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Then and now in English and French: Parallel patterns?

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Abstract

English *now* and *then* and French *maintenant* and *alors* all exemplify the cross-linguistic tendency for temporal adverbs to grammaticalize into markers of rhetorical relations. This paper analyses the polysemy of these adverbs in a comparable corpus of written-to-be-spoken speeches and unscripted spoken interviews. For *now* and *maintenant*, while the discourse patterns and the direction of change are remarkably similar, French and English seem to be at different points in the grammaticalization cycle, with *maintenant* being less grammaticalized than *now*. In the case of *alors* and *then*, it is the French lexeme that appears to be more bleached, occurring in a wider range of rhetorical contexts and in different discourse patterns from English *then*.

1. Introduction

1.1 Time in language

It is well known that cross-linguistically, time expressions develop argumentational and text-organizational functions. Typically, time expressions can grammaticalize to acquire meanings such as adversative, causative, concessive and conditional (Heine & Kuteva 2002: 291ff), although different languages may do so in different ways.

This chapter compares two pairs of temporal adverbs across French (of France) and English (of the UK), *now* / *maintenant* and *then* / *alors* in two related genres of political discourse: speeches and discussion. These adverbs have all evolved the types of cohesion-marking functions mentioned above. *Now* and *maintenant* have acquired contrastive and topic-shifting functions, while *then* and *alors* have both been recruited to express inference, marking conditional apodosis and inferred result, and as discourse management tools.

1.2 Overview

The next section sets the study within the domain of ‘discourse phraseology’, an expansion of the usual sense of phraseology to include regular patterns at the level of discourse, where schematic and sparsely-filled patterns are found. Section 3 then presents the comparable corpora of political discourse used in the study. This is followed by the findings of the comparative studies of English *now* and its French approximate equivalent *maintenant* in Section 4, and of English *then* and French *alors* in Section 5. Section 6 provides a summary and conclusion.

2. Contrastive phraseology

2.1 Discourse phraseology

Language usage is at the heart of phraseology, which deals with conventional linguistic production rather than rule-governed production. ‘Rule-governed production’ refers here, in the context of discourse, to multi-word linguistic sequences that are transparent insofar as they are built up by the speaker from smaller units in accordance with the permissions and obligations of the speaker’s language. They may be novel (at least for the speaker and/or the hearer), and to interpret them the hearer does not need to have had any prior experience of them. In a usage-based framework, no boundary is assumed between ‘rule-governed’ and ‘conventional’, nor need they be mutually exclusive. They can be thought of as being at either end of a cline of conventionality, running from novel sequences, through sequences recognized as regular and associated with a particular context and particular implicatures, to the most opaque idioms and ossifications which are unitary in that their meaning is impenetrable to those without prior experience of them. Conventionality in this sense depends on regularity, not rules. Given such a cline, it is not possible to delimit precisely the domain of phraseology. Moreover, what is conventional for one speaker might not be so conventional for another. In a panchronic usage-based framework, of course, rules themselves can be understood as having evolved over time through conventionalization.

Key to phraseology, then, is the notion that, for many linguistic sequences, there is more to the meaning of the sequence than the composition of the component parts. However, the nature of this “more” is uncertain. Overall, phraseology remains a rather ill-defined domain. The regular, “patterned” expressions it focuses on include collocations, idioms, and fixed phrases, with varying degrees and types of “additional meaning”. There is no obvious way to distinguish between idiomatic and non-idiomatic. Semi-lexically-filled regular chunks of language as well as unfilled schemata can also be viewed as phraseological. As Altenberg notes, it is difficult to classify the many different types (Altenberg 1998:101; cf. Ebeling & Ebeling 2013). From the structural point of view it is convenient to think of the various types as being along a cline from maximally filled, where both the words and the word order are fixed (e.g. idioms such as *when all’s said and done* or *bubble and squeak*) through semi-filled/semi-schematic where some slots only are filled (e.g. ‘*have a (MODIF) time*’, as in *have a {terrible / splendid / absolutely riotous /..} time*), to maximally schematic where the lexical slots are unspecified (e.g. ‘COMP and COMP’, as in *faster and faster, higher and higher*).

As an umbrella term for phraseological types, ‘phaseme’ seems appropriate. Phrasemes crucially involve regularity, frequency, and conventionalization; through these mechanisms they come into being. Phraseology has tended to focus on the lexically-filled or semi-filled sequential structures or ‘chunks’ or ‘lexical bundles’ at sentence-constituent level. Above constituent level, towards sentence level and beyond, phrasemes tend to be more schematic, which goes along with decreasing predictability at “higher” levels of language production. Of course, schematic constructions with few or no lexical specifications can be observed both below and above sentence level. But at multi-clausal level, filled phrasemes become rarer and more specialized (this is the realm of proverbs, quotations and sayings). Larger discourse chunks can nonetheless be “phraseological” but in a more abstract sense, as exemplified below. Regular patterns, expressing discourse meanings such as discourse coherence or discourse salience, can be considered phraseological. At discourse level, as at other levels, different types of phraseme can be identified. They include maximally schematic structures

(i.e. lexically unfilled), such as ‘bareV-1 + NP-1 + bareV-2 + NP-2’, as in *Build a dam, kill a river*, where syntactic form and clause order combine to convey the additional, phraseological meaning. Structures dependent on a connective, such as ‘p CONN q’ can also be considered phrasemes, and where the slot is filled, as in ‘p so q’, we have a semi-schematic phraseme. The ‘consequence’ meaning is dependent on the presence of the whole sequence. These observations are of course compatible with a Construction Grammar approach. In fact, observation of idiomaticity contributed greatly to the impetus for that approach (Michaelis 2019).

Our discussion of discourse-level phrasemes will use the relatively neutral term ‘discourse pattern’. It will also use the term ‘rhetorical structure’ for discussion of the rhetorical functions of such patterns. However, this is simply for convenience, and nothing hangs on the choice of terms. Discourse patterns serve to link sections of discourse together and to structure them into a salience hierarchy. In other words, they provide discourse coherence. As observed above, phrasemes can be situated on a cline of schematicity. Discourse patterns include those schemata where two (or more) ideas are linked by a third idea which is the coherence relation between them (the ‘relational proposition’ of Rhetorical Structure Theory (Mann & Thompson 1986)). Coherence relations may be inferred or explicitly marked (by grammatical means such as morphosyntactic clause-combining devices or by lexical means such as connectives). In either case, regular patterns (discourse patterns) emerge and conventionalize over time.

2.2 *The aims of the study*

This study adopts the wide view of phraseology, to include recurrent discourse patterns, presented in 2.1, to compare the temporal expressions *then* and *now* and their frequent translation equivalents in French, *alors* and *maintenant* in scripted and unscripted political discourse.

A question to be posed in the study is how ‘discourse patterns’ compare across languages; to what extent different languages conventionalize similar patterns using comparable grammatical and lexical means for comparable discourse meanings. The starting point is the recruitment of temporal expressions for discourse-structuring functions: the comparison involves English *now* and *then* and French *maintenant* and *alors*. The study aims to compare the polysemies and the usages of these pairs of time expressions, which can be considered translation equivalents in both their temporal and their extended senses, to see how far the parallels between the two languages can be taken. The comparison is made from a discourse-level point of view, taking into account the discourse-structuring role of the adverbs. When comparing, or translating between, related languages, such as English and French, the unit of comparison adopted is often the sentence, defined as a syntactic unit. The syntactic sentence continues to enjoy a special status in linguistic analysis as the default unit of discourse. But such an approach risks undervaluing the role of a great deal of structure beyond the sentence, both referential (e.g. anaphoric/cataphoric) and rhetorical (including information structure and coherence relations).

A second question to be considered is the role of genre: to what extent are genre differences similar across languages? This consideration may suggest hypotheses regarding which aspects of discourse structuring are potentially universal and which depend on language or local convention.

3. Data

3.1 Comparable corpora

Much contrastive analysis is based on bidirectional parallel corpora, i.e. translated texts. Translated text has the advantage, among others, of allowing equivalences across the different languages to be quickly identified, insofar as the 'same' meanings are expressed in the two languages. The meaning of the discourse acts as a *tertium comparationis*. But basing contrastive analysis on translated text also has disadvantages, such as its dependence on translation type and translation quality. Contrastive analysis at the suprasentential level is not so easy with parallel corpora, partly because at discourse level the distinctions between languages are less grammatical and more rhetorical than at lexical or clausal levels; translation choice is therefore less constrained. Atypical rhetorical features are often what gives translated text its foreign flavour. In translation it is not easy to recreate in the target language the links between particular genres and particular discourse structures. Comparable corpora, containing genre-matched native text, have to take the comparable situations as the *tertium comparationis*, and situations are never entirely comparable. The advantage is that the calquing of discourse features and structures is avoided, meaning that the identification of a discourse feature as characteristic of a genre is more reliable because the frequencies and distributions are native.

3.2 The political discourse corpora

This study is based on two small comparable corpora of political discourse, one of scripted monologic political speeches, one of unscripted dialogic political interviews and discussion. The assumption is that the event types of political speech and radio or TV political discussion programme in France and the UK are comparable. The corpora are described in Table 1.

Table 1. The comparable corpora used in this study

Political speeches genre (scripted monologue)	Political discussion genre (unscripted dialogue)
French part: 383,800 words	French part: 159,000 words
148 political speeches, 1-4 per speaker 53 speakers 2001-2010	57 discussions and interviews 45 speakers (politicians and political commentators with journalists) 2000-2017
English part: 385,700 words	English part: 140,100 words
132 political speeches, 1-5 per speaker 32 speakers 1995-2010	59 discussions and interviews 71 speakers (politicians and political commentators with journalists) 2004-2009

The political speeches corpus consists of speeches given by politicians, mostly government ministers. In the political contexts of France and the UK, the genre of ministerial speeches is relatively constrained and relatively comparable. The situations in which such speeches are produced are well-defined and similar across the two countries, and identifying comparable texts for a corpus is fairly straightforward. The speeches are pre-scripted and made available to journalists and to the wider public. The speeches are designed for a wide audience of other

politicians, other governments, other institutions, the media and the public, in addition to the immediate audience that is physically present. Speeches are written to be spoken and comprise a few thousand words at most. Speeches have several functions: expository, persuasive and ceremonial, in varying measures depending on the context of production of the speech and on the conventions and political traditions of the country. Speeches are integral parts of many regular events in the calendars of politicians.

The political interviews and discussion corpus is a little less constrained. The dialogues come from radio and television programmes in which politicians and other personalities involved in politics are interviewed in one-to-one situations, or participate, under the direction of a programme presenter, in discussion with a small group of people. Some of the politicians that are present in the speeches corpus also appear in the discussion programmes. The corpus is based on transcripts made available by the media that broadcast the programmes. They show no prosodic features and no doubt edit out hesitation markers and other non-linguistic material but appear to be relatively reliable records of the words spoken. The examples from the interviews and discussion corpus are presented here with the punctuation removed and replaced by dots to avoid a false impression of written text. Square brackets ([...]) signal that a long passage has been abbreviated.

‘PS’ refers, in the source information following the examples, to the political speeches comparable corpus, while ‘PID’ refers to the political interviews and discussion comparable corpus.

4. *Now and maintenant*

4.1 *Polysemy and discourse patterns*

As mentioned in the Introduction (Section 1.1), time expressions often develop argumentational or text-organizational functions. This is the case for *now* and *maintenant*, which both have temporal and argumentational uses.

The examples in (1) illustrate temporal *now* and *maintenant* in medial position (i.e. post-V for French and post-Aux pre-V for English), the most frequent position for both languages.

- (1) a. *some of the country's best known businesses are **now** agreeing to take part in the new deal project* (PS, 1997)
b. *je crois que la Corse a **maintenant** besoin d'action beaucoup plus que de discours ...* (PS, 2002)
[‘I believe Corsica **now** needs action much more than speeches’]

Argumentational *now* and *maintenant*, in initial position in English and French, serve the speaker's rhetorical-structuring purposes as topic shifters. They signal to the listener or reader that what is coming up is a new idea that departs from what has gone before in being a new subtopic, a shift to a new aspect or development of the overall topic, or a different perspective on the topic, setting it in a new and different light. There is thus always a contrast present in the context, reminiscent of the usage of the initial temporal adverbs, but this time a rhetorical contrast. Example (2) illustrates how English and French use *now* and *maintenant* to introduce a different perspective, in these cases the speaker's perspective, on the current topic. In both languages the adverb is in initial position for this function and serves a presentative function, putting into focus the idea it precedes.

- (2) a. *you can look at any one of these things.... now ... what I have tried to do is I've tried at all times to do what the rules required* (PID, 2009)
- b. *je parle d'incertitude et de demande de clarification [...five turns...] maintenant... quand je parle d'incertitude je fais simplement un constat et ce n'est pas un jugement de valeurs* (PID, 2016)
 ['I'm talking about uncertainty and about requests for clarification [...five turns...] **now**... when I talk about uncertainty I'm simply making an observation and not a value judgment ...']

As with many similar polysemous expressions, where a more abstract use has emerged from a more concrete one, there is evidence of persistence in both *now* and *maintenant*. It is thus usually possible to understand argumentational uses such as those in (2) both as referring to the time of speaking ('At present I say...') and as marking a contrast ('A new point is that ...').

In the corpora, *now* and *maintenant* show similar patterns to one another in their temporal usage. Both enter into a contrastive discourse pattern in initial position (3):

- (3) a. *when in the old days you would have gone to the post office to get ... renew your car tax ... you'd have had to sort out your MOT certificate ... your log book... your insurance... all of those things... queue up in the post office with a cheque now you can do it online or by phone.* (PID, 2009)
- b. *avant ... les quatre grands pays ... l'Allemagne ... la France... l'Angleterre... l'Italie... avaient 10 voix chacun ... maintenant ... avec la repondération... elles ont 29 voix* (PID, 2000)
 ['before... the four largest countries ... Germany... France... the UK... Italy... each had 10 votes... **now** they have 29 votes.']

In both (3a) and (3b) there is a contrast between a time in the past and the present. Such juxtaposition of two contrasting ideas, framed by past and present temporal expressions, forms a schematic rhetorical pattern '[past time expression/tense] p' '[present-time expression] q'. The result is that temporal *now* or *maintenant* in initial position tends always to evoke a contrast.

The corpora also reveal a more complex pattern with *now*, where, alone or in combination with another marker, it participates in an argumentational sequence. The examples in (4) illustrate this for concession, where a claim is followed by a concession (which may be elaborated by an explanation or justification or evidence as in (4a)) and then a claim which constitutes the speaker's main point, and which is consonant with the first claim. The pattern can be schematically represented as '[claim] [concession marker(s)] [concession (elaboration)] [contrast marker(s)] [main claim / counterclaim]'. The concession is made explicit in (4b, c) by *of course*, while *now* marks the introduction of a different perspective, one that the speaker does not wish to emphasize.

- (4) a. *what we did was to create a governing body which included Central Office ... the parliamentary party and the voluntary party and they have worked very very well together ... now nobody has pretended that those rules were absolutely unchangeable ... in fact we built into the Constitution a provision to review things after a period.... but the truth of the matter is... they did succeed in uniting the party.* (PID, 2005)

- b. *the government [...] had the chance to stop it... but that was back in October... **now of course** they should look at all the legal avenues that exist to try and make sure that not all of this seven hundred thousand pounds is paid to Fred Goodwin... **but** this is a bit like trying to bolt the stable door after the horse has itself bolted.* (PID, 2009)
- c. *I think that I think that by allying ourselves with the United States [...] we sort of threw our hat into the wrong ring I believe... **now of course** I don't excuse what these people did... **but** I think the way it works is that [...]* (PID, 2005)

The markers (*now* and *but* in (4)) together form a structure or frame for the concession and its counterclaim. Even where there is no obvious concession in the content, the schematic structure suggests a concessive argument: in this structure, *now* marks its host as given or backgrounded in some way or as a premise for a claim, and sets up an expectation of a rhetorically strong claim to follow.

Maintenant was not found to participate in any wider regular pattern or in any regular collocations, perhaps because of its relatively low frequency as an argumentational marker in the data, or because it has developed an argumentational function relatively recently. The more grammaticalized *or* (from temporal *ore/ores*, 'now', from Latin *hora*) does show a pattern in the data, but unlike *now*, it marks its host as foregrounded and in opposition or antithetical to the previous idea, as exemplified by the two different speakers in (5).

- (5) a. *ce que je regrette un peu c'est que le Président de la République [...] n'ait pas anticipé les conséquences ... **or** nous étions un certain nombre à les voir* (PID, 2000)
 ['what I rather regret is that the President of the Republic [...] didn't anticipate the consequences ... **or** several of us saw them']
- b. *là où à mon avis les choses ne vont pas c'est dans le fait que le Président de la République n'accepte pas l'idée d'une crise de la politique ... **or** il y a une crise de la politique* (PID, 2000)
 ['where in my view things are not right is that the President of the Republic doesn't accept the idea of a political crisis ... **or** there is a political crisis']

So while *now* and *maintenant* (and *or*) have similar polysemy structures insofar as they are temporal and argumentational, the argumentational functions have taken a different direction for each expression.

4.2 Frequency comparison

By contrast with the similarities between the polysemies, the frequencies reveal considerable differences between the French and English expressions. Figures 1 and 2 compare the frequencies for the scripted, monologic political speeches genre and the unscripted, dialogic political interviews and discussion genre respectively.

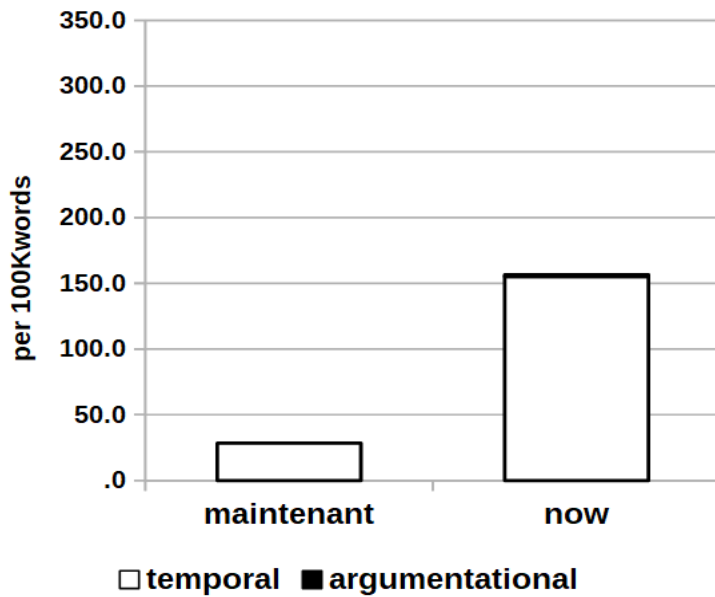


Figure 1. *Maintenant* and *now* in the political speeches corpus

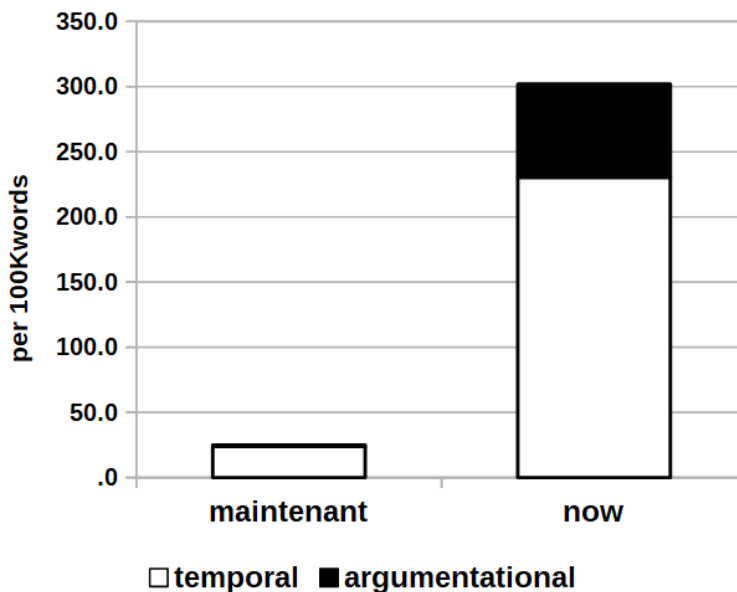


Figure 2. *Maintenant* and *now* in the political discussion corpus

First, for both genres and both languages, the temporal use dominates, consistent with the argumentational uses having developed relatively recently. For the dialogue corpus, the proportions are similar across English and French.

Second, there is an important genre difference: for both languages, the argumentational use occurs predominantly in the more informal, unscripted, dialogic data. For English, the frequency of argumentational *now* was 1 per 100K words in the speeches, but 71 per 100K words in the spontaneous discourse of the interviews and discussions. The French speeches contained no examples at all of argumentational *maintenant*. This could be partially due to the

availability of the more formal *or*, which grammaticalized earlier (sixteenth century). In the speeches, however, *or* frequency is lower, at 8 per 100 K words, than in the dialogic corpus (15 per 100K words), and, as seen in Section 4.1, its function is rather different.

Turning to the relative frequencies, in the dialogic corpus, argumentational *maintenant* represents just 5 per cent of total occurrences, whereas argumentational *now* accounts for 31 per cent of occurrences. It is possible that the relative frequency of argumentational *now* has been boosted by its participation in regular schematic rhetorical patterns as outlined in 4.1.

5. *Then and alors*

5.1 *Polysemy and discourse patterns*

Like *now* and *maintenant*, *then* and *alors* have similar polysemies. Both can signal ‘at that time’ with reference to some past time already established in the discourse (6). But whereas *then* is widely used in the sense of ‘next’ or ‘after that’ for both past (7) and future situations, *alors* in the data rarely is.

- (6) a. *In 1979 there were 59,000 full-time higher-education students in this country, many of them simply enjoying the very low fees we **then** charged.* (PS, 1995)
- b. *elle intégrait l'information dont nous disposions **alors** sur le ralentissement économique constaté au 1er semestre* (PS, 2001)
[‘it included the information we **then** had on the economic slowdown in the first semester’]
- (7) *We had the oil crisis... **then** we had the credit crunch* (PID, 2008)

And like *now* and *maintenant*, *then* and *alors* have also developed argumentational uses. And again, there is evidence of persistence of the temporal sense in the newer uses.

Both *then* and *alors* contribute to two related rhetorical patterns, which we will term ‘inferential’ (following Quirk et al. 1985) and ‘conditional’. The argumentational function, in both cases, presupposes the temporal function insofar as the argumentation links two situations that are necessarily temporally sequential, as cause precedes consequence. From the diachronic perspective, one event occurring after another related event becomes associated with causation, whence the cross-linguistically common temporal > causal semantic shift (Heine & Kuteva 2002).

Both *then* and *alors* function as inferential connectives referring anaphorically to a previous idea as having resulted in the upcoming idea (8). In both (8a) and (8b) the expressions can be glossed as ‘given that that is so’ or ‘since that is the case’; thus the idea in the first unit in each example is presented as providing the justification for the proposal in the second. While other common markers such as English *so* and French *donc* mark a wide range of consequence, *then* and *alors* appear in the data where the speaker is justifying a conclusion by reasoning, by inferencing.

- (8) a. *you're quite right ... that we have our own problem with one dodgy donor who gave money to the party. Let's **then** take the opportunity to change this*

- (PID, 2009)
- b. *il y a des points de vue philosophiques et des points de vue religieux qui sont différents... ils sont respectables... alors acceptons le débat* (PID, 2012)
 [‘there are philosophical points of view and religious points of view that are different... they can be respected... **then** let’s agree to discuss the issue’]

The second pattern is centred around conditional constructions. The redundant inclusion of *then* in the English conditional pattern ‘*if* p, (*then*) q’ and of *alors* in the French one ‘*si* p (*alors*) q’ may be “mannered”, but is common in the political discourse of both corpora, illustrated in (9).

- (9) a. *If we do that, then Africa has a chance to ...* (PID, 2008)
 b. *Si nous ne parvenons pas à créer cette citoyenneté européenne alors c’est la civilisation européenne qui sera bousculée par la mondialisation.* (PID, 2011)
 [‘**If** we do not manage to create this European citizenry **then** European civilization will be overturned by globalization.’]

Although they are redundant for the expression of the condition, English *then* and French *alors* arguably can serve other purposes. First, they can contribute to emphatic information structure, acting as presentatives with the rhetorical function of focusing the idea that follows (Hansen 1996: 141-142 on the foregrounding function of *alors*). They may also have a further rhetorical function of creating a rhythm. The role of rhythm in public speaking is recognized in traditional rhetoric, as explained for example in Smart’s 1848 manual (where protasis and apodosis refer not only to conditional constructions but to subordinate constructions more generally):

If [...] the subject and occasion require a sustained style; a style in which every 'protasis' raises expectation, and every apodosis fulfils it; we shall be wanting in powers of language, should the ear suggest nothing higher in rhythm and construction, than we find in sentences of ordinary occurrence. (Smart 1848: 33)

Prosodic and formal parallelism of the *if-then* type provides such rhythms. In the data, *then* and *alors* also enter into parallelisms with other temporal expression such as *when*, *as soon as*, *quand*, *lorsque* (10), where there is equally a strong implicature that the second idea is presented as being a consequence of the first:

- (10) a. *When you see the financial industry caving in and doing things that Nick Leeson got six and a half months for... then I think Brown’s got the message.* (PID, 2008)
 b. *Lorsque nous aurons fait cette union... alors... effectivement... il y aura possibilité de mutualiser la dette.* (PID, 2011)
 [‘**When** we have created this union... **then**... in fact... it will be possible to mutualize the debt.’]

The structure is also found in conjunction with other markers including *unless*, *as*, *where*, *because* (11). As with the *if*-conditionals, the *then* or the *alors* is semantically redundant. But

it serves an information structuring function by marking the start of, and putting into focus, the speaker's main, concluding point. The first idea is subordinated or backgrounded by the first marker and the second is focused by *then / alors*. In the examples of (9), (10) and (11) the markers also provide rhythm to the whole, especially clearly in the extended *because-then* structure in (11b).

- (11) a. **Where** *Tony Blair has picked up Conservative ideas*, **then** *we're not going to abolish them ...* (PID, 2006)
 b. **Because** *he's got a sense of humour...* **because** *he's human...* **because** *he's likeable...* **because** *he doesn't fit the standard political mould...* **then** *I think that people within the political establishment say ah you know he's riding for a fall.* (PID, 2008)

These constructions can be seen as rhetorical elaborations of the inferential use. Some occurrences of *then*, however, seem not quite to fit the inferential or conditional semantic mould. This is the case for (10a), where there seems to be some incoherence.¹ That is, it is hard to see how the second idea could be a consequence or an inference of the first. Nor does it make better sense interpreted as temporal. A possible explanation is that the speaker can take advantage of the regular inferential use of the construction to suggest a line of valid reasoning where there is none. At the same time, it is possible that the combination of the regularity and the rhythm of rhetorical patterns acts as a kind of mnemonic for the speaker. That is, the speaker first reaches for a pattern, such as 'justification + claim', framed by associated backgrounding and foregrounding information-structuring markers, and then fills in with content. Such patterns recall what Pawley calls "productive speech formulas": "clause- or multi-clause-sized constructions that contain some slots that are lexically specified and others that are filled by abstract grammatical categories" (Pawley 2009:19), but rather than abstract grammatical categories, they are filled by rhetorical types such as 'evidence', 'concession' and so on.

The importance of rhythm to "professional" speakers of specialized genres is emphasized by Kuiper (2000), who suggests that speakers use formulas and their rhythms to mitigate the effect of short-term memory constraints on fluency and complexity. The examples in (11) also come across as odd, due to the redundancy and unconventionality in the '*because p then q*' construction, but they make sense when seen as a speaker's mnemonics, where the rhetorical value of the markers overrides their semantic value.

The case of French *alors* is rather different. And *alors* appears to have gone a lot further along the path towards presentative functions than *then*, often occurring as nothing more than a focus particle. For some speakers, it regularly appears at the start of an answer to a question (12) (here it is comparable to English *well*). Inter-speaker variation in frequency suggests a very bleached marker. For some speakers a very bleached marker can become a feature of their style or even a kind of "linguistic tic". For example, the speaker in (12) starts almost half their answers to the interviewers' questions with *alors*; other speakers rarely do.

- (12) a. Q - *On évoque maintenant un éventuel retour en arrière... où en est-on?*
 A - **Alors** *on regrette cette décision britannique ...* (PID, 2017)
 ['Q - There's talk now of a possible backtracking... what's the situation?']

¹ Cases such as (10) or (11) are not (yet) directly comparable with so-called 'Austinian conditionals', which are conventionalized uses of the English *if*-construction (one type of insubordination).

- [‘A - *Alors*... we regret this decision by the British’]
 b. Q - *Est-ce que vous avez des nouvelles de Loup Bureau?*
 A - *Alors on suit sa situation très attentivement* (PID, 2017)
 [‘Q - Do you have any news of Loup Bureau?’]
 [‘A - *Alors*... we are monitoring his situation very carefully’]

The English data *well* functions in a very similar fashion in. Example (13) is taken from one discussion between an interviewer and three guest interviewees and shows one response from each interviewee; all three repeatedly begin their answers with *well*.

- (13) Q: *your thoughts on the events of the last few days first of all*
 A1: *well I just heard from America ...*
 Q: *what are you thinking about doing?*
 A2: *well first of all I think it's important to point out that this is a free vote issue ...*
 Q: *why don't we encourage that?*
 A3: *well I think the government will have to encourage more saving ...* (PID, 2004)

Alors occasionally occurs discourse-initially, as in (14a) which is the first turn of the presenter at the start of a programme, to introduce the topic. This is not a function of *then*. But there is an interesting parallel with English *now*, in its topic-changing, topic-introducing function: (14b) is from the start of a political discussion programme where the presenter introduces the first topic.

- (14) a. *Bonjour... alors... l'un des quatre policiers attaqués samedi...* (PID, 2016)
 [‘Good morning... *alors* one of the four policemen attacked on Saturday...’]
 b. *We have a live studio audience who will be debating with a stellar political panel [NAMES]... now Labour are way behind in the opinion polls...* (PID, 2006)

Other discourse-initial topic introducers found in the English data are *well* and *so*.

There are 19 examples in the corpus of a more bleached *then* used as an additive to introduce an additional or further point (15). Most are preceded by *and* or *but*, with which *then* combines to form a complex additive/conjunction.

- (15) *[we] make sure that the facilities and the coaching support is there for them and then of course I mean we've done an enormous amount of development for facilities for elite athletes* (PID 2004)

Hansen (1995) discusses how *puis* (unlike *alors*) has undergone grammaticalization into an additive marker and possibly into a conjunction (1995:53). This is borne out by our French data, where there is evidence that *et puis* has grammaticalized to additive/conjunction (16).

- (16) *Vous avez dit que vous aviez soutenu et puis maintenant vous ne soutenez plus ...* (PID, 2016)
 [‘You said that you did support it *et puis* now you no longer support it ...’]

5.2 Frequency comparison

Figure 3 compares the frequencies in the monologic speeches of the temporal, conditional, inferential, presentative and additive functions of *alors* and *then*, and Figure 4 compares the same functions for the dialogic corpus.

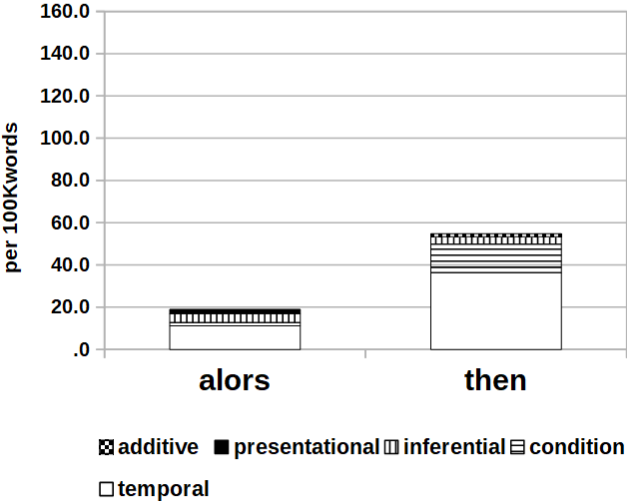


Figure 3. *Alors* and *then* in the political speeches corpus-

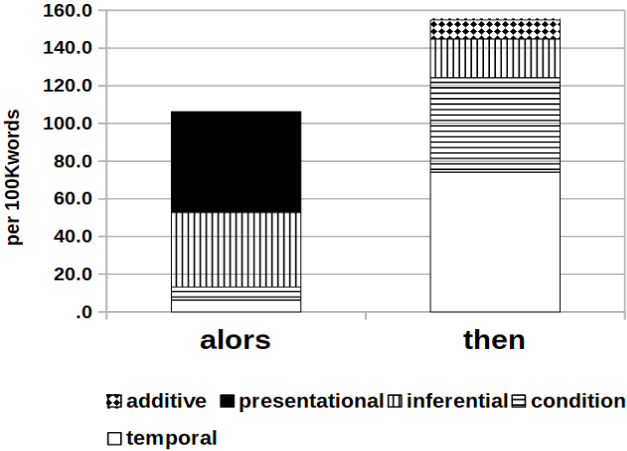


Figure 4. *Alors* and *then* in the political discussion corpus

What is similar across the two languages is that the frequency of *then* and *alors* is much greater in the dialogic language than in the scripted monologic speeches: three times greater in the case of *then*, and six times greater for *alors*.

But the distributions are very different. While the proportions of the different uses of *then* are rather similar across the two genres, this is not at all the case for *alors*, where temporal use is lower in the dialogic data, the vastly greater frequency being accounted for almost entirely by inferential and presentative uses. A similar but less striking observation was made for *now* and *maintenant* (4.2).

6. Conclusion

On the face of it, the polysemy structures of the pairs of English and French adverbs as seen in these corpora are rather similar. The adverbs exemplify the cross-linguistic tendency for temporal adverbs to grammaticalize into markers of rhetorical relations. Each is used in both temporal and argumentational senses. Moreover, in both English and French the temporal expressions occur in initial, medial and final positions. All four adverbs typically occur in the standard adverbial positions for each language when temporal, and utterance-initially in both languages in their rhetorical function. *Alors* and *then*, however, have been shown to be developing final-position uses in their rhetorical function (see Degand & Fagard 2011 for *alors*; Haselow 2011 for *then*). *Now* and *maintenant* have both evolved discourse-structuring uses; they occur in contrastive contexts and serve topic-management functions. *Then* and *alors* have likewise developed into discourse markers of inference, alone and in conditional contexts; both have become markers of information structure, foregrounding or focusing the upcoming idea relative to a previous idea.

There are nevertheless considerable differences between the English adverbs and the French ones. First, they seem to be at different stages of grammaticalization. *Maintenant* in the corpus data is less frequent and less grammaticalized than *now*, (possibly due to earlier-grammaticalized *or* still occupying this space in formal genres). While *now* is seen to recur in a concessive discourse pattern, collocating with other markers, no such pattern was apparent for *maintenant*. In the case of *alors* and *then*, the French lexeme occurs in a wider range of rhetorical contexts, and looks more bleached and grammaticalized than *then*, despite its being less frequent in these genres (cf. Degand & Fagard (2011) and Haselow (2011) on functional splitting in *alors* and *then* respectively). The two adverbs function in similar ways in conditional and inferential discourse contexts, but differ in discourse management, *alors* having wide presentative functions while *then* can introduce an additional idea.

Second, the argumentational uses of the English and French adverbs develop along similar lines, such as the inferential senses of both *then* and *alors*, which retain some of the temporal sense. But once the adverbs acquire more abstract discourse functions, they no longer occur in such comparable contexts, and they cannot be taken for translation equivalents. As has been seen, *then* occurs as an additive while *alors* can “present” almost any statement or question.

Striking differences appear when frequency and genre are taken into account. For *then/alors*, considerable genre difference is apparent for both languages, with much greater frequency in the dialogic data. But the difference is much greater in the French data compared with the English. This is particularly interesting given that several of the speakers are represented in

both corpora. It suggests that in the two genres of political speeches and political discussion, usage of the two French adverbs is quite tightly bound to particular discourse patterns that are semi-conventionalized. And it may reflect a wider register gap in French than in English between the standard formal language of the written-to-be-read speeches and the spoken language of unscripted discussion.²

The development of sub-sentential phrasemes involves the amalgamation or coalescence of meaning into the sequence, resulting in a loss of compositionality. There is likewise coalescence at discourse level: coherence-relational “meaning” cannot be said to reside only in the coherence markers, but in the whole pattern or schema of which it forms part. There are some signs that such patterns may have a mnemonic value for the speakers, whereby those accustomed to public speaking develop a repertoire of semi-automated rhetorical patterns, like templates, with their associated prosodies and information structures, into which they slot the relevant claims and arguments. The aim of much political language as public discourse is to convince by (apparently) reasoned argumentation, involving causation, concession, condition, justification, evidence, example and so on. Markers such as these temporal adverbs help form a linguistic framework for such argumentation. *Now*, *then* and *alors* appear to participate in some of these rhetorical patterns, while *maintenant* does not. The data also suggested that while the argumentational uses in English and French follow broadly parallel ways, motivated by aspects of the temporal meanings, further bleaching of the expressions into information-structure functions such as focus was more arbitrary.

An important factor in the ongoing development and polysemy of the four adverbs that has not been addressed here is their role in complex subordinators (such as *now that* or *alors que*, etc.) and the way they combine with other markers of coherence and/or information structure. A further issue that needs to be addressed is the absence of any comparison with other, more frequent genres. The dialogic data need to be put in the context of domain-general conversational language, and the speeches compared with other written and written-to-be-spoken genres. Only then can the interaction between frequencies and polysemies be appreciated. The study has shown nevertheless that there are strong genre effects on the usage of the adverbs and that these effects operate in similar directions across the two languages.

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² In France, “alongside the national standard language, is a nationwide, non-regional non-standard *français populaire* ... now part of virtually every Frenchman’s linguistic repertoire” (Posner 1997: 74, emphasis added). Posner describes it as a case of “stable variation between standard and non-standard, possibly throughout the modern period” (1997: 75). Educated French speakers such as those represented in the corpus command both the standard (written) variety and the nationwide non-standard variety which is the norm for speech. This is a simplification of the complex register situation of European French, of course, but it highlights the contrast with the situation in the United Kingdom, where there is no nationwide, non-regional non-standard *anglais populaire* (despite some dialect levelling, non-standard British English remains regional (Beal 2010)) and where morphosyntactic and stylistic differences between the “standard” or “educated” spoken language and the written standard are much less marked.

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