

From happenstance to modality and beyond: verbo-nominal constructions with *chance(s)*

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1. Introduction

- Focus on *chance(s)*: “semiotic noun” (Halliday 1985), “shell noun” (Schmid 2000)

OEDonline on *chance* (< Old French; attested from ME onwards)

- “The falling out or happening of events; the way in which things fall out; **fortune**; case.”
- “An **opportunity** that comes in any one's way. Often const. *of*. ”
- “A **possibility** or **probability** of anything happening: as distinct from a certainty: often in plural, with a number expressed.”
- In “phrases”: “To stand a (fair, good) chance”; “Is there any chance of....?”; “To be in with a chance”

1. Introduction

- *Chance(s)* in **verbo-nominal patterns** in which it takes a complement (clause) (constructional templates)

EXIST	N	complement
HAVE	N	complement
N	COP	complement

Formal realizations of complement:

- *that*-clause
- *to*-infinitive
- *of*-PP → *of* + V-ing; *of* + action NP
- *for*-PP → *for* + action NP

There BE DET ADJ *chance(s)* **of/to/(that)**

*You have got the midterm election coming up here. My sense is that there's a very good **chance** the Republicans are going to take back the Senate* (WBO)

Have DET ADJ *chance(s)* **of/to/(that)**

*If he had a dropsy fit sitting there, I wouldn't have a **chance** to grab him because he goes that quick down.* (WBO)

DET *chances* **are (that)**

*if you 're really interested in the course then **chances** are you'll go out and buy the books* (WBO)

- Fits in with earlier joint work on 'no' + semiotic noun [*doubt/question/way/wonder/need/fear/chance*] + complement clause/relative clause (Van linden, Davidse & Brems 2011; Davidse & De Wolf 2012; Davidse et al. 2014; Davidse, De Wolf & Van linden 2015; Saad et al. 2011; Brems 2015; Gentens et al. 2016; Van linden et al. 2016)

1. Introduction

For Present-day English, Van linden & Brems (2017) showed that verbo-nominal patterns with *chance(s)* exceed the functional reach of modal auxiliaries, as they exhibit **3 types of uses**:

1) They are functionally equivalent to modal aux → grammatical uses

- **Grammatical uses** expressing different types of modality (dynamic, deontic and epistemic)

*Since he was quite unable to run he had no **chance** of outstripping his pursuer, so he resigned himself to imminent recapture . (WBO UKwrit)*

2) They exceed the functional reach of modal aux:

- **Lexical uses**

*Many also devote inside pages to the policies and characters of the three contenders, and assess their **chances** of winning (WBO UKspok)*

- **Third category**: 'caused modality'

*While executing their children 's killers would not bring back their loved ones, it would at least act as a catharsis, giving all concerned a better **chance** to move on with their lives (WBO UKwrit)*

Outline for today

1. Introduction
2. Present-day English
3. Diachrony of VNPs with *chance(s)*
 - 3.1 Data and methods
 - 3.2 Diachronic overview
4. Conclusions

2. Present-day English

Van linden & Brems (2017): data and methods

- Queries run on **WordBanks Online** subcorpora (57 million word synchronic corpus)
- British English subcorpora:
 - **Spoken**: Brspok
 - **Written**: Brbooks, Brmags, Brnews, Brephem, Times, Sunnow
- Queries targeted the lemma *chance*
- Analysis of 250 random examples with complements for written and spoken each

2. Present-day English

2.1 Grammatical uses

Dynamic modality

- generally defined in terms of (Palmer 1979: 3–4, 1990: ch. 5–6; Nuyts 2005, 2006):
 - abilities/possibilities, or needs/necessities
 - inherent in participants of actions, or in situations
 - no attitudinal assessment (i.e., no speaker attitude)
- 3) He [i.e. Saddam Hussein] has caused a superpower [i.e., the USA] to hesitate to use force against him. And he now has a **chance** to present himself as the only Arab leader who can compel the world to take the Palestine problem seriously. (brspok)
[participant-imposed possibility: he can now present himself as ...]
- 4) with er the monkeys [...] they'd got **chances** to swing to the trees and that sort of thing (brspok) [participant-imposed possibility: they could swing to the trees]
- 5) It's such a fab feeling having a make-over with everyone fussing over you. I love everything about this outfit but what makes it more special is that I'd never get the **chance** to wear something like this back home on a night out. (sunnaw)
[participant-imposed impossibility: I would never be able to wear ...]

2. Present-day English

Deontic modality

- Permission/obligation & desirability of SoA (Nuyts et al. 2010; Van linden 2012)
- 6) But Shearer did not rule out the possibility of making the pairing work. He added: "Myself and Patrick should be able to form a good partnership -- if we get the **chance** to play together." (sunnaw)
[permission: if we are allowed to play together (by the coach)]
 - 7) What about erm do you think while you were at school there was anything that you were n't allowed to do because you were a girl? -- Mm . <tc text="pause"/>
E as well we had the **chance** to play football (brspok)
[permission: we were allowed to play football at school]

2. Present-day English

Epistemic modality

- speaker's (or someone else's) assessment of an SoA in terms of likelihood
(Palmer 1979: ch. 3, 2001: 24–35; Van der Auwera and Plungian 1998: 81; Nuyts 2006: 6)
- 8) Q. How does it seem this particular issue may be resolved ? GREEN : There is a good **chance** that someone in Parliament may yet call for a vote of no confidence in Mr Sacher. (brspok)
[epistemic probability: someone may well yet call for a vote]
 - 9) I mean fair enough if you're really interested in the course then **chances** are you'll go out and buy the books (brspok)
[epistemic probability: it is likely you go out and buy the books]
 - 10) With between 13 and 14 per cent of the vote they [the Communists] are the second biggest political group nationwide. They know they stand no **chance** of being included in the future coalition government. That will most likely be a matter between the Civic Forum and the Christian Democrats. (brspok)
[epistemic impossibility: they know they won't be included]

2. Present-day English

- Verbo-nominal patterns with *chance(s)* can express ‘caused modality’ in augmented event structures: addition of (positive/negative) causative operator to basic modal meaning

“greater modal system” (Talmy 1988: 81): Conceptual framework of **FORCE DYNAMICS** (Talmy 1988, 2000)

- applied to modal auxiliaries: entities interact with respect to forces and barriers
- as well as (lexical) **causative** verbs (e.g. *make, let, have, help*), e.g. (1):
 - **syntactically** similar to the core modals: take a bare infinitival complement
 - **semantically** similar: have force-dynamic reference
 - different in **verb argument structure**: code the Antagonist as subject, while modals code the Agonist as subject

(1) *I **made** him **push** the car to the garage.*

(2) *He **must** push the car to the garage.*

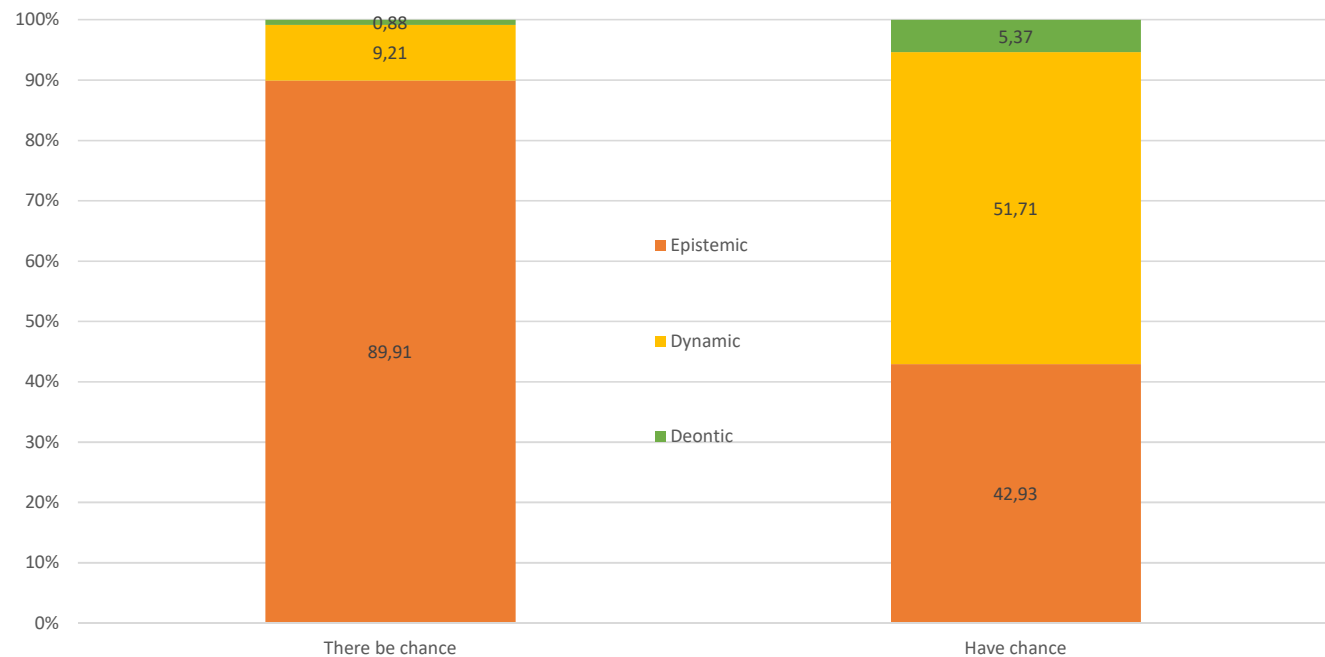
2. Present-day English: 'caused modality'

Modal type	Basic pattern	Augmented pattern: extra argument (Causer)
Epistemic	<p><i>It has declared that it'll take account of legitimate Soviet security worries. And there's every chance the NATO summit will unveil a revised military strategy for the Alliance (WBO)</i></p> <p><i>But erm then if you use er flux correction at the surface erm <M01/> Mm. <M02/> chances are you'll still have a thermohaline circulation and things like that (WBO)</i></p>	<p><i>chairman John Yorkston has admitted Richard Gough's plan to draft in Archie Knox as his right-hand man has boosted his chances of being Pars gaffer. (WBO) (increase likelihood: make more likely)</i></p> <p><i>Just seven days earlier, the White Feather had blown the chance of a draw for his relegation-racked side at Newcastle by having a penalty brilliantly saved by Shay Given. (WBO) (decrease likelihood: make less likely)</i></p>
Dynamic	<p><i>Since he was quite unable to run he had no chance of outstripping his pursuer, so he resigned himself to imminent recapture. (WBO)</i></p> <p><i>they'd got chances to swing to the trees and that sort of thing (WBO, brspok)</i></p>	<p><i>but fears a dispute over a transfer fee might scupper any chance he has of making the move permanent. (WBO) (preclude: make impossible)</i></p> <p><i>While executing their children's killers would not bring back their loved ones, it would at least act as a catharsis, giving all concerned a better chance to move on with their lives (WBO) (enable: make possible)</i></p>
Deontic	<p><i>However, the paper says, in an historic move, the Soviet Union will be given the chance to join the International Monetary Fund (WBO)</i></p> <p><i>It is BBC policy that all parties to a contentious matter have a fair chance to make their points within the confines of programme format (WBO)</i></p>	<p><i>Vinogradov 's difficult task was to restore the Kirov 's morale by providing new choreography alongside the 'classics' and by giving impatient young dancers a chance to prove themselves. (WBO) (allow)</i></p> <p><i>The North Korean premier said he would give the South one more chance to sit round the negotiating table. (WBO, brspok). (allow once more)</i></p>

2. Present-day English

Study of two VNPs: THERE BE CHANCE & HAVE CHANCE by MA students in Liège (Piot & Blanchère 2017):

- Corpus study bases on WBO data
- Queries targeted the VNPs; random samples of 250 hits



	deontic		dynamic		epistemic		Total AF	Total RF
	AF	RF	AF	RF	AF	RF		
of_PP_ing-form		0,00%	8	38,10%	69	33,66%	77	33,77%
to-infinitive	2	100,00%	5	23,81%	10	4,88%	17	7,46%
that-clause		0,00%	4	19,05%	104	50,73%	108	47,37%
covert		0,00%	1	4,76%	3	1,46%	4	1,75%
for_PP_actionN		0,00%	1	4,76%	2	0,98%	3	1,32%
of_PP_actionN		0,00%	1	4,76%	11	5,37%	12	5,26%
of_PP_pronoun		0,00%	1	4,76%	1	0,49%	2	0,88%
of_PP_entity		0,00%		0,00%	5	2,44%	5	2,19%
Total général	2	100,00%	21	100,00%	205	100,00%	228	100,00%

Table 1. *There be chance*: Formal types of the complement across the types of modal meaning

	deontic		dynamic		epistemic		Total AF	Total RF
	AF	RF	AF	RF	AF	RF		
to-infinitive	8	72,73%	79	74,53%	13	14,77%	100	48,78%
of_PP_ing-form	2	18,18%	17	16,04%	57	64,77%	76	37,07%
covert		0,00%	7	6,60%	5	5,68%	12	5,85%
of_PP_actionN	1	9,09%	3	2,83%	13	14,77%	17	8,29%
Total général	11	100,00%	106	100,00%	88	100,00%	205	100,00%

Table 2. *Have chance*: Formal types of the complement across the types of modal meaning

	deontic		dynamic		epistemic		Total AF	Total RF
	AF	RF	AF	RF	AF	RF		
near_negative		0,00%	2	9,52%	41	20,00%	43	18,86%
near_negative/negative		0,00%		0,00%	2	0,98%	2	0,88%
negative	1	50,00%	11	52,38%	36	17,56%	48	21,05%
positive	1	50,00%	8	38,10%	126	61,46%	135	59,21%
Total général	2	100,00%	21	100,00%	205	100,00%	228	100,00%

Table 3. *There be chance*: Polarity values across the types of modal meaning

	deontic		dynamic		epistemic		DUSE		Total AF	Total RF
	AF	RF	AF	RF	AF	RF	AF	RF		
near negative		0,00%		0,00%	10	11,63%		0,00%	10	5,10%
negative	2	18,18%	30	30,61%	10	11,63%	1	100,00%	43	21,94%
positive	9	81,82%	68	69,39%	66	76,74%		0,00%	143	72,96%
Total général	11	100,00%	98	100,00%	86	100,00%	1	100,00%	196	100,00%

Table 4. *Have chance*: Polarity values across the types of modal meaning

3. Diachrony of the VNPs with *chance*

3.1 Data & methods

Queries targeting different spelling and inflectional forms of *chance*:

Subperiod of English	Time span	Corpus	Number of words (millions)
Middle English (ME)	1150–1500	Penn-Helsinki Parsed Corpus of Middle English, Second Edition (PPCME)	1.16
Early Modern English (EModE)	1500–1710	Penn-Helsinki Parsed Corpus of Early Modern English (PPCEME)	1.79
	1570-1710	Corpus of Early Modern English texts (CEMET)	3.03
Late Modern English, Extended version (LModE-EV)	1710–1920	Corpus of Late Modern English texts (CLMETEV)	15.01

3. Diachrony of the VNPs with *chance*

3.2 Overview

Middle English: 1150-1500

PPCME	Chance_n	Take one's chance
18	7	1

*(11) Mordrede hade assemblede al þe folc of Cornwayle, and hade peple wipoute nombre, & wist þat Arthure Was comyng. He hade leuer to Dye and **tak his chaunce**, þan lenger flee, and abode and gaf an harde bataile to Kyng Arthur & to his peple*

‘Mordred has assembled all the people of Cornwall, and had countless people, and knew that Arthur was coming. He had rather die and **take his chance**, than flee any longer, and he waited and gave a hard battle to king Arthur and to his people.’ (PPCME, 1350–1420)

3. Diachrony of the VNPs with *chance*

3.2 Overview

Middle English: 1150-1500

PPCME	Chance_n	Of-PP complement
18	7	1

(12) *A man or a womman, affraied wip **any sodeyn chaunce of fiir, or of mans deeb, or what elles pat it be**, sodenly in þe heizt of his speryt he is dreuyn upon hast & upon nede for to crie or for to prey after help.* (PPCME, 1350–1420)

→ *of*-PP refers to a situation: (afraid) that a fire may break out, or that somebody would die

3. Diachrony of the VNPs with *chance*

3.2 Overview

Early Modern English: 1500-1710 in PPCEME

PPCEME	1500-1570	1570-1640	1640-1710	TOTAL
no complement	66	33	20	119
<i>of</i> -PP	8	0	1	9
<i>to</i> -inf	3	3	0	6
<i>when</i> -clause	0	0	1	1
TOTAL	77	36	22	135

(13) And thou thynkest that these mutacio~s and **chaunces** of fortune, do wander wythout anye gouvernoure. (PPCEME, 1500-1570)

(14) And they can love no longer but until the next Ague comes, and they are fond of each other but at the **chance** of fancy, or the small Pox, or Child-bearing, or Care, or Time, or any thing that can destroy a pretty Flower. (PPCEME, 1640-1710)

➔ until the occurrence of small pox, ...

3. Diachrony of the VNPs with *chance*

3.2 Overview

Early Modern English: 1500-1710 in PPCEME

matrices of clausal complement types	1500-1570	1570-1640	1640-1710
<i>it be (det) chance + to-inf</i>	2	3	0
<i>(det) chance be + to-inf</i>	1	0	0
<i>it be not chance when</i>	0	0	1
TOTAL	3	3	1

(15) After that lacke had long led this pleasant life, beeing though hee were but poore in good estimation; it was his Masters **chance** to die, and his Dame to bee a Widow, who was a very comely auncient Woman, and of reasonable Wealth. (PPCEME 1570-1640)

→ Happenstance meaning: ‘it was his master’s hap, fortune to die’

3. Diachrony of the VNPs with *chance*

3.2 Overview

Early Modern English: 1500-1710 in PPCEME

(16) it was my **chaunce** to meete with a Monster, who like the people Cynomolgy, had the proportion of a man, but headed like a dogge (PPCEME 1570-1640)

→ Happenstance meaning: ‘it was my hap, fortune to meet with a monster’

It	BE	Possessive determiner + CHANCE	<i>To</i> -infinitive
	Possessive determiner + CHANCE	BE	<i>To</i> -infinitive

→// complement-taking predicate ‘happen to’: Possessor *HAPPEN TO* + Inf
‘Positive achievement CTP’ in Noonan’s (2007) typology of CTPs

→ Also first meaning of epistemic adverbs like *maybe, perhaps, perchance* (López-Couso & Méndez-Naya 2017)

3. Diachrony of the VNPs with *chance*

3.2 Overview

Early Modern English: 1570-1710 in CEMET

CEMET	1570-1640	1640-1710	TOTAL
Noun chance	161	90	251

PPCEME	1570-1640	1640-1710	TOTAL
no complement	33	20	119
<i>of</i> -PP	0	1	9
<i>to</i> -inf	3	0	6
<i>when</i> -clause	0	1	1
TOTAL chance (noun)	36	22	135

3. Diachrony of the VNPs with *chance*

3.2 Overview

Early Modern English: 1570-1710 in CEMET

matrices of clausal complement types	1570-1640	1640-1710
<i>it be (det) chance + to-inf</i>	4	2
<i>(det) chance be + to-inf</i>	1	1
<i>Have (det) chance + of V-ing</i>	1	0
TOTAL	6 [/161]	3 [/90]

Patterns with *to-inf*: happenstance meaning

(17) I was very well pleased with the sight of a fine lady that I have often seen walk in Graye's Inn Walks, and it was my **chance** to meet her again at the door going out. (CEMET 1640-1710)

3. Diachrony of the VNPs with *chance*

3.2 Overview

Early Modern English: 1570-1710 in CEMET

Pattern with **HAVE (det) CHANCE of V-ing:** emergence of **modal** meaning!

(18) The right path is that by which he **has** the best **chance** of adding to the stock of knowledge in the world something worth labouring for (CEMET 1570-1640)

→ Best able to add sth ? → dynamic modal meaning?

→ Most likely to add sth? → epistemic modal meaning?

3. Diachrony of the VNPs with *chance*

3.2 Overview

Early Modern English: 1570-1710 in CEMET

Types of matrices (with or without complements referring to SoA), so far all showing POSITIVE polarity

	CEMET1	CEMET2
it be (det) chance	5	3
(det) chance be	1	2
this be (det) chance	1	0
have (det) chance	2	0
there be chance	0	2
take (det) chance	4	2
try (det) chance	0	2

3. Diachrony of the VNPs with *chance*

3.2 Overview

Late Modern English: 1710-1920 in CLMETEV

	1710-1780	1780-1850	1850-1920
chance	202	776	1298
Chance_noun	177	665	?

New matrix types:

- *Stand (det) chance*
- *Give (det) chance*
- *Lose (det) chance*
- *Present (det) chance*

3. Diachrony of the VNPs with *chance*

3.2 Overview

Late Modern English: 1710-1920 in CLMETEV: MODAL meanings

HAVE (det) CHANCE + **of V-ing**

(19) I have but just begun to like London, and to be settled in an agreeable set of people, and now they are going to wander all over the kingdom. Because they **have** some **chance** of having a month of good weather they will bury themselves three more in bad. (CLMETEV: 1710-1780) → epistemic

HAVE (det) CHANCE + **to-INF** (& negative polarity!):

(20) as they all spoke together, no man **had** **chance** to be heard (CLMETEV: 1710-1780)

(21) what specialties of treason, stratagem, aimed or aimless endeavour towards mischief, no party living [...] **has** now any **chance** to know. Camille's conjecture is the likeliest [...] (CLMETEV : 1780-1850)

4. Conclusions

- Verbo-nominal patterns with *chance(s)* ‘enrich’ the “greater modal system”
 - Onomasiologically: new patterns that are functionally equivalent to basic modal auxiliaries
 - ‘Functionally’: display ‘caused modal’ meanings
 - Show layering (Hopper 1991) of lexical, grammatical and ‘caused’ modal uses
- Diachronic data:
 - modal VNPs, caused modal and lexicalized meaning: first structures with implied complement (inferable from preceding discourse)
 - First VPN: happenstance meaning: It BE POSS_DET CHANCE + **to-inf**
→ ‘POSS happens to V’ [OED 1549]
 - Later development: epistemic-dynamic meaning
 - First modal VNP: HAVE (det) CHANCE + **of V-ing** [1570-1640]
 - Later on: HAVE (det) CHANCE + **to-inf** [**negative polarity**, possibly to maximally distinguish from earlier happenstance VPN with to-inf complement]
- Role of polarity: still to be confirmed, but negative polarity does not predominate in PDE

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