

THE VERB ‘DAR PARA’ AS AN EXPRESSION OF MODALITY IN BRAZILIAN PORTUGUESE: A STUDY BASED ON SYNTACTIC CARTOGRAPHY AND FORMAL SEMANTICS

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- **ABSTRACT:** The aim of this paper is to provide a syntactic and semantic analysis for the modal ‘dar para’ (give to) in Brazilian Portuguese, following syntactic cartography (Cinque, 1999; 2006; Cinque; Rizzi, 2008) and formal semantics (Kratzer, 1977, 1991). Two methodological procedures are used: (i) the analysis of 125 spontaneous data on the internet (on social network X and news websites) and (ii) the preparation of tests using the introspection method. In the literature, ‘dar para’, in its modal use, is analyzed as a quasi-auxiliary verb (Salomão, 2008; Souza, 2016), lexical verb (Duarte, 2012; Souza, 2016) or auxiliary verb (Coelho, Silva, 2014). Semantically, ‘dar para’ is treated as a weak verb (Oliveira, 2001) which expresses epistemic modality (Duarte, 2012; Coelho; Silva, 2014), facultative modality (Souza, 2016) or root and deontic modality (Velo, 2007). We argue that ‘dar para’ is a functional verb that expresses only weak root modality, preferably expressing circumstantial modality, and less frequently deontic and teleological modalities. It differs syntactically from other modal functional verbs such as ‘poder’, ‘dever’ and ‘ter que’ because it does not favor raising to the subject position and, semantically, because it is more restricted in relation to the types of modality it expresses.
- **KEYWORDS:** Dar para; Root modality; Modality; Syntactic Cartography; Formal Semantics

Introduction

This paper describes the modal uses of the verb ‘dar para’ (give to) in Brazilian Portuguese (henceforth BP). We assume that modal uses are those in which ‘dar para’ indicates the possibility of events or states. This use is illustrated in the sentences in example (01); in (01a), the speaker questions the addressee’s possibility of perception and it can be paraphrased as ‘was it possible to realize it?’; In (01b), the speaker denies

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the possibility of hearing and it can be paraphrased as ‘it was not possible to hear’; and, finally, in (01c), the speaker states the possibility of understanding and it can be paraphrased as ‘now it was possible to understand the chaos in Rio.’

- (01) a. Deu para perceber?
give.PST.PFV.3SG to perceive
'Was it possible for you to realize it?'
- b. Não deu para ouvir.
not give.PST.PFV.3SG to hear
'It was not possible to hear it.'
- c. Agora deu para entender o caos no Rio.
now give.PST.PFV.3SG to understand the chaos in.the Rio
'Now it was possible to understand the chaos in Rio.'

Studies on verbs that express possibilities and necessities focus, for the most part, on the semantic and syntactic aspects of the modal verbs ‘poder’ (can/may), ‘dever’ (must) and ‘ter que’ (have to) (see Pires de Oliveira; Scardueli, 2009; Pires de Oliveira; Pessotto, 2010; Pessotto, 2011; 2014; 2015; Rech, 2011; Rech; Giachin, 2014; Mendes, 2019; Ferreira, 2020; among others). However, as pointed out by Ferreira e Rech (2025), there are other verbs and constructions associated with the expression of possibilities or necessities that have received less attention in formal literature. The verb ‘dar para’ has received two preliminary formal descriptions: Oliveira (2001) and Duarte (2012). Oliveira (2001) discusses modal and aspectual readings for ‘dar para’ and, according to her, this verb expresses possibility in its modal reading. However, the author does not discuss the type of modality that ‘dar para’ conveys. For Duarte (2012), ‘dar para’ is a full verb that expresses epistemic modality, but she does not present tests to corroborate her analysis.

The discussion of modal readings of ‘dar para’ in the functionalist literature is more prolific, but the analyses diverge. Syntactically, ‘dar para’ is analyzed as a quasi-auxiliary verb (Salomão, 2008; Souza, 2016), a lexical verb (Souza, 2016) and an auxiliary verb (Coelho, Silva, 2014). Semantically, it is assumed that ‘dar para’ expresses epistemic modality (Coelho, Silva, 2014), facultative modality (Souza, 2016) and root and deontic modality (Veloso, 2007).

The aim of this paper is to describe the syntactic and semantic aspects of ‘*dar para*’ from a formal perspective, basing the analysis on the literature on modality in syntactic cartography (Cinque, 1999; 2006; Cinque; Rizzi, 2008; Brubig, 2001; Tsai, 2015) and formal semantics (Kratzer, 1977, 1991; Condoravdi, 2001; von Stechow, 2006; von Stechow; Heim, 2011; Hacquard, 2006, 2011). In formal semantics, modality is the category of meaning associated with the expression of possibilities and necessities (Kratzer, 1991; Hacquard, 2011) and it is considered weak when it expresses possibility or strong when

it expresses necessity. This is called modal force and, in addition to it, there are also different types of modal readings, such as epistemic, deontic, bouletic, circumstantial, teleological, etc.; which are called modal flavors. Thus, the specific objectives of the semantic analysis were to determine the modal force and modal flavor using contexts and paraphrases in order to make the modal meaning explicit.

In cartographic syntax, Cinque (1999, 2006) assumes that different modal flavors are associated with different positions in the syntactic structure. There are, for example, different positions for different readings such as epistemic, volition, obligation, ability, etc. Thus, modal flavors are analyzed as a reflection of the different syntactic positions in which the modal can be interpreted. To corroborate this proposal, the author carries out precedence and transitivity tests that verify the positions that modals occupy, using mainly the co-occurrence of modal items with both aspectual heads and other modal heads.

In this paper, we use two methodological procedures for data collection and analysis: (i) the collection and analysis of 125 spontaneous data from the internet and (ii) the elaboration of syntactic and semantic tests following the introspection method. The collection of spontaneous data from the internet was done through searches on the social network X and on news websites. Our goal was to observe linguistic patterns in spontaneous uses of ‘dar para’. However, negative data was also necessary for the analysis carried out here and since it is very difficult to occur spontaneously, we have also used the introspective method to test different structures and contexts of use with ‘dar para’ in order to obtain negative data.

We argue that ‘dar para’ does not express epistemic modality, contrary to what was assumed by Duarte (2012) and Coelho e Silva (2014) since: (i) it does not appear with epistemic reading in spontaneous data; (ii) it is not felicitous in a context which forces epistemic reading and; (iii) it is in a low position in the hierarchy. We also assume that it cannot express bouletic, abilitive or high deontic (*ought to be*) modality. In our analysis, this verb expresses weak root modality and its preferred reading is the circumstantial one, but it can also convey teleological and low deontic (*ought to do*) modality. Our semantic analysis is closer to the one proposed by Souza (2016) since facultative modality seems to be equivalent to circumstantial modality in formal semantics.

In our syntactic analysis we argue that ‘dar para’ is not a lexical verb (Duarte, 2012; Souza, 2016), but a functional verb, in line with Coelho and Silva (2014)’s syntactic description. However, unlike other modal functional verbs such as ‘poder’ (can/may), ‘dever’ (must) and ‘ter que’ (have to), it does not favor raising to the subject position.

This paper is divided into 4 sections. Section 1 provides an overview of the treatment given to verbs that express modality in formal semantics and syntactic cartography. Section 2 presents the data collection and analysis methodology. Section 3 presents the results of the data analysis. Finally, the last section presents the paper’s final considerations.

The treatment of modality in formal semantics and in syntactic cartography

The analysis of syntactic and semantic aspects of ‘dar para’ is based on the vast literature on verbs that express modality in syntactic cartography (Cinque, 1999, 2006; Cinque; Rizzi, 2008; Brubig, 2001; Tsai, 2015) and in formal semantics (Kratzer, 1977, 1991; Condoravdi, 2001; von Fintel, 2006; Hacquard, 2006, 2011). We present those paradigms below.

Modality in formal semantics

In formal semantics, modality is the category of meaning associated with the expression of possibilities and necessities (Kratzer, 1991; von Fintel, 2006; Hacquard, 2006, 2011). It can be described in at least two dimensions: (i) modal force and (ii) modal flavor (von Fintel, 2006; Hacquard, 2011). The force of the modal depends on whether it expresses a necessity or a possibility. For instance, the modal ‘ter que [must]’ in Brazilian Portuguese (BP) is classified as strong since it expresses a necessity, as illustrated in (02a), and the modal ‘poder’ in BP is classified as weak since it expresses possibility, as illustrated in (02b).

- (02) a. Maria tem que ter o passaporte para viajar para os EUA.
‘Maria must have a passport to travel to the USA.’
b. Maria pode usar o RG para viajar nos países do Mercosul.
‘Maria can use her ID to travel in the Mercosur countries.’

The second dimension considered to describe modal items is modal flavor, which refers to the different criteria the speaker uses to consider the possibilities/necessities. For example, we say a modal has an epistemic reading when the possibilities are considered according to the speaker’s knowledge of the available evidence, as illustrated in (03a); the bouletic reading occurs when the possibilities/necessities are according to someone’s wishes, as illustrated in (03b); ability reading occurs when possibilities/necessities are considered based on someone’s abilities, as illustrated in (03c); the circumstantial reading occurs when they are in accordance with the circumstances/conditions of the situation, as illustrated in (03f); the teleological reading occurs when possibilities/necessities are means to achieve a certain goal/objective, as illustrated in (03g). When the possibilities are considered according to the rules, it is called deontic reading, which can be of two types, depending on who the rules are aimed at (Feldman, 1986; Hacquard, 2006, 2010).¹ It is called deontic *ought to do* when the rules are

¹ Feldman (1986) proposes two types of obligations: one that corresponds to a set of norms that stipulates how things should be according to a moral standard (ought-to-be); and another that falls on a specific individual (ought-to-do). Hacquard (2006, 2010) also establishes this distinction, but associates it with the position of the modal in the sentence structure: the deontic ought-to-be is interpreted in a high position, referring to a participant in the speech event (the

directed at the participant in the event described by the VP (preferably the subject of the sentence), as illustrated in (03e); it is called deontic *ought to be* when the rules are directed at the interlocutor as illustrated in (03d).²

- (03) a. Pode chover, está cheio de nuvens escuras no céu. **(epistemic)**
 ‘It might rain, there are dark clouds in the sky.’
- b. O João bem que podia ser advogado, eu preciso de uma defesa. **(bouletic)**
 ‘João could very well be a lawyer, I need someone to defend me.’
- c. O João pode falar três línguas. **(habilitive)**
 ‘João can speak three languages.’
- d. A cachorra pode tomar vacina às 13h. **(deontic - *ought to be*)**
 ‘The dog can be vaccinated at 1pm.’
- e. O João pode beber, ele completou 18 anos ontem. **(deontic - *ought to do*)**
 ‘João can drink, he turned 18 yesterday.’
- f. O João pode nos dar uma carona, o carro está funcionando. **(circumstantial)**
 ‘João can give us a ride, his car is working.’
- g. O João pode usar o micro-ondas para esquentar o leite. **(teleological)**
 ‘João can use the microwave to heat the milk.’

The verb ‘poder’ can express different modal flavors, as illustrated in (03). The same occurs with modal verbs in other languages, such as English (see Kratzer, 1977) and for this reason, Kratzer (1977) assumes that modal flavors are pragmatic in nature since they depend on the context.

The specific objectives of our semantic analysis were to determine the modal force and the modal flavors of ‘dar para’. In order to achieve this, we have used a series of tests discussed in the formal literature on modality. The first one is related to the interaction between different modal flavors with tense and aspect. As mentioned previously, the modal flavor depends on the criteria used to consider the possibilities/necessities (evidence, desires, laws, goals, circumstances, etc.). In this sense, it is

interlocutor); the deontic ought-to-do is interpreted in a low position, referring to one of the participants in the event described by the VP, usually the subject of the sentence.

² Souza (2016) uses the term “facultative modality” in her paper on ‘dar para’. This terminology does not appear in formal literature on modality (see von Stechow, 2006; Hacquard, 2011). Souza (2016) describes two types of facultative modality: (i) one oriented to the participant and (ii) another one oriented to the event. In the first case, it expresses the subject’s ability (Souza, 2016, p. 96); in the second case, it expresses the circumstances which make the event possible (Souza, 2016, p. 94). Thus, by the author’s description, what she calls facultative modality seems to be equivalent to abilitative and circumstantial modality in formal semantics.

possible to evaluate the time in which these criteria are anchored. For example, in (04a), the possibility of João being at home is assumed based on the evidence available at the time of enunciation (present) and, in (04b), the possibility of João drinking is assumed based on the laws in force at the time of enunciation (present). This anchoring is called temporal perspective (Condoravdi, 2001).

- (04) a. João pode estar em casa, as luzes estão acesas.
 ‘João may be at home, the lights are on.’
- b. João pode beber, ele tem mais de 18 anos.
 ‘João can drink, he is over 18 years old.’

The analysis of temporal perspective is relevant since it allows us to differentiate the epistemic reading from other readings. For example, the verb ‘poder’ [may] with an epistemic reading is incompatible with the past perfective tense morpheme to express the past temporal perspective, as illustrated by the sentence in (05a). Note that the sentence (05a) cannot be used to state that, based on the evidence available at some point in the past, the eventuality of John being at home was possible. On the other hand, the same modal is compatible with the past perfective morpheme to express past temporal perspective with the deontic reading, as illustrated by the sentence in (05b). The sentence (05b) can be used to state that, based on the rules of the pest control company at some point in the past, João was allowed to be at home.³

- (05) a. #João pôde estar em casa, as luzes estavam acessas.
 ‘João was able to be at home, the lights were on.’
- b. João pôde estar em casa, a dedetização já havia acabado.
 ‘João was able to be at home, the debugging was already over.’

Another test used to differentiate the epistemic reading from other readings is the *actuality entailment* test. Bhatt (1999) was the first to describe this phenomenon, relating it to the abilitive modal, which, when in the past perfective tense, generates an entailment

³ An anonymous reviewer has pointed out that the incompatibility with epistemic reading illustrated in (05a) does not occur when the verb’s tense is past imperfective, such as ‘João podia estar em casa. As luzes estavam acessas’. For this test to work, one needs to use the perfective past since this is the tense for which the contrast between epistemic and deontic modality appears. With the imperfective past, the sentence is good with both readings as illustrated below.

- (i) a. João podia estar em casa. As luzes estavam acesas. (epistemic)
 ‘João could be at home, the lights were on.’
- b. João podia chegar em casa tarde. O pai dele deixou. (deontic)
 ‘João could arrive late at home. His father had allowed it.’

Since our goal was to show how epistemic modality behaved differently from deontic modality, it is relevant for this test to be done using the perfective past.

that the event described under its scope has taken place. This phenomenon manifests itself, however, with every root modal (Hacquard 2006, Tsai 2015). The example (06) illustrates it with a teleological reading. In (06a), the modal is conjugated in the perfective aspect, generating the implication that the event did in fact occur, whereas, in (06b), the modal bears the imperfective past and it does not have the entailment.

(06) a. Para ir ao zoológico, Jane pôde pegar o trem.
'To go to the zoo, Jane could.PFV get the train.'

b. Para ir ao zoológico, Jane podia pegar o trem.
'To go to the zoo, Jane could.IPFV get the train.'
(Hacquard, 2006, p. 13 *our traslation*)

Lastly, it is also possible to determine the modal flavor that an item expresses using paraphrases and contexts that make the criteria explicit, forcing certain readings. For example, in (03f), the information "the car is working" forces a circumstantial reading, while, in (03g), the information "to heat the milk", brought by the adverbial clause, forces a teleological reading. To determine the modal force, we used the test described in von Fintel and Heim's (2011, p. 31). According to it, the coordination of sentences with incompatible propositions with strong modals generates a contradiction, as illustrated in (07a), but the same does not occur with weak modals, as illustrated in (07b).

(07) a. You must stay, and/but also, you must leave. (leave = not stay)
CONTRADICTORY

b. You may stay, but also, you may leave.
CONSISTENT

Modality in syntactic cartography

Syntactic cartography assumes a hierarchy of rigidly ordered functional heads which is extended to all languages as a property of universal grammar (UG). The segmentation of functional heads began with the separation between the categories of *tense* and *agreement* proposed by Pollock (1989), which was later extended to verbal inflections, such as mode, modality and aspect by Cinque (1999). In one of the first versions of Cinque's hierarchy (1999), there was already a distinction between epistemic modality, which occupies a high position in the hierarchy, and root modality, which groups low modals. The example (08) presents the relevant part of the hierarchy for this paper:

- (08) Mood_{speech act} > Mood_{evaluative} > Mood_{evidential} > **Mod_{epistemic}** > TP(Past) > T(Future)
 > Mood_{irrealis} > Asp_{habitual} > AspP_{repetitive} > T(Anterior) > Asp_{perfect} > Asp_{retrospective}
 > Asp_{durative} > Asp_{progressive} > Asp_{prospective} / **Mod_{root}** > VoiceP > Asp_{celerative} >
 Asp_{completive} > Asp_{(semel)repetitive} > Asp_{iterative...}

(Cinque, 1999, p. 76, emphasis added)

In the hierarchy above, the epistemic modal head (Mod^{Epistemic}) is located above TP, while the root modal head follows TP and most aspectual heads, located close to the VoiceP head. One piece of evidence employed by authors such as Cinque (1999, 2006), Stowell (2004), Hacquard (2006), Tsai (2015), among others, to locate the epistemic modal in a high position in the hierarchy and root modals in a low position is the possibility of a sequence of modals in which the first has an epistemic reading; and the second, a root reading, as illustrated in (09). On the other hand, it is not possible to have a sequence of modals in which the second one has an epistemic reading.

- (09) João pode ter que chegar cedo.
 ‘João may have to arrive early.’
 ModEpistemic > ModDeonticOught-to-do

One of the goals of this study is to verify whether the verb ‘dar para’ is used as a lexical predicate or as a functional item. In this sense, the distinction between these two categories becomes relevant. According to the literature, this distinction is established between “concepts”, for lexical items, and “grammatical meaning”, for functional items (Rizzi; Cinque, 2016, p. 140). To test the properties concerning each of these categories, we subjected the verb ‘dar para’ to combinations with CP and DP complements, which correspond to arguments, and to precedence and transitivity tests, such as those proposed by Cinque (1999, 2006). The effectiveness of the tests proposed by Cinque is that, if the verb follows the ordering of the functional heads, its meaning is grammatical; however, if it does not alternate with such heads, it corresponds to a lexical item. In (10), we illustrate this test with an example from Cinque (1999, p. 62) from Haitian Creole:

- (10) a. Za te dwe maze.
 J. PAST must eat.
 ‘J. has had to (obligation) to eat.’

 b. Za dwe te maze.
 J. must PAST eat
 ‘J. must (probability) have eaten.’

In (10a), the particle *te*, indicating past tense, precedes the modal *dwe* (must), which takes on a root reading, occupying a low position in the structure. On the other hand, *te* follows the modal in (10b) and, since it precedes the tense functional head, it assumes an epistemic reading.

In Portuguese, the verb *ir* (to go) corresponds to an independent form, while the morpheme (*rá* which indicates future) does not. Even so, both are equivalent to functional heads indicating future time. In creole languages such as Guinean, time markers are expressed by particles, functional items, but separate from the lexical verb (such as Portuguese *ir*), as illustrated by the example of Cá (2021: 81) with the particles “*ba*” and “*ta*”:

- (11) a. N djuga **ba** tchiu odjan mininu.
 I play ANT a lot when child
 ‘I played a lot as a kid.’
- b. N **ta** kanta **ba** tchiu.
 I HAB sing ANT a lot.
 ‘I used to sing a lot.’

The particle *ba* marks the imperfect past tense and can occur alone, as in (11a), or be combined with the particle *ta*, a progressive aspect marker, as in (11b). It is important to note that these particles follow a rigid ordering, in which the aspect indicator *ta* precedes the temporal *ba*, the former being pre-verbal; and the latter, post-verbal. Functional heads have appropriate morphosyntactic resources to trigger syntactic movement and other important syntactic actions, such as marking tense, mode, modality and aspect (cf. Rizzi; Cinque 2016, p. 141)

According to Cinque (1999, 2006) and Rizzi and Cinque (2016), among others, the same modal item provides more than one reading depending on the position it occupies in the hierarchy of functional heads and the relationship it establishes with other heads such as mood, modality, tense and aspect. According to Rizzi and Cinque (2016: 141), functional elements, as well as content elements, make the general conception of syntactic structures simpler and more uniform.

Hacquard (2006) connects the semantic approach proposed by Kratzer (1977) with the cartographic approach proposed by Cinque (1999). The author assumes that the differences between epistemic and root modality is not purely contextual, but derives from different syntactic positions the modal occurs. Thus, semantic tests can be used to corroborate syntactic analysis and vice-versa. The actuality entailment test, for example, can be also used in syntactic cartography. Tsai (2015), for example, uses it to differentiate high modals - with epistemic and deontic *ought to be* readings - from low modals - with circumstantial, deontic *ought to do* and teleological readings.

Tsai (2015) tests the restriction of the actuality entailment with high modals from Chinese. In this language, modals do not perform move to the perfective; but

an aspectual item is inserted above the modal verb, a strategy that also generates the actuality entailment. The examples in (12) illustrate the interaction of the deontic modal ‘yao’ with the aspectual item ‘changchang’ (Tsai, 2015, p. 290):

- (12) a. Akiu yao changchang xiuxi. [irrealis: necessity]
 Akiu YAO often rest
 ‘Akiu needs to rest frequently.’
- b. Akiu changchang yao xiuxi. [realis: human need]
 Akiu often YAO rest
 ‘Akiu has frequently needed to rest.’

Em (12a), the modal ‘yao’ occurs before the frequency adverb ‘changchang’ (aspectual operator) generating an irrealis and imperfective reading. However, when ‘yao’ follows the adverb ‘changchang’, the sentence has a realis and perfective reading. Tsai (2015) uses the example (12) to show that the actuality entailment is related to low modals such as deontic *ought-to-do* in (12b), but not to high modals such as deontic *ought-to-be* in (12a).

Tsai (2015)’s analysis of Chinese shows that the actuality entailment is restricted to root modals – ability, bouletic, teleologic, deontic *ought-to-do*, among other heads located below TP; whereas heads above TP such as epistemic modals and deontic *ought-to-be* do not generate the actuality entailment.

Based on the theoretical assumptions of cartographic syntax, we analyzed the verb ‘dar para’ lexical and functional properties. For the analysis of lexical properties, we investigated the category of the element that appears in the position of its complement (Ferreira 2009), as well as its constraints on semantic selection; for the analysis of functional properties, we carried out the precedence and transitivity tests proposed by Cinque (1999, 2006), investigating the possibilities of co-occurrence of ‘dar para’ with different functional items indicating tense, modality and/or aspect.

Data collection and analysis methodology

In this paper, we used two methodological procedures for data collection and analysis: (i) the collection of 125 spontaneous data and (ii) the elaboration of syntactic and semantic tests following the introspection method. The data was collected on the internet, based on examples found on the social network X and on news sites. Our goal was to search for patterns of use for the construction ‘dar para’, observing the types of syntactic structures in which this verb appeared. However, negative data is essential for the analysis carried out here and this is very difficult to occur spontaneously. Therefore, we used the introspective method, in order to test different structures and contexts of use with ‘dar para’ to obtain negative data.

Data analysis

Modal force

Our tests agree with Oliveira (2001) description of ‘dar para’ as a weak modal. The analysis of the spontaneous data corroborated her proposal, since ‘dar para’ was only used in contexts expressing weak modality, as illustrated in the data in (13), which can be paraphrased with ‘ser possível’ [to be possible], as illustrated by the translations adopted.

- (13) a. *Deu* *para* *esticar* *a* *vantagem.*
Give.PST.PFV.3SG *to* *stretch* *the* *advantage*
Foi possível esticar a vantagem.
‘It was possible to stretch the advantage.’
- b. *Dava* *para* *ver* *a* *felicidade* *na* *carinha* *dela.*
Give.PST.IPFV.3SG *to* *see* *the* *happiness* *on* *face*.little *her*
Era possível ver a felicidade na carinha dela.
‘It was possible to see the happiness on her little face.’
- c. *Vamos* *ver* *se* *dá* *para* *acusá-lo.*
go.PRS *see* *if* *give.PRS.3SG* *to* *accuse-him*
Vamos ver se é possível acusá-lo
‘Let’s see if it’s possible to accuse him.’

Another evidence comes from the test proposed in Von Stechow & Heim (2011, p. 31), which showed that ‘dar para’ behaves like a weak modal since it allows to coordinate incompatible propositions without generating contradictions, as illustrated in (14). Therefore, we can conclude that ‘dar para’ expresses weak modality, similar to the modal verb ‘poder’ in BP.

- (14) *Dá* *para* *o* *Corinthians* *ganhar,* *mas* *também*
give.PRS.3SG *to* *the* *Corinthians* *win*.INF, *but* *also*
dá *para* *o* *São Paulo* *ganhar.*
give.PRS.3SG *to* *the* *São Paulo* *win*.INF.
‘It’s possible for Corinthians to win, but it’s also possible for São Paulo to win.’

Modal flavor

Previous works have assumed that ‘dar para’ expresses epistemic modality (Duarte, 2012; Coelho; Silva, 2014), facultative modality (Souza, 2016) and root and deontic modality (Veloso, 2007).⁴ We argue that this modal cannot be used to express epistemic

⁴ For Souza (2016), the ability use of ‘dar’ occurs in constructions such as ‘João dá pra médico’ (João would be a good doctor), that refers to João abilities/aptitude. This kind of construction did not occur in our spontaneous data.

modality, but that it is a root modal which favors the circumstantial reading. In the spontaneous data, we observed three types of modality: (i) circumstantial; (ii) deontic – *ought to do* and (iii) teleological.

Table 1 – Modal flavors found in the *corpus*

Modality	Quantity	Percentage
Circumstantial	103	86.5%
Deontic - <i>ought to do</i>	15	12.6%
Teleological	1	0.84%

Source: Elaborated by the authors.

Table 1 shows that ‘dar para’ seems to favor circumstantial modality contexts. Observe the sentences in (15) from our *corpus*. (15a) can be paraphrased as “it is not likely that the conditions allow us to see it”, (15b) can be paraphrased as “the conditions only made it possible to draw the foot”, and (15c) can be paraphrased as “the conditions did not allow to hear it”.

- (15) a.

Nem deve dar pra ver.

nor must give.INF to see.INF

‘It’s probably not possible to see it.’
- b.

Então só deu para desenhar o pé.

so only give.PST.PF.3SG to draw.INF the foot

‘Thus, it was only possible to draw the foot.’
- c

Não deu para ouvir.

not give.PST.PFV.3SG to hear.INF

‘It was not possible to hear it.’

There were cases in which ‘dar para’ was used with the deontic or teleological reading. For example, (16a) has a deontic reading and it was used in a context in which a driver exceeded speed and the car fell, thus this sentence can be paraphrased as “according to the rules, racing was not allowed”. On the other hand, (16b) expresses a teleological modality, as it was used in a context in which the interviewed mothers have a goal in mind, to end the romanticization of the disorder, then, this sentence can be paraphrased as “In order to end the romanticization of the disorder, it is not possible to just show its nice side”.

Despite looking like an ability modal construction, it seems that this is a different construction from the one we are investigating in this paper because the subject seems obligatory and there is a property under the scope of the modal, not a proposition. Therefore, our description does not cover this use of ‘dar para’ and we leave the analysis of ability ‘dar para’ for future research.

(16) a. ‘Sabia que não dava para correr’,
 know.PST.IPFV that not give.PST.IPFV.3SG to run.INF’,
 diz recepcionista após carro que caiu em loja.
 say.PRS receptionist after car that fall.PST.PFV in store
 “‘He knew he couldn’t run”, says receptionist after car falling in the store.’

b. No Dia da Conscientização do Autismo, mães pedem fim da
 in day of awareness of autism, mothers ask.PRS end of
 romantização do transtorno: ‘Não dá para mostrar só
 romanticization of disorder: not give.PRS.3SG to show.INF only
 o lado bonito’.
 the side beautiful
 On Autism Awareness Day, mothers call for an end to the romanticization
 of the disorder: ‘You can’t just show the pretty side’

However, the use of ‘dar para’ to express deontic and teleological modality was much less frequent in relation to circumstantial modality. We applied a test by placing ‘dar para’ in sentences that force certain readings and observed that this modal is odd with epistemic reading, as illustrated in (17a), bouletic, as illustrated in (17b); ability, as illustrated in (17c); and deontic *ought to be*, as illustrated in (17d). On the other hand, the use of ‘dar para’ sounds natural with deontic reading *ought to do*, as illustrated in (17e), circumstantial, as illustrated in (17f); and teleological, as illustrated in (17g).

(17) a. #Dá pra chover, o céu está cheio de nuvens.
 give.PRS.3SG to rain.INF, the sky COP.PRS full of clouds
 ‘It may rain, it’s full of dark clouds in the sky.’ **(epistemic)**

b. #Daria pro João ser advogado,
 give.PST.FUT.IPFV.3SG to João be.INF lawyer,
 eu preciso uma defesa.
 I need.PRS a defense
 ‘I wish João could be a lawyer, I need someone to defend me.’ **(bouletic)**

c. #Dá para o João falar três línguas.
 give.PRS.3SG to the João speak.INF three languages
 ‘João can speak three languages.’ **(ability)**

d. #Dá pra a cachorra tomar vacina às 13h.
 give.PRS.3SG to the dog take vaccine at 1pm
 ‘The dog can have its vaccine at 1pm.’ **(deontic - ought to be)**

e. Já dá pro João beber, ele completou 18
ontem.
already give.PRS.3SG to João drink.INF, he complete.PST.PFV 18
yesterday.

‘João can already drink, he turned 18 yesterday. (deontic - *ought to do*)

f. Dá pro João nos dar uma carona,
give.PRS.3SG to João us give.INF a ride,
o carro está funcionando.
the car COP.PRS work.PROG
‘João can give us a ride, the car is working.’ (circumstantial)

g. Dá pra usar o microondas para esquentar o leite.
give.PRS.3SG to use the microwave to heat the milk
‘It is possible to use the microwave to heat the milk.’ (teleological)

Thus, we assume that there is a restriction of ‘dar para’ with the higher modalities, namely: epistemic, bouletic and deontic *ought to be* and also with abilitative modalities, as illustrated in (17). The spontaneous data suggest that ‘dar para’ expresses root modality, preferably circumstantial reading and, less often, deontic *ought to do* and teleological.

If ‘dar para’ does not admit epistemic reading, as we have argued, we expect sequences in which ‘dar para’ occupies the first position, such as *dar p(a)ra > poder; dar p(a)ra > ter que*, to be impossible. This constrain actually applies to ‘dar para’ as illustrated in (18):

(18) a. Pode dar para resolver esse problema.
may give.INF to solve this problem
‘It is likely that it is possible to solve this problem.’
ModEpistemic>ModCircumstantial

a’.*Dá para poder resolver esse problema.
give.PRS.3SG to may solve this problem

b. Tem que dar para parcelar essa compra.
have that give.INF to pay.in.installment this purchase
‘It is necessary the possibility to pay this purchase in installments.’
ModBulético>ModDeônicoOught-to-do

b’.*Dá para ter que parcelar essa compra.
give.PRS.3SG to have that pay.in.installment this purchase

The impossibility of ‘dar para’ occurring as the first modal in a sequence of modals illustrated in (18a’) and (18b’) corroborates that it cannot have an epistemic reading. Furthermore, ‘dar para’ can be inflected in the perfective past, as illustrated (15b-c), and that is also not possible with epistemic modals. Another argument is the actuality entailment which occurs with ‘dar para’ when it is inflected in the perfective past, as it occurs in (15b), in which the event of drawing the foot actually occurred. As we have discussed in the previous section, actuality entailment is a phenomenon associated only with root modals. Lastly, ‘dar para’ is not good in contexts that force epistemic reading, as illustrated in (19-21).

- (19) CONTEXT: A doctor is observing the signs as dilation and distance between contractions to determine if the birth is near.

- a. Seu bebê pode nascer a qualquer momento.
 your baby may born to any moment
 ‘Your baby may be born at any moment.’
- b. #Dá para seu bebê nascer a qualquer momento.
 give.PRS.3SG to your baby born to any moment
 #Give birth to your baby at any time.

- (20) CONTEXT: Your father has suffered an accident and he is unconscious in the ICU. You and your mother visit him. He cannot communicate to tell if he is in pain, but his injuries seem quite serious.

- a. (Não toque nele,) ele pode estar sentindo dor.
 (Don’t touch him,) he may be.INF feeling pain
 ‘Don’t touch him, he may be in pain.’
- b. #(Não toque nele,) dá para ele estar sentindo dor.
 (Don’t touch him,) give.PRS.3SG to he be.INF feeling pain

- (21) CONTEXT: You and your sister are waiting for your mother at home. You know she leaves work at 5pm and usually takes her half an hour to get home.

- a. Mamãe pode chegar a qualquer instante.
 mommy may arrive.INF at any instant
 ‘Mommy may arrive at any moment.’
- b. #Dá para mamãe chegar a qualquer instante.
 give.PRS.3SG to mommy arrive.INF at any instant

b. Deu para entender porque o Lula está
 give.PST.PFV.3SG to understand why the Lula COP.PRS
 taxando em 92% suas comprinhas na SHEIN?
 tax.PROG in 92% your purchases at SHEIN
 ‘Did you understand why Lula is taxing your purchases at SHEIN by 92%?’

c. Deu para notar que ali que não sentiu
 give.PST.PFV.3SG to notice that there that no felt.PST.PFV
 remorso em deixar as mulheres.
 remorse in leave.INF the women
 ‘It was possible to notice that there was no remorse about leaving the women.’

Despite being a tense inflection generally associated with the past, spontaneous data show a tendency for it to be used to talk about the recent past or even about the present itself. Of the 23 examples inflected with perfective past tense, in 9 the use of ‘deu para’ does not describe something in the past. One piece of evidence is that the use of the past perfect in these data, illustrated in (22), could be replaced by indicative present tense, and the sentences could be used in the same context, as illustrated in (23). Another piece of evidence that the use of past perfect does not describe a past state is the co-occurrence of this inflection with the adverb of time ‘agora’ (now) illustrated in (24).

(23) a. Dá para perceber?
 give.PRS.3SG to perceive.INF
 ‘Is it possible to realize it?’

b. Dá para entender porque o Lula está
 give.PRS.3SG to understand why the Lula COP.PRS
 taxando em 92% suas comprinhas na SHEIN?
 Tax.PROG in 92% your purchases at SHEIN
 ‘Do you understand why Lula is taxing your purchases at SHEIN by 92%?’

c. Dá para notar que ali que não sentiu
 give.PRS.3SG to notice that there that no felt.PST.PFV
 remorso em deixar as mulheres.
 remorse in leave.INF the women
 ‘It is possible to notice that there was no remorse about leaving the women.’

- (24) a. *Agora* deu para entender o caos no Rio.
 now give.PST.PFV.3SG to understand the chaos in Rio.
 ‘Now it is possible to understand the chaos in Rio.’
- b. Deu para entender *agora* a ida da dama
 give.PST.PFV.3SG to understand.INF now the departure of lady
 do Comando Vermelho no ministério da justiça.
 of Command Red in ministry of justice
 ‘It is possible to understand now the departure of the lady of the Red
 Command to the ministry of justice.’

However, there are cases in which this tense inflection is used to refer to a specific moment in the past, as in the sentences illustrated in (25).

- (25) a. Ele estava grande demais para aparecer no desenho,
 he was too big to appear in the drawing,
 Então só deu para desenhar o pé.
 thus only give.PST.PFV.3SG to draw.INF the foot
 ‘He was too big to appear in the drawing, thus it was only possible to
 draw the foot.’
- b. Fiz uma lasanha tão gostosa pro jantar que
 I did a lasagna so delicious that
 não deu para comer um pedaço só.
 not give.PST.PFV.3SG to eat a piece only
 ‘I made such a delicious lasagna for dinner that it was not possible to eat
 only one portion.’
- c. A doação dos fãs da Taylor Swift deu
 the donation of fans of Taylor Swift give.PST.PFV.3SG
 para custear o velório e o transporte do
 to pay the funeral and the transportation of
 corpo da filha.
 body of daughter.
 ‘The donation from Taylor Swift’s fans’ made it possible to pay for the
 funeral and transportation of the daughter’s corpse.’

In order to explain why the past inflection seems to be used sometimes to refer to the present and sometimes to refer to a specific moment in the past, we adopted Ferreira’s (2017) analysis of the Brazilian Portuguese temporal system. The author notes that the past perfect tense can refer to both the past, as in (26a), and the present, as in (26b). To explain this behavior, the author assumes that the past perfect tense is

an ambiguous inflection, functioning as the spell out of two different structures. In the past reading, we would have the perfective aspect in the scope of the past tense, as in (26a) and, in the present reading, we would have the perfective aspect in the scope of the present, as illustrated in (26b).

- (26) a. João assou um bolo *ontem*.
 João baked.PST.PFV a cake *yesterday*.
 ‘João baked a cake yesterday.’
 [_{TP} *past* [_{ASPP} *perfective*]]
- b. *Agora* já comi o bastante.
Now already eat.PST.PFV the enough.
 ‘Now I have already eaten enough.’
 [_{TP} *present* [_{ASPP} *perfect*]]

In this way, the present reading would be a perfect present. A characteristic in the data with ‘gave to’ that reinforces the analysis that some cases of ‘dar para’ inflected for past perfective past tense are actually a *spell out of* present + perfect is that these data are used to talk about a recent past or a past with consequences in the present, as in ‘deu para perceber’ (was it possible to realize?) in (22a) or ‘deu para notar’ (it was possible to notice) in (22c); the understanding or perception of something that has happened recently with results in the present.

Considering these two possible readings, the present tense reading restricts the perspective of the modal to the present, as in (24a), in which the conditions in the present moment allow us to understand the chaos in Rio, while the past tense reading restricts the perspective of the modal to the past, as in (25c), in which the conditions in the past allowed the funeral and the transportation of the corpse. Therefore, we conclude that the sentence’s tense shifts the temporal perspective of the modal, which may be less evident in the case of the past perfect, since this tense inflection can function as a *spell out of* both the past and the present.

The indicative present tense occurred in 35 of the 125 data (28%) 32 of which were non-progressive and 2 progressive. We will first analyze the use of the present non-progressive indicative, illustrated in (27). The present also seems to operate on the temporal perspective of the modal. For example, the sentence in (27a) indicates that the current conditions do not allow us to remain neutral with Israel’s attacks on Palestine. (27b) indicates that the current conditions with the environmental catastrophe at Braskem in Maceió do not allow us to let the guard down.

(27) a. Não dá para ficar neutro nesse choque
 not give.PRS.3SG to remain neutral in.this clash of
 de barbáries em Israel.
 of barbarities in Israel
 ‘It is not possible to remain neutral in this clash of barbarities in Israel.’

b. Maceió atualiza velocidade do afundamento da mina da Braskem:
 The speed of Braskem’s mine sinking accelerates:
 ‘Não dá para baixar a guarda’.
 not give.PRS.3SG to get.down the guard
 ‘Braskem’s mine sinking accelerates: “We can’t let our guard down”.’

Ferreira (2017) assumes that the present reading of the past perfect is a *spell out* of the present tense and the imperfective aspect, as illustrated in (28)⁶. Thus, we consider that the difference between the use of the indicative present ‘dar para’ and the perfect past tense ‘deu para’ is, roughly speaking, lies in whether the speaker conceives the event in the scope of the modal as culminated or not. For example, the use of the past tense in (22) makes the events of perceiving, understanding and noticing to be conceived as culminated – an interpretation being triggered by the perfect aspect present in the structure. The use of the indicative present in (22), on the other hand, means that the eventualities of remaining neutral and letting one’s guard down are conceived as not culminated, an interpretation triggered by the imperfective aspect present in the structure.

(28) [_{TP} *present* [_{ASPP} *imperfective*]]

When the present indicative occurs associated with the progressive, the present modal perspective still remains as present; however, speakers seem to use it to indicate a recent and/or temporary situation. In (24a), for example, the speaker seems to consider that the situation of not defending Brazilian cinema is recent. And the use of the progressive in (24b) contributes to show that the situation of hearing birdsong is something ephemeral, which is occurring at that instant, but could end at any moment.

⁶ This analysis does not account for certain uses, such as the historical present, the narrative present and the programmed future. We follow Ogihara (2005), Schmit (2001) and Ferreira (2016; 2017), assuming that these are marginal readings and do not in fact constitute a present.

- (29) a. O cinema brasileiro feito recentemente
 the cinema Brazilian made recently
 não tá dando para defender, não.
 not COP.PRS give.PROG to defend, no.
 ‘The Brazilian cinema made recently cannot be defended.’
- b. mas tá dando para escutar os passarinhos cantando!
 but COP.PRS give.PROG to hear the birds sing.PROG
 ‘But one can hear the little birds singing!’

The imperfect past tense occurred in 45 data (36%). The imperfect past tense operates on the perspective of the modal, which is the past. The sentences were collected on the social network X in November 2023 and they bring complaints made by users who were unhappy with Taylor Swift’s concerts, in (30a-b), and Rebelde’s concerts, in (30c-d), which were taking place during this period. We get a reading of what was allowed or not by the conditions in the past. For example, the reading in (30c) is that the circumstances at that time that allowed the concert to be realized also allowed the concert to be postponed until Monday and the reading in (30d) is that the conditions at the time of the concert, which had already happened, did not allow the TV to be heard inside the house. In this way, the imperfect past tense shifts the temporal perspective to the past.

- (30) a. 300 ml não dava para matar a sede.
 300 ml not give.PST.IPFV.3SG to kill the thirst.
 ‘300 ml was not enough to quench my thirst.’
- b. com toda a estrutura da Taylor
 with all the structure of Taylor,
 dava para montar uns 3 MITA.
 give.PST.IPFV.3SG to assemble some 3 MITA.
 ‘With Taylor’s entire structure, it was possible to assemble about 3 MITAs.’
- c. Super entendemos a situação da Anahi,
 Super understand-1PL the situation of Anahi,
 mas se dava para ir no show,
 but if give.PST.IPFV.3SG to go.INF in concert
 dava para [adiar o show de ontem para
 segunda!
 give.PST.IPFV.3SG to [postpone the concert from yesterday to
 Monday!
 ‘We really understand Anahi’s situation, but if it was possible to go to
 the concert, it was also possible to [postpone the concert from yesterday
 to Monday!’

- d. não dava para [ouvir sua tv dentro de casa].
 not give.PST.IPFV.3SG to [hear your TV inside of house].
 ‘It was not possible to [hear one’s TV at home]’.

We classify as future the data with the periphrasis ‘ir’, as illustrated in (31), which occurred in only 3 examples (2.4%). Its use anchors the perspective in the future, as, for example, in (31a), in which the reading is that it is not known whether the circumstances at a future moment will allow the photo to be taken; in (31b), the reading is that the circumstances at a future time will not allow the PEC to be shelved; and in (31c), the speaker questions if the circumstances in the future (the salary proportional to three days) would make life possible.

- (31) a. Não sei se vai dar para fazer uma foto assim.
 not know.PRS if FUT give.INF to make a photo like.that
 ‘I don’t know if it’s possible to take a picture like that.’
- b. Lira afirma que não vai dar para engavetar PEC do STF.⁷
 Lira states.PRS that not FUT give.INF to shelve PEC of STF
 ‘Lira states that it will not be possible to shelve the STF’s PEC.’
- c. O salário proporcional a 3 dias por semana
 the salary proportional to 3 days per week
 trabalhados vai dar para viver?
 worked FUT give.INF to live?
 ‘Will the salary proportional to 3 days worked per week be enough to live on?’

The past future tense occurred in 17 examples (13.6%). The use of this tense seems to favor a counterfactual reading that indicates a situation as not compatible with reality. For example, in (32) we have examples of sentences in which people show their dissatisfaction with government expenses, indicating what could be done with the amount of money spent on travels and layettes. Therefore, using money to help a lot of things (32a), to buy millions of basic food baskets (32b) and to satisfy the hunger of those in need (32c) is not compatible with reality, since this amount has already been spent on travel and layettes. In this context, the modal perspective is the present, but the circumstances are evaluated not in the actual world, but in a possible world in which another attitude towards the money was taken, such as spending money on other things as illustrated in (32).

⁷ PEC means Proposed Amendment to the Constitution and STF means Supreme Court.

- (32) a. 1 bilhão em viagens daria para [ajudar em muita coisa]
 1 billion in trips give.PST.FUT.3SG to [help in much stuff]
 ‘1 billion in travel would be enough to [help with a lot of things].’
- b. O q já gastou com essas viagens inúteis
 the what already spent with these travels useless
 daria para [comprar milhões de cestas básicas!]
 give.PST.FUT.3SG to [buy millions of basket basic]
 ‘What has already been spent on these useless trips would be enough to
 [buy millions of basic food baskets!].’
- c. O valor gasto nesse enxoval daria para ajudar a
 the value spent in.this latette give.PST.FUT.3SG to help to
 matar a fome de quem precisa.
 kill the hunger of who need.PRS
 ‘The amount of money spent on this layette would be enough to help
 satisfy the hunger of those in need.’

Only 2 of the 125 data were in the infinitive (1.6%). The use of the infinitive was triggered by the fact that ‘dar pra’ is in the scope of another modal verb, as in (33).

- (33) a. Nem deve dar pra ver.
 not must give.INF to see
 ‘It must be impossible to see.’
- b. Deve dar pra levar uma máscara como essa aqui ó.
 must give.INF to take a mask like this here look.
 ‘It must be possible to take a mask like this one here.’

For these data, two temporal perspectives must be taken into account: (i) the perspective of the modal verb ‘dever’ (must) and (ii) the perspective of the ‘dar para’. The temporal perspective of ‘dar para’ seems to be defined according to the perspective of the first modal. For example, we might paraphrase (33a) as “According to the evidence at the present time, present conditions do not allow us to see”. In this way, tense inflection expresses ingredients such as time and aspect. The tense shifts the temporal perspective of the modal, that is, the use of the present makes the considered circumstances being the current ones; in the case of the past, the circumstances considered are from a certain moment in the past and in the future the circumstances considered are the ones that will hold sometime in the future. Aspect, on the other hand, does not seem to operate on the modal itself, but on the eventuality under the scope of the modal. For example, we assume that the difference between the present and the present reading of the perfective past is aspectual, and that the aspect is not related to the verb ‘dar para’, but to whether the eventuality in the scope of that verb is conceived as culminated or not.

The type of the verb and the position in the hierarchy

In Cinque and Rizzi's hierarchy (2008), there are six positions for the expression of modality, namely: (i) epistemic; (ii) alethic; (iii) volitional (or bouletic); (iv) obligation; (v) ability and (vi) permission. This version of the hierarchy is illustrated in (34).

- (34) [Moodspeech act [Moodevaluative [Moodevidential [**Modepistemic** [Tense(Past) [Tense(Future) [Moodirrealis [**Modalethic** [Aspecthabitual [Aspectrepetitive(I) [Aspectfrequentative(I) [**Modvolition** [Aspectcelerative(I) [Tenseanterior [Aspectterminative [Aspectcontinuative [Aspectretrospective [Aspectproximative [Aspectdurative [Aspectgeneric/progressive [Aspectprospective [**Modobligation** [**Modability** [Aspectfrustrative [**Modpermission** [Aspectcompletive [Voicepassive [Aspectcelerative(II) [Aspectrepetitive(II) [Aspectfrequentative(II)]

(Cinque; Rizzi, 2008, p. 12, 93, emphasis added)

As illustrated in the hierarchy, there is a connection between the modal flavor an item expresses and the position it occupies. In higher positions we can find modals with epistemic, alethic and bouletic readings and in lower positions we can find modals with deontic and ability readings. The hierarchy of heads also helps to explain certain interactions we observed between the modal flavor and the temporal perspective described in the previous subsection. For example, we saw that epistemic reading is not compatible with perfective past whereas deontic reading is. This follows from the fact that the head expressing the epistemic modality is in a position above tense, and the head expressing the deontic modality is in a position below tense, as illustrated in (34).

As discussed in the previous section, 'dar para' does not express epistemic, bouletic or ability readings, but expresses weak deontic modality (permission). Thus, 'dar para' appears to be a modal that occupies a low position, along with other root modals. In addition to weak deontic modality, we showed that 'dar para' can express circumstantial and teleological readings, modal flavors not represented in the hierarchy of functional heads proposed by Cinque (1999, 2006) and Cinque and Rizzi (2008, 2016). In this way, ordering tests with the modal 'dar para' and other modal, temporal and aspectual heads were used to determine which positions the circumstantial and teleological functional heads occupy in the hierarchy.

The syntax of 'dar para'

This subsection discusses the syntactic aspects of 'dar para', such as the category of the complement, the type of external argument of the verb under the scope of the modal, and the raising patterns. Regarding the complement, all cases of spontaneous

data were of InfP, as illustrated in ‘pegar’ (to take) and ‘correr’ (to run) in (35). Of our examples, only two occurred in the inflected infinitive, as illustrated in (35).

- (35) a. Não dá para [InfP pegar uma metralhadora?] not give.PRS.3SG to [InfP take.INF a machine.gun] ‘Isn’t it possible to [InfP get a machine gun?]
- b. Sabia que não dava para [InfP correr.] know.PST.IPFV that not give.PST.IPFV.3SG to [InfP run.INF] ‘He knew running was not possible.’
- (36) a. Foi o que deu para [InfP fazerem para was the what give.PST.PFV.3SG to [InfP do.INF.PL to tentar abafar o caso das visitas ...] try.INF hurry.INF the case of visits...] ‘That’s what was possible to do [try to hush up the visitation case...]
- b. Não dá para [InfP fazeres “Fusão”.] not give.PRS.3SG to [InfP do.INF.2.SG “Fusion”.] ‘It is not possible to do “Fusion”.’

Although all the data found are with the preposition ‘para’, we believe that the construction with ‘dar de’ is also grammatical and can be used to express modality, as illustrated in (37).

- (37) a. *Dá* **para** *ir.*
give.PRS.3SG **to** go.INF
'It is possible to go there.'
- b. *Dá* **de** *ir.*
give.PRS.3SG **of** go.INF
'It is possible to go there.'

The spontaneous data show that ‘dar para’ favors the position of the external argument of the embedded verb not being filled, as illustrated in table 3. The vast majority of data has an empty category (*ec*) in the external argument position, as illustrated in (38).

Table 3 – Types of embedded subject

type	Amount	Percentage
EC	121	96.8%
DP	4	3.2%

Source: Elaborated by the authors.

- (38) a. Deu para [_{InfP} *ec* perceber?]
 give.PST.PFV.3SG to [_{InfP} *ec* understand?]
 ‘Was it possible to realize?’

- b. nem deve dar pra [_{InfP} *ec* ver]
 not must give.INF to [_{InfP} *ec* see.INF]
 ‘It must not even be possible to see.’

There were some cases in which this position was filled, as illustrated in (39). It is interesting that, even in these cases, the speaker’s preference seems to be for generic rather than referential pronouns, as shown in the following sentences.

- (39) a. Não dá para [_{InfP} **você** culpabilizar a escola por um
 not give.PRS.3SG to **you** blame the school for an
 evento dessa natureza.]
 event of.this nature.]
 ‘One can’t blame the school for an event of this nature.’
- b. Não dá para [_{InfP} **você** só trabalhar e dizer ‘eu
 not give.PRS.3SG to you only work.INF and say I
 vou ter felicidade no final da vida’.]
 FUT have.INF happiness in end of life
 ‘One can’t just work and say, ‘I’m going to be happy at the end of my life’.

Raising of a constituent to a position before the modal ‘dar para’ was found in only 19 of the 125 examples. The following patterns were observed in the spontaneous data:

Table 4 – Types of raising found in the *corpus*

From	To	Quantity	Percentage
No raising		101	84%
Object DP	CP	2	1.6%
Locative DP	Topic-subject	1	0.8%
Object DP	Topic-subject	3	2.5%
Instrument DP	Topic-subject	10	8.4%
Object DP	Matrix Object	1	0.8%
Subject	Topic	1	0.8%
Temporal DP	Topic-subject	1	0.8%

Source: Elaborated by the authors.

As illustrated in table 4, most of the raisings are non-argumental DPs which lost their preposition, as illustrated by the contrast between (40) and (41). These DPs convey the circumstances that allow the possibilities.

(40) a. 1 bilhão em viagens daria para [ajudar em muita coisa].
 1 billion in trips give.PST.FUT.3SG to help in much stuff]
 ‘1 billion in travel would be enough to help with a lot of things.’

b. 300 ml não dava para [matar a sede].
 300 ml not give.PST.IPFV.3SG to [kill the thirst].
 ‘300 ml was not enough to quench my thirst.’

(41) a. daria para [ajudar em muita coisa] com 1 bilhão em viagens.
 give.PST.FUT.3SG to [help in much stuff] with 1 billion in travels.
 ‘It would be possible to [help with a lot of things] with 1 billion in travel.’

b. não dava para [matar a sede] com 300 ml .
 not give.PST.IPFV.3SG to [kill the thirst] with 300 ml
 ‘It was not possible to [quench my thirst] with 300 ml.’

Such DPs have been analyzed by some authors as being a type of topic-subject (Avelar; Galves, 2011) or as having a topic structure (Negrão, 1999). Quarezemin (2017), based on Cardinaletti (2014), proposes that the preverbal subject can appear in two positions, depending on whether it is the grammatical subject, with morphosyntactic properties, or the semantic subject, the subject of predication. The authors propose that each of these properties should be encoded in distinct functional projections: AgrSP

To understand the position that the modal ‘dar para’ with circumstantial reading occupies in Cinque’s hierarchy of functional heads, we tested its occurrence with the heads TP(Past), ModVolition, AspProgressive and AspSuccess, which are located in different positions in the hierarchy. Let us look at the examples:

- 28

d'. *Consegue dar para levantar esse peso, será?
 *Achieve.PRS give.INF to lift.INF this weight, COP.FUT?
 *Asp^{Suc.} > Mod^{Circumst.}

TP(Past) corresponds to a high head in the hierarchy of functional heads, being preceded only by the heads: Mood^{Speech act}, Mood^{Evaluative}, Mood^{Evidential} and Mod^{Epistemic}. In our data, there were instances of 'dar para' with circumstantial reading inflected in the past tense (TP^{Past}). In (42a), we transcribed one of these examples. The past perfective inflection of 'dar para' is an indication that this modal occupies a position below that of the temporal head indicating the past, as it triggers a movement for this head to receive this marking. Thus, it can be seen that the order of these functional heads is TP(Past) > Mod^{Circumstantial}. In (42b), we combined 'dar para' with circumstantial reading with the head Mod^{Volition}. Here, again, there is an ordering in which circumstantial 'dar para' follows the other modal: Mod^{Volition} > Mod^{Circumstantial}. In (42c), we tested the co-occurrence of the circumstantial reading of 'dar para' with the progressive aspectual head. In this case, we see that 'dar para' moves to incorporate the progressive inflection, which indicates the following ordering: Asp^{Progressive} > Mod^{Circumstantial}. Finally, in (42d), we tested the circumstantial reading of 'dar para' co-occurring with the aspectual head of success. In this case, what is observed is that Mod^{Circumst} precedes the latter: Mod^{Circumstantial} > Asp^{Success}, as shown in the well-formed sentences in (42). Considering the examples in (42), we present below the partial ordering of the hierarchy proposed by Cinque (1999, 2006) with the insertion of the circumstantial modal head, tested based on the ordering between 'dar para' with circumstantial reading and temporal, modal and aspectual heads:

(43) ... > TP(Past) > ... > Mod_{Vol.} > ... Asp_{Prog.} > ... > **Mod^{Circums.}** > Asp^{Frustr/Suc.} ...

The verb 'dar para' can also have a teleological reading. A teleological modal is interpreted in a different position in the hierarchy of functional heads than, for example, a circumstantial modal, even if both are lexicalized by the same functional item. In this sense, we now begin to investigate how the modal verb 'dar para' with a teleological interpretation relates to other items indicating tense, modality and/or aspect. The following examples show sentences in which 'dar para' with a teleological interpretation occurs with items corresponding to the heads TP^{Past}, Mod^{Volition}, Asp^{Progressive} and Asp^{Completive(I)}, respectively.

(44) a. Deu para trabalhar aos domingos para ganhar hora extra.
 give.PST.PFV.3SG to work.INF on Sundays to earn hour extra
 'It was possible to work on Sundays to earn overtime.'^v TP^{Past} > Mod^{Tel.}

b. Tem que (Bem que podia) dar para fazer greve para pressionar o
have that (well that might) give.INF to do.INF strike to pressure the
governo.
government

‘It should be (it might well be) possible to go on strike to put pressure on
the

government.’

$\forall \text{Mod}^{\text{Volition}} > \text{Mod}^{\text{Teleologic}}$

b’.*Dá para ter que fazer greve para pressionar o
governo.

*give.PRS.3SG to have that do.INF strike to pressure.INF the
government.

*Mod^{Tel.} > Mod^{Volition}

c. Está dando para adotar uma cartinha de
COP.PROG give.PROG to adopt.INF a letter.small of
Natal para fazer uma criança feliz.

Christmas to make.INF a child happy

‘It is being possible to adopt a Christmas letter to make a child happy.’

$\forall \text{Asp}^{\text{Progressive}} > \text{Mod}^{\text{Teleologic}}$

c’.*Dá para estar adotando uma cartinha de

*give.PRS.3SG to COP.INF adopt.PROG a letter.small of
Natal para fazer uma criança feliz.

Christmas to make.INF a child happy

*Mod^{Teleologic} > Asp^{Progressive}

d. Dá para terminar de contornar esta rua para passar
give.PRS.3SG to finish.INF of go.around.INF this street to pass.INF
em frente à Arena do Grêmio.

in front of Arena of Grêmio

‘It is possible to go around this street to pass in front of Grêmio’s stadium.’

$\forall \text{Mod}^{\text{Teleologic}} > \text{Asp}^{\text{Completive(I)}}$

d’.*Terminou de dar para contornar esta

*finish.PST.PFV of give.INF to go.around.INF this
rua para passar em frente à Arena do Grêmio.

street to pass.INF in front of Arena of Grêmio

*Asp^{Completive(I)} > Mod^{Teleologic}

The tests illustrated in (44), with ‘dar para’ with a teleological reading, show that
this head, similarly to the circumstantial head, occupies a low position in the hierarchy

of functional heads, between AspProgressive and AspCompletive(I). The tests were carried out with heads that occupy positions at different heights in the hierarchy and that can combine with the teleological modality. Taking these combinations into account, we arrive at the following sequence of functional heads:

$$(45) \dots > TP^{(Past)} > \dots > Mod^{Vol.} > \dots > Asp^{Prog.} > \dots > \mathbf{Mod^{Tel.}} > \dots > Asp^{Compl(I)}$$

Finally, we applied the methodology proposed by Cinque (1999, 2006) to sentences with ‘dar para’ with the permission reading (deontic modality). The following examples show the combination of this verb with functional heads of tense, aspect and/or modality, with ‘dar para’ denoting circumstantial and teleological readings, respectively.

(46) a. Não deu para flexibilizar exploração na
not give.PST.PFV.3SG to make.flexible.INF exploration in
Foz do Amazonas, diz Marina.
river.mouth of Amazonas say.PRS Marina
‘It was not possible to make exploration in Foz do Amazonas more flexible,
says Marina.’ $\forall TP^{Past} > Mod_{Perm.}$

b. ‘Não está dando para tratar facções
not COP.PRS give.PROG to deal.INF factions
sem polícia’, defende governador da Bahia.
without police argue.PRS governor of Bahia
‘It is not being possible to deal with factions without police’, argues
governor of Bahia.’ $\forall Asp_{Prog.} > Mod_{Perm.}$

b’.* ‘Não dá para estar tratando facções
not give.PRS.3SG to COP.PRS deal.PROG factions
sem polícia’, defende governador da Bahia.
without police argue.PRS governor of Bahia
 $*Mod_{Perm.} > Asp_{Prog.}$

c. Base se formou, mas não dá para terminar de
base itself form.PST.PRF but not give.PRS.3SG to finish.INF of
aprovar pauta de costumes.
approve.INF agenda of behaviors
‘A base has been formed, but it is not possible to finish approving the
customs agenda.’ $\forall Mod_{Perm.} > Asp_{Compl(I)}$

c'. *'Base se formou, mas não terminou
 base itself form.PST.PRF but not finish.PST.PFV
 de dar para aprovar pauta de costumes'.
 of give.INF to approve.INF agenda of behavior
 $*\text{Asp}_{\text{Compl(I)}} > \text{Mod}_{\text{Perm.}}$

d. Não dá para tentar relativizar o terrorismo.
 not give.PRS.3SG to try.INF relativize.INF the terrorism
 'It is not possible to try to relativize terrorism.'
 $\forall \text{Mod}_{\text{Perm.}} > \text{Asp}_{\text{Con.}}$

d'. * Tentar não dá para relativizar o terrorismo,
 Try.INF not give.PRS.3SG to relativize.INF the terrorism
 $*\text{Asp}_{\text{Con.}} > \text{Mod}_{\text{Perm.}}$

The test results from (46) indicate that 'dar para' with a deontic reading of permission is interpreted after the $\text{Asp}^{\text{Progressive}}$ head and before the $\text{Asp}^{\text{Conative}}$ and $\text{Asp}^{\text{Completive(I)}}$ heads, the same position predicted for the $\text{Mod}^{\text{Permission}}$ head in Cinque's hierarchy. Below, we transcribe the relevant excerpt from the hierarchy to illustrate the position of 'dar para' with this use in relation to the other categories tested.

(47) ... > $\text{TP}^{\text{(Past)}}$ > ... > $\text{Asp}^{\text{Progressive}}$ > ... > $\text{Mod}^{\text{Permission}}$ > $\text{Asp}^{\text{Conative}}$ > $\text{Asp}^{\text{Completive(I)}}$
 > VoiceP

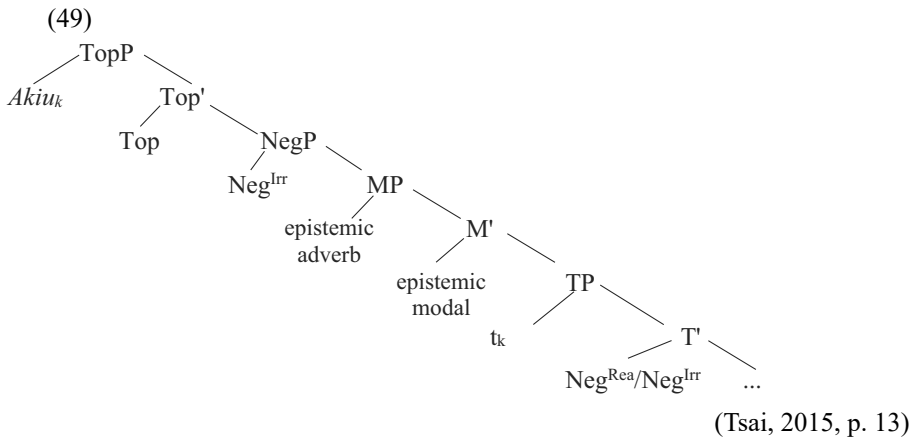
'Dar para' can also be combined with other modal heads, as shown in the sentences in the following example:

- (48) a. Deve dar pra levar uma máscara como essa aqui ó.
 must give.INF to take a mask like this here look
 'It must be possible to take a mask like this one here.'
- b. Tem que dar para entrar com bebidas na festa.
 have that give.INF to enter.INF with drinks in party
 'It must be possible to bring drinks to the party.'

In sentences with co-occurrence of modals with 'dar para', as in (48), it is observed that this modal occupies the second position, being preceded by a high modal: epistemic, as in (48a); or bouletic, as in (48b). According to Rech and Varaschin (2018), when two modal items appear in the same functional domain, as in (48), the first corresponds to a high modal, oriented towards a participant in the speech act (speaker or interlocutor); and the second, to a root modal, oriented to a participant in the event described by the VP (preferably the subject of the sentence). The sentences in (48) therefore correspond

to further evidence that ‘dar para’ constitutes a functional item, behaving like other functional items in relation to the rigid syntactic ordering that these categories follow.

Another test used in the linguistic literature to understand the height of a modal functional item in the syntactic structure is its combination with a sentential negation item (Tsai, 2015; Drubig, 2001). Based on the analysis of modals in Chinese, Tsai (2015) states that an epistemic modal is above the negation marking of realis sentences (*mei*) and below the negation marking of irrealis sentences (*bu*): “*Double negation again displays the same pattern: Irrealis negation bu can appear on both sides of an epistemic modal. Realis negation mei, on the other hand, can only follow an epistemic modal.*” (p. 11-12). According to Tsai, this relationship points to a position for the epistemic modal, since the irrealis negation marker (*bu*) is in a high position in the sentence, above tense, and the realis negation marker (*mei*) is in a low position in the sentence, as illustrated in (49), which shows the epistemic modal in a high position in the sentence hierarchy, under the scope of irrealis negation but not realis negation.



Drubig (2001) states that, when a modal item has scope over negation, it generates an epistemic reading; if, however, the negation has scope over the modal, the only possible reading will be the root interpretation. In (50), the modal has scope over negation, denoting epistemic modality; in (50), the negation has scope over the modal, which only provides a deontic reading.

- (50) a. *Dia mesti tidak Belajar* . (epistemic)

he must not study

‘He must not study.’

(Drubig, 2001, p. 8)
- b. *Dia tidak mesti belajar*. (deontic)

he not must study

‘He must not study.’

(Drubig, 2001, p. 8)

The modal ‘dar para’ does not generate an epistemic reading; therefore, it is expected to fall under the scope of sentential negation in all its uses – circumstantial, deontic and teleological, since it is a root modal. The following examples, taken from our corpus, illustrate each of these uses:

(51) a. Não deu para dançar o tanto que eu queria.
not give.PST.PFV.3SG to dance the much that I want.PST.IPFV
‘It was not possible to dance as much as I wanted.’

b. Não dá para você culpabilizar a escola por um
not give.PRS.3SG to you blame the school for an
evento dessa natureza.]
event of.this nature.]
‘One can’t blame the school for an event of this nature.’

c. No Dia da Conscientização do Autismo, mães pedem fim da
in day of awareness of autism, mothers ask.PRS end of
romantização do transtorno: ‘Não dá para mostrar só
romanticization of disorder: not give.PRS.3SG to show.INF only
o lado bonito.’
the side beautiful
‘On Autism Awareness Day, mothers call for an end to the romanticization of the disorder: “You can’t just show the pretty side” .’

As the sentences in the example above show, the modal ‘dar para’ falls under the scope of negation when used with circumstantial (51a), deontic (51b) and teleological (51c) readings. These data indicate that ‘dar para’ corresponds to a root modal, occupying a low position in the hierarchy of functional heads, as per the results of the tests in examples (42), (44) and (46).

Conclusion

In our semantic analysis of ‘dar para’, we considered that this modal expresses weak modality as previously assumed by Oliveira (2001). Thus, this verb is similar to functional verbs such as ‘poder’ (can), but, unlike the latter, with less flexibility in relation to the types of modality it conveys. From our tests we concluded that ‘dar para’ is a root modal which favors circumstantial modality, but that it can also be used in the deontic *ought to do* and teleological readings. Thus, the results of our tests corroborate Souza (2016)’s analysis of ‘dar para’ as a facultative modal which would be equivalent to what is described as circumstantial modality in formal literature. The tests also show that ‘dar para’ cannot express epistemic modality, different from what

was assumed by Duarte (2012) and Coelho and Silva (2014). The data and tests also showed that this verb cannot be used in the first position in a sequence of modals. Moreover, the verb ‘dar para’ can be inflected in different tenses such as the present, the imperfect and perfect past tense, the future and past future tense and the infinitive. These inflections are the *spell out* of tense and aspect, the role of tense being to shift the temporal perspective of the modal.

Precedence and transitivity tests, based on Cinque (1999, 2006), revealed functional properties in the use of ‘dar para’ denoting circumstantial, teleological and deontic modalities. These results corroborate Coelho and Silva (2014)’s analysis which classifies ‘dar para’ as an auxiliar verb, but not Duarte (2012)’s and Souza (2016)’s analyzes which classify ‘dar para’ as a main verb. With a circumstantial reading, ‘dar para’ is interpreted between the Asp^{Progressive} and Asp^{Frustrative/Success} cores in Cinque’s hierarchy; with a teleological reading, it is interpreted between the Asp^{Progressive} and Asp^{Completive(I)} heads; finally, with deontic reading, it is interpreted between the Asp^{Progressive} and Asp^{Conative} heads. As with other functional items, the interpretation of this modal is determined by the position it occupies in the hierarchy of functional heads. Another interesting aspect regarding the use of ‘dar para’ is that it appears with other modal heads in the same functional domain – co-occurrence of modals, which only occurs with functional items. In the co-occurrence of modal heads, ‘dar para’ only occurs in the second position, being preceded by an epistemic or bouletic modal, showing that its use is restricted to a root modal reading. In (52), we transcribe a relevant part of the hierarchy of functional heads proposed by Cinque (2006), highlighting the heads lexicalized by ‘dar para’:

(52) Epist>...>TP(Past)>TPFut>MoodIrr>...>AspHab>AspRepet>
 AspFrequent>...>ModVolition>...>AspProgres>AspIncep(I)>
 ModObligation>**ModCircust**>AspFrustrat/Sucesso>**ModPerm**>
 AspConat>**ModTeleologic**>AspComple(I)> VoicePassive > Verb

In our tests of ‘dar para’ with a sentential negation item, it was observed that it is under the scope of negation in all its uses – circumstantial, teleological and deontic, indicating that it is a root modal item.

We also showed that ‘dar para’ always has an InfP in its scope, in which the verb can be inflected, but it tends not to be. There is also a tendency for the position of the verb’s external argument in the scope of the modal to not be filled and, when it is, the verb seems to favor generic subjects. The verb ‘dar para’ also does not favor raising to subject position, however, when raising occurs, it is generally an instrumental DP, which makes explicit the circumstances that make the eventuality possible. Therefore, there is a direct relationship between the type of modality expressed by the modal and the type of raising.

FERREIRA, Luiz Fernando; RECH, Núbia Ferreira. O verbo ‘dar para’ como expressão de modalidade no português brasileiro: um estudo a partir da cartografia sintática e da semântica formal. *Alfa*, São Paulo, v. 69, 2025.

- **RESUMO:** *O objetivo deste artigo é analisar usos modais do verbo ‘dar para’ do português brasileiro sintática e semanticamente, fundamentando a análise na cartografia sintática (Cinque, 1999, 2006; Cinque; Rizzi, 2008) e na semântica formal (Kratzer, 1977, 1991). Empregamos dois procedimentos metodológicos: (i) coleta e análise de 125 dados espontâneos da internet (na rede social X e sites de notícias) e (ii) elaboração de testes seguindo o método da introspecção. Na literatura, ‘dar para’, em seu uso modal, é analisado como verbo quase-auxiliar (Salomão, 2008; Souza, 2016), verbo pleno (Duarte, 2012; Souza, 2016) e verbo auxiliar (Coelho; Silva, 2014). Semanticamente, ‘dar para’ é tratado como um verbo fraco (Oliveira, 2001), que expressa modalidade epistêmica (Duarte, 2012; Coelho; Silva, 2014), modalidade facultativa (Souza, 2016) e modalidade raiz e deôntica (Véloso, 2007). Em nossa análise, mostramos que ‘dar para’ é um verbo funcional, que denota modalidade raiz fraca, expressando, preferencialmente, a modalidade circunstancial e, menos frequentemente, as modalidades deôntica e teleológica. Ele se diferencia sintaticamente dos verbos funcionais modais ‘poder’, ‘dever’ e ‘ter que’, por não favorecer o alçamento para a posição de sujeito e, semanticamente, por ser mais restrito em relação aos tipos de modalidade que expressa.*
- **PALAVRAS-CHAVE:** *Dar para; Modalidade raiz; Modalidade; Cartografia Sintática; Semântica Formal.*

Author Contributions (according to CRediT taxonomy)

Luiz Fernando Ferreira: Conceptualization, Data Curation, Formal Analysis, Writing – Original Draft, Writing – Review & Editing.

Núbia Saraiva Ferreira Rech: Data Curation, Formal Analysis, Writing – Original Draft, Writing – Review & Editing.

Data Availability Statement

The database supporting the analysis presented in this study is available at this link: <https://docs.google.com/document/d/1JSjtIruvCRd9u6x55BkzpDEismaLDipb/edit?usp=sharing&oid=114420792231737192925&rtpof=true&sd=true>. The data originated from the social media platform X (formerly Twitter) and several news websites, as indicated in the text.

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