People didn't used to speak like that: on the reanalysis of *used to* in English

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Is *used* sometimes an adverb?

1. Introduction

English control verbs take infinitival complements that include the particle *to*:

(1) a. *She tried to read one book each week.*
     b. *She promised to read one book each week.*

The verb *use* has a special application which qualifies it as a type of control verb, albeit with aspectual semantics and certain peculiar syntactic characteristics that make it comparable to a modal verb:

(2) *She used to read one book each week.*

The negated versions of the sentences in (1) and (2) are of course as follows:

(3) a. *She didn't try to read one book each week.*
     b. *She didn't promise to read one book each week.*
     c. *She didn't use to read one book each week.*

What is striking is that instead of (3c) one very frequently encounters the following:

(4) *She didn't used to read one book each week.*

Note that because the [d] in "used to" is assimilated and not heard in actual speech, it is necessary to base this study on written data. This is actually advantageous. Written data provide a certainty and a formality that are often lacking in the spoken language. When speakers write something even though they do not hear it, one can be much more certain that it reflects their linguistic competence and is not a performance issue.

While sentences like (4) are striking, it is equally striking that many speakers who accept (4) consider (3c) to be ungrammatical. I have presented sentences (3c) and (4) to a number of educated native speakers of American and British English whose education ranges from a bachelor's degree to a doctorate, and only one of them, a Scotsman over sixty years of age with a doctoral degree, categorically rejected (4). Nearly all the others found (3c) strange and preferred (4). One informant, an American English teacher with a master's degree, preferred (3c) but said that she found both sentences strange and that she would only say, "She never used to read one book each week", thereby avoiding the dilemma.

But the reader does not have to draw any conclusions from my little survey. The Internet contains millions of examples of both *didn't use to* and *didn't used to*, and an Internet search for "didn't

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used to" yields countless websites in which it is debated which construction is correct. Opinions differ greatly. Roger Woodham, who answers questions about grammar on the *Learning English* page of the website of the BBC World Service, writes that *didn't use to* and *didn't used to* are both correct.[1] My favourite quote, from *Kenneth's ESL Blog*, is the following:[2]

> *"Did he used to" or "Did he use to"? Interesting question. As a native British English speaker I would argue that "used to" is correct and "use to" is wrong. But people say both, and a BBC website says both are okay. So it's probably not worth losing any sleep over!*

These are but a few of the many comments and discussions that one can easily find. It is a fact that many, maybe even most, English speakers, regardless of whether they are British or American and regardless of their educational level, write "didn't used to". And yet, these speakers would never say the following:

(5) a. **She didn't tried to read one book each week.*
     b. **She didn't promised to read one book each week.*

There is evidence that "didn't used to" has had to fight for recognition. The following quote, borrowed from Tagliamonte & Lawrence (2000), is both revealing and amusing:

> *Though such forms as 'Did you used to live in Whitechapel?' and 'I didn't used to work at Billingsgate' are much used by illiterate persons it is highly improbable that they will ever come to be employed by speakers of education and refinement.* (T. O. Lees, 1931, *English 'English'*, Tokyo, Osaka, p. 96)

In *Women in Love*, written in (1921), David H. Lawrence uses the expression "didn't used to" to reflect the relative lack of education of a servant woman who is talking about how happy the servants were whenever one of the spoiled Crich children was punished:

> *And didn't we used to be thankful when one of them caught it. They were the torment of your life.*

The way this subject is handled in grammar books provides additional evidence that *didn't used to* has evolved from an unacknowledged, non-standard expression to one that has achieved much wider acceptance. If one consults reference books such as Foley & Hall (2004), the *Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English* (1995), Fowler (1965), Leech *et al.* (2012) and Dirven *et al.* (1989) one finds that *didn't use to* is the prescribed form and there is no mention of *didn't used to*. Quirk *et al.* (1985) mention both variants but state that *didn't used to* is often considered non-standard. However, other reference books, particularly more recently published ones such as Swan (2005), the *Collins Cobuild English Grammar* (2011), the *Oxford English Grammar* (1996) and the *Cambridge Grammar of English* (2006) are very much reflective of current usage. They treat *didn't used to* not as incorrect but as a variant of *didn't use to*. Christophersen & Sandved (1969) do not condemn *didn't used to* but imply that it is less frequent than *didn't use to*. This may have been true in 1969, but it would be difficult to make the same claim today. Table 1 shows the results of an Internet search conducted on 30 March 2013. Whereas an Internet search such as this one can certainly not be relied upon for any kind of statistical precision, it does serve to demonstrate that *didn't used to* co-exists with *didn't use to* and is frequently the preferred form.

Negation is of course not the only syntactic operation in which *did* and *use* co-occur. Interrogation, which also involves *do*-insertion, also results in this phenomenon. The following examples are from discussions on the Internet and show that *didn't used to* and *didn't use to* co-exist in questions:

(6) a. *Did you use to live in London?*
     b. *Was Edward always a vampire or did he used to be human?*

An Internet search of interrogative sentences on 30 March 2013 yielded the results in Table 2.

Table 1: The number of occurrences of "didn't use to" vs. "didn't used to" in declarative sentences

	didn't use to	didn't used to
I	39,900,000	37,500,000
You	15,900,000	11,300,000
He	12,800,000	15,300,000
She	6,280,000	8,670,000
It	14,600,000	16,200,000
We	9,010,000	112,000,000
They	13,500,000	11,900,000

Table 2: The number of occurrences of "didn't use to" vs. "didn't used to" in questions

	use to	used to
Did I	925,000	1,450,000
Did you	112,000,000	158,000,000
Did he	22,950,000	63,600,000
Did she	1,300,000	18,100,000
Did it	1,220,000	586,000
Did we	10,100,000	26,100,000
Did they	12,500,000	36,600,000

Needless to say, if a sentence is both interrogative and negated, *did* and *used* also co-occur:

(7) a. *Didn't you used to go to the Hacienda?*[3]
    b. *Didn't he used to be Ben Affleck?*[4]

The results of another Internet search on 31 March 2013 can be seen in Table 3.

I have three aims in writing this article: to show that the co-occurrence of *did* and *used* is a fairly recent development; to show that reanalysis is the probable cause; and, most importantly, to offer an explanation for why the reanalysis has taken (is taking) place. The explanation is actually that the reanalysis in question is the continuation of a process that started hundreds of years ago. It is well-known that *use* (as a kind of control verb) began as a full lexical verb and gradually took on modal-like characteristics. What I will claim is that the evolution of *use* did not stop at modalization but

Table 3: The number of occurrences of "didn't use to" vs. "didn't used to" in negative questions

	use to	used to
Didn't I	396,000	1,610,000
Didn't you	6,360,000	25,900,000
Didn't he	12,500,000	32,600,000
Didn't she	6,530,000	11,300,000
Didn't it	1,660,000	994,000
Didn't we	8,090,000	29,300,000
Didn't they	125,000,000	23,400,000

has continued to adverbialization. The article is organized as follows:

In Section 2 I present historical data from three different corpora and from some relevant articles and the *Oxford English Dictionary* to show the development of the *use to* construction. It will be shown that originally, beginning in the 14th century, *use* as a modal-control verb behaved syntactically like a lexical verb. In Section 3 I provide a summary of how, syntactically, *use* began to show more and more modal-like characteristics while retaining some of its lexical verb qualities, with the end result that its status became very uncertain in the minds of English speakers and it became susceptible to reanalysis. Section 4 presents the hypothesis that reanalysis is the best explanation for the development of *didn't used to* and discusses the factors that probably played a role in the reanalysis process. Section 5 is a brief summary.

2. The history of *use to*

The verb *use* is an old lexical verb of Norman French origin that means "to make use of". However, *use* also functions as a kind of modal that selects infinitival complements with *to* and is semantically aspectual. The semantics of *used to* has been discussed in the literature by Comrie (1976), Hantson (2005), Tagliamonte & Lawrence (2000) and others and is typically described as *former habituality*, or *habituality that no longer holds*. In this article, to distinguish the two functions of *use* I will apply the terms *lexical use* and *modal use*.

In Present Day English, modal *use* is defective. It only occurs in the simple past tense, never in the present or in participial or gerundive form. It cannot be selected by modals and auxiliaries. This makes it very much like a modal verb. Things were not always so. From the Middle English period well into the Early Modern English era modal *use* was able to occur in the past, present and perfect tenses, it was able to occur with a modal or auxiliary, it had a gerundive form, and it could even be passivized. According to Nagle (1985), who is citing the 1933 edition of the *Oxford English Dictionary*, the first documented occurrence of modal *use* was in 1303:

(8) *For ryche men **vse** comunly Sweryn grete othys grysly.*
    for rich men use commonly swear great oaths grisly.
    'For rich men commonly are in the habit of swearing great, grisly oaths.'

A thorough review of Kroch & Taylor ([2000](#)), the *Penn-Helsinki Parsed Corpus of Middle English*, Release 2 (PPCME2), provided relevant data. Some example sentences follow. Note that in the first example the expression *use to* is in the perfect tense, that is, in past participle form:

(9) *"Sir," seyde sir Kay the Stywarde, "if ye go now unto youre mete ye shall breke youre olde custom of youre courte, for ye* **have nat used** *on thys day to sytte at your mete or that ye have sene some adventure."*[5]

The following example from Chaucer's Canterbury Tales, cited in Nagle ([1985](#)), shows that modal *use* even had a gerundive form:[6]

(10) *A theef he was for sothe, of corn and mele ... and* **usuant** *to stele.* A thief he was forsooth of grain and meal ... and using to steal

The following example from the OED shows that modal *use* could even be passivized, like a true lexical verb:[7]

(11) *It was in old times* **vsed** *... for men to shaue themselues.* (1621 R. Montagu *Diatribæ Hist. Tithes* 531)

Despite the fact that *use to* was present in Middle English, one cannot expect to find examples of *didn't use to* or *didn't used to* for the simple reason that *do*-insertion in negated and interrogative sentences had not yet entered the language. A search for *didn't used to* must therefore begin in Early Modern English. The corpus that I have used is Kroch, Santorini & Delfs ([2004](#)), the *Penn-Helsinki Parsed Corpus of Early Modern English* (PPCEME). What is interesting is that even in the Early Modern English period modal *use* still behaved like a full lexical verb (was not restricted to simple past tense form). The following examples show modal *use* in the perfect tense, the present tense and in combination with modals.

(12) *For if you will haue a tree beare more fruite then it* **hath vsed to do***; it is not any thing you can do to the boughs ...*[8]

(13) *I'll creepe vp into the chimney. There they alwaies* **vse to discharge** *their Birding-peeces.*[9]

(14) a. *To whom a physycyon cam to gyue hym councell and seyd that he* **must vse to ete** *metis that be light of dygestyon as small byrdys.*[10]

b. *... by mine aduise, the childe* **shall vse to** *speake no latine.*[11]

The following example shows that *use to* could even be used in the passive voice and present tense with the meaning of habitualness. Note that it differs from the passive in (11) because it does not involve impersonal *it*:

(15) *But leauing to speake any further of these Circles, because they* **are not vsed to be** *described in Spheares but onely in Astrolabes, I will now treate of the foure lesser Circles ...*[12]

The modal *use* could also be negated without *do*-insertion:

(16) *"I* **vse not** *to gest," quoth this parson, "when I speake so earnestly."*[13]

(17) *Forsooth for I wyll not, I* **vse not** *to kisse men.*[14]

Nonetheless, as the following sentence shows, at some point in Early Modern English *do*-insertion for negation was possible, but *didn't used to* had not yet appeared:

(18) *And so, he that vsed to teache,* **did not commonlie vse to beate***, but remitted that ouer to an other mans charge.*[15]

And at the time when *do*-insertion came into use for negation, it was still possible to employ *use to* in the present tense:

(19) *Look you, though in strictness, unless the Party be dead, we* **do not use** *to admit of any such Evidence.*[16]

The following example shows that in 1685 *do*-insertion had entered the language for interrogative sentences but reanalysis of *used to* had probably not yet taken place:

(20) *Did your Lady* **use to** *sup below stairs or above?*[17]

And the following example shows that when *do* was used for emphasis in Early Modern English, *use* could accompany it, but in infinitival form, not tensed:

(21) *I believe thou* **dost use** *to bake on Sundays, dost thou not?*[18]

The data viewed so far show that *use to* existed in Middle and Early Modern English and behaved like a lexical verb, including being affected by *do*-insertion. There is, however, no evidence that in Early Modern English *did* or *didn't* and *used to* could co-occur, which means that we need to focus on Modern English. The *Corpus of Historical American English* includes examples from written

Table 4: Occurrences of "used to" vs. "use to" in the Corpus of Historical American English by decade		
	Used	Use
2000	10	2
1990	14	1
1980	7	1
1970	5	6
1960	3	2
1950	1	4
1940	7	2
1930	4	3
1920	1	3
1910	2	9
1900	0	6
1890	0	2
1880	2	4
1870	1	2
1860	2	7
1850	0	7
1840	0	2
1830	0	2
1820	0	0
1810	0	0
Total	59	5

In this section we have seen that *use* in its modal function behaved like a lexical verb. However, probably because of its aspectual semantics it gradually took on a number of modal-like characteristics. This will be the subject of the next section.

3. The incomplete modalization of *use*, and its consequent uncertain status

It is not surprising that the verb *use*, even though it had the aspectual semantics of a modal, behaved like a full lexical verb, since it was derived from the lexical verb *use* meaning "to make use of". At some point, however, *use* in its modal function began to be treated, logically, as a modal. The history of *use to* is thus linked to the history of modals in general. For a detailed history of English modals, the reader is directed to Fischer (2003) and Lightfoot (1974). For the purposes of this article it is important to know that once the Middle English period had begun, modals began to undergo grammaticalization, which included the loss of infinitival and participial forms and the loss of the ability to combine with other modals and auxiliaries. Past tense forms of modals also lost their past semantics. This led to the appearance of the so-called quasi-modals like *ought to* and *have to*. The expression *use to*, also sometimes categorized as a quasi-modal, went through many of the changes that modals went through. These changes began during the Early Modern English period and will be discussed below.

Modal *use* was probably pre-destined to become reanalysed as a modal because it has one characteristic that differentiates it from other lexical verbs that take a *to*-infinitive: *used to* only serves to add habitual modality to a verb. It does *not* assign a thematic role to its subject like a control verb. In the following sentences, one could not maintain that *use* assigns a thematic role any more than one could claim that the habituality modal *would* does:

(23) a. *John used to get up early every day.*
b. *John would get up early every day.*

Let's now look at the changes that *use* underwent as a result of its status as a quasi-modal. As we have already pointed out, it can only be used in the past tense.

(24) a. *Mary used to play football every Saturday.*
b. **Mary uses to play football every Saturday.*

American English from 1810 to 2009. A search for occurrences of *didn't used to* and *didn't use to* by decade yielded the results shown in Table 4.

In this corpus *didn't used to* doesn't appear until after 1850 whereas *didn't use to* was around before that. Until around 1940 *didn't use* clearly dominated. After that the trend started to reverse itself and in the 1980s *didn't used to* became quite dominant. Incidentally, whereas Table 4 suggests that *didn't used to* appeared in the middle of the 19th century in the United States, the OED places the first occurrence in England in the 18th century. The following sentence is from a dialogue and is spoken by a "glassman", a person who makes or sells glass products (non-nobility, non-gentry):

(22) *'Dad', (said the glassman. pulling out his pocket-handkerchief) 'I **didn't used to** be so melch-hearted.'* (1782 E. Blower *George Bateman* II. 111)

It also has no gerundive form and it cannot combine with true modals or auxiliaries:

(25) a. *John was using to visit his mother on Sundays.
b. *Mary could use to run faster than her brother.
c. *Before Peter studied law he had used to be a farmer.

Further evidence of the modal-status of *use* is that even in the 20th century there are examples of its being used without do-support. The following examples are from Jørgensen (1988):

(26) a. *The Mistress **usedn't** to sleep well at night*. (from *Dumb Witness* (*Poirot Loses a Client*) by Agatha Christie, 1937)
b. *'This the only strip in the vicinity?' – He nodded again. – 'They **used not** to have a strip at all.'* (from *The Rainbow and the Rose* by Nevil Shute, Norway, 1958)
c. *He **used not** to sweat like that*. (from *You Only Live Twice* by Ian Fleming, 1964)

These sentences are of course for most speakers antiquated at best and would normally be constructed with do-support, but they illustrate that *use* has retained modal-like characteristics up until very recent times. On the other hand, it has not completely surrendered its status as a lexical verb. The most obvious similarities between *use* and a normal control verb are that they both take infinitival complements and they both require do-support in certain environments:

(27) a. *You promised to be on time, didn't you?*
b. *She really tried to impress us, didn't she?*
c. *He used to live in England, didn't he?*

There are other signs that modal *use* has been slow to forfeit its lexical verb qualities. The following sentences are from rather recent times. In the (a) sentence, from Nagle (1985), modal *use* appears in the present tense. In the (b) sentence, from Jørgensen (1988) we see modal *use* as a past participle, in the pluperfect:

(28) a. *All this time, of course, they went on talking agreeably, as people of birth **use**, about the Queen's temper and the prime Minister's gout*. (from *Orlando* by Virginia Woolf, 1928)
b. *His hide was less shiny than it **had used** to be*. (from *Animal Farm* by George Orwell, 1962)

One can see that the modal semantics of *use* has been (and is) in conflict with the fact that it was derived from a still existent lexical verb. The result is that it behaves sometimes like a lexical verb and sometimes like a modal. This dual status causes confusion in the minds of speakers and renders *use to* more susceptible to reanalysis. This is the subject of the next section.

4. Reanalysis as the explanation

I begin this section with a definition of *reanalysis*. I will follow the definition in Langacker (1977), who says that reanalysis is "*change in the structure of an expression or class of expressions that does not involve any immediate or intrinsic modification of its surface manifestation*."[19] Brinton & Traugott (2005) expound on this definition by adding that reanalysis entails a change in constituency, a change in category labels, and boundary loss. We will see that all of these definitions and criteria are very applicable in the case of *used to*.

What we saw in Section 3 is that *use* underwent a kind of reanalysis or grammaticalization, from lexical verb to modal or quasi-modal, while never surrendering all its lexical verb qualities. I think that it might be useful at this point to compare this with what happened in the case of the perfect auxiliary *have*. When the lexical verb *have* meaning "to own or possess" was grammaticalized as the perfect auxiliary, it did not disappear as a lexical verb. It simply took on an additional function. When do-insertion became obligatory for lexical verbs in negated and interrogative sentences, *have* was (and still is, in some cases) exempt, due to the fact that it is both a lexical verb and an auxiliary. Sentences like the following are fairly common:

(29) a. Have you the ability to make this project a success?
b. I haven't a clue.

The modal verb *use* shows comparable behaviour. Because it has undergone a kind of reanalysis or grammaticalization, a sentence like (26a) (*The Mistress usedn't to sleep well at night*) is rare but not totally impossible. However, since *use* has never lost its status as a full lexical verb, *The Mistress didn't use to sleep well at night* would be more normal. The grammaticalization of *use* was thus not complete. When used as a modal it forfeits its ability to appear in any tense but the past, its ability to combine with modals and auxiliaries, etc. but because of its dual status as a lexical verb it normally requires do-support in questions and negation.

The question that we will now address is why *didn't use to* has become *didn't used to*. I will argue that reanalysis is the best explanation. The cornerstone of my argument is the fact that an English verbal projection cannot contain more than one tensed or finite verb. Consequently, in the phrase *didn't used to* either *didn't* or *used* must be something other than a verb. Since the clitic negation marker *n't* is only attached to verbs, it is clearly *didn't* that is the finite verb, which means that *used* must be something else. It is very plausible to construe this as reanalysis. This is strongly supported by the fact that many people who say "didn't used to" not only would never say "didn't use to", they find it ungrammatical, although they would never say "didn't promised" or "didn't tried". For these speakers, the word *used* in the phrase *didn't used to* does not have the status of verb. Since it is not a verb, noun, adjective or preposition, it is an adverb. Because it combines the semantics of the adverbs *usually* and *formerly*, it could be considered an adverb of *time* and *frequency*. I will now present some factors that I think might have played a role in bringing this reanalysis about.

The most significant factor is the uncertain status of modal *use*, a hybrid that vacillates between being a lexical verb and being a modal. If something is neither fish nor fowl there is some possibility that it will be categorized as something else eventually. Another factor is that in the history of English the particle *to* has been involved in reanalysis and grammaticalization before. In Los (2005), Lightfoot (1979) and Nagle (1985) there is discussion of how *to* was originally a preposition appearing not only before nouns but before nominalized verbs. At some point in the later Middle English period, the combination of *to* plus a nominalized verb was reanalysed as VP (*to* plus verb) so that *to* was, in addition to being a preposition appearing before nominals, also a non-finite tense marker. Nagle suggests that this dual status of *to* created opacity that opened the door to reanalysis.

Another important factor is that modals do not have an infinitive form. Since *use* has so many modal qualities and can be said to have undergone grammaticalization, it is understandable that *use* in its modal function would seem strange in infinitival form. In the following sentence, modal *use* is in fact in infinitival form, and it is not unreasonable to assume that many speakers reject the sentence simply because they cannot accept a modal as an infinitive.

(30) *She didn't use to like broccoli.*

The rejection of *use* as an infinitive may well have encouraged the use of *used to* instead.

Still another factor, closely related to the last one, has to do with an observation made by Jørgensen (1988). He says that the phenomenon "didn't used to" might have arisen from the fact that when *used* appears in its quasi-modal tensed form the past ending is always present, and this gives speakers the subconscious feeling that the past ending is a "permanent fixture". This would prevent one from saying "use" when using the verb in its modal sense. This argument by Jørgensen is not implausible.

Phonology could also have played a role. For many speakers the pronunciation of *used to* when *use* is a modal verb deviates from the pronunciation of *used to* when *used* is employed as a transitive verb. Note the pronunciation of the sibilant in the following examples:

(31) a. *This is the camera that Mary used to take pictures.*
      b. *This is the place where Mary used to take pictures.*

For many speakers of Standard British and American English, the pronunciation of *used* is [juzd] in (a) but [jus] in (b). Contrast this with a sentence containing another control verb, such as *Mary refused to take pictures.* In this sentence, the [z] and [d] phonemes in *refused* are not devoiced and assimilated to the following [t]. The merging of the [z] and [d] phonemes in *used* with the [t] in *to* may very well have facilitated the reanalysis of *used* and *to* as a constituent.

It has actually been suggested to me that the *used to/use to* distinction is a simple spelling problem. Nothing could be further from the truth. A spelling problem exists when a speaker doesn't hear a particular letter pronounced and spells accordingly. People may spell "climb" <clime> because they don't hear a [b] or "often" <offen> because they don't hear a [t]. In the case of "used to", people don't hear or pronounce the [d] on "used" but insist that it is there. That is not an issue of spelling but of grammar.

Another factor, mentioned before, is the fact that modal *use* cannot be used in the present tense:

(32) **She doesn't use to go home on time every day.*

It is not difficult to imagine that a speaker might think that if this sentence is impossible, its past tense equivalent should also be impossible:

(33) *She didn't use to go home on time every day.*

In other words, if *used to*, which is in the past tense, cannot also appear in the present tense the way any normal verb can, then it must not be a verb.

Another important factor was probably analogy. One cannot help but think of the expression *to be used to*. According to Lightfoot (1979) and Nagle (1985), *to be used to* first appeared in the late 1500s, when modals were separating from main verbs and quasi-modals started to appear. Nagle argues that it spread as a result of analogy with expressions such as *be wont to* and *be accustomed to*. It most likely originated as an adjectival past participle. I say this because one of the meanings of transitive *use* was "to accustom". Note the following examples from the OED:[20]

(34) a. *Some moderate skill in it **will use a man** to reason closely.* (1688 T. Shadwell *Squire of Alsatia* ii. i. 29)
  b. *It is not surprising that the seal ... **should use her little ones** to live under water.* (1783, J. O. Justamond tr. G. T. F. Raynal, *Philos. Hist. Europeans in Indies* (new ed.) VII. 91)

Although *use to* came into existence at least two hundred years before *be used to*, since the latter expression invariably involves the adjectival past participle *used*, it is certainly possible that the invariability of *used* in this expression had an effect on creating Jørgensen's above-mentioned "permanent fixture" in *didn't used to*. This idea becomes, I think, all the more plausible when one considers the fact that *to be used to* could originally take *to*-infinitives as complements, the same as modal *use*. This similarity between the two constructions would seem to make *use to* much more susceptible to change through analogy. Note the following additional examples from the OED:[21]

(35) a. *He hath bene vs'd Euer to conquer.* (1616 Shakespeare *Coriolanus*)
  b. *I'm not used to be used in this manner!* (1796 F. Burney *Camilla* IV. viii. vii. 329)

I would also like to say that I think it is significant that the reanalysis of *used to* as an adverb began with negated sentences, interrogative sentences, and negated interrogative sentences, all of which involve *do*-insertion, subject-auxiliary inversion, or both. These are more complex structures, syntactically speaking, and this added complexity combined with the already uncertain status of modal *use* may well have contributed to the reanalysis.

I will continue this discussion by adding data that provide evidence that *used to* has been reanalysed as an adverb. What is interesting and important is that some of the examples involve neither negation nor interrogation. The following sentences from the Midwestern United States are from Nagle (1985). Nagle even refers to (36a) as "preposed adverbial *used to*". (He does so without elaboration or discussion, but he was clearly thinking in a manner consistent with the hypothesis being presented in this article.)

(36) a. *Used to he called home every week.*
  b. *Mary used to didn't play tennis.*

These sentences are at best highly marginal for most speakers, but they do exist. Consider the following additional sentences:

(37) a. *Musicians **used to came** up to me after I had written a review.*[22]
  b. *That was two years ago, when she **used to came** down to the corner of Chrystie bareheaded to meet you after supper.*[23]
  c. *We **used to took** a vacation every summer but we stopped.*[24]

Given the placement of *used to* in these examples, it seems very reasonable to conclude that *used to* has been reanalysed as an adverb.

I would now like to return to the definition of reanalysis presented at the beginning of this section to show that it applies to *used to*. Langaker's criterion is that a reanalysed syntactic element shows no superficial sign of having changed. This is certainly the case with *used to*. Consider the following two sentences:

(38) a. *Catholics used to eat fish on Fridays.*
  b. *Catholics didn't used to eat meat on Fridays.*

In the (a) example *used* is the finite verb in the sentence. In (b), the finite verb is *did* and the complement of *did* is the VP *eat meat on Fridays*. The finite verb also bears the clitic negation marker, and the entire verbal projection *didn't eat meat on Fridays* is modified by the aspectual adverb *used to*. The phrase *used to* looks and sounds the same in both sentences. Recall that Brinton and Traugott state that reanalysis will involve a change in constituency, a change in category labels and boundary loss. These criteria are all met in the case of *used to*. Constituency has definitely been realigned. In (38a), *to* is the non-finite tense marker and forms a constituent with *eat*. In (38b), *to* forms a constituent with *used*, that constituent being an adverb. Category labels also change, from verb to adverb. And given that *used* and *to* have combined to form an adverb, one can also speak of

boundary loss, which is enhanced by the coalescence of phonemes.

5. Summary

This article has been about the reanalysis of the quasi-modal *used to* as an adverb. The reanalysis is the continuation of a process that began centuries ago when *use* was reanalysed/grammaticalized as a modal. That is, when the verb *use* meaning "to make use of" took on the additional function of aspectual modal early in the 14th century, it continued to behave syntactically as a lexical verb. More than two hundred years later, English modals began to undergo reduction resulting from grammaticalization. Probably because of its modal semantics, *use* was associated with modals and began to be treated more and more like a modal. And yet, most probably because of its having been derived from the still existent lexical verb *use*, modal *use* led a "double life", with many speakers treating it not as a modal but as an anomalous lexical verb. The result of this series of events is that up until very recent times there has been inconsistency among speakers in the way they employ modal *use*, and this has created uncertainty concerning the actual category of the verb. This made it a good candidate for reanalysis.

It appears that the reanalysis began during the first part of the 19th century in the United States and a bit earlier in England. While the phenomenon began as a non-standard expression it has gradually become more and more accepted. This is attested by the countless discussions and debates being held on various websites and by the fact that the coexistence of *didn't used to* and *didn't use to* is discussed in renowned books on English grammar, both American and British.

It is probably not a coincidence that the reanalysis process began with negated and interrogative sentences. These kinds of sentences are more complex, involving subject-auxiliary inversion or do-insertion, and this may have enhanced the confusion surrounding the categorial status of *use*. In any case, if *used to* as an adverb first appeared in questions and negated sentences, there is evidence that its use is spreading to other kinds of sentences.

The overwhelming evidence that reanalysis is the most plausible explanation for this phenomenon is that in Standard English a clause may contain only one finite verb.

Notes

1 http://www.bbc.co.uk/worldservice/learningenglish/grammar/learnit/learnitv285.shtml.

2 http://esl.about.com/b/2009/03/23/are-you-did-you-used-to-studying-every-day.htm.

3 The title of an article in the Life & Style section of *The Guardian*, 26 May 2012.

4 Sub-title in an article in *Time Magazine* in October, 2007.

5 Malory's *Morte Darthur*, 1470, file labelled CMMALORY.

6 Nagle (1985), p.163.

7 "use, v." *OED Online*. Oxford University Press, December 2014. Web. 17 December 2014.

8 Francis Bacon, *The twoo bookes of the proficience and advancement of learning*, 1605, file labelled BACON-E2-H.

9 Shakespeare, *The Merry Wives of Windsor*.

10 Included in William Shakespeare, *A hundred mery tales, from the only perfect copy known*, 1526, file labeled MERRYTAL-E1-H.

11 From Roger Ascham, *The Scholemasteer,* 1563–1568, file labelled ASCH-E1-P2.

12 Thomas Blundeville, *A briefe description of the tables of the three speciall right lines belonging to a circle, called signes, [sic] lines tangent, and lines secant. A plaine Treatise of the first principles of Cosmographie, and specially of the Sphaere, representing the shape of the whole world*, 1597, file labelled BLUNDEV-E2-H.

13 Thomas Harman, *A caueat or warening for commen cursetors vulgarely called vagabones*, 1567, file labelled HARMAN-E1-H.

14 From a drama by Nicholas Udall, 1552, file labelled UDALL-E1-H.

15 From Roger Ascham, *The Scholemasteer,* 1563–1568, file labelled ASCH-E1-P2.

16 Francis Hargrave (ed.), 1776–1781 (4th edn), *A complete collection of state-trials, and proceedings for high-treason, and other crimes and misdemeanours, commencing with the eleventh year of the reign of King Richard II, and ending with the sixteenth year of the reign of King George III*, 1685, file labelled OATES-E3-P2.

17 Author unknown, Francis Hargrave (ed.), 1776–1781 (4th edn), *A complete collection of state-trials, and proceedings for high-treason, and other crimes and misdemeanours, commencing with the eleventh year of the reign of King Richard II, and ending with the sixteenth year of the reign of King George III*, 1685, file labelled LISLE-E3-H.

18 From Gervase Markham, *Countrey Contentments, in two bookes: The first, containing the whole art of riding, The second intituled, The English Huswife, The English Experience,* 1615, file labelled LISLE-E3-P1.

19 Langaker (1977), p. 58.

20 "use, v." *OED Online*. Oxford University Press, December 2014. Web. 17 December 2014.

21 Ibid.

22 From British columnist and musician Miles Kingston.

23 From *The Guilty Party* by O. Henry.

24 Spoken by a white woman from the southern United States on a BBC programme.

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