

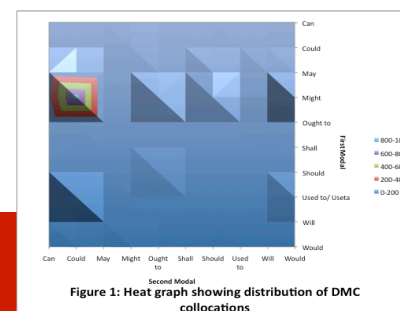
INTRODUCTION

The Double Modal construction (DMC) (e.g. *I might could do that.*) is a series of two (or three) modal auxiliary verbs in a single verb phrase, and is a well-known feature of Southern American English (SAE). Much of the prior research on DMCs is based on small sets of observed or artificially constructed tokens (Butters 1973, Boertien 1986, DiPaolo 1986, Mishoe 1991, Mishoe and Montgomery 1993, Hasty 2012). The present paper examines a portion of the corpus containing over 1700 naturally occurring American English tokens, presents a definitive inventory of the number and range of naturally occurring collocations, and characterizes both the collocations that are found and those that aren't.

OBSERVATIONS

The most important observation, from an analysis of the corpus, is that 15 (out of 90 possible) collocations account for nearly 98% of the data. Twelve involve *might* or *may* followed by one of: *can*, *could*, *ought to*, *should*, *will*, and *would*. Two involve *usedta* followed by *could* or *would*, and the remaining one is *should oughta*.

First/Second	Can	Could	Might	Ought to	Should	Will	Would	
Can	0	0	2	0	0	0	1	
Could	0	0	5	0	0	0	0	
May	84	46	3	5	21	10	15	186
Might	171	883	1	74	60	15	148	1360
Ought to	0	2	0	0	0	1	1	
Shall	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
Should	1	0	0	18	0	0	0	
Usedta	0	131	1	0	0	0	39	171
Will	4	0	1	0	0	0	0	
Would	0	2	6	0	0	0	0	
	260	1064	19	97	81	26	204	



CORPUS AND METHODOLOGY

The data presented here are compiled from Multimo, The Database of Multiple Modals (Reed & Montgomery 2012), a database of over 2000 DMC tokens (along with bibliography and commentary) collected from the United States, Scotland, and Northern England. The website is designed to facilitate investigation into DMCs, and can be queried using linguistic (e.g. sentence type) and metalinguistic parameters (e.g. speaker demographics). The current paper focuses on tokens drawn from the Southern United States. We filtered the data for those tokens drawn from the Southern United States, giving 1763 total tokens. Drawing upon these tokens, we analyzed the distribution of DMCs.

DISCUSSION AND ANALYSIS

We propose that the restriction of DMCs (with four exceptions) to either *may/might* + another modal is due to the special status of these two. We note that *might* distinguishes itself from *could* in Mainstream American English (MAE) in not being able to occur in counterfactuals.

(1) *If I could/*might leave, I would.*

The special status of *may/might*, is argued for in Elsmann & Dubinsky 2009 and Reed & Dubinsky 2014. Therein, it is proposed that these two elements function as "polarity" items, rather than regular aspectual modals. Being inserted higher in the derivation guarantees that *may/might* (when selected) will occur as the first element in DMCs

The three collocations not involving *might* or *may* are (i) *should oughta*, (ii) *useta could*, and (iii) *useta would*. We propose that the first of these, *should oughta*, involves two synonymous modals, and that they are used together for emphasis.

(2) He should oughta do it now. = He really should do it now.

The second two collocations, both involving *useta*, provide a means to disambiguate the dual use of *could* and *would* in MAE. In SAE, *might could* only denotes prospective aspect, and *useta could* denotes perfective aspect. So, in place of the ambiguous MAE sentence *I could do that*, SAE has either (3) or (4).

(3) *I might/*useta could do that later.*

(4) *I usedta/*might could do that, when I was younger.*

SELECTED REFERENCES

- Boertien, Harmon. 1986. Constituent structure of double modals. In Michael Montgomery and Guy Bailey (eds.), *Language variety in the South: Perspectives in black and white*, 294-318. Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press.
- Butters, Ronald. 1973. Acceptability judgments for double modals in Southern dialects. In Charles-James Bailey and Roger Shuy (eds.), *New ways of analyzing variation in English*, 276-286. Washington: Georgetown University Press.
- Di Paolo, Marianna. 1986. *A study of double modals in Texas English*. University of Texas dissertation.
- Elsmann, Minta, and Stanley Dubinsky. 2009. Single and Double Modal Syntax: A Unified Account. BLS 35.
- Hasty, J. Daniel. 2012. We might should oughta take a second look at this: A syntactic re-analysis of double modals in Southern United States English. *Lingua* 122(14): 1716-1738.
- Mishoe, Margaret. 1991. *The pragmatics of double modal usage*. University of South Carolina thesis.
- Mishoe, Margaret, and Michael Montgomery. 1994. The pragmatics of multiple modal variation in North and South Carolina. *American Speech* 69: 3-29.
- Reed, Paul E., and Stanley Dubinsky. 2014. The Syntax of Multiple Modals from a Corpus and Experimental Perspective. LSA Poster.
- Reed, Paul E., and Michael Montgomery. 2012. Multimo: The Multiple Modal Database. <http://artsandsciences.sc.edu/multimo>