Annotating the Interaction between Focus and Modality: the case of exclusive particles

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Introduction

• Our goal is to discuss contexts where Focus interacts with and affects modality values

• To present an adaptation of an existing annotation scheme of modality for Portuguese (Hendrickx et al., 2012) to deal with such contexts

• To apply the scheme to a corpus of 100 sentences extracted from the written part of the Corpus de Referência do Português Contemporâneo (CRPC) (Généreux et al., 2012)

• To explore the results
The concepts of Modality and Focus

• Modality
  expression of the speaker’s (or the subject’s) opinion and attitude towards the content of the proposition (Palmer, 1988; Oliveira, 1988; van der Auwera and Plungian, 1998)

• Focus
  a means to “give prominence to meaning-bearing elements in an expression.” (Krifka, 1995:240)

• Exclusive particles: só, apenas ‘only’
The effects of Focus on Modality (1)

- The exclusive **can restrict the set of possibilities** to the one presented (depending on the scope of the particle)
  epistemic possibility → epistemic necessity
  
  *Isto só pode ter sido um acidente.*
  ‘This can only have been an accident’

- **Weaker alternative** than expected (mirative reading)
  
  *Para participar só tem de contactar a organização através dos telefones 96... ou 91...*
  ‘To participate, you only have to contact the organization through the phone numbers...’
The effects of Focus on Modality (2)

• In certain contexts, the exclusive particle is not optional
  epistemic necessity + emphatic reading
  
  Sr. Deputado, só pode estar a brincar!
  ‘Congressman, you must be kidding!’

• In contexts with modal ambiguity, the exclusive can block one of
  the modal readings

  A nova lei (só) pode reduzir a injustiça.
  ‘The new legislation can (only) reduce injustice’

w/o exclusive: epistemic possibility OR participant-internal capacity
with exclusive: epistemic possibility → epistemic necessity
# Modality Annotation scheme: components

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Trigger</th>
<th>The lexical expression conveying the modal value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Modal value</td>
<td>The modal value expressed by the trigger</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ambiguity</td>
<td>When the triggers conveys more than one modal value in a context</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Polarity</td>
<td>To mark the positive or negative polarity of the trigger</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Target</td>
<td>The linguistic expression in the scope of the trigger</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Polarity</td>
<td>To mark the positive or negative polarity of the target</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Source of the event mention</td>
<td>The producer of the sentence: speaker or writer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Source of the modality</td>
<td>The holder of the modality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comment</td>
<td>Any aspect of the annotation which is not covered by the scheme</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
New Features of the Annotation Scheme

- New attribute “focus” of the trigger component
  Three possible values: none, exclusive, additive (for particles such as "também ‘also’").

- New attribute “focus_value” of the trigger component to handle pragmatic values (see poster)
  Three possible values: none, mirative and contrastive

- Two new components to mark the focus particle and its scope: “focus_cue” and “focus_scope”

- Ambiguity attribute of the “focus_scope” component
Results of the annotation

- 100 sentences with the focus particle só ‘only’ and a modal verb (poder ‘can/may’, dever ‘must’, ter de ‘have to’, ser capaz de ‘be able to’, querer ‘want’)

- 1 context with só + poder (‘only + can’) with necessity reading

- 7 contexts with ter de ‘have to’ and 3 contexts with querer ‘want’, which denote a weaker alternative than expected and were marked with the value “mirative”
O plantel do Estrela da Amadora só deverá poder voltar a contar com o guardião Tiago, durante a próxima semana, mas a data exacta para a recuperação clínica total do jogador ainda está por definir.

Fonte do Ministério da Saúde informa que está a aguardar a conclusão de um estudo a mortalidade causado pela vaga de calor de Agosto, da responsabilidade do Instituto Ricardo Jorge, trabalho que só deverá ficar terminado dentro de dois ou três meses.

Há quem defenda que os medicamentos só devem ser usados numa primeira fase do tratamento.

Por sua vez, Wally Wonfor, destacado para coordenar a tarefa dos apanha–bolas, estabeleceu as regras de tratamento relativamente a essa "diva" natural de Moscovo e presidente na Florida: "A postura e a cortesia serão guardadas a todo o instante e só se deve dizer obrigado quando tal for oportuno".

Também os frutos só devem ser descascados, assim como os sumos preparados, na hora da refeição, evitando tanto quanto possível a exposição ao ar e ao calor, que podem alterar as vitaminas que contêm. Cerca de 62% do peso do nosso organismo é água.
### Modal Sentences

**Type**
- none
- target
- trigger
- source_modality
- source_event
- focus_cue
- scope_focus

**modal_value**
- deontic_obligation

**polarity**
- pos
- neg

**polarity_cue**

**focus**
- none
- exclusive
- additive

**focus_cue**
- só

**extra_focus_value**
- none
- mirative
- contrastive

**ambiguity**

**modal_class**
- set_28

**comment**

- Suppress check
- Warn on extra attributes
Conclusions

- Our detailed analysis of the data show that this is a complex issue that needs to consider the modal value, the linguistic context and each modal trigger.
- The annotation confirms the dual nature of exclusives, due to the fact that in certain contexts they both signal one of the possible alternatives and describe it as weaker that would be expected by the participants.
- The scope of the focus particle plays an important role in the meaning of the sentence.
Thank You!