

# Changes in the use of the modals **HAVE**, **HAVE GOT TO** and **MUST**

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## 1. Introduction

In this paper we investigate recent change in the use of the semi-modals *HAVE TO* and *HAVE GOT TO* and the core modal *MUST* in a corpus of spoken English, with the aim of answering the following questions:

- Is there support for the idea that core modals are decreasing?
- If *MUST* is found to be decreasing, can the decrease be related to (an increase in) the use of [f] [v] [g] [y] [ɹ]-modal forms?
- Is there support for the theory that modals are becoming monosemous?
- What is driving the change in the use of the three forms?

A further aim of this work is to contribute to the understanding of recent change, an aim we share with Mair, Hundt, Leech and Smith, the authors of the forthcoming CUP book *Change in contemporary English*.

## 2. The Diachronic Corpus of Present-Day Spoken English

The *Diachronic Corpus of Present-Day Spoken English* (DCPSE) contains around 400,000 words from the British component of the *International Corpus of English* (ICE-GB) collected in the early 1990s and around 400,000 words from the *London-Lund Corpus* (LLC) collected between the late 1960s and early 1980s. Unlike the *FLOB* and *FROWN* corpora, compiled by Christian Mair at Freiburg, DCPSE contains only spoken English, because spoken English is where changes are likely to occur first.

[Sdc\_Yb XUHU [Å ] UfY h\Y g]hY cZ cf][ ]b cZ U`a cgh U`` bcb-prestige ]bbcj Uh]cbg ]b `Ub[ i U[ YÍ (Mair, forthcoming 2008).

All the sentences in DCPSE have been grammatically analysed and have been given a detailed parse tree.

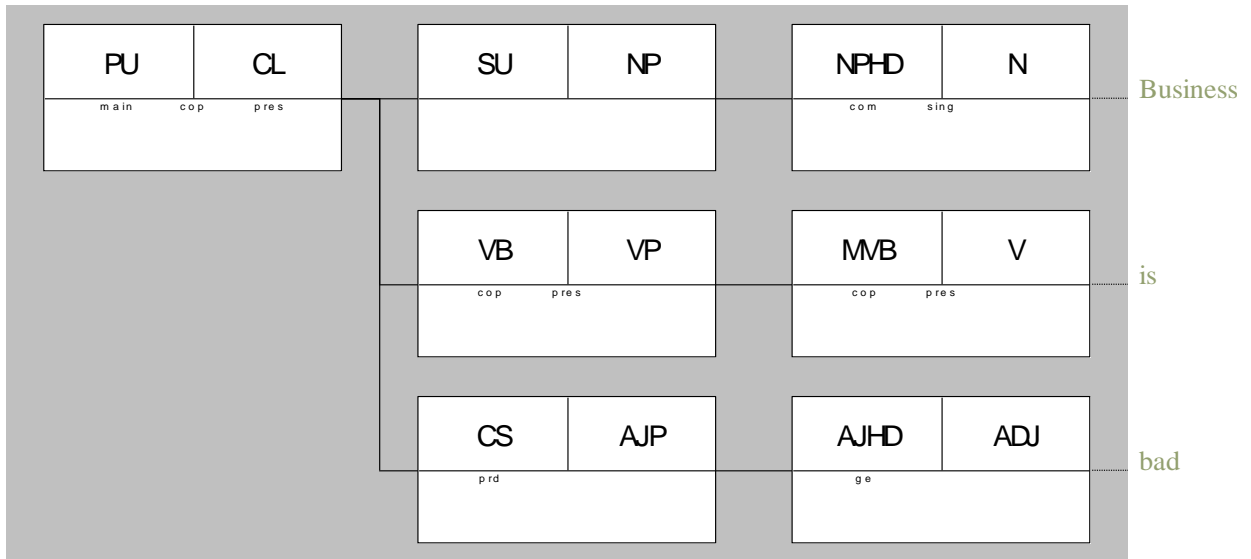


Figure 1. The grammatical analysis of the sentence *Business is bad* in DCPSE. PU = Parsing Unit, SU = Subject, VB = Verbal, MVB = Main verb, CS = Subject Complement, AJHD = Adjective Phrase Head, ADJ = Adjective.

Using the International Corpus of English Corpus Utility Program (ICECUP), it is possible to search DCPSE in a number of ways from simple text searches to more detailed grammatical queries using *Fuzzy Tree Fragments* (FTFs), which will retrieve matching examples from the corpus (Aarts, Nelson and Wallis 1998; Wallis and Nelson 2000; Nelson, Wallis and Aarts 2002). The FTF in figure 2 searches the corpus for the string *got to* with the position for *HAVE* left unspecified. We use the label *fuzzy* in Fuzzy Tree Fragments to indicate that users

3. Data and methodology  
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increase of just under 4% (from 47.78% in LLC to 51.74% in ICE-GB). There is little evidence that *MUST* is becoming monosemous.

Source corpus	Epistemic		Root		Performative		Ambiguous		Total N
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	
LLC	43.96	47.78	36.63	39.81	9.48	10.30	1.94	2.11	92.01
ICE-GB	21.12	51.74	16.14	39.53	2.37	5.81	1.19	2.91	

*What is driving the change?*

Myhill (1995) suggests a growing tendency to avoid overt claims to authority by the speaker/writer, and claims this results in the decline in *MUST* (=obligation) and the rise of *SHOULD* (=weak obligation). We investigated the use of *SHOULD* in DCPSE to discover if the decline in root *MUST* could be attributed to a rise in use of *SHOULD*. The results do not support this.

SHOULD	LLC frequency		ICE-GB frequency		Change in frequency %
	raw	per 100,000 words	raw	per 100,000 words	
EPISTEMIC	34	7.33	34	8.07	+10.1
ROOT	226	48.70	230	54.58	+12.07
OTHER	125	29.94	41	9.73	-67.5
TOTAL	385	85.97	305	72.38	

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