

Periphrastic and morphological future forms in Bogotá Spanish: A preliminary sociolinguistic study of upper class speakers

Key words: periphrastic and morphological future forms, speech style, Bogotá Spanish

Abstract:

The use of periphrastic (*voy a estudiar* ‘I’m going to study’) and morphological (*estudiaré* ‘I will study’) future forms has been widely studied in Spanish (Sedano, 1994; Almeida and Díaz, 1998; Aaron, 2006). In Colombian Spanish, however, only a few investigations have been conducted (Montes, 1962; Berschin, 1978; Orozco, 2005). Motivated by previous research, the present study describes the use of periphrastic and morphological future forms in a specific Colombian dialect (Bogotá Spanish), in two different types of corpora: an oral corpus from the 1990’s (Samper-Padilla et al., 1998), and a written corpus of *readers’ opinions* sections from five online Colombian newspapers. Given the limitations of the corpora, this investigation restricts its analysis to the production of future forms by upper-class speakers from Bogotá in order to examine the distribution of these forms in both oral and written speech, and in relation to social and linguistic variables. A total of 352 cases were analyzed by the statistical program Goldvarb 2.0 (Rand & Sankoff, 1990). The social variables included in this analysis were gender, age, and newspaper; the linguistic variables were person/number of the verb, verb class, subject type, clause type, negation of the future situation, time proximity of the future situation, certainty of the future situation, intentionality in the future situation, and number of syllables in the main verb. The results show that the periphrastic form is most frequently used in the oral data (79.2%), whereas the morphological form is substantially preferred in the written data (82.2%). In terms of the statistical analysis, the occurrence of the morphological form is significantly favored by gender, number/person, verb class, and proximity in the oral data, and by gender, newspaper type, verb class, negation, and proximity in the written data. In addition, cross-tabulation analyses of ‘gender and number/person’, ‘gender and verb class’, and ‘verb class and number/person’ suggest that the use of the morphological form directly correlates with speech style (i.e. written speech), given that both male and female speakers increase their use of it in ‘action’ and ‘state’ verbs in the written corpus. As for the proximity of the future situation, contrary to what has been found in previous investigations (c.f. Sedano, 1994; Orozco, 2005; Almeida and Díaz, 1998; Díaz and Almeida, 2000), the analysis suggests that proximal/non-proximal future situations favor the use of the morphological form in oral speech (.765 and .934, respectively), and disfavor it in written speech (.140 and .474, respectively). A closer look at the distribution of the remaining cases in the oral corpus (95/114 temporally unspecified), indicates that 38 cases (40%) clearly show futurity, whereas the other 57 cases (60%) are used with some type of modality (speaker’s predictions, speaker’s actions in a hypothetical situation, or other hypothetical uses). Although the number of cases analyzed here is somewhat limited and further research should be conducted, the data suggest that the periphrastic future may be acquiring modal uses that have been exclusively associated with the morphological future (predictions, hypotheses, etc.).

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