Aspects of communication within the European Union institutions have, from the outset, represented a fertile domain of investigation in the field of language analysis and specialised discourse. The multilingual regime on which supranational communication is founded gives rise to an interesting scenario, where linguistic and translation issues are directly involved in the expression of multicultural variety. The technical nature of EU legal language has led scholars to rank it among the category of specialised languages, as it is characterised by specific patterns and mechanisms that regulate its morpho-syntactic and lexical evolution.

The study on EU legal discourse is introduced in Chapter 1, which provides a broad overview of the historical and political reasons underlying the current multilingual regime adopted by the European Union institutions. The analysis illustrates the current linguistic situation (following the 2004 enlargement to Mediterranean and Central and Eastern European Countries) as well as the institutional instruments used to guarantee an effective and sustainable multilingual system. Translation into all the official languages of the Union is ensured by the linguistic services of the European institutions, in particular by the Directorate General for Translation of the European Commission, which is unparalleled in terms of size and in-house staff. This opening section culminates in the analysis of the complexities generated by the rigid drafting process of EU multilingual legal texts which, although translated rather than co-drafted, are considered equally binding and vested with the same legal force. Reference is also made to cases of linguistic discrepancy that emerged in the past between different language versions, as well as to the arbitration role played by the European Court of Justice in ensuring a uniform interpretation of EU law throughout national courts.

The quantitative investigation of EU documents implies a corpus-based research analysis, which is made possible through a work of document collection and selection. This results in a final corpus, EUSLEX (European Union Secondary Legislation), consisting of EU secondary legislation enacted by the Council of the European Union, autonomously or jointly with the European Parliament, over a time-span of almost 4 years: from 1st July 1999 until 31st December 2002. The texts, in English and
Italian, are drawn from the EUR-Lex website\(^1\), which represents the official and complete database collection of EU legal texts. The corpus, introduced and described in Chapter 2, consists of almost four million words and is distributed as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Text types</th>
<th>Tokens</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>English section</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regulations</td>
<td>1,270,877</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decisions</td>
<td>385,480</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Directives</td>
<td>831,381</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Framework Decisions</td>
<td>37,166</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1. Corpus composition per number of words

The corpus was used to investigate EU legal language in all its morphosyntactic, stylistic and lexical aspects. It also proved an indispensable tool of investigation for both the quantitative and qualitative analysis of modal verbs employed in the different text types constituting EU secondary legislation. The corpus was searched and its occurrences and concordances investigated with the support of the *WordSmith Tools* software (Scott 2004). A useful instrument in the comparison of statistical data was also represented by the British National Corpus, a collection of 98 million words of written texts and two million words of spoken language (Leech *et al.* 2001). At a second stage, thanks to the contribution of the SSLiMIT, the Advanced School of Modern Languages for Interpreters and Translators of the University of Bologna at Forlì, the texts in the EUSLEX corpus were annotated. This involved lemmatisation, part-of-speech (POS) tagging and a categorisation in terms of genre, year and language for each document. These tasks were carried out using supervised machine learning techniques. The EUSLEX corpus is now available online on the SSLiMIT website\(^2\) and can be searched for research purposes together with other corpora made available by the SSLiMIT.

In Chapter 3, the research work is approached with the intent of investigating the various features of EU legal language in order to assess its degree of specificity and demonstrate that, being a specialised language, it responds to specific rules and patterns that regulate its organisation. The analysis is therefore carried out on a multidimensional scale, taking into consideration aspects related to morphosyntax, style and lexicon. The approach adopted is interpretative in nature, and not merely limited to description and quantitative analysis. To this end, the discussion shows to what extent some of the

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2 [http://sslmitdev-online.sslmit.unibo.it/login.php](http://sslmitdev-online.sslmit.unibo.it/login.php)
linguistic aspects shared with other specialised languages (e.g. general legal language) are employed in EU texts to achieve disciplinary goals whilst accommodating the message of Community law to the diverse national legal settings. The closing part of this chapter focuses on EU specific lexis, in an attempt to categorise the various mechanisms of lexical innovation that generate EU terminology in order to ‘label’, through neologisms, innovative types of institutions, measures and policies.

The focus of the attention is shifted in Chapter 4 from the general distinctive traits of EU secondary legislation to the specific legal acts that constitute it: Directives, Framework Decisions, Regulations and Decisions. These provisions differ in terms of their applicability (while Regulations and Decisions are directly applicable, Directives and Framework Decisions need implementation procedures by Member States) and final addressees (e.g. Regulations are generally addressed to all Member States, while Decisions can be binding only on specific individuals or Member States). The investigation therefore seeks to identify the communicative function performed by modal verbs in conveying the different pragmatic purposes of the four legislative text types. Starting from a quantitative analysis of the occurrence, distribution and use of modal forms in the documents of the corpus, the study explores the pragmatics of prescriptive and performative verbs used to express different levels of obligation in EU law. The ultimate aim is to identify different nuances in the legal messages of different text types, depending whether the obligation arises as prescriptive or explicitly performative.

From a general overview of the main aspects under investigation, a set of patterns in EU legal discourse can be identified in the expression of its communicative and regulatory purposes. The main objective of the research work thus culminates in delimiting a specialist framework in which EU legal language creates, and simultaneously expresses, a *sui generis* system, neutralised from any nationally based culture or legal tradition.
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