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Semi-modal verb "Need to" and the modality of obligation "Must & Have to" in authentic corpus-based English

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Abstract

Recent studies indicate that the modality system of current English grammar depicts notable alteration in the frequency, distribution and semantic developments of modals and semi- modals. Research on some modal auxiliaries points toward a considerable decrease in the use of these modals (e.g. shall, must) while semantically similar phrases called semi-modals (e.g. have to, need to, be going to) show an upward trend in use. This research paper focuses on an investigation of the semi-modal verb "need to" in naturally occurring American English comparing to the root modal "must" and the semi-modal "have to", which are mainly used for the expressions of strong obligation. As an exploratory corpus study, the purpose of the paper is to present conducted observations and make inferences from the authentic uses of the epistemic necessity and modality of obligation in the context of American English. All data are obtained from the Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA) over the span of 1990-2017. The occurrence of "need to" compared to "must" and "have to" is examined through frequency and percentages, distribution by genre and year, most common verbs and personal pronouns used with modals, and modal combinations of "need to". This corpus-based analysis has revealed various alternative constructions and an increase in the frequencies of the occurrences of "need to" in the corpus, providing support for earlier studies in the field. It is clearly seen that modality gradually gets free from central and root structures and heads toward modal expressions which are called semi-modals forming milder means of obligation expressions.

Keywords: Corpus linguistics, corpus-based study, modality, authentic English.

Derlem temelli İngilizce'de yarım kip yapısı "Need to" (-meli/-malı) ve zorunluluk kipleri "Must & Have to" (-mek zorunda)

Öz

Son çalışmalar günümüz İngilizce dilbilgisindeki kiplik sisteminde kip belirteçlerinin kullanım sıklıkları, dağılımı ve anlamsal gelişimi açısından dikkate değer bir değişim göstermektedir. Bazı kiplik yapıları üzerinde yapılan araştırmalar, kimi yapılarda (shall, must gibi) önemli bir düşüş olduğunu fakat anlamsal açıdan benzer yapıların kullanımında da (have to, need to, be going to gibi) artış olduğunu göstermektedir. Bu araştırma otantik Amerikan İngilizcesindeki "need to" (-meli, -malı) yapısını zorunluluk ifadeleri olarak kullanılan "must" (-mek zorunda) kip yapısı ve "have to" (-mek zorunda) yarım kip yapısı ile karşılaştırarak incelemektedir. Bir derlem çalışması olarak, araştırmanın amacı Amerikan İngilizcesi bağlamında zorunluluk ve gereklilik kiplerinin gerçek kullanımlarını inceleyip bunlardan çıkarımlar yapmaktır. Araştırma verileri 1990-2017 yıllarına yönelik olarak Çağdaş Amerikan İngilizcesi Derlemi'nden (COCA) elde edilmiştir. "Must" ve "have

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to" ile karşılaştırmalı olarak "need to" kullanımı sıklık ve yüzdelikler, tür ve yıllara göre dağılım, kiplerle yaygın kullanılan fiiller ve kişi zamirleri ve kiplerin birlikte kullanımı başlıkları altında incelenmiştir. Bu çalışma alandaki benzer çalışmaların sonuçlarını destekleyerek, yapıların alternatif kullanımlarını ve "need to" kipinin artan kullanım sıklığını ortaya koymaktadır. Açıkça görülmektedir ki kiplik yavaşça kök yapılardan çıkıp zorunluluk ifadelerini yumuşatan yarım kip ifadelerine doğru evrilmektedir.

Anahtar kelimeler: Derlem dilbilim, derlem temelli çalışma, kiplik, otantik İngilizce.

1. Introduction

Over the past few decades, the studies conducted in modality, modal verbs and modal auxiliaries have shown that there is an apparent and ongoing change in English. Research on some modal auxiliaries indicates a considerable decrease in the use of these modals (e.g. shall, must) while semantically similar phrases called semi-modals (e.g. have to, need to, be going to) show an upward trend in use. Until now, conducted studies have been based on data gained from different corpus sources including British National Corpus (BNC), A Representative Corpus of English Registers (ARCHER), Santa Barbara Corpus of Spoken American English (CSAE), International Corpus of English (ICE), and The Bergen Corpus of London Teenage English (COLT) (e.g. Biber et al., 1999; Biber, 2004; Nokkonen, 2006; Biewer 2009; Diaconu, 2011). The increase of communication tools, the common use of internet and the limitless information shared on social media lead people to use language more and more. Especially as a means of global interaction, English is used by millions of people around the world and some central structures in the language have been evolving slightly. From this aspect, corpus studies help linguists, language experts and people see the evolution through statistical and descriptive data.

Increases and decreases of some forms in modality in authentic context have a direct effect on language learning environment as well. Corpus studies are useful sources to see the changes at first hand so EFL text book writers and educational planners are supposed to follow these changes in the target language. For this reason, the current study aims to share the picture of an ongoing change in modality in terms of "need to", "must", and "have to" with other stakeholders of language education to raise awareness for setting realistic goals and expecting learning outcomes which are parallel to the language use in real life and authentic contexts.

Based on the motives mentioned above, this paper presents data on the semi-modal verb "need to" comparing to the root modal "must" and the semi-modal "have to", which are mainly used for the expressions of strong obligation, from the Corpus of Contemporary American English over the span of 1990-2017. Firstly, some background information is provided in Literature Review part of the study. English modality for necessity and strong obligation is explained through sentences which serve as examples. In the following part, corpus-based studies specifically on "need to" are presented through tables. After sharing the research question in the third part of the study, the research design is offered in the fourth part. The fifth part includes the results and the discussion providing statistical tables, graphs, sample sentences from the database and inferences based on the findings. The last part, section 6, contains some discussion and conclusion.

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2. Literature review

2.1. English modality for necessity and strong obligation: Must, Have to, Need to

Quirk et al. (1985:219) define modality "as the manner in which the meaning of a clause is qualified so as to reflect the speaker's judgment of the likelihood of the proposition it expresses being true." Biber et al. (2006:73) add that the modals "are used to build up complex verb phrases and cannot occur alone unless a lexical verb is recoverable from the context". Modality can be thought of as an umbrella term and the term consists of modal auxiliary verbs, modal verbs, modal adjectives and modal adverbs. Modal auxiliary verbs can be classified in three main semantic categories of ability-possibility-permission, necessity-obligation and volition-prediction.

The modality of obligation is expressed by the modals "must" and "should" (Kastrone, 2008). When it comes to strong obligation, discussing the modal auxiliary "must" would be appropriate since "should" expresses a much weaker obligation (Swan, 2002:351). Modality of strong obligation can be expressed by other verbs as well, some on the borderline between auxiliaries and lexical verbs, some behaving like full lexical verbs but expressing modal meaning (Kastrone, 2008). In the categorization of Quirk et al. (1985:236), it is shown that "need to" is placed under the title of "marginal auxiliaries" and with the headline of both "necessity" and "obligation". Biber et al. (2006:489-490) present "need to" and "have to" among six different semi-modal verbs that are used to express strong obligation and necessity.

As noted above, "must" is expressed for strong obligation which conveys "obligations, duties, directives, recommendations and the like" (Collins, 2005:251). The following sentence can be shown as an example for such a strong obligation:

> (1) You *must* be back by ten o'clock. ['You are obliged to be back. . .'; 'I require you to be back. . .] (Quirk et al. 1985:225)

In the example (1), the use of "must" shows the authority of the source of obligation.

While "must" is used for the subjective obligation which normally comes from the speaker, "have to" expresses an obligation that comes from outside and lacks the implication that the speaker is in authority. As Foley and Hall (2003) state, "have to" is used to express an obligation we see as outside our control, e.g. rules imposed by an authority.

> (2) I *have to* work from nine to five. [More natural than I must work from nine to five] (Swan, 2002:351)

"Must" and "have (got) to" can both be used in British English to talk about necessity. In American English, "have to" is more common, especially in speech (Swan, 2002:352).

> (3) Plants *must / have to* get enough light and water if they are to grow properly. (Swan, 2002: 352)

In the example (3), both verbs can be used in British English to talk about obligation. In American English, "have to" is the normal form (Swan, 2002:352).

The distinction between "must" and "have to" based on British English can be seen in the examples below:

> (4) You really *must* go to church next Sunday – you haven't been for ages. (I'm telling you to.)

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(5) Catholics *have to* go to church on Sundays. (Their religion tells them to.) (Swan, 2002:352)

In most instances, "need to" expresses a neutral participant-external necessity that can be paraphrased by 'it is necessary for…to…' (Seggewiß, 2012) as in the following example:

(6) I really need to get some more sleep. I'm always exhausted. (Foley & Hall, 2003:183)

Foley and Hall (2003:183) state that "need to, must, have to" can be used to express necessity (i.e. a requirement that results from things other than just commands, rules or laws):

(7) All living beings *need to / must / have to* take in sustenance in order to live. (Foley & Hall, 2003:183)

However, not all meanings of "must" correspond to those of "need to." For example, while the core meaning of "must" expresses strong subjective obligation, the core meaning of "need to" expresses objective compulsion (Kastrone, 2008).

Using "need to" in the passive also helps formulating indirect and thus more polite obligations (Seggewiß, 2012), for instance:

(8) That poor bird – his cage really *needs to be* cleaned. (Foley & Hall, 2003:183)

2.2 "Need to" in corpus-based authentic English

Diaconu (2011) asserts that corpus-based studies on the English modality system fall largely in two categories: studies which focus on the long-term historical developments and those which analyse recent diachronic and synchronic changes. As Diaconu (2011) suggests, in spite of different research perspectives, these studies provide ample evidence that modal *must* is drastically decreasing whereas the semi-modals *have to* and *need to* are increasing at different speeds in genre-specific environments in present-day English. Smith (2003: 255; 260) expresses that the increase of *need to* in present-day English might function as a possible competitor for *must* and *have to*.

(9) You *need to* get a hair-cut. (Diaconu, 2011)

In the example above, the imposed obligation meaning of *need to* is more indirect as against *must*, which is generally associated with direct speaker authority.

In her study, Tottie (2002) states that "need" (need to) is more frequent in British English while Americans probably prefer to use "have to" instead. According to Tottie, "in negative sentences "need" is often used without *do* in British English, especially with verbs like bother, fear, worry" (Tottie 2002:156-157). To illustrate, if a speaker of British English would say *You needn't worry about them*, a speaker of American English would prefer *You don't need to worry about them*.

Some corpus studies in the literature show that use of "need" decreases compared to use of "need to". For example, according to Leech, "need (nt)" dropped by 12.5% in American English. When it comes to "need to", it became more frequent by 123.2% in American English (Leech 2003: 228-229). However, most researchers agree that the rapid growth of "need to" cannot be accounted for only by the decline of "need" (Kastrone, 2008). It is apparent in the literature that the decline of "must" has received greater attention than the rise of "need to." Mair & Leech's (2006) frequency analysis verifies the decrease in the usage of *must*.

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Additionally, semi-modals are most preferred particularly in spoken American English. In the study of Nokkonen (2006) it is shown that the highest frequency of *need to* is found in the spoken register. At the end of the study, a comparison of *need to* with *must* and *have to* is offered by providing and proposing a research area for potential diachronic and synchronic variation.

Seggewiß (2012) showed the summary of most of the complex corpus-based and corpus-informed research on English modal auxiliaries as a table. Some information of this table was adapted from Tagliamonte/D'Arcy (2007: 54) but extended by an extra column 'modals studied.' Based on these studies, Table 1 shows some corpus-based research on English modal auxiliaries which includes "need to".

Table 1: Overview of previous corpus-based research of modal auxiliaries including "need to" (related parts are received from Seggewiß, 2012:33-39)

Research	Modals studied	Corpus-Variety	Style/register	Time period analysed	Words (ca.)
Biber et al. (1999)	*will, would, can, could, may, should, must, might, shall, have to, (had) better, (have) got to, **need to**, (be) supposed to, ought to, be going to, used to*	Longman [in part, BNC] BrE-AmE	written and spoken, multi-genre	post 1980	40m
Biber (2004)	*will, would, can, could, may, should, must, might shall; have to, (had) better, (have) got to, **need to**, (be) supposed to, ought to, be going to, used to*	ARCHER BrE-AmE	written	1650-1990	1.7m
Biewer (2009)	*should, have (got) to, must, **need to**, ought to, supposed to, need*	ICE BrE, AmE, NZE, FijE, SamE, CookE	written (press sections)	1990s onwards	2m
Collins (2005)	*must, should, need, **need to**, have to, have got to, ought to, had better, may/might as well*	C-US AmE	spoken	1990s	200 000
Collins (2009)	*must, should, ought to, need, have to, have got to, **need to**, had better, be supposed to, may, can, might, could, be able to, will, shall, would, be going to, want to, be about to*	C-US AmE	written and spoken	1990s	150 000
Diaconu (2011)	*have to, have got to, must, **need to***	CSAE AmE	spoken	2005	249000
Leech et al. (2009)	*can, could, may, might, shall, should, will, would, must, ought, 'd better, have got to, have to, **need to**, want to, used to*	Longman Corpus of Spoken American English AE	spoken	1990s	n/a
Mair (2006)	*must, **need to**, needn't, have to, have got to*	CSAE AmE	spoken	2000	70 000
Millar (2009)	*can, could, may, might, shall, should, will, would,, must, ought (to), need(n't), be going to, be to, 'd better, have got to, have to, **need to**, want to, used to*	Time Magazine Corpus AE	written	1923-2006	100m
Nokkonen (2006)	***need to***	COLT BrE	spoken	1993	500
Seggewiß (published	*needn't, **need to***	ARCHER BrE	written and speech-based	1800-1990	1.7m

as Mül-ler) (2008)					
Smith (2003), Leech et al. (2009)	*have to, (have) got to,* **need to,** *must, need*	FLOB BrE	written	early 1990s	1m
Tagliamonte/ D'Arcy (2007)	*must, (have) got to, got to,* **need to**	Text samples drawn from Toronto English archive CanE	spoken	2003-2004	1.5m

As it is seen in Table 1, modality has been one of the most commonly researched topics in the corpus perspective for years. It is apparent that Biber et al. (1999) studied central modals and semi-modals in British and American English in the written and spoken genre. In 2004, Biber studied the same variety of modals in British and American English only in the written genre. Biewer (2009) and Millar (2009) similarly studied central modals and semi-modals on written genres while Leech et al. (2009) focused on the spoken genre. Collins (2005, 2009) used data from American English to explain the range and distributions of central and semi- modals in spoken and written English in 90s.

After 2000s, studies concentrated on "have to, must, need to" can be found in the works of Mair (2006) and Diaconu (2011) for American English and Tagliamonte and D'Arcy (2007) for Canadian English in the spoken genre; and Smith (2003) for British English in the written genre. The table demonstrates that in recent years some studies focus only on "need to" in British English within various contexts. To this, Nokkonen (2006) searched only "need to" in spoken genre and Seggewiß (2008) studied "need to" with its negative form in written and speech-based genre.

The results obtained from these corpus studies have offered useful and enlightening information on the usage of modality and particularly in the case of "need to". For showing this issue, in his study titled "Current Changes in the English Modals - a Corpus-Based Analysis of Present-Day Spoken English", Seggewiß (2012) summarized the corpus-based analyses of his study and demonstrated the layering of modals of obligation in present-day English. In his study, Seggewiß (2012:186) states "a lot of central modals are declining in frequency while semi-modals are on the increase." Seggewiß (2012) notes that the increase of the semi-modals "need to" is more evident in the spoken data. Adapted from the researcher's work, Table 2 displays "need to", "must", "have to" in terms of semantics, syntax and frequency.

Table 2 shows that flexible forms display an increase in frequency in present-day English while less flexible expressions like "must" are decreasing. It is a striking result that, syntactically, "must" shows only affirmative uses in the American data. Since "have to" is syntactically flexible, it can be used in a number of contexts which are not possible for "must" as a central modal. It is clearly seen from the Table 2 that use of "need to" is significantly increasing due to its flexible use through the main verb syntax. The main reason can be found in the semantic feature which shows more polite usages through "need to."

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Table 2: Overview of spoken corpus-based research of "need to, must, have to" (related parts are received from Seggewiß, 2012:191)

	semantics	syntax	frequency
need to	expresses necessity and obligation with inherent meaning of necessity so that obligations can be formulated more politely	main verb syntax, syntactically flexible	still infrequent but <u>significantly increasing</u>
must	Imposes direct obligations, epistemic necessity and occurs in formulaic expressions	modal syntax but reduced syntactic paradigm with regard to negations; in the American data only affirmative uses	<u>drastically decreasing</u> in the frequency of all registers and varieties of English
have to	expresses necessity and (weak) obligation; epistemic and formulaic uses occur only rarely	main verb syntax, syntactically flexible	<u>most frequent modal of obligation</u> across genres and varieties; the overall frequency remains stable; in the variation of the modals of obligation its proportion is increasing

3. Research question

The purpose of the present study is to examine the occurrences of "need to" comparing to "must" and "have to" in Corpus of Contemporary American English. The following research question motivates the present study;

What are the occurrences of "need to" found in Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA)?

4. Research method

4.1. Data source

In the current study, the language data were drawn from Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA) which provides data from both the spoken and the written language. COCA is preferred for this study since it is one of the best and largest corpora available today, offering over 560 million words of texts and extensive research opportunities. The data source, created by Mark Davies from Brigham Young University, is seen as the largest corpus of American English. COCA obtains linguistic data from different genres, including newspapers, popular magazines, fiction, spoken, and academic texts. The corpus involves words from 1990-2017 and the data provided by the source is updated in a regular phase. On that account, COCA allows an extensive data source for researchers while searching both recent and ongoing changes in target language.

4.2. Data collection procedure

The research strings used to obtain the frequencies and the sample sentences of "need to", "must" and "have to" from COCA are displayed in Table 3 below;

Table 3. Research strings used to obtain data in COCA

Modal expression	Main search string	Related subtitle
	need to have to must	*5.1 Frequency and Percentages* *5.2 Distribution by Genre and Year*
NEED TO	[need] [to] [have] [to] [must]	*5.1 Frequency and Percentages*
HAVE TO	need to take a break have to take a break must take a break	*5.1 Frequency and Percentages*
MUST	need to take have to take must take	*5.1 Frequency and Percentages*
	need to [v] have to [v] must [v]	*5.3 Most Common Verbs Used with Modals*
	* need to * have to * must	*5.4 Personal Pronouns Used with Modals* *5.5 Modal Combinations of "Need to"*

As it is seen Table 3, frequencies and percentages for "need to" were searched through following strings; need to, [need] [to], need to take, need to take a break. Similar research strings were used for "have to" and "must" for frequencies and percentages. Distributions by genre and year were searched through the research strings of need to, have to and must. While scanning for the most common verbs used with modals, the strings were *need to [v], have to [v]* and *must [v]*. To analyse personal pronouns used with modals and modal combinations of "need to", the following research strings were used; * need to, * have to, * must.

4.3. Data analysis

The study aims at displaying the use of "need to, must, have to", English modality for necessity and strong obligation, in naturally occurring data. In that way, exploring different and common uses of related structures were intended. The entire number of corpus-based "need to" patterns were counted and classified before being sorted out based on frequency.

5. Results

5.1. Frequency and percentages

Table 4 presents the distribution of "need to", "must" and "have to" in COCA. It is seen that the most frequent modal among these three is "have to" (294.739 tokens/44.60%). More than half of the total occurrences is made up by "must" (223.996 tokens/33.90%) and "need to" (142.003 tokens/21.50%).

Table 4. Distribution of "need to, must, have to" in COCA

Type of Modal	frequency	%
have to	294.739	44.60
must	223.996	33.90
need to	142.003	21.50
TOTAL	660.738	100

It should be noted here that analysis demonstrated in Table 4 only shows the results of the search entry of "need to", "must" and "have to". In addition to this main search, it is necessary to search other forms of these modal verbs. For this reason, a second search was carried out by entering the titles of [need] [to], [must], [have] [to]. In this way, the category of "have to" included other entries like "had to, has to, having to, 've to, 'd to" while the category of "need to" was consisting of entries like "needed to, needs to, needing to." Related results of the second search are illustrated in Table 5 below.

Table 5. Distribution of "[need] [to], [must], [have] [to]" in COCA

Type of Modal	frequency	%
have to *had to *has to *having to *'ve to *'d to	495.909	53.19
must	223.999	24.02
need to *needed to *needs to *needing to	212.406	22.79
TOTAL	932.314	100

Similar to the previous table, Table 5 shows that the most frequent modal is "have to" (495.909 tokens/53.19%). Less than half of the total occurrences is made up by "must" (223.999 tokens/24.02%) and "need to" (212.406 tokens/22.79%). This table shows us that the different forms of "have to" are commonly used as well. For example, the analysis reveals that "had to" is ranked second in frequency (133.429 tokens) and "has to" is ranked third (54.064 tokens) while "have to" is the most common one (294.443 tokens).

The analysis of "need to" shows that "needed to" is ranked second in frequency (36.794 tokens) and "needs to" is ranked third (32.523 tokens) while "need to" is the most frequent structure among them (141.956 tokens).

It can be inferred from Table 4 and Table 5 that "have to" is preferred more than "must" for obligation. Additionally, the use of "need to" is quite close to the use of "must" and this shows the people's tendency to use softer expressions for necessity. Some sample sentences from COCA database seem to support this inference as well. As a random example, "take a break" is chosen since the phrase is commonly used in the spoken genre with similar purposes. In general, a TV program presenter requires to take a break for commercials and he makes an announcement to the audience. In this case, the speaker uses a modal and it is apparent that the choice of modal has changed during the decades.

For example; when "take a break" is searched with "need to, must, have to", it is seen that the least frequent use is "must take a break" (23 tokens). It is seen that the sample sentences with "must take a break" are ranged between 1990 and 2005. Taking these years into consideration, it can be inferred that people do not prefer this structure any more.

(10) Gentlemen, if you'll stand by, we **must take a break**. We'll be back in just a moment. (COCA: SPOK 2000 CNN_LiveSun)

"Need to take a break" is more commonly used and it is in the second rank with 124 tokens. Although "must take a break" has not been used and seen since 2005, "need to take a break" has a recent use including the year 2017.

(11) We **need to take a break**. We'll be back with more Hot Topics. (COCA: SPOK 2016 ABC: The View)

Based on the database, the most frequent use is "have to take a break" with 701 tokens. 689 of these sentences are found in the spoken genre with similar purposes; the speaker declares that they are going to have a break for commercials.

(12) We **have to take a break** because we're out of time. But I want to thank everybody. (COCA: SPOK 2017 CNN: Anderson Cooper)

(13) We **have to take a break** here, but we'll see you a little later. (COCA: SPOK 2015 Fox: Fox News Sunday)

If we analyse the verb "take" with these modals, it is again seen that the sequence stays same. The most frequent use is seen in "have to take" with 7045 tokens, and then "need to take" with 2690 tokens. People preferred "must take" less often with 2409 tokens. As the table 6 illustrates below, the structures "need to" and "must" comprise less than half of the total number of utterances "have to".

Table 6. Distribution of "need to, must, have to" for the verb of "take" in COCA

The sentences below show that people tend to use "take credit" with "have to" recently. The sample sentence from 2002 indicates that it was used with "must"; however, people have preferred "have to" for similar meaning and function in recent years.

(14) "I guess I ultimately **have to take** some **credit**, or <u>blame</u>, for this, but he is kind of a throwback kid," says Oliver Luck, athletics director at West Virginia University. (COCA: NEWS-2012)

(15) But the fact is the Bush administration does **have to take** some **credit** for at least some fault for what has happened. (COCA: SPOK-2009)

(16) In its defense, the fund's officials have said repeatedly that countries **must take credit** and <u>blame</u> for their own situations. (COCA: NEWS-2002)

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Other examples below demonstrate that people are prone to use "take action" with "have to" (73 tokens) and "need to" (68 tokens) more. The sample sentence from 2004 shows that it was used with "must" (33 tokens in total); nonetheless, people have used "have to" and "need to" for approximate meanings.

(17) *And the International Olympic Committee is going to **have to take action** to limit how much is spent on Olympic Games.* (COCA: SPOK-2014)

(18) *There is no magic wand to make the debt go away, but we do **need to take action***. (COCA: NEWS-2017)

(19) *It is extremely troubling and we **need to take** serious **action***. (COCA: NEWS-2017)

(20) *And most importantly, the president **must take action** to insure that our nation's vulnerabilities are fixed.* (COCA: SPOK-2004)

5.2 Distribution by genre and year

In order to understand the increases and decreases in the uses of three different modal verbs, types of genres and historical perspective were taken into consideration. The changes in terms of genres and years were illustrated in the tables below:

Table 7. Distribution of "have to" in different genres and years (visual is received from COCA)

SECTION	ALL	SPOKEN	FICTION	MAGAZINE	NEWSPAPER	ACADEMIC	1990-1994	1995-1999	2000-2004	2005-2009	2010-2014	2015-2017
FREQ	495924	177985	113738	83742	83981	36478	92982	92836	87176	85755	86904	50271
WORDS (M)	577	116.7	111.8	117.4	113.0	111.4	104.0	103.4	102.9	102.0	102.9	62.3
PER MIL	858.59	1,524.52	1,016.92	713.58	743.22	327.42	894.07	897.42	846.86	840.40	844.46	806.80
SEE ALL SUB-SECTIONS AT ONCE												

According to Table 7, "have to" has been used in similar frequencies throughout the years. It can be said that the use of "have to" has decreased slightly 3.37% from 1990-1994 to 2010-2014. Based on the Table 7, it can be asserted that "have to" is mostly used in spoken genre. The least frequent context for "have to" is academic genre.

Table 8. Distribution of "must" in different genres and years (visual is received from COCA)

SECTION	ALL	SPOKEN	FICTION	MAGAZINE	NEWSPAPER	ACADEMIC	1990-1994	1995-1999	2000-2004	2005-2009	2010-2014	2015-2017
FREQ	223999	25130	54134	42009	34404	68322	52186	44425	41238	36020	32337	17793
WORDS (M)	577	116.7	111.8	117.4	113.0	111.4	104.0	103.4	102.9	102.0	102.9	62.3
PER MIL	387.81	215.25	484.01	357.97	304.47	613.25	501.79	429.45	400.60	353.00	314.22	285.56
SEE ALL SUB-SECTIONS AT ONCE												

In the Table 8 above, "must" shows the falling frequencies apparently. It is seen that "must" was most frequently used between 1990-1994 (52.186 tokens). For the two last time frames, 2010 to 2014 and 2015 to 2017, the contribution seems highly low (32.337 tokens and 17.793 tokens). It is clear that speakers use "must" most often for the academic context (68.322 tokens) and least often for the spoken language (25.130 tokens).

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Table 9. Distribution of "need to" in different genres and years (visual is received from COCA)

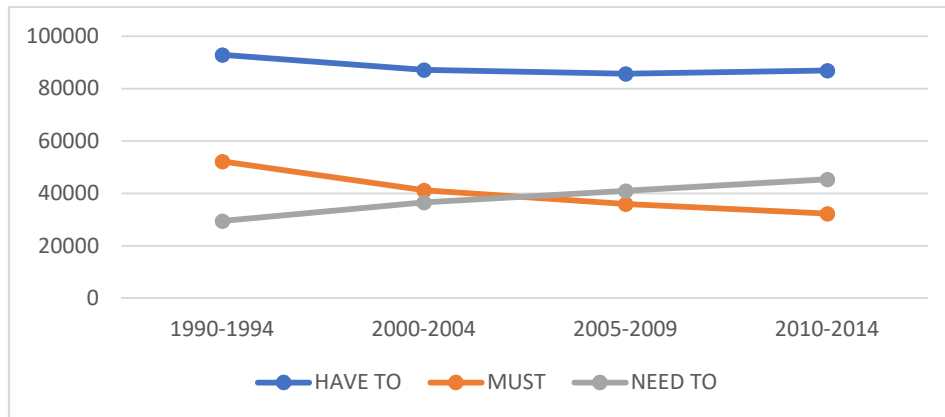| SECTION	ALL	SPOKEN	FICTION	MAGAZINE	NEWSPAPER	ACADEMIC		1990-1994	1995-1999	2000-2004	2005-2009	2010-2014	2015-2017
FREQ	212406	55189	31812	43903	35717	45785		29524	33509	36608	41016	45407	26342
WORDS (M)	577	116.7	111.8	117.4	113.0	111.4		104.0	103.4	102.9	102.0	102.9	62.3
PER MIL	367.74	472.72	284.43	374.11	316.09	410.96		283.89	323.92	355.62	401.96	441.23	422.76
SEE ALL SUB-SECTIONS AT ONCE													

While "must" is in decrease, "need to" shows an upward trend throughout the years. Table 9 indicates that "need to" was most frequently used between 2010-2014 (45.407 tokens). For the upcoming years, the use of "need to" may increase based on the chronological rise seen in recent decades. It is seen that speakers prefer "need to" mostly for the spoken context (55.189 tokens), the academic context (45.785 tokens), and the magazine context (43.903). It is preferred least often for the fiction context (31.812).

In order to understand the general upward trend of "need to" and the preference for the spoken context, some random sample sentences can be viewed as below;

> (21) You know, Speaker Ryan said we **need to** fix this problem. (COCA: SPOK 2017 CNN: New Day Sunday)
>
> (22) There's like this eye opening tweet storm from the actor Terry Crews tonight who was groped recently apparently at a party by a male Hollywood executive. He didn't out the executive but he said I **need to** tell this story so the guy knows who he is and he stops doing it. (COCA: SPOK 2017 CNN: Anderson Cooper)

The contexts for these two sentences show an obligation as well. Fixing the problem (21) and sharing the story with people (22) are a kind of responsibility for the speakers, so they require to do these actions. In these examples, "need to" is preferred by the speakers instead of "must" or "have to".

Table 10. Distribution of "need to, must, have to" by years

All things considered, Table 10 shows an overview for the use of "need to, must have to" by years. It is apparent that the use of "need to" is slightly increasing while "must" is comparatively decreasing, and "have to" keeps its frequency for using more or less.

5.3. Most common verbs used with modals

Table 11. Distribution of modals with common verbs in COCA

Modal + Verb		frequency
HAVE TO	be	33.569
Had to	be	18.826
HAVE TO	do	18.133
Has to	be	16.490
HAVE TO	go	12.365
	be	64.719
	have	30.443
MUST	do	2.505
	say	2.468
	go	2.438
NEED TO	be	21.837
Needs to	be	13.828
NEED TO	know	7.058
NEED TO	do	7.007
NEED TO	get	5.336

As revealed from the corpus data from COCA, "need to, must, have to" are used with some verbs more often. Table 11 demonstrates that the three modals are most commonly used with the verb "be". The total frequency number of using "be" with three modals and their inflected forms is 169.269 tokens. The second most preferred verb is "have" with 30.443 and it is mostly used with "must". In the third rank, there are 27.645 tokens of "do" and it is used with all the structures.

These numerical figures show us that people prefer "must" less with the verbs "do", "say", and "go". However, they tend to use "have to" with these verbs. When it comes to "need to", the verb "do" is used with "need to" more than it is used with "must". It can be inferred that people want to emphasize the requirement more than pure obligation and they pick a softer form.

The random sample sentences taken from COCA database may verify these inferences;

(23) You **must do** your duty. Or the ancestors will know it. (COCA: FIC 2016 Obsidian)

(24) "You **must do** your duty. Kill Americans. Blow up trains. Destroy factories." (COCA: FIC 2017 Bk: WolfsMouth)

The two examples above show that "must" is used when the speaker has a duty. It is strong obligation for the speaker since the task is in his responsibility and compulsion.

(25) "You **need to do** yoga," Alissa, his most recent ex-girlfriend, had insisted. (COCA: FIC 2016 The Massachusetts Review)

(26) It's his obligation to finalize things, and you **need to do** that before you can sell the house. (COCA: FIC 2016 Bk: SecretsSheKept)

Given sample sentences above show that "need to" is preferred since the requirement is emphasized. In the first sample (25), the speaker insists on her friend doing yoga. In the second sample (26), it is obvious that the person is obliged to complete the things before selling the house; nevertheless, the speaker does not impose a burden by using "have" or "must". Instead, the speaker highlights the necessity.

5.4. Personal pronouns used with modals

Table 12. Distribution of modals with subject types in COCA

Subject Types + Modal	frequency
YOU have to	53.985
WE have to	34.893
WE must	17.637
YOU must	16.992
WE need to	27.327
YOU need to	18.044

In the context of obligation, one side becomes dominant over the other side and gains an authority by expressing compulsory action. This case is viewed in "have to" since it is mostly used with "you" pronoun (53.985 tokens). It can be inferred that people tend to use "have to" when they want to lay a burden on someone. Second most common subject for "have to" is "we" (34.893 tokens).

On the other hand, the two subject types seem to be more commonly used with "must" are "we" (17.637 tokens) and "you" (16.992 tokens). As the figures display, these two subject types are close to one another in terms of frequency.

Analysis on "need to" indicates that it is most frequently used with "we" (27.327 tokens). It reveals that the speaker and the receiver share the responsibility and necessity while the speaker is using "we". Here the speaker does not throw a burden on another person or does not assign an encumbrance but shoulders the case and shares the responsibility. The sample sentences below seem to justify the mentioned inferences.

(27) Now the people have to stand up, **we need to** say what we want, how we want the country run. (COCA:NEWS)

(28) **We need to** give the Palestinian living in Gaza and West Bank some hope that if they respect the peace agreements, if they, you know, try to listen to the international community, this would bring them peace and a life where they can live in dignity. (COCA: SPOK)

(29) **We need to** treat the global environment not as a series of separable puzzles in corporate strategy or national policy, but as parts of an integrated Global Commons, with hundreds of millions of people responsible for its health because its health is the key to their own. (COCA: MAG)

(30) The American news radio is anticipating a panic. **We need to** keep the children protected. (COCA: FIC)

All the sentences above (sample 27, 28, 29, 30) demonstrate that the responsibility is shared by the speaker. For example, in the beginning of the first sentence (27) "people" is told by the speaker and afterwards "people" turns into "we" since the speaker sees himself inside of the society, as a member of "the people". In other samples, it is seen that there is no specific "we". Using "we", all speakers refer to a part of society or humanity committing to common aims. Furthermore, using "we" softens the way of speaking preventing an authoritarian style.

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Additionally, the example below shows the impersonal use of "need to". The extract is taken from an academic genre. The speaker opts for "we" not for including himself in the available situation but for showing a slight instruction.

> (31) In my opinion, this is really the key question that **we need to** address. (COCA:ACAD)

5.5 Modal combinations of "Need to"

One of the reasons for the increase of the use of "need to" in recent years can be explained with its use with modals. Since "must" is a root modal and it cannot be used with other modals, "need to" seems to serve this purpose while the use of "must" is decreasing day by day. Table 13 below shows modals which are commonly used with "need to."

Table 13. Distribution of 'Need to' with modals in COCA

Modal + Need to	frequency
WILL need to	3.770
WOULD need to	2.451
'LL need to	2.170
MAY need to	2.068

> (32) Therefore, if Republicans want to pass the tax cuts, they **will need to** cut federal spending. (COCA: MAG)
>
> (33) If you plan on viewing the eclipse, you **will need to** wear protective glasses. (COCA: NEWS)
>
> (34) To fully understand remediableness though, we **will need to** fully understand the transactions costs in the cost measurement process. (COCA: ACAD)

These three examples above show future meaning of "need to". Speakers express an action or a case which will be required in the future.

> (35) *For instance, if he were 58 and opening his first Roth IRA, he **would need to** wait until he was 63 to get to the earnings tax-free.* (COCA: MAG)
>
> (36) *If the embassy were moved to Jerusalem, the undertaking **would need to** involve coordination with U.S. allies and be part of a diplomatic process with Palestinians, Shapiro said.* (COCA: NEWS)
>
> (37) *Dysfunction is so deeply embedded in the jail culture that, if Mayor de Blasio is serious about turning things around, he **would need to** work at it until the very day he leaves office.* (COCA: ACAD)

The sample sentences above indicate that "need to" is used with "would" structure. These sentences are if conditional type two (hypothetical condition) examples.

> (38) You **'ll need to** follow me in the rest of the way. (COCA: FIC)
>
> (39) We've got some charts here that shows what happens, what he **'ll need to** do if he wins both Florida and Ohio. (COCA: SPOK)
>
> (40) So if you have money that you know you **'ll need to** spend in the near term, my advice is to just kind of hold your nose and try to find the best-yielding option you can. (COCA: MAG)

In informal contexts, "ll need to" is also seen. The prominent examples shown above are from fiction, spoken and magazine genres. Another common modal used with "need to" is "may" and it gives the meaning of probable necessity.

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(41) "Based on our findings, policy makers and regulators **may need to** review whether employers are systematically assigning people of different races and ethnicities different jobs or job tasks according to their risk," the researchers wrote. (COCA: MAG)

(42) Because I felt something might break out, because I felt I **may need to** protect myself in a certain way. (COCA: SPOK)

(43) "Because it's a cute trick and I **may need to** use it some time," I said. (COCA: FIC)

5.6. Features of spoken "Need to"

In section 5.2, it is displayed with a table that "need to" is most frequently used in spoken genre. The analysis of spoken genre indicates that some phrases are expressed quite a lot as given in the following;

(44) *All they* **need to** *do now is vote on it.* (COCA: SPOK)

(45) *I mean, that is what you* **need to** *do.* (COCA: SPOK)

Based on corpus data, people prefer "need to" with pseudo-cleft sentences in spoken genre. In this way, they have the opportunity to emphasize their message.

Moreover, the passive structure is highly common in spoken language. When the speaker does not want to point at the certain and specific doer, he uses the passive form of "need to." Related examples are shown below;

(46) It **needs to be** done very carefully though because it is a very sensitive issue. (COCA: SPOK)

(47) Well, that's a problem. That **needs to be** addressed. (COCA: SPOK)

Some modifiers are commonly used with "need to" in the spoken genre with total number of 39.491 tokens. "Really", the top in the ranking, is used 955 times with "need to" to put an emphasis on the necessity.

(48) So, you **really need to** think about what you do before you do it. (COCA: SPOK)

And we haven't talked about the things that **really need to** start happening in health care reform. (COCA: SPOK)

(49) Do we **really need to** put that in the dictionary? (COCA: SPOK)

Secondly, "just" is used with "need to" 482 times in order to narrow down the options for the necessity; it means that you have only this necessary point. It is similar to the meaning of "the only thing we need to make…"

(50) We **just need to** make it work for us. (COCA: SPOK)

(51) We **just need to** make sure everybody is there and we'd be able to solve this problem. (COCA: SPOK)

(52) You cannot live in fear, and you **just need to** carry on your daily life as normal. (COCA: SPOK)

(53) I **just need to** hear from you. Please, please call me. I'm worried. (COCA: SPOK)

6. Conclusion

The main aim of the study is to observe and display the ongoing change in terms of modality of strong obligation. The conducted data analysis on COCA for "must", "have to" and "need to" including frequency, percentages, and distribution by genre and year, demonstrates that "have to" is the most

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preferred one among these three modal structures keeping more or less its frequency of use in recent decades. It is seen that people have started to use "have to" instead of "must" in time for similar contexts. Besides, "need to" has started to be used more than "must" undertaking several functions of the latter in recent years since the former softens the message of obligation. The data also show that "have to" is mostly used in spoken genre and "must" is highly used for the academic context while "need to" is seen to be used more for both spoken and academic context. This finding indicates why "need to" is on steady rise while the use of "have to" has decreased slightly in years and "must" has declined considerably. Data related to verb use with modals prove that people want to emphasize the requirement more than pure obligation and they pick a softer form. The findings of the current study offer support for previous studies in the related issue (Kastrone, 2008; Diaconu, 2011; Seggewiß, 2012) that there is a common tendency to use "need to" to avoid very directive and obligatory expressions as served by "must." Besides, the fact that the subject type of "we" is the most frequent one with "need to" provides evidence for a rather moderate language use making the obligation expression less strong. In spoken language, it is observed that "need to" is used with cleft or pseudo-cleft sentences and passive structures. As it is spoken context, some modifiers accompany "need to" to remark the emphasis. These findings support the earlier studies in terms of grammaticalization and its underlying reasons like Americanisation, democratisation and colloquialisation. Another reason for the downward tendency to use "must" is that it does not have flexible syntactical usages. "Need to" and "have to" are used in inflections and they can be combined with other modals. However, "must" does not show any semantic and syntactical changes.

It is clearly seen that modality gradually gets free from central and root structures and heads toward modal expressions which are called semi-modals forming milder means for obligation expressions. This recent change requires to review both teaching and learning practices in order to present authentic language use. Taking recent changes in authentic language into consideration some implications should be noted. First, syllabus designers and coursebook writers should revise the sources which are presenting modality and related examples for EFL learners. Additionally, EFL teachers should be informed about these ongoing changes through trainings and be aware of recent usages in target language. In the local context, authorities in the national education system must encourage and motivate educational planners to investigate further studies in modality in English. The findings must be shared with stakeholders and the final outcomes must shape educational content for EFL teaching. In conclusion, effective and authentic language use within the EFL context requires the implementation of the suggested steps. In this way, EFL learners and teachers will increase their awareness for the target language used in real life instead of language practice in unnatural contexts.

By means of this study, it is hoped to contribute to current scholarship on modality of obligation. Hopefully this contribution will also open up for more research related to the uses of "need to" in an authentic linguistic context.

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