# MULTIPLE MODAL CONSTRUCTIONS IN THE WESTERN ENGLISH-SPEAKING WORLD

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### ABSTRACT

The main aim of this paper is to provide an overview of the Multiple Modal constructions used by speakers of British English, American English and English based creoles. The overview focuses on the wide range of variation in double and triple modal constructions, with respect to the list of modals, their ordering in relation to each other and in relation to negations, as well as in their location within the clause. The second aim of the paper is to provide new data from the Scottish Borders, where the multiple modal constructions show important changes.

**Keywords**: multiple modals, Scottish English, Scottish double modals, American double modals, triple modals, root, epistemic, lects, creoles, interpretations, English-speaking world

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The central concept of this paper is *Multiple Modal constructions*. This is a vernacular dialectal phenomenon composed of hundreds of sequences of two modals, termed Double Modals (DMs), or of three modals, called Triple Modals (TMs). Multiple Modals (MMs) are mainly found in vernacular *lects* of English spoken in Southern Scotland, Ulster, the Southern United States and Northern England.[1] The numerous sequences or combinations of modals can have different types of semantic orderings, viz. a mixing of epistemic and/or root modals as well as a mixing of tenses, viz. present and/or preterite combinations. The possibilities of creation of modal combinations are quite large in varieties of English accepting such a vernacular dialectal phenomenon in their own grammatical and syntactic system. Here is an example of DM, where the first modal is epistemic (E), and the second has a root reading (R).

(1)     You *might could* broad jump the Grand Canyon. (Pampell 1975:113)
        E (M1) R (M2)

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[1] According to Joan Swann's definition (2004:178), the term *lect* is used to distinguish and label linguistic varieties, e.g. dialect (a regionally & socially distinct variety), ethnolect (an ethnically or culturally distinct variety), genderlect (a variety associated with female or male speakers), sociolect (a socially distinct variety) or idiolect (the language variety used by an individual speaker).

The sequence *might could* remains the best MM to illustrate the Epistemic-Root (E-R) semantic ordering of the combination. In this instance, *might* expresses weak probability meaning that the event is unlikely to occur. Generally, most modals positioned in the first tier of a DM or TM express diverse degrees of probability and therefore belong to the epistemic modality. *Could*, on the other hand, has the root sense of ability and is positioned toward the right of the combination, in the second tier of this example.

Although E-R remains the most used semantic ordering of multiple modality, DM combinations also have other types of orderings such as:

(2)   R-R
      You *used to could* do that in the old house. (Butters 1996:274)

(3)   R-E
      Yes, we *ought to might* go now. (Coleman 1975:96)

(4)   E-E
      I wonder if you *may would* help me. (Mishoe's corpus 1991:15)

And for TMs:

(5)   E-R-R
      He *might used to could* run the marathon. (Mashburn 1989:133)

(6)   E-E-R
      He*'ll might can* come the morn. (Brown 1991: 78)

(7)   R-E-R
      Oh well, if you're planning a trip we *should might better* go ahead have a look. How's Wednesday for you? (Montgomery 1994: 16)

Based on these semantic combinations, dialectal interpretations can be quite numerous especially when a single MM can adopt more than one semantic ordering -- it depends on the social and cultural contexts in which a modal combination is used.

Over the last thirty years, about fifty studies have dealt with the concept of MMs variation, starting in the 1970's, with papers by Butters (1973), Coleman (1975) and Pampell (1975), who focused on MMs used in the spoken English of North and South Carolina, Georgia, Arkansas and Tennessee. At the time, they limited their scope to DMs, which had the epistemic *might* in first position, followed by a root modal, such as *could*, *would*, *should* or *ought to*. The number of combinations in the affirmative, negative and interrogative was quite limited, so the interpretations they could elaborate were also limited to epistemic-root and preterit-preterit sequences.

Subsequent research continued to look at DMs only. For example, in her doctoral thesis, Close (2004) focused on *might could* from beginning to end working on its use by Tennessee, Arkansas and Scottish speakers in affirmative, negative and interrogative clauses, and in Tag Questions. Battistella (1991) also remained focused on DMs, but adopted a more theoretical approach to account for *might could* in colloquial American English. Other researchers continued to analyze DM sequences of the type *might should, might could* and *might would*, while also extending their empirical basis to more complex MMs, which were shown to be used differently by

the native speakers of English in Texas, Scotland, Belize or Jamaica (Boertien 1986; Brown 1991; Miller 1993; Montgomery 1994; Nagle 1989, 1994, 1997; De-La Cruz 1995). Basically, it was shown that complex MMs are composed of three or even four modals in a single clause, and *might* is not necessarily in first position.

Following on the same path (especially Nagle 1989, 1994, 1997), this paper takes a closer look at MMs constructions in the dialects of English spoken in the western hemisphere. The purpose is to provide a comprehensive overview of these constructions and to point out the areas in which variation arises intra-, inter- and cross-linguistically. The productivity of these constructions is then illustrated with new data from the English of Scottish Borders, where an important turn over in the inventory of MMs took place.

## 2. NAGLE'S ANALYSIS

Nagle (1994, 1997) discusses DMs in Southern English and Scottish Englishes, and proposes a distribution of modals in sequences, and of MMs sequences within the clause. The idea is that the order of modals is systematic and predictable, with epistemics preceding the root modals in sequences, and with the MM sequence located constantly between subject and verb phrase within the clause. This distribution is shown in Table 1.

**TABLE 1**

Nagle's distribution

| Subject | + | **Left tier**<br>*May*<br><br>*might*<br><br>*must*<br>**Epistemic** | **Right tier**<br>*can*<br>*could*<br>*will*<br>*would*<br>*should*<br>**Root** | + | Verb Phrase | + | complements |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|

Table 1 shows that Nagle expanded the epistemic list, compared to previous literature, by adding *must* and *may* to *might*. Each of these modals conveys a different degree of probability: *may* shows neutral probability; *might* expresses weak probability or eventuality; while *must* expresses certainty corresponding to the highest degree of probability. Based on Table 1, we can have the following combinations in the affirmative:

> *may can* (Southern US)                    *might can* (Scottish and US Englishes)
> *may could* (Southern US)                  *might could* (Queen of combinations)
> *may will* (Southern US)                    #*might will*
> *may would* (Southern US)                  *might would* (Scottish and US Englishes)
> *may should* (Southern US)                 *might should* (Scottish and US Englishes)
> *must can* (Southern Scottish English, Lowland Scots)
> *must could* (Southern Scottish English, Lowland Scots)
> #*must will*
> *must would* (Southern Scottish English, Lowland Scots)
> #*must should*

Accordingly, Nagle's important contribution to the previous research on DMs is the expansion of the DMs list, by including five combinations which begin by *may*, a modal in the present, followed by either a preterit or another present modal. In theory, with Nagle's distribution, the underlined combinations, marked as unattested (#), can also be created. However, they have never been heard or detected in any MM lists before, contrary to the others. In this case, they have no geographical origin at present unless further future research shows the contrary. In total in his Table, we have four present-present combinations, three preterit-preterit combinations, six present-preterit combinations and to finish two preterit-present combinations.

Importantly, Nagle found examples in which most of these combinations are used in the negative and interrogative forms (Nagle 1994: 1, 1997: 1515), which increases the number of accurate interpretations of this linguistic phenomenon:

(8)     I *might should**n't*** worry about it, but I do.

(9)     He *may **not*** even *can* get out of the parking lot.

(10)    *Might could* you get here early?

While the ordering of the modals is constant in the negative DMs (i.e., epistemic > root), variation arises in the location of modals within the clause, in relation to the negation.
For example, (8) illustrates American English, where the DM is in the negative, and the negation is contracted with the second modal. The Scottish counterpart is different (see Brown 1991: 81-85, for Hawick Scots), insofar as the negation does not contract, as shown in (11a), and/or may arise between the modals, as in (11b). Notably, the negation has narrow scope, over the verb phrase (not over the clause), in (8) and in (11a, b).

(11)    a.     I *might should* **no** worry about it, but I do.
        b.     I *might* **no** *should* worry about it, but I do.

Hence, despite the variation in word order and in the morphological properties of the negation, the shared narrow scope structure for the negation amounts to a similar reading, which can be rephrased for (8) as either (8') or (8").

(8')    Perhaps it is not necessary that I worry about it, but I do.

(8")    Perhaps I shouldn't worry about it, but I do.

The same analysis applies to the example (9) above, since it also displays narrow scope for the negation. Accordingly, the rephrasing will be as in (9')-(9"), where the narrow scope is assigned by the negative adjective, which further allow for the introduction of a future modal.

(9')    It is possible that he is even unable to get out of the parking lot.
(9")    It is possible that he will even be unable to get out of the parking lot.

The rephrasing in (9')-(9") captures the structure of (9), whereby the first modal of the DM is epistemic expressing a neutral degree of probability (50 % of chance that this situation occurs) while the second one is root, expressing intellectual ability.

Example (10) contains an interrogative sentence in American English. The general rule for question formation in any variety of American English is subject-verb inversion, which places modals in the first position of the clause. In the case of DMs, variation arises as to whether only one or both modals are fronted above the subject. Both modals are fronted in (10), but variations with one modal also occur, and the modal may not be the same. For example, (12a) shows *could* fronted from under *might*, which is possible in Arkansas (Close 2004), while the same may occur with *might* fronted instead of *could*, as in (12b), in some Tennessee idiolects (Close 2004, chapter 4), and in vernacular Southern Scottish Englishes.

(12)    a.    *Could* you *might* get here early?
        b.    *Might* you *could* get here early?

Chase (2004) points out that the fronting choice between the two modals depends on whether recategorization applied to *might* or not. Those refusing to put *might* in first position in a Yes/No Question, as in (12a), consider it an adverb, on a par with *maybe* or *possibly*, so *could* is the next available verbal item than can be fronted to satisfy the requirement for subject-verb inversion.

Crucially, the underlying structure is the same for (10) and (12a, b), with the same ordering of modals and scopal properties in semantics. Hence, they can all be paraphrased as in (12', 12"), where the epistemic is higher than the root modal (with ability reading), irrespective of the linear order (e.g., 12a), and allow for the insertion of the future modal.

(12')   Is it possible that you'll be able to get here early?

(12")   Would (or will) it be possible for you to (be able to) get here early.

A note on the variation side: although *may can* is a typical American DM, I have surprisingly found this DM during my investigation in Hawick (Scottish Borders) in April 2010. Indeed, it can now be used among the masculine population of the town like another similar DM *may could*, which is a more recent observable change.

To conclude, the existing literature provides material covering the use of MMs in non-standard varieties of English, and the list of these MMs has been expanded, especially in Nagle's work. In particular, other DMs have been found, beyond *might* sequences, and they were shown to occur not only in affirmative sentences, but also in negative and interrogative clause types. Also, systematic properties have been discovered in the ordering of modals within the sequence and their placement in the clause structure.

Nevertheless, *might could, might should, might would* and *might ought to* (or *oughta*) only represent a fraction of the MM reality. In the remainder of this paper I will show that this non-standard modal system covers a very important range of MMs still well scattered in the western English-speaking world.

### 3. THE RANGE OF VARIATION IN MM STRUCTURES

According to Nagle (1994), circa twenty million people use at least one or several MM combinations in the American South without counting Northern Ireland, Scotland, the county of Northumberland and Jamaica, and in various English-based creoles. De-La Cruz (1995) gives different figures estimating that thirty million speakers in the USA know and use these combinations. The more speakers there are the greater chance is for intra-, inter- and cross-linguistic variation.

There is, however, one DM construction that appears wherever DMs are used: *might could* is dubbed by De-La Cruz (1995:82) as "the queen of combinations". Apart that, there are other preferences amongst British informants, notably the use of *will can, willna(e) can, would can, would could* especially among the citizens of the Scottish borders, who tend to interpret the future of prediction accompanied by an ability meaning. Such DMs are not encountered in North and South Carolina despite the immigration of the 250,000 Scots and Ulster Scots people to the USA from 1718 onwards, according to Mishoe & Montgomery (1994:19). These authors also provide lists of DMs showing that the Scottish *will/would* initial DMs disappeared several decades after the first landing of these immigrants to the Southern United States, and were replaced by a large number of DMs that begin by *may* and *might* such as *may can, may could, may ought to, may will, might can, might've used to, may used to, might will, might supposed to*… The development of modal constructions did not stop after the immigration; on the contrary, we find more numerous and longer lists of DMs and TMs in American papers and corpora rather than in Scottish surveys.

Since we deal with around twenty American states using MMs at this moment, each state and even each region and county of these states feature different constructions. Socio-cultural history and immigration play an important role in the habits of the American citizens of these states and influence their choice of non-standard dialectal structures. For instance, the inhabitants of East and West Texas have different DM structures than those from North and South Carolina. Di-Paolo (1979) and Boertien (1986) worked on a couple of regiolects of Texas and created their own lists of MMs, some of which do not begin by *might* nor by *may*. Thus we find Texas structures such as *better can, would better, could might, can might, could used to, used to could, oughta should, ought could*… Some of these DMs present very peculiar morphosyntactic characteristics which trigger variations in their interpretation. Some start with the modal *can* or *could* followed by *might,* thus showing the exact opposite of the DMs in Table 1. Would they be equivalent of *might could* and *might can* semantically speaking or not? Previous research has not yet determined that. *Better can* is also difficult to interpret. Is *better* now considered as a full and independent modal auxiliary as Jacobsson (1980) suggests, or is it still identified as a quasi or semi modal, as in Collins (2005) or a quasi-auxiliary, as Palmer (1990)? No one agrees on the status of these elements. The debates and proposals reflecting different analyses for similar data go on and on.

One fact that stands to attention in the literature is that the modal sequence can be amplified with what we call marginal modals, semi modals or auxiliaries, periphrastic expressions or catenatives, signaled in bold face in the following list, compiled from De-La Cruz (1995) and Brown (1991): ***used (to)** wouldn't, **used to** might, **used (to)** couldn't, might **(had) better**, **ought to (oughta)** should, **have (got) to** can* or *might **would like to***.

The literature also provides information on the geographical variation within the membership of negative DMs. For example, speakers in Northumberland and Tyneside in the North-East of England, use *must(n't) could have* and *would(n't) could have*, rather than *might* initial DMs;

these DMs are especially well used amongst the population of Urban Tyneside (Miller 1993). On the contrary, *would could*, in the affirmative, is more appreciated by the rural Northumberland population. Indeed, preferences vary not only with respect to the types of modals but also regarding the type of structure in which they occur (affirmative, negative, interrogative or interro-negative clauses, with a Tag Question or not).

The factors that trigger such variations are complex, and they may differ from one variety to another. For example, the spread of Northumbrian DM structures to the town of Teviot may have to do with many new arrivals coming from Newcastle and other towns in Northern England over these past 25 years. Immigration definitely plays a big role in the constant change of DM structures in Hawick, which could explain why *should can, should could, will could* and *would can*, which were typically Hawick Scots structures, now tend to disappear little by little.

## 4. INFORMATION FROM ORTHOGRAPHY

Insofar as MMs made it to the written language, the orthography may indicate changes in the morphology of the modal or the membership of the modal list. Representative in this respect are Scots English and Caribbean Creoles.

As mentioned in the previous section, Scots English is under some pressure of change under the impact of immigrants. The Scots language and its numerous non-standard varieties still cover their own DMs but are nowadays rarely used. Some authors (e.g., Lawson 2002) researched older Scots dialectal constructions and provide evidence that the orthography of the modal has changed as in (13) and (14).

(13)  a.    He *wull* niver *kin* unnerstaun.
      b.    He *will never can* understand.

(14)  a.    I *wull kin* dae it.
      b.    I *will can* do it.

In these two examples, the change in orthography reflects a change by which standard (and more modern) modals replace the old ones while maintaining the same sequence.

Caribbean Creoles provide another example, especially Jamaican Creole. Butters & Fennel (1996) listed DM constructions used mostly orally in this Creole, of the type in (15), where *hafi* 'have' occurs in alternation with *kyan* 'can'.

(15)  a.    *maita*      *hafi*
            might        have (to)

      b.    *mosa*       *hafi*
            must         have (to)

      c.    *shuda*      *hafi*
            should       have (to)

Similar combinations, mostly used in the affirmative, are also found in other creoles, such as the mesolectal variety of Belizean Creole, as shown in Butters & Fennell (1996:171). These data include a DM with marginal modals, as in (16), which the authors consider rare:

(16) Yu      *mos   yuz   to*… taim        dey     yuz tu go    tuchin.
       you     *must   used   to* …. sometimes    they    used to go    "torchin"

For the time being, this type of DM has not been found in North America or in the UK. In these areas, *used to* very often goes with *could* and/or *might*. It may indicate that in some of these creoles, there is a slight preference for the modal *must* in first position in these multiple modal structures.

Relevant to this section is the fact that, in Butters (1991, 1996), there are three different spellings for *must*: *mos, mosa* and *musu*. In a basilectal variety of Jamaican Creole *must* is again showed in first position. The only difference observable through orthography is the removal of the last consonant, as in the example given in Butters (1991: 172) reproduced in (17), and having the reading "He must be able to do it".

(17)  Him *mus' can* do it.

The DM written in this Creole sentence is close in orthography to the ones used in non-standard Scottish Englishes in which *must can* is often mentioned like *must could*. The rule of "pronoun exchange ", which is well known in South Western British English varieties (Wagner: 2004) is apparently also used in this basilect.


## 5. TRIPLE MODALS IN THE WESTERN WORLD

There are no TMs in the Carribean Creoles, but they occur in American and British English. A couple of them can be found especially in Scotland, in the states of North and South Carolina and in Texas. The regiolects of these areas do not all accept TMs.

Typically, Southern Scottish English TMs display *will* in first position, as in (18), taken from Brown's (1991) paper on the variety of Scots spoken in Hawick.

(18)    a.      He*'ll might can* come the morn.
         b.      He*'ll should can* come the morn.
         c.      He*'ll might could* do it for you.
         d.      He *might used to could* do it.

(18a, b, c) display the epistemic modal of prediction *will*, which combines with a second epistemic, having the root modal in third place. The combination of the two epistemics yields a reading of probable futures. The interpretation of these TMs is captured in (18'), where *morn* is the Scottish for 'morning'.

(18')  a.      Probably he will be able to come the morn.
         b.      He will logically be able to come the morn.
         c.      He will possibly be able to do it for you.

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A structural observation on (18) is that *will* contracts with the pronoun in the affirmative, but not in the negative. In the negative, *will* is prevented from contracting with the previous constituent because it fuses with the negation *nae*. Thus, we have either *He'll (might) can* or *He willnae can*.

In (18d), *might* has the first position in the TM sequence, and its epistemic semantics combined with the repetitive marginal modal *used to* yields a past habitual event. Therefore, the interpretation is as in (18'd).

(18')  d.     It's possible that formerly he was able to (or managed to) do it.

In the American varieties of North and South Carolina, TM sequences display *may* or *might* in first positions. Mishoe & Montgomery (1994: 9) provide the list in (19) of TMs they heard from a panel of speakers.

(19)  a.     *Might will can't*
      b.     *Might should ought to*
      c.     *Might should better*
      d.     *May might can*

In North and South Carolina, like in Southern Scotland, most TMs are used in the affirmative. If at least one modal is in the negative, it is mostly the third one being always a root modal. In American English, the root modal is not always *can* or *could*, but also *ought to* (similar sense to *should*) and *better* (similar sense to *had better*). The immigration of the Ulster Scots and Scottish peoples in the 18$^{th}$ and 19$^{th}$ centuries to North America allowed the MM phenomenon to expand and to become a rich and complex dialectal phenomenon in many States of the USA.

Texas is also a place where TMs are used and where new modal combinations developed. Boertien (1979; 1986) found the three TMs in (20) in his research on the varieties spoken in East and West Texas.

(20)  a.     *Might should oughta*
      b.     *Might could oughta*
      c.     *Might had oughta*

This author focused (20a), and pointed out that this TM is fairly well used in negative and interrogative structures, such as in (21), taken from Boertien (1979:20) and (1986:302).

(21)  a.     I *might shouldn't oughta*.
      b.     *Might shouldn't* he *ought to* go?
      c.     *Shouldn't* he *oughta might* go?

Notably, the modals do not have a fixed position in the relation to each other or in relation to the clause subject: *might* may appear either in the first position (21a, b) or in the last position (21c); *oughta* occurs either in the third position (21a, b) or in the second position (21c). Also, the fronting of the verbal element in interrogative clauses may involve either one modal (21c) or two modals (21b). These variations in the distribution produce variations in the interpretation. In particular, there is a difference between the readings in (21b) and (21c), the former conveying a less insisting requirement and leaving room for more probability, whereas the latter conveys a more strict requirement. This difference can be paraphrased as in (22).

(22)  a.     Shouldn't he probably go?
             (A simple suggestion, he/she is just asking the question)
      b.     Shouldn't he really go?
             (Assessment and persistence is involved in the question).

All the examples in (21) are negative, with contracted negation on *should* only. This is the use in Texas. This is not the case in North and South Carolina, despite the presence of *should* in the TMs used in these regions; that is, there is no negative version for *might should better*, in the same way there is no negative version for Scottish *will should can* (or *could*).

The situation is slightly different for *had*: it does not display negation within the clause, but it can appear in negative Tag questions, which signals that it functions as an auxiliary. The problem is: what type of auxiliary? *Might had ought* may be a TM if *had* is a modal auxiliary, or it remains a DM if *had* is identified as a primary auxiliary. There are serious doubts about the morpho-syntactic status of this non-standard construction. Boertien (1986: 302; 1979:28) obtained two sentences containing this kind of structure:

(23)  I *might had oughta*, *hadn't* I?

(24)  You have a point: I *might had oughta* do that.

In these two clauses, *had* may be a perfective auxiliary, which would lead to the following paraphrases:

(23')  Probably I should (or ought to) have,    shouldn't I?
                                                oughtn't I? (very rare Tag)

(24')  You have a point: I probably should (or ought to) have done that.

To conclude, there are TM constructions based on the use of marginal modals. There is much variation in the composition of such TMs, in the ordering of modals in relation to each other and in relation to the subject of the clause, as well as in the interaction between TMs and negations. The variation arises mostly from the degree of reanalysis of the marginal modal, usually leading to ambiguity between a modal and a perfective auxiliary status.


## 6. SCOTTISH BORDERS: NEW DATA

I carried two surveys on MMs in Southern Scotland in 2010 and 2011, mostly on speakers who lived in Hawick, Kelso and Jedburgh. The respondents were females and males aged between 30 and 60 years old. In total, I distributed 139 questionnaires: 66 informants accepted to complete the questionnaire in Hawick in 2010; and 73 completed it in the other two towns in 2011. The following table indicates the number of questionnaires in which the multiple modality system is recognized and used by male and female informants:

**TABLE 2**

Number of speakers that recognized MMs

|      | MEN          | WOMEN        |
|------|--------------|--------------|
| 2010 | 18 out of 25 | 32 out of 41 |
| 2011 | 13 out of 27 | 27 out of 46 |

Over half of the Hawick informants use MM combinations in their day-to-day basis. Hawick is the only town of the Scottish Borders' region in which the Scots language and Scottish-English dialects are particularly preserved. Grammatical, lexical and phonological variations are quite heterogeneous in this town. The presence of Standard English is barely visible contrary to the other towns of the region. When I visited Kelso and Jedburgh in 2011, the situation was quite different. There is a greater presence of Scottish Standard English in which the use of multiple modality is much more reduced compared to Hawick. There is generally a greater presence of English speakers from Southern, Central and Northern England, which explains why just half of the informants use a minority of MMs. However, a great diversity of MMs are still recognized by the informants but they only use them on very specific face-to-face interactions, special pragmatic conditions, contrary to Hawick where their use is a societal habit. In both field surveys, I also noticed that there are always more female informants that were interested in completing the questionnaire study than male informants. There has always been a greater hesitation from the male informants, and those who accepted it asked fewer questions regarding my research, contrary to female informants. In the end, the results are not equal and I get a greater recognition and use of MM combinations by female informants than male informants.

Previous studies on MMs in the same varieties of English asserted that *shall*, *may* and *ought* are absent from MMs:

"Broads Scots lacks SHALL, MAY and OUGHT." (Miller 1993:16)
"Notice also the absolute absence of *shall* and *may* in Scotland." (De-La Cruz 1995:81)

My survey revealed that these statements do not hold any more: I was able to find new DMs and TMs used mostly in the oral medium by middle-aged respondents who were not all born in the Scottish Borders. These MMs contain *shall*, *may* and *ought*.

The speakers using these modals in their MM constructions have been working and living in the Southern Scottish area for several years now. Their constructions are different from those typical to Scottish locals; this indicates that they brought their own list of MMs that do not have the same syntactic and semantic interpretations. So the typical Scottish MMs regularly mentioned in Brown's and Miller's papers, such as *will (should) can* , *would can*, *wull kin*, *should could*…are now accompanied by *may can* or *could*, *may will*, *should ought to*, *might better* and *mustn't could 've* or *must not could have*. Nowadays, they are recognizable by most Scottish-English speakers using mixed dialects and they pose no problem in terms of oral use when talking with friends or between family members.

My questionnaires (filled out mostly by female respondents) provided the non-standard constructions in (25)-(31), where all MMs are new in the language.

(25)  I was afraid you *may not could* find the address.

(26)    He *may can* go tomorrow.

(27)    I think we *should ought to* have done that yesterday.

(28)    The girls usually make me some toasted sandwiches but they *mustn't could*
        have made any today.

Notably, *may* occurs in first position in the MM of (25) and (26), whereas *ought to* is always positioned after *should* by the Scottish users of MMs. Of course *ought to should* was also found but its frequency in both the oral and written media is very rare. As for *mustn't could have*, which is a DM that has its origin in Northumberland and Tyneside English, it was chosen in general by female informants especially those living in Hawick.

    The male respondent in Kelso showed a clear preference for *may might can*, *should might better* and *might oughta* (or *ought to*) *should*. These TM constructions were integrated in the following sentences:

(29)    He *should might better* do it for you.

(30)    I think I *may might can* have me a piece of cake.

(31)    One of our goals *might oughta should* be to encourage non-member
        involvement.

The order within the TM sequence invalidates former claims that only epistemic *might* can be put in first position, since *should* and *may* are also shown to occupy this position. *Oughta* and *should* in (31) have basically the same root classification. Yet, ambiguity may arise in TMs, as in (30), where *may* can be read as either root-permission or epistemic-probability.

    Crucially, the modals *may* and *ought* are now officially included in the syntax of new MM constructions in Southern Scotland. This proves that dialectal rules enunciated over a decade ago cannot remain identical and the arrivals of new groups of people imply rapid changes in the vernacular(s) or dialect(s) of a community. The results I obtained there point to an important change, by which some Scottish DMs such as *should can* or *should could*, *would can* or *would could* are fading out to the benefit of new MMs that involve *may*, *ought* and even (*had*) *better*. Of course, change cannot affect all MMs in Scotland, and some remain definitely unique in the speech of the inhabitants of Borders' towns. For example, *will*(*nae*) *can*, *'ll can*, *will might can*, *will should can*, *won't can* and *won't can't*  -- MMs recorded by Brown in the 1980's -- have been immediately recognized  by the regular users of MMs in my latest survey in Kelso.


## 7. CONCLUSION

This paper showed how diversified the Multiple Modality system is in the English varieties spoken in the Western hemisphere. The Scottish living in the Borders prefer using MMs with *will* in first position whereas in the southern areas of the USA, American speakers prefer using MMs with *may, might* or even *should* in the first tier of the construction. Those who speak Jamaican or Belizean varieties of Creoles have a preference for the modal *must* (*mos* or *musu* in Creole spelling) followed by another modal or quasi-modal in the second tier, such as have *to* (*hafi*) or

used to (*yuz to*). The well-studied *might could*, *might should* and *might would* continue to be taken into account in this research but the point is that there is a wide range of variation in MMs beyond these three versions.

An important observation of this paper is that the inventory and composition of MMs is in continuous change. The new data from the Scottish Borders provided evidence for profound changes, alongside the preservation of some traditional MM constructions.

Wherever MMs are used, the variation in the list of modals is compounded by the variation in their ordering, in their placement in the sentence and in their interaction with the negation. Morphosyntactic studies may fully benefit from the data provided in this paper for an enhanced discussion of micro-parametric variation in the mapping of modal features.

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