

Dialogically contractive uses of modal adverbs in *Proceedings of the Old Bailey*
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Seventeenth and eighteenth century courtroom trials have been shown to provide valuable insights into language use and change in the Early Modern English period (Kryk-Kastovsky 2006, 2007, Archer 2007). Most studies have focused on trials as evidence for interactive dialogue, especially speech acts. In this paper I investigate the use of some modal adverbs in the *Proceedings of the Old Bailey 1674-1834* (see Huber 2007 on the linguistic value of this corpus) with focus on the dialogic/contesting functions to which they are put (White 2003, Traugott 2008). The adverbs selected are a subset of adverbs of modal certainty: *no doubt*, *undoubtedly*, *surely*, and *necessarily*, and their use is compared to that of Present Day English as attested in ICE-GB and BNC (Simon-Vandenberg and Aijmer 2007). Of these modals adverbs *undoubtedly* and *necessarily* are largely restricted to transcriptions of what was said in court. For example, *undoubtedly* is used by participants in the trials (mainly surgeons, judges, but also defendants) (1779, Q. *They may bring tools of their own? A. They may undoubtedly, but I do not know that they do*). By contrast, *no doubt* and *surely* are also used by the reporter (1675, *she was found guilty upon both Indictments, and no doubt will be made an example*). The data therefore show that the discourse marker uses of *no doubt* and *surely* were already well established by the later seventeenth century. I discuss ways in which the modals are used by the participants in the trials over time and especially by the reporter to take up various stances. I argue that the modal adverbs are for the most part used in “dialogically contractive” ways, i.e. “to close down or contract the space for the alternatives” (White 2003: 268). This study is a contribution to the understanding of genre effects on the development of meaning (Moore 2006) from an interactional discourse perspective.

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