

## Wishing it were: *podia* and the implicature of desire in Brazilian Portuguese

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### 1. Introduction

Although in the logical philosophical literature the variety of meanings expressed by modal auxiliaries are treated as ambiguity, since Kratzer (1981, 1991, 2008), modality is accounted for by making modal sentences contextually dependent. For instance, *poder* (can/may/might), the prototypical auxiliary of possibility in Brazilian Portuguese (BrP, from now on), may receive epistemic, deontic, capacity, and other readings, depending on the context.:

- (1) Inês pode estar em casa. (epistemic)  
Inês pod-3person-PRESENT be-INFinitive in house.  
'Inês may/might be at home.'
- (2) Inês pode viajar sozinha. (deontic)  
Inês pod-3p-PRES travel-INF alone.  
'Inês may travel by herself.'
- (3) Inês pode correr 10 quilômetros. (capacity)  
Inês pod-3p-PRES run-INF 10 kilometers.  
'Inês can/may run 10 kilometers.'

State verbs, as *estar* in example (1) below, do not allow future oriented interpretations, which will be our main concern in this paper; this is the reason why we shall avoid them in this paper. This paper focuses on describing the epistemic uses of the imperfective form *podia* in comparison with the present form *pode* when they discharge future oriented interpretations. We show that, when they are used precisely in the same context, they do not mean the same: only *podia* conveys that the speaker believes that the state of affairs described by the “prejacent” sentence (the proposition denoted by the infinite clause) will not come up true – in a sense it is “counterfactual” –, and may convey an implicature of the speaker’s desire. Our investigation is based on the context-

dependent possible world semantics approach, presented specially by von Stechow & Gillies (2007) and Kratzer (1991, 2008), and on Iatridou's (2000) approach to conditionals. In the dynamic semantics model by von Stechow & Gillies (2007), the epistemic *might* is a test on the information state, i.e., the prejacent proposition is compatible with the speaker's epistemic state (the relevant body of information in this case). We argue that this model is insufficient to capture the differences between *pode* and *podia*, since the semantics for *might* applies to both. The differences between these two auxiliaries may be apprehended, we argue, by a slightly modified version of Iatridou's approach (2000) to imperfective morphemes. We propose that the imperfective morpheme *-ia* in *podia* does not necessarily exclude the actual world from the topic worlds, but it actually organizes the worlds according to a contextually given "ideal" world. Such an ordering cannot be performed by *pode*. Thus, only *podia* expresses a low grade of possibility, in line with Kratzer (1991): because of the counterfactual component *-ia*, epistemic *podia* conveys that the proposition expressed by the prejacent sentence is a weak possibility. From this we derive that only *podia* implicates the speaker's desire.

## 2. Differences and Similarities between *pode* and *podia*

The assumption that *pode* and *podia* merely express possibility is far from sufficient for an accurate description of their semantics, since it is intuitively clear that the possibilities expressed by them differ. Moreover, it is not appropriate to reduce their differences to a matter of tense and aspect.

*Podia* may express a possibility in the past, i.e., it is one of the past forms of *pode* (the other one being *pôde*, the perfective past), as shown below, but it may also convey a "present" possibility, when the state of affairs described by the prejacent proposition is a possibility in the moment of utterance; thus, it is future oriented. Out of the blue, sentence (4) is ambiguous: (a) it was a possibility that Inês would pay the bill; (b) It is a possibility that Inês will pay the bill.

- (4) Inês podia pagar a conta.  
 Inês pod-3p-IMP pay-INF the bill. <sup>1</sup>  
 'Inês could pay the bill'

The interpretation is contextually dependent and fixed by temporal adverbs, like *ontem* (yesterday), *agora* (now) and *amanhã* (tomorrow).

*Pode* shows a different behavior. It cannot have a past interpretation unless the main verb of the prejacent sentence is in the past perfect as in (7) below. If in the simple form, its combination with a past adverb, like *ontem* (yesterday), is ungrammatical, as (5) shows:

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<sup>1</sup> Here is the list of abbreviations: INF = infinitive; 3p = third person singular; PRES = present tense morphology; IMP = past imperfective morphology. Although we are not sure about the translations, we translated *pode* by *may/might*, since it is always epistemic; and *podia* by *could*, which sounds to us the most natural translation.

- (5) \* Inês pode pagar a conta ontem.  
Inês pod-3p-PRES to pay-INF the bill yesterday.  
'Inês might pay the bill yesterday.'

Both *pode* and *podia* combine with the so called past perfect form of the main verb, constituted by the auxiliary *ter* (have) in the infinitive plus the past participle of the main verb, but their combination do not mean the same:

- (6) Inês podia ter pago a conta.  
Inês pod-3p-IMP have-INF pay-PART the bill.  
'Inês could have paid the bill.'

Sentence (6) states that Inês having paid the bill is a past possibility, accompanied by a strong implicature that the paying event did not occur.<sup>2</sup> In (7) the speaker claims that as far as she knows it is open for her whether the state of affairs described by the prejacent proposition turned out to be the case. It is still an open/present possibility:

- (7) Inês pode ter pago a conta.  
Inês pod-3p-PRES have-INF pay-PART the bill.  
'Inês might have paid the bill.'

Thus, (7) is incompatible with the speaker knowing about her paying the bill:

- (8) \* Eu sei que a Inês não pagou, mas ela pode ter pago a conta.  
I know that the Ines pay-3p-PAST PERF, but she pod-3p-PRES have-INF pay-PAST PART the bill.  
'I know Ines did not pay it, but she might have paid the bill.'

However, sentence (6) is compatible with her knowing about the state of affairs:

- (9) Eu sei que a Inês não pagou, mas ela podia ter pago a conta.  
I know that the Ines pay-3p-PAST PERF, but she pod-3p-IMP the bill.  
'I know Ines did not pay it, but she could have paid the pay.'

Thus, *pode* plus the past participle form of the main verb is not compatible with the speaker knowing about the state of affairs described by the prejacent, whereas *podia* is.

In this paper we shall concentrate only in future oriented epistemic uses of *podia*, cases where it has precisely the same distribution as *pode*: contexts in which the prejacent

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<sup>2</sup> It seems that (4), with past interpretation, and (6) are not synonymous: the state of affairs described by the prejacent proposition in (4) may be future orientated, given a reference point in the past, whereas this is not possible with (6), since the proposition expressed by the prejacent must be past oriented.

proposition is a present possibility, expressing future oriented state of affairs if it is not a state sentence. In such a restricted context, the most striking difference is that only *podia* conveys the speaker's desire, something that seems to be characteristic of BrP. Suppose it is raining a lot, Ana is at home, and from all the evidences that she can grasp she must conclude that the rain will not stop. Even though she knows that, she may still utter (10) felicitously:

- (10) Podia parar de chover.  
pod-IMP stop-INF of rain-INF.  
'It could stop to rain.'

A good paraphrase to (10) is: although the speaker knows that the chance of stop raining is low, she still would like it to be the case. Our main aim in this paper is to account for this interpretation, which we shall call desire interpretation.

*Pode* cannot convey the speaker's desire: (11) cannot be paraphrased as "the speaker's wishes that it would stop to rain". It only means that according to the speaker's evidence, it is possible that it will stop to rain:

- (11) Pode parar de chover.  
Pod-PRES stop-INF of rain-INF.  
'It might stop to rain.'

Besides the difference concerning the expression of desire, sentences (12) and (13) do not have the same meaning, even if both express present possibility, and are future oriented (that is Inês paying the bill is a future event):

- (12) Inês pode pagar a conta.  
Inês pod-PRES pay-INF the bill.  
'Inês might pay the bill.'

- (13) Inês podia pagar a conta.  
Inês pod-IMP pay-INF the bill.  
'Inês could pay the bill.'

The difference is in the strength of the possibility. *Pode* is neutral, whereas *podia* expresses that the possibility of Inês paying the bill is less "actual": she could pay the bill but she won't. This intuition can be confirmed by the fact that the following discourse is perfectly coherent (it is not a contradiction):

- (14) Eu sei que não está chovendo mas podia estar, então é melhor você levar o guarda-chuva para garantir.  
I know-PRES that not is-PRES rain-GER but pod-IMP be-INF, then is-PRES better you take-INF the umbrella to guarantee-INF

‘I know it is not raining but it could be, so you better take the umbrella just for safe of it.’

As far as the speaker knows it is not raining, but she still entertains a raining state of affairs – perhaps because she has read that it will rain, or she evaluates the weather conditions and concludes that there is a possibility of raining – and that is the reason for her advising the addressee to carry an umbrella. If instead of *podia* in (14) we insert *pode* the sentence turns into a contradiction: \**Eu sei que não está chovendo mas pode estar* (\*I know that it is not raining but it may be raining).

Another way of attesting that *podia* semantically expresses a weak possibility is that its occurrence in the following context is “pragmatically” inadequate. Suppose that your dog barks a lot during the night and you hire a dog trainer to teach it not to bark. In such a situation, uttering (16) is inadequate, since the speaker claims that it is more likely that the dog will continue to bark (it could bark less, but it won’t!); so the trainer is already saying that the training will not succeed.

(15) Com o treinamento, ele pode latir menos.  
With the training, he pod-PRES bark-INF less.  
‘With the training, it might bark less.’

(16) # Com o treinamento, ele podia latir menos.<sup>3</sup>  
With the training, he pod-IMP bark-INF less.  
‘With the training, it could bark less.’

They also differ when there is direct or indirect evidence supporting the truthfulness of the prejacent; in such situations, only *pode* can be felicitously used:

(17) (seeing a bird) Pode ser um pica-pau.  
pod-PRES be-INF a woodpecker.  
‘It might be a woodpecker.’

(18) \* (seeing a bird) Podia ser um pica-pau.<sup>4</sup>  
pod-IMP be-INF a woodpecker.  
‘It could be a woodpecker.’

Suppose a situation in which we are all locked in a room with no direct access to the outside world, but we see people arriving wet with wet umbrellas:

(19) Pode estar chovendo.

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<sup>3</sup> Sentence (16) may have a counterfactual reading - if the dog gets training, then she would/could bark less -, but this is not the interpretation we are aiming at.

<sup>4</sup> It may have a counterfactual interpretation: the speaker knows it is not a woodpecker, but she wishes it was. This is not the interpretation we are focusing on.

Pod-PRES be-INF rain-GER.  
'It might be raining.'

- (20) \* Podia estar chovendo.  
pod-IMP be-INF rain-GER.  
'It could be raining.'

(20) is not felicitously used in such a context. Why so?

Finally, there is one context in which only *podia* can be used. Suppose the speaker knows (and knows that the addressee knows that she knows) that Silvio is dead, she could still utter (21):

- (21) Silvio podia jantar conosco hoje.  
Silvio pod-IMP have.dinner-INF with+us today.  
'Silvio could have dinner with us today.'<sup>5</sup>

Silvio having dinner with us is no longer an actual possibility, but a counterfactual one. *Pode* cannot be used in such a context:

- (22) \* Silvio pode jantar conosco hoje.  
Silvio pod-3p-PRES have.dinner-INF with us today.  
'Silvio might have dinner with us today.'

This paper aims at explaining all of these cases, by clarifying the semantics of *podia*.

### 3. Theoretical Background

#### 3.1 *Pode* and *podia*: making explicit the speaker epistemic state

Von Stechow & Gillies (2007) present a model of dynamic semantics for the English *might*, which translates both *pode* and *podia* in BrP. According to this approach, the denotation of a sentence is given by its context changing potential (CCP). A *might* sentence does not kick out sentences from the background, rather it returns the background as it is; i.e., it is a program that checks whether some conditions are satisfied on a given information state *s*. *Might*-sentences take an information state *s* and return all of it, or none of it, depending on whether the conditions are satisfied in *s*. The condition checked is whether the information carried by the prejacent proposition  $\phi$  is compatible with *s*. If it is, the *might*-sentence returns *s*; if it is not, it returns  $\emptyset$ . Here is von Stechow & Gillies' (2007) formulation:

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<sup>5</sup> *Might* sentences in English should not be possible in the counterfactual context, showing the same behavior as *pode* in (22); a hypothesis to be verified.

$$(23) \quad s[[\text{might } \varphi]] = s \text{ iff } s[[\varphi]] \neq \emptyset \\ \emptyset \text{ otherwise}$$

The CCP for  $[[\text{might } \varphi]]$  is

$$(24) \quad s[[\text{might } \varphi]]^{\text{ccp}} = \{w \in s : s[[\varphi]]^{\text{ccp}} \neq \emptyset\}$$

In regard to the speaker's epistemic state (which corresponds to the relevant body of information to be checked by the modalized sentence), both *pode* and *podia* will, if true, return the epistemic state. If the proposition is compatible with the speaker's epistemic state, both *pode*  $\varphi$  and *podia*  $\varphi$  return as output the same input  $s$ . Thus, we have to assume (25):

$$(25) \quad s[[\text{pode } \varphi]]^{\text{ccp}} = s[[\text{podia } \varphi]]^{\text{ccp}} = \{w \in s : s[[\varphi]]^{\text{ccp}} \neq \emptyset\}^6$$

Being it a neutral possibility or a weak possibility, as exemplified above, it is the case that, if true, there must be at least one world, in the speaker's epistemic state in which the prejacent proposition is true. In both cases, the speaker implies – a quantity implicature – that she does not know that  $\varphi$ , i.e., she is ignorant about  $\varphi$ .

To illustrate this point, consider the following situation, in which a speaker is talking about the possibility of Silvio's travelling. The sentence between parentheses reveals the speaker's epistemic state in each situation:

$$(26) \quad (\text{The speaker is ignorant about Silvio's travelling}) \text{ Silvio } \text{pode/podia} \text{ viajar.} \\ \text{Silvio } \text{pod-3p-PRES/pod-IMP} \text{ travel-INF.} \\ \text{'Silvio might/could travel.'}$$

Both *pode* and *podia* are felicitously used in a context where the speaker is ignorant about Silvio's travelling, but uttering *podia* conveys that the speaker believes that he will not travel, that the actual world is more likely to be a  $\sim \varphi$  world.

Thus, we have to account for the fact that when the speaker is ignorant, both auxiliaries return the speaker's epistemic state, but they do not mean the same, since only *podia* conveys that it is more likely that the world will turn out to be a world in which the prejacent proposition is false.

### 3.2 Counterfactuality

As we have already shown, another difference between *pode* and *podia* is that

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<sup>6</sup> Notice that the formulation would fit also in the case in which  $\sim \varphi$  is in the input. The input and output information state would be different in content ( $[[\sim \varphi]]$  instead of  $[[\varphi \text{ and } \sim \varphi]]$ ), but the result would be  $s$  anyway.

only *podia*  $\varphi$  may be truthfully uttered if both speaker and addressee know that  $\varphi$  is not the case. Thus, the speaker is not ignorant because she knows that all worlds are non- $\varphi$ -worlds. In such a situation, if one utters *might*  $\varphi$  the sentence is false since  $\varphi$  is not compatible with the speaker's state of knowledge. The same is true for *pode*, but not for *podia*. Suppose the speaker knows that Silvio will **not** travel:

(27) # Silvio pode viajar.  
 Silvio pod-3p-PRES travel-INF.  
 'Silvio might/may travel.'

(28) Silvio podia viajar.<sup>7</sup>  
 Silvio pod-3p-IMP travel-INF  
 'Silvio could travel.'

In such a context, uttering (27) is false: all worlds are worlds where Silvio does not travel, so the possibility of his travelling is false. But (28) sounds true. This is a situation where *pode* and *podia* come apart, because only *podia* can be used counterfactually, due to the semantic contribution of the suffix *-ia*. In the context where it is known that non  $\varphi$ , the only way of interpreting is counterfactually: if it were the case that  $\varphi$ .

In line with Stalnaker (1975), Iatridou (2000) assumes that counterfactuality in conditionals is a conversational implicature, not an assertion, since it may be cancelled. Counterfactuality, claims Iatridou, is used "only with respect to situations that cannot be helped anymore" (p. 231). Thus, we have counterfactuals to the present and to the past, but we not to the future, since the future is not yet a fact. Considering the situations above, only in (28) we have a counterfactual interpretation, because this is the only situation one may claim that cannot be helped anymore, since the speaker already knows that the state of affairs described by the prejacent proposition is not the case. In (26), where the speaker is ignorant and the prejacent sentence is future oriented, there is no counterfactuality (strictly speaking), since what is expressed is that that the speaker believes that the prejacent proposition will not be true, but it may still be. Thus, depending on the context – what is taken for granted – *podia* may convey a counterfactual state of affairs or that the speaker is inclined to believe that the event expressed by the prejacent proposition is not likely to become a fact. Only in the latter case we have a future oriented interpretation and *podia* is a minimal pair with *pode*.

Iatridou argues that, when the environment in conditionals is future oriented, we may have either a future neutral vivid (FNV) interpretation, if the verb has a present (or non past) tense morphology; or a future less vivid (FLV) interpretation if the verb has past tense morphology. In the FLV interpretation, we have a situation of *fake past*, in

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<sup>7</sup> If the speaker knows that  $\sim \varphi$ , she uses *podia*  $\varphi$ ; on the other hand, if she knows that  $\varphi$ , then she uses *podia*  $\sim \varphi$ . In order to have a counterfactual reading it must be the case that the proposition expressed by the prejacent sentence is in contradiction with the speaker's state of knowledge.



which the past tense morphology does not receive a past tense interpretation and it implicates that the speaker believes that the actual world is more likely to become a  $\sim \varphi$  than a  $\varphi$  world. Iatridou also shows that “when the aspectual part of the verb is perfective, then the past becomes real” (p. 237), which implicates that the *fake past* can only appear with imperfective morphology.

What she proposes for the conditionals may enlighten our intuitions about the interpretation of *podia* sentences (*fake tense* and imperfective morphology), which raises a FLV interpretation: *podia* sentences convey that the actual world is more likely to become a  $\sim \varphi$  than a  $\varphi$  world.

The imperfective past tense morpheme, according to Iatridou, provides an *exclusion feature*, that may range over times or worlds:

(29)  $T(x)$  excludes  $C(x)$

$T(x)$  means the topic set of times or worlds and  $C(x)$  means the utterance set of times or worlds. The *exclusion feature* is then the property of excluding the  $C(x)$  (the time or world of the speaker at the time of utterance) from the  $T(x)$  (the time or worlds that the speaker is talking about).<sup>8</sup> When *podia* sentences are future oriented, the morpheme can only range over worlds; thus, (29) translates as:

(30) The topic worlds exclude the actual world.

We may say, then, that the imperfective morpheme *-ia* excludes the actual world from the worlds the speaker is talking about, which means that in a sentence like (31):

(31) Silvio *podia* viajar.  
Silvio *pod-IMP* travel-*INF*.  
'Silvio could travel.'

the speaker is excluding from her topic worlds, worlds in which Silvio does not travel, because she wants to talk about situations where he travels. Notice that this description is true against two different backgrounds: the speaker may be ignorant – as in situation (26), or she may know that he will not travel – as in situation (28). Out of the blue, (31) conveys that the speaker believes that the actual world is a world in which Silvio does not travel. Thus, Iatridou's *exclusion feature* cannot account for the fact that *podia* conveys slight possibility; the most it can do is to express that the speaker believes that the prejacent proposition will not be the case. Although she talks about future less vivid, her exclusion feature cannot really apprehend the less vivacity of the imperfective. By

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<sup>8</sup> If the formula is tensed interpreted, then more has to be said about the aspect since the definition in (29) would apply both to the perfective and to the imperfective morpheme. We will not pursue the issue here.

excluding the  $\varphi$  worlds from the topic worlds, we do not convey that they are less likely to happen. For that we need something more: an ordering source.

### 3.3 Ordering source

As already mentioned, *podia*  $\varphi$ , when uttered in a situation where the speaker is ignorant, as in (26), differs from *pode*  $\varphi$  because it conveys that the speaker is inclined to believe that the actual world is a  $\sim\varphi$ -world more than a  $\varphi$ -world. The comparison between states of affairs cannot be apprehended by Iatridou's exclusion feature, but may be explained by the concept of ordering source (Kratzer 1981, 1991, 2008).

According to Kratzer (1981, 1991), the standard analysis of modality cannot account for modals in natural language because it cannot cope with graded notions of possibility and necessity. This is so because the standard analysis captures the notions of possibility by means of logical compatibility, in which either a proposition is compatible with a set of propositions or it is not: it cannot be more or less compatible. This is the reason why von Stechow & Gillies' account for *might* is true for both auxiliaries in BrP: it cannot apprehend the difference between *pode* and *podia*, since both are compatible with what the speaker knows. In natural language, we do express our understanding about some situations being better, or more likely than others. And this is what happens with *podia*: we convey that although the state of affairs described by the proposition is a possibility it is not a likely one.

To account for the grades of possibility, Kratzer introduces the idea of ordering source, which is a second conversational background (the normal course of events, stereotypical, etc.) that induces an ordering in the epistemic modal base: it organizes the modal base worlds according to how close to a contextually given ideal world they are.

Following Kratzer (1981, 1991, 2008), we propose that the imperfective morpheme *-ia* introduces an ordering source that organizes the topic worlds according to a contextual parameter. Uttering (31), *Silvio podia viajar* (Silvio could travel), the speaker conveys that she wants to talk about worlds in which Silvio travels, but given what she knows about the normal course of events, which constitute the worlds which are closest to the ideal one (where no accidents happen, for instance), she conveys that the topic worlds are far from the ideal ones; they are less likely to happen. In other words, the "normal" worlds are believed to be  $\sim\varphi$ , worlds in which Silvio does not travel; whereas the  $\varphi$ -worlds, the ones she wants to talk about, are less normal. Thus, she conveys that, according to what she knows, it is slightly possible that Silvio travels, because worlds in which he does so are not close to the normal ones ("normal course of events" ordering), although these are the worlds she wants to talk about.

By assuming this point of view, we are in a position to explain some important differences between *podia* and *pode*. Even though both are interpreted against an epistemic modal base, only *podia*, because of the imperfective morpheme *-ia*, introduces a second conversational background that orders the worlds according to a contextually

given ideal world. *Pode* has what Kratzer calls a *purely epistemic* interpretation; probably the same is true about *might*, which means that the second conversational background, namely, the ordering source, is empty. Then, *pode* is neutral with respect to the occurrence of the situation expressed by the proposition. Using Kratzer's (1991) definition of *possibility*: "a proposition  $p$  is a possibility in a world  $w$  with respect to a modal base  $f$  and an ordering source  $g$  iff  $\sim p$  is not a necessity in  $w$  with respect to  $f$  and  $g$ " (p. 644).<sup>9</sup> Notice that this definition satisfies von Fintel & Gillies' description of *might* since it would return the same epistemic state, given that it is compatible with it. Let's analyze (32) below according to this definition of possibility:

- (32) Silvio *pode* viajar.  
Silvio *pod-3p-PRES* travel-INF.  
'Silvio might travel.'

Uttering (32), the speaker claims that, according to the evidences that she has, Silvio's travelling is compatible with what she knows, because his not travelling is not necessarily true and the ordering according to the ideal world is not available in this case. Thus, as far as she knows, there is at least one world in which he travels; back to von Fintel & Gilles's approach to *might*.

When interpreted against an epistemic background *podia* discharges an ordering in the worlds according to which the actual world is far from the topic worlds (the counterfactual effect). Its semantic contribution may, then, be apprehended by Kratzer's (1991) definition of *slight possibility*: " $\phi$  is a slight possibility in  $w$ , with respect to an epistemic modal base  $f$  and a 'normality' ordering source  $g$  because  $\phi$  is a possibility and  $\sim\phi$  is a weak necessity in  $w$  with respect to  $f$  and  $g$ " (p. 644). Then, by uttering (31), the speaker conveys that, according to the evidences available to her and according to what she considers the normal course of events, Silvio travelling is a slight possibility, because, although it is a possibility, his not travelling is a *weak necessity*<sup>10</sup>, which means that worlds in which he does not travel are closer to the normal ones. The definition of slight possibility is also compatible with the semantics for *might* in von Fintel & Gilles. Thus, their semantics is not sufficient to apprehend the semantic contribution of *podia*.

We conclude that in an epistemic environment, *pode* conveys a neutral possibility, whereas *podia*  $\phi$  conveys that it is more plausible to believe in non- $\phi$  worlds, due to the contribution of the imperfective. This allows us to explain the similarities and differences

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<sup>9</sup> "A proposition  $p$  is a necessity in a world  $w$  with respect to a modal base  $f$  and an ordering source  $g$  iff the following condition is satisfied: For all  $u \in \cap f(w)$  there is a  $v \in \cap f(w)$  such that  $v \preceq_{g(w)} u$  and for all  $z \in \cap f(w)$ : if  $z \preceq_{g(w)} v$ , then  $z \in p$ ." (Kratzer, 1991, p. 644)

<sup>10</sup> Kratzer's (1991) definition of weak necessity is: "a proposition is a weak necessity in a world  $w$  with respect to a modal base  $f$  and an ordering source  $g$  iff  $p$  is a better possibility than  $\sim p$  in  $w$  with respect to  $f$  and  $g$ ." (op. cit. p. 644). And, "a proposition  $p$  is a better possibility than a proposition  $q$  in a world  $w$  with respect a modal base  $f$  and an ordering source  $g$  iff  $p$  is at least as good a possibility as  $q$  but  $q$  is not as least as good a possibility as  $p$  in  $w$  with respect to  $f$  and  $g$ ." (op. cit. p. 644).

between the two auxiliaries. In (12) – *Inês pode pagar a conta* (Inês might pay the bill) – is neutral, whereas (13) – *Inês podia pagar a conta* (Inês could pay the bill) – conveys that the speaker believes that her paying the bill is not likely. In (14) – *Eu sei que não está chovendo mas podia estar, então leva o guarda-chuva* (I know it is not raining but it could be, so take the umbrella.) – the speaker conveys that she believes that the possibility of raining is not very likely, but it may happen. Sentence (14) is not contradictory, because *podia* already conveys that the possibility expressed by the prejacent is likely not to be the case.

It is also possible to understand why sentence (16) – # *Com o treinamento, ele podia latir menos* (With the training, it could bark less) – is not appropriate for a dog trainer, if the training is actually going to happen. Uttering (16) commits him with the claim that it is only slightly possible that the dog will bark less.

Finally, we may explain why only *pode* may be used with direct or indirect evidence, as exemplified above with the woodpecker examples (17) and (18), and the situation of indirect evidence of raining; examples (19) and (20). *Podia* sentences are blocked in evidential contexts because by using *podia* the speaker is excluding the actual world from the topic ones, something that is incompatible with reasoning with the direct or indirect evidence, when one is trying to guess how the world actually is.

The counterfactual example has a different explanation. It happens when the speaker knows that the prejacent proposition is false; thus the prejacent proposition is incompatible with her epistemic state of affairs. In that case, we must admit that she has to consider worlds which she knows that are not actually the case. Let's consider the scenario according to which Silvio died; the speaker may felicitously utter *Silvio podia jantar conosco hoje* (Silvio could have dinner with us today). She knows that he cannot come to dinner, because he is dead. The prejacent proposition is, then, not an actual possibility, and the modal auxiliary is not verifying her actual epistemic state. There seems to be two solutions here: either she is considering an epistemic state which is no longer the case; or she extends her “epistemic” worlds in order to suppress the contradictory information that he is dead, and we are back to an epistemic state where the possibility exists. In either case, the speaker considers worlds in which he is alive, and states that in such a situation his coming to have dinner with us is a possibility. Thus, the interpretation of sentence is equivalent to a subjunctive conditional where the consequent is the modal sentence: If Silvio were alive, Silvio could have dinner with us today. The semantics for conditionals is a very controversial topic, and we will leave it for another occasion. But it should be no surprise that modals and conditionals have close connections, given Kratzer's proposal that conditionals are modal sentences. If our interpretation of sentence is correct, then in such a context *podia* no longer expresses slight possibility, but it is the subjunctive version of *pode*, in an implicit concord with the subjunctive antecedent. It expresses a “counterfactual” possibility: given worlds in which the antecedent is true, then there is at least one world in which the consequent is true.

The implicature of desire is the topic of the next section.

#### 4. An implicature of desire

As we have already stressed, only *podia* discharges an interpretation according to which the speaker conveys her desires. Suppose we are in a meeting and Silvio is behaving very badly; moreover, we all know that he will not easily leave the room. One could then utter (33):

- (33) O Silvio *podia* sair.<sup>11</sup>  
The Silvio pod-3p+IMP leave-INF.  
'Silvio could leave.'

By uttering (33), the speaker semantically conveys that she believes that it is more likely that Silvio will not leave the room while at the same time she expresses a wishful thinking: it would be nice if he did. The expression of desire is even more prominent when it is discursively clear that the speaker knows that the prejacent proposition is not the case; when the speaker is not ignorant. Thus, it seems that the implicature is linked to counterfactuality. In BrP, only *podia* conveys this effect of expressing the speaker's desire, which leads us to believe that the expression of desire could be an implicature (Grice, 1975), a generalized conversational implicature in BrP. But before drawing the reasoning underling such an implicature, let's entertain another way of explaining the speaker's desire.

One could explain the expression of desire by considering that the worlds epistemically accessible (the modal base) are ordered by a bouletic ordering source (Kratzer 1991), which orders them according to the speaker's desire. Although it is not really clear in the literature (Kratzer (1991), Portner (2009)) how precisely this ordering source works, in particular it is not clear according to whose desires will the ordering be arranged (the speaker's desire? the desires of the grammatical subject?), a desire ordering source organizes the worlds in such a way that the ideal worlds are those in which all the desires are satisfied. Thus, the speaker who utters (33) claims that, in all the worlds more attuned to her desires, Silvio leaves the room. But this analysis does not seem to be adequate because with this description we lose the fact that she may also be conveying that his leaving is a slight possibility, unless we believe there are two ordering sources, an analysis we haven't entertained. Moreover according to the bouletic analysis, *podia* would have to show two different forces: when the worlds are organized according to the normal course of events, it expresses possibility (a slight one); whereas when it is combined with an organization according to the speaker's desire, it expresses necessity: in all of the worlds which are compatible with the speaker's desires it is the case that Silvio leaves. *Podia* would then be expressing possibility and necessity. Finally, although *podia* strongly conveys a desire interpretation, it may also convey other sorts of indirect

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<sup>11</sup> We are aware that the intonation with focus on *podia* enforces the desire interpretation, but the discussion about the prosody involved is beyond the scope of this paper.

speech acts, such as suggestion, for instance. It seems, then, that a better solution is to mimic the intuition, already described in the functionalist approaches to modals, that modal sentences express the speaker's point of view. Perhaps one way of doing so is via implicatures.

We believe that a better explanation is to consider that desire is an implicature, a generalized conversational implicature in BrP. The argument for the implicature analysis comes from the fact that in epistemic conversational backgrounds *podia* always conveys possibility, but may also convey desire.

According to Grice, conversational implicatures differ from conventional ones in being cancellable and reinforceable. One may cancel the desire reading, and the sentence only expresses slight possibility. Suppose we are organizing a vacation schedule for the professors, and according to that schedule,

- (34) Silvio podia tirar férias em setembro  
Silvio pod-IMP take-INF vacations in September.  
'Silvio could take his vacations in September.'

(34) could be uttered without carrying any trace of desire; just a not very likely possibility. Thus, it is not contradictory to utter (35):

- (35) Silvio podia tirar férias em setembro mas eu não quero.  
Silvio pod-IMP take-INF vacations in September but I not want.  
'Silvio could take his vacations in September but I don't want.'

Moreover, the implicature may be reinforced by conjoining it with a sentence that explicitly conveys the desire, without being redundant:

- (36) Silvio podia tirar férias em setembro e é isso o que eu quero.  
Silvio pod-IMP take-INF vacations in September and this is what I want.  
'Silvio could take his vacations in September and this is what I want.'

The fact that we may cancel and reinforce the implicature is not an argument for the implicature explanation, since the phenomena may also be explained by the bouletic ordering source – ordering sources are contextually given; thus, given that the context does not raise such a ordering, it will not be active in the interpretation; on the other side, nothing blocks the possibility of reinforcing the ordering source by making it explicit. The real argument against the bouletic analysis comes from the fact that with the implicature view the meaning of *podia* remains the same: it expresses a slight possibility.

The implicature may be derived as following: when a speaker utters a *podia*-sentence, as (33) above, she claims that although there is a possibility, she is inclined to believe that it will not happen. But why would a speaker talk about the possibility of something she believes there is little chance of being the case, and she believes her

addressee also believes it is a slight possibility; or even worse, they already know it is not the case? Because, although it is common ground that it is more likely that it will not happen in the actual world, she would like it to be the case. This reasoning is even stronger when it is known that the possibility does not even exist in the actual world, thus the speaker is clearly speaking of something she believes it is false, and flawing the maxim of Quality. The flawing of a maxim is interpreted cooperatively: if the speaker is explicitly flawing a maxim, it is because she wants to convey something else. By uttering something she believes to be false (because she knows that such a state of affairs is not actually the case or because she knows it is not likely to be the case and knows that everyone else also knows that it is not likely to happen), she expresses that she wished the state of affairs to be the case. Why European Portuguese speakers do not draw such an inference? If our reasoning is sound, then we expect them to draw such an inference in particular contexts. The desire implicature would then be for them a particular rather than a generalized conversational implicature.

## 5. Conclusion

While developing this research, we asked several speakers about the interpretation of *podia* sentences in order to verify whether our hypothesis was plausible. One example that stroked us came about when we inquired our department secretaries about *podia* sentences. One of them came up with the following example. When a good looking student comes to make his registration, after his leaving we could say:

- (37) Ele *podia* ser solteiro.  
He pod-IMP be-INF single.  
'He could be single.'

In such a context, she is ignorant about his marital status, thus as far as she knows his being single is compatible with her state of knowledge. But since he is so good looking, and given that according to our stereotypical ordering good looking men are not normally "free", then she also conveys that she believes that his being single is not likely. She utters something she believes to be false (and believes that her addressee also believes the same), because she wants to express that she wished that were the case. Desires are blind to what is possible: we may desire even if we believe there is not the slightest chance of the state of affairs coming up true. Even if I don't bet in lotteries I may still utter: *Eu podia ganhar na loto* (I could win the lottery); winning the lottery is actually a very unlike possibility, in particular if I don't bet, but this is no obstacle for my wishing it to be the case.

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