Mr. sc. Sanel Hadžiahmetović-Jurida, Filozofski fakultet u Tuzli

MARGINAL MODALS IN ENGLISH

Sažetak

U ovom radu se daje kratak pregled posebne podgrupe modalnih glagola u engleskom jeziku – grupe koju čine marginalni modalni glagoli. U okviru koncepta modalnosti u engleskom jeziku, izdvaja se grupa marginalnih modala (dare, need, ought to i used to). U radu su predstavljene osnovne razlike između marginalnih i centralnih modala, i navedene su njihove osnovne karakteristike.

Ključne riječi: modalni glagoli, centralni i marginalni modali, koncept modalnosti

* * *

The present paper aims at providing an outline of a particular subset of English modal verbs – marginal modals. More particularly, the paper offers an introduction to modality in the English language, highlighting the distinction between central and marginal modals.

Most examples in the paper have been taken from Quirk et al (2003). Leech (1987), Aarts and Meyer (1998), and Palmer (2001) have also proven invaluable as sources of a significant number of examples in the paper.

INTRODUCTION

A vast number of authors have written about the modal verbs in English. More specifically, many chapters and books have been written primarily about the so-called central modal auxiliaries (central modals). Leech (1987:71) argues that the fact that their meaning has both a logical and a practical element is precisely the reason it is quite difficult to account for the use of these words.

Given that not all of the modal auxiliaries exhibit the eight criteria for auxiliary verbs (see Appendix A) and the four modal

auxiliary criteria (see Appendix B), a distinction between central and marginal modals is made. However, it has to be borne in mind that marginal modals do closely resemble the central modals.

In addition to the central modals in English (*can*, *could*, *may*, *might*, *shall*, *should*, *will*, *would* and *must*), there exists a set of verbs that can be placed on a gradient between modal auxiliaries and full verbs (Quirk et al.: 2003:136). These are marked marginal modals, and include the following:

- *dare*,
- *need*,
- *ought to*, and
- *used to*.

The gradience refers to the properties of marginal modals allowing them to behave in a way similar to lexical verbs.

MODALITY AND ENGLISH MODAL VERBS

Generally speaking, modality, as a cross-language grammatical category (Palmer (2001:1)), is a category concerned with the event or situation reported by the utterance. Moreover, it is a category concerned primarily with the status of the proposition that describes the event.

According to Quirk et al. (2003: 219), modality may be defined, at it most general, as the manner in which the meaning of a clause is qualified so as to reflect the speaker's judgment of the likelihood of the proposition it expresses being true. Quirk et al. go on to divide the constraining factors of meaning into two groups:

a)   'permission', 'obligation', and 'volition', and
b)   'possibility', 'necessity', and 'prediction'.

The former include some sort of intrinsic human control over events, and are, therefore, marked *intrinsic (root)*, whereas the latter are not involved in any sort of human control over events, rather in human judgment of what is to happen, and are marked *extrinsic (epistemic)* modality. Coates (1998: 145), claims that the distinction between root (deontic or agent-orientated) and epistemic modality has proved quite useful to those attempting to describe modal systems. Epistemic modality is concerned with the speaker's assumptions or assessment of possibilities, and in most cases it indicates the speaker's confidence or lack of confidence in the truth of the proposition expressed. According to Coates (1998: 145), the

root/epistemic distinction cuts across the necessity/obligation and possibility/permission distinctions.

Given how closely the so-called marginal auxiliaries (marginal modals, modal idioms, semi-auxiliaries, and catenatives) tend to follow the pattern of auxiliaries in the kinds of meaning they convey (Quirk et al., 2003: 236), it can be argued that the abovementioned division into two types of modality applies to marginal auxiliaries as well.

MARGINAL MODALS (*dare, need, ought to,* and *used to*)

DARE and *NEED*

According to Collins Cobuild English Grammar (CCEG, 1998), *dare* and *need* have the same meaning when used modally and when followed by a to-infinitive clause. However, they are normally used as a modal only in negative and interrogative sentences, as in the examples below:

Nobody dare talk to him.
No person *dare* talk to him.
How *dare* you talk to me?
Need you do that right now?
With his friends, he *need not* fear.

Quirk et al. (2003:138) also argue that both *dare* and *need* can be constructed either as a main verb (with *to*-infinitive and with inflected *–s, -ing* and past forms), or, exceptionally, as a modal auxiliary (with the bare infinitive and without the inflected forms), as follows:

	MODAL AUXILIARY CONSTRUCTIONS	MAIN VERB CONSTRUCTIONS
Positive	-	He *needed/dared* to escape.
Negative	He *needn't/daren't* escape.	He *doesn't need/dare* to escape.
Interrogative	*Need/Dare* we escape?	*Do* we *need/dare* to escape?
Negative-interrogative	*Needn't* he escape after all? *Dare* he *not* escape?	*Doesn't* he *need* to escape after all? *Doesn't* he *dare* to escape?

Table 1. (Quirk et al., 2003: 138)

Quirk et al. (2003) further argue that the main verb construction is, in fact, more common, and that the auxiliary construction with *dare* and *need* is more frequent in BrE than in AmE, adding that it is quite rare in BrE.

Unlike other modals, *dare* and *need* can be used with the auxiliary *DO,* and with some other modals (*will, would, should* and *might)*, as in the following examples, respectively:

We *do not dare* examine it.

Don't you ever *dare* come here again!

No one *will dare* override what the towns decide.
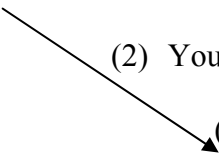
I *wouldn't dare* go to Iraq.

NEED VS. NEED TO

Leech (1987: 100-101) argues that *need to* is not to be grammatically confused with the auxiliary verb *need*, despite a similarity of meaning. According to Leech, since *need* as an auxiliary verb is practically confined to questions and negative statements, it is only the *need to* construction that can be used in ordinary positive statements.

On the scale of intensity, Leech (1987: 101) places *need to* half way between the central modal *must* and the marginal modal *ought to*, as follows:

(1) You must get a hair-cut (most categorical)

(2) You need to get a hair-cut

(3) You ought to get a hair-cut (least categorical).

Need asserts obligation or necessity, but without either the certainty that attaches to *must* or the doubt that attaches to *ought to*.

Leech (1987: 102) closes his discussion on *need (to)* by highlighting that there is a further difference between the modal and main verb constructions referring to past time*, needn't have* and *didn't need to*. The former, he argues, is always contrary to fact: e.g. *We needn't have sold the car* implies '*We did sell it*'. But *We didn't need to sell the car* allows us to continue: …*and so we didn't sell it.*

According to Leech (1987: 99), *ought to* has the meaning very similar to that of *must* and *have to*. However, it is rarely found, particularly in AmE. Leech further argues that *ought to* differs from *must* in that it expresses not confidence but rather lack of full confidence in the fulfilment of the happening described by the main verb. *Ought to* appears to be less categorical than *must*, both in the sense of 'logical necessity' and 'obligation'. The following examples help to account for this:

You must buy a new car. (the tone tolerates little argument)

You ought to buy a new car. (the speaker is merely commenting the condition the car is in)

The force of *must* is weakened by *ought to*. The latter indicates that the speaker is doubtful of the soundness of his/her conclusion.

A more common alternative to *ought to* is *should* (the central modal), in both senses, 'obligation', and 'logical necessity' (Leech, 1987:100):

He ought to pay for the broken window=

He should pay for the broken window.

Our guests ought to be home by now=

Our guests should be home by now.

Ought to is normally found in both its uncontracted negative form *ought not to* and the contracted negative *oughtn't to,* as in the examples given below (Quirk et al., 1987:139):

You *ought to* stop smoking.

You *oughtn't to* smoke so much.

Ought you *to* smoke so much?

One of the indicators of the marginal status of *ought to*, argue Quirk et al. (2003: 140), is the existence of the construction as in the following examples:

They *didn't ought to* do that sort of thing.

Did we ought to have done it?

This example of dialectal usage of *ought* as a main verb with DO-support shows some tendency of *ought to* to pattern as a main verb, thus reflecting the uncertainty in the use of this (marginal) modal.

USED TO

Although *used to* is semantically not so much a modal auxiliary as an auxiliary of tense and aspect (Quirk et al., 2003:140), as it denotes a state or a habit that existed in the past, it meets the marginal modal category.

Used to is always followed by the *to*-infinitive and found exclusively in the past tense, as shown below:

She used to attend regularly. ('it was a habit of hers to attend')

I used to be interested in bird-watching. ('I was formerly…')

As far as similarity with other (central) modals is concerned, *used to* is close to *would* when used to describe repeated actions in the past:

She would (often) sit crosslegged in her red robes.

In which case an adjunct of time is often added

Quirk et al. further argue (2003:140) that *used to* occurs both as an operator and with DO-support. When it occurs with DO-support, the spellings *use to* and *used to,* merely reflecting the uncertainty on the part of the speaker as to the status of this verb. The uncertainty has to do with the fact whether the verb is used modally or as a full verb. However, discrimination between these possibilities is not allowed by the pronunciation of this verb. According to Quirk et al. (2003: 140), the negative operator construction, which avoids this dilemma, is preferred by many in BrE:

He usen't to smoke.   BrE

He used not to smoke.   BrE

He didn't use to smoke.   BrE and AmE

He didn't used to smoke.   BrE and AmE

Used to+infinitive VS. *used to+noun phrase* (NP) *or –ing participle clause*

A distinction must be made between *used to+infinitive* and used to+NP or –ing participle clause:

She is used to life in the country.

She is used to living in the country.

In addition, *used to* never occurs with the Perfect Aspect (Leech, 1987: 55):

I <u>used to</u> have been working all afternoon.

With the Progressive Aspect, it is rare, but may be used in a habitual sense denoting 'repetition of events of limited duration':

Often when I passed she _used to_ _be sitting_ there on the doorstep.

CONCLUSION

In the preceding sections of this paper I have presented an outline of a particular subset of English modal verbs – marginal modals.

The paper focused on the main characteristics of these verb constructions as viewed by various authors, both syntactic and semantic properties. The paper was intended to provide a brief overview of the non-central modals, whilst at the same time discussing the 'determining' properties of the verb constructions outlined.

In conclusion, this area appears not to be as largely explored as the area involving the central modals. Although all of the members of the subset discussed in this paper are placed on a gradient between full (lexical) verbs and modal verbs, there can be said to exist a resemblance between particular non-central and central modals, as shown in the case of _dare_ and _need,_ for example. In some cases, marginal modals actually take the meaning of particular central modals, in either their epistemic or root concept, proving their very intermediate status.

REFERENCES

Aarts, B. and Meyer, C., eds (1998), _The Verb in Contemporary English: Theory and Description_, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press

Coates, J. (1998), _The Expression of Root and Epistemic Possibility in English_, Aarts, B. and Meyer, C., eds (1998), _The Verb in Contemporary English: Theory and Description_, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press

Collins COBUILD _English Grammar_ (1998), London: COBUILD

Leech, G. (1987), _Meaning and the English Verb_, London: Longman

Palmer, F.R. (2001), _Mood and Modality_, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press

Quirk et al. (2003), _A Comprehensive Grammar of the English Language_, London: Longman

APPENDIX A: The eight criteria for auxiliary verbs

	AUXILIARY CRITERIA (Op=operator)	AUXILIARY	MAIN VERB
a	Op in negation	He *cannot* go.	*He *hopes not* to go. (*cf* Note)
b	Negative contraction	*can't*	**hopen't*
c	Op in inversion	*Can* we go?	* *Hope* we to go?
d	Emphatic positive	*Yes, I *DO can* come.	Yes, I *DO hope* to come.
e	Op in reduced clause	I can come if you *can*.	*I hope to come if you *hope*.
f	Position of adverb	We *can always* go early.	We *always hope* to go early.
g	Postposition of quantifier	They *can all* come. ?They *all can* come.	?They *hope all* to come. They *all hope* to come.
h	Independence of subject	Ann can do it. It can be done by Ann.	He hopes to do it. *It hopes to be done by him.

Note: *He hopes not to go* is acceptable in the sense 'He hopes that he will not go'; but this is then a case of the negation of *to go,* not of *hopes.*

APPENDIX B: The four criteria for modal auxiliaries

	MODAL AUXILIARY CRITERIA	MODAL AUXILIARY	MAIN VERB
j	Bare infinitive	I *can go*.	*I *hope go*.
k	No nonfinite forms	**to can*/*canning*/*canned*	*to hope/hoping/hope*
l	No -*s* form	*She *cans* come.	She *hopes* to come.
m	Abnormal time reference	You *could* leave this evening. [not past time]	You *hoped* to leave this evening. [past time]