse. Epistemic modals, finally, will also prove to serve both as a mean to indirectly order the situations described in the foreground and to achieve the characteristic impression of vividness of *L'Étranger* due to their particular semantics.

Keywords: epistemic modals, Spanish, *L'Étranger*, discourse, tense

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[ii] The two versions differ significantly. The first version (T1) is owed to the Argentinian editor Bonifacio del Carril and was firstly published in the also Argentinian editorial Emecé in 1949. The author of the second version (T2) is the Spanish poet, writer and translator José Ángel Valente, and it appeared in the Sp. editorial Alianza in 1971. According to Ledesma (2014: 64-65), T2 is to be preferred due to both its more careful use of language and its literary style. T1, on the contrary, is in many occasions too close to the original version. This is shown in the table below, where it can be appreciated that only T1 uses the Sp. corresponding word for Fr. *obliger* (lit. to oblige):

LE	T1 Del Carril	T2 Valente
J'**étais obligué** de… (p. 147) lit. I was.IMP obliged of... 'I could but…'	Me **veía obligado** a … lit. me saw.IMP **obliged to**	Había de… lit. had.IMP of…

Other than that, there are no significant differences, although expected, between the two versions, included dialectal differences, since the percentage of present perfects vs. simple pasts is the same in the two of them: 3%. See Ledesma (2014, specially chap. 6, for further details).

As regards the Eng. translations, I'm citing after Stuart Gilbert's 1946 version. Interestingly, this translation is, according to Kaplansky (2004: 187), the more "domesticating" (*nauralisante*, in Fr.) of the four. For this reason, this will be the text used in the glosses too. *LE* will stand for *L'Étranger*.
[iii] The observation goes back at least to Tasmowski (1980). See Carrasco Gutiérrez (2018) for a very exhaustive and up to date list of references. A concise review of the existent analyses can be found in Laca (2012, 2018) and in Carrasco Gutiérrez (2018).
[iv] Both Martin (2011) and Boogart (2007), though in different grounds, defend that tense can scope above epistemic modals and, hence, reject such an explanation.
[v] Standard abbreviations from the Leipzig Glossing Rules.
[vi] According to a reviewer, this conclusion relies on the assumption that what it is moved are semantic objects, and not 'pieces of morpho-phonetics (as is the case in most externalization or lowering processes', since in this case semantics remains unaffected. For this argument to hold i) syntactic

operations must be independent from semantics, which is a highly intra-theoretical assumption, and ii) the formation of syntactic terminals #stem+affixes# (#deb + ía#) must be ordered after the movement of affixes, with the problems this assumption represents in terms of where the affix in question is interpreted, so we need to resort to rule ordering and timing of semantic interpretation. I am thankful to Diego Krivochen for discussion and help with this point.

[vii] This would amount to analysing epistemic modals as evidentials. We leave this issue aside.

[viii] As one reviewer points out to me, imperfect *devoir* 'is very often used as an expression of future in the past for planned actions, which is probably the case in this example'. In fact, in the Eng. version there is only reference to 'the sleeping mat', without any sense of modality. Nevertheless, if a modal is to be used in Sp. *tener que* is to be preferred for the reasons explained in the text.