Modals in Vietnamese

Ella Hannon & Wataru Uegaki
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This data has been reviewed by a native speaker expert

BODY OF THE QUESTIONNAIRE

A. EPISTEMIC

A1 Epistemic Necessity

Target: epistemic vs. deontic necessity.
(3) and (4) target only epistemic necessity.

(1) Ben goes swimming every day. Ben is not obliged or required to go swimming; it is just a habit of his. It is now time for Ben to be swimming… so **Ben must be swimming** (right now).

Ben	***CHẮC.HẲN***	*(là)*	*đang*	*bơi*
Ben	**MOD**	be/COM	PROG	swim

(2) You know that John goes to school at 9am every day. You look at the clock and see it is 9am, therefore **John must be at school.**

John	***chắc.hẳn***	*(là)*	*đang*	*ở*	*trường* // *John* ***chắc.chắn*** *(là) đang ở trường*
John	**MOD**	be	PROG	LOC	school

John	***chắc.chắn***	*(là)*	*đang*	*ở*	*trường*
John	**MOD**	be	PROG	LOC	school

(3) The math teacher says: The ball is in A or in B or in C. It is not in A. It is not in B. So, **it must be in C.** (Adapted from von Fintel & Gillies 2007).

Chắc chắn phải (là)
Ắt phải (là)

Quả	*bóng*	*chắc chắn phải (là)*	/	*ắt*	*phải*	*(là)*	*ở*	*C*
CLF	*ball*	*MOD MOD COP/COM*		*MOD*	*MOD*	*COP/COM*	*in*	*C*

(4) Tim is calling for his dog. The dog is not coming. Tim looks for the dog in the kitchen, bedroom, living room, (in every room in the house) but the dog is not in any of those rooms. Therefore, Tim thinks/concludes that **the dog must not be in the house.**

Con	*chó*	***chắc.hẳn***	*(là)*	*không*	*ở*	*trong*	*nhà*
CLF	dog	**MOD**	COP/COM	NEG	LOC	in	house

A2 Epistemic Weak Necessity

Target: epistemic weak necessity vs. deontic weak necessity
(6) is also compatible with testing for epistemic possibility.

(5) You know that Ann goes hiking from 7am until 8am every day. Most of the time Ann goes to the lake, but sometimes she goes to the mountains. It is now 7:30am. You say to your friend: **Ann should be at the lake** right now.
có lẽ là/chắc là

Ann	*có*	*lẽ*	*(là)*	*/chắc*	*là*	*đang*	*ở*	*hồ*
Ann	**there.is**	**MOD**	COP/COM	MOD	COP/COM	PROG	LOC	lake

 # CHẮC.HẴN

(6) (Imagine that) you used to live in Goa. You are not living in Goa anymore. You notice how different the weather is in the UK, where you live right now. You know that it often rains in Goa, especially in the afternoon, but not necessarily every day. Now it's the afternoon, so you think **it should be raining now in Goa**.

Trời	*có*	*lẽ*	*(là)/*	*chắc*	*là*	*đang*	*mưa*	*ở*	*Goa*
sky	**there.is**	**MOD**	COP/COM	MOD	COP/COM	PROG	rain	LOC	Goa

 # CHẮC.HẲN

(7) When the light is on at Mary's house, it usually means that she is home. You want to visit Mary. You walk past Mary's house and notice that the light is on. However, there is no car in the driveway. You think to yourself: **Mary should be at home,** but it's not certain.

Mary	*có*	*lẽ*	*(là)*		*đang*	*ở*	*nhà, nhưng tôi không chắc*
Mary	**there.is**	**MOD**	COP/COM		PROG	LOC	home, …

Mary	*có*	*thể*	*(là)*		*đang*	*ở*	*nhà, ...*
Mary	**there.is**	**MOD**	COP/COM		PROG	LOC	home

- MOD *thể* and *lẽ* translatable as possibility and probability, respectively
- Difference in the choice of modal in this context possibly due to the ambiguity in the context: how to weigh the different pieces of evidence (car vs light)

A3 Epistemic Possibility

Target: epistemic possibility vs. epistemic necessity
(11) targets epistemic possibility vs. deontic possibility
(8) The teacher is not consistent. The students never know if he's going to come or not to teach class. Today, it's time to start class and the students are waiting again. **He might come to school today.**

Anh.ấy	*có*	*thể*	*(là)*		*sẽ*	*đến*	*trường*	*hôm.nay*
he	**there.is**	**MOD**	COP/COM		FUT	come	school	today

# Anh.ấy	*có*	*lẽ*	*(là)*		*sẽ*	*đến*	*trường*	*hôm.nay*
he	**there.is**	**MOD**	COP/COM		FUT	come	school	today

(9) Grace is looking for her necklace. She looks in her wardrobe and on top of the wardrobe. It's not there. She looks on top of the TV. It's not there. She looks in her backpack. It's not there. Wait! She didn't check her sister's wardrobe yet. **Grace's necklace might be lost.**

Vòng.cổ	*của*	*Grace*	*có.lẽ*	*(là)*		*đã*	*bị*	*mất*
Necklace	of	Grace	**MOD**	COP/COM		PST/PFV	PASS	lose

(10) Charles is looking for his pet cat, but cannot find it. He knows that his cat is very elusive/mysterious. Charles tells his sister: **The cat may be inside. The cat may also be outside.**
(The task is not only to translate these two sentences individually, but to keep in mind the sequencing i.e., these sentences are not to be used in isolation).

Có thể

Con	*mèo*	*có.thể*	*(là)*	*ở*	*trong.*	*Nó*	*cũng*	*có.thể*	*(là)*	*ở*	*ngoài*
CLF	cat	MOD	COP/COM	LOC	inside	3SG	also	MOD	COP/COM	LOC	outside

* Có lẽ

(11) Daniel lives in London and his friend has recently moved to New York. Daniel's parents told him that he is not allowed to go and see his friend in New York because it is too far away. You heard that Daniel is leaving London next week but you don't know where he will go. Daniel usually does things that he is not permitted to do. You think **Daniel might go to New York**.

Daniel	*có thể*	*(là)*	*(sẽ)*	*đi*	*New York*
Daniel	*MOD*	*COP/COM*	*FUT*	*go*	*New York*

A4 Epistemic Non-necessity

(7') When the light is on at Mary's house, it usually means that she is home. You want to visit Mary. You walk past Mary's house and notice that the light is on. However, there is no car in the driveway. You think to yourself: **she may not be at home**, but it is not certain.

Có.thể	*(là)*	*không*	*ở*	*nhà*
MOD	COP/COM	NEG	LOC	home

A5 Epistemic impossibility

(1') Ben goes swimming every day. Ben is not obliged or required to go swimming; it is just a habit of his. It is now time for Ben to be swimming… so **Ben must not be // can't be at home**.

Chắc.chắn	*(là)*	*không*	*ở*	*nhà = không thể ở nhà vào giờ này*
MOD	COP/COM	NEG	LOC	home

Comment:
- *Chắc hẳn* = must not be
- *Chắc chắn* = can't

(3') The math teacher says: The ball is in A or in B or in C. We opened box A, and the ball is there. There is only one ball. So, **it can't be in C**.

Chắc.chắn	*(là)*	*không*	*ở*	*trong*	*hộp*	*C*
MOD	COP/COM	NEG	LOC	in	box	C

Không	*thể*	*(nào)*	*ở*	*trong*	*hộp*	*C*
NEG	**MOD**	which/any	LOC	in	box	C

B. DEONTIC

B1 Deontic Necessity

Target: deontic necessity
(12) In Indonesia, the law states that when you ride a motorbike… **You must wear a helmet.**

Bạn	*phải/*	*buộc*	*phải*	*đội*	*mũ.bảo.hiểm*
PRON	**MOD** /	obligatorily	MOD	wear	helmet

 # can phai

Comment (consultant): this is infelicitous because it is in between *should* and *must*
(13) You are going to visit your friend in the hospital. When you enter into the hospital, you stop at the information desk to inquire what room your friend is in. But the woman at the information desk tells you that you can't visit your friend now because it's already 8pm. She says, "I'm sorry, the hospital regulations say that… **Visitors must leave by 6pm**."

Khách.thăm	*phải*	*ra.về*	*trước 6h.tối*
visitors	**MOD**	go.home	before 6pm

B2 Deontic Weak Necessity

Target: deontic weak necessity
(16) Your friend is having a birthday party. She tells you that she would like it if everyone invited wore formal clothes, but that it is not necessary to wear formal clothes to attend. You think to yourself… **I ought to wear formal clothes to the party.**

Tôi	*cần.phải*	*mặc*	*quần.áo*	*nghiêm.trang*	*khi*	*đến*	*dự.tiệc*
I	**MOD**	wear	clothes	formal	when	come	party

Tôi	*$nên*	*mặc*	*quần.áo*	*nghiêm.trang*	*khi*	*đến*	*dự.tiệc*
I	**MOD**	wear	clothes	formal	when	come	party

Nên is preferable.

Comment:
- In all the B2 contexts, the consultant thinks that *nên* is preferable.
- with *phai* it is a rule that you may or may not agree with. *can.phai* is something you agree with

(17) Your friend tells you that the rules of the restaurant state that employees must wash their hands after going to the bathroom. You reply to your friend:… **Non-employees ought to wash their hands too!**

Những	người	không.phải	nhân.viên	cũng	**cần.phải /$nên**	rửa	tay!
PL	CLF	NP.NEG	worker	also	**MOD /MOD**	wash	hands

Nên is preferable.

(18) In England, it is recommended that face coverings be worn in stores, but it is not a legal requirement. You plan on going shopping, and you think to yourself… **I ought to wear a mask**.

Tôi	**cần.phải/$nên**	đeo	khẩu.trang
I	**MOD/MOD**	wear	mask

Nên is preferable.

B3 Deontic Possibility

Target: deontic possibility vs. deontic necessity
(22) and (23) target deontic possibility vs. circumstantial possibility

(19) The ferris wheel ride is only for children under 12 years of age. Martin is 10 years of age. It is not obligatory for Martin to go on the ride if he doesn't want to. **Martin may ride the ferris wheel.**

Martin	có thể	được/	**được**	chơi	đu.quay
Martin	MOD	MOD	**MOD**	play	wheel.ride

Martin	**được.phép**	chơi	đu.quay
Martin	**MOD**	play	wheel.ride

- Consultant comments after a reflection on the distribution: *duoc.phep* is more about legal permissions etc. whereas *duoc* is more general.

(20) According to the rules of the hospital, only family members are allowed to enter the patient's room during visiting hours. You came to visit your sister, but it was after visiting hours. But the really nice nurse says… **You may enter.**

Bạn	**(có.thể)**	**được**	vào
PRON	**(MOD)**	**MOD2**	enter

Bạn	**có thể**	vào	**được**
PRO	MOD	enter	MOD

(20') You will be allowed to enter at 6pm tomorrow:

*Bạn **có.thể** vào thăm lúc 6h*
You MOD enter (deontic)

 # Bạn có thể sẽ vào thăm lúc 6h
"I guess that you will enter …"

*Bạn **được phép** vào thăm lúc 6h*
You **MOD permission** enter visit at 6h

Comment: This last one is strictly deontic

(21) You are making plans for tomorrow night to meet up with your friend. Your friend says: **You can stay overnight or you can also go home.**

Bạn	***có.thể***	*ngủ.lại*		*hoặc*	*bạn*	*có.thể*	*về*	*nhà*
PRON	**MOD**	sleep.over		or	PRON	MOD	return	home

(Permissive)

Bạn	***được***	*ngủ.lại*	*hoặc*	*bạn có thể về nhà*
PRON	**MOD**	sleep.over…		

(22) Alice fell down the stairs and broke her arm a while ago. She hasn't been lifting her baby while her arm was hurt because the baby is heavy. Finally, she has recovered, and she went to the doctor for a final check-up. The doctor gave her permission to lift her baby. But when she got home after her visit to the doctor, Alice found that she is still too weak to lift her baby… **Alice can lift her baby.**

Alice	***được.phép/có***	*thể*		*bế*	*em.bé*
Alice	**MOD**	/MOD		lift	baby

(23) Beth's teacher told her class that it was okay to go swimming, but Beth doesn't want to because she cannot swim! **Beth can go swimming.**
i.e. Beth COULD go swimming, Beth is ALLOWED/PERMITTED to go swimming, but she can't swim.

Beth	***được.phép/có thể được***			*bơi*
Beth	**MOD**	/MOD	MOD	swim

Comment:
- *For both: Được.phép = is.permitted*

B4 Deontic non-necessity

(16') Your friend is having a birthday party. She tells you that she would like it if everyone invited wore formal clothes, but that it is not necessary to wear formal clothes to attend. You think to yourself… I ought to wear formal clothes to the party, but **I don't have to wear formal clothes.**

Tôi	không	*(cần)*	*phải*	*mặc*	*quần.áo trang.trọng*
I	NEG	**MOD**	**MOD**	wear	clothes formal

(18') In England, it is recommended that face coverings be worn in stores, but it is not a legal requirement. You plan on going shopping, and you think to yourself… I ought to wear a face covering, but **I don't have to / needn't wear a face covering**.

Tôi	không	*(cần)*	*phải*	*đeo*	*khẩu.trang*
I	NEG	**MOD**	**MOD**	wear	mask

B5 Deontic impossibility

(12') In Indonesia, the law states that when you ride a motorbike… **You may not ride a motorbike without a helmet.**

Bạn	không	***được.phép***	*lái*	*xe.máy*	*mà*	*không*	*đội*	*mũ.bảo.hiểm*
PRON	NEG	**MOD**	ride/drive	motorbike	COMP	NEG	wear	helmet

(13') You are going to visit your friend in the hospital. When you enter into the hospital, you stop at the information desk to inquire what room your friend is in. But the woman at the information desk tells you that you can't visit your friend now because it's already 8pm. She says, "I'm sorry, the hospital regulations say that… **Visitors mustn't stay after 6pm**."

Khách.thăm	không	***được***	*ở.lại*	*sau*	*6h.tối*
Visitors	NEG	**MOD**	stay	after	6pm

C. TELEOLOGICAL

C1 Teleological Necessity

Target: teleological necessity

(24) There is only one main road from Location A to Location B… If you go from Location A to Location B, **you have to take this road**.

Bạn	***(cần).phải***	*đi*	*đường*	*này*
PRON	**MOD**	go	road	this

(25) Team A are playing in a tournament/competition/championship. In order to advance… **Team A has to beat Team B**.

(cần).phải

(26) The best pizza in town is sold at Gino's. You have invited your sister for dinner, and you decide to order pizza. You tell your sister: **We have to order from Gino's** to eat the best pizza.

Chúng.ta	*(cần).phải*	*đặt.hàng*	*từ*	*Gino's*
we.INCL	**MOD**	order	from	Gino's

C2 Teleological Weak Necessity

Target: teleological weak necessity
(27) There are different ways to get to the shopping centre. You can go by foot, by tram/horse-carriage/truck/train/bus/public van, or drive/motorcycle/bicycle yourself. You are not sure how to go. Your friend advises you to get the bus because it is cheaper… To get to the shopping centre, **you should take the bus**.

Bạn	*nên*	*đi*	*xe.buýt*
PRON	**MOD**	go	bus

 # cần.phải

(28) There are 3 ways to get to the seaside: a direct road, taking smaller roads, or a combination. Your friend says that taking the smaller roads is very beautiful. According to him, **you should go via the smaller roads**.

Bạn	*nên*	*đi*	*đường*	*nhỏ*
PRON	**MOD**	go	road	small

(29) Your friend wants to buy a new shirt for her job at a reasonable price. There are many nice shops for professional clothes in the area, and you work at one of them and think it offers good prices. You say: **You should go to my shop** to buy a new shirt.

Bạn	*nên*	*đến*	*cửa.hàng*	*của*	*tôi*
PRON	**MOD**	come	shop	of	1SG

C3 Teleological Possibility

Target: teleological possibility
(30) There are two different ways to get to the mountains from the city centre. Way 1 is inland and way 2 goes around via the coast. Both take around 7 hours by bus and they are equally beautiful… **You can take way 1**.

Bạn	*có.thể*	*đi*	*đường*	*số*	*1*
PRON	**MOD**	go	road	no.	1

(31) There are two swimming pools in the town with the exact same design and both are an equal distance from your house. You plan to go swimming later on but have no specific desire for which pool to go to. You tell your sister… **We can go to the swimming pool to the west**.

Có thể

(32) Your friend wants to buy a new shirt for her job. Since there are many nice shops for professional clothes in the area, you say… **You can go to this boutique**.

Có thể

C4 Teleological non-necessity

(27') There are different ways to get to the shopping centre. You can go by foot, by tram/horse-carriage/truck/train/bus/public van, or drive/motorcycle/bicycle yourself. You are not sure how to go. Your friend advises you to get the bus because it is cheaper… To get to the shopping centre, you should take the bus, but **you don't have to take the bus**.

Bạn	*không*	***cần.phải***	*đi*	*xe.buýt*
PRON	NEG	**MOD**	go	bus

C5 Teleological impossibility

(24') There is only one main road from Location A to Location B… If you are going from Location A to Location B, **you can't take another road**.

Bạn	*không*	***thể***	*đi*	*đường*	*khác*
PRON	NEG	**MOD**	go	road	different

(25') Team A are playing in a tournament/competition/championship. In order to advance… **Team A can't lose to Team B**.

Đội	*A*	*không*	***thể***	*thua*	*đội*	*B*
Team	A	NEG	**MOD**	lose.to	team	B

D. CIRCUMSTANTIAL

D1 Circumstantial Necessity

Target: circumstantial necessity; (35) with inanimate subject
(33) You are on a bus. You have not had a chance to go to the toilet for 4 hours, and your bladder is full. You text your friend… **I have to pee**!

Tôi	**cần.phải**	*đi*	*vệ.sinh.*
I	**MOD**	go	toilet

Comment:
- Slight preference for *cần.phải* over *phải*

(34) In the middle of a conversation, you feel a sneeze coming on… Excuse me! **I have to sneeze**.

Tôi	**cần.phải**	*hát.xì*	*hơi*
I	**MOD**	sneeze	breathe

Comment:
- Slight preference for *cần.phải* over *phải*

(35') Water is entering a pipe, which has two outputs: the left output and the right output. But, you know that the left output is blocked. And the water is coming out from the right output. You say: **the water must come out from the right output**.

Nước	**chắc.hẳn/ắt.phải**		*chảy*	*ra*	*từ*	*ống*	*bên*	*phải*
Water	**MOD**	**/MOD**	flow	out	from	pipe	side	right

Comment: *phai* here in this example is not modal word; homophone/polysemous root meaning "right side"

D3 Circumstantial Possibility

Target: (36) & (37) circumstantial possibility vs. epistemic possibility
(38) circumstantial possibility
(39) & (40) circumstantial possibility vs. deontic possibility

(36) Ani came to visit a small island in the Philippines. She noticed that the climate and many of the plants are similar to some places she visited in Indonesia. The temperature is the same, the rainfall is the same, the types of rocks and the soil are the same. But when she looked around, she didn't find any *duku* trees anywhere. But because the temperature, rainfall, and soil are the same, she thinks that… *duku* **trees can grow here.**

Cây	*duku*	**có.thể**	*sinh.trưởng*	*ở.đây*
tree	duku	**MOD**	grow	here

(37) Amy knows how to make traditional Italian pasta. Now Amy is back in the country she lives in, and she wants to make traditional pasta, but the right kind of ingredients are not sold where she lives. So, she is unhappy because she wanted to show her parents how to make traditional pasta… **Amy can make traditional Italian pasta** (but she does not have the ingredients).

Amy	***có.thể***	*nấu*	*mỳ.Ý*		*truyền.thống*
Amy	**MOD**	cook	Italian.pasta		traditional

(38) Ben was in a motorbike accident 3 weeks ago, and he sprained his ankle. Ben is able to walk now. However, the doctor told Ben that he is not allowed to walk until 5 weeks after the accident… **Ben can (is able to, but not allowed to) walk now**.

Hiện.tại Ben	***có.thể***	*đi*	*lại*		*(được)*
now Ben	**MOD**	walk	again		MOD

(39) Paul is quite old now, but he is still strong. His children are scared he will hurt his back if he does any intense labour, so they told him that he is forbidden to lift heavy things. But one day, his friend Rob asked to help him in the field, because Rob knows Paul is still strong. So when Rob saw a large rock that had to be moved, he asked P straightaway for help (but he didn't tell Paul's children!). Rob knew that… **Paul can lift that rock**.

Paul	***có.thể***	*nâng*	*hòn*	*đá*	*đó*	*(được)*
Paul	**MOD**	lift	CLF	rock	DEM	MOD

(40) The travel vans have a limit of 13 people by law. But the drivers don't care, and stop for more than 13 people. Also, the vans are bigger than you think… **Travel vans can fit 20 people**.

Chiếc	*xe*	*du.lịch*	***có.thể***	*chở*	*(được)*	*20*	*người*
CLF	vehicle	tourist	**MOD**	conduct	MOD	20	people

Chiếc	xe	du.lịch	chứa	được	20	người
CLF	vehicle	tourist	usher	MOD	20	people

D4. Circumstantial non-necessity

(44) Given the way this volcano has been active in the past 100 years, **it is likely but not certain that it will erupt in the next 5 years**.

Có.thể	*nhưng*	*không*	***chắc.chắn***	*rằng*	*ngọn*	*núi.lửa sẽ*	*phun.trào*	*trong*	*5 năm*	*tới*
MOD	but	NEG	**MOD**	COMP	CLF	volcano FUT	erupt	within	5 years	ahead

D5. Circumstantial impossibility

(34') In the middle of a conversation, you feel a sneeze coming on… Excuse me! **I can't help sneezing**!

Tôi	*không*	***thể***	*không*	*hắt.hơi!*
I	NEG	**MOD**	NEG	sneeze

Tôi	*sẽ*	*hắt.hơi!*
I	FUT	sneeze

(35') Water is entering a pipe, which has two outputs: the left output and the right output. But, you know that the left output is blocked. And the water is coming out from the right output. You say: **the water can't come out from the left output**.

Nước	*không*	***thể***	*chảy*	*ra*	*từ*	*ống*	*bên*	*trái*
water	NEG	**MOD**	flow	out	from	pipe	side	left

(35") Paul can't walk now (because he broke his legs)

Hiện.tại	*Paul*	*không*	***thể***	*đi.bộ*
currently	Paul	NEG	**MOD**	go.on.foot

E. BOULETIC

E1 Bouletic Necessity

Target: bouletic necessity
(42) targets bouletic necessity vs. deontic necessity

(41) You love handbags. You see a really nice handbag in a window and you say… **I want / need to buy it**.

Tôi	***muốn***	*mua*	*chiếc*	*túi*	*đó*
I	**want**	buy	CLF	bag	that

Tôi	*(**cần).phải***	*mua*	*chiếc*	*túi*	*đó*
I	**MOD**	buy	CLF	bag	that

Tôi	***cần***	*mua*	*chiếc*	*túi*	*đó*
I	MOD	buy	CLF	bag	that

(42) Your friend asks you what you desire/want to do today since it is a holiday and you both are not required to do any tasks today. You say… **I want to go to the cinema**.

Tôi	***muốn***	*đi.xem.phim*
I	**want**	go.to.the.movies

 # *cần phải*

(43) A daughter tells her parent… **My friend wants to come visit me**.

muốn

 # cần phải

Table of Vietnamese Modals

MODALS	EPISTEMIC	ROOT/NON-EPISTEMIC			
		PARTICIPANT-EXTERNAL		PARTICIPANT-INTERNAL	
	Epistemic	Deontic	Teleological	Circumstantial	Bouletic
Necessity	[chắc hẳn (là) // chắc chắn (là)]^{SVP} ắt phải (là)/chắc chắn phải (là)	phải^{MV} buộc phải	[(cần) phải]^{MV}	[cần phải]^{MV} // [chắc hẳn]^{SVP} // [ắt phải]	Muốn^{V} // cần// [cần phải]^{MV}
Weak Necessity	[có lẽ (là)]^{ADV} chắc là	[nên//?cần phải]^{MV}	nên^{MV}		…
Possibility	[có thể (là)]^{ADV}	[có thể (được)]^{ADV} // được (phép) + V// có thể V được	[có thể]^{ADV}	[có thể]^{ADV}, được^{PVD}	
Non necessity	có thể (là) + NEG	NEG + (cần) phải	NEG + cần phải	NEG + chắc chắn	
Impossibility	[chắc chắn (là) + NEG]^{SVP} // NEG + thể (nào)	NEG + được (phép)	NEG + thể	NEG + thể	

NEG = không (usually), chả / chẳng (negation focus)

[MV] Modal Verbs: phải, cần/cần phải, được, nên
[SVP] Stative Verb/Pseudo-Adjectival Paraphrase: chắc chắn/chắc hẳn/ắt (~= "sure") + (là)
[PVD] Postverbal DUOC: modal ability particle