

## *Need and dare: The black sheep of the modal family*

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### Abstract

The first aim of this article is to explore as exhaustively as possible the full range of modal usage found with the verbs *need* and *dare* in English, something which has never been done before. The second aim is to explain why these two verbs can exhibit modal-like behaviour. The reason is to be found in the fact that in certain uses they express a type of meaning which is analogous to that of the core modals, sharing with the latter the impression of 'non-assertiveness'. This provides a valuable insight into the essence of the meaning of the modal auxiliaries in English and demonstrates convincingly that the morpho-syntactic behaviour not only of *need* and *dare* but also of the modals themselves is conditioned by meaning and not by syntactic rule.

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### 1. Introduction

The epithet used in the title above was first applied to the verb *dare* in a study of modal expressions in English (Perkins, 1983: 29) just before the author announced that he was not going to deal with the verb in question at all. Although one cannot really blame someone for steering clear of such an ornery linguistic creature, one would expect at least some attempt at an analysis of *dare* in a work dealing with modality in English. Perkins is not alone, however, in not knowing what to do with this verb: in his section on the modal auxiliaries, Palmer (1988: 106) admits that "there is no obvious place for DARE" within the semantic framework of the modals, even though it "has to be handled here because it is clearly a modal in some of its functions, and, in particular, is very much like NEED". As for the latter, which does get more notice in the two studies just mentioned, it is generally discussed only in its relation with *must* as a necessity modal. Perkins, for instance, makes but one comment concerning the distinction between the auxiliary and the full verb use, pointing out that "whereas auxiliary NEED is compatible with either a subjective or an objective interpretation, NEED TO is restricted to an objective interpretation" and "indicates a compulsion that comes from within" (1983: 62–63). While not

branded outright as a black sheep, *need* certainly does not get as much attention as most of the other members of the modal family – and this is true of work on English modality in general. In the present study I wish therefore to attempt to remedy this situation by trying to identify more precisely what it is that entitles *need* and *dare* to membership in the modal category, based on an extensive examination of the occurrences of these two verbs in the Brown University (American), Lancaster-Oslo/Bergen (British) and Strathy (Canadian) corpora of English, supplemented by examples from other sources.

The problem posed by the ambivalent usage of *need* and *dare* has a much broader scope than these two verbs themselves. We will see that this usage calls into question a fundamental assumption about the whole category of the modal auxiliaries, namely that there is no connection between the meaning which they express and the morpho-syntactic properties characteristic of this class of verbs. The consequence of this view is the further assumption that these properties can only be dealt with by means of purely formal grammatical rules. *Need* and *dare* show on the contrary that it is the type of meaning which these verbs express which conditions their morphology and syntax, and consequently it will be held here that this is also the case for the modal auxiliaries themselves. The focus of this study will therefore be mainly on the semantic level; however, before going into this crucial aspect of the problem it will be useful to recall the morphological and syntactic characteristics which *need* and *dare* can share with the modals.

## 2. Morphological and syntactic characteristics relating *dare* and *need* to the modals

That *need* and *dare* are indeed close relatives of the modal auxiliaries is obvious from their syntax and morphology. The traits which are most indicative of the relation are as follows:

(A) direct negation with *not*:

(1a) She needn't worry.

(1b) I was so blame tired I couldn't think, I dare not think. (Strathy. FATHER. FIG. 2606)<sup>1</sup>

(B) inversion without *do* auxiliary in the interrogative:

(2a) Need you make that dreadful noise?

(2b) Dare she ring him at the office? He had asked her never to do that. (Visser, 1969: 1439)

<sup>1</sup> LOB and BUC stand for London-Oslo/Bergen and Brown University, respectively. The codes describe the location of the key word in the corpus: the first three characters identify the text; the next set – up to a maximum of three digits in LOB and four in BUC – specify the line number of the word's occurrence; and the final two positions identify the location of the word in that line. The codes for the Strathy corpus are divided into three parts: the letters and/or numbers preceding the first period identify the text; the abbreviation following the period indicates the genre; the numbers after the genre indicate the line in the text.

(C) use in tag questions:

(3a) She needn't leave, need she?

(3b) I daren't get involved, then, dare I?

(D) use of the bare and not the *to* infinitive (as in all of the examples above); and

(E) absence of the *-s* ending in the third person singular present indicative (see (1a) and (2b)).

What distinguishes *need* and *dare* from the core modals is that they are also used as non-auxiliaries, with the full-verb characteristics of:

(A) negation with *do*:

(4a) What was the deepest music on the program had the poorest showing. Miss Xydis was best when she did not need to be too probing. (BUC CO3 0560 4)

(4b) I wanted to wipe my flint, but I didn't dare to, the state my hands were in, just as I didn't dare to do anything about the priming. (BUC K09 0260 6)

(B) interrogative with *do*:

(5a) Do I need to say more to you? (Visser, 1969: 1430)

(5b) Do you dare, sir, to call yourself a gentleman? (Jespersen, 1940: 174)

(C) use with the *to* rather than the bare infinitive

(D) presence of *-s* ending in the third person singular present indicative:

(6a) To be a poet a man needs to be advantageously placed in the world. (Poutsma, 1923: 15)

(6b) A bully like that respects anyone who dares to stand up to him. (LOB N02 132 9)

Having evoked the main syntactic and morphological facts to be considered, let us now turn our attention to the semantic aspect of the problem. The objective pursued will be to bring out the meaning-relation between the full verb and the modal uses of *need* and *dare* and to show what it is that allows these two verbs to enter the semantic system of the modals.

### 3. Previous work on the semantics of *need* and *dare* in modal use

#### 3.1. Need

Various comments have been made on the distinction in meaning between auxiliary and full verb *need* and the consensus seems to point to an opposition between external vs. internal sources of need. For Bolinger (1942: 63) it is a question of "personal want" or "literal requirement or expression of lack within one's self"

with the full verb, and of “compliance with something external” with the auxiliary. The notion of personal want expressed by full verb *need* is illustrated by *Does he need to see the doctor now?* which “implies a need for medical attention” (p. 63). The “something external” implied by the auxiliary is equated by Bolinger (p. 65) with an authority seen as a source of permission:

“In what kind of sentences involving the idea of external compulsion would *need* fit most naturally? Obviously, those having suggestions of permission, asked or given. Permission asked gives us the second type, on the model of ‘Need I wait any longer?’, which plainly asks for permission to go, or ‘Need it cost so much?’, which calls for permission to pay less. Permission given results in the first and third types: ‘You needn’t wait any longer’ (i.e., ‘You are permitted to go’); ‘He need only sign his name’ (i.e., he is permitted to dispense with the other requirements).”

Bolinger is not alone in getting the kind of impressions he does from the auxiliary and full verb uses of *need*. Leech (1987: 102) also feels that in certain contexts one can draw a clear distinction between them, and adduces the following to illustrate his point:

“Let us suppose that Lady P. addresses her gardener with the words: *The hedges needn’t be trimmed this week, Smithers*. This means ‘You are excused the task – I shall not oblige you to trim the hedges this week’ (perhaps because Lady P. is feeling kind, or because she has more important jobs in mind for Smithers). But the import is quite otherwise if she says: *The hedges don’t need to be trimmed this week, Smithers*. The point she makes here is that the hedges do not require attention – because, we presume, they have not grown enough to make them look untidy.”

He is prudent about the general distinction however, and notes on the other hand that the auxiliary and the full verb “scarcely differ in effect on many occasions”, as in:

- (7a) Need you wake him up?  
 (7b) Do you need to wake him up?

Joos (1964: 192) contrasts two sentences quite similar to Leech’s:

- (8a) You needn’t wait.  
 (8b) You don’t need to wait.

and defines the modal as carrying “two social messages, either ‘I’m indulgently excusing you’ or ‘I’m firmly dismissing you’,” whereas the full verb “carries only technical messages” so that (8b) means “your waiting is not technically requisite: the state of the factual world will be just as good if you don’t wait”. The most recent formulation of this distinction is that of Dixon (1991: 188), who feels the full verb to refer to some “inner state” of the subject, whereas the auxiliary use relates to “external circumstances”:

- (9a) I don’t need to go to the toilet (my bladder isn’t full).  
 (9b) I needn’t go to the toilet (no one is telling me to go).

Not all authors agree, however, that the full verb/auxiliary opposition can be defined in this way. We have already cited Perkins (1983: 62–63), who, while sharing the view that *need + to* indicates a compulsion that comes from within the subject (what he calls “objective” need), feels that auxiliary *need* is compatible with either a “subjective” (external) or an objective (internal) interpretation. He gives no examples to illustrate this contention however, and since my corpus shows no clear cases of *need* auxiliary evoking a compulsion that comes from within the subject this assertion cannot be regarded as having been verified. With respect to another point, Jacobsson (1974: 39) proposes that the analysis of the meaning of full verb *need* as being “internal” requires rectification in the light of uses such as:

(10) The slums need to be replaced by good housing.

He points out that here *need to* is practically the equivalent of *have to* and that consequently the notion of a requirement internal to the subject hardly seems applicable.

### 3.2. Dare

Much less ink has flowed over the question of the semantic distinction between modal and full verb *dare*. Apart from the stock descriptions of *dare* as expressing the notion of audacity, only three authors propose any sort of meaning-distinction between full verb *dare* taking the *to* infinitive and the auxiliary with modal characteristics taking the bare infinitive. Wood (1962: 67) analyzes the full verb as meaning ‘have the effrontery’, as in:

(11) He dares to accuse me of dishonesty!

and the modal as meaning ‘have the courage’ as in:

(12) She dare not say what she thinks.

This distinction does not seem well-founded: besides the fact that the difference between courage and effrontery is not always easy to make *per se*, closer examination of usage shows that modal *dare* can evoke effrontery:

(13) How dare he accuse me of dishonesty!

and the full verb with the *to* infinitive, courage:

(14) However humiliating the lesson, with our whole hearts we rejoice that our country will be saved from the deep, damnable stain of surrendering a human being to be burnt at the stake because he dared to assert his freedom. (Strathy ANDERS 2. BK. 687)

Moreover, the paraphrase proposed for modal *dare* does not correspond very precisely to what this verb expresses in (12) above, for this sentence does not really mean ‘She does not have the courage to say what she thinks’.

Wolff (1978: 397) proposes a far better paraphrase of the meaning of *dare* in modal uses like (12). He distinguishes between the literal notion of daring expressed in full verb use and the idea ‘it is prohibitively dangerous for x to perform the event’ conveyed by the modal. Unfortunately he does not push his semantic analysis any further to show what *dare*’s meaning has in common with that of the modals here, and consequently he is unable to explain why *dare* exhibits modal-like behaviour in this type of use.

Thirdly, Dixon (1991: 184) is the only author to see the same type of internal/external opposition with *dare* as with *need*. He gives the following contexts for:

(15a) He doesn’t dare to touch Mary. (he hasn’t the courage, since she is so beautiful and he is too shy)

(15b) He doesn’t dare touch Mary. (for fear of catching AIDS)

and claims that the full verb sense illustrated in (15a) ‘‘tends to refer to an inner state of the subject’’ and the modal-like use in (15b) ‘‘to some external circumstance’’. While Dixon makes no distinction between fully and partly modal *dare* (cf. section 11 of this article), his comments on the partly modal use in (15b) apply *a fortiori* to the modal construction in *He daren’t touch Mary*.

The observations cited above all leave one very important question unanswered however. Even if one were to agree with those who define the distinction between the full verb and modal uses of *need* and *dare* as one of internal vs. external, what does this have to do with the opposition between full verbs and modal auxiliaries in the first place? Not all modals denote things which are external to their subjects:

(16) He can bench-press 250 pounds.

(17) Boys will be boys.

And not all full verbs evoke something internal to their subjects (cf. *He was wearing a blue sweater*). So why should *need* and *dare* stop behaving like full verbs and start behaving like modals when they refer to external circumstances rather than to the internal dispositions of the subject? The explanation for the modal behaviour of these two verbs must lie elsewhere, in some other facet of the meaning of *need* and *dare*.

#### 4. An important observation

A crucial fact for understanding the modal use of both *dare* and *need* is to be found in an observation which does not concern the meaning of these verbs directly, but rather the kind of context in which this type of use is found. Jacobsson (1974:

62) brings to light something which is highly significant for explaining usage with these two verbs when he shows that the modal use of *need* is associated with a semantic factor which he calls “non-assertiveness”:

“The existence of the necessity or obligation is not asserted but denied, questioned, conceded (in concessive clauses), or represented as a mere conception rather than a positive fact (‘subjunctive’). (...) If it is possible at all to find a semantic common denominator for sentences containing auxiliary *need*, the best candidate would probably be ‘non-assertiveness’.”

This semantic common denominator is observed in every one of the ten types of use identified by Jacobsson, which I list below:

(18) (a) *Questions*

Need I be present?

(b) *Negation*

He needn’t come.

(c) *Shifted negation*

There is nothing you need trouble about.

(d) *With semi-negatives **hardly** and **scarcely***

I need hardly say how glad I am.

(e) *With ‘hidden negatives’*

He need only state his opinion clearly.

All he need do is state his opinion clearly.

(→ ‘he needn’t do more than ...’)

(f) *In comparative clauses*

Standards are lower than they need be.

(→ ‘They need not be as low as they are.’)

(g) *After superlatives*

His book covers most that need be said on the subject.

(→ ‘There is little more that need be said on the subject.’)

(h) *In **before**-clauses*

I have half an hour to spare before I need go.

(→ ‘I needn’t go yet.’)

(i) *With subjunctive force*

It is embarrassing that such a truth need be stated at all.

(→ ‘Such a truth should not need to be stated at all.’)

(j) *In concessive clauses*

However much need be said, let it wait.

(→ ‘There may be a great deal that needs to be said but it need not be said immediately.’)

Non-assertiveness is also characteristic of a use which Jacobsson, strangely enough, treats as an exception – what he terms the “marginal use of auxiliary *need* in conditional clauses” (p. 62):

(19) If you need borrow money at all, borrow as little as possible.

As indicated by *at all*, however, this sentence also involves a negative bias against the existence of any real need to borrow money.

Besides Jacobsson’s list of contexts, auxiliary *need* has also been found in the following two uses:

(20) By co-vary, we mean that the more a language has of one of the processes, the less it need have of the other. (Keenan, 1978: 120)

(21) The telephone made me wonder whether I need drop this task to answer the call ... (LOB F40 36 4)

In both cases the non-assertive quality of the utterance is obvious and so they too provide further confirmation of Jacobsson’s analysis: (20) involves comparison and implies ‘if it has more of one, it need not have as much of the other’; (21) contains an embedded interrogative.

Despite his very perceptive observation of the type of sentence in which *need* can be used modally, Jacobsson remains puzzled, however, as to why this use should be restricted to non-assertive contexts as he sees no significant difference in meaning between the modal and the full verb: this leads him to claim that “from a semantic point of view ... there should be no obstacle to *need* being used as an auxiliary even in affirmative sentences” (p. 62). In spite of this contention, it will be shown further on that there is indeed a semantic repugnance to modal use in affirmation. However, before that is done, the type of context in which *dare* can be used modally must be examined.

## 5. Non-assertiveness and modal *dare*

A survey of all the possible uses of *dare* with modal characteristics reveals, significantly enough, the same sort of restriction on its use as on *need*: such usage is associated with non-assertive contexts. This non-assertiveness most commonly takes the form of the negative:

(22) Even in that his hands were tied. He dare not precipitate what might well be another coronary. (LOB P06 39 8)



or the interrogative:

(23) Dare I ask you to join me? (Zandvoort, 1957: 97)

However, it is also found, as with *need*:

– with shifted negation:

(24) In that zone of insecurity in the mind where none but the artist dare trespass, the tribes were mustering. (Waugh, 1976: 64)

– with semi-negatives such as *hardly* and *scarcely*:

(25) I just sat there and it seemed I hardly dare breathe for a minute or two. (Naughton, 1975: 280)

– in comparative clauses:

(26) Cameron concluded his eloquent defence of the natural rights of man and of Anderson's right to defend his liberty by advocating that meetings such as this "be held throughout the length and breadth of the Province to let those who are in power know that it is more than they dare do to give the fugitive up." (Strathy ANDERS 1. BK. 3597)

– after superlatives:

(27) But launching a new cigarette in today's climate of disapproval requires finesse. The company is advertising its Premiers as "a cleaner smoke", the furthest it dare go. (*The Economist*, Sept. 17, 1988: 33) ('it dare go no further')

– in *if*-clauses:

(28) "The living have never used that road since the coming of the Roherrim," said Aragorn, "for it is closed to them. But in this dark hour the heir of Isildur may use it, if he dare." (Tolkien, 1968: 812) (The speaker obviously has some doubts that it is possible for the heir of Isildur to dare use the road.)

– in clauses introduced by *whether*:

(29) I wonder whether he dare try. (Schibsbye, 1969: 24) (The speaker is not sure whether it is possible for the person in question to dare.)

The modal use of *dare* has also been found in a type of context not mentioned by Jacobsson but nevertheless closely related to those he lists:

(30) It was true that he himself was ignored by the countess as much as she dare ignore him ... (Johnson, 1959: 100)

Here the comparative of equality carries the negative implication 'she didn't dare ignore him any more than that'. In all modal uses of *dare*, consequently, a non-assertive quality similar to that which is characteristic of *need* can be discerned.

## 6. The semantic implications of non-assertiveness

What is significant about this fact is that it means that in no case of the modal usage of *need* or *dare* is the existence of a need or the realization of the action of daring (in the stative sense of *dare* the possession of sufficient courage to perform some deed) affirmed. What then do *need* and *dare* evoke in these uses? It will be proposed here that they are evoking merely the conceivability of the existence of daring or need, that is to say, the conditions determining whether daring or need are felt to be possible, and not the latter's real existence. In the case of *dare*, that which determines whether the performance of the action of daring (or the possession of sufficient audacity to do some deed) is conceivable is whether the risks involved in doing this action are too high or not. This is most apparent in contexts such as:

- (31) Inflation is a problem which dare not be neglected. (Pullum and Wilson, 1977: 785)
- (32) The genesis of human life is a sacrosanct domain which dare not be invaded by human hands or 'rationalized', that is, subjected to utilitarian considerations. (De Valk, 1982: 10)
- (33) To be the Saviour and the Lord, Jesus Christ has to be a historical individual with a biography all his own: he dare not be a cosmic aeon that swoops down to earth for a while but never identifies itself with man's history. (BUC D04 0080 9)

In such sentences as these the modal use of *dare* evokes the notion of something being impossible to do without extremely dire consequences or risks: the performance of the action of daring or the possession of sufficient courage to carry out a given act is to all intents and purposes ruled out by the highly undesirable consequences which would ensue. In other uses daring is not completely ruled out but merely held in doubt (28), questioned (23), ruled out beyond a certain point (30), etc. In all cases, however, what is evoked is not the action or state of daring in itself but the conditions making daring possible, what could therefore be called the 'riskability' of some course of action.

As for the modal use of *need*, what makes the existence of a need conceivable, i.e. the conditions determining whether or not a need is felt to exist and/or to be fully operative as a real need, can take various forms. A survey of usage reveals three basic impressions, which can be described as follows:

(i) The conditions for a need to act to be real can sometimes be identified with the existence of some imperative reason to do something. This reason can be: (a) the imperative will of an authority, as in Joos' *You needn't wait*, where the negating of the condition which could have given rise to a need to wait produces the impression of a dispensation (be it indulgent or condescending); or (b) simply the feeling that the reasons for doing something have sufficient weight to give rise to a real need, as in:

(34) "Oh, I doubt if we need get there before half past," he replied ... (Erdmann, 1982: 98)

where negating the conditions for a need to get there before half past – the existence of some imperative reason to do so – suggests that getting there before that time is not indispensable. This first type could be characterized as evoking 'indispensability'.

(ii) The conditions giving rise to a need for something to occur can be felt to be the existence of some necessary cause or fatal reason for it to come to pass. Negation here produces the impression of there being no conceivable reason for some event to occur or, conversely, of there being other possible scenarios and/or conceivable ways of avoiding its occurrence. This type can be illustrated by:

(35) Presently Rosalie said, "Your mother need never know about you." (Christie, 1937: 202)

It could be characterized as evoking the 'inevitability' of the event denoted by the infinitive.

(iii) The conditions for a need for something to be true can involve the impression of there being some evidence making it impossible to conceive this state of affairs as not being true. In the negative this creates the impression observed in:

(36) He may be there, but he needn't be. (Palmer, 1979: 54)

i.e. of there being no imperative reason to hold the statement 'He is there' to be true since the speaker's knowledge of the situation allows room for other perfectly conceivable alternative scenarios. This use has been called "epistemic" by Palmer (*ibid.*) since it concerns the logical necessity of holding some proposition to be true. We will refer to it simply as expressing the notion of 'logical necessity'.

## 7. The semantic relation between the modal and non-modal uses of *need* and *dare*

It is now possible to describe the semantic relation that exists between the modal and non-modal uses of *need* and *dare* in more general terms. To start with *dare*,

whereas the modal use evokes the above-mentioned notion of there being certain risks which raise the question of the very possibility of daring, non-modal use on the other hand evokes either the action of going ahead and doing something in the face of certain risks:

- (37) Annie rallied overnight ... and Charles dared to picture 'my own former Annie with her dear affectionate face'. (Desmond and Moore, 1992: 381)  
 (38) ... he stood near the sweet-smelling stall and dared to pat her muzzle. (BUC K06 1480 3)

or, more rarely, the state of possessing sufficient courage for some action:

- (39) He felt it would be best for him to pop the question while he still dared to put it to her.

The relation between these two meanings is therefore that between what conditions whether an action or state of daring can exist, i.e. the gravity of the risks involved in performing some action (modal), and the daring itself (full verb). This can be depicted by means of a diagram as in Fig. 1.

MODAL <i>DARE</i>	FULL VERB <i>DARE</i>
What conditions whether an action or state of daring can exist: the risks attendant upon the action envisaged not being prohibitively high	The realization or existence of the daring itself
What makes daring possible, the conceivability of daring	The reality of an action or state of daring
The possibility of the subject possessing or exercising daring and, consequently, the possibility of the subject of <i>dare</i> realizing the infinitive's event at all	

Fig. 1

The modal use of *dare* is thus indicative of a focussing on the conditions necessary for daring to exist, that is to say, on that which exists before an act of daring is performed or before someone can be considered to momentarily possess sufficient courage to perform some action, namely the awareness of the gravity of the consequences which the speaker feels would ensue (the risks). The full verb use simply evokes actually going ahead and doing something audacious or the real possession of enough courage to do so.

The same type of relation holds between modal and full verb *need*. The latter evokes a need in and for itself, whether the need stems from the internal dispositions of the subject (40) or is imposed on the latter by external circumstances (41):

- (40) I need to get some fresh air.  
 (41) The slums need to be replaced by good housing.

Modal *need*, on the other hand, focusses rather on whether the conditions leading to the constitution of a real need are fulfilled. This can take the form of: (1) referring to whether an external authority has asked for something to be done or whether sufficient reasons exist to give rise to a real need to act (dispensation/indispensability); (2) judging whether some necessary cause makes something seem fated to occur (inevitability); or (3) weighing whether the facts of the case make it necessary to conclude that a given proposition is true (logical necessity). The relation between these two uses of *need* can be depicted in the same way as for *dare* (see Fig. 2).

MODAL <i>NEED</i>	FULL VERB <i>NEED</i>
What conditions whether a real need must be posited as existing: the impossibility of dispensing with some action due to the will of an authority or the weight of the reasons for doing it; the impossibility of conceiving something as not happening or not being true	The actual state of need itself
What makes a need recognizable, the conceivability of the existence of need	The reality of the existence of need
The necessity of positing the subject to be in a state of needing to perform the infinitive's event and, consequently, the necessity of the subject realizing this event at all	

Fig. 2

## 8. The internal/external opposition

The observations made above allow us to return to the opposition between internal or objective vs. external or subjectively determined need and daring and to understand now why many grammarians have felt these sorts of impressions as characteristic of the opposition between full verb and modal usage with the two verbs under study. On the surface, the connection between the idea of 'external' and the fact that the modal use of these two verbs is found in non-assertive contexts is not immediately obvious, especially since, as noted above, there is no necessary connection between 'external' and the category of the modal auxiliaries. However, a deeper look into this problem reveals how it is that the kind of non-assertiveness involved in modal usage with *need* and *dare* can give rise to an impression of reference to external circumstances rather than to the inner state of the subject.

The link between these two observations is to be found in the fact that in modal usage one is not evoking needing or daring in themselves but rather the conditions

for a need to be felt to be constituted or for daring to be able to exist. In the case of *need*, these conditions take the form of a reference to what gives rise to a need to act (the will of an authority or the existence of sufficiently important reasons for acting), to a need for something to occur (the existence of a necessary cause), or to the need to hold something as true (the inconceivability of other scenarios). In the case of *dare*, the conditions are represented by the risks attendant upon some action. In both cases, therefore, reference is made to circumstances external to the subject of *need* or *dare*.

In full verb usage, on the other hand, it would be more exact to say that *need* and *dare* evoke needing and daring in and for themselves rather than something which is internal to their subjects. As pointed out by Jacobsson regarding sentences such as *The slums need to be replaced by good housing*, the notion of a need internal to the subject is not applicable to all uses of the full verb. Nevertheless, this sentence can be said to evoke a need as having a real existence of its own. The idea of an “inner state of the subject” (Dixon, 1991: 184) does not fit uses of *dare* such as (37) and (38) very well either, since here *dare* evokes the action of exercising daring, i.e. of actually going ahead and doing something requiring audacity. Once again, however, such uses can be adequately treated as evoking the action of exercising audacity as a reality in its own right and not as a mere possibility dependent upon certain conditions for its realization.

## 9. The contrast between modal and full verb uses in non-assertive contexts

The analysis of the distinction between the modal and full verb constructions proposed above will allow us now to compare the two in contexts in which both can be used, since thus far the argumentation has been based on the fact that the modal use is restricted to non-assertive contexts while the full verb use is not. This, however, does not mean that the full verb use is solely limited to affirmative sentences; consequently it is possible to compare it to the modal construction in non-assertive contexts, and even necessary to do so, in order to show that the distinction between the two is not just a matter of context.

### 9.1. Modal vs. full verb dare

#### 9.1.1. Negative contexts

The negative sentences in the corpus all confirm the hypothesis that modal *dare* evokes the conceivability of daring and not daring itself. In all uses a reference to circumstances making daring impossible can be clearly felt, as for example in (33) above or in:

- (42) These two aspects of death cannot be successfully separated, but they dare not be confused or identified. (BUC D04 1390 6)

It is significant to note in these two cases that the full verb construction could not be substituted here at all, since reference to the audacity of the subject is

incompatible with the context (cf. also the impossibility of inserting *be afraid to* in place of *dare*).

In other uses, even though the modal gives the impression of referring to factors making daring impossible without incurring dissuasive consequences, the notion of audacity is not completely excluded by the context:

- (43) ... delayed his departure as one who dare not go to bed early for fear of missing some ... (LOB K01 15 5)

This accounts for the fact that *did not dare to* could be substituted in (43) above, as could *was afraid to*, with a consequent change in meaning.

In full verb usage *dare* also behaves as expected. When *not dare to* evokes the state of not having enough courage to do something, it can generally be replaced by the modal since both evoke states and the state of being afraid implies the existence of prohibitive risks creating a state of quasi-impossibility of daring. This can be seen in:

- (44) Fisher says that in his opinion most Canadians don't support the open immigration policy, but opposition to it has never formed because no party dares to 'battle against the conception of 'the rainbow'.' (Strathy SATN 864. MAG. 388)

When, however, *dare* expresses an action, it is more difficult to substitute the modal, and the latter even seems impossible in contexts such as:

- (45) Grandfather managed to save himself by hanging on to a tree and completed the rest of the journey on horseback. He had lost his plenipotentiary papers in the accident, but apparently he was such an awe-inspiring character that no one dared to ask for them and the Turks signed the treaty. (Strathy PEACE 1. BK. 338)

The intent here is to describe what occurred in this particular situation (no one risked asking for his papers); the modal construction *no one dare ask for them* would have evoked rather a state of impossibility prohibiting any asking by anyone who might conceivably have done so. Whether full verb *dare* evokes an action or a state, what is negated is always the reality of daring (the state of possessing sufficient courage or the action of going ahead and doing something risky): no cases like (33) and (42) above, where the very possibility of daring is negated, have been found with the full verb construction.

### 9.1.2. Interrogative contexts

Only two uses of modal *dare* in interrogative contexts were found in the corpus. In one case, the full verb cannot replace the modal:

- (46) *Theories of the Theatre* then might very well serve such a person as a supplement to (dare one imply 'in lieu of?') such a pursuit. (Strathy QQ 943. FIC. 794)

This is to be expected since here the possibility of anyone implying ‘in lieu of’ is presented as highly questionable due to the fact that they would incur the wrath of authorities in the field. In:

- (47) ‘‘I don’t care,’’ Vera said hostilely. ‘‘How dare she accuse me of poisoning your mother?’’ (LOB L22 204 8)

my initial reaction was that *How did she dare to ...* would sound too literal. However, the occurrence of the sentence below shows that the full verb can be used in this type of context:

- (48) And how, amidst the worst economic conditions since the 1930s, did the Macdonald Commission dare to recommend ‘business as usual’ policies to deal with Canada’s economic problems? (Strathy JEWISH 2. MAG. 2648)

*How did they dare to* does nevertheless evoke something more concrete than the modal, being close to ‘How were they so indifferent to the country’s plight’, whereas *How dare she* in (47) is practically equivalent to ‘How could she’ and evokes the inconceivability of her daring to do something so preposterous as accusing Vera of poisoning her mother.

There are only three other occurrences of full verb *dare* in questions, all in the Strathy corpus. In one case there is no way to compare the full verb with the modal as the form *dare* + bare infinitive could be either modal or blend:

- (49) On the kibbutz you have to be prepared to do all kinds of jobs and you dare to take yourself out of doing work with children, even your own children? (Strathy JEWISH 2. MAG. 518)

In the other two cases a contrast is possible and the modal would be slightly stronger than the full verb, questioning whether the subject performing the infinitive’s event is conceivable rather than asking if the subject is/would be bold enough to perform it. The generalizing force of *any* evoking audacity as not referred to a particular person has the effect of blunting the distinction between the modal and the full verb here, however:

- (50) ... under the management of an American impressario Colonel Hezekiah Linthicum Bateman. (Would any playwright dare to put an American on the stage with that name?) (Strathy ATTIC 2. BL. 1534)  
(cf. Dare any playwright put an American on the stage with that name?)
- (51) Was their vision false? Does anyone dare to say so? Let us say rather that when it was at less than its best, it was stagey ... (Strathy ATTIC 1. BL. 3944)  
(cf. Dare anyone say so?)

### 9.1.3. Other non-assertive contexts

Of the uses of full verb *dare* in other types of non-assertive context, only three allow comparison with the modal construction:



- (52) Peterson said America has nothing to fear in world competition if it dares to be original in both marketing and product ideas. (BUC A27 0880 8)
- (53) The landing was easier than either of them had dared to hope. (LOB N01 183 10)
- (54) Mrs Babiuk sticks to the Ukrainian ladies, like so many others on their side of town. I hardly dared to let her see my shack and me as I am, as she might carry tales to Ski Town. (Strathy FATHER. FIC. 2686)

In (52) above there is no suggestion at all of prohibitive risks making daring unadvisable, the idea expressed being simply that of having the audacity to be original. In contrast, the use of the modal construction in conditional clauses, as in (28) above, produces rather the impression that daring is of highly questionable possibility due to the danger involved in performing the action denoted by the infinitive. Comparing (53) above to (26) shows that while the modal evokes something felt to be prohibitively dangerous, the full verb refers merely to not having the audaciousness to be more optimistic. Sentence (54) may be compared to (25): the modal evokes risks which are so great that daring to breathe is felt to be practically impossible; the full verb, on the other hand, simply describes a young girl as being afraid to let Mrs. Babiuk see her home and does not depict this as something which was completely unthinkable as would the modal construction.

## 9.2. *Modal vs. full verb need*

### 9.2.1. *Negative contexts*

Comparing modal and full verb *need* in non-assertive contexts in the corpus yielded an as yet unobserved fact: while the full verb can often be substituted for the modal in the 'indispensability' sense, this is not the case for the uses where *need* expresses 'inevitability'. Regarding the latter, pertinent examples are:

- (55) ... Yale need never give its record a thought again since outscoring its opponents 694 to 0 in the season of 1888 ... (BUC F30 1730 6)
- (56) ... I believe that the risk need not increase, but may be deliberately reduced ... (BUC D11 1000 13)
- (57) ... if they have an end-product, have one that need never be reached. (LOB F21 85 8)
- (58) Esmond need never have died if you hadn't given him away. (LOB P24 169 6)
- (59) For the Sabres game ... need not have happened, at least not then. (Strathy GAME 3. BK. 1502)
- (60) Chris, who had rearranged time and space so that this torso she was confronted with need never confront her, closeted as it was in an area clearly marked off from hers ... (Strathy LIFE A. FIC. 3241)
- (61) ... preliminary identities during infancy and childhood need not be irreversibly deterministic ... (BUC F39 0490 1)

The impression produced by all of these uses is that the speaker sees no conceivable need for some event to occur or to have occurred. This implies that what is negated here is the conceivability of need and not need itself, the latter being always a specific requirement existing as a result of a specific circumstance or set of circumstances.

As for the ‘logical necessity’ sense, there are no clear cases of it in the corpus. In Palmer’s example, the full verb does not seem substitutable for the auxiliary, however:

(62) He may be there but he needn’t be. (Palmer, 1979: 54)

As with ‘inevitability’, negation only makes sense here if it is represented as bearing on the conceivability of a need to accept the truth of ‘He is there’, since the speaker is not negating some specific need for him to be there but rather the existence of any evidence of any kind that this conclusion is necessary.

The fact that, unlike in the logical necessity and inevitability senses, *need to* can frequently replace the auxiliary in the indispensability sense is explainable by the fact that here the conceivability of need can usually be identified with a specific factor capable of giving rise to a need. Thus in:

(63) ... think of buying expensive outdoor aerals when they need not do so. (LOB H22 104 3)

the modal is felt to be merely a shade more subjective than the full verb would be, since the latter would evoke the non-existence of the need to buy expensive aerals, while the former evokes the speaker’s inability to conceive anything which could possibly give rise to a real need for such equipment (and suggests therefore the slightly condescending attitude that no such need should be thought to exist at all).

The fact that this impression of the speaker’s viewing the existence of any need whatsoever as inconceivable is the only interpretation which makes sense in the sentences below accounts for the impossibility of substituting *need to* for the auxiliary even though the notion of ‘indispensability’ is evoked:

(64) Interfaith communication need not be regarded as an unfortunate burden visited upon us ... (BUC D10 0370 2)

(‘There is no need whatsoever to regard it this way’)

(65) ... we do not know how they were regarded in their day, but we need not believe the epic audience to have been more insensitive to the formulas than the numerous scholars of modern times ... (BUC J67 1200 4)

(‘There is no evidence whatsoever that this is necessary’)

(66) Sharp claws will cut into the shank of a nail and need not be used solely on the nailhead. (Strathy HARROW 63. MAG. 6451)

(‘There is no reason at all to use them only on the head of the nail’)

(67) The Meditation begins with a bang, and ends with a whimper. We need not feel disappointed, however, for we know that the climax of the whole enterprise had already been reached ... at the end of Meditation Four. (Strathy PHILOS. ACA. 1853)

(‘There is absolutely no reason to feel disappointed’)

- (68) After I refused her, she called Father Archipenko and told him he needn't bother to come over and bless her house. He could just do it over the phone. (Strathy FICTION. FIC. 2954)  
(‘There was absolutely no need for him to come’)
- (69) ... They lack the wide appeal of *The Charles Men*, and need not detain us here. (BUC G18 1610 12)  
(The speaker is saying he can see no reason at all to discuss them.)

In contrast to these uses where the speaker's inability to conceive anything which could give rise to a real need is evoked, negative contexts in which only *need to* can be used only make sense if they are interpreted as referring to the absence of some specific factor or factors constituting a need:

- (70) ... then we will no longer be ‘soft’. America doesn't need to ‘push-up’, she needs to stand up. (BUC B19 1620 12)
- (71) ‘Here we are much bigger. We do not need to fight so much.’ (LOB M06 115 1)
- (72) ... it offers the right environment for hockey in Montreal. On the ice and off, it's an environment that doesn't try too hard, that doesn't need to, where everything fits ... (Strathy GAME 3 BK. 1701)

### 9.2.2. Interrogative contexts

Only four uses occur in the corpus, two of the modal and two of the full verb. In both uses of the modal, it is obvious that the speaker's mind is already made up in favour of the negative, the questions being purely rhetorical:

- (73) ... ask what I am going to ‘reply’ to Bradley. But why need one reply to everything and everybody? (BUC C05 0540 3)
- (74) Need we consider, then, whether H.D. is the peer of established Modernist masters like Pound and Williams? In some quarters, the question is still considered important, but the categories on which to base an authoritative answer seem not yet to have emerged ... (Strathy QQAA. FIC. 2782)

This is indicative of the fact that the speaker is evoking the questionable conceivability, in his eyes, of the existence of need and not merely the question of whether a need exists or not. Indeed the use of *why* in (73) recalls its use in questions with the infinitive such as *Why bother?*, where the very existence of any reasons for some action are called into question (cf. Duffley, 1992b: 106–107).

This is very different from the expressive effect felt in questions with the full verb:

- (75) What do parents need to know about those ‘years of the braces’ in order not to ...? (BUC F11 0190 4)
- (76) Why didn't they need to know about things like that? Lesje now wonders. What do they need to know about? Probably not much. Certainly not the ques-

tions that occur to her at times of free-ranging speculation. Did dinosaurs have penises, for instance? (Strathy LIFE.B. FIC. 968)

In (75) the question concerns the exact content of a need whose existence is taken for granted; *What need parents know?*, by questioning the conceivability of any need existing, would suggest that parents very probably need know nothing special about their adolescents during this period of their lives. Similarly in (76) *What need they know about?* would imply that quite possibly they need know about nothing at all, whereas the point of the sentence is rather to ask about the content of the other students' desire for knowledge. As for the negative question at the beginning of the quotation, it requests the reasons for the other students' lack of need to know about certain things that interested Lesje. *Why needn't they know about things like that?* would question the conceivability of a purported absence of a need for them to know and would therefore imply that the speaker thought they did in fact need to be informed about some matter.

### 9.2.3. Other non-assertive contexts

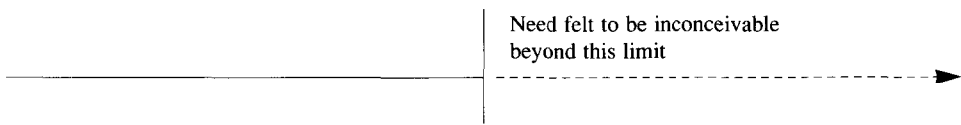
The modal use of *need* has been found in the following other types of non-assertive context in the corpus: comparative clauses (1 occurrence), with *only* (8 occurrences), with *hardly* (3 occurrences), preceding *but* (2 occurrences), with *all* (3 occurrences) and in clauses introduced by *whether* or *if* (3 occurrences). Of these, only the following reveal some sort of difference between the modal and full verb constructions:

- (77) At each step of the calculation the operating variables of only one stage need be varied. To see how important this economy is, ... (BUC J79 0300 9)
- (78) North American manufacturers make more than 300 kinds for nailing everything from horseshoes to the blacksmith's wooden tool box. The casual user, however, need be concerned with only three types: common, spiral and finishing. (Strathy HARROW 63. MAG. 6187)
- (79) ... so accustomed to think of men as the privileged who need but ask and receive. (BUC G31 0110 9)
- (80) I need hardly say that if Gillian's arrest had been anything other than a trick there would have been no question of my confronting him personally. (LOB L24 32 2)

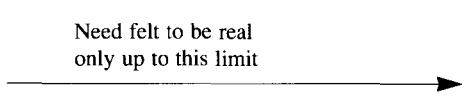
In the sentences with *only*, the modal produces a strongly restrictive effect. Thus the context of (77) obviously involves a search for the greatest economy possible and the import is therefore that it is useless to vary more than one variable. As for (78), this sentence concerns more the 297 types of nails which the casual user can forget about – this is the truly significant fact – rather than a positive need for three types of nails; the latter would be the case in a sentence such as *To build a shed you only need to use three types of nails*. In this respect (77) and (78) can be compared to:

- (81) Although a mature business only needs to allot 3 to 5 percent of its sales for advertising, a new venture can spend as much as 10 percent. (Strathy HARROW 63. MAG. 7093)

Here *need only allot* would suggest that anything beyond 3 to 5 percent was excessive, whereas the intent of the sentence is merely to express the extent of the need to spend on advertising in the case of a business which has already established a clientele. A diagram may be useful to illustrate how the modal is evoking conceivability and the full verb reality in these uses. The adverb *only* evokes the idea of a limit, both with the full verb and the modal. With the modal, the concern is with what is beyond the limit, where the speaker feels any need to be completely inconceivable, whence the greater restrictive effect produced by this construction:



Since the speaker sees need here in terms of its conceivability and not its reality, this use implies that it is unreasonable or useless to go beyond the limit evoked by *only*. With the closely related full verb construction, on the other hand, the existence of need is asserted as a reality but only inside the limit implied by *only*:



This gives the impression of a more factual view since one is not extrapolating beyond the limit into the realm of the inconceivable but merely asserting how great the need really is. Usage with *but* confirms this analysis: this conjunction signifies a highly restrictive view, as can be seen in (79) above, where anything more than merely asking is presented as being utterly superfluous in order for men to receive what they desire; consequently, it is found only with the modal construction.

In uses containing the adverb *hardly* such as (80) only the modal has been attested. This fact is also explainable by the hypothesis that here it is the conceivability of a need which is in question and not its reality. The person who utters this sentence obviously feels that there should not be any need to state some fact which ought to be obvious from what he has already said. He is therefore not evoking a need which does not exist but one which *should* not exist, i.e. a need which is inconceivable in his eyes.

The explanatory hypothesis formulated above allows us to understand therefore both why auxiliary and full verb *need* can be practical equivalents in some cases of the indispensability sense, and why in the inevitability and logical necessity senses one form cannot be substituted for the other. When the conceivability of a need can be identified with some specific factor capable of giving rise to a need, the auxiliary

and the full verb can produce pragmatically similar effects. When, however, the auxiliary is used to evoke any conceivable factor which could give rise to a need, the full verb is no longer appropriate.

Having identified the notions underlying the modal and full verb uses of *need* and *dare*, it is now time to show how the way in which daring and need are conceived in modal usage brings these two verbs into semantic relation with the modal auxiliaries and thereby to explain the modal-like morpho-syntactic characteristics which *need* and *dare* exhibit in these uses. In order to do this a brief discussion of the correlation between the semantics and morpho-syntax of the modals is necessary. As mentioned earlier, the point of view adopted here is that it is the semantic content of the modals which explains their peculiar morpho-syntactic behaviour and not some formal syntactic rule.

### 10. The semantics and morpho-syntax of the modal auxiliaries

It is generally agreed that the English modal auxiliaries express notions such as possibility (*may/can*), necessity (*must*), and probability or predictability (*will*). Quirk et al. (1985: 221), for instance, describe the meanings of the modals in the following terms: *may/can* (permission ↔ possibility, ability), *must* (obligation ↔ necessity), *will/shall* (volition ↔ prediction). They contend that “ ‘ability’ is best considered a special case of possibility”, and following this line of reasoning I would argue that ‘permission’ is a special case of possibility, ‘obligation’ a special case of necessity, and ‘volition’ a special case of predictability: if someone has obtained permission to do something, it is now possible for them to do it; if someone has an obligation to do something, it is necessary for them to do it; if someone is ready and willing to do something, then one can practically predict that they will do it. These generalizations highlight the overall type of meaning expressed by the modals and show that the latter denote various forms of what could be called potentiality or virtuality. As Joly and O’Kelly (1990: 308) point out, therefore, they do not express the actual existence of an event but rather its potential existence.

This general description of the kind of meaning expressed by the modal auxiliaries brings out the analogy between the latter and the subjunctive mood, which has indeed merited the modals their appellation. Just as the subjunctive, in contrast to the indicative, evokes an event as a mere potentiality:

(82a) John insists that Mary knows the answer.

(82b) John insists that Mary know the answer,

so the modal auxiliaries do not evoke the reality of an event but merely its possibility, probability, or necessity. What is novel about the position being taken here is that I hold that it is the fact that the modals express this type of meaning which conditions their morphological and syntactic behaviour, i.e. that this behaviour is not merely a grammatical fact, to be stated by a purely formal rule. To start with their morphology, it cannot be a mere accident that both the modal auxiliaries and the

subjunctive mood drop the *-s* ending in the third person singular present. While it is true historically that these auxiliaries were in fact preterite-presents and had no third person singular ending, forms with *-s* could have appeared through analogy as occurred with the dental suffix in the case of the ‘second-generation’ past forms *could*, *would*, etc. One must consequently explain why they did not and, in addition, why *will*, which was not originally a preterite-present, lost its third person singular ending when it came to be used as a modal. Joly and O’Kelly (1990: 20, 99) argue that the third person *-s* ending on the verb is in fact meaningful and expresses the idea of absence, since the third person is defined by its absence from participation in the act of speech: the third person evokes neither the speaker nor the hearer (who must both be present) but rather that which is spoken of (which can be, and very often is, absent). Regarding the modals, these authors propose (p. 310) that the reason for the *-s* ending not being introduced is that these verbs express potentiality and therefore imply absence from actuality since they evoke non-reality: since *-s* is of itself a sign of absence – the absence of the third person from the speaking relationship established in the present of speech – its use would be superfluous with verbs which already express a form of absence from actuality due to their lexical meaning. While Joly and O’Kelly’s argumentation requires further refinement, it does receive confirmation from the fact that the third person *-s* does not appear with past tense indicative forms (*\*My grandfather smoked a pipe*), since this tense also implies absence from the actuality of the speaking situation. The coherence of this set of facts concerning the *-s* ending indicates that its absence is not merely a matter of inexplicable grammatical rule but is associated with a semantic constant which conditions its use.

The parallel between the modals and the present subjunctive drawn above can also help to explain the syntactic fact that the modals do not require *do*-support in negatives and interrogatives and, by the same token, why they appear in tag questions where one would normally find *do*. Just as the subjunctive can be opposed to the indicative as non-real versus real, the modal auxiliaries can be opposed to *do*-auxiliary in the same way. Thus while the former evoke the infinitive event’s possibility, probability or necessity (*I may, will, must know the answer*), the latter evokes its actual reality or realization (*I do know the answer/She did tell me*). Since *do* evokes actuality, it does take the *-s* ending in the third person present indicative whereas the modal auxiliaries do not. And since it is defined in opposition to the modals, *do* is not compatible with them in negation and interrogation even though it is the normal way of expressing a negative or interrogative idea with most other verbs.<sup>2</sup>

As for the use of the modals with the bare and not the *to*-infinitive, the explanation for this syntactic fact is also semantic and lies in the type of meaning expressed by the modals. As shown in Duffley (1992b), *to* occurs with the infinitive whenever

<sup>2</sup> This analysis is in no way in contradiction with the use of *do* in negatives and questions: as Hewson (1990) has shown, the goal of negation and interrogation is not to deny or question an event in itself as an object of thought but to deny or question its real existence in time. This English usually does by applying the negation or question to the idea of reality or realization in time signified by *do*-auxiliary and not to the lexical notion of the event in itself.

the latter's event is conceived as being somehow subsequent to some other point of reference. This is perhaps clearest in usage with matrix verbs where *to* can evoke the infinitive's event as the goal (*I tried to open the window*) or result (*I managed to open the window*) of the matrix verb's event. The modals, however, are indifferent to whether the infinitive's event is subsequent (*He may come*) or coincident (*He may be here*) in time with respect to what the modal denotes. This is because these auxiliaries do not situate a reality in time constituting a before-position with respect to the infinitive's event, but merely denote a potentiality expressing the type of modal relation which this event has with respect to reality.

The modal characteristics of *need* and *dare* can be explained according to the same principles. It has been shown above that in modal usage these two verbs do not evoke needing and daring as realities in their own right but rather the mere conceivability of needing and daring, i.e. need and daring as potentialities defining the type of modal relation which the infinitive's event has to reality, *dare* evoking a particular kind of possibility, *need* a form of necessity. As such, need and daring are not felt to constitute before-positions with respect to the event expressed by the infinitive and so *to* is not used before the latter. Furthermore, this way of conceiving need and daring as non-realities defining the infinitive's relation to reality sets *need* and *dare* in opposition to *do*-auxiliary, and so the latter does not occur in negation and questions when these two verbs express this type of meaning. Lastly, since in modal usage need and daring are represented as being absent from actuality, in the sense that the speaker is evoking their conceivability and not their reality, it comes as no surprise that they should drop the *-s* ending in the third person singular as do the modals.

Nevertheless, *need* and *dare* are not pure modals, as they exhibit the characteristics explained above only when their lexical content is conceived in a certain way. Moreover, they also differ from the pure modal auxiliaries in being able to combine both modal and full verb characteristics in some uses. Such 'blend constructions', as they are called by Quirk et al. (1985: 138), constitute a further challenge to a purely formal approach to grammar, as it will be shown below that they too are conditioned by meaning and not by formal rule.

## 11. Blend constructions

### 11.1. Need

Blend constructions are extremely rare with *need*<sup>3</sup> – only three examples occur in the whole corpus:

- (83) Sure, sure, you're the one take over for Pretty, soon as I get the supply, get started up again, isn't it? You don't need worry. (BUC L08 0680 4)

<sup>3</sup> The reason for this will be discussed below when *need* and *dare* are compared.



- (84) You don't need worry, Judge. Big wind like that can't drown good man. (LOB N03 134 6)
- (85) It is a shared understanding that requires no fast talk, no big cars or flashy clothes, that needs not be argued or explained. It is simply there. (Strathy GAME 1. BK. 558)

The first two occurrences are obviously attempts at imitating foreign speakers of English – Ehrman (1966: 72) describes the first use as ‘mock-broken English’. Sentence (85) represents native-speaker usage, however, and can be compared to the ‘handful of blends’ found by Jacobsson (1974: 63), all of which also exhibit the pattern *he needs not/only go*:

- (86) ‘‘If a trainer wants to ensure that a horse has no chance he needs only give it a bucket of water just before the race,’’ says one racing man.
- (87) To do this, one needs only meditate on the meaning of the cryptotype, e.g. of the typical verbs which take UN-, or to use the methods of free-analogizing akin to the ‘free-association’ methods of Freud and Jung.
- (88) Indeed none of the responses needs be the same.

All such uses are non-assertive, which implies that no real need is affirmed to exist and that the mere conceivability of a need is being evoked; on the other hand, the full verb construction could also be inserted in all four cases as it would also make sense here to negate or restrict a real need. This ambivalence accounts for the possibility of a blend construction in these sentences.

### 11.2. Dare

The occurrence of blend constructions is far more frequent with *dare*, where the latter represent a good 40% of uses in each of the three corpora examined. As has already been shown elsewhere (Duffley, 1992a), all such uses evoke the conceivability of daring and not merely its reality. Consideration will therefore be given here only to the relation between the blend construction and the full verb or modal use.

The distinction between the blend construction and the modal and full verb uses can be stated in the following general formula: whereas full verb usage evokes the reality of daring and modal usage its possibility or conceivability, blend constructions evoke both the possibility/conceivability and the reality of daring at the same time. The contrast between blend and full verb is perhaps clearest in conditional clauses. The full verb use given in (52) above merely expresses the idea of having the audacity to go ahead and perform the event denoted by the infinitive. The blend structure, on the other hand, evokes the hypothesis of someone having the audacity to actually perform the event as unlikely due to the existence of prohibitive risks making daring extremely unadvisable (i.e. practically inconceivable), as in:

- (89) ... as solemn as if they were at a funeral and if you dare interrupt they chop your head off. (LOB P14 50 7)

- (90) By God, if he dares come here again, I'll make him damned sorry he did.  
(O'Neill, 1919: 76)

This means that here the possibility of daring is being evoked – as highly questionable – and not merely the actualization of daring as in (52).

In the negative context in (91) below the impression is that of the subject not being in a position to realize the event because he feels the risks to be too high for daring to be possible:

- (91) The Admassy place could not be far now. He would go in there, climb through the window, and at least be safe for a little while and able to rest. There was even a bare chance that the phone had not been disconnected. He did not dare climb back up to the road. He was in deep water but at least they could not reach him there. (BUC L04 1070 4)

The state-like impression of (91) can be compared with:

- (92) They did not *dare* to take the road, but they kept it on their left, following its line as well as they could at a little distance. (Tolkien, 1968: 674)

where if *dare* is interpreted as expressing an action the sentence constitutes a description of what the group did not do rather than of a state of impossibility in which they felt themselves to be. (In the state-like interpretation of the full verb, however, paraphrasable by *afraid to*, the difference would be slighter, with the blend adding to the idea of the subject not having sufficient courage a reference to the risks being prohibitively high, i.e. to daring being inconceivable in this situation, thereby taking some of the onus off the subject and putting it onto the situation). Similarly, the blend construction in the following sentence is a variant on the modal structure 'dare I/we say?':

- (93) He turned away from the place of his – shall we dare say his Waterloo? – to go to the door. (BUC G40 0300 2)

The idea is that of 'can we dare without risk of over-exaggerating?' On the other hand, the blend would seem inappropriate as a request for information as to what actually transpired in the case of a use such as:

- (94) Did he dare to ask her out yesterday as he said he was going to do?

Here the full verb evokes the action of 'taking the plunge'.

While the full verb and blend uses both evoke the reality of daring, with the blend referring also to its conceivability, the modal and blend uses both evoke the conceivability of daring, with the blend referring also to its reality. This explains why the blend construction can be used to attribute the realization of the action of daring to its subject at the same time as it evokes daring as difficult to conceive as possible. This is the impression one gets in sentences such as:

- (95) When Agamemnon dares bring his concubine, the prophetess Cassandra, home from Troy, Clytemnestra kills them both and exults in full-bodied fury unfit for prudish ears. (Stone, 1988: 38)

This sentence implies that he did actually dare but that he shouldn't have because the risks were prohibitively high, i.e. the conditions making daring conceivable were not fulfilled. Significantly enough, the modal construction would not be possible in this context.

The fact that the blend use of *dare* refers both to the dispositions of the subject and to the risks determining whether daring is feasible also allows one to understand why only the modal would be acceptable in the sentence below:

- (96a) Inflation is a problem which dare not be neglected.  
 (96b) ?\*Inflation is a problem which doesn't dare be neglected.

Whereas the modal can abstract completely from the subject's dispositions and merely evoke a state of impossibility due to prohibitive risks, the blend construction cannot produce this impersonal type of impression and always implies some reference to the subject: this is why in (96b) blend *dare* seems to introduce the inappropriate suggestion that inflation has some say in the matter of its not being neglected.

The blend construction thus places greater focus than the modal on the subject, attributing to the latter the state of possessing or the action of exercising courage at the same time as it evokes the riskability of some course of action. Indeed this might have been expected, for if morphology and syntax are reflections of meaning, the fact that *dare* does not have fully modal morpho-syntactic characteristics in these uses would lead one to predict that they must not be quite as fully 'modal' on the semantic level either. What is common to both modal and blend constructions nevertheless is the fact that they both evoke factors determining whether the existence of daring seems possible or not, i.e. the conceivability of daring and not just the action or state of daring as a reality in its own right.

As for the fact that *dare* admits blends far more easily than *need*, with which they are practically inexistent, this seems to be due to the more complex nature of the notion of daring, which involves a reference not only to conditions determining whether daring seems conceivable to the speaker (i.e. to potentially prohibitive risks) but also to the reaction of the subject to these risks. With *dare*, therefore, one can question the existence of conditions making daring conceivable without necessarily questioning the actualization of daring itself. This is the case in (95) above, where the impression is that of an actual exercising of audacity in circumstances in which the nature of the risks made daring inconceivable in the speaker's eyes.

With *need* on the other hand, negating or questioning what conditions or gives rise to the existence of a need, what determines whether a real need must be posited, implies *ipso facto* negating the need itself. One cannot deny that the conditions giving rise to a need exist without necessarily implying that the need itself does not exist. This makes *need* different from *dare*, where, as seen above, one can intimate that the risks attendant upon some action are/were prohibitively high without neces-

sarily denying that the subject went ahead and performed the action anyway, in spite of the risks.

## 12. The semantic relation between *need* and *dare* in their modal use and the core modals

What has preceded has prepared the ground for a deeper understanding of how *need* and *dare* come into semantic relation with the modals. As regards *need*, the semantic kinship which it exhibits with the core modal *must* has long been perceived by grammarians. It is now possible, however, to define this relation more precisely and to pinpoint how each denotes necessity. *Must* evokes necessity directly, as a state in which some action cannot not be done or some fact cannot not be true. Auxiliary *need*, in contrast, evokes necessity through the notion of need: it discusses whether the conditions requiring one to posit a need for the infinitive event exist, i.e. the necessity of hypothesizing a need. This would explain why the auxiliary use of *need* is not found in affirmative contexts, since if a real need must be posited as really existing then one simply evokes its existence and not the necessity of its existence.<sup>4</sup>

The relationship of *dare* to the core modals can be seen in the fact that in its modal and partly modal uses *dare* bears a close resemblance to auxiliary *can*. This is most obvious in sentences such as (31)–(33) above, where *can* could be substituted with only a slight shift in meaning. What differentiates *dare* and *can* be seen from the following example, cited earlier, where *dare not* occurs immediately after *cannot*:

- (97) These two aspects of death cannot be successfully separated, but they dare not be confused or identified. (BUC 1390 E1 D04)

*Cannot* obviously evokes the idea of impossibility; *dare not*, on the other hand, adds something to this basic notion, and can be said to evoke infeasibility or impossibility due to prohibitive consequences or risks, whence my term ‘unriskability’. When it expresses this idea in its pure state (i.e. in modal use), *dare* attributes neither the action of daring nor the state of possessing sufficient courage to its subject,

<sup>4</sup> Consider, however, the following curious uses, which we have not included because they may be dialectal or archaic, where the notion of the necessity of positing a need would allow one to make sense of the use of the modal construction:

- (i) – ‘It’s only about that young Twist my dear,’ said Mr. Sowerberry, ‘‘a very good-looking boy that.’’  
– ‘‘He need be, for he eats enough,’’ observed the lady. (Dickens, from Poutsma, 1923: 15)
- (ii) When I consider all, and think of what has passed, I need be made of iron to stand before him. (Dickens, from Visser, 1969: 1426)
- (iii) A man need be very young and pretty foolish too to be excused for such conduct. (G.B. Shaw, from Visser, 1969: 1426)

Here a real need is not asserted straightforwardly but only inasmuch as hypothesizing its existence would explain some other fact or justify something which would otherwise be unjustifiable. Further observation is required, however, in order to determine whether this type of construction is part of standard usage.

but merely evokes what conditions an action or state of daring and determines whether it is possible to dare or not, viz. the existence of potentially prohibitive risks militating against the performance of some action and/or against the ability of the subject to summon up enough courage to dare.

The fact that modal *dare* does not attribute real daring but merely the possibility thereof to its subject accounts for its affinity with non-assertive contexts. One use has been found, however, which does not seem dialectal or archaic, in which modal *dare* does occur in an affirmative sentence:

(98) But she had forgiven the pot man. They were friends. She dare now finger his pots. So she was happy. (Lawrence, 1913: 36)

However, even this use does not stand in contradiction to the position held here. On the contrary it confirms it, as reference is obviously being made in this context to the possibility of daring: the meaning here is that whereas the quarrel had previously made it prohibitively dangerous for her to dare touch his pots, their having made up made it possible now for her to dare to do so. This explains why *could* would convey a very similar meaning to *dare* in this sentence.<sup>5</sup>

We can now discern more clearly therefore why *need* and *dare* behave like modals when they evoke inevitability, indispensability, logical necessity and riskability. In all the uses where these two verbs show modal characteristics, neither one predicates a real need or real daring of its subject. This holding back from asserting anything real of its subject is what makes *dare* and *need* similar to the modal auxiliaries, for virtuality is also the semantic common denominator of all the core modals: *may*, *can*, *shall*, *will*, and *must* are all unique in that they have as a lexical content incorporated within the verb itself the notions of possibility, probability and necessity, all of which are defined in opposition to reality.<sup>6</sup> Since *need* and *dare* do not have purely modal meaning but still possess a lexical content which normally predicates something real – a real need or a real act or state of daring – of their subject in affirmative use, they can be used as equivalents of modal auxiliaries only when the speaker does not assert the real existence of what their lexical content denotes. This explains why Jacobsson observed some form of non-assertiveness as the constant element underlying the modal uses of *need* and why we have discovered the same thing to be true of *dare*. *Need* and *dare* thus provide a valuable insight into

<sup>5</sup> The explanation given for (98) would also apply to the stereotyped expression *dare say*, as in *I dare say it's going to rain*, which has not been discussed because it may constitute a case of lexicalization since it is often written as one word. However, its meaning could be treated as similar to that of (98) in that it implies that the speaker feels himself to be in a state of riskability due to the chances of his being wrong not being very high. This use could therefore also be paraphrased using *can*: 'I can assert this with only a slight risk of being wrong'; the speaker is in fact saying that, due to the risks not being very high, he feels that he can dare assert some claim.

<sup>6</sup> One might object that *have to* and *be able to* also express such notions; however, in this case they are not part of the verb's lexical content (*have* expresses the notion of possession and *be* that of existence, i.e. two realities) but are rather a product of the combination of the verb's meaning with that of *to* (prospective notion) or of a futurizing adjective such as *able* plus *to*.

the type of meaning expressed by the English modals, showing more clearly how their lexical content is defined in opposition to actuality. It has been shown above how this way of defining the modals' meaning can explain why the latter – and *need* and *dare* in modal usage – drop the *-s* ending in the third person singular, are incompatible with *do*-auxiliary in negatives and interrogatives and are construed with the bare rather than the *to*-infinitive. It has even been possible to propose an explanation for the blending of modal and full verb characteristics with *dare* based on the more complex nature of its lexical meaning as compared to that of *need*. All this goes to show that the morpho-syntax of *need*, *dare* and the modals is not just a set of bald grammatical facts, which can only be dealt with by means of formal rules, but rather a consequence of the type of meaning which these verbs express, and therefore is open to explanation in semantic terms. The terms used in this study have probably struck the reader as somewhat intuitive at some moments. This is inevitable in an area of usage such as that with *dare* and *need* in which many uses are being described in semantic terms for the first time. Moreover, the approach taken here has attempted to avoid *a priori* logical categories because these enshrine the divorce between syntax and semantics as an unproven principle of analysis before even looking at the facts. Of course, all this implies that the descriptions of meaning which I have offered here require further refinement and discussion. But they at least provide a starting-point for investigating the correlation between meaning and form in this area of usage and open the way to going beyond a purely formal approach to grammar.

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