

Modal combinations in English and Scots dialects: Double and Triple Modals in negative and interrogative syntactic forms in Scotland

Southern Scotland contains many fascinating non-standard grammatical features belonging to the Scots regional language and Scottish-English dialects. For fifteen years, I have been working on some of these vernacular constructions called Multiple Modals (MMs). They are of two types:

- Double Modals (DMs) (*might could, will can, must could*)
- Triple Modals (TMs) (*might used to could, should might better*)

The main purpose of the research is to decipher the current syntax and semantics of Scots-English modal combinations especially in the negative and the interrogative forms. These grammatical constructions are located in different groups of dialects, i.e. vernacular Scottish English dialects *will can*, Scots regional dialects *wull kin* and Standard Scottish English *will be able to*. It is necessary to use Quirk's scale system (1985: 137) of modal forms to be able to identify the different types of combinations. For example, *will can* and its Scots variant *wull kin* contain two Central Modals (CMs).

By analyzing these three groups during a series of field surveys conducted in the Scottish Borders and the Lothian regions from 2010 to 2018, I was able to better describe the morphosyntax of this Multiple Modality system spoken by the Lowlanders.

In the five field surveys, due to the pervasive influence of Globalized Mainstream English, there is henceforth a greater concentration of standard MMs and Single Modals (SMods) than vernacular Scots and Scottish-English modal combinations in the questionnaires' data. Nevertheless, the amount of information written by the informants still contains 40% of vernacular modal features. Here are a few examples (a & b) of these standard combinations:

a- I *won't* *be able to* get it out tomorrow.
CM SM (Semi Modal)

b- A good machine clipper *should* *be able to* do it in half a day.
CM SM

Overall, 140 out of 248 questionnaires contain between one and ten regional modal combinations proposed by the British informants in vernacular Scottish English and/or in Scots. The results led to a clear preference towards the negative syntactic use of DMs unlike the interrogative syntactic part. The negative structure of MMs contains a strict codified vernacular system in which a Scots negator (*no*) or an (un)contracted English negator (*not*) is always positioned between both CMs (Quirk 1985, 137) in Southern Scottish Englishes (c) and Scots dialects (d). Here are some informants' examples writing their morphosyntactic variations of different MM combinations in the negative:

c- I *won't* *can* come.
CM CM

d- We *might no* *cun* park over there.
CM CM

This dialectal grammatical phenomenon has been conducted in the Southern United States since the 1970's (Nagle 1994) without taking into account the territory where they originate, i.e. the Lowland Scots area. I intend to obtain a complete overview of the Folks Southern Scottish grammar of MMs in the 21st century.

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