

## Structural Problems and the Cartography of Multi-modal Constructions: Views from Mandarin, Rural Chesapeake English, and Jamaican Creole

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Multi-modal constructions of the type seen in Southern (or Rural) American English, Caribbean Creoles, and in Chinese languages are an oft-examined subject. Cross-linguistically, wide variation in the number of modals allowable in the syntax is observed, from simple double-modal constructions in Southern American English (SE), to up to four projections in languages like Mandarin Chinese (MC) (Lin, 2012). Examples of these constructions include:

- (1) He might should go into town.  
"He likely will have to go into town." [Southern English]
- (2) Im kuda mos kyahn nyam di ackee.  
"He surely could be able to eat the ackee." [Jamaican Creole]
- (3) Zhangsan keneng bixu yuanyi hui jiang Fayu.  
"Zhangsan likely (will) need to be willing to be able to speak French." [Mandarin Chinese]
- (4) I would like to could swim.  
"I would like to be able to swim" [Hawick Scots (Brown, 1991)]

There appears to be a consistent hierarchy of modals, roughly formulated as: Epistemic Modality > Root /Deontic Modality > Dynamic Modality (Tsai, 2015; Ellison, 2007; Brown, 1991; Durrleman-Tame, 2008 *inter alia*). Languages such as MC (Huang, 2000) and Jamaican Creole (JC) (Durrleman-Tame, 2008) appear to hold to this hierarchy strictly, exhibiting strong judgments of ungrammaticality when the hierarchy is not obeyed. In SE, judgments are consistent for the most part when the hierarchy is followed, but are highly inconsistent as to the grammaticality of sentences that flaunt the hierarchy (Ellison, 2007). Furthermore, while JC and MC forbid the use of more than one modal of the same class within a single clause (Durrleman-Tame, 2008; Li, 2003), some SE speakers do not categorically reject these constructions (Ellison, 2007) (e.g. 'He should must study'). The present study first examines data from JC, MC and a variety of SE to establish the cross-linguistic validity of the modal hierarchy. We then argue that the inconsistencies in acceptability of sentences that flaunt the modal hierarchy in SE may result from availability of "repair" strategies, including: modified readings of the modal semantics (e.g. an epistemic reading of *should* in a sentence with 'should must'), or bi-clausal syntax wherein the first modal selects a TP complement. In the case of the latter strategy, we argue that some varieties of English have developed non-finite versions of selected modals which appear in these clausal modal complements, similar to those seen in Nordic languages (Larsson, 2014) and we support this conclusion by examining data from Hawick Scots (Brown, 1991) which exhibits the same (ex.4 above). We argue that while some SE speakers have access to these repair strategies, they are not universal, and furthermore are not available in languages such as MC and JC.

## References

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