

QUASI-MODALS IN BRITISH AND AMERICAN ENGLISH

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Abstract

In daily use of language, speakers need to use certain linguistic units to convey messages to the interlocutors. To assert non-factual condition, there are modality markers as parts of language elements. English grammar marks the modality concept by means of modal verbs, adverbs, adjective, conditional sentence, and the like. Regarding modal verbs, one of them is quasi-modal. This paper then examines quasi-modals in English. However, talking about English cannot be separated from its regional varieties. This research thus aims to describe the differences of quasi-modals in British English and American English. To complete the research, it attempts to reveal the factors triggering the differences.

Keywords: *modality, quasi-modal, English varieties*

In using language, speakers deliver messages to the interlocutors. In delivering messages, speakers sometimes need to convey nonfactual condition of the proposition. Take a look at the following examples.

- (1) John is at home at 6 p.m.
- (2) John must be at home at 6 p.m.
- (3) John should be at home at 6 p.m.

As is seen, sentence (1) indicates factual condition about the presence of John, while sentence (2) and (3) expresses speaker's knowledge or attitude. In details, sentence (2) attempts at expressing vigorous assumption and sentence (3) shows contrary fact. In other words, linguistic units such as *must* and *should* are used to show modality. Modality is the semantic aspect covering possibility, necessity, ability, obligation, and assumption (Collins, 2009: 1). Modality, thus, can be defined as a semantic notion dealt with nonfactual condition.

Basically, modality is influenced by internal and external factors. Modality influenced by the internal factor of the speaker, including speaker's knowledge and attitude is known as epistemic modality (Portner, 2009: 2). Meanwhile, modality affected by external factors, such as norms, rules, values, is called deontic modality (Portner, 2009: 2).

(4) John must be sick.

(5) John must apologize.

Modality embodied in sentence (4) is internal modality, conveying the speaker's knowledge or assumption, while sentence (5) exhibits external factor causing John to ask for apology. In brief, sentence (4) belongs to epistemic modality and sentence (5) belongs to deontic modality.

English manifests the concept of modality in the term of lexical units called modals. Thus, *must* and *should* in the former discussion are the instances of modals. Different languages might have different modality realizations. For example, Latin manifests its modality by using verb inflections (Warner, 2009: 1). In English, modals are under the category of auxiliaries. In general, auxiliaries are divided into two, namely modal verbs and non-modal verbs (Quirk et al., 1985: 120). Nevertheless, to limit the discussion, non-modal verbs are not being covered.

Interestingly, modality expression is not only expressed by using single linguistic units (modal), but also by phrasal units. For instance, *will* and *can*

have their phrasal substitute as the followings.

(6) a. You will most likely strengthen your defense.

(7) a. You can come back for a second helping.

(Collins, 2009)

Both sentences above are equivalent with the following sentences—
apart from the slight semantic difference.

(6) a. You are going to most likely strengthen your defenses.

(7) a. You are able to come back for a second helping.

Modal will and can in (6a) and (7a) can be replaced by the phrasal equivalents be going to and be able to.

According to Chapin (1973), phrasal elements such as be going to and be able to are named quasi-modals; it is due to the nature of the element which meet the characteristic “as if” it is a modal, but it is not a “pure” modal. In line with Chapin, other experts also use the term “quasi-modal” referring to modality manifestation in the form of phrasal units (Brinton, 1991; Collins, 2009). Another term was proposed by Quirk et al. (1985) by calling it “semi-modal”. However, following the term of traditional grammar and to emphasize on the “as if” character, this study prefer using the term quasi-modal rather than semi-modal or the like.

As one of the prominent elements in language, thus it is assumed that the use of modals are quite frequent in English. Based on the research conducted by Barber (1964: 130—144), one of the striking language change in English is the emergence of auxiliary-like elements originating from lexical verbs, like want to from lexical verb want. It indicates modality is of importance so that language users—who basically creative and innovative—“created” new linguistic forms to express modality to meet the communication needs. As for quasi-modals, it is also assumed that quasi-modals emerge to meet the

semantic need that cannot be covered by the semantic of modals (Brinton, 1991). The interesting phenomena today is related to quasi-modals; how its use is increasing. According to Collins (2009), quasi-modals have to begin to replace the position of modal must. Lakoff associated the choice of have to and must with the speaker's involvement. He stated that modal must implies speaker's involvement, while quasi-modal have to does not. However, the assumption must be further proven.

Regarding the explanation, it is then intriguing to further analyze the phenomena of quasi-modals in English. Having huge number of speakers, English has oddless of varieties, namely British English, American English, Australian English, and many others. Thus, studying the use of quasi-modals in some English varieties is definitely interesting and useful for linguistic study. Nonetheless, this study focuses on British English and American English (hitherto BE and AmE respectively) as two largest English varieties.

MODALS AND QUASI-MODALS

In English, modals can be classified into auxiliary. Taken from Merriam Webster dictionary, auxiliary means "available to provide extra help, power, etc., when it is needed" (www.merriam-webster.com). In English, auxiliary can be defined as the helping verb of lexical verb in or the substitute of a lexical verb in a construction. Structurally, auxiliary can stand alone as the filler of predicate function—if there is no lexical verb—as in (8) or auxiliary as the helping verb as in (9).

(8) For pluralist, the activities of groups are the central feature of the political process.

(9) We can imagine the following situation.

(Collins, 2009)

Modal can in (9) is the helping verb and non-modal verb be in (8) is the filler of predicate because there is no lexical verb in the construction.

Related to the categorization of auxiliary, Lyons (1972) proposed auxiliary as one of word classes, belongs to the minor part of speech along with article, pronoun, conjunction, preposition and interjection. Quirk et al. (1985) then classified auxiliary into several types, namely primary verb (be, have, do) and modals. Payne (2011) categorized auxiliary into modal verbs and non-modal verbs. Regardless of the different labeling, auxiliaries share common property. They can serve as operator in yes/no question. In addition, auxiliaries also serve as the host for aspect and voice inflection.

As for quasi-modals, Collins (2009) defined it as the elements possessing the semantic property of modality as in modals. According to Collins, quasi-modals can be categorized into (i) quasi-modals with auxiliary as the initial element and (ii) quasi-modals without auxiliary as the initial element. The former quasi-modals are called semi-modals, including have got to, had better, be to, and would rather. The latter is called lexico-modal, including be supposed to, be willing to, be about to, etc.

CORPUS LINGUISTICS

Describing language use is challenging for researcher, especially the aspects dealt with language structure. The rapid growing of corpus as the factual data source for linguistics research benefits linguistics as a science. Corpus (corpora—pl.) is large systematic collections of written and/or spoken language stored on a computer and used in linguistic analysis (Johansson, 2007). Linguistics branch that focuses on the use of corpora is known as corpus linguistics. Corpus linguistics is based on the principle that linguistic theory and description is best based on real rather than contrived data (Meyer, 2003: 28). The benefit of using corpus is the researcher can get the real language use so the description can be more comprehensive. Moreover, corpus can portray regional or dialectal varieties so it best to describe language variation analysis.

Corpus used in this study is British National Corpus and Corpus of Contemporary American English. British National Corpus and Corpus

of Contemporary American English (abbreviated as BNC and COCA respectively) are corpora comprised of real language use in Britain and USA. Cited from <http://www.natcorp.ox.ac.uk/corpus/index.xml>, BNC collects written and spoken language from various sources and designed to represent English language use in Britain since early 20th century. As for COCA, it is a corpus representing language use in USA. Cited from <http://corpus.byu.edu/coca/>, COCA is the largest corpus comprised of 450 million words from a huge amount of sources, be they spoken or written language (fictions, magazines, newspapers, academic texts). It records English language use from early 20th century until 2012.

Both corpora used in the study and many other corpora are software created to aid linguistic research. They can be accessed online or by purchasing the CD-ROM. By so doing, linguistic researchers need not read newspapers, magazines, novels, dictionaries, and some possible data sources and record manually as all of them have been recorded in a huge database. In addition, each recorded data is completed with the detail (where it was taken and/or the information about the speaker(s) for a spoken corpus) so researcher can comprehensively study the data.



Figure 1. The display of BNC



Figure 2 The display of COCA

METHOD

This research uses qualitative and quantitative method since there are two types of data, the qualitative data (sentences containing quasi-modals) and quantitative data (the frequency of occurrence of quasi-modals in corpora). The data was collected by using metode simak (Sudaryanto, 2015). As for the analysis, the qualitative data was analyzed by employing metode agih (Sudaryanto, 2015) and quantitative data was analyzed by implementing normalized frequency (McEnery and Hardie, 2012). To count the normalized frequency, the number of word found in the corpus is divided with the size of the corpus and multiplied with the base of normalization (this study uses 100.000 words as the base of the normalization).

DISCUSSION

The differences of Quasi-modals in BE and AmE

There are some differences of quasi-modals spoken or written in BE and AmE portrayed by the comparison of BNC and COCA.

1. Double quasi-modal is uncommon in BE, but not in AmE

One of the differences found between quasi-modals in BE and AmE is about double quasi-modal construction. In AmE, double quasi-modals, a construction of which there are two quasi-modals occur together, is commonly known. In the data display below, there are some sentences containing double quasi-modals in COCA. Unlike COCA, BNC only records one example of double quasi-modals.

COCA

- (10) "Chicago is going to have to pull rabbits out of several hats to fill its projected budget deficit."
- (11) "The next time I come, we have to be able to just walk downtown."
- (12) Now, insiders in our system currently have made bankruptcy in government units illegal because some people never want to have to restructure contracts that are out of control.
- (13) "Soon she's going to have to come out with more detail."

BNC

- (14) To overcome that problem, say some congressional Democrats, he is going to have to show more determination to cut the deficit — and not just by raising taxes.

The emergence of this phenomenon is associated with the existence of double modal construction in AmE. Double modal construction comprises of two modals occurring together. According to Berger (2005: 35), "pure modal" doesn't have infinitive form thus it cannot be followed by another modal and must be accompanied with infinitive form. Hence, the sentences below are ungrammatical.

- (15) *We will must tell them.
- (16) *We have must had to tell them.

However, Berger realized that in some English language varieties, there are some uses of double modals. Previously stated by Battistea (1995) that double modal use could be found in southern part of America and started to be found elsewhere. In his opinion, double modal can be categorized into adverbial construction.

Nowadays, double modal is still debatable. There are some arguments concerning this phenomenon. The first view uphold that double modals are assumed as one unit. Meanwhile, the second view asserts that in a double modal construction, one of the modals is a non-modal. When we look for double modal as well as double quasi-modal, there is only one double modal use in BNC. It indicates that both double modal and double quasi-modals are unfamiliar among British English speakers.

2 Different frequency of occurrence of quasi-modals in BE and AmE

Not only investigating the structure, the difference can be seen, especially, in the different frequency of use. The frequency used for the comparison is not the raw frequency, but the normalized frequency. After counting the normalized frequency of each quasi-modal, the result is displayed in table below of which the normalized frequency is written in the bracket.

Table 1. Frequency of quasi-modals in BE and AmE

Quasi-modal	BE (BNC)	AmE (COCA)
Ought to	5015 (50)	21.234 (48)
Need not	1766 (18)	3407 (7)
Dare	2039 (20)	6105 (14)
Used to	25.763 (257)	86.384 (196)
Would rather	547 (5)	3538 (8)
Had better	512 (5)	1947 (4)
Have got to	521 (5)	1988 (5)
Have to	43.185 (431)	239.877 (545)
Be able to	937 (9)	2950 (7)
Be due to	532 (5)	1862 (4)
Be meant to	233 (2)	1173 (3)
Be likely to	4233 (42)	7920 (18)
Be willing to	218 (2)	2230 (5)
Be supposed to	617 (6)	4305 (10)
Be going to	2669 (27)	40.918 (93)
Be about to	638 (6)	4101 (9)
Be obliged to	129 (1)	138 (0,3)
Want to	28.628 (287)	236.163 (536)
Need to	21.943 (220)	109.724 (249)
Gonna	12.436 (124)	25.850 (59)
Wanna	2596 (26)	5194 (12)

Based on the table, it is evident that there are some quasi-modals having higher frequency of use in BE and others having higher frequency in AmE. Below is the table depicting the quasi-modals with high frequency in BE.

Table 2 Quasi-modals in BE

Quasi-modals in BE	Frequency of use
Ought to	5015 (50)
Need (not)	1766 (18)
Dare	2039 (20)
Used to	25.763 (257)
Be able to	937 (9)
Be due to	532 (5)
Be likely to	4233 (42)
Be obliged to	129 (1)
Gonna	12.436 (124)
Wanna	2596 (26)

Meanwhile, there are some quasi-modals having higher frequency of use in AmE than those in BE as described in the following table.

Table 3 Quasi-modals in AmE

Quasi-modals in AmE	Frequency of use
Would rather	3538 (8)
Have to	239.877 (545)
Be meant to	1173 (3)
Be willing to	2230 (5)
Be supposed to	4305 (10)
Be going to	40.918 (93)
Be about to	4101 (9)
Want to	236.163 (536)
Need to	109.724 (249)

By observing the tables above, it is obvious that ought to, need (not), dare, used to, be able to, be due to, be likely to, be obliged to, gonna, and wanna are more frequently used in BE than in AmE. As in AmE, there are some quasi-modals with higher frequency compare to BE; they are would rather, have to, be meant to, be willing to, be going to, be about to, want

to, and need to. Interestingly, one quasi-modal, have got to, have the same frequency of use in BE and AmE.

Overall, both English varieties have slight difference of frequency of use. Moreover, among 18 quasi-modals, BE has 9 quasi-modals with higher frequency than those in AmE. It is interesting due to the assumption that BE is more conservative than is AmE (Collins, 2009). BE, alike many other living languages, undergoes changes. Quasi-modal as the linguistic element is also increasingly used because of the increasing need. In the other words, the statement that BE is more conservative needs to be revisited.

3 Quasi-modal be going to is higher in COCA (AmE), but its contracted form gonna is higher in BNC (BE)

Based on the explanation about frequency of use, there is also another unique fact, that is related to the frequency of be going to and gonna. In AmE, the frequency of be going to is higher than those in BE. It seems that speakers of AmE are likely to use this quasi-modals. Nevertheless, it is interesting to find out that the contracted form of be going to, gonna, has higher frequency in BE than those in AmE. It can be concluded that what is meant by grammar differences in two varieties of the same language is a matter of proportion and probability (Tottie in Rohdenberg and Schluter, 2009: 342). In a dialect, a certain linguistic unit is more commonly used rather than in another dialect and the like. There is no fundamental difference in the structure between BE and AmE.

Factors triggering the differences

1. Different region

Although originating from the same language, since due to the geographical factor, a language spoken by two separated communities might result in two language varieties. According to Crowley (1992: 25) two separating communities speaking the same language have to adapt

themselves with their current geographical condition. This condition triggers the differences of the language spoken. BE and AmE are in two different continents and the separation of the societies happened very long time ago. Thus, changes are unavoidable.

2. Language is dynamic

All living communities are dynamic, so does the language used by the communities. There are many factors influencing the dynamic of language, social and geographical. In BE and AmE, there are many other regional varieties (whether it is the southern or northern part and the like), not to mention the social varieties. BE spoken in northern part is slightly different from those spoken in southern part. In AmE, the English language also varies depending on the area; English language spoken in northern America and southern America relatively vary (Yannuar, 2014). It is therefore not uncommon to find many varieties of the same language regarding the nature of language and the society using the language.

CONCLUSION

To sum up, there are some differences found after observing quasi-modals in BE (represented by BNC) and AmE (represented by COCA). However, because BE and AmE are basically the same language, the differences are dealt with the frequency of use. For instance, in BE, the use of double quasi-modals is less familiar than in AmE. Eventually in some AmE regional dialects, double modal construction is commonly used. Furthermore, some quasi-modals have higher frequency of use in BE than that in AmE and vice versa. The differences are possible since the two varieties are located in distant regions; UK and USA are separated by the geographical barriers. In addition, language is as dynamic as the society speaking the language so that it is inevitably changing.

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