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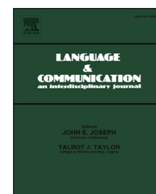

Speaking up and being heard: The changing metadiscourse about ‘voice’ in British parliamentary debates since 1800

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ABSTRACT

As a metaphor for political power, participation, and legitimacy, the concept of ‘voice’ is central to considerations of representative politics during the modern era. Little is known about how political actors themselves understood and referred to their own voices, those of others, and their respective significance for representative politics. This article focuses on the British Parliament, which was since the eighteenth century regarded as a paradigmatic incarnation of political voice and as the pinnacle of modern representative government. Based on a corpus of Hansard debates from 1800 to 2005, we analyse MPs’ explicit references to ‘voice’ in parliamentary debates. We aim to explore the salience of ‘voice’ for MPs and of different aspects of voice as a vehicle for expressing political will. We also shed light on how metadiscursive references to ‘voice’ change over the course of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

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1. Introduction

As a metaphor for political power, participation, and legitimacy, the concept of ‘voice’ has been central to considerations of representative politics during the modern era. Political theorists, philosophers and communication scholars alike have presented detailed – and often critical – analyses of the concepts’ multi-layered meanings in the context of democratic and non-democratic regimes. A lot less is known, however, about how political actors themselves refer to ‘voice in their own speech, what this tells us about the significance of ‘voice’ in representative politics, and how conceptualisations of ‘voice’ might have changed over time. Rather than a theoretical or normative viewpoint, considering the metadiscourse of actors directly involved constitutes a bottom-up empirical approach to the question of how the metaphor of voice helped shape the political sphere during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. In addition to this, it also allows for a genuinely historical perspective, tracing the changing meanings of ‘voice’ over a long timespan.

If indeed voice is a common metaphor for political participation and representation, we could expect to find references to ‘voice’ anywhere where political issues are addressed. In focusing on the British Parliament, we turn to an institution that has since the late eighteenth century been understood as the pinnacle of modern representative government and as a paradigmatic incarnation of political voice. How did the primary agents of this institution, the Members themselves, conceptualise their own voice and its relation to the legislative institution, as well as to the nation’s voice it was supposed to articulate? And how did these discursive frameworks change in the course of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries? Before addressing the

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methodological basis for such an approach in more detail, a short survey of existing literature allows us to identify some main elements of the concept of voice in its relation to representative politics.

2. Conceptualisations of 'voice'

From antiquity to the present day, the concept of voice played a key role in Western understandings of human identity, both in terms of the essence of humans in general, of specific individuals in particular, and of the nature of human society. In opposition to sounds made by animals or inanimate objects, the phenomenon of voice is predominantly associated with human beings (Di Cesare, 1998) and with orality. Before the invention of various media for recording and transmitting voice, orality was tied to face-to-face communication, so that voice also invoked presence. Voice produces sounds that are distinguished from other sounds mainly through intentionality and meaning in the production of speech, and/or intentional manipulation for aesthetic purposes such as with singing, where meaning can take the back seat. However, drawing the line of intentionality is not always straightforward (Dolar, 2006). On the one hand, we can produce speech unintentionally while being asleep. On the other hand, a cough, mostly an unintentional physical reaction, can at times be deployed with communicative intent, e.g., to signal irony. Still, in most contexts, voice is associated with speech and hence related to meaning and intentionality, and because of the latter also to subjectivity. It is often perceived as the primary vehicle for the expression of the speaker's inner world and as a marker of their individual character, since voices are quite unique to speakers (König and Brandt, 2006; Dolar, 2006). Speech production relies on a speaker's physicality and is tied to the body (Neis, 2009), insofar as the body enables the voice, but the voice also points to the presence of the body (Mersch, 2006), unless it gets technically reproduced, which may alter its meaning.

Building on such established connotations while at the same time brushing them against the grain, various areas of recent scholarship have opened up new perspectives. In sociolinguistics and linguistic anthropology, voice is increasingly considered in terms of heteroglossia and polyphony, following the seminal work of Mkihail Bakhtin (1981) which points out the presence of different registers and voices in any stretch of speech. In this view, speakers "are not unified entities, and their words are not transparent expressions of subjective experience" (Keane, 2000, 271). This view recognises that no speech is purely original, but that "the voice of the 'other' finds its way into the mouth of the 'self'" (Hastings and Manning, 2004, 301), whether consciously quoting and mimicking, or subconsciously by way of styles and discursive threads and fragments previously encountered. Equally seminal work by Goffman (1974) distinguishes different speaker roles, allowing for a more differentiated analysis of the ways in which speech and speech styles originating from various sources are drafted into the individual speakers' text. Linguistic research building on these notions is mostly interested in analysing language use with a view on those linguistic means that are indicative of heteroglossia or of shifts between speaker roles in the same speakers' utterances. It is focused on means and processes of voicing, i.e., how different voices are performed in speech (e.g., Agha, 2005). While these notions are relevant for representatives' speech as well (see Section 2 below), our analysis takes a different route. Rather than looking at how, when, and with what linguistic means politicians draft in others' voices in their speech, we look at instances where they explicitly refer to 'voice' (cf., e.g., Kunreuther, 2014). The resulting analysis therefore does not aim at a comprehensive analysis of different means of voicing, which would be very difficult to undertake diachronically. By focusing on metacommunicative references to 'voice' in parliamentary discourse, we instead aim at what might be called a history of mentalities, exploring the salience of 'voice' to, and its different conceptions within representatives' speech.

A second area of research that has received increased interest in recent years is concerned with the materiality, modality, and performativity of communication (Lagaay, 2004), allowing for a new focus on the cultural meanings associated with phenomena that were previously regarded as mere 'vehicles' of communication. This includes the phenomenon of voice, where aspects such as intonation, melody, and accent can be brought to the fore. However, the cultural meanings of the concept of voice go well beyond such references to the material or symbolic properties of individual human beings' speech. There is a long-established idea of metaphysical voice, established in the notion of the voice of God, of angels, or other, including evil, spirits which humans can perceive and transmit (Connor, 2000). This idea in turn enabled other metaphorical extensions of the 'voices' of abstract concepts, such as the voice of reason, of nature, or the voice of mercy. The idea of such disembodied voices also relates back to the strife to, and (sometimes spooked) fascination with capturing and transmitting voice beyond the physicality of speakers (Göttert, 1998; Macho, 2006), including voices of the deceased (Peters, 1999; Connor, 2000). In such cases, the underlying tension between voice as a marker of immediate presence and its inscription into various systems of mediatized representation brings along a new dynamics of suspicion, multi-interpretability and potential conflict.

3. Voice as representation

The tension between presence and absence that surrounds discourses of voice became especially poignant since the Age of Revolutions at the turn of the nineteenth century, when the metaphor of 'voice' started to play a decisive role in public discourse about political power, representation, and democratic participation. Göttert (1998) traces the ascent of voice from a largely ornamental and ceremonial role during the Ancien Régime to the primary medium of political negotiation and legitimation in the context of the French Revolution. While citizens across the West increasingly came to perceive it as their right (Meisel, 2001) and duty (Starr, 2008) to debate matters of public interest in the press, in political clubs, assemblies, and

the like, they simultaneously looked to the newly constituted parliaments (literally: houses of speech) to express the nation's sovereign will.

The discourse of voice in the context of representative politics that emerged at the turn of the nineteenth century continues to shape understandings of the political sphere to this day (e.g., Couldry, 2010; Schlozman et al., 2012). In terms of what might be called the 'representative relation' – which is at the core of parliamentary speech – two main aspects of voice come to the fore. Firstly, the concept points to the necessity for members of a society that are going to be represented (representees) to have rights pertaining to influence in the decision-making of those who represent them (representatives). The different ways in which this influence can be materially expressed and organised have long been at the heart of political controversies as well as theoretical debates. In one recent consideration of political participation, Gray (2015) identifies the "vocal ideal of democratic citizenship" (476) as a dominant undercurrent in all major contemporary theories of democracy. He describes it as characterised by the norm of autonomy, i.e., an amount of "control over the political duties and obligations collective life imposes" (ibid.), by the norm of equality, i.e., "equal influence over collective decision-making processes" (477), and by the norm of inclusion, i.e., that "all of those affected by collective decisions should be included in the making of those decisions" (ibid.). While other theorists may disagree with Gray or stress different facets of the citizens' voice, for our purposes it suffices to point out that this kind of analysis is primarily focused on the aspect of representees' expression.

On the other side of the representative relation, however, the concept of voice also implies a notable tension between identity and alterity (see, regarding the latter, Hastings and Manning, 2004). Representatives are not only accountable to their constituents, but are expected to factor the latter's views and interests into their own stance on all kinds of policy matters. For this reason, representatives need to be seen to listen (cf. Connor, 2023) as well as to lend their own voice to the representees. As in any case of mediated voice, this type of re-production brings up questions concerning the adequacy of the relation between the represented and representative voices. Representatives cannot listen to, digest, and act according to everyone at the same time, so they have "to filter out some voices, privilege others and thereby represent different sections of her constituency at different times" (Crewe, 2015, 218). In Goffman's (1974) terms, the MPs are the animators, i.e., performers of their utterances, as well as the authors, i.e., the ones responsible for them. They are probably also the principals, i.e., those whose positions are expressed, even though this would apply to the overall position taken, and may include assembly of a number of other positions in support of the own position, or lined up for rebuttal. MPs' speeches are therefore likely to include different embodied voices (Cooren, 2010), labelled figures by Goffman. The MPs own personal identity is captured as the natural figure. Here, vocal qualities of representatives are often noted and judged as a marker both of their individual character and of fitness for public office (cf. Göttert, 1998), not rarely in a highly gendered way (Hoegaerts, 2014; Hoegaerts, 2015). But MPs' speech also typically incorporates cited figures, e.g., in reported speech, citing organised stakeholders, individual constituents or political colleagues or opponents. Interestingly, figures represented in speech can also be mockeries or say-fors, when "an individual acts out someone not himself, someone who may or may not be present. He puts words and gestures in another's mouth" (Goffman, 1974, 534). It is possible, and indeed likely, that representatives draw on imagined, selectively chosen, or even purely fictional voices that they ascribe to their constituents to add weight to their own words. What matters here is not so much the reality of representative adequacy, but rather that representatives need to be *perceived as* being receptive of, or acting according to their representees' voices, and they can showcase this commitment by making others' voices part of their own speech. In public speaking, they draw on, and draw in, their constituents' voices, acting as "highly polished vessels for a polyphony of voices" (Marionneau and Hoegaerts, 2021, 96) and "disclaiming the individual character" of their voices, suggesting their "supposedly disinterested, acorporeal character" (Hoegaerts, 2014, 43), offering themselves "as the embodiment of constituency interests" (Saward, 2010, 37). Several aspects emerge from this discussion as interesting for a closer investigation of 'voice' in political discourse, including shifts in speaker roles and strategies as well as linguistic means of incorporating a multitude of voices into political speech.

In this paper, we are interested not so much in the ways in which the specific forms of heteroglossia discussed above become manifest, but in the salience of 'voice' for politicians, and the ways in which they invoke this concept which is at the heart of their role in parliament (Finlayson, 2017). We will analyse the ways in which British representatives refer to 'voice' in their own representative speech in parliament during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. In analysing the MPs' metadiscourse about voice in their contributions to the plenary debates over time, we are also interested in possible changes in the ways in which 'voice' is represented in politicians' speech, and whether these may reflect changes in the understanding of the representative relation. As a point of departure for this type of study, Craig (2013) offers a small-scale study of current metadiscursive arguments about 'voice' retrieved by way of a general internet search. His study, while very preliminary, demonstrates the value of studying metadiscourse, because it points to normative claims relating to inclusion and exclusion, and to arguments about the (non-)legitimacy of particular voices. He asserts the relevance of the concept of voice especially for the context that we are interested in, in that "some of the central normative issues involving 'voice' have to do with representation, agency and legitimate participation in communicative interactions, especially in public discourse and democratic political processes" (126).

With this article, we follow up on this approach, but also investigate the metadiscourse about 'voice' from a diachronic point of view, discussing the changes in this discourse since 1800. Taking a long-term perspective, we investigate how quantitative and qualitative changes in the way 'voice' was referred to in the parliamentary arena reflect changing understandings of the representative relation as well as wider developments in British society and politics. For the nineteenth century, we may expect the discourse to reflect the structural changes to the British representative system against the background of the gradual extensions of the franchise up to the institution of universal suffrage after the First World War. In

the context of the fully democratic political regime of the twentieth century, other fault lines will have come to the fore, e.g. the inherent tension between the plurality of voices emerging from different parts of society and the necessity to integrate them into the process of legislation. Bauman and Briggs (2003) discuss the history of ideas about language during the advent of modernity which entailed its purification "of ties to particular social positions, interests, and from differences between human beings in general" (31), which might have contributed to the notion that speakers could be separated from their subjectivity, therefore becoming 'disinterested vessels' (Hoegaerts, 2014). However, the 'modernisation' process as described by Bauman and Briggs (2003) also entails exclusions, i.e., of speech seen as 'naïve', 'irrational', 'uncivilised' etc., which means that voices to which such qualities are ascribed are unlikely to be represented. Beyond the 'modern' project, then, scepticism about the inherent selectivity in representation gains ground. Kunreuther (2014), e.g., looking into post-1990 metadiscursive conceptualisations of 'voice' in Nepal notes the relevance of voice as manifestations of subjectivity in the context of democratisation processes and political movements to enhance representation. In addition to what seems to be an increasing appreciation of subjectivity in public discourse, post-modern scepticism of the possibility of adequate representation through another's voice is also mirrored within some social movements in calls to not speak on others' behalf (e.g., Veniard, 2022). Such increased scepticism poses a challenge for political representation and might be mirrored in references to 'voice'.

Considering the long-term changes in the understandings of political representation, our approach contributes to the study of the long-term "metamorphoses of representative democracy" (Manin, 1997, 193ff.). Manin took a theoretical viewpoint, focusing on institutional settings and regime change, culminating in a threefold typology of classical parliamentarianism through party democracy up to today's 'audience democracies'. In contrast to this, building on the empirical study of parliamentary metadiscourse allows us to approach the long-term change of representative government from the point of view of the prime group involved in these changes – the Members of Parliament.

A second step beyond the existing scholarship lies in our systematic approach, with a defined corpus and a stringent corpus-based analysis. We start with looking at all references to 'voice' across the entire volume of Hansard-documented parliamentary debates in the corpus under study (i.e., 1800–2005), paying attention to recurring patterns of speech rather than to the individual MPs mentioning 'voice' in this way or another.

4. Methodology

Various studies have shown how corpus-based digital humanities approaches can be fruitfully applied to the study of political discourse. E.g., Blaxill (2013) used quantitative techniques to study the language use in British election speeches of the 1880 to 1910 period, tracing the changing prevalence of particular themes through various campaigns. Parliamentary discourse in the plenary debates has been shown to be especially fit for such approaches, since the minutes provide a highly standardized text genre with good long-term accessibility in digitized form. Especially in political regimes characterized by gradual, rather than sudden political change, like Britain or the Netherlands, this allows for long-term diachronic comparisons. Van Eijnatten and Huijnen (2021) have studied the Dutch parliament's records of the period between 1815 and 2018, tracing the use of 'future' and related concepts over a long timespan. Other studies have focused on shorter periods, allowing for a more detailed analysis. Barron et al. (2018) tracked the creation, transmission, and decline of word-use patterns across more than 40.000 speeches of the French Revolution's National Constituent Assembly. Closely related to our study both in terms of approach and theme are contributions by Bonin (2020) on the concepts of 'democracy' and 'people' in British parliamentary debates between 1775 and 1885, and Baker et al. (2017) on the use of 'Ireland' between 1803 and 2005, which combine corpus linguistic tools similar to those used below with a detailed close-reading of case studies on specific subperiods.

Our analysis is based on the Hansard documentation of parliamentary debates, comprising the House of Commons as well as the House of Lords. Covering the time span between 1800 and 2005, the debates published by Hansard have been compiled into a digitized and annotated text corpus (Davies, 2015) by the AHRC-funded SAMUELS project (2014–2016, see: English-Corpora: Hansard, last access 27/09/2022) and are part of the collection of English corpora (Davies, 2020). The corpus has been annotated with metadata as well as linguistically. Metadata annotation ensures that searches of individual tokens can be performed by decade, by year, by chamber, and by political party.

Linguistic annotation enables analysis of the use of words by part of speech (e.g., to distinguish between 'voice' as verb and noun) and lemma (to analyse different word forms together, e.g., singular and plural). Crucially, however, to understand the discourse surrounding certain key words, we can use the corpus tool to analyse collocations. Collocation refers to the frequent, statistically salient, i.e., not unique or random co-occurrence of words (cf. McEnery and Hardie, 2012, 122ff.). Collocations are determined with a statistical measure to calculate the degree to which the co-occurrence of words with a search word is beyond random and might constitute an established pattern of language use.

The tool into which the Hansard debates were incorporated uses Mutual Information (MI), which is pre-determined and cannot be changed to a different measure. MI looks at the probability of the occurrence of the search word and the occurrence of words in its surroundings and compares these to the probability of them occurring together. Results prioritise collocations that are in themselves relatively rare words in the corpus. The rationale for this is that because of the lesser ubiquity of the latter, those combinations seem particularly strong. An MI score of 3 or above is considered significant (cf. Hunston, 2002, 71f.). Highly frequent grammatical or function words (articles, auxiliary verbs, prepositions) do not show among the results when sorted by MI score. While the results cannot be ordered using a different statistical measure, they can be ordered by raw frequency of co-occurrence, and it is here that we see that the most frequent co-occurrences are, indeed, 'the' and 'of'. Their

MI scores, however, are very low at 0.29 and 0.54, respectively. The ranking of results provided by the tool as illustrated in Appendix 1 only includes results with significant MI scores, but ordered along frequency of co-occurrence. It is also possible to rearrange the list purely along MI score, but this then privileges words that are rare and spread thinly over time. For these reasons, a list of results combining significant MI score and frequency of co-occurrence, as illustrated in Appendix 1, seems best for our purposes, so that we can capture not only distinctive, but also frequent and repeated patterns of usage. By way of an example, we can see that 'dissentient' by itself occurs 1,668 times and that in 37.95 % of its occurrences, it collocates with *voice* (633 times). This gives it a relatively high MI value of 10.62. Among the words that have an MI score above 3, the word that co-occurs with *voice* most often overall in terms of raw frequency is 'heard'; altogether 2,592 times. But because 'heard' by itself occurs 370,698 times in the corpus and because it is more ubiquitous and only combines with voice in 0.70% of its occurrences, it has a lower MI value of 4.86.

Once we have a list of collocates, in the next step we will want to explore at least some of these frequent and relevant co-occurrences in more detail to investigate the kinds of contexts in which the words co-occur by checking the related concordance lines, which, if needed, can be further expanded into about a paragraph-length of text in which the co-occurrence is embedded. What is very useful indeed for our diachronic analysis is that the tool allows us to trace the occurrence of specific collocations over time. Appendix 1 illustrates the information that the tool generates in this respect. If we take the example of 'dissentient' again, we can then see how often it co-occurs with *voice* in any decade, e.g., 9 times in the 1810s, 49 times in the 1830s, 51 times in the 1880s, 46 times in the 1920s, and 25 times in the 1960s. We can click on each of these sections to investigate the related concordance lines.

In the following analysis, we will first take a look at the frequency of 'voice' in different word forms in the corpus overall, as well as along different parameters (5.1). Then, we investigate the kinds of words with which voice co-occurs in the corpus overall and go beyond a mere list by characterising and grouping them semantically (5.2). Third, in order to capture changes over time, we will zoom in on certain time spans in relatively large intervals, to see whether or to what extent the collocational profile of *voice* changes between periods of time (5.3). Finally, we take a look at those collocates that remain most stable over time and investigate concordances from selected time spans to see in more detail whether the co-occurrence patterns change over time (5.4).

We shall bear in mind that initially, until 1878, Hansard did not employ official stenographers, and instead compiled accounts of the debates from newspaper reports. At first, the Hansard reporter only supplemented these, and it was not until 1909 that an official verbatim record of the proceedings was instituted (Shaw, 1974). This might have some impact on the ways in which voice occurs up until the twentieth century together with collocations like 'raised', or 'heard', in that these were at times in narrating what was going on in parliament rather than as part of the parliamentarians' utterances themselves. We will be mindful of this by checking the concordance lines before drawing conclusions from such co-occurrence patterns. If we were to investigate how voicing phenomena and how drawing different voices into political speech are performed in politicians' speech, then this would be a serious limitation. Since we, however, investigate explicit references to 'voice', it will become clear from the pre-1900 examples that these are also included when the content of politicians' speeches is related in the newspaper reports.

5. Analysis

5.1. Frequency of 'voice' over time

To begin our analysis, we should consider the frequency of the occurrence of 'voice' in the Hansard debates over time. There are 50,976 occurrences of 'voice' in total. A very clear majority of these are nouns (47,820). The instances in which voice is used as a verb seem negligible by comparison (3,156) and will be excluded from further analysis. Voice (noun) occurs overall 30.08 times per million words (PMW).

The relativised frequency allows us to identify points in time where voice was used more than this average of 30.08 PMW, since it takes the volume of documented debate into account. The number of sitting days per calendar year steadily increased during the period under study, from about 125 in the mid-nineteenth century to 164 at the end of the twentieth (Rush, 2001, 63f.). The decades in which 'voice' occurs most often relative to the overall amount of text are the 1810s, 1830s (with just over 50 times PMW), 1870s and 1890s (with just over 40 times PMW), as well as 1840s, 1880s, and 1990s (with just over 34PMW) (see Appendix 2).

It is also possible to check individual years for the frequency of voice PMW, which shows that in 69 individual years, the frequency was above 34 PMW. The list is topped by the year 1831 with 86.57 PMW and tails off into over 50PMW from the third-ranked year. Of those 69 individual years, most of these are in the 1800s, only eight years are from the 1900s, and the years 2001–2003 feature as well. The unique prevalence of voice in 1831 is clearly linked to the ongoing debates over parliamentary reform, ultimately culminating in the "Representation of the People Act" of 1832, corroborating that the concept of 'voice' was linked to representation.

The plural form 'voices' occurs 10,490 (6.6 times PMW) times in the corpus – more frequently than the verb, but four times less frequently than the singular noun. While we have undertaken a separate analysis of 'voices', word count permits its inclusion. Suffice to say here that this investigation did not reveal very distinct patterns from those observed with 'voice', apart from collocates involving different verb forms of 'collect', which all pertain to the process of voting in the Chambers.

With a view on representation, as discussed above, a further differentiation between the two Houses might be of interest. It would seem reasonable to assume that 'voice' might play a lesser role in the Upper Chamber of hereditary and appointed, rather than elected representatives. Indeed, 'voice' occurs 21.59 times PMW overall in the House of Commons, and 7.93 times PMW in the House of Lords. However, it is equally reasonable to assume that claims to representation were, and still are also being made by members of the Upper House (cf. Salmon, 2018), so that both Chambers will be included in the analysis. Comparisons between parties, also enabled by the tool, would be a worthwhile avenue for future research focusing on more circumscribed time periods. In the context of a long-term study like ours, however, it would be complicated by the changing nature of party adherence and coherence in parliament (Jenkins, 1996), the emergence of different parties over time and their changing proportions in the Houses, so that any over-time frequency of use by MPs of different political parties is unlikely to provide clear insights.

5.2. Collocations of voice overall

We mentioned above that the tool can generate various kinds of information about patterns of co-occurrence of words in the corpus. The span for calculating collocations was set at 4 words to the right, and 4 words to the left of the search word. The screenshot in Appendix 1 illustrates the display of results for the collocations of 'voice' over the different decades included in the Hansard corpus. As noted above, the list takes into account both raw frequency and MI score in that it includes only items with an MI score above 3, but shows the results ranked by raw frequency of co-occurrences. The first 100 collocates decline in frequency of co-occurrence with voice from 2,592 to 30. These are listed in Appendix 3. Before we apply a diachronic view on collocations over time, it is worthwhile to move beyond this simple list and to identify recurring themes in the discourse around voice which are reflected in these collocations.

Therefore, we undertake a thematic grouping of these collocates. Some of the collocates seem to refer to more or less powerful voices (e.g., decisive vs. feeble), some to more or less unity (unanimous vs. dissenting), some seem to refer to the production or transmission of speech (speak, listen), some to modes of speaking (loud, quiet), and some seem mysterious at first glance (Jacob). These might be useful preliminary categories, but to determine whether the categorisation is appropriate, the concordance lines have to be checked for the way in which the collocates co-occur with voice. For example, the collocate *management* mostly occurs in phrases like 'have a voice in the management of' and was therefore allocated to the category 'power'. The collocate *popular* occurs nearly throughout as a modifier immediately to the left of voice. The concordance lines show that it is also associated with power – the popular voice influences decisions, prevents things from happening, and in some examples seems synonymous to 'vote cast', in that it has the effect to return representatives to the Commons. The collocate *wilderness* refers to individuals' speeches, often to the speaker in first person, and occurs in phrases like 'I/he may (only) be a (lone) voice crying in the wilderness', whereby they position their own contribution as unlikely to have much resonance and justify making their point in spite of this anticipated ineffectiveness. This was therefore allocated to 'lack of power'. The collocate *master* raises the question of whether we are looking at a noun or a verb, and the concordances show that we are looking at a noun, preceded in almost every case by a possessive pronoun, 'his/their master's voice', so it was allocated to power. The collocate *drowned* partly has to do with transmission, in that a voice in the chamber was drowned by other noises, but from the 1960s onwards, this becomes more metaphorical, in the sense that certain voices get drowned by others in a wider public discourse. It was therefore allocated to two categories ('production, transmission, reception' as well as 'lack of power'). The latter meaning prevails for the present tense word form *drown*, which was allocated to 'lack of power'.

- **Production, transmission, reception**: heard, hear, raise, speak, listen, voice, lift, silent, silence, audible, deaf, ears, drowned,
- **Characteristic properties**: authentic, tone, loud, crying, effective, tone, powerful, uncertain, authoritative, warning, quiet, weak, eloquent, articulate, distinctive, moderation.
- **Unity/collectivity**: add, unanimous, collective, universal, chorus, choir, unified, coherent, (add voice to) plea, (add to/ join with) voices.
- **Disunity/singularity**: protest, dissentient, dissenting, solitary, dissent, discordant.
- **Power**: strong, deciding, determining, democratic, predominant, influential, lend (a powerful voice to a cause), preponderating, dominant, decisive, potent, heed (adhere to a powerful voice), (having a voice in the) nomination, popular, stronger, master, controlling, management, selection.
- **Lack of power**: stifle, drown/drowned, humble, feeble, muted, wilderness, feeble, humble, weak, silent/silence, lone, lonely, solitary.
- **Groups of social actors**: consumer, cabinet, parishioners, Londoners.
- **Technology, machines**: telephony, data, cockpit; the last three collocations often occur together, as in 'flight data and cockpit voice recorder', or 'data services and voice telephony'.
- **Miscellaneous**: Jacob, siren, male, echo, charmers, sanity, congratulations, tears, choosing, Esau, theirs. Examples: Jacob refers to the bible and Jacob's voice is in most instances juxtaposed to Esau's hand. The collocate 'male' refers only in a few instances to a dominant male voice, and in most instances to male voice choirs.

One preliminary observation that supports our discussion above already arises from this exercise of semantically grouping the collocates: the extent to which 'voice' is related to social relations, rather than just to sounds that individuals produce. The collocates relating to (lack of) power and to (dis-)unity point to the relevance of 'voice' in the socio-political realm – and hence, for our enquiry of the imagination of representative relations. They outweigh those of production, transmission, and reception as well as characteristic properties that relate more to the voices of individuals in concrete speech situations. That said, our choice of corpus of course makes such occurrences more likely than corpora pertaining to other, e.g., informal and interpersonal conversations.

5.3. Collocations of 'voice' over time

To gauge the changes in the parliamentary metadiscourse around voice over time, the corpus tool generates quite a bit of detail about each collocate's occurrence in each decade or even year. This micro-perspective, while useful for more time-limited and in-depth case studies, is practically unfeasible for a study of long-term discursive change. For this purpose, a selection is necessary. A stringent yet manageable way to trace long-term developments is to select decades in intervals and to compare their collocational profiles. At this medium-level of detail, it is possible to identify the changing contexts of use of collocates that remain part of the discourse throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries as well as to identify patterns that emerge or disappear. To this end, we selected the 1830s, 1880s, 1930s, and 1980s. It makes sense to start in the 1830s, because the overall debate volume is still quite low, but within the first half of the 1800s, the occurrences of voice are the highest in the 1830s, providing us with a reasonable amount of data, although the 1830s are not a complete outlier from surrounding decades either (see Appendix 2). From there, we will go in regular intervals of 50 years to arrive in the 1980s – the corpus comprises data until and including 2005. It is to be expected that our results will to some extent reflect the major issues debated during the selected decades. For example, in the 1830s, discussions around parliamentary reform surrounding the Great Reform Act of 1832 will have impacted the use of the concept of voice by putting new focus on the issue of how the people's voice could be represented in parliament in a fairer, more inclusive manner. For the 1880s the same may be true for the issue of Home Rule and the obstruction battles it engendered. While the former pointed to the relative weight of the Irish in relation to the English or British voices, the latter involved the controversial issue whether it could be legitimate to curtail representatives' freedom of expression in the debates in the name of legislative efficiency. In the 1930s, the Great Depression and the tense international relations in Europe will have made their mark, highlighting tensions between voices from different social groups or nations, respectively, while in the 1980s controversies around Thatcherite economic reforms and the UK's relation to the European Union will certainly appear in the data. But for our purposes here, such relatively short-term specifics are not at the centre of attention, since we are not interested in specific decades with specific events, but rather in long-term semantic shifts. For this reason, a fairly random choice of decades seems appropriate, considering that, like the 1830s, the latter decades do not stand out in terms of relative or raw frequency from surrounding decades (see Appendix 2).

Appendix 3 lists those collocations that appear 5 or more times together with 'voice' in descending frequency of co-occurrence for each of the chosen decades. These collocates have been integrated into Tables 1 and 2 below to show those collocates that are shared between certain or all decades (Table 1) and those that are unique to every decade (Table 2).

Table 1
Shared collocations profiles of voice over time in selected decades in 50-year intervals.

1830s	1880s	1930s	1980s
raise (incl. raised, raising), heard, dissentient, unanimous, speak (incl. speaks, speaking, spoke), single, listen (incl. listened, listening), loud (incl. loudly, louder), tone, voice(s)			
popular, nation, warning (incl. warn), feeble, behalf, charmer, low			
lift(ed), humble, management, reach			
	selection, uncertain, controlling, effective, deciding, equal, determining, fixing, join		
	add (incl. adding, added), protest, powerful, Jacob, crying		
		master, authentic, wilderness, authoritative, lone(ly), conscience, siren, echo, lend, expressing	
stifle			*stifle*
dissenting		*Dissenting*	*dissenting, dissent*
drown			*drowned*
	silence, representatives		*silence, silent, representative*
	governing, God		*governing, God*

Table 2
Collocations unique to selected decades in 50-year intervals.

1830s	1880s	1930s	1980s
people, against, united, choice, universal, independent, thunder, prevail, condemned, deaf, casting, humanity, demands, demanded, multitude, obey, represent	*appointment, representatives, settlement, ratepayers, preponderating, constitutional, consultative, potential, potent, irresistible, crowd, disposal, nomination, weak*	*soldier(s), calling, chorus, tears, urging, deprived, parishioners, declare*	*consumer, strong(er), vote, telephony, rural, America, democratic, data, cabinet, collective, minority, cockpit, recorder, sanity, sole, dissident, unified, quite, plea, strident, discordant, Saatchi, heed, male, parental, muted, moderation, decisive, moderate, choir, audible, mistress, flight, recovered, socialism, recording, beautiful, communication, sane, influential, tributes, lovely, realism, theirs, soft, PLO, welcoming, missing, text, respected, friendly*

Since the decades were investigated separately, with calculation of the collocates specific only to these subsets, the picture somewhat differs from the overall list of collocates which drew on the entire corpus. In terms of the thematic groupings identified above, Table 2 shows that in the 1830s, there are many collocates relating to ‘unity/collectivity’, a theme which resurfaces in the 1980s. In the 1880s, this aspect is less prominent, and there are more collocates relating to ‘power’, which continues into the later decades, although this theme is less remarkable there because other themes are evident as well. In the earlier decades, the motif ‘lack of power’ is also more prominent, although present as well in the later decades, but again hardly so in the middle decades. The themes ‘groups of social actors’ and ‘technology, machines’ is exclusive to the later decades. ‘Production, transmission, and reception’ seems to be most stable over time. ‘Characteristic properties’ is also a theme present in all decades, although more so in the later decades.

Considering the evidence in terms of the different themes becoming dominant in specific decades offers a first impression of the shifts in the metadiscourse about ‘voice’ throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. For a more in-depth view, in the next step we consider most prevalent collocates that are used over the whole time period for an analysis of more subtle long-term changes. In the following, we will undertake this for those collocations that are shared across the selected decades as shown in Table 1 and that co-occur overall at least 300 times with ‘voice’.[1] These will be, in declining order of overall frequency of co-occurrence indicated in brackets: *heard (2,592), raised (1,509), speak (1,236), raise (1,106), hear (736), single (720), dissentient (633), voice (547)*[2], *listen (510), speaking (475), tone (394), loud (354), unanimous (338)*. The by far most frequent collocate *heard* will be discussed first, at greater length and with more examples to illustrate the proceeding and reasoning of the analysis, whereas for the following, the results will be more summarised, with fewer and shorter selected examples.

5.4. In-depth analysis of individual collocates for changes over time

5.4.1. ‘Voice’ and heard

Voice co-occurs with *heard* overall 1,592 times. In the 1830s, there are 39 co-occurrences, and within these, three patterns of speech can be distinguished. First, there is reference to ‘popular’ and ‘public voice’, or the ‘voice of the people’ in relation to a (partly disputed, see example 1) demand that it should be heard, as in the following examples:

(1) And, although it certainly was most desirable that the popular **voice** should be *heard* in the Legislature, it was not less desirable that it ought not to be permitted entirely to overpower the expression of the sentiments of the other orders in the State; (…) (Commons, 19/09/1831).

(2) All he wanted Ministers to do was, (…) to assure the people, that their **voice** was *heard*, that their expressed opinions would be acted upon (…) (Commons, 23/06/1834).

(3) that in the elective franchise, the difference between England and Ireland was absolutely enormous; (…) and that in Ireland, it was positively so small as to render it a matter of surprise (…) that the popular **voice** could be *heard* there at all. (Commons, 28/02/1839).

Examples 1–3 reflect the way in which debates were reported initially, in that there are third-person accounts of MPs’ speech. The way in which speakers are reported to refer to the popular, public, or people’s voice appears to be presuming an unanimous voice of an entire electorate.

Second, there is reference to voices of individual Members, sometimes, as in example 4 and 6, with an express wish to be heard beyond the confines of the chamber:

[1] Collocates occurring less than 300 times overall are excluded due to article length limitations, and because over 205 years, the spread gets too thin to provide conclusive evidence of usage for specific decades.

[2] *Voice* is listed as a collocate, co-occurring with *voice* 547 times. This number, however, needs to be divided in half, because each is counted twice, so that it only appears less than 300 times as collocate. It will therefore be excluded from further analysis. The co-occurrence mostly follows the pattern: ‘This/the voice is the voice of’.

(4) He trusted, however, that the people would use no other but legal means. If he could make his **voice** *heard* from one end of the country to the other, he would exclaim to the people (…) (Commons, 05/11/1830).
(5) Mr. Alderman Waithman rose (…) for some time he was totally inaudible in the gallery. When the hon. Member's **voice** could be *heard*, he observed that (…) (Commons, 16/11/1830).
(6) He had a great respect for the lower orders (…); but he would lift up his voice, if he could make his **voice** *heard*, to warn them against (…) (Commons, 05/06/1832).

Example 5 again reflects the documented nature of MPs' speech and also the conditions under which the speech and its documentation were conducted.

Third, there is reference to the absence of dissenting or objecting voices within the chamber against matters under debate, as illustrated in the following examples:

(7) After a short interval, war ensued; what **voice** was *heard* to condemn it? (Lords, 03/10/1831).
(8) Mr. Briscoe had not *heard* a single dissentient **voice** out of the House against the principle of the bill (…) (Commons, 24/04/1839).

In the 1880s, there are 87 co-occurrences of **voice** and *heard*, among which there is only one reference to 'the public voice', another one to 'the voice of Scotland', to 'the voice of a nation', referring to Ireland vis-á-vis Great Britain, to 'the voice of India', and to 'the voice of England' in the context of foreign relations. We see a disappearance of references to the electorate as a whole, and instead note the emergence of different stakeholders, as in the following examples:

(9) Wherever the farmer's **voice** could be *heard* he cried out for a settlement of that question (Commons, 24/02/1881).
(10) (…) it was not desirable that the debate should close without one **voice** being *heard* on behalf of the English Universities (Commons, 29/03/1881).
(11) But the unfortunate ratepayer's **voice** was not much *heard* (Commons, 13/04/1885).

The other two patterns observed for the 1830s continue in the 1880s, although references to individual MP's voices are now more related to the proceedings and exchanges within the chamber, a shift that may be linked to ongoing debates revolving around the phenomenon of obstruction. What is new in the 1880s and continues into later decades, is the phrase 'to make someone's voice heard', which points to normative claims that certain social groups, or positions, needed to be acknowledged by the legislative, as in the following examples:

(12) I appeal to him not to leave out of the scope of his Bill that class which is least able to help itself, which is least able to make its **voice** *heard* in this House (…) (Commons, 25/04/1881).
(13) (…) but what I claim for these large numbers that we propose to admit is that they should be granted something more than a mere sterile vote: I claim that they should have a right to make their **voice** *heard* in Parliament (Lords, 07/07/1884).

In the 1930s, **voice** and *heard* occur together 130 times. The patterns of co-occurrence found in the 1880s continue, but they are joined by two new patterns. Firstly, the phrase 'make someone's voice heard' starts to proliferate and is joined by '(a chance/opportunity/right to) have someone's voice heard', as illustrated in the following examples:

(14) Manchester (…) naturally feels that in the interest of its own citizens it has a right to have its **voice** *heard* (…) (Commons, 28/02/1934).
(15) (…) the labouring classes, the outcasts and the women should at least have a chance of their **voice** being *heard* (Commons, 05/07/1935).

Secondly, references to individual MPs' voices (not) heard become a strategic means of criticising political competitors, as illustrated in examples (16) and (17):

(16) He did not like housing subsidies (…), but it is curious that through all these months we have never *heard* his **voice** upraised when all these uneconomic efforts have been made in agriculture (Commons, 26/07/1933).
(17) I do not think I *heard* his eloquent **voice** in your Lordships' House during the earlier stages (…) I rather regret that he should have reserved his vigorous and general condemnation of the Bill for the last stage (…) (Lords, 24/07/1935).

The above examples illustrate how references to voice were used to mock MPs for lack of involvement in debates at earlier stages or with regard to different, but related matters, so that their contributions to the debate at hand could be delegitimised.

In the 1980s, there are 361 co-occurrences of **voice** and *heard*. The patterns persisting through the 1930s as described above continue. There is a large variety of stakeholders now whose voices are referred to, including: consumers, minorities, students, unionists, pensioners, children, workers, the arts world, shareholders, local councils, tenants, Kent, Hampshire Members (of parliament), Northern Ireland, the people of Hong Kong, and others. The voice of 'Britain' occurs a few times, always in the context of international relations and the European Community. 'Our voice' either refers to Britain in those contexts, or to the respective House of Parliament.

Particularly conspicuous is the further proliferation of normative claims to 'voice': 'Making/having someone's voice heard' is now also expressed with modal verbs indicating that voices 'should/must/need' to be heard, for example:

(18) That is why it is immensely important that the angler and the tenant netsman should be considered, and that his **voice** should be *heard*. (Lords, 13/02/1986).
(19) (…) the consumer's **voice** must be *heard* so that complaints can be dealt with more effectively and efficiently (…) (Commons, 28/04/1989).

One last more recent development which can be seen a few times in the 1980s concerns strategic references to the contrast between a group's utterances and its authentic voice, unintentionally expressed in other actions or statements, as in the following examples:

(20) The Opposition Front Bench tried to wriggle out of saying whether the voice of Labour Back Benchers was that of the Labour party (…) we *heard* the authentic **voice** of the militant Left (Commons, 20/04/1988).

(21) We have *heard* today the authentic **voice** of the Tory party in England (…). Tomorrow the Irish media will reflect some of the bile that is clearly felt by some Conservative Members against the people of Ireland (Commons, 12/05/1988).

Over time, therefore, references to **voice** in combination with *heard* by members of, and inside the chamber tend to refer less to the speech situation and the proceedings within, but increasingly showcase the political competition for an audience beyond the chamber. Moreover, during the later decades, the assumption of a unified voice speaking for the nation as a whole is gradually dropped. Instead, we find an increasing proliferation of the voices of different stakeholders. Perhaps in line with this, there are increasingly normative claims about voices that need to be included in political discourse and decision-making.

5.4.2. 'Voice' and other collocates

Following on from our analysis of the most prevalent collocate *heard*, it will be interesting to see whether some of the tendencies that emerged over time will be confirmed with a view on the other collocates. *Raised* co-occurs with voice overall 1,509 times. Throughout time, the majority of the co-occurrences follow a pattern that consists of two parts: Part 1 – no/not a (single) voice raised OR only one voice raised OR MPs raised a voice OR a voice should be raised; part 2 – in favour/in support of OR against OR on behalf of OR on this occasion, as illustrated in the following examples:

(22) But in this instance the petition had been adopted unanimously, not a single **voice** had been *raised* against it (Lords, 28/03/1831).

(23) His hon. Friend, who had so often *raised* his **voice** on behalf of humanity, would, he was sure, not defend such a system now that he was in Office (Commons, 28/04/1882).

(24) We have also had a tirade from the hon. Member for Hulme (…), who, (…) has never on a previous occasion *raised* his **voice** in support of any provision which helped (…) clearing away slums in Manchester (…). What is the reason for this remarkable change of front? (Commons, 06/03/1933).

(25) (…) and having heard only a single **voice** *raised* in its support, (…) I think it is perfectly clear that party political issues have nothing to do with the merits of what we are now discussing (Lords, 24/01/1985).

Initially, the pattern is predominantly employed to emphasise unanimity of views on the issue under debate. From the 1930s, however, it is increasingly used to challenge political opponents, as indicated in example 24 above, as well as (26) and (27) below:

(26) (…) and it will be extremely difficult for supporters of the Government to explain to their constituents why they *raised* no **voice** why they were dumb regarding some of the revolutionary proposals in the Bill. (Commons, 19/12/1933).

(27) (…) but the British Government have gone along with it and have not *raised* their **voice** to halt that dangerous programme (Commons, 22/10/1987).

The collocate *raise* in many respects behaves similarly to *raised*, but not entirely so. It co-occurs with voice overall 1,106 times. Part 2 of the pattern is similar as with *raised*: for/in support of OR against/in protest of OR on behalf of OR here/on this occasion. Part 1, however, is different: (duty/obligation/bound to) raise a (humble/warning) voice, such as "he felt it his duty to *raise* his **voice** in (sic) behalf of the distressed agriculturists and the unemployed manufacturers" (Commons, 15/02/1830), or "I feel bound to *raise* my **voice** against the Vote by way of protest" (Commons, 19/02/1886). The strong emphasis on no voice being *raised* for or against something is nearly absent in co-occurrences with *raise*, and the element of duty or obligation, which appears in co-occurrences with *raise* is absent from those with *raised*. Similar, however, is the increasing use over time of this pattern by way of reproaching the political opposition for the way in which they do (not) raise a voice such as: "I have never once heard him *raise* his **voice** on behalf of his own constituents" (Commons, 08/11/1932), or: "When will the Secretary of State *raise* his **voice** in the Cabinet in favour of greater growth and an end to this tragic waste of human resources?" (Commons, 15/02/1982).

Speak co-occurs with **voice** 1,236 times overall. There are only 14 co-occurrences in the 1830s, but they point to the necessity of a certain voice to speak, such as "this new Parliament, which ought to *speak* the **voice** of the people" (Commons, 02/11/1830), or "the people of England would ere long *speak* out in a **voice** that could not be misunderstood" (Commons, 15/03/1838). In the 1880s, a new pattern (the Government/House should) 'speak in no uncertain voice' emerges, and there are a few occurrences of 'speak with one/a united/the same/a unanimous/a collective/undivided/common voice'. The former recedes in the later decades, but the latter becomes notably more prominent in the 1930s, where it accounts for 43 out of 77 co-occurrences, and more so in the 1980s, where it accounts for 133 out of 174 co-occurrences. In the 1930s, references to 'speak with one voice' at times still pertain to the House or Government, but now also include references to different stakeholders, such as "to get the Durham coalowners, or coalowners in any part of the country, to *speak* with a united **voice**" (Commons, 23/06/1932), or "to enable manufacturers and exporters to *speak* with one **voice**" (Commons, 09/06/1939). Both continue into the 1980s, with the addition of the stated need for 'Europe' or the European Community to 'speak with one voice'.

Hear co-occurs with *voice* 736 overall; only six of these instances are in the 1830s, and in the 1880s, most of the 24 occurrences refer to proceedings in the house, such as "they should (…) *hear* the **voice** of the new Chief Secretary on this

important question" (Commons, 03/11/1884), or "he was glad to *hear* the **voice** of the noble Marquess again" (Lords, 02/07/1888). This continues through the 1930s and 1980s where, in addition, more references to stakeholders emerge, such as "Committee has heard a voice from Scotland, that it should now *hear* a **voice** from Wales" (Commons, 07/07/1930), or "if the House wishes to *hear* the **voice** of those who live and work in the areas about which we are talking" (Commons, 15/07/1980). In the 1980s, there are references to English or British *voice*, all in the context of foreign politics. In line with our observations above, the latter two decades also see increased references to *voice* in a context of delegitimising the political opponent:

(28) It is interesting now and again to *hear* the **voice** of honest and authentic Toryism (…) who still wants to see a lowering of the charges for social services in order that the burden of Income Tax may be lowered (Commons, 27/04/1938).

(29) (…) it is with these amendments that we *hear* the true **voice** of the Labour and SDP parties who are concerned to go on subsidising (…) policies (…) at the expense of precisely those small businesses they seemed so anxious to protect earlier (Lords, 09/06/1988).

The co-occurrences of *voice* and *single* – 720 times overall – are mostly tied in with the co-occurrence of *raised* described above: not a *single*/only a *single* (dissentient) voice raised against/in favour of, as in "declared without a *single* dissentient **voice** that the whole system ought to be open to competition" (Commons, 21/06/1889). As observed for *raised*, increasingly, this pattern gets used to reproach the political opposition for (not) raising a voice:

(30) Not one *single* **voice** has been raised by Members opposite in favour of justice for these people: Why? Because they are concerned most with justice to the coal lessees, who, under this Bill, become a monopoly (Commons, 14/12/1937).

However, for *single*, an entirely new pattern emerges in the 1980s, which pertains to speaking with a single voice, as in: "It would be a great advance if the trade unions could speak with a *single* **voice**" (Commons, 24/03/1988). In the 1980s, it mostly refers to Europe speaking with a single voice, which also co-occurs with modal verbs like 'should' or 'can', indicating the desirability of avoiding a multiplicity of voices within the European Union. The co-occurrence of *dissentient* and voice – 633 times overall – is to a large extent tied in within the patterns of co-occurrence with *single*; 'without one/not a single/no/not one *dissentient voice*'. This pattern does not change in any discernible way over time, other than that it remarkably decreases in frequency, which might again point to a decreasing presumption of unanimity.

There are 510 co-occurrences of *voice* and *listen*. The pattern of co-occurrence in our selected decades is largely: 'Listen to the voice of the people/public/electorate OR more specific stakeholders' (Catholics; Scotch Members; Labour; women; industry etc.) OR 'listen to the voice of an abstract principle' (of reason; mercy; justice; duty). It is difficult to trace lines of development over time in this case. References to the 'voice of the people/the public' interestingly occur most often in the 1830s as well as in the 1980s. Reference to listening mostly indicate the need to listen to the voices mentioned, and/or a warning against not listening. Specific to the 1930s are reproaches for a refusal to listen directed towards the political opponent. In the 1980s, opposition is constructed between the executive that is portrayed as not listening to Parliament, as in: "the Government must *listen* to the united **voice** of all hon. Members from our great county" (Commons, 27/06/1988). Again, we see how references to 'voice' are to some extent used to delegitimise opponents.

The collocate *speaking* co-occurs with *voice* 475 times overall, 99 times in our selected decades, of which only 4 times and 9 times respectively in the 1830s and 1880s. It behaves similarly to *speak*, in that over time, the pattern 'speaking with one/a united/a single voice' becomes dominant.

Tone co-occurs with *voice* 394 times overall. In the 1830s and 1880s, these co-occurrences mostly refer to the acoustic situation in the house, such as "his remarks were couched in so extremely low a *tone* of **voice** that scarcely any of them reached the Treasury Bench" (Commons, 10/09/1886). In the 1930s and 1980s, they refer to conveying added meaning through delivery, e.g., "in a *tone* of **voice** in which there was more sorrow than humour" (Commons, 24/03/1930), or "in the most casual *tone* of **voice** imaginable" (Lords, 25/11/1980), i.e., there is a tendency here once more for *voice* to become part of a metadiscourse about how political debate is conducted.

A somewhat similar observation can be made regarding the collocate *loud*, which co-occurs with *voice* 354 times overall, 11 in the 1830s, 20 in the 1880s and 1930s, and 40 times in the 1980s. It is used partly to refer to a strong (claim for) representation, e.g., "the people of Ireland spoke to you in a **voice** too *loud* not to be heard" (Commons, 15/05/1838). Partly it refers individual MPs' use of their voice, such as "I can hear his *loud* **voice** from the back" (Commons, 20/07/1987). There is no clearly discernible development over time here, but in line with observations regarding *tone* and *raise* above, there is a tendency only emerging in the 1930s and persisting into the 1980s to use references to loud voice as part of political confrontation, to criticise another speaker: "We have heard from him a *loud* **voice** and shallow proposals" (Commons, 02/03/1933), or "that the only tactic to adopt with a lousy case is to speak in vague generalities with great confidence and a very *loud* **voice.** He is well qualified in all three respects (…)" (Commons, 03/12/1984).

The collocate *unanimous* co-occurs with *voice* 338 times overall, 48 in 1830, 41 in 1880, 14 in 1930, and 7 in 1980. This notable decrease in frequency over time ties in with the observation regarding *dissentient* above, which was mostly used in the pattern 'not one/not a single dissentient voice', also with decreasing frequency. In the 1830s, there are various references to the unanimity of 'the people' as a whole, as in the following examples:

(31) They would from that moment have been degraded in their own feelings, and condemned by the *unanimous* **voice** of the people (…) (Commons, 10/05/1832).

(32) (…) but even if he were told that the *unanimous* **voice** of the people of England demanded immediate emancipation, (…) he would say, that such a fact would not release him from what he considered to be his duty (…) (Commons, 03/06/1833).

In the 1880s, the voices referred to as unanimous comprise more varied stakeholders: There is the *unanimous* voice of the Church, of the shipping community, of the House, of the Committee, of the people of London, of the Irish people, of Scotland, of the Judges. This is similar in the 1930s and in the 1980s, although there are only 14 and 7 co-occurrences, respectively, and 'speaking with an unanimous voice' occurs in the 1930s, as well as 'adding a voice to the unanimous voice of particular stakeholders'.

6. Discussion

Tracing changes in MPs' reference to 'voice' over an extended time span precludes the more detailed analysis of utterances in specific contexts, decades or, or years. Instead, we chose a birds-eye view of conceptual change indicated by changes in the metadiscourse about 'voice' in the British Parliament during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. This analysis brought to the fore two major long-term trends, which in combination indicate a profound shift in the Members' conceptualization of the representative relation. It would be interesting for further research to follow-up on this indication with more in-depth and more contextualised, qualitative case studies.

Firstly, the assumption of an essential unity of the political nation declines from the last decades of the nineteenth century on, all but disappearing in the twentieth century. During the early stage of parliamentary government, British MPs still tended to take for granted the idea that ultimately 'the people' spoke with one voice, even if it was at times inaudible through the noise of party positions and interests. Accordingly, their own role – both individually and collectively – was conceived of as primarily one of articulation, giving voice to the nation's unified will. Already in the 1880s, this point of view gradually loses dominance to a very different conceptualization of voice, assuming a plurality of voices of different stakeholders. The increasing emphasis on the necessity of unity points in the same direction, reacting to a perceived reality of fragmentation viewed as problematic. Moreover, the voice whose unity was called for was – especially during the twentieth century – usually not the voice of the nation as a whole but rather of specific sub-groups. The fact that references to the voice of England or Britain shifted to the international arena, where they are contrasted to the voices of other nations, corroborates these findings.

Secondly, and closely connected to the first trend, we find that the normative values put on the discourse of 'voice' change shape. The presumption that political voice should be both raised and heard was already constitutive of discourses around the unified voice of the British people. But it became even more important once the concept's referent shifted to the plurality of voices of different stakeholders. On this basis, the concept of voice became a double-edged weapon to be used against opponents, who could be scandalized for not hearing the voice of particular constituencies and for not raising their voice in support of or against a measure. In general, the increased normative pressure to raise and hear all voices points to an increasing understanding of the representative regime in terms of a communicative system (cf. Couldry, 2010; Saward, 2010).

These findings align with discussions within political theory about the changing nature of representative regimes. As mentioned above, Bernard Manin frames the changing historical relation between representees and representatives in what might be characterized as a stage theory of representative democracy. In another influential work on the historical development of representative government, Pierre Rosanvallon (1998) highlights the increasing tension between the imagined unity of the people and the conflicting, fragmented realities of social and political life during the modern era. While both authors develop their models primarily with reference to the French case, our findings show that British MPs' references to 'voice' reflect similar developments. For the earlier part of our period, this is corroborated by Conti's recent work on the history of British theories of representation during the Victorian era (2019), which stresses the tension between predemocratic ideals of descriptive representation, i.e. that in order to 'mirror' society's diversity and function as an arena of deliberation, Parliament had to be shielded from the pressures of majoritarian democracy, and twentieth-century understandings of 'representative democracy' presupposing that for parliament to reflect the full range of social groups and interests, it must be based in democratic elections. Although Conti does not expressly put it this way, his findings seem to align with our observation of a long-term shift of emphasis in conceptualisations of the legislative, from the voice of the unified nation to an arena of expression for society's multiplicity of voices. While the writings of the major political theorists on which these studies are based will not have directly influenced MPs' rhetorical interventions in the debates (cf. Steinmetz, 2002, 88f.), they still point to some of the major concerns around which both political theorising and parliamentary debate revolved at different points in time.

Our dataset and tools of analysis can identify, but not explain these changes. To this end, existing historical scholarship provides some further leads. It is plausible that institutional change like the gradual extension of the franchise during the nineteenth century and the advent of universal suffrage after the First World War played a role in the proliferation of stakeholders whose voices needed to be articulated and heard. Similarly, the changing relation between the executive and legislative branches of government and the increased importance of party organizations will have been important. Together with increasing mass media reporting, focusing on political antagonisms in the House, these changes might have contributed to the increasing strategic use of 'voice' to delegitimise political opponents. The post-modern scepticism against the 'disinterested voice' and against the possibility of adequate representation through another's voice noted in Section 2 above might also have played a role in the trends we observed. However, to identify the specific factors at work and weigh them against

each other, future research will have to the trace the precise mechanisms linking changing social and political contexts to MPs' conceptualisations of, and verbal references to public discourse. One might easily imagine similar studies on related concepts like 'debate' or 'silence', or on more traditional concepts of political theory like 'representation' or 'interest'. In addition, the concept of voice might be traced across other textual genres and even non-textual media to attain a fuller understanding of its changing contours in particular settings. Finally, as recent work on the history of political concepts has emphasized (Ihalainen and Palonen, 2009), comparative studies on different parliamentary regimes would be helpful to differentiate specifically national from transnational trends. As our study shows, such research should be complemented by empirical, analyses of the language use of political actors themselves, rather than on the exegesis of contemporary theoretical discourse alone. Whether diachronic and corpus-based, or in the shape of more in-depth contextualised case studies, such analyses allow for a far more detailed, bottom-up historical understanding of changing imaginations of the representative relation.

Declaration of competing interest

The authors have no interests to declare.

CRediT authorship contribution statement

Melani Schröter: Conceptualization, Formal analysis, Methodology, Writing – original draft, Writing – review & editing. **Theo Jung:** Conceptualization, Writing – original draft, Writing – review & editing.

Appendix 1. Illustrative screenshot display of results for collocations with 'voice' (noun) per decade

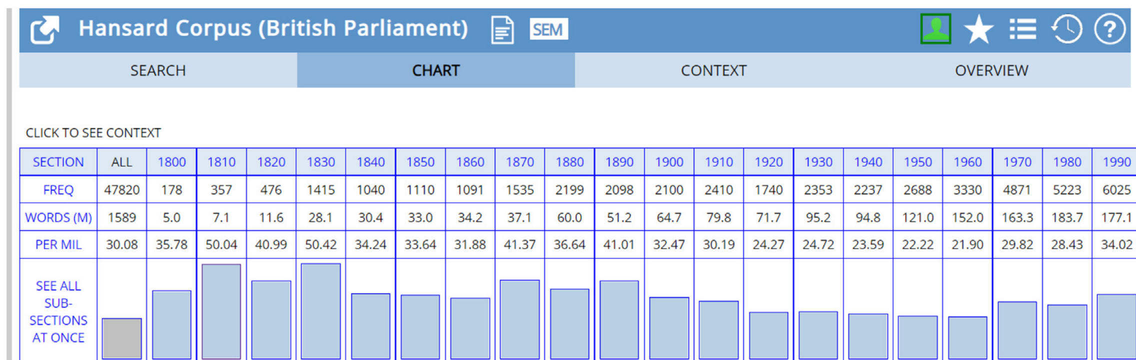
Hansard Corpus (British Parliament)

SEARCH FREQUENCY CONTEXT ACCOUNT

ON CLICK: CONTEXT TRANSLATE (??) ENTIRE PAGE GOOGLE IMAGE PRON/VIDEO BOOK (HELP)

HELP	WORDS	ALL	1800	1810	1820	1830	1840	1850	1860	1870	1880	1890	1900	1910	1920	1930	1940	1950	1960	1970	1980	1990	2000	ALL	%	MI
1	HEARD	2592	4	8	26	39	23	41	39	61	87	47	74	96	70	130	129	164	217	314	361	447	215	370698	0.70	4.86
2	ADD	2163		2	3	6	2	10	16	13	34	21	25	55	61	123	148	172	237	285	347	390	213	202216	1.07	5.47
3	RAISED	1509	3	20	27	73	55	54	72	58	108	73	90	88	68	138	89	107	120	110	87	53	16	400651	0.38	3.97
4	SPEAK	1236	2	2		14	2	9	4	19	27	22	30	43	30	77	83	84	117	226	175	174	96	254107	0.49	4.34
5	RAISE	1106	9	25	33	76	57	45	41	38	78	54	63	67	62	95	65	67	59	63	49	44	16	194229	0.57	4.56
6	HEAR	736		2	9	6	9	8	11	13	24	21	22	28	29	43	56	52	51	91	106	117	38	316494	0.23	3.27
7	SINGLE	720	2	4	9	24	13	13	20	16	38	26	39	44	34	32	28	30	43	73	73	111	48	217883	0.33	3.78
8	DISSENTIENT	633	9	10	13	49	46	39	34	32	51	51	42	53	46	35	29	25	25	11	26	7		1668	37.95	10.62
9	VOICE	547		2	2	8	6	2	8	12	30	36	14	24	44	34	34	41	52	68	76	39	15	50978	1.07	5.48
10	LISTEN	510	4	4	8	19	10	8	7	7	34	30	23	16	18	24	18	16	27	59	66	71	41	70217	0.73	4.92
11	AUTHENTIC	489										1	1	3	1	27	31	33	39	78	102	136	37	4885	10.01	8.70
12	SPEAKING	475		1	3	4	1	1	2	9	9	9	12	11	13	21	34	42	49	103	63	59	29	185686	0.26	3.41
13	STRONG	473	1	1	1	1	2	1		8	6	6	8	5	4	8	7	10	13	54	68	166	103	212612	0.22	3.21
14	MANAGEMENT	428				8	5	11	15	57	47	84	80	44	21	15	9	3	9	7	5	5	3	179114	0.24	3.31
15	EFFECTIVE	421		1						1	13	8	21	35	20	25	28	20	34	69	50	60	36	174558	0.24	3.32
16	TONE	394	12	18	25	12	15	14	8	6	16	7	2	8	5	14	16	38	27	44	58	27	22	25720	1.53	5.99
17	POWERFUL	389	1		4	3	3	5	5	6	9	2	8	4	6	11	7	13	22	62	61	98	59	59540	0.65	4.76
18	LOUD	354	3	4	4	11	4	5	9	7	20	5	8	9	10	20	19	25	41	53	40	45	12	7884	4.49	7.54
19	LONE	338													1	9	23	40	48	55	75	55	32	8175	4.13	7.42
20	UNANIMOUS	338	3	6	17	48	25	22	12	22	41	30	21	27	9	14	3	5	2	9	7	13	2	34188	0.99	5.36
21	PROTEST	288			1	3	4	3	6	1	14	12	19	27	28	40	27	27	26	28	8	10	4	58875	0.49	4.35
22	RAISING	260	1	6	9	19	15	17	18	9	15	5	16	12	12	30	17	16	14	11	10	6	2	90164	0.29	3.58
23	CONSUMER	251					1			2				1	1	3	2	13	18	55	83	54	18	94141	0.27	3.47

Appendix 2. Screenshot displaying frequency of 'voice' (noun) over time



SECTION	ALL	1800	1810	1820	1830	1840	1850	1860	1870	1880	1890	1900	1910	1920	1930	1940	1950	1960	1970	1980	1990
FREQ	47820	178	357	476	1415	1040	1110	1091	1535	2199	2098	2100	2410	1740	2353	2237	2688	3330	4871	5223	6025
WORDS (M)	1589	5.0	7.1	11.6	28.1	30.4	33.0	34.2	37.1	60.0	51.2	64.7	79.8	71.7	95.2	94.8	121.0	152.0	163.3	183.7	177.1
PER MIL	30.08	35.78	50.04	40.99	50.42	34.24	33.64	31.88	41.37	36.64	41.01	32.47	30.19	24.27	24.72	23.59	22.22	21.90	29.82	28.43	34.02
SEE ALL SUB-SECTIONS AT ONCE																					

Appendix 3. Collocations of *voice* overall

Heard, add, raised, speak, raise, hear, single, dissentient, voice, listen, authentic, speaking, strong, management, effective, tone, powerful, loud, lone, unanimous, protest, raising, consumer, dissenting, speaks, popular, crying, deciding, uncertain, wilderness, determining, cabinet, authoritative, stronger, selection, master, democratic, controlling, warning, collective, voice, humble, adding, lift, Jacob, decisive, listening, feeble, siren, lifted, louder, universal, plea, predominant, male, telephony, silent, lend, stifle, data, chorus, influential, quiet, silence, solitary, preponderating, echo, audible, loudly, cockpit, weak, deaf, dissent, dominant, eloquent, articulate, drowned, parishioners, distinctive, charmer, choir, potent, moderation, discordant, unified, heed, sanity, congratulations, tears, choosing, Esau, muted, drown, coherent, nomination, theirs, lonely, Londoners, ears, loudest.

Appendix 4. Collocations (5 or more co-occurrences) with voice in selected decades, in 50-year intervals

The following lists for each decade descend in frequency of co-occurrence.

1830s: people, against, raise, raised, popular, dissentient, unanimous, heard, election, single, nation, warning, listen, raising, united, lift, speak, lifted, loudly, choice, tone, universal, independent, loud, low, stifle, feeble, humble, thunder, listened, voice, management, dissenting, prevail, condemned, behalf, charmer, deaf, casting, humanity, demands, demanded, drown, multitude, obey, reach, represent.

1880s: raised, heard, raise, dissentient, management, unanimous, single, listen, add, voice, speak, popular, appointment, loud, selection, behalf, representatives, uncertain, tone, nation, raising, settlement, protest, controlling, low, effective, rate-payers, preponderating, lifted, deciding, warning, reach, equal, powerful, constitutional, consultative, lift, Jacob, humble, feeble, crying, determining, speaks, charmer, potential, potent, stifle, irresistible, listening, crowd, silence, governing, disposal, stifling, warn, nomination, weak, God, fixing, join.

1930s: raised, heard, add, raise, speak, hear, protest, dissentient, voice, single, master, raising, authentic, uncertain, effective, determining, listen, crying, loud, spoke, wilderness, join, deciding, authoritative, speaks, management, reach, tone, unanimous, voices, humble, selection, soldier, powerful, equal, lone, lifted, controlling, Jacob, dissenting, conscience, calling, siren, chorus, tears, lift, urging, adding, deprived, listening, louder, parishioners, echo, lend, declare, fixing, expressing, soldiers.

1980s: heard, add, speak, hear, authentic, raised, consumer, voice, lone, single, strong, listen, speaking, powerful, vote, tone, speaks, raise, telephony, loud, dissenting, rural, America, stronger, dissentient, added, democratic, wilderness, data, authoritative, cabinet, collective, minority, cockpit, adding, governing, siren, crying, representative, hearing, master, Jacob, recorder, sanity, lend, sole, dissident, unified, quite, plea, strident, discordant, louder, Saatchi, heed, conscience, echo, protest, male, expressing, parental, muted, lonely, loudly, moderation, decisive, dissent, moderate, unanimous, choir, audible, mistress, flight, recovered, socialism, recording, beautiful, God, communication, drowned, stifle, sane, influential, tributes, lovely, realism, theirs, silent, soft, PLO, welcoming, silence, missing, text, respected, friendly.

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