

Original Paper

Five Types Involving the Subjunctive: A Corpora-based Analysis

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Abstract

The main goal of this paper is to provide a detailed frequency analysis of the five types it is imperative that, it is vital that, it is essential that, it is important that, and it is necessary that within the British National Corpus (100 million, British, 1980s-1993), the Corpus of Contemporary American English (1.0 billion, US, 1990-2019), the Corpus of Historical American English (400 million, US, 1810s-2000s), and the Hansard Corpus (1.6 billion, British Parliament). In this paper, we have examined the frequency of the five types and collected the data. A major point to note is that it is important that was the most preferred by British people, followed by it is essential that, it is vital that, it is imperative that, and it is necessary that, in that order. The BNC clearly shows, on the other hand, that it is important that was the most commonly used one in the spoken genre, magazine genre, newspaper genre, and academic genre. A further point to note is that it is important that was the most preferred by Americans, followed by it is imperative that, it is essential that, it is vital that, and it is necessary that, in that order. The COCA clearly indicates that it is important that was the most widely used one in the blog genre, web genre, spoken genre, fiction genre, magazine genre, newspaper genre, and academic genre. The reason why it is important that was the most preferred by Americans and British people in the academic genre may be that a moderate obligation is suitable for conveying factual information. With respect to the COHA, it is worth noting that it is necessary that was the most preferred by Americans from 1810 to 2000, followed by it is important that, it is essential that, it is imperative that, and it is vital that. As for the HC, it is important that was the most preferred by British politicians, followed by it is essential that, it is vital that, it is necessary that, and it is imperative that. It is worth noting that Americans and British politicians show the similar pattern in the ranking of the five types in that Americans did not prefer a strong statement or the strongest statement, whereas British politicians did not prefer the strongest statement.

Keywords

corpus, BNC, COCA, COHA, HC, type, token

1. Introduction

The main goal of this paper is to provide a detailed frequency analysis of the five types *it is imperative that*, *it is vital that*, *it is essential that*, *it is important that*, and *it is necessary that* within the British National Corpus, the Corpus of Contemporary American English, the Corpus of Historical American English, and the Hansard Corpus. We use the subjunctive after these five types:

- (1) It's essential/imperative/important/necessary/vital that something **happen**.
- (2) It is essential that everyone **be** at work by 9:00 tomorrow morning. No exceptions.
- (3) It is imperative that government **do** something about health care. (Murphy, 2016, p. 64)

As alluded to in (1), (2), and (3), we use the subjunctive after the five types *it is imperative that*, *it is vital that*, *it is essential that*, *it is important that*, and *it is necessary that*. In this paper, we will answer the following main questions: Which type was the most frequently used one in the BNC? Which type was the most widely used one in the COCA? What does the frequency of the five types in the BNC, COCA, COHA, and HC indicate? What are the main difference between results from the BNC and those from the COCA? What are the key difference between results from the COHA and those from the HC? This paper is organized as follows. In section 2.1, we argue that *it is important that* was the most preferred by British people, followed by *it is essential that*, *it is vital that*, *it is imperative that*, and *it is necessary that*, in that order. The BNC clearly indicates that *it is important that* was the most commonly used one in the spoken genre, magazine genre, newspaper genre, and academic genre. It is worth noting that types with the strongest one or the weakest one in their meaning such as *it is imperative that* and *it is necessary that* were not preferred by British people in the spoken genre. In section 2.2, we contend that *it is important that* was the most preferred by Americans, followed by *it is imperative that*, *it is essential that*, *it is vital that*, and *it is necessary that*, in that order. The COCA clearly shows that *it is important that* was the most widely used one in the blog genre, web genre, spoken genre, fiction genre, magazine genre, newspaper genre, and academic genre. A major point to note is that *it is important that* is the most widely used one in the shared on-line journal, whereas *it is necessary that* is the most undesired one in it. Additionally, we argue that the reason why *it is important that* was the most preferred by Americans and British people in the academic genre may be that a moderate obligation is suitable for conveying factual information. In section 2.3, we maintain that *it is necessary that* was the most preferred by Americans from 1810 to 2000, followed by *it is important that*, *it is essential that*, *it is imperative that*, and *it is vital that*, in that order. In section 2.4, we examine the frequency of the five types in the Hansard Corpus (1803-2005). We contend that *it is important that* was the most preferred by British politicians, followed by *it is essential that*, *it is vital that*, *it is necessary that*, and *it is imperative that*. Also, we argue that the reason why *it is imperative that* was the most undesired one may be that British politicians did not prefer the strongest obligation (the strongest statement) among the five types.

2. Results and Discussion

2.1 The Genre Frequency of the Five Types in the BNC

In what follows, we examine the frequency of the five types in the BNC (the 1980s-1993). Table 1 shows the use and frequency of the five types in the BNC:

Table 1. Genre Frequency of the Five Types in the BNC (the 1980s-1993)

Type	All	Spoken	Fiction	Magazine	Newspaper	Non-Acad	Academic	Misc
It is essential that	366	13	1	17	21	57	73	184
It is imperative that	62	1	0	5	10	12	5	29
It is important that	648	23	3	23	32	126	133	308
It is necessary that	42	0	0	0	0	5	26	11
It is vital that	181	2	4	16	27	29	27	76

An important question to be asked is “which type was the one most frequently used among the five types in the BNC?” Table 1 clearly indicates that the type *it is important that* was the most widely used one in the UK. *It is important that* has the highest frequency (648 tokens) and the highest proportion (54.04%) among the five types, which indicates that it was the most preferred by British people. On the other hand, the type *it is necessary that* has the lowest frequency (42 tokens) and the lowest proportion (3.50%), which suggests that it was the most undesired one in the UK. Table 1 clearly suggests that *it is important that* was the most preferred by British people, followed by *it is essential that*, *it is vital that*, *it is imperative that*, and *it is necessary that*, in that order. When it comes to the meaning of the five types, the type *it is imperative that* is the strongest one, followed by *it is vital that*, *it is essential that*, *it is important that*, and *it is necessary*, as indicated in (4):

(4) It is imperative that > It is vital that > It is essential that > It is important that > It is necessary that

What is interesting is that types with the strongest one and the weakest one in their meaning was not preferred by British people, as illustrated in (5). (5) shows British people’s preference towards the five types:

(5) It is important that > It is essential that > It is vital that > It is imperative that > It is necessary that

As indicated in (5), *it is imperative that* with the strongest one in its meaning ranks fourth and *it is vital that* with a strong one in its meaning ranks third. On the other hand, *it is necessary that* with the weakest one in its meaning ranks fifth. This in turn suggests that types with the strongest one or the weakest one in their meaning was not preferred by British people. Note, however, that the types *it is important that* and *it is essential that* with a moderate one in their meaning were widely used in the UK.

Now attention is paid to the spoken genre in the BNC. A question which naturally arises is “which type

was the most widely used one in the spoken genre?” Table 1 clearly shows that *it is important that* was the most commonly used one in the spoken genre (23 tokens). More specifically, the *type it is important that* was the most frequently used one in the BNC, followed by *it is essential that*, *it is vital that*, *it is imperative that*, and *it is necessary that*, in that order. Noteworthy is that the frequency of the spoken genre and the overall frequency of the five types show the same pattern in the ranking of the five types. This implies that types with the strongest one and the weakest one in their meaning were not preferred by British people in the spoken genre. More specifically, types with the strongest one or the weakest one in their meaning such as *it is imperative that* and *it is necessary that* were not preferred by British people. It is worth noting, however, that types with a moderate one in their meaning were preferred by British people in the spoken genre. Why did this happen? We wish to argue that to use *it is imperative that* with the strongest one in its meaning may be a burden to the hearer, which leads to the infrequency of *it is imperative that*. Likewise, to use *it is necessary that* with the weakest one in its meaning may not accomplish the speaker’s intention in his or her conversation since the type *it is necessary that* is weak. However, *it is important that* with a moderate one in its meaning may be neither a burden nor obligation to the hearer. This may be why the type *it is important that* was the most frequently used one in the spoken genre.

Now an immediate question to be asked is “which type was the most widely used one in the fiction genre?” Table 1 clearly indicates that *it is vital that* was the most frequently used one in the fiction genre. More specifically, *it is vital that* was the most preferred by British people in the fiction genre, followed by *it is important that*, *it is essential that*, and *it is imperative that* and *it is necessary that*, in that order. Again, types with the strongest one and the weakest one in their meaning were not preferred by British people in the fiction genre. However, *it is vital that* with a strong one in its meaning was the most preferred by British people? Why was it the most preferred by British people? We wish to argue that authors encourage readers to read a book with excitement and thus *it is vital that* with a strong one in its meaning is suitable for exciting readers. Note, however, that *it is necessary that* with the weakest one in their meaning may not excite readers since it is the weakest one among the five types.

Now a question which arises is “which type was the most commonly used one in the magazine genre?” Table 1 clearly shows that *it is important that* was the most widely used one in the magazine genre. More specifically, *it is important that* has the highest frequency (23 tokens) and the highest proportion (37.70%). As alluded to in Table 1, *it is important that* was the most preferred by British people in the magazine genre, followed by *it is essential that*, *it is vital that*, *it is imperative that*, and *it is necessary that*, in that order. Why were the types *it is important that* and *it is essential that* widely used by British people in the magazine genre? We wish to argue that *it is important that* and *it is essential that* are suitable for conveying articles, information, and ads in that they have far-reaching effects since it is neither the strongest one nor the weakest one. Note that *it is imperative that* and *it is necessary that* were not preferred by British people. *It is imperative* is too strong to use it in the magazine and *it is necessary that* is too weak to use it.

Now an important question to be asked is “which type was the most frequently used one in the newspaper genre?” Table 1 indicates that *it is important that* was the most widely used one in the newspaper genre. More specifically, *it is important that* obtains the highest frequency (32 tokens) and the highest proportion (35.55%) among the five types. As illustrated in Table 1, *it is important that* was the most preferred by British people in the newspaper genre, followed by *it is vital that*, *it is essential that*, *it is imperative that*, and *it is necessary that*, in that order. Why were the types *it is important that* and *it is vital that* commonly used by British journalists in the newspaper genre? We wish to argue that just in the case of the magazine genre, *it is important that* and *it is vital that* are neither the strongest one nor the weakest one in their meaning. Newspapers are mainly used to convey news, articles, information, and ads and thus they are supposed to be fair. This may be why *it is important that* and *it is vital that* are wildly used by British journalists. Note, however, that *it is imperative that* is too strong to use it in the newspaper and *it is necessary that* is too weak to use it.

Now attention to paid to the academic genre. A question to be asked is “which type was the most frequently used one in the academic genre?” Table 1 clearly shows that *it is important that* was the most commonly used one in the academic genre. The type *it is important that* obtains the highest frequency (133 tokens) and the highest proportion among the five types. As indicated in Table 1, *it is important that* was the most preferred by British people in the academic genre, followed by *it is essential that*, *it is vital that*, *it is necessary that*, and *it is imperative that*, in that order. Why were the types *it is important that* and *it is essential that* widely used by British people in the academic genre? We intend to argue that the academic genre is characterized as a knowledge database and that *it is important that* and *it is essential that* are mainly used to convey factual information since they are neither the strongest statement nor the weakest statement. Simply put, *it is important that* and *it is essential that* are suitable for conveying factual information since they are impartial with respect to their meaning.

2.2 The Genre Frequency of the COCA

In what follows, we examine the frequency of the five types in the COCA (1990-2019) and compare results from the COCA and those from the BNC in order to observe the national variation. Table 2 shows the use and frequency of the five types in the COCA:

Table 2. Genre Frequency of the Five Types in the COCA (1990-2019)

Type	All	Blog	Web	TV/M	Spoken	Fiction	Magazine	News	Acad
It is important that	2004	348	363	50	149	25	157	119	793
It is imperative that	880	124	112	76	25	16	81	71	375
It is essential that	677	87	119	15	23	9	57	40	327
It is vital that	284	52	51	17	7	5	33	15	104
It is necessary that	224	29	55	13	3	11	6	4	103

Now an important question to be asked is “which type was the most frequently used one among five types in America?” Table 2 clearly indicates that the type *it is important that* was the most widely used one in America. More specifically, *it is important that* obtains the highest frequency (2004 tokens) and the highest proportion (49.25%). On the other hand, *it is necessary that* obtains the lowest frequency (224 tokens) and the lowest proportion (5.50%). As alluded to in Table 2, *it is important that* was the most preferred by Americans, followed by *it is imperative that*, *it is essential that*, *it is vital that*, and *it is necessary that*, in that order. Note that *it is important that* was the most preferred by British people, followed by *it is essential that*, *it is vital that*, *it is imperative that*, and *it is necessary that*, in that order. The COCA and BNC have two things in common. That is to say, *it is important that* has the highest frequency and *it is necessary that* has the lowest frequency. This in turn suggests that *it is important that* was the most preferred by Americans and British people, whereas *it is necessary that* was the most undesired one in America and the UK. It is worth noting, however, that *it is imperative that* ranks second in the COCA, whereas *it is essential that* ranks second in the BNC. In addition, it must be noted that *it is essential that* ranks third in the COCA, whereas *it is vital that* ranks third in the BNC. Noteworthy is that Americans were fond of using *it is imperative that* with the strongest one in its meaning after *it is important that*, whereas British people were fond of using *it is essential that* with a moderate one in its meaning after *it is important that*.

Now let us turn our attention to the blog genre. The blog genre was first introduced in the COCA in 2020. Which type is the most commonly used one in the blog genre? Table 2 clearly indicates that *it is important that* is the most widely used one in the blog genre. More specifically, *it is important that* has the highest frequency (348 tokens) and the highest proportion (54.37%) in the blog genre. As indicated in Table 2, *it is important that* is the most preferred by Americans in the blog genre, followed by *it is imperative that*, *it is essential that*, *it is vital that*, and *it is necessary that*, in that order. A blog is defined as “a website where an individual person, or people representing an organization, write regularly about recent events or topics that interest them, usually with photos and links to other websites that they find interesting” (Oxford Learner’s Dictionaries). It is noteworthy that *it is important that* is the most widely used one in the shared on-line journal, whereas *it is necessary that* is the most undesired one in it. Just as in the case of the ranking of the overall frequency, *it is imperative that* ranks second in the blog genre. This in turn indicates that Americans are fond of using *it is imperative that* with the strongest one in its meaning in the blog genre.

Now attention is paid to the web genre, which was first introduced in the COCA in 2020. A question to be asked is “which type is the most widely used one in the web genre?” Table 2 clearly shows that *it is important that* is the most frequently used one in the web genre. More specifically, *it is important that* has the highest frequency (363 tokens) and the highest proportion (51.85%), whereas *it is vital that* has the lowest frequency (51 tokens) and the lowest proportion (7.28%). As illustrated in Table 2, *it is important that* is the most preferred by Americans in the web genre, followed by *it is essential that*, *it is imperative that*, *it is necessary that*, and *it is vital that*, in that order.

Let us consider the TV-movie genre, which was first introduced in the COCA in 2020. An immediate question to be asked is “which type is the most commonly used one in the TV-movie genre?” Table 2 indicates that *it is imperative that* is the most widely used one in the TV-movie genre. More specifically, *it is imperative that* has the highest frequency (76 tokens) and the highest proportion (44.44%), whereas *it is necessary that* has the lowest frequency (13 tokens) and the lowest proportion (7.60%). As illustrated in Table 2, *it is imperative that* is the most preferred by Americans, followed by *it is important that*, *it is vital that*, *it is essential that*, and *it is necessary that*, in that order. The reason why *it is imperative that* is the most frequently used one in the TV-movie genre may be that it can give an impact to TV audience or movie viewers. Note that *it is imperative that* is the strongest one in its meaning among the five types. Additionally, it is significant to note that *it is important that* ranks second and that *it is necessary that* ranks fifth. The reason why *it is necessary that* is the most undesired one among the five types is that it is the weakest one in its meaning and thus to use *it is necessary that* cannot give an impact to TV audience or movie viewers.

Now let us consider the spoken genre. Which type was the most frequently used one among the five types? Table 2 clearly shows that *it is important that* was the most commonly used one in the spoken genre. As indicated in Table 2, *it is important that* was the most widely used one in America, followed by *it is imperative that*, *it is essential that*, *it is vital that*, and *it is necessary that*, in that order. The COCA and BNC show the similar pattern in the frequency of the spoken genre. As observed earlier, *it is important that* was the most frequently used one in the BNC, followed by *it is essential that*, *it is vital that*, *it is imperative that*, and *it is necessary that*, in that order. This suggests that *it is important that* was the most preferred by Americans and British people and that *it is necessary that* was the most undesired one in America and the UK. The reason why *it is important that* was the most preferred by Americans and British people may be that it carries a moderate one in its meaning and thus to use *it is important that* is neither a burden nor obligation to the hearer. The reason why *it is necessary that* was the most undesired one in America and the UK may be that *it is necessary that* is so weak in its meaning, eventually leading to the infrequency of *it is necessary that*.

Now let us observe the fiction genre. An important question to be asked is “which type was the most widely used one in America?” Table 2 clearly indicates that *it is important that* was the most commonly used one in the fiction genre. More specifically, *it is important that* obtains the highest frequency (25 tokens) and the highest proportion (37.87%), whereas *it is vital that* obtains the lowest frequency (5 tokens) and the lowest proportion (7.57%). As illustrated in Table 2, *it is important that* was the most preferred by Americans in the fiction genre, followed by *it is imperative that*, *it is necessary that*, *it is essential that*, and *it is vital that*, in that order. Note that *it is vital that* was the most preferred by British people in the fiction genre, followed by *it is important that*, *it is essential that*, and *it is imperative that* and *it is necessary that*, in that order. We take this as indicating that British people were fond of using *it is vital that* with a strong one in its meaning in the fiction genre, whereas Americans were fond of using *it is important that* with a moderate one in its meaning. It must be noted, however, that *it is vital that*

was the most undesired one in America, whereas *it is necessary that* was the most undesired one in the UK.

Now let us turn our attention to the magazine genre. Which type was the most frequently used one in the magazine genre? Table 2 clearly shows that *it is important that* was the most commonly used one in the magazine genre. More specifically, *it is important that* has the highest frequency (157 tokens) and the highest proportion (47%), whereas *it is necessary that* has the lowest frequency (6 tokens) and the lowest proportion (1.79%). As alluded to in Table 2, *it is important that* was the most preferred by Americans in the magazine genre, followed by *it is imperative that*, *it is essential that*, *it is vital that*, and *it is necessary*, in that order. As observed earlier, *it is important that* was the most preferred by British people in the magazine genre, followed by *it is essential that*, *it is vital that*, *it is imperative that*, and *it is necessary that*, in that order. The COCA and BNC have two things in common. That is to say, *it is important that* was the most preferred by Americans and British people and *it is necessary that* was the most undesired one in America and the UK. The reason why *it is important that* was the most preferred by American and British writers may be that it carries a moderate one in its meaning and a moderate obligation is suitable for conveying articles, information, and ads. On the other hand, the reason why *it is necessary that* was the most undesired one in America and the UK may be that it is the weakest one in the five types and thus the weakest obligation is not suitable for conveying articles, information, and ads. Additionally, it is significant to note that *it is imperative that* was the most widely used one in America after *it is important that*, whereas *it is essential that* was the most commonly used one in the UK after *it is important that*. This in turn suggests that Americans were fond of using *it is imperative with* the strongest one in its meaning in the magazine genre, whereas British people were fond of using *it is essential that* with a moderate one in its meaning.

Now let us consider the newspaper genre. Which type was the most frequently used one in the newspaper genre? Table 2 clearly indicates that *it is important that* was the most widely used one in the newspaper genre in America. Specifically, *it is important that* has the highest frequency (119 tokens) and the highest proportion (47.79%) among the five types, whereas *it is necessary that* has the lowest frequency (4 tokens) and the lowest proportion (1.6%). As illustrated in Table 2, *it is important that* was the most preferred by Americans in the newspaper genre, followed by *it is imperative that*, *it is essential that*, *it is vital that*, and *it is necessary that*, in that order. Note that *it is important that* was the most preferred by British people in the newspaper genre, followed by *it is vital that*, *it is essential that*, *it is imperative that*, and *it is necessary that*, in that order. Again, the COCA and BNC have two things in common. *It is important that* was the most preferred by Americans and British people and *it is necessary that* was the most undesired one in America and the UK. The reason why *it is important that* was the most preferred by American and British journalists may be that *it is important that* carries a moderate obligation and thus it is suitable for conveying news, articles, information, and ads. However, *it is necessary that* carries the weakest obligation and thus it is not suitable for conveying news, articles, information, and ads. A further point to note is that the newspaper genre and magazine genre show the

same pattern in the ranking of the five types. That is to say, *it is important that* was the most preferred by American writers and journalists, followed by *it is imperative that*, *it is essential that*, *it is vital that*, and *it is necessary that*, in that order.

Now let us observe the frequency of the academic genre. A question which arises is “which type was the most commonly used one in the academic genre?” Table 2 clearly shows that *it is important that* was the most frequently used one in the academic genre. More specifically, *it is important that* obtains the highest frequency (793 tokens) and the highest proportion (46.59%), whereas *it is necessary that* obtains the lowest frequency (103 tokens) and the lowest proportion (6.05%). As indicated in Table 2, *it is important that* was the most preferred by Americans, followed by *it is imperative that*, *it is essential that*, *it is vital that*, and *it is necessary that*, in that order. Note that *it is important that* was the most preferred by British people in the academic genre, followed by *it is essential that*, *it is vital that*, *it is necessary that*, and *it is imperative that*, in that order. The COCA and BNC have one thing in common. That is, *it is important that* was the most preferred by Americans and British people. The reason why *it is important that* was the most preferred by Americans and British people may be that a moderate obligation is suitable for conveying factual information. It must be noted that *it is imperative that* was the most preferred by Americans after *it is important that*, whereas *it is essential that* was the most preferred by British people after *it is important that*. This in turn suggests that Americans liked using a strong obligation in the academic genre, whereas British people liked using a moderate obligation. A further point to note is that *it is necessary that* was the most undesired one in America, whereas *it is imperative that* was the most undesired one in the UK. This indicates that Americans did not prefer the weakest obligation in the academic genre among the five types, whereas British people did not prefer a strong obligation. Finally, it is worth pointing out that the magazine genre, newspaper genre, and academic genre show the same pattern in the ranking of the five types. That is to say, *it is important that* was the most preferred by Americans, followed by *it is imperative that*, *it is essential that*, *it is vital that*, and *it is necessary that*.

2.3 The Frequency of the Five Types in the COHA

In what follows, we examine the frequency of the five types in the COHA (1810-2000). Table 3 shows the frequency of *it is necessary that*, *it is important that*, *it is essential that*, *it is imperative that*, and *it is vital that*:

Table 3. Frequency of the Five Types in the COHA (1810-2000)

Type	It is necessary that	It is important that	It is essential that	It is imperative that	It is vital that
1810	10	0	0	0	0
1820	20	6	1	0	0
1830	43	7	8	0	0
1840	32	14	7	2	0
1850	39	19	9	0	0

1860	34	13	7	0	0
1870	28	17	8	1	0
1880	39	9	5	3	0
1890	27	15	9	3	0
1900	53	19	17	5	1
1910	24	15	14	7	1
1920	50	28	25	6	2
1930	16	30	23	11	6
1940	23	27	23	18	1
1950	16	25	19	12	3
1960	11	31	29	8	7
1970	14	29	16	14	7
1980	10	16	9	6	3
1990	5	36	14	12	6
2000	2	25	11	12	4
Total	496	381	254	120	41

A question which naturally arises is “which type was the most frequently used one for one hundred and ninety years (1810-2000)?” Table 3 clearly indicates that *it is necessary that* was the most widely used one for one hundred and ninety years. More specifically, *it is necessary that* has the highest frequency (496 tokens) and the highest proportion (38.39%), whereas *it is vital that* has the lowest frequency (41 tokens) and the lowest proportion (3.17%). As alluded to in Table 3, *it is necessary that* was the most preferred by Americans from 1810 to 2000, followed by *it is important that*, *it is essential that*, *it is imperative that*, and *it is vital that*, in that order. Most interestingly, the ranking of the five types in the COHA is different from that of the five types in the BNC and COCA. As observed earlier, *it is important that* was the most preferred by British people, followed by *it is essential that*, *it is vital that*, *it is imperative that*, and *it is necessary that*, in that order. On the other hand, *it is important that* was the most preferred by Americans from 1990 to 2019, followed by *it is imperative that*, *it is essential that*, *it is vital that*, and *it is necessary that*, in that order. A major characteristic of the frequency of the five types in the COHA is that *it is necessary that* with the weakest obligation was the most preferred one from 1810 to 2000, which is different from the result of the BNC and that of the COCA. When it comes to the frequency of the five types in the COCA and BNC, *it is important that* with a moderate obligation was the most preferred by Americans and British people. A further point to note is that *it is vital that* with a strong obligation was the most undesired one in America from 1810 to 2000, which is different from the result of the COCA and that of the BNC. In the COCA and BNC, *it is necessary that* with the weakest obligation was the most undesired one among the five types. Additionally, it is worth noting that Americans did not prefer *it is imperative that* with the strongest obligation and *it is vital that*

with a strong obligation, which in turn suggests that Americans avoided strong statements from 1810 to 2000. On the other hand, British people avoided the weakest statement among the five types.

As indicated in Table 3, the frequency of *it is necessary that* continued to increase to 33 tokens from 1810 to 1830. After this period, there were slight fluctuations in the frequency of *it is necessary that* from 1840 to 2000. A major point to note is that the frequency of *it is necessary that* reached a peak in the 1920s (50 tokens). This indicates that the type *it is necessary that* was the most preferred by Americans in the 1920s. In addition, *it is necessary that* was the most preferred by Americans among the five types in the 1920s. After this period, there were slight fluctuations in the figure of *it is necessary that* and its figure continued to decrease from 1970 to 2000.

As can be seen from Table 3, the figure of *it is important that* continued to increase to 19 tokens from 1810 to 1850. After this period, there were slight fluctuations in the frequency of *it is important that* from 1860 to 2000. It is significant to note that *it is important that* reached a peak in the 1990s (36 tokens). *It is important that* was the most preferred by Americans in the 1990s. In addition, it was the most preferred by Americans among the five types in the 1990s. A further point to note is that *it is important that* was the most preferred by Americans among the five types from 1930 to 2000.

As illustrated in Table 3, the figure of *it is essential that* continued to increase to 8 tokens from 1810 to 1830. There were slight fluctuations in the figure of *it is essential that* from 1840 to 2000. A major point to note is that *it is essential that* reached a peak in the 1960s. It was the most preferred by Americans in the 1960s. It must be noted, however, that *it is essential that* ranked second among the five types in the 1960s.

As indicated in Table 3, the number of the token of *it is imperative* was 0 from 1810 to 1830. After this period, there was an increase in the figure of *it is imperative that*. A major point to note is that *it is imperative that* reached a peak (18 tokens) in the 1940s. This indicates that *it is imperative that* was the most preferred by Americans in the 1940s. It should be noted, however, that *it is imperative that* ranked fourth among the five types in the 1940s.

As can be seen from Table 3, the number of the token of *it is vital that* was 0 from 1810 to 1890 and there was an increase in the figure of *it is imperative that* from 1900 to 1930. After this period, there were slight fluctuations in the frequency of *it is vital that*. A point to note is that *it is vital that* reached a peak (7 tokens) in the 1960s and the 1970s. This suggests that *it is vital that* was the most preferred by Americans in the 1960s and the 1970s. It must be noted, however, that *it is vital that* ranked fifth among the five types in the 1960s and the 1970s. This in turn suggests that *it is vital that* was the most undesired one among the five types in America.

2.4 The Frequency of the Five Types in the Hansard Corpus

In what follows, we examine the frequency of the five types in the Hansard Corpus (1803-2005). The Hansard Corpus contains nearly every speech given in the British parliament from 1803 to 2005. Table 4 shows the frequency of *it is important that*, *it is essential that*, *it is vital that*, *it is necessary that*, and *it is imperative that*:

Table 4. Frequency of the Five Types in the Hansard Corpus

Type	It is important that	It is essential that	It is vital that	It is necessary that	It is imperative that
1800	2	1	0	16	0
1810	1	2	0	11	0
1820	0	0	0	15	0
1830	9	12	0	63	0
1840	25	11	0	83	0
1850	40	23	0	121	2
1860	47	38	0	172	1
1870	46	43	0	161	0
1880	123	101	0	435	10
1890	126	123	1	381	11
1900	141	196	7	350	12
1910	367	577	47	788	41
1920	416	663	77	571	55
1930	788	1,428	205	741	101
1940	1,276	1,660	315	670	122
1950	2,152	1,575	367	552	127
1960	3,156	1,190	537	460	176
1970	4,895	2,329	929	385	306
1980	7,395	2,926	1,468	344	308
1990	11,340	3,110	2,093	230	359
2000	7,724	1,560	1,207	96	249
Total	40,069	18,288	7,253	6,645	1,880

An immediate question to be asked is “which type was the most widely used one in the British parliament?” Table 4 clearly shows that *it is important that* was the most frequently used one in the British parliament. More specifically, *it is important that* obtains the highest frequency (40,069 tokens) and the highest proportion (54.04%), whereas *it is imperative that* obtains the lowest frequency (1,880 tokens) and the lowest proportion (2.53%). As alluded to in Table 4, *it is important that* was the most preferred by British politicians, followed by *it is essential that*, *it is vital that*, *it is necessary that*, and *it is imperative that*, in that order. That *it is important that* was the most preferred by British politicians indicates that they liked using a moderate obligation among the five types. Also, they preferred *it is essential that* with a moderate obligation. This in turn indicates that they were keen on using a moderate statement in the British parliament. A point to note is that *it is imperative that* was the most undesired one in the British parliament among the five types. Why did this happen? We wish to argue

that the reason why *it is imperative that* was the most undesired one may be that British politicians did not prefer the strongest obligation (the strongest statement) among the five types. This may reflect a spirit of democracy in that democracy is an agreement and calls for cooperation and compromise. The strongest statement (obligation) may only interfere with an agreement or compromise and thus a moderate statement is the preferred one among the five types. On the other hand, *it is necessary that* was the most preferred by Americans from 1810 to 2000, followed by *it is important that*, *it is essential that*, *it is imperative that*, and *it is vital that*, in that order. This suggests that a strong statement was the most undesired one in America. Americans and British politicians show the similar pattern in the ranking of the five types in that Americans did not prefer a strong statement or the strongest statement, whereas British politicians did not prefer the strongest statement. Note, however, that *it is necessary that* with the weakest obligation was the most preferred by Americans from 1810 to 2000, whereas *it is important that* with a moderate obligation was the most preferred by British politicians from 1800 to 2000. This in turn indicates that Americans were keen on using the weakest statement from 1810 to 2000, whereas British politicians were keen on using a moderate statement from 1800 to 2000.

As indicated in Table 4, the figure of *it is important that* continued to increase to 11,331 tokens from 1830 to 1990. That is to say, there was a dramatic increase in the frequency of *it is important that* from 1830 to 1990. A major point to note is that *it is important that* reached a peak in 1990, which indicates that *it is important that* was the most preferred one in the British parliament in 1990. In addition, *it is important that* was the most preferred by British politicians in the British parliament among the five types from 1950 to 2000. It must be noted that *it is important that* was the most undesired one in 1820. In 1820, the number of the token of *it is important that* was 0, which indicates that it was the most undesired one in 1820.

As can be seen from Table 4, the frequency of *it is essential that* continued to increase for one hundred years from 1840 to 1940. That is to say, there was a dramatic rise in the frequency of *it is essential that* from 1840 to 1940. It is noteworthy that *it is essential that* reached a peak in 1990, which implies that it was the most preferred one in the British parliament. In addition, *it is important that* ranked first and *it is essential that* ranked second among the five types in 1990. It is worth noting that *it is essential that* was the most preferred by British politicians in the British parliament among the five types from 1900 to 1940. This indicates that a moderate statement was the most preferred one in the British parliament from 1900 to 1940. It should be noted, however, that in 1820, *it is essential that* had the lowest frequency (0 token).

As illustrated in Table 4, with respect to *it is vital that*, it is interesting to note that there was no frequency (0 token) from 1800 to 1880. We do not know why this happened in this period (1800-1880). However, after this period, the frequency of *it is vital that* continued to increase to 2,092 tokens from 1890 to 1990 (1 token-2,093 tokens). Simply put, there was a dramatic increase in the figure of *it is vital that* from 1890 to 1990. Noteworthy is that *it is vital that* was the most preferred by British politicians in the British parliament in 1990. That is to say, *it is vital that* reached a peak in 1990.

However, *it is vital that* ranked third among the five types in 1990.

As indicated in Table 4, there were slight fluctuations in the figure of *it is necessary that* from 1800 to 2000. A major point to note is that *it is necessary that* was the most undesired one in 1810. After this period, the frequency of *it is necessary that* continued to increase from 1810 to 1860 (11 tokens-172 tokens). After this period, there was slight fluctuations in the frequency of *it is necessary that* from 1860 to 2000. It is significant to note that *it is necessary that* reached a peak in 1910. This indicates that *it is necessary that* was the most preferred by British politicians in the British parliament. In addition, *it is necessary that* ranked first among the five types in 1910, which implies that it was the most preferred by British politicians in the British parliament among the five types.

It is worth pointing out that as can be seen from Table 4, *it is imperative that* had no frequency (0 token) from 1800 to 1840. After this period, there was a gradual rise in the frequency of *it is imperative that* from 1880 to 1990. A major point to note is that *it is imperative that* reached a peak in 1990, which in turn suggests that it was the most preferred by British politicians in the British parliament in 1990. It must be noted, however, that *it is imperative that* ranked fourth among the five types in 1990. We thus conclude that *it is imperative that* was the most preferred by British politicians in 1990, but it was the most undesired one in British parliament in 1800, 1810, 1820, 1830, 1840, and 1870 (0 token).

3. Conclusion

To sum up, we have provided a detailed frequency analysis of the five types *it is imperative that*, *it is vital that*, *it is essential that*, *it is important that*, and *it is necessary that* within the British National Corpus, the Corpus of Contemporary American English, the Corpus of Historical American English, and the Hansard Corpus. In section 2.1, we have argued that *it is important that* was the most preferred by British people, followed by *it is essential that*, *it is vital that*, *it is imperative that*, and *it is necessary that*, in that order. The BNC clearly shows that *it is important that* was the most commonly used one in the spoken genre, magazine genre, newspaper genre, and academic genre in the BNC. It is worth pointing out that types with the strongest one or the weakest one in their meaning such as *it is imperative that* and *it is necessary that* were not preferred by British people in the spoken genre. We have maintained that the academic genre is characterized as a knowledge database and that *it is important that* and *it is essential that* are mainly used to convey factual information since they are neither the strongest statement nor the weakest statement. In section 2.2, we have contended that *it is important that* was the most preferred by Americans, followed by *it is imperative that*, *it is essential that*, *it is vital that*, and *it is necessary that*, in that order. The COCA clearly indicates that *it is important that* is the most widely used one in the blog genre, web genre, spoken genre, fiction genre, magazine genre, newspaper genre, and academic genre. A point to note is that *it is important that* is the most widely used one in the shared on-line journal, whereas *it is necessary that* is the most undesired one in it. Additionally, we have argued that the reason why *it is important that* was the most preferred by Americans and British people in the academic genre may be that a moderate obligation is suitable

for conveying factual information. In section 2.3, we have maintained that *it is necessary that* was the most preferred by Americans from 1810 to 2000, followed by *it is important that*, *it is essential that*, *it is imperative that*, and *it is vital that*, in that order. In section 2.4, we have examined the frequency of the five types in the Hansard Corpus (1803-2005). We have contended that *it is important that* was the most preferred by British politicians, followed by *it is essential that*, *it is vital that*, *it is necessary that*, and *it is imperative that*. Finally, we have argued that Americans and British politicians show the similar pattern in the ranking of the five types in that Americans did not prefer a strong statement or the strongest statement, whereas British politicians did not prefer the strongest statement.

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