The Spanish Synthetic Future as a Means of Expression of Inference

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Abstract
The present paper analyses the inferential use of the Spanish synthetic future form, i.e. examples in which the future is used as an inferential marker. The examples are retrieved from the search engine GlossaNet, more precisely, from the Spanish daily newspapers El País and El Mundo. This study does not aim to be a quantitative one. It is a qualitative study where the data are used to verify/refute the theoretical basis. It is, for example, not my intention to show in how many cases of a certain total amount of uses the Spanish synthetic future form is used to express inference. It is argued that the label “inferential future” (instead of “epistemic future”) should be preferred. Additionally, the synthetic future is shown to convey inferences of different strengths: será + sin duda (“it will/must be + without a doubt”), for instance, represents a stronger inference, while with será + probablemente (“it will/must be + probably”) a weaker inference is expressed.

Key words: Spanish synthetic future; Evidentiality; Inference

INTRODUCTION
The present study is concerned with the analysis of the inferential use of the Spanish synthetic future form, that is, with uses of the future tense, in which no future time is expressed or at least “backgrounded” (Hennemann, 2013, p.381–399). In the following two examples, for instance, the future is used as an inferential marker:

(1) ... Zapatero ha advertido de que el tercer trimestre del año “será peor que el segundo”, cuando la economía española creció un 0,2% ... . (El País, 8 December, 2010)

“Zapatero has indicated that the third quarter of the year ‘will/must be worse than the second one’, when the Spanish economy increased 0.2% …”

(2) Media hora después tenían cama, ducha y una botella de champán como bienvenida. Será por eso que asegura: “Lo más divertido de mi trabajo es superar retos”. (El País, 5 July, 2010)

“Half an hour later they had a bed, a shower and a bottle of champagne as welcome gift. It will/must be for that reason that he assures: ‘The most entertaining thing of my work is overcoming challenges’.”

As the examples above already indicate, all examples to be found in the present study are taken from Spanish daily newspapers, i.e. from El País and El Mundo. In order to obtain the results I used the search engine GlossaNet (http://glossa.fltr.ucl.ac.be/). As the user is not able to use asterisks to replace a verbal ending, GlossaNet was configured to search for an entire lexical item: the search engine was set up to search for será, that is, for the verb ser “to be” in 3rd person singular, future tense.1 The results were received by email in text format.

Será is found to be used by both journalists and interviewed, quoted persons, as examples (2) and (1) indicate respectively. In general, the newspaper writing style can be divided into two text types: The journalist’s part represents written discourse, while direct quoted speech can be oral in character, even though they clearly cannot be compared with “real” spoken data. Insofar as

1 In cases of quoting examples containing other forms than será, it is because I came across them incidentally.
the utterances that are the subject under discussion are
not uttered by a journalist, in which medial writtenness
combines with conceptual writtenness, the utterances
are marked by conceptual orality, as in example (1). If
a formerly interviewed person is interviewed and then
quoted, the direct quoted speech is oral in character. 9

This study does not aim to be a quantitative one. It is,
for example, not my intention to show in how many cases
of a certain total amount of uses the Spanish synthetic
future form is used to express an inference. The focus
is on showing that the Spanish future can be used as an
inferential marker.

1. SOME THEORETICAL NOTES ON
INFERENCE

Generally, inference is regarded one subcategory of
evidentiality (Willett, 1988, p.57). Nevertheless, it
represents a disputatious topic for scholars like van der
Auwera & Plungian (1998) and Cornillie (2009), who
discuss whether inference is “more modal” or “more
evidential”.

In “Modality’s semantic map” van der Auwera
& Plungian represent “cross-linguistically relevant
synchronic and diachronic connections between modal,
premodal, and post-modal meanings or uses” (1998,
p.79). In doing so, they claim to pay special attention
to meanings that are vague between possibility and
necessity” (1998, p.79). Nevertheless, they explain

that the inferential reading amounts to epistemic modality and
more particularly necessity. For both categories we are dealing
with the certainty of a judgment relative to other judgments.
From this point of view it also causes no surprise that inferential
evidentials often receive an English translation with epistemic
must. Inferential evidentiality is thus regarded as an overlap
category between modality and evidentiality. (van der Auwera

Even though it indeed makes sense to regard inference
as the evidential subcategory where (epistemic) modality
and evidentiality overlap, it is not very prudent to analyse
every inferential reading as amounting to necessity.
It depends on the evidence that is the basis for the
conclusion, and hence [p] expressed as an inference may
be possible, probable or necessary (or even something
in between as highly probable or almost necessary).
The following two examples, for instance, contain the
synthetic future form será, which is used to express a
strong inference because it is accompanied by the noun
phrase sin duda “no/without doubt” (Volkmann, 2005,
p.299). The inference expressed is thus more necessary
than only possible:

(3) “El sector debe enfrentar una gran reconversión
en un plazo de unos cinco años”, vaticina.

Asi será, sin duda, cuando las comunidades
vayan completando sus decretos … (El País, 30
September, 2010)

“The sector has to face a big structural change
within five years, he predicts. So it will/must be,
without doubt, when the communities are.SUBJ
completing their decrees …”

(4) Su pianismo lee con personalidad las mejores
páginas del jazz americano, a las que suma
palabras clásicas y europeas. Sin duda, será
una de las revelaciones del festival. (El Mundo, 31
October, 2010)

“His ‘manner to play the piano’ reads the best
pages of American jazz with personality, where
he adds classic and European words. No doubt,
he will/must be one of the revelations of the
festival.”

The following instance of será, in contrast, is used
with the verbal phrase creo que “I believe/think that”. In
comparison to the former examples, this inference seems
more possible than (logically) necessary. According to the
journalist, the football player is nevertheless “convinced”
(está convencido) that the current season “may” (puede)
be better, that is, the speaker does actually not express an
inference that [p] necessarily is the case.

(5) Seydou Keita: “Creo que será un buen año”.
El jugador del FC Barcelona Seydou Keita
está convencido que este año el Barça puede
hacer una muy buena temporada. (El Mundo,
September 2, 2010)

“Seydou Keita: ‘I think that it will/must be
a good year’. The football player from FC
Barcelona Seydou Keita is convinced that Barça
is able to play a good season this year”.

Cornillie (2009) also takes a stance against van der
Auwera & Plungian’s proposal because it

assumes that all inferential statements are concerned with
certainty of a judgment. That is, inference is seen as a
monolithic concept that lacks any variation. … Moreover, the
proposed correlation between inference and necessity implies
that other modes of knowing, such as quotative (or hearsay)
evidentiality, are automatically outside the realm of necessity.
This implicitly correlates them with weaker forms of modality
such as possibility and probability (Cornillie, 2009, p.49).

Cornillie (2009) is obviously right when rejecting the
assumption that inferential statements should generally be
concerned with certainty. The modal verbs poder “may”
and deber “must”, for instance, can be used to express
inference, whereby the former is normally used to express
a tentative conclusion, the latter to indicate a stronger one.
Diewald and Smirnova (2010, p.92) also “assume that
the sub-domains of epistemic necessity and inferential
evidentiality can and must be distinguished”. They
provide two reasons:

(a) not every inferential statement needs to have an epistemic
modalization,

For the notions of ‘medial writtenness’ and ‘conceptual orality’
However, this is not always as simple as it sounds here. As indicated above, the assumption that inference automatically amounts to epistemic necessity should be rejected. Spanish *poder* and *deber* can both be used to express inference but the modal values going hand in hand with an inference expressed by *poder* and *deber* are, roughly speaking, concerned with lower certainty and higher certainty, respectively. That means there is “something modal about their use”. Therefore, the correlation between inference and necessity in particular should only be rejected, but not – as Diewald & Smirnova formulate with their two reasons – between inference and epistemic modality at all. The discussion about ‘where to put inference?’ is also addressed by other scholars such as Squartini (2001):

... inferential markers, which, even if often consistently treated as evidential[,] are described as a case of interaction between epistemic modality and evidentiality by Van der Auwera & Plungian (1998, p.86). Their intermediate status is also recognized by Palmer ..., who treats inferentials under the heading judgements when languages such as English or German are concerned ..., while mentioning them in the section devoted to evidentials in a language such as Tuyuca. (Squartini, 2001, pp.297–298)

Gómez Rendón (2006, p.49) says in this connection: “... an interpersonal approach makes clear that inference in E(cuadorian) Q(uecha) may be read not only as a cognitive exercise but also as a commitment of the speaker to the truth of a propositional content.” This is easy to understand since speakers always like to believe in their own conclusions. Nevertheless, Palmer seems to go the right way as he argues that the place of inference is language specific. Statements about inference which lay claim to universal validity should generally be avoided. As Volkmann (2005, p.120) explains, on the one hand evidentiality offers a place for inference because it represents one kind of access to information, and consequently represents one information source. On the other hand, inference is the evidential subcategory that relies more than any other subcategory on knowledge, which obviously lets it appear “more modal” or “more epistemic”. Boye (2006) also describes expressions that indicate an assumption as (possibly) being partly epistemic, partly inferential:

... the “assumption” may be taken to indicate a certain range of degree of epistemic support – assumption in contrast to e.g. certainty – but it may also be taken to indicate a type of evidence – assumption in contrast to e.g. reportive evidence .... Thus, in lack of further information, items and constructions characterized with the term “assumed” or “assumptive” may be taken to encode the meaning of indirect-inferential evidence, the meaning of e.g. partial epistemic support, or both these meanings .... (Boye, 2006, p.66)

So where to put inference then? Is it ‘more modal’ or ‘more evidential’? Obviously, inference is the evidential subcategory where (epistemic) modality and evidentiality overlap, whereby it depends on the evidence that is the basis for the conclusion as to whether the inference amounts to necessity or not. An inferentially marked proposition may be possible, probable or necessary (or something in between such as highly probable, almost necessary etc.). Even though epistemic modality and evidentiality seem to overlap in inferences, in an inferential use of a certain expression it should be decided whether the evidential component or the epistemic one is more prominent. If the evidential component is regarded as more prominent the expression is labelled “inference”. By contrast, if the epistemic component is considered more prominent in a particular use of an expression, the expression is labelled “assumption” (Boye, 2006, p.66).

In summary, inference is situated in between epistemic modality and evidentiality, whereby in an inferential use of a certain expression, the evidential domain is considered clearly more prominent than the epistemic one.

2. THE SYNTHETIC FUTURE IN SOME GRAMMARS OF SPANISH

The fact that the synthetic future is to express inferences is not explicitly addressed by the Manual of the RAE:

Se llama futuro de conjuctura, futuro de probabilidad o futuro epistémico el que introduce alguna suposición del hablante relativa al presente. Las paráfrasis que admite se forman con verbos de probabilidad o de duda, en ambos casos con un verbo en presente. Admite también paráfrasis con verbos modales. Todo ello pone de manifiesto su significado modal, a la vez que su valor temporal. En efecto, *Serán las ocho* significa aproximadamente (en uno de sus sentidos) “Probablemente son las ocho” o “Deben de ser las ocho”. (Manual, 2010, p.448; emphasis in bold is mine).

... el llamado futuro de conjuctura se interpreta como presente de incertidumbre: *Serán las tres de la tarde* equivale, de manera aproximada, a “Son probablemente las tres de la tarde” ... (Manual, 2010, p.474; emphasis in bold is mine).

It is called future of conjecture, future of probability or epistemic future, which introduces the speaker’s supposition with regard to the present [situation]. The paraphrases, which it allows, are formed with the help of adverbs of probability or of doubt; in both cases with verbs in present tense. Paraphrases with modal verbs are also possible. All this highlights its modal meaning besides its temporal value. Indeed, *It will/must be eight o’clock* approximately means (in one of its meanings) “It’s probably eight o’clock” or “It must be eight o’clock”.

... the so-called future of conjecture is interpreted as [the] present of uncertainty: *It will/must be three o’clock in the afternoon* is approximately equivalent to “It’s probably three o’clock in the afternoon” ...

Although no explicit reference to the inferential reading of the future is made, *Serán las ocho* is paraphrased as *Deben de ser las ocho*, that is, with the
help of the modal that is widely described as being evidential. In the following we will have a closer look at the use of the synthetic future to express inferences.

Actually, open conditions, which are expressed by *Si* “if” + present + future (also possible with the present tense having future meaning; cf. Butt & Benjamin 2004, p. 362), also indicate the inferential aspect of the future form itself. If the formerly mentioned condition is fulfilled, [*p*] will be/must be the case. But at the moment of speaking, the speaker does not know whether the condition will be fulfilled or not; the condition is still “open”. He nevertheless judges: If the condition is fulfilled, then [*p*], whereby he cannot know for sure. The speaker infers or assumes that “(then) *será* [*p]*”:

(6)  *Si* el presidente Obama mantiene su compromiso con estos principios progresistas en sus futuros años de Gobierno ..., Estados Unidos *será* un país más fuerte y más justo gracias a ello. (*El País*, 4 September, 2010)

“If President Obama maintains his compromise with these progressive principles during the next years of government ..., the USA will/must be a more powerful and fairer country thanks to that.”

(7) Según CCOO, *si* no hay avances, la próxima convocatoria *será* la de una huelga general” para rechazar el apagón postal y el proyecto de Ley Postal. (*El Mundo*, November 19, 2010)

“According to CCOO, if there is no progress, the next convocation *will/must be* the one of a general strike” to refuse the postal blackout and the project of the postal law.”

(8) Antes sí me agobiaba, ahora me lo tomo con paciencia. *Si* no llega el momento por algo *será*. ¿Cómo está el mercado musical en España? (*El Mundo*, November 19, 2010)

“Earlier I was bugged, now I am more patient. *If* the [right] moment does not come, there *will/must be* a reason for it. How is the music market in Spain?”

(9)  “*Será* difícil ser campeones *si* los rivales del Barça le regalan los partidos. Un equipo de Primera no puede dar ...”. (*El Mundo*, December 28, 2010)

“It *will/must be* difficult to become champions *if* the rivals of Barça donate him games. A team of the first division should not give ...”

The use of *será* in example (8) is special in so far as the second clause only expresses that there must be a reason, if the condition is fulfilled: “*If* (the right) moment does not come, there *will/must be* a reason for it” (*Si no llega el momento por algo *será*). The following example in particular confirms that the future form in open conditions is accompanied by a non-temporal moment. The speaker states “*if* the condition is fulfilled, then [*p*] because ...”, that is, giving a reason for [*p*]. Admittedly, the construction in the following example is a very special one because the fulfillment of the open condition represents [*p*] in the second clause: “*If* [*p*], then [*p*] because ...”:

(10)  *Si* estos señores tienen hueco, *será porque* lo merecen .... Nos creíamos mejores que Italia cuando se presentaba Cicciolina. (*El Mundo*, November 19, 2010)

“*If* these men have a gap, it *will/must be* because they deserve it .... We thought we were better than Italy when Cicciolina presented herself.”

So from uses of the future form as in the example above the step to the inferential/modal use – without being (explicitly) bound to the two-part conditional sentence – is only a small one. The step is a small one because the conditional structure *Si* + present + future itself already represents a supposition or hypothesis. The connection between the structure of conditional sentences and the ‘hypothetical character’ of conditional sentences is also addressed by the Gramática Descriptiva:

En primer lugar, existe la creencia generalizada de que toda oración condicional constituye también la formulación de una hipótesis; esto es, es un lugar común considerar que la idea de condición coincide con la de hipótesis (Montolío, 1999, p.3647).

“Firstly, it is generally believed that every conditional sentence also constitutes the formulation of a hypothesis; that is, it is commonly acknowledged to consider that the idea of condition coincides with the [idea] of hypothesis.”

Consequently, the typical conditional structure that results is “[*si* [*p*], entonces [*q*]]” (Montolío, 1999, p.3647), whereby a hypothesis may always be confirmed or negated (Montolío, 1999, p.3648), which, in turn, depends on the fulfillment of the condition as the examples above that contain the future form in the second clause show. These utterances are ‘real hypothetical conditionals’:

... puesto que la verificación de una hipótesis sólo puede hacerse en el devenir temporal, en el futuro, sólo las oraciones condicionales en las que la prótasis tiene esa orientación temporal son verdaderas condicionales hipotéticas (Montolío, 1999, p.3648).

Taken for granted that the verification of a hypothesis is only possible in upcoming time, in the future, only the conditional sentences in which the protasis has this temporal orientation are real hypothetic conditionals.

That is why hypothetical conditionals are also called ‘predicting conditionals’ in the sense that they express a prediction, conjecture (Montolío, 1999, p.3648) or supposition: “Así pues, cuando un hablante utiliza una construcción del tipo [*si* [*p*], [*q*]] está estableciendo una suposición y una implicación pragmática entre dos enunciados ...” (Montolío, 1999, p.3649). The conditional structure “*si* + presente de indicativo, presente/futuro de indicativo” is, according to Montolío (1999, p.3658), used to express probability, that is, it is the structure that expresses the highest probability that [*p*] of the second clause in comparison to those conditional structures
that express improbable and irreality, which represent
the other “oraciones condicionales” (Montolío, 1999, p.3657). In any case, every conditional structure describes
a situation of contrast where ‘two different worlds’ clash.
Whether the speaker decides to choose the conditional
structure expressing probability, improbability or irreality
depends on his perspective – on his subjective perspective
concerning the degree of coincidence of the two worlds:

Al formular una oración condicional [si p, q], se produce una
situación de contraste entre dos mundos; aquel en el que se
formula la suposición hipotética (mundo de la enunciación o real)
y un mundo posible, el creado lingüísticamente por el enunciado,
en el que, dado el antecedente, se produce la consecuencia .... La
opinión subjetiva del hablante sobre el grado de coincidencia de
dos mundos ... se refleja ... en el uso de unos determinados
tiempos y modos verbales. Esta actitud subjetiva ante la
probabilidad de cumplimiento de los acontecimientos denotados
es lo que se ha llamado también el “universo de creencia” de
cada hablante ... (Montolío, 1999, p.3659).

In formulating a conditional sentence [if p, q] a contrastive
situation between two worlds is produced: one [world] in
which the hypothetical supposition is formulated (the world
of enunciation or real [world]) and a possible world, the
linguistically created one by the help of the enunciation,
where – given the antecedent – the consequence is produced ....
The subjective opinion of the speaker about the degree of
coincidence of the two worlds ... is reflected ... in the use of
particular verbal tenses and moods. This subjective attitude
concerning the probability of fulfilment of the denoted situations
is what has also been called ‘universe of belief’ of each speaker ...

About the conditional structure Si + present + future in
particular it is said:

Este esquema temporal expresa por lo general expectativas
que el hablante supone bien fundadas; esto es, muy raras
veces se utiliza para meras especulaciones, de ahí que algunos
especialistas hablen aquí de mundos anticipados factuales ...
(Montolío, 1999, p.3664).

This temporal scheme generally expresses expectations which
the speaker rates as well grounded; that is, very rarely he uses it
for mere speculations. That is why some specialists speak about
anticipated factual worlds in this connection ...

These words confirm the assumption that the future
may be used to express well-founded expectations or
inferences, even if the protases containing si – thus
the condition for the expectation to be answered – is
not explicitly mentioned. More words that confirm
the assumption are to be found in in the Manual of the
RAE, where it is explained that ‘epistemic conditionals’
express an inference or conjecture because the manual
provides the following examples to illustrate an epistemic
conditional: Si las calles están mojadas, debe de haber
llorado “If the streets are wet, it must have been raining”
and Si vino a la ciudad, estará en su oficina “If he came
to the city, he must be in his office” (Manual, 2010, p.906).

“Estas subordinadas condicionales inciden sobre algún
predicado abstracto de inferencia o conjetura al que la
apódosis se subordina: ‘Si se quedó sin dinero, (intuyo

3. THE SPANISH SYNTHETIC FUTURE
AS A MARKER OF INFERENCE

Giacalone Ramat & Topadze (2007, pp.7–8) observe that
in some languages, evidential meanings “have developed
as secondary meanings out of tenses and moods of the
verbal system”. Such evidential meanings have developed
out of the Spanish futuro sintético. But how could it be
explained that the synthetic future in Spanish rather fulfils
modal/evidential functions – or more precisely, inferential
functions (Squartini, 2001; Wachtmeister Bermúdez,
2004) instead of the temporal function? The temporal
function is mostly expressed by the periphrastic future
form (ir a + infinitive). Instead, the synthetic future has
become unreliable and redundant in its temporal value.
That is why the form could be re-functionalised for modal/

If used temporarily, the future describes a state of
affairs that is located in the future with reference to the
here and now, that is, with reference to the time of
speaking. If it is used as “futuro de probabilidad”
(Volkmann, 2005, p.287), the speaker expresses his
epistemic/evidential attitude concerning the information
he transmits. The fact that the synthetic future fulfils –
despite its temporal function – also the modal/evidential
one is easy to understand because “[f]uturity is never
a purely temporal concept; it necessarily includes an
element of prediction or some related notion” (Lyons,
1977, p.677).³ The future is always unknown so that
uncertainty is somehow inherent in the future:

... reference to the future, in contrast with reference to the past
or the present, is generally, if not always, tinged either with
uncertainty or, alternatively, with expectancy and anticipation.
Such attitudes are traditionally regarded as modal ... (Lyons,

What is conventionally used as a future tense... is rarely, if ever,
used solely for making statements or predictions, or posing or
asking factual questions, about the future. It is also used in a
wider or narrower range of non-factive utterances, involving
suppositions, inference, wish, intention and desire (Lyons,

The following example may illustrate that one can
only “estimate” a future event and that the synthetic future
represents an appropriate means to express estimation:

(11) Los expertos estiman que la demanda crecerá un
50% en 10 años. (El Mundo, December 23, 2010)
“Experts estimate that the demand will/must
increase by 50% in 10 years”.

³ Wachtmeister Bermúdez (2005, p.121) also assigns the future
morpheme a modal meaning and an evidential one.
While in examples (12) and (13) the future “simply” describes events that are situated in the future, examples (14) and (15) additionally contain *previsiblemente* “presumably”. These examples could be described as representing the intermediate stage between “pure” reference to a future event and the non-temporal use of the future. *Previsiblemente* + future shows that the event referred to is tinged with uncertainty, or more precisely, with “no-total-certainty” so that it is neither purely temporal nor purely non-temporal:

(12) ... muy criticado por la oposición de centro izquierda, ha sido validado por una mayoría de 90 diputados de 179 en el Parlamento, y **próximamente será** presentado como un Proyecto de Ley. (*El Mundo*, November 19, 2010)

“... very much criticized by the centre-left opposition, it was confirmed by a majority of 90 deputies of 179 in the Parliament, and it will soon be presented as a bill”.

(13) Ríos ha desvelado que está preparando una nueva iniciativa cinematográfica, el Cinemart, que **será** un festival de cine de autor. Este nuevo proyecto **se celebrará la primavera que viene pero será presentada el próximo diciembre** en los Cines Verdi de Barcelona. (*El Mundo*, November 19, 2010)

“Ríos has revealed that he is preparing a new cinematographic initiative, the Cinemart, which **will be** an auteur cinema festival. This new project will **be celebrated in next spring but will be presented in next December** in the cinemas Verdi de Barcelona”.

(14) “El desarrollo del vehículo eléctrico requiere la elaboración de un programa de formación ocupacional de calidad específico destinado a un número limitado de profesionales que **previsiblemente será** el objeto real de los nuevos desarrollos”. (*El Mundo*, November 19, 2010)

“The development of the electric vehicle requires the elaboration of a specialized training programme designated to a limited number of professionals which **presumably will/must be** the real object of the new developments”.

(15) Una ambulancia del Servicio de Atención Médica Urgente (SAMU) lo llevó al hospital comarcal de la Marina Baixa, en Villajoyosa, donde ingresó con pronóstico grave, y **previsiblemente será** trasladado de nuevo en las próximas horas al General de Alicante. (*El Mundo*, November 19, 2010)

“An ambulance of urgent medical attention service brought him to the local hospital of Marina Baixa, in Villajoyosa, where he was admitted to in a serious condition, and he **will/ must presumably be transferred** again within the next hours to *General de Alicante*”.

Indeed, Bybee et al. (1994) even explain that the main function of the future is more a modality than a temporal one:

... the central functions in future grams are intention and prediction. It follows from this that future is less a temporal category and more a category resembling agent-oriented and epistemic modality, with important temporal implications. (Bybee et al., 1994, p.280)

De Haan (2006) simply states: “epistemologically, the speaker cannot know for certain that the event will occur” (de Haan, 2006, p.49), by which he establishes the connection between the (never purely) temporal use of the future and the “future of probability”. In other languages, speakers have the choice between different future morphemes by which they simultaneously express their degree of certainty concerning the state of affairs they are talking about: Bybee et al. (1994, pp.247–248) speak about “pairs of future grams which, in addition to expressing prediction, bear an indication of how convinced the speaker is that the event will come about”. In other words, the speaker can choose between morphemes alongside a certainty scale that goes from “future possibility” up to “future necessity” (Bybee et al., 1994, p.148).


The future ... may be in some cases engendered by the existence of a source of evidence, but it never fulfils the function of explicitly encoding it. To put it in another way, the future does not serve the purpose of marking information as inferential, it does not have therefore “source of information” as its core meaning, as a true evidential must have ... (Pietrandrea, 2007, p.42).

Pietrandrea (2007) claims to be able to prove the fact that the future is genuinely epistemic in nature as it “can be employed in purely conjectural contexts; i.e. in contexts lacking any evidential source” (Pietrandrea, 2007, p.41) and wants to illustrate this with the help of the following example:

*Saranno le otto e mezza, immagino<br>It must be eight thirty, I guess.*

She then explains, “It is clear that these contexts cannot be considered as evidential by definition: The speaker simply expresses his opinion, without referring to any evidential source” (Pietrandrea, 2007, p.41). But is it not obvious that the speaker expresses this utterance because he must have had some kind of evidence to infer that it must be eight thirty? The parenthetically used *immagino* “I guess” (or: “I imagine”) rather seems to confirm that the speaker transmits a tentative conclusion. Whether
the speaker relies on his biological clock or whether he
relies on the altitude of the sun – there must be some kind
of evidence he relies on (Squartini, 2008). Otherwise
he would not have said that it must be eight thirty. So
the speaker obviously bases his reasoning process on
‘something’, let it be world knowledge (Squartini,
2008). That is why even Pietrandrea (2007, pp.41–42)
admits – referring to Squartini (2008) – that “the genuine
episodic nature of the future can be questioned by the
fact that the epistemic future … is grammatical in generic
inference contexts …”. Anyway, it seems to be difficult
and certainly not appropriate to analyse examples that
are offered without context. If having a look at context-
embedded instances of the synthetic future in Spanish,
it becomes obvious that it may represent a linguistic means
to express inference (even if no clear evidence is provided
– such as in example (16) – to infer that [p]):

(16) El medio no es el culpable. Lo es el mal uso. Y lo que
hará sobrevivir a los medios tradicionales
serán las virtudes de toda la vida a las que
tendrán que sumar una gran formación de
sus trabajadores. Será imprescindible …. Y un
análisis que aporte algo al lector de prensa que
tiene un nivel de conocimiento bastante elevado
y al que le dará bastante igual enterarse un par
de horas antes … (El País, August 12, 2010)
“The medium is not the guilty party. It is the bad
usage. And what will/must [make] survive the
traditional media will/must be the virtues of the
whole life against those that will have to sum
a big formation of its workers. It will/must be
indispensable …. And an analysis which brings
what the newspaper reader, who has a fairly
elevated knowledge level and for whom it will
not matter whether to acknowledge something a
few hours earlier ...”

(17) “Nos conocemos muy bien. No hará falta
ningún informe”, dijo Bryant. “Será una
eliminatoria muy dura. Deberemos mejorar
nuestra concentración para no tener que correr
sin sentido como hicimos en algunas fases del
partido ante Oklahoma, aunque ellos fueron muy
tenaces”, afirmó Phil Jackson, el técnico. (El País,
4 May, 2010)
“We know each other very well. A report is not
necessary, Bryant said. ‘The qualifying round
will/must be very hard. We will have to improve
our concentration so that we do not have to run
without reason as we did during some phases of
the game against Oklahoma, even though they
were very persistent’, affirmed Phil Jackson, the
technician”.

In example (17) the use of será is not obviously
inferential although it is highly likely because the
speaker certainly knows the teams which are in the same
group as his team. This may lead him to conclude that

the preliminaries must be/will be hard. However, this
contextual information is not linguistically provided (such
as in the example Saranno le otto e mezza, immagino).
The use of deberemos “we will have to”, in contrast,
is clearly inferential. The speaker says: “We will have
to improve our concentration so that we do not have to
run without purpose as we did in a few phases of the
match against Oklahoma” (Deberemos mejorar nuestra
concentración para no tener que correr sin sentido como
hicimos en algunas fases del partido ante Oklahoma).
So “deberemos [p]” clearly represents a conclusion drawn out
of formerly made experiences during the match against
Oklahoma. The following example could be analysed in
similar terms: it is highly probable that Ferrer does not say
unfoundedly that he “must be/play very aggressive(ly)”.
He certainly knows how Nadal plays and infers from this
fact that – against him – he should be an aggressive player:

(18) “Estoy jugando muy bien esta temporada. Contra
Nadal deberé ser muy agresivo”, cerró Ferrer ...
(El País, 4 May 2010)
‘I am playing very well this season. Against
Nadal I will have to be very aggressive’, said
Ferrer finally ...

Consequently, the synthetic future forms in examples
(17) and (18) may be considered markers of inferentiality,
whereby the inference is based on the speaker’s
experiences or stored knowledge (Lazard, 2001, p.365).

In “A semantic description of French lexical evidential
markers and the classification of evidentials” Dendale &
Van Bogaert’s (2007) aim is to “reanalyze” a few French
lexical markers (trouver, avoir l’impression, penser,
croire, paraître and sembler) and two grammatical
markers (devoir and the future form) in terms of
evidentiality because already before the “evidentiality
era” a selection of these markers was “described in modal
terms or in non-technical evidential-like terms, comprising
such notions as conclusion, reasoning, calculus,
deduction, supposition, assumption, etc. …” (Dendale and
Van Bogaert, 2007, p.66). Their reanalysis is said to show
that the semantic differences between the markers can be
grasped in terms of evidentiality, whereby the common
classification of evidentials is not considered “fine-
grained enough to cover all the fine distinctions between
semantically similar lexical expressions” (Dendale & Van
Bogaert, 2007, p.65). In their study of the French future,
the form is denied to be a “real” evidential marker (this is
in line with Pietrandrea’s (2005, 2007) statements about
the future):

It is a [sic] more a kind of assertion marker or alethic marker
(saying something about the truth value of the proposition), but
one that can be used in an evidential strategy.

The inferential or purely speculative reading it generally gives rise
to stems from the fact that any information created by the speaker
but which he cannot verify at the moment of speaking, must be
This brings up the question whether empirical data from Frantext, for instance, would have confirmed that the future “is not an evidential marker” (Dendale & Van Bogaert, 2007, p.83).

Concerning the Italian future Giacalone Ramat & Topadze (2007) somehow criticise that the future has received the label “epistemic future”: They “prefer to highlight the inferential basis for the speaker’s confidence and to use the label inferential future, in line with Squartini (2001)” (Giacalone Ramat & Topadze, 2007, p.25). I would not only “prefer” to highlight the fact that the synthetic future is often used inferentially, I would even exclude a pure modal use. If not used to express future time, then it is used to express an inference. Giacalone Ramat & Topadze conclude:

The epistemic future is inferential in nature. It is based on the speaker’s inference, whose source is not specified: it can be either external or internal, based on either hearsay or reasoning. ... The future can express judgments based upon an inferential process, which may be not explicit ... (Giacalone Ramat & Topadze, 2007, p.26).

That is why they also disagree with Pietrandrea (2005), who says regarding the use of the Italian future: “… unlike the modals, the future seems not to condense any inferential process, but appears to function as the form expressing the speaker’s genuine opinion about the propositional content” (Pietrandrea, 2005, p.93). Disagreeing with Pietrandrea, Giacalone Ramat & Topadze show that the Georgian future – just as the Italian future – may be used to express inference (2007, p.18). Pietrandrea, by contrast, describes the future as a means of expression of the speaker’s subjective opinion, whereby it is regarded as neutral as to the degree of certainty (Pietrandrea, 2005, p.94, p.98). I wonder whether the Italian future can really be said to be neutral regarding the degree of certainty that is conveyed. It is supposed that by speaking of the “future’s neutrality” Pietrandrea refers to its semantics, that is, the future form itself does not convey a higher or lower degree of certainty in comparison to dovere “must” and potere “may”, for instance. The degree of certainty is generally estimated higher if an inference is marked by dovere in comparison to an inference marked by potere. Such an assertion cannot be made with regard to the future. But – with regard to the Spanish future – contextual information may provide hints regarding the speaker’s degree of certainty that the future in a particular context conveys. Furthermore, it should not be stated that the future has “no evidential nuances” (Pietrandrea, 2005, p.101) because similar uses in similar contexts could certainly also be found in Italian:

(19) ... ha ofrecido un obligado armisticio, que será sin duda fugaz ... (El País, 1 October, 2010)

“... has offered an obliged ceasefire, which will/ must be without a doubt fugitive ...”

Example (19) clearly indicates that sin duda “no doubt” represents contextual information that shows that in this text passage the degree of certainty conveyed by será cannot be regarded as “neutral”. If [p] will undoubtedly (without a doubt) be the case, the degree of certainty is clearly higher than only neutral.

(20) No obstante, el piloto de Yamaha lo tiene claro. “El objetivo vuelve a ser el podio, para así seguir sumando el máximo de puntos en la carrera por el campeonato del mundo. Será importante ir rápidos ...”. (El País, October 1, 2010)

“However, the Yamaha driver is well aware of it. “The objective is the podium again for summing up the maximum of points of the race for the world championship. It will/must be important to go fast …”

(21) ... sus resultados se verán “en un espacio corto de tiempo”. “El éxito de la huelga será el cambio de las políticas que están haciendo tanto daño”, ha indicado. (El País, September 30, 2010)

“… its results will be seen “in a short time span”. “The success of the strike will/must be the change in politics which cause so much pain”, he has indicated.”

Text passages (20) and (21), in contrast, represent examples where indeed no contextual information is provided that would allow any conclusion to be drawn about the degree of certainty conveyed by the forms.

4. EMPIRICAL ANALYSIS

As already indicated, by using the future to express an inference the degree of certainty can vary “from certainty to possibility” (Cornillie, 2009, pp.50–51). In the chapter containing some words about inference it was shown that Cornillie’s and van der Auwera & Plungian’s (1998) views clash here as the latter analyse every inferential reading as amounting to necessity (van der Auwera & Plungian, 1998, pp.85–86). The following examples will demonstrate that it is Cornillie’s view which should be adopted as the examples confirm that the future is used to express inferences of various degrees of certainty.

Even though the phrase sin duda “beyond doubt” is usually certainly found in contexts of – at least a little – doubt (cf. Simon-Vandenbergen & Aijmer, 2007), the speakers of the following examples are fairly certain that “será [p]”:

(22) Para muchos será sin duda un descubrimiento [de] la belleza por dentro y por fuera del colegio y residencia A Nosa Señora dos Milagres de Baños de Molgas (Ourense ... (El País, April 25, 2010)

“For many [people] it will/must without a doubt be a discovery of beauty from the inside and the outside of the college and the residence A

However, in other contexts sin duda is not a strong personal commitment marker but reveals an intersubjective dimension and is attributed to the hearer.
... por lo que podría deducirse que la elección sobre su línea editorial, sin duda será entre los laboristas y los liberales demócratas. (El País, April 25, 2010)

"... which leads to the conclusion that the election about his editorial line, will/must without a doubt be between the supporters of the Labour Party and the liberal democrats."

Yo creo que un líder de la oposición, además de criticar al gobierno y decir que la situación económica va a mejorar (sin duda, mejorará por una cuestión de ciclos) ... (El Mundo, April 26, 2010)

"I think that a leader of the opposition, besides criticizing the government and saying that the economic situation is going to improve (no doubt, it will/must improve as it is a question of cycles) ..."

... el ex entrenador de Barcelona y del Betis tendrá varios asuntos a resolver. El más importante será sin duda el futuro tanto de Gonzalo Castro como de Akihiro Ienaga. (El Mundo, April 30, 2010)

"... the ex-trainer of Barcelona and [Real] Betis will/must have various things to resolve. The most important [one] will/must undoubtedly be the future of Gonzalo Castro and Adihiro Ienaga."

La Copa del Rey, que va a definir durante el primer mes del año 2011 a los equipos que se jugarán las semifinales será sin duda uno de los grandes objetivos ... (El Mundo, December 30, 2010)

"The King’s Cup, which during the first month of 2011 is going to define the teams which will play in the semi-finals will/must undoubtedly be one of the big objectives ..."

The fact that sin duda is often found in connection with the inferential future is supported by Volkmann (2005, p.299), who describes the prepositional phrase as an inferential marker. She also offers the sample sentence Sin duda pretenderá sacar venta ja de la confusión reinante en el equipo español (Volkmann, 2005, p.299), Hence, in summary the speakers in the examples above express an inference and it is intersubjectively comprehensible that these are inferences they are fairly certain of.

In the two examples that follow será is also used to convey a relatively high degree of certainty, whereby in example (28) the degree of certainty is assumed to be slightly higher than in example (27) because Todo indica que “Everything indicates that” refers to certain circumstances which the conclusion is drawn from. Todo hace suponer que “Everything leads to the supposition that”, in contrast, introduces an inference of a slightly lower degree of certainty:

(27) Todo hace suponer que la crisis económica será el auténtico banco de pruebas del presidente ... (El País, July 27, 2010)

“All leads to the supposition that the economic crisis will/must be the authentic test bank of the president ...”

(28) Igualmente subirán el impuesto a las viviendas más caras y el que pagan las empresas tabacaleras. Todo indica que el aumento de impuestos será aprobado en el Parlamento. (El País, April 25, 2010)

“Similarly the real estate taxes and the tobacco taxes will increase. All this indicates that the rise of taxes will/must be approved in the Parliament.”

Suponer – being a verb of cognitive attitude – seems more subjective in its use (Cappelli, 2007, p.217; Hennemann, 2012, pp.163–166; 2013, pp.307–309) than indicar because it does not refer to perceivable facts such as indicar which refers to some facts in example (28). Even though being an “element of subjectivity” (Cappelli, 2007, p.217), in example (27), however, suponer does not appear in its “most subjective use” because it is not used in its qualificational, non-descriptively construal. Instead, it is used intersubjectively such as indicar: Todo hace suponer que as well as Todo indica que is a construction which expresses that [p] is regarded as intersubjectively comprehensible. In the following example, in contrast, the verb is used qualificationally and non-descriptively. While the inferential use of the verb is underlined by the inferential future, the inferential future underlines the inferential use of the verb:

(29) Supongo que el futuro será una combinación de supervivientes y nuevas empresas: habrá medios tradicionales que se habrán adaptado bien. (El País, July 27, 2010)

“I suppose that the future will/must be a combination of survivors and new companies: there will/will have to be traditional media which will/will have to be adapted well.”

The following example is comparable to examples (27) and (28) because it contains a similar phrase: Todo apunta a que “everything points towards/indicates that” is comparable to the phrases used in the examples above. Everything points to “será [p]”, that is, everything leads to the inference expressed by the future:

(30) ... todo apunta a que España, pese a haber salido de la recesión, afronta, unos años de crecimiento anémico. Y que una recuperación tan débil será incapaz de generar empleo con la fuerza necesaria ... (El País, August 3, 2010)

“... all this points to that Spain, due to having overcome the recession, faces a few years of anaemic increase. And that such a weak recuperation will/must be incapable to generate the employment with the necessary force ...”
In example (31) the future is also used in inferential contexts, which is underlined by *podría deducirse* (“one could conclude”), but here the inference is built on recently uttered words *por lo declarado recientemente por él mismo*, i.e. previously uttered words represent the basis for the inference that is indicated by the future *hablará* and underlined by *podría deducirse*:

(31) En esta testitura, González Macho sería el serio. *Podría deducirse*, por lo declarado recientemente por él mismo, que su programa por venir *hablará* de la Ley Audiovisual ... *El Mundo*, March 16, 2011)

“With this pitch of voice González Macho would be the serious [one]. *It could be deduced, because of what he himself has declared recently*, that his future programme will/must talk about the audiovisual law ...”

The following uses of *será* are also inferential. As contextually provided information shows, it is used in contexts of “fairly-certainty”:

(32) La posición del laborismo en ese debate *será seguramente* uno de los puntos cruciales en el discurso que mañana pronunciará el nuevo líder, Ed Miliband ... *El País*, September 30, 2010)

“The position of the Labour movement in this debate will/must certainly be one of the crucial points in the discourse which tomorrow is to be pronounced by the new leader Ed Miliband ...”

*Será* and *atacará* in example (33), by contrast, are clearly used evidentially: they indicate that *[p]* is an inference, which is underlined by *seguramente* “certainly” – a modal adverb that is also often used to mark a proposition evidentially (Hennemann, 2012, pp.153–155; 2013, pp.270–275). The speaker is fairly certain that *[p]* will be must be the case:

(33) “… Lo que más me preocupa es responder a los rivales”. Entre ellos, el belga Philippe Gilbert, que “*seguramente atacará* y *será* uno de los peligrosos”, apunta el español. *(El País*, October 1, 2010)

“‘... What I am mostly worried about is fighting back and our rivals’. Among them, the Belgian Philippe Gilbert, who *will/must certainly attack* and *will/must* be one of the dangerous [ones]’, explains the Spaniard.”

The following example is to be analysed in similar terms:

(34) ... los problemas que encontraron para desmontar el módulo hicieron imposible el cambio, ha informado el NASA. Por eso, se va a realizar un nuevo paseo espacial, no antes del miércoles, y *seguramente será* necesario uno más para terminar la tarea. *(El País*, August 11, 2010)

“... the problems which were found for dismounting the module made the change impossible, the NASA has informed. That is why one is going to realize another walk in space, not before Wednesday, and *it will certainly be* necessary to have one more to end this task”.

Example (35) is clearly the most interesting example I came across. The future form is not only accompanied by *seguramente* but also preceded by *pienso que* “I think that”:

(35) El rival será el Fulham, la gran sorpresa de esta competición y un equipo del que Quique no se fía: “yo desconfío siempre de los equipos que llegan a una final. *Piensou que seguramente será* un equipo muy competitivo y muy inglés, es decir, muy difícil”. *(El País*, May 2, 2010)

“The rival will be Fulham, the big surprise of this competition and a team which Quique does not trust: ‘I always distrust teams that get to the final. *I think that it will/must certainly be* a very competitive and very English team, that is, very challenging’.”

In analysing this example the broader context should also be considered: The utterance before the one containing *pienso que seguramente será* may underlie this: the speaker always distrusts (socker) teams that get to the final *(yo desconfío siempre de los equipos que llegan a una final)*. That means the speaker draws a conclusion out of his live experience. In Willet’s terms it is an inference belonging to the subcategory “reasoning” (1988, p.57). Similar to *seguramente* is the phrase *seguro* “it is certain that” or the postponed *seguro* “for sure”:

(36) En el Bernabéu *será* muy parecido. *Seguro que* les va a costar mucho. Otra cosa es que nosotros ... *(El País*, May 4, 2010)

“In the Bernabeu [stadium] *it will/must be* very similar. *It is* sure that it is going to cost them a lot. Another thing is that we ...”

(37) * 33 Dardo - 26-08-2010 - 23:05:21h Es Vd. (JUAM) optimista. La noche talibana *será* un paréntesis, *seguro*; pero no sabemos su extensión temporal. Tal vez se pierda esta batalla; pero estamos obligados (Occidente) a no perder esta guerra (choque de civilizaciones). *(El País*, August 30 , 2010)

“... The Taliban night *will/must be* a parenthesis, *for sure*; but we do not know its temporal extension. Maybe we lose this fight; but we (occident) are obliged to not lose this war (confrontation of civilisations)”.

If *[p]* – besides being marked by the future – is marked by *seguro* (*que*) or *seguramente*, the future is clearly used to convey an inferential reading. The point that should be emphasised, however, is that the speaker is not absolutely certain that *[p]* but fairly certain.

In contrast to *será + sin duda* and *será + seguro* (*que*)/ *seguramente*, the speaker’s degree of certainty is lowered if “*será* [p]” is additionally marked by *probablemente*:

(38) El director general de la Policía y la Guardia Civil, Francisco Javier Velázquez ha anunciado
hoy que “probablemente será suspendido” …(El País, 25 April, 2010)

“Today the general director of the police and civil guard Francisco Javier Velázquez has announced that ‘he will probably be suspended’ …”

(39) Se está debatiendo una regulación de solvencia que probablemente será muy exigente en el nuevo marco de Basilea III y que se pretende poner en marcha a finales de 2012. (El País, 4 May, 2010)

“There is a debate going on about the regulation of the borrowing capacity which will probably be very demanding in the new market of Basilea III and which is put into operation by the end of 2012.”

So the different phrases (será + sin duda/seguramente/probablemente, for instance) in which the synthetic future appears demonstrate that inferentiality does not necessarily amount to necessity. If the future is used with probablemente the speaker expresses a weaker inference and if the future is used in connection with sin duda the speaker clearly expresses a stronger inference. This highlights how one and the same linguistic form is “affected” by the context. The fact that this “affectedness” is not necessarily bound to the immediate context because a linguistic form may not only be affected by other expressions at the sentence level but also by expressions beyond the sentence level was already shown in the present study.

In example (40) it is reasonable to assume that significará “will/must mean” and deberá ratificar “must. Fut. confirm” are used inferentially, whereby it seems not only reasonable but obvious that será is used to convey an inferential reading because it is followed by pues “since/because” indicating the reason or explanation why “será [p]”:

(40) La puesta en marcha de las centrales significará una inyección multimillonaria a la deprimida economía del país. El Parlamento deberá ratificar las licencias, pero ese paso no será más que un trámite, pues el Gobierno tiene amplia mayoría. (El País, 25 April, 2010)

“To put the central [ones] into operation will/must mean an injection of several millions into the depressed economy of the country. The Parliament will have to ratify the licenses, but this step will not does not have to be more than a formality because the government has the vast majority.”

In example (41) the future form habrá “(there) will/must be” is also followed by a conjunction that indicates why “habrá [p]”. The speaker says that “in Spain a political change will take place because its party is prepared to govern” (habrá cambio político en España porque su partido está preparado para gobernar). So the speaker offers a justification for the reason why “habrá [p]”. That is why the utterance could be rewritten as because of the fact that Spain’s party is prepared to govern, a political change will take place:

(41) … habrá cambio político en España porque su partido está preparado para gobernar, y ‘da igual’ quién sea el candidato del PSOE en las próximas elecciones generales, ‘si Zapatero, Rubalcaba, Pepiño o la Chacón’. (El Mundo, 30 December, 2010)

“… there will/must be a political change in Spain because his party is preparing to govern, and ‘it does not matter’ who is.SUBJ the candidate for PSOE in the next general elections, ‘if [it is] Zapatero, Rubalcaba, Pepiño or la Chacón’.”

In example (42) the reason for “será [p]” is indicated by ya que “because” and es más que probable que “it is more than likely that”, whereby the fulfilment of the condition en caso de pasar “if it wins” is involved. The speaker says: “The matches are going to take place on 12 and 19 January and it will/must be the last ‘comfortable’ preliminary round for the team because if it wins it is more than likely that it will have to compete against Barcelona in the semi-final”:

(42) Los partidos serán el 12 y el 19 de enero y ésta será la última eliminatoria “cómoda” para el equipo ya que en caso de pasar, es más que probable que el rival en semifinales fuera el Barcelona. (El Mundo, 19, November, 2010)

“The matches are going to take place on 12 and 19 January and it will/must be the last ‘comfortable’ preliminary round for the team because if it wins it is more than likely that it will have to compete against Barcelona in the semi-final.”

The speaker in the following example also indicates why “será [p]”. By using the conjunction porque “because” the speaker establishes a causal relation between his inference and the reason for his inference:

(43) El record no será difícil de superar, porque a la máquina … (El País, 4 September, 2010)

“It will not does not have to be difficult breaking the record, because for the machine …”

Examples (44) and (45) show inferential uses of será, whereby the degree of certainty – varying from possibility to certainty – is not unequivocally determinable. That is to say, the context does not always provide information which gives some indication of the degree of certainty that is expressed:

(44) “Hay que dudar”, pide el compatriota de Disney, cuyo origen “será hoy y siempre una leyenda”.

(El País, 4 May, 2010)

“One should have doubt”, demands Disney’s compatriot, whose origin … “will/must be a legend today and forever.”

(45) “Cuando los músicos más grandes están volviendo a las discográficas más humildes, por algo será. …” (El País, July 27, 2010)
“When the greatest musicians are regressing to more modest record labels, there will/must be a reason. . .”

In example (44) contextually provided information shows that será is used to convey an inferential reading because the speaker does not utter *es hoy y siempre será una leyenda* “today it is a legend and it will always be”. As the speaker says será hoy, he uses the future tense to refer to the present time, that is, to express an inference. The speaker in example (45) utters: “When (if) the greatest musicians go back to more modest record labels, there must be a reason” (por algo será “there must be a reason”) for it. So the speaker infers that this does not happen without any reason. However, it could also be argued that the speaker does no more than assume that [p] and that this assumption is based on intuition. Assumptions are seen as (possibly) being partly epistemic, partly inferential (Boye, 2006, p.66). According to Boye (2006), expressions that could be labelled with the term “assumptive” “may be taken to encode the meaning of indirect-inferential evidence”, an epistemic meaning, or both these meanings (Boye, 2006, p.66). The following use of será may also be described as conveying an assumption:

(46) Nunca un largo periodo de posesión producirá en el público y en los jugadores la reacción entusiástica que suscita un gol. **Por algo será.** (El País, August 30, 2010)

“A large period of [ball] possession will never produce the [same] enthusiastic reaction in the audience and in the players a goal does. There will/must be a reason”.

Example (47) may also be said to express (only) an assumption based on intuition, whereby it is reasonable to assume that the speaker 1. knows the teams his team has to compete against in the preliminary round and that the speaker 2. knows that the preliminaries will be/must be complicated because his team has already competed against (some or one) of the other teams. In summary, the degree of certainty of these three uses of será in the text passages above is not unequivocally determinable:

(47) ... Iniesta destacó el carácter con el que afronta esta competición el equipo vasco: **Sérá una eliminatoria bonita, complicada, con la vuelta fuera de casa y ante un rival que en esta competición hace mucho daño**. (El Mundo, November 19, 2010)

“... Iniesta emphasized the character with which he faces the Basque team in this competition: ‘It will/must be a nice preliminary round, complicated, with the return leg away from home and against a rival that in this competition causes a lot of pain.’”

In comparison to the assumptions above, the following uses of será convey a higher degree of certainty as contextually provided information shows. Inferential uses of será can often be explained by contextual information which is “grammatical in nature”. In a few examples above, for instance, an explanation for ‘será [p]’ is established by causal conjunctions. In the following example, in contrast, the inferential use of the future must be explained by (contextually provided) world knowledge. The speaker explains: “The second leg must/will be similar to that we played here in the Calderón. It will/will be a difficult match”. So it is the “second leg” which illustrates that the uses of será are inferential. Obviously, the speaker2 has already seen the first leg; otherwise he could not say that he expects the matches to be similar. The fact that there is always a first leg for the second leg represents world knowledge:

(48) “**El partido de vuelta será muy parecido al que jugamos aquí en el Calderón. Será un partido difícil. . .**” (El Mundo, December 30, 2010)

“The second leg will/must be similar to that we played here in the Calderón. It will/must be a difficult match.”

In the following three examples the speech-accompanying verbs calcular “to calculate”, concluir “to conclude” and vaticinar “to vaticinate, to predict” support the fact that the uses of será are inferential. These verbs are clearly used in inferential contexts:

(49) Esto se explica, según la consultora, por “el deterioro del gasto de las familias y la disminución en la entrada de turistas extranjeros”.

**Así, DBK calcula que la facturación de este mercado será de 1.600 millones en 2010, un 10% menos que el año anterior.** (El Mundo, December 30, 2010)

“This is explained, according to the consultant, by ‘the decreasing spending by families and the declining numbers of foreign tourists’. So DBK calculates that the account of this market will/must be 1600 million in 2010, 10% less than the year before.”

(50) “...Voy a pasar un tiempo en Japón, y será una buena ocasión para relajarme y estar listo para el que pienso que será un gran fin de semana”, ha concluido. (El País, 1 October, 2010)

“... I am going to spend some time in Japan before, and it will/must be a good occasion to relax and get ready for the – what I think will/must be a great – weekend”, he concluded.”

(51) Una temporada de huracanes muy activa. Los meteorólogos vaticinan que será una temporada “muy activa” porque entre cuatro y seis huracanes podrían ser de gran intensidad, con vientos superiores a 177 kilómetros por hora. (El País, September 4, 2010)

Obviously, the speaker is the trainer because he uses jugar in the first person plural (“jugamos “we played”) and simultaneously speaks about ellos “they” when he refers to the team. This is a peculiarity of trainers’ speech.
“A season of very active hurricanes. Weather forecasters predict that it will/must be a “very active” season because between four and six hurricanes might be very intense, with a maximum wind speed of 177 km/h.”

Furthermore, in example (49) asi “thus, hence” is to be found, which establishes a causal relation between information that is previously mentioned and the reason for the following inference, which is introduced by DBK calcula que. And in example (51) the causal conjunction porque “because” indicates the reason for the inference so that a similar causal relation is established between [p] marked by the future and the reason for inferring that [p]. While será in example (50) is part of the literally quoted fragment so that it clearly marks an inference, the uses of será in examples (49) and (51) are comparable to the use of the adverb supuestamente. The adverb was shown to be used to transmit an inference made by another speaker than the current one, by what an inferential and reported reading consequently overlap (Hennemann, 2012, pp.155–157; 2013, pp.276–278). In examples (51) and (49) the speech-accompanying verbs back up the fact that será is used inferentially, whereby the verb forms + que show that [p] (marked by será) represents reported information. The following example is very similar to example (51):  

(52) **Fuentes de Benestar Social adelantaron ayer que esta oferta también será rechazada “porque no tiene dónde prestar el servicio”, y atribuyeron a “un error” que se presentase al concurso. (El País, August 12, 2010)**

“Sources from Benestar Social anticipated yesterday that this offer will/must also be rejected ‘because it does not contain where to hire the service’, and they attributed ‘an error’, which is presented.SUJB to the contest”.  

The reportive and the inferential reading of será seem to overlap. The reference to the source is given and a justification for why “será [p]” is given as well (because of porque), whereby the latter is represented by a literally quoted fragment. This leads to the assumption that the Fuentes de Benestar Social also used será in order to express an inference. Thus, the inference is reported information.  

In the following two examples the speech-accompanying verbs prever “to foresee” and predecir “to predict” may also be considered as being inferential in nature, such as the verbs calcular “to calculate”, concluir “to conclude” and vaticinar “to vaticinate, to predict”. If a speaker foresees or predicts that “será [p]” he is assumed to have based his prediction on certain facts. Hence, the speech-accompanying verbs back up the fact that the following future forms are used inferentially:  

(53) Sergio Scariolo, el seleccionador, **prevé que el Mundial que empieza mañana en Turquía será difícil y atípico por las bajas que afectan a todas las selecciones, incluida la española ...** (El País, August 30, 2010)

“Sergio Scariolo, the national coach, anticipates that the world championship, which begins tomorrow in Turkey, will/must be difficult and atypical because of the deficits which affect the representative teams, including the Spanish [one]...”

(54) En el Arsenal, Fábregas y Robin van Persie podrán actuar juntos por primera vez desde agosto. “Nuestra actuación en casa en la segunda vuelta de la temporada será decisiva”, predijo Arsene Wenger ... (El Mundo, December 27, 2010)

“In Arsenal, Fábregas and Robin van Persie will/must be able to play together for the first time since August. ‘Our team play at home during the second leg of the season will/must be decisive’, predicted Arsene Wenger ...”

While the use of será in example (53) is – as in the examples above – comparable to the use of the adverb supuestamente, será in example (54) is part of the literally quoted fragment so that it clearly marks an inference, which is emphasised by the verb predict “to predict”.  

A further context in which the synthetic future is used to convey an inferential reading are weather forecasts. The weatherman would not say that it will be windy or cold, if he had not previously analysed weather charts, for instance. That is why one could argue that weather reports are always inferential in nature, whereby the degree of certainty that is conveyed is estimated to be relatively high:

(55) ... en regiones montañosas del norte, con cotas de nieve en torno a los 900 o 1.000 metros en el norte y entre 1.000 y 1.200 metros en el centro. “En el resto soplará viento de componente norte y habrá temperaturas más bien bajas, con lo cual el tiempo será más bien frío y des capacicable”, apuntó. Esta situación persistirá hasta el martes o miércoles de la próxima semana, cuando posiblemente entre otra borrascas en la península. “En resumen, habrá tiempo des capacicable con el paso de estas b rrascas ...” (El Mundo, November 19, 2010)

“... in mountainous regions of the North, with snowy tops about 900 or 1000m in the North and between 1000 and 1200m in the centre. ‘In the rest will/must blow north wind and the temperature will/must be fairly low, so that the weather will/must be relatively cold and uncomfortable’, he pointed out. This situation will/must persist till Tuesday or Wednesday next week, when other thunderstorms possibly come. SUBJ to the isle. ‘In summary, the weather will/must be uncomfortable with these thunderstorms passing by ...’”

(56) En zonas de Málaga, Jaén y Granada será fácil que el termómetro toque los 40 grados, y en Barcelona, Lleida, Girona y Tarragona las máximas se acerarán e incluso superarán ese registro. Los ciudadanos de la Comunidad
Valencia son los que más van a sufrir hoy, porque ... (El País, August 30, 2010)

“Around Málaga, Jaén and Granada the thermometer will/must easily touch upon 40 degrees, and in Barcelona, Lleida, Girona and Tarragona the maximum [temperature] will/must approach and even get higher than this. The citizens of Valencia are those who are going to suffer most today, because …”

Example (56) is interesting insofar as it also contains a use of the periphrastic future which seems to express an inference of such a high degree of certainty that the information is represented as a fact: “The citizens of Valencia are those who are going to suffer most today because …”. The fact that they are going to suffer represents a consequence of the information about the weather given before.

With regard to the following uses of the synthetic future it might be argued that they are “more epistemic than evidential” so that it seems rather prudent – concerning the following examples – to speak about assumptions (Boyé, 2006, p.66) instead of inferences. Nevertheless, generally one should not speak about an “epistemic future” – as Pietrandrea (2005, p.56) does – because speakers are assumed to always have a reason/reasons for stating that “será [p]”, which makes the future (at least to some extent) inferential in nature. But in the following examples the future forms cannot be analysed as being clearly used inferentially. As no further contextual information is provided that would lead to the assumption that the future forms are clearly used to convey an inferential reading, it seems rather prudent to analyse them as assumptions or conjectures:

(57) Después de la pérdida de calidad crediticia, ya no bastará con una moderación salarial en el sector público para convencer a los mercados de que España puede reducir el déficit al 3% en 2013; será necesario aplicar un plan de congelación de los sueldos públicos .... Tampoco será suficiente ... (El País, May 1, 2010)

“After the loss of credit quality, a salary moderation in the public sector will not be sufficient to convince the markets that Spain is able to reduce the deficit to 3% in 2013; it will be necessary to put a plan of payment stop of the public salary into action .... It will also not be sufficient ...”

(58) El presidente del Ecofin ha dado a entender que el rescate de Irlanda es inevitable porque “para el BCE será difícil ir más lejos a la hora de dar liquidez a algunos bancos ... (El Mundo, November 19, 2010)

“The president of ECOFIN made clear that Ireland’s rescue is inevitable because “going beyond giving liquidity to some banks will/must be difficult for BCE ...”

While the use of the future in examples (57) and (58) might be argued to be “more inferential than epistemic” because they are used in political or rather economic contexts (whereby I admit that there is no unambiguous proof in the contextual environment that they are used inferentially), the following two uses appear in more subjective contexts. Here, the future “only” seems to convey the speaker’s subjective assumption or subjective opinion (the inferential meaning aspect not being contributed by contextual information):

(59) Debemos estremecernos todos .... Sobre todo no hay tiempo que perder. Todo esfuerzo será menos molesto que esos seis grados más en verano. (El País, May 4, 2010)

“We all should shiver .... Most of all, there is no time to lose. Every effort will/must be less annoying than those six degrees more in summer”.

(60) “Sigue siendo un jugador de alto nivel y su aportación será muy buena, será un jugador importante para nosotros”, ha dicho. (El País, May 4, 2010)

“‘He still is a player on a high level and his contribution will/must be very good, he will/must be an important player for us’, he said”.

Even if the last mentioned uses of the future forms seem to be more “epistemic than inferential”, it should be emphasised that the category of inference is assumed to be the category where evidentiality and epistemic modality overlap. However, in every single use one domain is expected to be more prominent than the other. In the last mentioned uses the evidential domain is clearly not the more prominent one, whereby it is considered to be never completely absent. In line with Giacalone Ramat & Topadze (2007, p.25) I “prefer to highlight the inferential basis for the speaker’s confidence and to use the label inferential future” because in every case the speaker must have at least one reason to infer that “será [p]”. “The future can express judgments based upon an inferential process, which may be not explicit” (Giacalone Ramat & Topadze 2007, p.26). And the statement “the future does not serve the purpose of marking information as inferential” (Pietrandrea, 2007, p.42) has been refuted by the examples of the present study.

CONCLUSION AND FUTURE PROSPECTS

With respect to the inferential use of the future, I subscribe to Giacalone Ramat & Topadze’s (2007) and Squartini’s (2001) view instead of to Pietrandrea’s (2005; 2007) because the former, for instance, state that “[t]he epistemic future is inferential in nature” (Giacalone Ramat & Topadze, 2007, p.26), while the latter claims that the future “only” expresses “the speaker’s genuine opinion about the propositional content” without indicating “any inferential process” (Pietrandrea, 2005, p.93). So Pietrandrea (2007, p.43) prefers to use the label
“epistemic future” instead of “inferential future”. Both Giacalone Ramat & Topadze (2007) and Pietrandrea (2007) investigate the inferential use of the Italian future and translate their examples into English by using the inferential modal must:

(a) *Ora come ora, saranno le 5*

“It must be five o’clock by now” (Giacalone Ramat & Topadze, 2007, p.25; my emphasis).

(b) *[Suonano alla porta]* [Sarà il postino]

[The bell rings] “It must be the postman” (Pietrandrea, 2007, p.42).

(c) *Saranno le otto e mezza, immagino*

“It must be eight thirty, I guess” (Pietrandrea, 2007, p.41; my emphasis).

Even though Pietrandrea herself translates the future by *must*, she explains with reference to example (c) that “[t]he genuine epistemic nature of the future is proved by the fact that the future (unlike the modals) can be employed in purely conjectural contexts, i.e., contexts lacking any evidential source” (Pietrandrea, 2007, p.41). As already illustrated above, the Spanish future is assumed to be always – at least to some extent – used inferentially because the speaker must have a reason that leads him to conclude that “it must be eight thirty”. He may be hungry; he may see the position of the sun etc. Incidentally, the English equivalent of *immaginare* “to imagine” was shown to involve affective evidence (slightly different from *believe*). So the semantics of the verb involves evidentiality (Cappelli, 2007, p.284):

> In non-descriptive qualificational interpretations, the epistemic evaluation lexicalized by *imagine* is grounded in affective evidence, be it general knowledge of the world or personal taste and experiences. [The speaker] has no other evidence but his/her “stored knowledge” (Cappelli, 2007, p.283).

As the translation of the example illustrates, Pietrandrea herself translates *immaginare* by English *guess*. This verb was also shown to involve evidentiality, more precisely, inferentiality (Cappelli, 2007, p.234). Thus, it could be argued that the verb of cognitive attitude – whether translated as “guess” or “imagine” – and the future in example (c) mutually confirm that they are used inferentially. The speaker in example (b) maybe knows the time at the moment of utterance and at a certain time it is always the postman who rings. It is consequently an inference which is expressed by *sarà*: the speaker considers the time of day and infers from this information that “it must be the postman”. Utterances are always bound to a particular moment of speech and “contextless utterances” simply do not exist. So the analysis of contextless utterances should generally be avoided.

The future was furthermore shown to convey inferences of different strengths: *sarà + sin duda*, for instance, represents a stronger inference, while with *sarà + probabilmente* a weaker inference is expressed. Hence, in contrast to Pietrandrea (2005, p.98), I would not describe the (Spanish) future as being “neutral as to the degree of certainty”.

Further studies should be concerned with the Spanish synthetic future as a means of expression of inference in the context of pragmaticisation processes. The synthetic future form is one means of expression that increased “in pragmatic force” (Traugott, 2003, p.633) during the pragmaticisation process (cf. also Häfler, 2003). In their study of demonstratives, Hayashi/Yoon define the process of pragmaticisation as a process whereby grammatical items evolve into pragmatic markers that serve specific discourse functions to such an extent that they display a number of phonological, morpho-syntactic, and/or semantic characteristics that diverge crucially from their original usage as grammatical items (Hayashi & Yoon, 2010, p.58).

This definition of pragmaticisation process may be perfectly applied to the development of demonstratives but for the use of the Spanish synthetic future form, for instance, it must be highlighted that these are markers of subjectivity6 that increased in pragmatic force. In contrast to the notions of “pragmatic strengthening” (Fried, 2009, p. 262) or “pragmatic narrowing” (Vega Moreno, 2007, p.205), the synthetic future should be considered under the heading of “pragmatic broadening”. It fulfils different functions, and which function it is, depends on the respective pragmatic situation.

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Although an inference may be intersubjectively comprehensible and possibly even rely on evidence that may be intersubjectively perceivable, if expressed by one speaker, an inference (or assumption) is subjective: at the moment of uttering [p], the speaker expresses his subjective opinion – regardless of to what extent the subjective inference or assumption might be intersubjectively comprehensible.

6 This term is also used by Vega Moreno (2007, p.205). She, however, uses it in terms of idioms, transparency and pragmatic inference, as her study is about figurative speech.


