

## Infinitival perfects in Appalachian English: modals vs. infinitival *to*

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In this talk we present a quantitative / qualitative study of variation in use of infinitival auxiliary *have* in perfects embedded under modals (1a, 2a) and *to* (1b, 2b):

- (1) a. I don't know what I **would have done** if it wasn't for her.  
b. That was supposed **to have been** a rare seed.
- (2) a. I don't know what I **would \_\_\_ done** if it wasn't for her.  
b. That was supposed **to \_\_\_ been** a rare seed.

We examine the frequency of the presence (1) vs. absence (2) of *have* in this modal / *to* context, in a one-million-word parsed corpus of Appalachian English. While elision of *have* in infinitival perfects (2) is relatively rare in English, our Appalachian study reveals differences between the two types of perfect which have not been previously noted in the literature, and which we argue are only observable in a parsed corpus of vernacular speech which is sufficiently large to yield the frequency data necessary to understanding the variation. We further show that the data gleaned from the corpus inform previous syntactic analyses of the infinitival perfect in English more generally, and suggest that infinitival perfects are not a homogeneous structural phenomenon.

Montgomery & Hall (2004; M&H) observe that “[a]uxiliary *have* and *had* are sometimes elided in Smokies speech, especially between a modal verb and a past participle,” and provide examples similar to those in (1) and (2) above. Notably, M&H report that the “elision” of *have* is more favored under a modal verb. However, our study reveals unexpected quantitative patterns and also suggests a novel analysis of the different infinitival perfects. First, it is true that infinitival perfects with modals are overall more frequent than infinitival perfects with *to*. However, despite their differences in absolute frequency, elided-*have* is actually relatively less frequent with modals, and relatively more frequent with infinitival *to*. In the relevant modal contexts, pronounced *have* (1a) occurs in 87% of the cases (whereas elided-*have* (2a) occurs in only 13% of the cases). This contrasts with the relevant context with infinitival *to*, where pronounced *have* (1b) occurs in only 34% of the cases (whereas elided-*have* (2b) occurs in 66% of the cases). This is unexpected under the claim that the elision obtains especially with a modal. We also examine the qualitative differences between perfects embedded under modals vs. *to* which may be responsible for the quantitative findings. One difference is that infinitival-*to* perfects are always embedded (in contrast with modals, which can head root clauses). Furthermore, AppE infinitival-*to* perfects with both pronounced and elided *have* exhibit a pleonastic use (in addition to a real past tense use), reflecting a type of Sequence of Tense phenomenon: (1b/2b) are ambiguous, where tense semantics are not entailed in one possible reading of the perfect (cf. Stowell 2007). This phenomenon (which is found in other Englishes with pronounced *have* — cf. Molencki 2003; Bowie & Aarts 2011) combines in AppE with the possibility of eliding *have*, to give rise to the observed pattern.

## References:

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