Dialects haven’t got to be the same: modal microvariation in English

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1 Introduction

- Two dialectal differences regarding have-got
- British (Br) vs. North American (NoAm) English
- have-got (1) occurs in both dialects, expressing possession (a) and obligation (b).\(^1\)

(1) a. Possession: John has got a lot of money.
   b. Obligation: John has got to wash the dishes.

- Difference 1: modal scope
  - scope of modal have-got with respect to negation (2)
  - novel

(2) Mary hasn’t got to wash the dishes. Br: ~ □, some northern □ > ~ NoAm;\(^2\)

- Difference 2: verb phrase ellipsis (VPE) (3)
  - same for possessive and modal have-got

(3) John has got [a lot of money] / to wash the dishes],
   a. … and Mary has / *does, too.  Br
   b. … and Mary *has / does, too.  NoAm

- Questions arising:
  - What is the syntactic and semantic nature of the have and the got of have-got? Do they differ between the dialects?
  - How does modal have-got to relate to modal have to (which itself shows dialectal variation “height”)?
  - How does the behaviour of modal haven’t got to in Br inform our understanding of the scopal relationship between necessity modals and negation?

- In outline:
  - §2: modal scope in standard Br and NoAm
  - §3: possible analyses in terms of polarity sensitivity
  - §4: ambiguous modal scope in non-standard dialects
  - §5: analysis in terms of the location of modality
  - §6: extension to VPE
  - §7: conclusions

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\(^1\) We set aside epistemic have-got such as those in (i) (Quirk et al. 1985: 141ff., 225ff.); (ii)
   a. Someone has got to be lying.
   b. There has got to be some mistake.

\(^2\) Deontic modal must and have to are not quite synonymous, particularly with regard to speaker endorsement of the
   necessity (see Silk 2018, note 42 for extensive references).

\(^3\) Unlike have to, have-got is restricted to non-finite environments (LeSourd 1976: 509, ex. 16), e.g. infinitival to
   clauses (i), gerunds (ii), and imperatives (iii), regardless of possessive (a) or deontic modal (b) meaning. A Br
   speaker has to screen out the irrelevant readings where got retains its full obtained meaning as the past participle of
   main verb got, cf. North American English gotten; i.e. for (a) to have obtained a lot of money..., for (b) to have come
   to be allowed to leave early...:
   (i) a. To have (*got) a lot of money would be fantastic.
      b. To have (*got) to leave early would be unfortunate.
   (ii) a. Having (*got) a lot of money would be fantastic.
      b. Having (*got) to leave early would be unfortunate.
   (iii) a. Have (*got) a car!
      b. ***
• However, it has escaped comment that the interaction between have-got and negation is subject to dialectal variation
  o Standard Br: like have to, obligation scopes below negation – i.e. Mary can stay
  o NoAm: (2) is plain bad

(2) Mary hasn’t got to leave. Br: ¬ □ ¬ *NoAm: *
  o naturally occurring example (9) (Algeo 2006: 33):

(9) We haven’t got to do anything yet! (J.K. Rowling, Harry Potter V, p. 617)

• Not a problem with the string have not got in NoAm
  o minimally contrasting negated possessive have-got, grammatical in all dialects

(10) Mary hasn’t got a lot of money.

• Previous literature reports the authors’ own dialects only (11)
  o NoAm (b): Israel (2011: 130, ex. 5c)
  o Mixed (c) – Br father/NoAm raised: Myhill (1996: 347, ex. 26)

(11) a. Br: We haven’t got to go already, have we?
    b. NoAm: *You haven’t got to finish the report by tomorrow.
    c. Mixed: *He hasn’t got to go.

• Extensive quantitative and sociolinguistic work on have has not observed the dialect contrast in (2), but is concerned with different research questions
  o preferences among ways of expressing the same meaning rather than un/grammaticality
    • exception: Anderwald (2002: 96ff)
  o so negated modals omitted from consideration due to semantic non-equivalence in scope (6 vs. 7)
  o a couple of near-misses
    • Algeo (2006: 33): negated have-got “not very frequent” in Br, “very rare” in NoAm
    • Hundt (1998: 55) negated have-got not extant in New Zealand English
    • Brugman (1988: 103, 5b) (12) on NoAm – but % not defined, inter-speaker variation rather than dialect contrast seemingly intended

(12) %He hasn’t got to leave soon.

* The facts seem to remain the same regardless of contraction possibilities: Mary has not got to, Mary hasn’t got to, Mary’s not got to, Mary hasn’t got, etc.
7 See also Collins (1991: 159) for Australian English.
(17) a. Positive Declarative with tag
I have to clear the table now, don’t I?
I’ve got to clear the table now, don’t I?

b. Embedded Polar Question
Felix is asking whether he has to wear a tie.
Felix is asking whether he’s got to wear a tie.

c. Why Question
Why do we have to water the plants this morning?
Why have we got to water the plants this morning?

d. Polar Question
Does he have to empty the dishwasher?
Has he got to empty the dishwasher?

e. When Question
When do they have to pick up the mail?
When have they got to pick up the mail?

f. Contracted n’t Polar Question
Don’t you have to watch the kids tonight?
Haven’t you got to watch the kids tonight?

g. Polar not Question
Do you not have to wait for the plumber this afternoon?
Have you not got to wait for the plumber this afternoon?

h. Negative Declarative
You don’t have to make your bed today.
You haven’t got to make your bed today.

- have to is at ceiling in all conditions except (g)
- mild dispreference for have-got to ever have to to start with (a)
- degradation for inverted have (got) (c, d, e, f, g)
  o not something about question semantics: uninvited embedded question OK (b)
- but starker degradation when negation involved (h)
- actually, contracted negative questions (f) better than negative statements (h)
- source of degradation in uncontracted negative have-got to question (g) potentially the same as its have to counterpart
- In sum:
  o raising the have of modal have-got to C is degraded in NoAm8
  o but the interaction of modal have-got with negation is a particular source of degradation10

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8 By the Head Movement Constraint, raising to C presumably has raising to T as prerequisite; but the better status of (17a) (and (17b)) suggests that either: raising to T is not of itself degraded; or (a) does not necessarily require V-to-T.
9 To entertain the possibility that there is no V-to-T in I’ve got to wash the dishes, we would have to allow that contraction doesn’t require being in T and that got can be something other than the pronounced trace of the raising of have to T (cf. §5 below for this analysis). The former seems unproblematic in light of the ability of have to contract (albeit remaining syllabic) when T is apparently occupied by something else (I should’ve / wear a tie).
10 Or just raising to T is worse than raising to C, if (17a) does not require V-to-T. Or again, raising to or via a polarity head is the problem. We didn’t collect data for sentences like (i), but to CS it seems worse than the inversion cases.

(i) John HAS got to do the dishes (after all).

3 have got a PPI?
- Incompatibility with negation might suggest deontic have-got is a modal Positive Polarity Item (PPI) (Iatridou & Zeijlstra 2013) in NoAm (Israel 2011: 130)

3.1 Iatridou & Zeijlstra (2013)
- Iatridou & Zeijlstra’s (2013) (henceforth I&Z) syntax for modals:
  o raise overtly over negation to Infl, if pronounced to left of negation
  o all else equal, reconstruct for scope at LF
- Negative Polarity Item (NPI) modals like need
  o ungrammatical in the absence of negation
  o surface above but obligatorily interpreted below negation

(18) Mary need *(not) leave. ¬ □ * □ ¬
- o Positive Polarity Item (PPI) modals like must
  o all else is not equal: reconstructing below negation would conflict with its PPI status
  o so must stays in Infl at LF and scopes over negation.

(7) Mary must not leave. * ¬ □ □ ¬
• Polarity neutral have to (4)
  o never raises to Infl, as shown by do-insertion in (6)
  o scopes where it starts out, below negation.

(4) Mary has to leave.
(6) Mary doesn’t have to leave.  \( \neg \) □ * □ \( \neg \)

3.2 We haven’t got a PPI

• But if have-got were a PPI (in NoAm), we would expect (2) to be good on a □ \( \neg \) □ reading!
  o i.e. = must not, obligated not to

• Further, have-got does not exhibit PPI behaviour along the lines of something or must
  o e.g. intervention: PPIs like must (19) can scope below negation when another scope-taking element intervenes (I&Z: ex. 21 gloss)

(19) She must not marry him because he is handsome but because he is smart.  \( \neg \) □ because □

(20) Mary hasn’t got to leave because she is sick,  \( \neg \) □ because □
  but because she is late for her next appointment. but still *NoAm

• strength: PPIs vary in the logical properties of their licensing contexts
  o have-got would be at most a weak PPI, since it can scope below non-sentential negation
    in all dialects:

(21) Nobody has got to play football.  \( \neg \) \( \neg \) □ □

4 Further data from non-standard dialects

• Standard/southern British English, negated have-got scope as in (2): \( \neg \) □
  - And in NoAm, do not have to: \( \neg \) □ □
  - But the opposite scope \( \neg \) □ □ (is obligated not to) is attested in other varieties of Br

4.1 have not got: □ \( \neg \)

• Reported most prominantly for North-East, but also generally from the Midlands through to
  northern England

11 A non-standard dialect variant which will not be discussed in the main text is ain’t. As illustrated in (i) (Mair 2014: 64, ex. 15), ain’t is another alternative to have + Neg in both modal and possessive have-got:
  (i) They ain’t got to go to school. They ain’t got homework. All they got to do is box.
  (COCA, NPR AT C 2012)
Though ain’t is more general in that as well as auxiliary have (ii), it can also replace auxiliary be (iii):
  (ii) I ain’t seen him.
  (iii) He ain’t coming.

22 My grandmother says I haven’t got to get into strange men’s cars (DECTE, Newcastle)

• North-West
  - (23) from Willy Russell’s Blood Brothers, p.33; author from and musical set in Liverpool

(23) I haven’t got to play with you.  (scope is unambiguously □ \( \neg \) □)


(24) He hasn’t got to do U-turns in my country – they are illegal.

• Variable scope within one dialect area (Schulz 2011, 2012)
  - Midlands (Schulz 2012: exx. 173, 189)

(25) \( \neg \) □ Forty acres of limestone had been worked there. But it was easy to get it as it was on top of the ground. They hadn’t got to pull it out of the earth.
  Midlands, Shropshire, SAL_33

(26) □ \( \neg \) □
  But if you made a complaint about anything like after you were discharged you eh you got sent home, eh got sent back to your unit, eh done you out of any leave at all. You hadn’t got to complain.
  Midlands, Nottinghamshire, NTT_05

• Inter- or intra-speaker variable scope?

• Intra-speaker, based on acceptance of both (27a) and (27b) by four Tyneside North-East English
  speakers, via Karen Corrigan (p.c.)

(27) a. \( \neg \) □
  That dryer figures out when your clothes are dry on its own.

b. □ \( \neg \) □
  Your granny is sleeping now.
  You haven’t got to make too much noise!

12 This example and (36) below were part of a survey of New Zealand English speakers, but were constructed based on
  the author’s native dialect of Yorkshire English.
4.2 *have not to: both □ > ¬ and ¬ > □*

- In some northern British English (esp. Tyneside, North-East), have above negation but without got is reported to be synonymous with *mustn’t*
  - i.e. □ > ¬ obligation outscoping negation

(28) She said I can’t tell you, I haven’t to tell you! BNC KB8 5178

(29) Moira gives me a row. I’ve not to leave without asking again.

- *Have raises to T very generally in these dialects: Have we to leave?*
- *Yorkshire (30) (Bauer 1989: 75, exx. 55)*

(30) People who want to be elected haven’t to do that kind of thing.

- Again, some scope differences
  - the other scope, ¬ > □ (31) (Algeo 2006: 20)
  - variable scope within North dialect area, (32 vs. 33) (Schulz 2012: exx. 186, 187)

(31) I haven’t to read it all. ¬ > □

(32) ¬ > □

Q: When you had to go to these camps for a fortnights training, did the firm you worked for have to keep your job open for you?

A: Well they used to do but they hadn’t to do. There was no such a thing as them having to do in them days.

North, Lancashire, LAN_20

(33) □ > ¬

Dad used to go out and pull the tray out and take all the used carbide out, the lamp, take it away, and if there was little odd pieces left, he’d put them back, before he put any new in, you, but of course, you hadn’t to put too much in, in the beginning, as it got all wet, the damp on the top, it wouldn’t ‘t allow the gas to come from the underneath, you had to put just so much in the bottom, so that it didn’t fill it altogether.

North, Yorkshire, YKS_06

4.3 *Bare got(ta)*

- In some (%) NoAm, possessive got can appear without an auxiliary in the positive (Tyler 2016)\(^{13}\)
- dummy do when negated, and negation scopes over necessity (34)

(34) If you don’t gotta wash the dishes. Br: * NoAm: ¬ > □, *□ > ¬^2^4

4.4 *Scopally ambiguous modals*

- Scopal ambiguity for *have not got to* and *have not to* in Br dialects has theoretical import\(^{15}\)
- *I&Z’s syntax for modals:*
  - PPI modals must not reconstruct for scope at LF
  - NPI modals must reconstruct
  - neutral modals scope where they start out, below negation

- Scopal ambiguity of *have (got) to* for some Br speakers is unpredicted by such a restrictive syntax for modals as I&Z’s
- Yanovich (2013) vs. I&Z: why shouldn’t neutral modals be able to scope freely?\(^{16}\)
- And they sometimes can:
  - French *devoir* (obligation) has variable scope in some tense-aspect-mood combinations
  - Russian universal deontic modals have completely free scope with respect to clausemate negation (Yanovich 2013: 11, exx. 13-15)

5 *Analysis: Locus of modality*

- Different dialects associate modality (□) with different pieces of *have (got)*

All Eng don’t have to

- modality □ resides in have
- have never raises – do-insertion
- so ¬ > □ only

Northern Br haven’t (t) to

- modality □ resides in have
- have base-generated below Neg, and always raises to T
- contra I&Z, can stay above negation: □ > ¬
- but can also reconstruct: ¬ > □

\(^{13}\) Quirk et al. (1985: 794) talk about may as having ambiguous scope, but their examples could just as well involve VP constituent negation:

(i) You may not [y smokes]; not > permitted (cf. Smoke, you many not.)  
(ii) You may [y not [y smokes]]; permitted > not (cf. Not smoke, you may.)

Such an appeal to constituent negation wouldn’t help with the ambiguous scope facts in the main text, since n’t can only be sentential negation.

\(^{16}\) Yanovich (2013) argues that any scope restrictions on neutral modals are idiosyncratic, the result of semantic-convention filters rather than syntactic constraints.

\(^{14}\) For third person singular positive, different bare gotta subdialects have gotta (Pullum 1997) or a paradigm gap (Tortora 2006).

\(^{15}\) As far as we are aware, there is no ambiguity in any American dialect on this point.
Northern Br have-got

- modality \( \hat{\uparrow} \) resides in have
- have is base-generated below Neg, and raises to T
- got is the spellout of the trace of raised have (Emonds 1994: ex. 11d; Quinn 2009; Thoms et al. 2018, 2019)
- can reconstruct below negation: \( \neg > \hat{\uparrow} \)
- but, contra I&Z, can also choose not to reconstruct: \( \uparrow > \neg \)

Standard Br have-got

- have is an auxiliary, so it must raise to T\(^1\)
- got is a defective main verb
- modality \( \hat{\uparrow} \) resides in got
- at no point in the derivation does modality get above negation: \( \neg > \hat{\uparrow} \) only

NoAm have-got

- have-got is effectively a main verb
- the have of have-got is not really an auxiliary in NoAm, and would rather not raise
  - raising of have to \( \hat{\uparrow} \) formation degraded\(^9\)
  - modality \( \hat{\uparrow} \) resides in have-got
- negation splits up have-got as a scopal unit, causing further degradation

NoAm bare gotta

- have has fallen away, got a modal verb
  - a modal main verb, not an English-type modal, since those always raise to T, never allow 
    do-support, and never inflect with \( \neg \cdot \cdot \)
  - modality \( \hat{\uparrow} \) resides in gotta
- gotta never raises, so \( \neg > \hat{\uparrow} \) only

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### Analysis Summary

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\(^{12}\) Emonds (1994) entertains this idea, but ultimately argues for an alternative. As Quinn (2009) recognises, the spirit of this analysis was present in the transformational rule analyses of LeSourd (1976), Wasow & Akmajian (1977). Why the trace spells out as got is an open question, but there is at least a precedent for spelling out traces differently than moved constituents: resumptive pronouns of movement.

\(^{13}\) Though care must be taken to distinguish this have got from the perfect of got, which is have gotten in NoAm, but the homophonous have got in Br. See Chalcraft (2009: 67f.) for discussion. In fact, have here is a defective, obligatorily finite auxiliary like (non-British) do.

\(^{14}\) N.B. to the extent this is possible, only the have portion can raise, not got.

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6 have (got) in VPE

have and VPE:

- Across all kinds of verb phrase ellipsis – illustrating with parallel VPE, regardless of negation
  \( (36)^{20} \) – perfect auxiliary have survives ellipsis (a) rather than being elided (b)
- Meanwhile, main verb have \( (37) \) behaves like any other main verb, eliding along with its VP, and leaving tense and agreement to be supported by do-insertion

(36) John has(n't) finished the book.  a. Bill has. b. *Bill does.

(37) I (don't) have the money.  a. *Bill has.\(^{21} \) b. Bill does.

have-got and VPE:

- dialect split (3) stable across both modal and possessive\(^{22} \)
- Br: behaves like perfect auxiliary have in obligatorily surviving ellipsis
- NoAm: behaves like main verb have in undergoing ellipsis\(^{24} \)
- stark numerical corpus frequency differences for have vs. do in Br vs. NoAm in VPE in question tags (Tottie and Hoffman 2006; Mair 2014)

(3) John has got (a lot of money / to wash the dishes).

- a. do *Mary has / don't got / doesn’t gotta.
- b. NoAm *Mary has / *do, too.
- c. Mary *has / does, too.

Independent support for cross-dialectal analysis of have-got in the previous section:

- Br have of have-got auxiliary-like
- NoAm have-got main verb-like
  - though the NoAm facts are exactly the same for possessive have-got, which can happen raise to T and C, ...
  - which suggests that NoAm has a have that distributes entirely as an auxiliary, but still undergoes VPE like a main verb

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20 Extends to tag questions and question-answer pair.

21 Fodor & Smith (1978, ex. 8) report have tags with main verb have antecedents for Br (i):

(i) John has a cucumber sandwich, but I haven’t *don’t.

But in contemporary English, have is tagged to main verb have less than 5% of the time (Nelson 2004; see also Algeo 2006: 295).

22 Again, the facts remain the same regardless of contraction possibilities: Mary has got to go, Mary hasn’t got to go, etc.

23 LeSourd (1976) reports NoAm (*). Fodor & Smith (1978) term the facts shown here for Br the conservative dialect (with the addition of have above the ellipsis with a main verb have antecedent), and for NoAm the innovative dialect. They add a middle-of-the-road dialect, where both have and do are acceptable above the ellipsis. Wasow & Akmajian (1977) report this mixed dialect, which also comes out in Quinn’s (2009) survey for New Zealand English.

24 This of course raises the issue of what counts towards identity for VPE, since have got can never be pronounced as such in the presence of do.

(i) *Mary doesn't got [a lot of money / to wash the dishes].

Beyond dummy do, ellipsis mismatches with got have antecedents are better tolerated in NoAm than Br when T is filled with another modal (cf. Warner 1993: 55):

(ii) *Mary got cash, and Bill should *have cash too. NoAm / ?Br
7 Conclusions

• Br: separate pieces – have // got
  • some Northern: have only
  • some Southern: have in raised position vs. got in trace position

• Emonds: modalilty: associated with one of the pieces, perfectly compatible with negation

• NoA: have-got
  • dispreferrence for raising to C
  • intervening negation disallowed – scopal unit
  • have falls away → bare got

• Semingly similar construction in different dialects may have radically different syntactic analyses

• Trickly for a language-acquirer → diachronic change

• I&Z’s syntax for modals is overly restrictive in the face of scopal ambiguity

References


