

Variation in the Future Tense of New Mexican Spanish¹

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1. Introduction

In Spanish there are two morphologically marked forms used to express future time reference, a periphrastic (or analytic) form (*ir + a + infinitive verb*) as in example 1; and a morphological (or synthetic) form (verb root + *-rá*) as in example 2. Both forms refer to a future action, however, the use of the two forms is differentiated, each occurring in different constructions and with slightly different meanings.

(1) no me *van a pegar* a mí that hard²
NEG me *go-3PL to hit-INF* to me that hard
'They aren't going to hit me that hard.'

(2) ... *iré* con su mula
go-FUT-1SG with his mule
'I will go with his mule.'

Gutiérrez (1994, p. 214) states that in the development from Latin to Spanish, there was a process whereby synthetic forms were replaced with analytic ones and it is through this tendency that the periphrastic future (PF) begins to replace the morphological future (MF). Various studies (Fleischman, 1982; Gutiérrez, 1994; Sedano, 1994; Silva-Corvalán & Terrell, 1989) have found that in Latin American Spanish, PF is on a course toward replacing MF. The morphological future is presently used to express probabilistic modal

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² In this example, 'that hard' is a loan phrase from English that is being used in an otherwise Spanish utterance.

meaning (see example 3) instead of expressing futurity that it expressed in the past and PF is now used to express future meaning (as seen in example 1).

- (3) no lo *hablarán* pero lo entienden todo
 NEG it *speak-FUT-3PL* but it understand-3PL everything
 'They may not speak, but they understand everything.'

In this work we combine a variationist perspective with a functional analysis to investigate the modern use of MF and PF in New Mexican Spanish, as used in sociolinguistic interviews. Our goals are to determine whether the data from New Mexican Spanish are consistent with these previously established patterns and, furthermore, to establish the role of frequency in this linguistic change. The results show that in New Mexican Spanish, as in other varieties of Latin American Spanish, the use of PF has adopted uses formerly exclusive to MF and, furthermore, that MF is now used principally with a probabilistic, or modal, meaning devoid of temporal reference.

The research questions that we intend to answer are: What is the predominant future form in New Mexican Spanish? Does the use of future tenses in New Mexican Spanish follow the pattern found previously in other varieties of Spanish that have been studied? Or does it follow different motivations that have not been found in previous studies?

2. Previous Research

Throughout the development of Spanish, PF acquired a temporal verb use that little by little expanded, although it was originally only considered characteristic of uncouth speech and of spoken language in general (Cartagena, 1995; Westmoreland, 1997). The extension of use of PF is highly frequent in Latin American and Andalusian Spanish when compared to northern Spain: Westmoreland (1997, p. 387) enumerates factors that differentiate the uses of MF and PF in Spain and the Americas. The author notes that in Latin American Spanish the use of MF is more motivated by modal and sociolinguistic considerations, and in Castile the use of PF is conditioned by aspectual criteria. According to the author, a tendency exists in Latin American Spanish to opt for the periphrastic forms, which also happens in other American varieties such as American English, Canadian French, and Brazilian Portuguese. Westmoreland states that periphrastic structures are characteristic of situations of colonization where there is a certain degree of bilingualism. He affirms that this is due to that such structures are easier to learn and furthermore are considered more expressive due to their analytic nature (1997, p. 388).

Futurate expression in Spanish has been extensively studied. The majority of the studies excludes modal uses of the futurate forms and concentrates only on futurity. We believe that the inclusion of modal use is of great importance in understanding the change that is taking place in the language, as was shown by Bybee, Pagliuca, & Perkins (1991) that future forms tend to grammaticize into markers of epistemic modality. In our study we investigate more thoroughly the modal use of MF compared to PF usage. Furthermore, we examine the linguistic and social factors that condition the selection of one form over the other.

3. Data

In this project we use interviews from the New Mexico-Colorado Spanish Survey (Bills & Vigil, 1999). New Mexican Spanish is unique among varieties of Latin American

Spanish in that it has been in a constant situation of language contact for several centuries. Additionally, the variety carries the status of a minority language subordinated to English and thus has limited social contexts in which it continues to enjoy widespread use.

The corpus consists of 355 sociolinguistic interviews of Spanish speakers from various parts of New Mexico and southern Colorado. The corpus was gathered at the beginning of the 1990s with the goal of producing a linguistic atlas of that variety of Spanish (Bills & Vigil, 1999). The data on which this study is based were extracted from approximately 250,000 words from 36 interviews. In this portion of the corpus, almost all speakers are bilingual and for this reason there is a high frequency of codeswitching between English and Spanish. The speakers are residents of rural areas such as Río Arriba, Taos, Mora, and Bernalillo counties; and of urban areas such as Española, Albuquerque, and Tucumcari. At the time of the interviews the speakers were between 36 and 96 years of age, had an education level between two years and university level, and included 18 women and 15 men. We extracted all uses of MF and PF from the portion yielding a total of 76 tokens of MF and 247 of PF. We decided to limit our study to these two forms due to their principal use being the expression of futurity. Other forms that may be used in certain contexts to refer to the future (the present tense, for example) do not have futurity as their central use. Based on these figures, PF is overwhelmingly preferred in New Mexican Spanish over MF. This preference is consistent with previous studies of the future in Latin American Spanish (Gutiérrez, 1994; Sedano, 1994; Silva-Corvalán & Terrell, 1989).

4. Methodology

In the present study we investigate which syntactic factors influence the use of PF versus MF and how the two futurate forms can be differentiated in the Spanish of New Mexico and southern Colorado, a variety that has for centuries been in contact with other languages. Our goal is to ascertain whether PF follows the same pattern in this variety as in other Latin American varieties. We also aim to determine what social factors condition the selection of forms in the variety.

Each token was coded for type of form: PF (see example 1) or MF (see example 2). The linguistic variables that are coded for include temporal distance (proximal, distal), adverbial specification (specific adverb, nonspecific adverb, no adverb), contingency (assumed, contingent), grammatical person (1st, 2nd, 3rd singular and plural), polarity (affirmative, negative), and meaning (futate, modal). The social variables that are coded for include sex, age (67 years and younger, 70 years and older)³, education (primary school or less, secondary school or greater), and locality (rural, urban). The significant factor groups will be discussed in more detail below as we present the results.

5. Results and Analysis

Our results show a greater number of occurrences of PF with a percentage of 76.5% compared to the less frequent MF at 23.5%. These results are consistent with other studies about the future in other varieties of Latin American Spanish, since PF always represents the majority. In the multivariate analysis of our data we use the statistical analysis program GoldVarb X (Sankoff, Tagliamonte, & Smith, 2005). The multivariate analysis

³ The age range in the corpus was 36 to 96 years old. We decided to divide the speakers into two age groups, the younger (36 to 67 years old) and the older (70 to 96 years old). The purpose was to identify if the variable shows preference of use in certain age group.

takes into account the interactions that may occur between each of the factors and offers corrected probabilities based upon that data that is presented to it. GoldVarb X presented as significant the following factor groups: meaning (futurity or modality), speaker age, and adverbial specification (see Table 1). The factor groups selected by GoldVarb X are the only ones that have a significant effect in the choice of one futurate form over the other. The range indicates the magnitude of effect on the data and factors are regarded as favoring or disfavoring PF if their weight is above 0.50 or below 0.50, respectively. In the following sections, the effects of each of the significant factor groups will be discussed.

Table 1. Variable rule analysis of the contribution of factors selected as significant in the probability of occurrence of PF in New Mexican Spanish. ($p \leq 0.05$)

Total N	323		
% PF	77%		
corrected mean	0.88		
	weight	%	% of data
Meaning			
Futurity	0.72	94	79
Modality	0.03	10	21
<i>Range</i>	69		
Speaker Age			
67 years & younger	0.76	95	36
70 years & older	0.35	66	64
<i>Range</i>	42		
Adverbial Specification			
Adverbial	0.78	97	21
Not adverbial	0.42	71	79
<i>Range</i>	36		

Factor groups not selected as significant: temporal distance, contingency, grammatical person, polarity, sex, education, locality.

5.1. Futurity and Modality

The factor group with the greatest magnitude of effect in our results is that of the futurity/modality opposition. Previous studies of the future tense in Spanish (Gutiérrez, 1994; Sedano, 1994; Silva-Corvalán & Terrell, 1989) have found that MF, in addition to expressing futurity (refer to example 2), is more frequent with its modal use (see example 4), although there are a small number of tokens such as example 5 where PF, whose primary use is futurate, may also express modality:

- (4) ... yo no sé cómo enseñarán pero sí enseñan
 I NEG know-1SG how teach-FUT-3PL but yes teach-3PL
 'I don't know how they might teach, but they do teach.'
- (5) él que va a saber es mi sobrino en Avendale
 he that go-3SG to know-INF be-3SG my nephew in Avendale
 'The one that will know is my nephew in Avendale.'

Example 4 does not refer to a future action as example 2 does, but to an action in the present, as indicated by the following clause. MF allows the speaker to express their uncertainty, while the use of the present here would imply a higher degree of certainty. As such, there is a probabilistic or modal element to the discourse.

As can be observed in Table 1, GoldVarb X selected this group in its best run and with a range of 69 it is the factor group with the most significant effect on the data. Futurate meaning favors the usage of PF with a weight of 0.72 and 94% of all tokens from the data with futurate meaning employing PF. On the other hand, with a weight of 0.03, modal meaning almost categorically rejects the usage of PF in favor of MF. In fact, 78.9% of the 76 tokens of MF carry modal meaning, while a mere 2.8% of the 247 tokens of PF carry modal meaning. We can deduce from these data that New Mexican use of MF has modality as its central meaning, while use of PF has futurity as its central meaning. The inclusion of modal tokens allows us to examine the nature of this variation of use of these forms.

5.2. *Speaker Age*

The factor group that has the second greatest magnitude of effect on the data is the age of the speaker. Each token was coded according to speaker age with two categories: 67 years of age and younger, 70 years of age and older. These two groups differ in that the younger group is largely still in the workforce, while the older group should have largely retired. As such the two groups represent people at different stages of their lives. The younger group (36 to 67 years of age) is represented by 13 speakers and the older group (70 to 96 years of age) is represented by 19 speakers.

GoldVarb X selected speaker age in its best run as the second most important factor group (range = 42) in determining usage of PF or MF (refer to Table 1). The speakers in the younger group use PF 95% of the time within the data, but with a weight of only 0.76 there are clearly other factors that influence the data. The older speakers are the speakers that use PF with the least frequency (66.2%), but with a weight of only 0.35 there are also clearly other factors that influence the use of the forms. Nevertheless, the range of 42 clearly shows that speaker age plays a large role in use of PF and MF. The reduced use of MF by the younger generation when compared to the older generation's less restricted use of MF clearly shows that there is a change underway in New Mexican Spanish with respect to futurate forms. A cross-tabulation of meaning and speaker age reveals that of the seven tokens of MF used by the younger speakers, five carry modal meaning. The rate at which MF is reducing in use combined with the limited futurate use it enjoys in this age group suggests that it may not survive into the next generation.

5.3. *Adverbial Specification*

The remaining factor group that was determined to have a significant effect on the data was adverbial specification. Adverbial specification proved to be relevant and statistically significant in studies of futurate forms in French (Fleischman, 1982; Poplack & Turpin, 1999). Each token was coded for the co-occurrence of a temporal adverb or lack thereof. Example 6 demonstrates the use of the temporal adverb *esta noche* 'tonight' with a token of PF:

- (6) ... esta noche si vas a salir te quiero aquí
 this night if go-2SG to go.out-INF you want-1SG here
- pa' las nueve
 at the nine
 '... tonight if you go out I want you here by 9 o'clock.'

With a range of 36 GoldVarb X selected adverbial specification as being the third most important factor in determining whether MF or PF would be used (refer to Table 1). Our data show that 97% of the tokens that co-occur with a temporal adverb are tokens of PF with a weight of 0.78. This indicates that the presence of temporal adverbs favors co-occurrence with PF and disfavors co-occurrence with MF. The case of tokens without a temporal adverb present is less clear. While 71% of the tokens lacking adverbial specification occur as PF, the weight is only 0.42. This indicates that the lack of adverbial specification only has a slight effect on what form will be employed. Returning to the case of the presence of temporal adverbs, there is a relatively simple explanation for why the presence of temporal adverbs would favor PF. Due to the fact that MF does not have temporality as its central meaning, PF has largely taken that role and temporal adverbs tend to occur in contexts where a temporal meaning is implied.

5.4. The Homogeneity of MF

Table 2. Verbs that appear in MF*.

Verb	1st Person	2nd Person	3rd Person	% Modal	# Modal	# Futurate	Tokens	% of Tokens of MF
<i>decir</i> 'to say'	17	0	3	90.0%	18	2	20	26.3%
<i>ser</i> 'to be'	1	0	13	100.0%	14	0	14	18.4%
<i>tener</i> 'to have'	0	1	4	60.0%	3	2	5	6.6%
subtotal -- frequent verbs [3]	18	1	20	89.7%	35	4	39	51.3%
infrequent verbs [21]	9	8	20	67.6%	25	12	37	48.7%
total [24]	27	9	40	78.9%	60	16	76	100.0%

* The shaded area indicates the numbers that were used to calculate statistical significance in section 5.5.

Table 3. Verbs that appear in PF*.

Verb	1st Person	2nd Person	3rd Person	% Modal	# Modal	# Futurate	Tokens	% of Tokens of PF
<i>hacer</i> 'to do/make'	10	3	13	3.8%	1	25	26	10.5%
<i>tener</i> 'to have'	6	5	4	0.0%	0	15	15	6.1%
<i>ir</i> 'to go'	4	1	8	0.0%	0	13	13	5.3%
<i>ser</i> 'to be'	1	1	11	23.1%	3	10	13	5.3%
<i>decir</i> 'to say'	8	1	1	20.0%	2	8	10	4.0%
<i>ver</i> 'to see'	7	1	2	0.0%	0	10	10	4.0%
<i>hablar</i> 'to speak'	6	2	1	0.0%	0	9	9	3.6%
<i>agarrar</i> 'to get'	1	1	5	0.0%	0	7	7	2.8%
<i>estar</i> 'to be'	3	1	2	0.0%	0	6	6	2.4%
<i>llevar</i> 'to carry/take'	3	0	3	0.0%	0	6	6	2.4%
<i>olvidar</i> 'to forget'	1	0	5	0.0%	0	6	6	2.4%
<i>dejar</i> 'to let'	2	1	2	0.0%	0	5	5	2.0%
subtotal -- frequent verbs [12]	52	17	57	4.8%	6	120	126	51.0%
infrequent verbs [80]	51	13	57	0.8%	1	120	121	49.0%
total [92]	103	30	114	2.8%	7	240	247	100.0%

* The shaded area indicates the numbers that were used to calculate statistical significance in section 5.5.

In our results we do not find it very surprising that MF is used with just 24 different verbs (see Table 2), while PF is used with 92 different verbs (see Table 3), for this can be explained by the fact that PF has three times the number of occurrences of MF. What is most interesting is the lexical homogeneity of each form.

Upon examination of Table 2, we find that three verbs (*decir*, *ser*, *tener*) account for half of the tokens of MF. On the other hand, it is the twelve most frequent verbs that account for half of the tokens of PF (see Table 3). The most frequent verb to occur with MF (*decir* 'to say') accounts for a quarter of the tokens of that form, and the second most frequent verb (*ser* 'to be') accounts for close to 20%. On the other hand, the most frequent verb of PF (*hacer* 'to do') accounts for a mere 10.5% of its tokens.

The preceding tells us that MF has become limited regarding the verbs that are employed. As we will see later, it is not only that MF has been limited to a few verbs in particular, but rather that some forms of MF have transformed to function independently of their original use.

5.5. *Lexical Diffusion of Modality*

Modal use of the two future forms that we examined is conditioned by the frequency with which the verbs appear in the in the verb tense in question. As we already saw in section 5.1, while MF may be the predominantly modal form, PF is also subject to use with modal meaning. The most frequent verbs are the ones that enjoy the most modal use. In Table 2 we observe that the three most frequent verbs of MF show modal use 89.7% of the time, while the remaining, less frequent verbs have modality as their meaning only 67.6% of the time. This distribution is statistically significant according to the χ^2 test ($p \leq 0.025$) with a difference of 22.1% between these two groups of verbs. As such, we can declare that the most frequent verbs are the ones that lead the change in meaning from futurity to modality.

Regarding PF, we can observe the same tendency as what is found for MF. In Table 3 we see that the twelve most frequent verbs of PF that account for half of the tokens of that form are used with modal meaning more frequently (4.8%) than the remaining verbs used in PF (0.8%). This distribution is not statistically significant and at this point in time the numbers are very small. Nevertheless, this tendency does follow the same general pattern as what we find for MF.

5.6. *Verb-Specific Behavior*

As we demonstrated in section 5.4, MF is used with a more limited selection of verbs than PF. We find that there are three verbs that account for half of the MF tokens, while there are twelve in the case of PF. Furthermore, as can be observed in Tables 2 and 3 the two most frequent verbs in MF, *decir* and *ser*, may be used in PF with modal meaning in addition to their modal use in MF.

The verb *ser* tends to be found in a complement clause presented by a main clause such as *no sé* 'I don't know' or *no digo* 'I'm not saying' and connected by *si* 'if', *que* 'that', and *qué* 'what', or another subordinate clause marker. The following tokens exemplify this construction:

- (7) ... yo no sé en inglés cómo se llamará
 I NEG know-1SG in English how REFL call-FUT-3SG
 'I don't know what it's called in English.'

- (8) Bueno, no digo que *será* ciento por ciento perfecto
 well NEG say-1SG REL *be-FUT-3SG* hundred per cent perfect
 'Well, I'm not saying that it will be a hundred percent perfect.'

Of the fourteen MF tokens of *ser*, twelve were in subordinate clauses like in examples 4, 7 and 8. Furthermore, in ten of the twelve tokens, the main clause is (*yo/nosotros no sé/sabemos*). The construction has pragmatic value in that it presents the uncertainty of the speaker regarding the facts being mentioned. This is a pattern very similar to what Scheibman (2001) finds in her study of subjectivity in American English. The *no sé/sabemos* + subordinate clause marker + verb_{MF} not only is used with the verb *ser*, but also with various other verbs in MF. Of the 76 tokens of MF, 33 tokens (43%) occur with this same construction.

Of the verbs with modal use in PF, the verb *ser* enjoys the greatest such use with three tokens. As can be seen in example 9, the verb *van a ser* does not have any temporal meaning. It instead expresses the same probabilistic meaning found with *ser* in MF.

- (9) *va a ser* eh, *van a ser* los em, de aquél Española
go-3SG to be-INF uh *go-3PL to be-INF* the uhm PREP that Española
 'He must be uh, they must be uhm, from that Española.'

In our data we find the verb *decir*_{MF} 'to say' in the first person (*diré* or *diremos*) in seventeen of the twenty tokens (refer to Table 2). See the following examples of *decir*_{MF}:

- (10) pues yo te *diré* he estado gastando
 well I you *say-FUT-1SG* have-AUX-1SG be-PART spend-PROG
 mucho dinero
 a.lot.of money
 'Well, I'll tell you I have been spending a lot of money.'
- (11) Oh, *diré* que como unas tres horas, yo creo
 oh *say-FUT-1SG* that like some three hours I believe-1SG
 'Oh, I'll say like around three hours, I think.'

In example 10 *diré* is not entirely futurate and not entirely modal. That is to say, it does express futurity, but the futurity that it expresses is very proximal since it merely refers to the next clause. In both tokens the verb *decir* is used as a means of hedging the content of the sentence. In other words, the intention of the speaker is to weaken the assertion. Example 11 is a clearer example of the modal use here, as it subordinates the assertion and has no clear temporal reference. The *decir* tokens in examples 10 and 11 behave as a canonical main verb – it precedes the subordinate clause and occurs with the complementizer *que*. Other tokens, however, show more freedom of use (see examples 12 and 13).

- (12) ahí tresquilaban los, todos los borregueros
 there shear-IMPV-3PL the all the shepherds

de Rock Springs *diré*
of Rock Springs *say-FUT-1SG*
'There all the shepherds from Rock Springs sheared I'll say.'

- (13) no teníamos muchos *diremos* eh juegos
NEG have-IMPF-1PL a.lot.of *say-FUT-1SG*uh games
'We didn't have many, let's say, uh games.'

As we can see in examples 12 and 13, the verb *decir* does not behave as a canonical main verb – it follows the subordinate clause, and there is no use of the complementizer. As a result of this syntactic behavior, *diré* and *diremos* appear to function more as discourse markers than as main clauses (cf. Thompson 2002).

Likewise, the verb *decir* is the verb that has the greatest modal use in PF (two tokens), after *ser*. The tokens of *decir*_{PF} with modal use have a function very similar to the same verb in MF:

- (14) *vamos a decir* como, veinticuatro horas
go-1PL to say-INF like twenty-four hours
'Let's say like, twenty-four hours.'

In the two modal examples of *decir*_{PF}, the verb functions to hedge the sentence. So, it would seem that the use of *decir*_{PF} follows the pattern of use of modal *decir*_{MF}.

6. Conclusion

The results of this project agree with previous studies that PF has extended its use as a future marker at the expense of MF. Furthermore, we find that MF is currently used with a primarily modal meaning. Because of MF's transition to a modal meaning, the dynamics of the other variables reflect the loss of temporal reference that has occurred for MF.

The fact that age is significant in this variation indicates that there is an apparent change occurring in New Mexican Spanish with respect to future forms⁴. The younger speakers show very little usage of MF, instead favoring PF. This tells us that the MF form is at the end of its life cycle in New Mexican Spanish.

Both the PF and MF forms demonstrate a process of lexical diffusion whereby the most frequent verbs transition to a modal use before the less frequent verbs. This is hardly surprising because future forms tend to grammaticize into markers of epistemic modality. As the data regarding the specific use of these verbs show, in many cases the MF forms are used in a subordinate clause whose main clause contains a negated main verb such as *saber* 'to know' or *decir* 'to say' that has a pragmatic force in the interaction signaling the doubt of the speaker regarding the validity of the action. In other cases, where the MF token is a form of *decir* it has come to have a similar pragmatic function of hedging the statement being made. These findings have implications for language in general in that the transition from futurity to modality is one that often occurs typologically. As such, the

⁴ Data regarding each speaker's abilities in Spanish are not available in the metadata of the corpus; however, we do not believe this factor to be relevant to the variation observed.

findings indicate what may occur in other languages with future forms undergoing this same transition, a hypothesis that merits testing to see if these results may be repeated in other languages.

Although the use of futurate forms has been amply studied in Spanish and in other languages (Bybee et al., 1991; King & Nadasdi, 2003; Poplack & Turpin, 1999), the contribution of this study is that it takes into account the modal use of the futurate forms, something that other studies have not examined before. Furthermore, our study accounts for the importance of the specific verbs that are used with each form and the constructions in which they appear. The verbs that are the most useful in the discourse are the ones that appear most frequently. Frequency plays an important role from a variety of angles. A few highly frequent verbs are largely responsible for the retention of MF, while PF enjoys use from a less homogenous group of verbs. Additionally, the semantic value of the few highly frequent verbs in MF favors the epistemic use with which MF is becoming associated. These findings advance our understanding of the process that the future forms in New Mexican Spanish are currently undergoing.

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