

# Apprehension in Romance: Bouletic and Epistemic Modality in Portuguese and Italian

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1. Cross-linguistically, particles with a continuative meaning (i.e. denoting the continuation of a state from a previous time until the present, e.g. English *still*) may develop meanings of averting a negatively evaluated outcome, or other modal meanings of prediction (Francez 2022; Heine & Kuteva 2002). So far, the study of averting particles has focused mostly on indigenous American and Australian languages (cf. Caudal 2023), less so on Romance. This paper fills this gap by providing an analysis of European Portuguese (EP) *ainda* and Italian *ancora* in sentences like (1) and (2).

- (1) Não saltes num pé, olha que **ainda** caís!  
neg jump-SUBJ.2SG on.one foot look-IMP.2SG that still fall-IND.PRS.2SG  
'Don't jump on one foot, you may fall!'
- (2) Stai attento **ancora** si rompe la bottiglia!  
stay-IMP.2SG careful still CL.REFL break-IND.PRS.3SG the bottle  
'Be careful, the bottle may break!'

In (1) and (2) the particles have an averting meaning: they mark the possible outcome of an event-sequence (i.e., the interlocutor falling in [1], the bottle breaking in [2]) as undesirable. Their use implies that the sequence should be interrupted in order to avoid the outcome (following Kuteva et al. [2019], Caudal [2023] calls such averting grams *apprehensionals*). This use has occasionally been described for Italian (cf. Tempesta 2018 on Apulian varieties), but has not been mentioned for EP (cf. Lopes 2000 on the different meanings of *ainda*). We examine Italian and EP data from Twitter and propose an account of averting *ainda/ancora* that relates their averting meaning with the continuative meaning.

2. Averting *ainda/ancora* is associated with the following implications:

- (i) imminence implication: the outcome is close in time (these particles cannot be used with respect to a possible outcome that is deferred in time; cf. ??*Ancora le temperature aumentino di 3°C prima del 2100!* 'Global temperatures may rise 3°C by 2100!');
- (ii) counter-bouletic implication: the outcome is undesirable or contrary to what the speaker wants (the particles cannot be used with positively-valued events; cf. ??*Ainda ganha a lotaria!* 'You may win the lottery! [unless ironic]).

Based on (i)-(ii), we analyze averting *ainda/ancora* as modal (bouletic) particles with a presuppositional component: they combine with a prejacent proposition *p* (the proposition expressed by the sentence without the particle), which is contrary to what the speaker wants, and presuppose the existence of an event-sequence leading to *p* as its outcome. Our proposal builds on Amaral & Del Prete's (2021) analysis of the periphrases *acabar-por-INF* (EP)/*finire-per-INF* (It.), argued to be modal (epistemic) expressions presupposing an event-sequence and associated with the implication that the outcome of the sequence is contrary to an expectation.

3. Twitter data from both languages show a pattern of co-occurrence with imperatives (e.g., EP [3] and It. [4b]) and other constructions expressing preferences (e.g., It. [4a]), hence supporting our bouletic modal analysis.



- (3) Odeio ver velhinhos a correr para o autocarro q[ua]nd[o] ele claramente ainda demora a chegar, tem calma men, ainda te matas  
 ‘I hate to see these sweet old people running for the bus when clearly the bus will still take a while to arrive, go slowly men [sic!], you may get killed’
- (4) a. È un [pò] pallido il ragazzuolo. Un pò di carne di cavallo. O lenticchie. Ancora si offende qualcuno  
 ‘He’s a bit pale, the little boy. [Let’s give him] Some horse meat. Or rather lentils. [Otherwise] someone may be offended’
- b. Chissà quanto costa questa CocaCola Bungabunga :biggrin: Invitiamo anche Silvio alla festa ancora si offende  
 ‘Who knows how much this CocaCola Bungabunga will cost [Coke bottle with picture of Silvio Berlusconi]. Let’s also invite Silvio to the party, [otherwise] he may be offended.’

Our analysis shows a semantic connection between the continuative and the avertive meaning: the hypothetical continuation of a situation may lead to an undesirable outcome. For example, in (3), if the old man continues to run to the bus, assuming an inertia world, the (dispreferred) outcome is that he may be run over, and in (4a), if the speaker gives horse meat to a boy, hearers who disapprove of eating meat may be offended.

4. We follow Löbner (1989)’s analysis of German *schon* ‘already’ and *noch* ‘still’, adverbs that encode implications about previous/current/future states of affairs, and the transitions between them. We propose that avertive *ainda/ancora* result from the conventionalization of a conversational implication based on their aspectual meaning: a predictable future state may be dispreferred, hence the transition between states should be avoided – in other words, if a salient sequence of events continues to unfold, some negative outcome might result.

5. Our analysis of avertive *ainda/ancora* contributes to our knowledge of bouletic modality in Romance. Interestingly, this avertive meaning of a continuative adverb is discontinuous within the Romance languages; to the best of our knowledge, it is not attested in Northern Italian varieties, French *encore* or Spanish *todavía*. More broadly, this study advances our understanding of the complex interplay between temporal, aspectual, and modal meanings.

**References.** Amaral, Patrícia and Fabio Del Prete. 2021. Predicting the end: Epistemic change in Romance. *Semantics and Pragmatics* 13. Caudal, Patrick. 2023. Avertive/frustrative markers in Australian languages: blurring the boundaries between aspectuo-temporal and modal meanings. In Kasia M. Jaszczolt (ed.), *Understanding Human Time* (Oxford Studies of Time in Language and Thought), 107–173. Oxford: Oxford University Press. Francez, Itamar. 2022. Apprehension in Hebrew. Forthcoming in *Apprehensional constructions in a cross-linguistic perspective*, edited by Marine Vuillermet, Eva Schultze-Berndt and Martina Faller. Kuteva, Tania, Bas Aarts, Gergana Popova and Anvita Abbi. 2019. The grammar of ‘non-realization.’ *Studies in Language* 43(4). 850–895. Löbner, Sebastian. 1989. German *schon* – *erst* – *noch*: an integrated analysis. *Linguistics and Philosophy* 12, 167-212. Lopes, Ana Cristina Macário. 2000. *Ainda*. In: Gärtner, Eberhard, Christine Hundt and Axel Schönberger (eds.), *Estudos de gramática portuguesa III*, Frankfurt am Main, TFM, 65-87. Tempesta, Immacolata. 2018. Varietà regionali in Puglia. Transumanze, confini, incroci. *Idomeneo* 25, 251-258.