

Modality, rurality, and emerging varieties:
A case study of modal verbs of obligation and necessity in Labrador Inuit English
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The expression of obligation and/or necessity in English has been well documented from Old English to present day with studies focusing on the morphosyntactic development of modal constructions (e.g. Denison 1993, Warner 1993), the semantic properties (e.g. Ehrman 1966, Perkins 1983), or both (e.g. Coates 1983, Biber et al. 1999). Much of our understanding of modality comes from studies of Standard American and British English, but recently there has been an increasing interest in other varieties of English (e.g. Trousdale 2003; Collins 2005, 2009; Tagliamonte & Smith 2006; Dollinger 2008; Fehring & Corrigan 2015), though the context of more rural communities is still underrepresented.

Although these studies examine different combinations of modals and semi-modals, one observation consistent across data sets is that, over time, there is a rise in the use of semi-modals and a corresponding decline in modal verbs that express obligation and/or necessity (e.g. Krug 2000, Leech 2003, Mair & Leech 2006). In addition, previous research has shown a recurring trend in the semantic development of modal expressions where epistemic meanings tend to develop out of deontic (or root) meanings as a result of ongoing grammaticalization (e.g. Van der Auwera & Plungian 1998, Traugott & Dasher 2002). Social factors are less well represented in the literature, though scholars such as Tagliamonte & D'Arcy (2007) have found limited effects for age and sex for certain semi-modals.

In this paper, we analyse the use of deontic and epistemic modals (*should*, *must*) and semi-modals (*got to*, *have to*, *have got to*, *need to*) in an age- and sex-stratified sample of 25 lifelong residents of Nain, an isolated Inuit community in northern Canada. We test to see if effects found in urban Canadian English (Tagliamonte & D'Arcy 2007) and American English (Collins 2005) also appear in this newer, more rural variety, bearing in mind the possibility of interference from Inuttitut, the community's ancestral language.

Preliminary findings (N=401) show similarities between the Nain data and other North American Englishes, but also some notable differences. Specifically, *have to* accounts for only 51.2% of deontic tokens in Nain English, in contrast to Tagliamonte and D'Arcy's (2007) study of Toronto English, which reports that deontic modality is dominated by this variant, and Collins (2005), who also finds a strong preference for *have to*, particularly in the spoken data in his corpus. Furthermore, we also observe a surprising absence of *have got to* (N=0). Epistemic contexts overwhelmingly favour *must* in Nain (88.9%), in keeping with these studies and others (e.g. Smith 2003). (These previous studies do not include *should*; ones that do include this variant, e.g. Leech (2003), see higher rates of *should* than *must*, a result not observed in Nain.) As such, our results seem to be more in line with outcomes in some rural, isolated communities in the United Kingdom (Tagliamonte & Smith 2006). Moreover, multivariate analyses indicate that social factors such as sex and age have no effect on modal choice; instead, (semi-) modal choice is governed by linguistic factors such as subject type.

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