

Semantics and Micro-Parametric Variation: The Simple Future in Ibero-Romance

Victoria Escandell-Vidal
Universidad Complutense de Madrid, Spain

Abstract Cross-linguistic variation in future-tense sentences has been extensively documented in the literature. Despite this diversity, there is a prevailing sense that a common core meaning exists and that the various interpretations in each language are connected. To account for both the similarities and the differences, Escandell-Vidal proposes that the meaning encoded by verbal tenses can be analysed into two components: i) core meaning; and ii) semantic micro-parameters. The purpose of this paper is twofold. On the descriptive side, it aims to refine the approach in terms of microparametric distinctions by suggesting some modifications. On the theoretical side, it seeks to offer a simpler and more powerful tool to account for interlinguistic variation by restricting its range to a limited set of predictable combinations.

Keywords Future tense. Semantic micro-parameters. Procedural meaning. Temporal interpretations. Evidential interpretations. Modal interpretations.

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1 Introduction

Tense is a grammatical category that expresses the ordering of events in time, providing a framework for situating eventualities relative to the speech time (Reichenbach 1947; Comrie 1985). Accordingly, the simple future tense is expected to locate an eventuality after the utterance time, thus denoting events or states that have not yet occurred but are expected or planned to occur.¹

However, accounting for the semantic import of the future tense presents several challenges, which complicates the direct mapping of grammatical forms to temporal meanings. To begin with, there are bidirectional asymmetries between future tense and future time reference. Other devices can be used to express future time reference (such as the ‘futurate’, the ‘*go*-future’ construction, and the simple present). In addition, the future tense can refer to states of affairs not located in the future, including events overlapping with the moment of speech or even in the past.²

Descriptive grammars of single languages tend to characterise the meaning of the future by giving unrestricted lists of uses: prospective, generic, conjectural, directive, intentional, concessive, modal, mirative or jussive – to name just a few. As can be easily seen, these interpretations appear unrelated or even contradictory.

Finally, cross-linguistic variation adds another layer of complexity, as different languages exhibit a variety of not-coincident interpretations.³ For illustrative purposes only, consider the differences in the examples in (1)–(2). Temporal uses (i.e., those placing eventualities along the timeline ahead of speech time) are found in all varieties, as illustrated in (1). Conjectural uses expressing guesses or hypotheses about what is going on elsewhere are limited in French and ungrammatical in Catalan, as shown in (2).

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2 Smith 1978; 1983; Fleischman 1982; Comrie 1985; Dahl 1985; Dahl, Velupillai 2008; Copley 2009; Jaszczolt, de Saussure 2013; De Brabanter, Kissine, Sharifzadeh 2014; Baranzini 2017; Escandell-Vidal 2022.

3 Spanish: Fernández Ramírez 1940–50; Rojo, Veiga 1999; Gennari 2000; Matte Bon 2006; RAE, ASALE 2009; Escandell-Vidal 2010; 2014; 2022; Laca, Falaus 2014; Lara Bermejo 2016; 2021; Rodríguez Rosique 2019. Italian: Bertinetto 1986; 1997; Squartini 2001; 2004; 2012; Rocci 2000; Mari 2009; 2010; Giannakidou, Mari 2018; Baranzini, Mari 2019. French: Dendale 2001; Saussure, Morency 2012; Mari 2015; Baranzini, Saussure 2017. Catalan: Pérez Saldanya 2002. Portuguese: Oliveira, Lopes 1995; Cunha, Cintra 2017; Mateus et al. 2006; Cunha 2019; 2021; 2022; Marques 2020. Romanian: Laca, Falaus 2014; Roussarie et al. 2017.

- (1) a. *El paquete llegará mañana.* (Sp.)
 b. *Il pacco arriverà domani.* (It.)
 c. *A encomenda chegará amanhã.* (Port.)
 d. *Le colis arrivera demain.* (Fr.)
 e. *El paquet arribarà demà.* (Cat.)
 'The parcel will arrive tomorrow.'
- (2) [Bell ringing]
 a. *Será el cartero.* (Sp.)
 b. *Sarà il postino.* (It.)
 c. *Será o carteiro?* (Port.)⁴
 d. *%Ce sera le facteur.* (Fr.)
 e. **Serà el carter.* (Cat.)
 'It must be the postman.'

This diversity raises intriguing questions about the nature of the future tense and the mechanisms underlying its interpretation: How can a single linguistic form have such a wide range of interpretations, including seemingly unrelated or contradictory ones? To what extent can languages differ in the interpretations that a future-tensed sentence can receive? How can historical change in the interpretation of future tense be accounted for? Addressing these questions is crucial for developing a comprehensive theory of future tense that accounts for both synchronic diversity and diachronic change.

In this paper, I will review the proposal about interlinguistic variation put forward in Escandell-Vidal (2022) and suggest some refinements based on the distinctions observed in Ibero-Romance languages. More specifically, I will address the question of what microparametric distinctions account for the differences in interpreting the simple future tense in Spanish, Catalan, Galician and Portuguese. Future tense uses will be compared, identifying commonalities and differences. My approach is simpler than the one found in the previous literature and better explains the constraints governing linguistic variation.

The remainder of the paper is organised as follows. In section 2, the main assumptions and hypotheses underpinning the proposal are introduced, including a summary of the two-layered semantics for the future tense proposed by Escandell-Vidal (2022), which also is the basis of the current account. Section 3 is devoted to reviewing the interpretations of the future tense found in descriptive grammars and

⁴ As one of the anonymous reviewers points out, in this context, Portuguese uses the interrogative version, not the affirmative one. Conjectural readings are possible in Portuguese, though the conditions seem stricter than in Spanish. See Marques 2020. I will go back to this issue in section 5.

corpora of Ibero-Romance languages. Section 4 presents a modification that simplifies the micro-parametric approach. Finally, Section 5 discusses and extends the implications of the suggested approach and summarises the main conclusions.

2 The Theoretical Framework

This paper is built on several theoretical assumptions that provide the foundational framework for analysing the semantics of tenses in general, and the simple future in particular. These assumptions are essential for understanding how tenses determine the referential properties of eventualities. Drawing upon a wide body of research, this section sets the stage for a detailed examination of the structure of the meaning of verbal paradigms and its implications for the articulation of linguistic theory.

2.1 Tenses, Interpretable Features and Procedural Meaning

Grammatical morphemes in inflectional paradigms are sets of features that occupy a functional projection in the Tense domain, containing interpretable features (Chomsky 1995) that feed the conceptual-intentional interface. This raises the question of how to account for the existence of various interpretations related to the same item. Different answers can be given.

The first option is to posit that all aspects of interpretation are pre-determined in the derivation generated by the grammatical system. The grammatical representations inherently contain the full specifications for all the interpretations. Thus, for each possible reading, a distinct derivation exists. The role of the context is to select the appropriate interpretation among all the existing possibilities. The second option is to suppose that all expressions have a default meaning, which is accessed first in the interpretation process. Other readings are activated only when the context requires cancelling the preferred reading or adding more data. The role of context is to verify or validate interpretations. I will not pursue these two options here.

The option I favour here is to assume that the semantic representation is underspecified. The meaning encoded by grammatical categories is abstract enough to be compatible with a variety of interpretations, so none takes precedence. The role of context is decisive in all cases for constructing the final interpretation.⁵ This view easily leads to a monosemic hypothesis: each tense has a single meaning

⁵ Sperber, Wilson [1986] 1995; Carston 2002; Frisson 2009; Egg 2010; Recanati 2012.

that explains the commonalities across its uses while being consistent with more than one interpretation. The various attested readings do not exemplify extended polysemy but context-dependency, i.e., they are a by-product of the linguistically encoded meaning and other linguistic and contextual data added during the inferential phase of utterance processing.⁶

As for the nature of the encoded meaning, I assume that it is procedural (as suggested in Relevance Theory).⁷ Grammatical categories encode processing instructions for the conceptual-intentional interface that constrain the inferential phase of interpretation by guiding the hearer towards the intended representation, rather than fully specifying it in conceptual terms. Thus, linguistic expressions encode an inherently abstract and incomplete schema that underdetermines the truth-conditional content and the intended meaning. Several aspects of the logical form must be elaborated through inferential processes to flesh out this abstract schema into a more precise representation. This enrichment occurs at both the propositional level (the basic content of the sentence) and the higher level (including aspects such as the speaker's intentions, illocutionary force, and propositional attitude).

2.2 The Simple Future: Natural System vs Cultivated Uses

Identifying the abstract meaning of a verbal tense requires careful consideration of all factors involved in utterance interpretation since the attested diversity of uses can derive from various sources, including grammatical factors (*Aktionsart*, control, person, adverbials, sentence modality, etc.) and contextual aspects (illocutionary force, expectations, desirability, etc.). An adequate account should distinguish the contribution of each aspect.

In addition to those grammatical and contextual factors, another element has contributed to overestimating the diversity in the case of the future tense. Based on the frequency of uses and first language acquisition patterns, it has been shown in the literature⁸ that not all the uses of the future tense are alike. Some uses are early acquired through natural exposition to the language and productively used and understood in all kinds of communicative situations. Other uses, by contrast, are learnt at a late stage through formal

⁶ Comrie 1985; Kratzer 1991; Carston 2002; Von Stechow 2006; Egg 2010.

⁷ Blakemore 1987; Wilson, Sperber 1993; Nicolle 1997; 2007; Moeschler 1998; Sausure 2003; 2011; Escandell-Vidal, Leonetti 2011; Escandell-Vidal 2021; 2022.

⁸ Gili Gaya 1962; Kernan, Blount 1966; van Naerssen 1980; Berretta 1994; Sedano 2006; Cartagena 2017; Weist 2014; Escandell-Vidal 2018.

instruction: their acquisition is incomplete, and they are confined to specific texts and registers.

Following the references mentioned above, it is important to distinguish between uses that belong to a natural, active and fully productive grammar, on the one hand, and those that belong to a fossilised system, preserved only as a cultivated set of fixed conventions, on the other. Uses of the simple future within the active system are temporal, conjectural and modal interpretations. In contrast, obligation uses (as seen in biblical commands), uses indicating logical necessity and irrefutability (as in mathematical demonstrations), and norms (as found in legal texts) represent grammatical fossils, not part of the internalised knowledge of native speakers regarding the semantic properties and uses of the future tense. The following examples from Spanish illustrate these uses, which are also found in other Romance languages.

- (3) a. *Honrarás a tu padre y a tu madre.*
 ‘You shall honour your father and your mother.’
 b. *Si dos ángulos de un triángulo suman 137°, el tercero medirá 43°.*
 ‘If two angles of a triangle add up to 137°, the third will measure 43°.’
 c. *El solicitante presentará las alegaciones en un plazo de 10 días.*
 ‘The applicant shall submit their allegations within 10 days.’

Therefore, what might appear as an array of unrelated uses results from the coexistence of different grammatical systems. The goal of linguistic theory is to provide a model of the internalised knowledge of native speakers. The other uses need not be explained using the same principles.

2.3 Modelling Verbal Paradigms in a Three-dimensional Space

In the classical approach of Reichenbach (1947), the basic meaning of the future tense is accounted for in terms of three temporal points (E: event; R: reference; S: speech) and two binary relations (precedence and coincidence) between them. In this model, all verbal tenses express temporal relations along the time arrow. Thus, the future tense locates an event at a time posterior to the speech time [fig. 1].

However, this framework does not capture all the complexity found in the semantic properties of tenses. The ‘real world’, as represented by the time arrow, only gives a linear view of a more complex system. Other dimensions must be added.

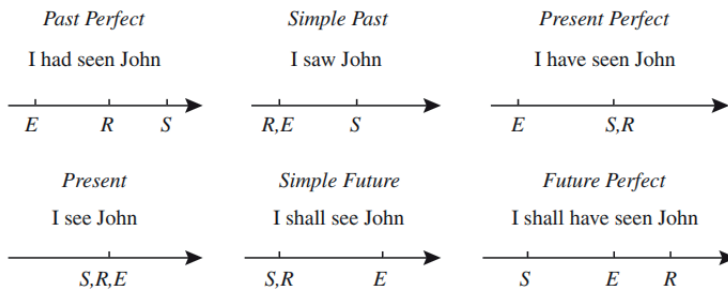


Figure 1 The semantics of verbal tenses of Reichenbach (1947, 72)

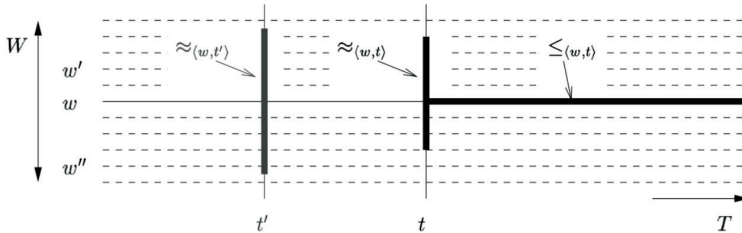


Figure 2 Two-dimensional modal logic (Kaufmann, Condoravdi, Harizanov 2006, 95)

The obvious addition concerns the modal domain. Any analysis of verbal paradigms must consider possible worlds as well. The standard view⁹ uses a two-dimensional model [fig. 2].

In this model,

...a multitude of possible worlds, or world-lines [...] are aligned with the same temporal dimension, given by (T, <). One can picture these alternative worlds as lines running in parallel. [...] The thick lines represent the sets of indices accessible from $\langle w, t \rangle$ by the modal relation \approx (vertical) and the temporal relation \leq (horizontal). (Kaufmann, Condoravdi, Harizanov 2006, 95)

This addition defines a two-dimensional space. All eventualities can be arranged along the time arrow. The bold horizontal line indicates a connection between different temporal events occurring at t, t', t'' ,

⁹ Kaufmann et al. 2008; van Benthem 2010; Kratzer 2020; see also Escandell-Vidal 2024.

all within the same world w . This reflects the standard temporal relationships of simultaneity and precedence (\leq). Thus, temporal relationships are a specific type of accessibility relation where the eventualities involved exist within the same world. At time t , certain aspects of the potential worlds w' and w'' can be accessible from w . This relationship constitutes a modal accessibility link connecting parallel worlds w and w' at t . In the two-dimensional framework, the actual world is conceptualised as a singular solid line that includes all presently existing states of affairs, with additional dotted lines representing possible worlds. However, this does not suffice to explain how speakers manage events.

At any given time, not all eventualities have the same status for a given speaker: only certain events in the actual world fall in her¹⁰ current spatiotemporal coordinates, while the remainder of the world, despite its reality, lies beyond her immediate experience. Calculating all forms of deixis (personal, spatial and temporal distinctions) requires considering the speaker's coordinates. This defines a space called the Speaker Perceptual Field (SPF):¹¹

[The SPF is] the set of locations l that (s)he has perceptual access to at the time t , where perception may involve any sense, not just sight. The perceptual field is a sub-space of the physical space surrounding and including the speaker. (Faller 2004, 69-70)

The SPF shifts along the timeline with each individual, leaving behind the set of locations the speaker previously had perceptual access to, there by forming the Speaker Perceptual Trace (SPT; Matthewson, Rullmann, Davis 2007; Faller 2004).

When two speakers share their coordinates for a while, their SPFs overlap. As soon as they part, however, their SPFs disconnect, so what happens inside the space of one of them is no longer accessible to the other. Therefore, what we call 'the real world' can be better conceived as a collection of all perceptual fields (and perceptual traces) of all speakers, aligned following the flow of time, including also their modal worlds, as shown in Figure 3 (from Escandell-Vidal 2024, 103; see also Escandell-Vidal 2010; 2014).

In the perceptual field of each speaker, the solid arrow represents the flow of their spatiotemporal coordinates, i.e., the subset of the actual world falling within their perceptual space (either past or present). A set of accessible possible worlds is also defined for each speaker, represented here by the starred, dotted and dashed lines.

10 Following a standard practice among Relevance theorists, I refer to the Speaker as 'she/her' and to the Hearer as 'he/him'.

11 Nikolaeva 1999; Faller 2004; Chung 2005; De Haan 2005; Speas 2008.

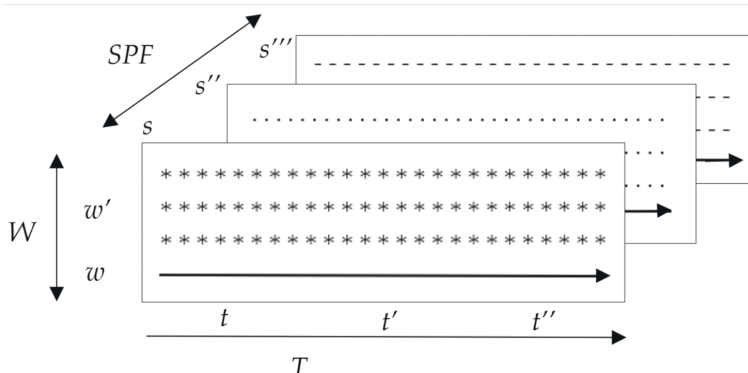


Figure 3 A three-dimensional space for temporal, modal and evidential dimensions

The result is a three-dimensional model where accessibility relations can be defined not only between the real world and possible worlds but also between the world of an individual and that of others. In addition to the regular temporal and modal relations, new forms of relations can be established along the new dimension created by the array of SPFs. A key prediction of this model is that for a given speaker, eventualities that fall outside her perceptual field belong to parallel perceptual spaces, so they are in a different dimension.

In this way, considerations about evidentiality – the grammatical category expressing the speaker’s source and/or mode of access to information (Aikhenvald 2004; 2018) – enter the picture. In the literature on evidentiality, two basic categories are typically distinguished (Willett 1988): direct evidence and indirect evidence. Direct evidence involves having perceptual sensory access to an eventuality, which means that the speaker has observed or experienced it. Indirect evidence, by contrast, includes information units accessed through inference or report: the speaker has not directly experienced the eventuality but has either deduced it from other information or learned it from someone else.

The distinctions associated with these three dimensions are crucial for understanding the semantics of the future tense. These dimensions provide a framework for analysing how future tense meanings are constructed and interpreted across different languages.

2.4 Eventualities and Situations

Some researchers working on evidentiality have developed a neo-Reichenbachian framework of functional heads related to temporal and evidential paradigms in terms of situations.¹² The model contemplates binary relations of accessibility and inclusion among the following three situations (where situations are conceived as sets of assumptions; Speas 2010).

1. Evaluated Situation (ES): The situation of which *p* is true;
2. Information Situation (IS): The set of assumptions upon which the judgement of truth is based; and
3. Discourse Situation (DS): The situation in which the sentence is being uttered.

This framework based on situations and their interrelations is not intended to be exclusive to evidential distinctions; rather, it is proposed as an adequate tool to capture the meaning of all functional categories in verbal paradigms. The purpose of this system is to show that variation is not random but subject to some basic cognitive constraints ruling out relational systems more complex than the one suggested here (Speas 2010).

These theoretical assumptions provide the foundational basis for analysing the meaning of tenses and their implications for language interpretation, change, and variation.

2.5 A Two-layered Semantics for the Simple Future

In this section, I will summarise the model proposed in Escandell-Vidal (2022) for the simple future (see also Escandell-Vidal 2010; 2014; 2024), which will serve as the basis for the analysis and the proposals in Section 4.

The main objective of that proposal is to account for interlinguistic variation in closely related languages by structuring the meaning encoded by functional heads into two distinct components:

1. Core meaning: It encodes an interpretative procedure consisting of a particular configuration of the set of situations (ES, IS and DS) and their relations (inclusion and accessibility). The configuration defined as the core meaning is shared by all languages, which explains cross-linguistic commonalities, despite the possible diversity in interpretations.
2. Semantic micro-parameters: They specify various aspects of the core meaning by establishing additional constraints on

¹² Nikolaeva 1999; Speas 2008; 2010; Davis, Potts, Speas 2007; Kalsang et al. 2013.

the way in which the abstract interpretive instruction must be satisfied. The ontological categories in the system (three situations, two relations) limit the number and the scope of the parameters. The selection of values is unique to each language, thus creating language-specific grammars from a very simple feature architecture. These additional restrictions account for both cross-linguistic variation and diachronic change.

The postulation of semantic micro-parameters is largely inspired by work on variation in the generative framework.¹³ A micro-parameter involves a finite set of grammatical options that can take on different values. This explains learnability, syntactic change, and cross-linguistic variation. The acquisition of a first language involves setting parameter values based on the input children receive during the critical period of language acquisition. Syntactic change results from modifying the values of one or more parameters. Interlinguistic differences arise because each language has chosen different parametric values. Importantly, a model that employs parameters as an explanatory tool imposes direct constraints on the range and configuration of potential linguistic systems.

2.5.1 The Core Meaning of the Simple Future

The core meaning of the simple future (i.e., the invariable part of the semantics encoded by this inflectional feature) in Romance languages relates the three situations (ES, IS and DS) as shown in (4):

- (4) $FUT=[IS \subset DS] \ \& \ [ES \not\subset IS]$
a) An inclusion relation between IS and DS: $IS \subset DS$
b) A non-accessibility (disjointness) relation between IS and ES: $ES \not\subset IS$ ($ES \cap IS = \emptyset$)

The first clause of the formula establishes an inclusion relation between IS and DS, indicating that these two situations coincide in the timeline and within the SPF. The second clause establishes a non-accessibility (or disjointness) relation between IS and ES, which means there is no direct access from IS to ES. Therefore, the semantic instruction in the formula in (4) prompts the hearer to create or activate the representation of an eventuality ES outside the SPF (i.e., an eventuality that the speaker cannot access from IS and hence neither

13 Chomsky 1981; Kayne 1996; 2000; Roberts, Holmberg 2010; Gallego 2011; Brandner 2012; Ordóñez, Roca 2013; Picallo 2016.

from DS). The formula is underspecified: it does not detail why this is the case and where the ES is located.

In principle, the eventualities the speaker cannot access directly from DS are those falling outside her current coordinates. Crucially, this limits the search space to three, and only three, dimensions: the eventuality may be either in another time, in an alternative world, or within the ace of other individuals. What is common to all three cases is that, at DS, the speaker has no direct experiential (i.e., first-hand) access to the represented eventuality.

Any category encoding a non-accessibility relation between IS and ES is anti-experiential by definition: “The speaker can only have indirect evidence for an eventuality that unfolds outside his or her perceptual field” (Faller 2004, 69). Thus, the future tense serves as an anti-experiential present, indicating that the speaker is referring to an eventuality she cannot directly experience or verify at the current time: the eventuality represented by the sentence is located in a dimension beyond the speaker’s immediate experiential reach.

It is worth noting that the future is compositionally transparent as an anti-experiential present, as argued by Matte Bon (2006) for Spanish and Caudal (2012) for French. The modern synthetic future of Romance languages consists of two different functional categories: an operator Present and the infinitive. The operator Present encodes the inclusion relation between DS and IS, whereas the infinitive describes the eventuality as potential.

Future-tensed sentences are not assertions (MacFarlane 2008), so they do not have truth values.¹⁴ They have, however, truth conditions and also licensing conditions in discourse. A future-tensed sentence conveys the speaker’s public commitment to not having perceptual access to the eventuality. Therefore, the simple future is legitimate if the speaker’s evidence for the representation is not based on direct experience. The occurrence of the eventuality as a worldly fact at a later time or its verifiability elsewhere does not affect the speaker’s justification and her public commitments.

By making explicit the speaker’s lack of perceptual evidence, the propositional content under its scope must be interpreted as the representation of an eventuality, not the eventuality itself. In fact, all forms of indirect evidence involve propositions. For any given speaker, only eventualities within their perceptual field (or perceptual trace) are state-of-affairs or worldly facts (i.e., particular situations occurring in their perceived real world; Kratzer 2002). In contrast, the objects of indirect evidentials are propositions, that is,

14 As one of the anonymous reviewers points out, the absence of direct experience is necessary but not sufficient for the truth of a future-tensed sentence, as a previous version of my text suggested. Other factors, such as shared knowledge, also play a crucial role.

structured informational units representing states-of-affairs without being facts themselves. Thus, when a speaker makes a prediction, expresses an intention, puts forward a conjecture, draws a conclusion and repeats information received from another individual, the resulting object is a proposition, not a fact.

If this proposal is on the right track, the simple future does not encode temporal, modal, or conjectural information. Instead, it conveys a more abstract and underspecified indication: that the speaker lacks direct perceptual access to the eventuality. This core meaning, however, does not still contain the whole set of features relevant to the semantics of the future tense for each language; further specifications may be added that constrain the domains in which the underspecified processing instruction can be satisfied. This is the role of micro-parameters.

2.5.2 The Role of Micro-parameters

The formula in (4) can be complemented by incorporating specifications that impose additional conditions on how the instruction should be elaborated. These constraints remain part of the encoded meaning, though their precise values vary across languages. This is where the concept of micro-parameters becomes pertinent.

Each language (or language stage) selects its own values for the parameters. The selected values determine the interpretive properties of its future-tensed sentences. To limit the inventory of parameters, the proposal in Escandell-Vidal (2022) is that they can only set constraints on either the status of the three situations involved or the relations between them. Three micro-parameters are defined there: [\pm factual], [\pm deictic] and [\pm forward].

The [\pm factual] parameter introduces additional conditions regarding the nature of the eventuality ES. Specifically, it determines whether the eventuality is considered a factual, worldly fact or a representational fact. This parameter establishes a crucial distinction between Latin and Romance languages. In Latin, the future tense was factual and *realis*, used for events occurring in a future time when everything was already determined but unknown to most people. In contrast, the modern synthetic future of Romance languages does not adhere to this factuality condition; Romance futures are all *irrealis* in nature. Therefore, the replacement of the Latin inflectional form with the new (originally periphrastic) future in Romance languages represents more than a superficial change in grammatical expression. It signifies a profound shift in semantic features, moving away from a factual future towards an *irrealis* one.

The [\pm deictic] parameter specifies the status of IS, particularly its connection to the SPF. When [+deictic] is selected, the SPF becomes

pivotal in determining the status of an eventuality: non-accessible worlds are those beyond the current speaker's experiential domain, even if they exist objectively and are accessible to other speakers. Conversely, when [-deictic] is chosen, the real world is universally defined in a generic sense for all speakers – thus erasing the third, evidential dimension. The criteria determining whether an eventuality belongs to the real world are objective, making it irrelevant whether a specific speaker witnesses an event or not.

The [\pm forward] parameter relates the location of ES to the temporal dimension: [+forward] specifies that ES can only occur in the future, along the timeline extending from the present; [-forward], by contrast, imposes no such temporal constraints. This parameter was designed to distinguish grammars that strictly adhere to temporal readings.

These are the main points of the two-layered approach developed in Escandell-Vidal (2022). The proposal aims to provide a framework for understanding linguistic variation and limiting the range of possible language types to a few predictable combinations. It does not aim to capture all the subtleties of the uses and interpretations found in actual utterances, which depend on a more intricate interplay of factors including *Aktionsart*, arguments, adjuncts, and other contextual considerations.

3 Revising the Simple Future in Ibero-romance. Grammatical Descriptions and Corpus Data

In this section, I will examine the uses of the simple future tense in Ibero-Romance languages, drawing on grammatical descriptions and corpus data. For each language, I will also discuss the classifications provided, highlighting how these often arise from a conflation of grammatical and pragmatic aspects.

3.1 The Simple Future in Catalan

The *Gramàtica de la llengua catalana* (GIEC) and its abridged version *Gramàtica essencial de la llengua catalana* (GEIEC) are the reference grammars by the Institut de Estudis Catalans. Both describe the simple future as having one proper use and some derived and modal uses.

a. Proper use: To indicate posteriority to the speech time:

- (5) a. *Demà em compraré una canya de pescar.*
Tomorrow I buy.FUT.1SG myself a fishing rod¹⁵

15 Future tense verbs will be glossed, not translated, to prevent biasing the interpretation by using the resources of English.

- b. *L'any vinent el nostre amic farà cent anys*
Next year our friend turn.FUT.3SG one hundred
- c. *Quan arribarem, encara {dormiran/estaran dormint}*
When we arrive.FUT.1PL, they sleep.FUT.3PL /be.FUT.3PL sleeping
(<https://geiec.iec.cat/text/20.5.3>)

The examples show that the verbs in the future tense all refer to eventualities located ahead of the moment of speaking. Adverbials, of course, contribute to making clear the intended interpretation.

b. Derived uses. These include:

i) As a past: Used mainly in historical or biographical texts to refer to a situation after a past event.

- (6) a. *Anys més tard publicarà la seva obra mestra.*
Years later he publish.FUT.3SG his masterpiece
- b. *Tot el segle XV reflectirà la lluita d'un país que no es resignava a una decadència inevitable.*
The entire 15th century reflect.FUT.3SG the struggle of a country that did not resign itself to inevitable decadence

ii) With generic value: To express truths or facts with general validity, in the same way as the present does.

- (7) *Un company com cal no t'enganyarà mai.*
A proper colleague never fool.FUT.3SG you

iii) With rhetorical value: To announce a situation the speaker presents as obvious (8a), to invite the interlocutor to intervene (8b) or to emphasise what will be announced next (8c).

- (8) a. *Com comprendràs, a mi això no em convé.*
As you understand.FUT.2SG, this does not suit me
- b. *Et confessaré que jo no pensava anar-hi.*
I confess.FUT.1SG that I did not intend to go
- c. *Et diré una cosa: t'estàs equivocant d'estratègia.*
I tell.FUT.1SG you something: you're wrong about your strategy

c. Modal uses: Referring “to situations that have not yet occurred” (GEIEC, <https://geiec.iec.cat/text/20.5.3>; Author's transl.). These include the following.

i) With imperative value

a. *Honraràs pare i mare.*

Honour.FUT.3SG (thy) father and (thy) mother

b. *Ara te n'aniràs a casa i demanaràs disculpes a l'àvia.*

Now you go.FUT.2SG home and apologiseFUT to grandma

ii) In legal texts

(9) *El centre d'informàtica proveirà els usuaris de la universitat de serveis informàtics i de telecomunicacions.*

The computer centre provide.FUT.3SG university users with information technology and telecommunication services

iii) For a polite effect

(10) *Ja em toca a mi? Doncs jo voldré un lluç de palangre grosset (dit al mercat).*

It's my turn? Well, I want.FUT.1SG a big longline hake (said at the market)

iv) For an intensive value (with nuances ranging from annoyance to disgust, disbelief or reply), with an idea of anticipation: it presents the situation as if it had to be confirmed by the interlocutor. The intensive value is common in interrogative sentences with an exclamatory intonation.

(11) a. *Ara em vindràs amb aquesta?!*

Now come.FUT.2SG to me with this?!

b. *Tan injustos serem que no l'hàgim sabut perdonar?!*

So unfair be.FUT.1PL that we couldn't forgive him?!

As an additional remark, both GIEC and GEIEC emphasise two contexts where the simple future is unacceptable – because it is considered a syntactic borrowing from Spanish.

It is not acceptable to use the simple future with conjectural value. For these cases, modal verbs are used (*deure* 'must', *poder* 'can') or adverbs of probability or possibility:

- *Veig que badalla: deu tenir gana* (I see he yawns: he must be hungry)

- *Fa molts badalls. Potser té gana* (He makes a lot of yawns. Maybe he's hungry)

- **Veig que badalla: tindrà gana* (I see he yawns: he be.FUT.3SG hungry. Sp ^{OK}Veo que bosteza: tendrá hambre).

The future with concessive value, used to partially refute the statement of the interlocutor, is not acceptable either. In these cases, other resources must be chosen, such as verbs *deure* or *poder* and adverbs expressing possibility or probability:

Deu/Pot tenir molts diners, però viu com un miserable (He must/may have a lot of money, but he lives like a wretch)

**Tindrà molts diners, però viu com un miserable*. (He have.FUT.3SG a lot of money, but he lives like a wretch. Sp^{OK} *Tendrá mucho dinero, pero vive como un miserable*) (GEIEC, <https://geiec.iec.cat/text/20.5.3>; Author's transl.)

A quick look at the above list shows that not all the described uses are distinct. To begin with, the so-called 'derived uses' do not deviate from the regular future time reference established as the basic meaning. So, in the 'narrative uses' in (6), the future denotes a past event not because this is an interpretive possibility of the future tense, but because the discourse situation has fictitiously moved back to a past time: the future remains a future in that context. The generic use in (7) is connected to the generic operator *mai* ('never'), which gives a persistence-in-time reading, and not to the simple future, which has its regular future time reference. Similarly, the examples in (8) have a clear future time reference, even if the interval between the time of speech and the projected eventuality is very short and mostly irrelevant.

The same applies to so-called 'modal uses', which GEIEC explicitly describes as referring to "situations that have not yet occurred", so they relate to scenarios in a time ahead of the speech time. The examples in (9)-(10) do not involve possible worlds in the traditional sense in modal logic. While modals express quantification over possible worlds (which can vehicle different degrees of epistemic commitment), the future signals a lack of evidence at the time of utterance. The sentences in (9) prescribe a course of action, rather than opening an array of possibilities. Because the eventualities in (9) describe desirable situations, over which the hearer has control, they easily acquire a directive interpretation. However, this is not an intrinsic property of the meaning of the future tense, but a by-product of several factors, including control, person, and social expectations, together with the meaning of the future itself. The same applies to (10), where a competent authority establishes a future course of action, thus giving rise to an instruction that must always be followed. These two examples relate to 'fossilised uses': as discussed above (§ 2.2), these are fixed expressions in limited registers and conventionalised phrases that have survived over time. They all have a formal or archaic flavour and are not part of the grammar internalised by native speakers in their natural environment. Finally, the use labelled as polite in (11) does not appear to be different from the rhetorical interpretations illustrated in (8) and described by GEIEC as a variety of derived, not modal, use: the eventuality is situated in the immediate future, not in a possible world. The same goes for the examples in (12), which exploit the contrast between what the future encodes and the current situation.

An anonymous reviewer offers two additional examples as possible arguments for the existence of modal uses of the future in Catalan.

- (12) a. *N'arribaràs a dir, de beneitures!* (Wheeler et al. 1999, 351)
You get.FUT.2SG to say some stupid things!
b. *T'atreviràs a negar-ho!* (Pérez Saldanya 2002, 2637–8)
You dare.FUT.2SG deny it!

Both examples exhibit a mirative flavour due to the combination of future tense semantics with interrogative modality in a context where an undesirable eventuality is taking place. The contrast between the linguistic formulation and the context gives rise to the mirative interpretation (for more details, see Escandell-Vidal, Leonetti 2021). In (13a), the exclamative presupposes the truth of the preja-cent ('You say [many] foolish things', with a covert degree quantifier), which is presented here by the speaker as an observable fact of which she has direct experience. By using the future tense, this behaviour is projected forward in the real world, as the natural continuation or development of an already attested event (in an inertia world: Dowty 1979; Varasdi 2017). The temporal interpretation is therefore based on the continuation of a present experience. Additional evidence supporting the temporal interpretation comes from the possibility of completing the utterance by the coda *si Deu no s'hi posa* (lit.: 'if God does not put himself in it', 'unless God intervenes'). This addition indicates that negative things will persist in the future in the real world unless there is direct action from God, as illustrated by the examples in (14).

- (13) a. *N'arribaràs a dir, de beneitures, si Deu no s'hi posa!*
You get.FUT.2SG to say some stupid things if God does not intervene!
'You will end up saying such nonsense if God doesn't intervene!'
b. *Ja en farém, de coses, si Deu no s'hi posa!*
We (=you) do.FUT.1PL some silly things, unless God intervenes!
'You will keep up doing [silly] things unless God intervenes!'
c. [...] *és un que rebrà, si Déu no s'hi posa, ¿veritat, Tonet?* (Corpus Textual Informatitzat de la Llengua Catalana)
'He will be punished unless God prevents it. Do you agree, Tonet?'

These utterances do not merely suggest possibilities; instead, they indicate the expected outcome of current circumstances projected into the future. Only divine intervention can alter the natural course of events. As shown in (14c), the coda can also occur in non-exclamative utterances. In addition, there is also a humorous, 'positive' counterpart to this expression (at least in the Balearic variety), indicating that things will go well unless something bad happens: *si es cuc no s'hi posa* (lit.: 'if the worm doesn't settle there', meaning 'unless

something bad unexpectedly occurs'). This reinforces the idea that what is involved here is a temporal, not a modal, use.

As for (13b), it does not seem different from (8a), which GEIEC classifies as a derived (not modal) rhetorical use. The speaker envisages the imminent occurrence of an undesired eventuality (namely, the hearer daring to deny something obvious). This utterance's strength and mirative force derive from the speaker's perceptual access to a preparatory condition that will result in a not-yet-experienced eventuality.

If these considerations are correct, Catalan grammar permits only temporal readings of the future tense. This means that the future tense in Catalan is used strictly to indicate eventualities that will happen in the future along the timeline, whereas the other dimensions seem to be excluded. As for the normative remarks banning conjectural and concessive uses, it must be kept in mind that, though these uses occasionally occur due to Spanish influence, they are infrequent (see § 3.4 below). In fact, for most Catalan-speaking people, the prohibition on conjectural and concessive uses is not an external prescriptive imposition but an integral part of their internalised grammar.

3.2 The Simple Future in Spanish

The *Nueva Gramática de la Lengua Española* (RAE, ASALE 2009, § 23.14), the main reference grammar for Spanish, offers a new and more structured description of the values of the future tense. Instead of presenting an extensive list of different uses, it organises them into two main categories: those involving future time reference and those involving conjecture. This systematisation marks a significant shift in grammatical descriptions, as it categorises the values based on their referential properties, moving away from previously unstructured and chaotic lists. According to RAE-ASALE (2009), values otherwise identified as requests, orders, recommendations, promises, commitments, warnings, threats, or suggestions are all instances of future time reference. The classical labels do not correspond to inherent properties of the future morphology alone; rather, they are the product of computing the semantic features encoded by the simple future with other components of the sentence (lexical meaning, person, control) and pragmatic factors (cost/benefit balance, desirability of the outcomes). The distinction between a promise and a threat, an instruction and an expression of goodwill has to do with pragmatic factors. This interaction helps create more specific sub-categories that do not change the fundamental classification as expressions of future time reference.

- (14) a. *Cumpliré mi palabra.*
I keep.FUT.1SG my word > promise
b. *Te recuperarás muy pronto.*
You get.FUT.2SG well very soon > expression of good wishes
c. *Te arrepentirás.*
You regret.FUT.2SG it > threat
d. *Le pedirás perdón.*
You ask.FUT.2SG for forgiveness > order
e. *Un poco de limonada te sentará bien.*
A little lemonade do.FUT.3SG you good > recommendation
f. *Te harás daño.*
You hurt.FUT.2SG yourself > warning
g. *Me disculpará usted.*
You_{FORMAL} excuse.FUT.3SG me > apology
h. *No te lo tendré en cuenta.*
I not hold.FUT.1SG it against you > exoneration
i. *Si debe permanecer de pie, se sentará diez minutos cada hora.*
If you_{FORMAL} must stand, you_{FORMAL} sit.FUT.3SG for ten minutes every hour > prescription
j. *El acusado cumplirá diez años de prisión mayor.*
The defendant serve.FUT.3SG ten years in a major prison > sentence

The second main category includes uses that express a supposition or a conjecture, i.e., indicating uncertainty about current events or situations

- (15) a. *Pensará que somos tontos.*
He think.FUT.3SG we are fools > supposition
b. *Llaman a la puerta. Será el cartero.*
They are knocking at the door. It be.FUT.3SG the postman > conjecture

After establishing this twofold distinction between temporal and conjectural uses, RAE-ASALE (2009) says that conjectural interpretations are modal, based on the possibility of paraphrasing them with modal adverbs.

The future has a modal value in these contexts. The paraphrases it allows are formed with adverbs of probability (*probablemente, posiblemente, seguramente*: ‘probably, possibly, surely’) or doubt (*tal vez, quizá, a lo mejor*: ‘maybe, perhaps, possibly’), in both cases with verbs in the present tense:

Sabrás que ya no vivo aquí. ~ Probablemente sepas que ya no vivo aquí.

You know.FUT.2SG that I no longer live here ~ You probably know that I no longer live here

Estarán en la cafetería. ~ Tal vez están en la cafetería.

They be.FUT.3PL in the cafeteria ~ Maybe they are in the cafeteria
(RAE, ASALE 2009, § 23.14h. Author’ transl.)

I believe, however, that the equation between conjectural and modal uses lacks a solid foundation. Firstly, the modal paraphrases are only loosely equivalent to the future-tensed versions and are not interchangeable in the same contexts. As discussed in § 2.3 above, there are good ontological reasons to distinguish modal worlds from non-experienced facts. The modal dimension involves possible worlds as ‘unreal’ alternatives to reality, while the conjectural interpretations refer to events in the real world that fall beyond the speaker’s direct perception. Since conjectures are hypotheses about real events, attempting to explain observed states of affairs by invoking a real cause, they are better treated as part of the perceptual space of others. Possibilities, by contrast, are representations grounded in alternative worlds. Adopting a three-dimensional model can easily accommodate this difference in a motivated way, explaining why the modal and evidential dimensions are ontologically distinct. I will turn to this issue below while discussing Portuguese modal interpretations.

3.3 The Simple Future in Portuguese

The *Nova Gramática do Português Contemporâneo* (Cuhna, Cintra 2017) can be considered as the standard Portuguese descriptive grammar. According to it, the uses of the simple future are characterised as follows (Cuhna, Cintra 2017, 472-4).

a. To indicate certain or probable future events, after the moment of speaking:

- (16) *As aulas começarão depois de amanhã*
The classes start.FUT.3PL the day after tomorrow

b. To express uncertainty (probability, doubt, supposition) about current events:

- (17) a. *Quem está aqui? Será um ladrão?*
Who is here? Be.FUT.3SG a thief?
b. *Há uma várzea no meu sonho,
Mas não sei onde será...*
There is a meadow in my dream,
But I don’t know where it be.FUT.3SG

c. As a polite form of the present tense:

- (18) *Não, não posso ser acusado. Dirá o senhor: mas como foi que aconteceram? E eu lhe direi: sei lá. Aconteceram: eis tudo.*

No, I cannot be accused. The lord say.FUT.3SG: but how did it happen? And I say.
FUT.31SG: I don't know. It happened: that's all

d. As an expression of a plea, a wish, an order, in which case the tone of voice can attenuate or reinforce the imperative character:

- (19) a. *Lerás porém algum dia*
Meus versos, d'alma arrancados,
D'amargo pranto banhados...
You read.FUT.2SG, however, one day
My verses, torn from my soul,
Bathed in bitter tears...
b. *Honrarás pai e mãe.*
Honour.FUT.2SG father and mother

e. In conditional statements, when referring to events of probable realisation:

- (20) *Se pensares bem, verás que não é isto.*
If you think carefully, you see.FUT.2SG that this is not the case

f. In narratives, to indicate that one action happened after another in the past (thus resembling the use of the historical present):

- (21) *João casou-se em 1922, mas Pedro esperará ainda dez anos para constituir família.*
João got married in 1922, but Pedro wait.FUT.3SG another ten years to start a family

As in the previous cases, the Portuguese interpretations revised so far can be organised into simpler and more coherent categories. The polite use illustrated in (19), the wish in (20a) and the use in conditional statements in (21) are all instances of future time reference. In fact, the example in (19) parallels examples (8) from Catalan and (15g) from Spanish, where the future tense is used to soften requests or statements by fictitiously delaying the eventuality to a later time. There is nothing special about the wish expressed in (20a) either: the first verse, with its direct appellation to a reader who can control an activity, refers to an event located in a future time. Similarly, conditional statements such as those in (21) have nothing unique: the simple future indicates future outcomes that depend on certain conditions being met.

On the other hand, orders and commandments, as in example (20b), while keeping their temporal orientation, belong to the non-active system discussed in § 2.2 above. The simple future is not a standard way of issuing commands, but a cultivated resource strategically invoking intertextuality and archaic uses. As for the narrative

use in example (22), referring to a future-in-the-past is not a distinctive feature of the simple future but the result of a shift in the deictic centre. This is a resource used in storytelling to present events as if they were unfolding before the reader's or the listener's eyes – a common cognitive strategy to create dynamic temporal frameworks within a narrative. This possibility is available for other tenses and in other languages.

The examples in (18) deserve a more detailed discussion. Both are used to illustrate uncertainty. However, the two examples are not alike. Example (18a) can be labelled as conjectural, since it offers an explanation for an observed real fact: perhaps some unusual noises are explained as the result of a thief having entered the house. As one of the anonymous reviewers has pointed out, this use crucially requires the interrogative modality. This does not mean, however, that conjectures are impossible in the declarative modality, as shown by the example in (23) (provided by the reviewer).

(22) *Neste momento, os assaltantes estarão fora do país.*

At this time, the robbers be.FUT.3PL out of the country

Marques (2020) explains this contrast in terms of the kind of evidence available to the speaker. The future is ruled out in (18a) because the speaker has perceptual evidence that supports her utterance, even if this is indirect evidence. In the postman example, the perceived eventuality is the ringing of the bell. This perceived fact enters as a premise in an inference also invoking pieces of general knowledge (that the postman usually comes at this time) and specific private information (that the interlocutors are not expecting anyone else). Therefore, for Portuguese it is the fact that one of the premises is located in the speaker's own perceptual field that excludes the use of the future tense with the declarative modality. In (23), by contrast, there is no immediate sensory evidence for the conjecture expressed and only general knowledge is invoked, so the use of the simple future is legitimate here.

In (18b), the situation is different: the meadow exists in the poet's dreams (in an alternative world), but she does not know its exact location. The future-tense sentence is not an explanation of an unknown reality, but the expression of a possibility, reinforced in the present case by its occurrence as an indirect interrogative. While the present tense would have also been adequate, the simple future opens a world of possible, alternative options more explicitly. The examples do not reflect ignorance but indeterminacy and vagueness. Here, the interpretation is modal because it allows different alternatives to coexist.

Modal uses have been described for Portuguese in the specialised literature. Oliveira and Lopes (1995, 111) underline that the future "is used for future time reference with a very strong modal information

and sometimes is basically modal” and provide the following examples and the subsequent comment.

(23) a. *Sera (FUT) verdade o que dizes (PRES) [mas eu não acredito (PRES)].*

It may be true what you say [but I don't believe it]

b. *Sera (FUT) a tua opinião [mas não é a minha].*

It may be your opinion [but it is not mine]

c. *A esta hora ja estará (PUT) em Nova Iorque.*

At this hour he will be already in New York

In the examples above we can observe that the Future does not give any temporal information but is basically modal. This is understandable since the future time is not factual; so the Future can be used to convey what is possible or probable. If we substitute the Future by the Present in those sentences, the modal effect is lost and (24a-b) would seem paradoxical. If we substitute it by *ir* + infinitive we get a reference to the future, but it cannot constitute a paraphrase of the sentences above (Oliveira, Lopes 1995, 111).

The translations offered by Oliveira and Lopes (1995) use a modal for examples (24a) and (24b) to convey the idea that the propositional content is presented as a possibility. In contrast, for example (24c), they use the future tense. Again, it must be highlighted that the examples in (24a) and (24b) do not express a conjecture (i.e., the best explanation for an unknown situation); rather, they present the propositional content as a mere possibility. The syntactic pattern in (24a) and (24b) is usually called ‘concessive’ because the construction acknowledges a point that might contradict another proposition, though this is not the case here (see the discussion in § 5.3). As discussed before, these uses are banned in Catalan but perfectly acceptable in Spanish (see §§ 3.1-3.2).

It is worth noting that the Spanish translations of (24a) and (24b) sound odd:

(24) a. **Sera verdad lo que dices pero yo no me lo creo.*

b. **Sera tu opinión, pero no es la mía.*

These Spanish examples are as odd and paradoxical as they would be in Portuguese (according to the authors) if the future tense were substituted by the present tense. This is an intuition shared by all the native speakers of Spanish consulted, as well as by Oliveira and Silva themselves (p.c.). The reason is, I argue, that Spanish does not have purely modal interpretations, so the only possible interpretation for (25a) and (25b) is as conjectures.

Modal uses in Portuguese can also be exemplified by the following examples from Cunha (2019, 40). The modal values associated with the simple future are quite evident and seem equivalent to an

epistemic modal. Again, these examples are impossible in Spanish, which would require an overt modal or a reportative conditional.

- (25) a. *Por outro lado, o Partido Popular, que se opõe veementemente a laços mais estreitos com a Europa, ganhará (= pode ganhar) mais um deputado, ficando com 26, segundo esta projecção inicial.* (Cunha 2019, 41)

‘On the other hand, the Popular Party, which vehemently opposes closer ties with Europe, may gain another deputy, bringing its total to 26, according to this initial projection.’

- b. *O “pequeno timoneiro”, 91 anos em Agosto, se lá chegar, já não é visto em público desde Fevereiro de 1994 e estará gravemente doente.* (Cunha 2019, 43)

‘The ‘little helmsman’, who will be 91 in August, if he makes it, has not been seen in public since February 1994 and might be severely ill.’

These facts suggest, therefore, that Portuguese allows a broader variety of uses, including temporal, conjectural and modal interpretations.

3.4 The Ibero-Romance Simple Future in 21st-century Corpora

After discussing the uses of the simple future found in descriptive grammars and specialised literature, a brief examination of corpus data can help to understand the extent and limits of variation among Ibero-Romance languages. According to the data gathered by Lara Bermejo (2021) based on 21st-century corpora,¹⁶ the situation can be summarised as shown in Figures 4-6. The maps reveal a landscape that aligns with the descriptions found in the literature.

The map of temporal uses shows that these are prevalent only in Catalan varieties, where the simple future is the preferred resource to indicate future time reference. The Balearic Islands’ variety shows the most consistent pattern: the simple future is used exclusively for future time reference, never for conjectures or to express a possibility. Valencian varieties, in contrast, show a mixed behaviour, with a prevalence of temporal uses, though not as strict as in other varieties. Spanish is the language where temporal uses are less frequent, while Galician and Portuguese show an intermediate state. Thus, the map demonstrates that all varieties have temporal uses, though not in the same proportion [fig. 4].

¹⁶ For Catalan, *Corpus Oral Dialectal* (COD), *Corpus Dialectal del Català* (DIALCAT); for Spanish, *Corpus Oral y Sonoro del Español Rural* (COSER); for Galician, *Corpus Oral Informatizado da Lingua Galega* (CORILGA); for Portuguese, *Corpus Dialectal para o Estudo da Sintaxe* (CORDIAL-SIN).

Conjectural uses involve the simple future as a resource to express hypotheses and speculations, i.e., to suggest real-world explanations for something unknown. These interpretations are absent in the Balearic Islands and most of Catalonia. Conjectures in the future are very frequent, by contrast, in Spanish and also in Galician. Portuguese allows the expression of conjecture but with a lower frequency. In a sense, the map of conjectural uses is the mirror image of the map of temporal uses [fig. 5].

The map of modal uses seems to require no specific comment. Only Portuguese illustrates this possibility, predominantly through the simple future in the subjunctive mood (not considered here). The rest of the Ibero-Romance varieties simply lack this option [fig. 6].

The overall conclusion is, therefore, that uses illustrated in corpora confirm the data found in grammatical descriptions. Corpora reveal the preferences expressed in a series of elicited tasks with specific contexts of use – ultimately, a matter of performance, not a representation of internalised grammatical knowledge. Consequently, whereas some results are neat and clear (such as the absence of modal uses in all languages except Portuguese), others might seem less conclusive. However, the trends and the contrasts are robust enough to support the insights of descriptive grammarians. This is the landscape that calls for an explanation in theoretical terms.

4 Semantic Micro-parameters for the Ibero-Romance Future

The data from the previous section show that Ibero-Romance languages differ in the number and the status of available readings. Catalan (allowing temporal readings only) occupies one end of the scale, with the most restrictive system; Spanish and Galician occupy an intermediate position, with temporal and conjectural readings; Portuguese is at the opposite end, with temporal, conjectural and modal readings. This distribution is shown in Table 1.¹⁷

¹⁷ Table 1 represents standardised grammatical systems without considering intralinguistic variation. The differences between Catalonia, Valencia, and the Balearic Islands within the Catalan-speaking regions are not considered. Table 1 does not reflect preference of use either. For European Spanish, the preferred uses are conjectural (81%), not temporal (19%) (Lara Bermejo 2021). This trend is even stronger in American varieties, where the ‘go-future’ and the simple present have become far more common, and temporal interpretations are almost absent in many varieties (Sedano 2006). The same applies to Portuguese, where the use of the future to express posteriority is rare and stylistically marked (Marques 2020). The situation in Portuguese is more complex because of the existence of a simple future in the subjunctive mood, which is the preferred form for modal interpretations.

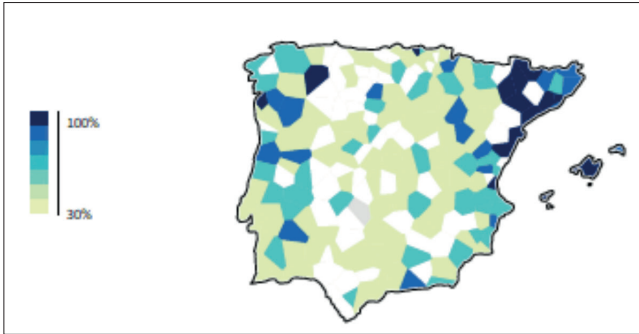


Figure 4 Temporal uses of the simple future (Lara Bermejo 2021, 149)

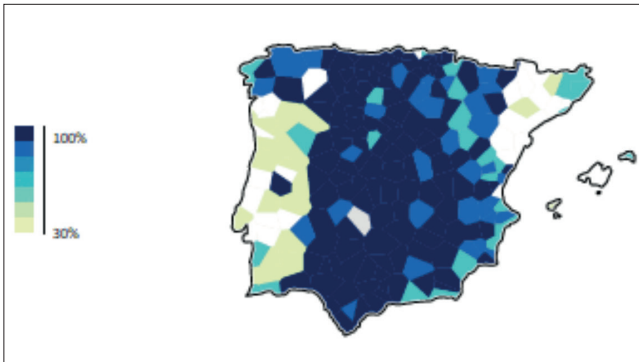


Figure 5 Conjectural uses of the simple future (Lara Bermejo 2021, 150)

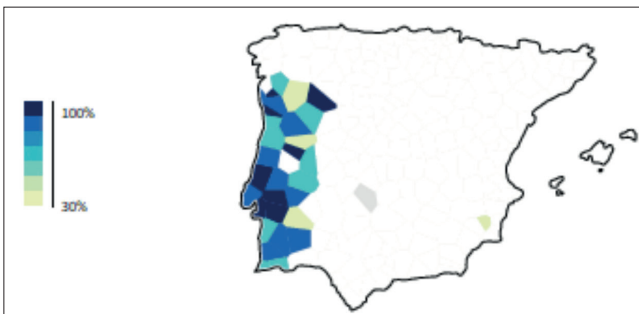


Figure 6 Modal uses of the simple future (Lara Bermejo 2021, 150)

Table 1 Interpretations of the future tense in Ibero-Romance languages

		Catalan	Spanish/ Galician	Portuguese
Interpretations	Temporal	+	+	+
	Conjectural	-	+	+
	Concessive	-	+	+
	Modal	-	-	+
	Reportative	-	-	+
	Deductive	-	-	+

In this section, I argue that the attested interpretations and their distribution across languages are not random but derive from a common logic. The resulting distribution can be accounted for with the tools developed in Escandell-Vidal (2014; 2022), to which I will add some slight refinements and modifications.

The hypothesis of the two-layered system (§§ 2.3-2.5) is that all Romance languages share the same core meaning, represented by the formula $FUT=(IS \subset DS) \ \& \ (ES \not\subset IS)$. According to this formula, the meaning encoded by the simple future imposes two conditions on the interpretation of future-tensed sentences: the existence of a relation of inclusion between the information situation IS and the discourse situation DS; and the existence of a non-accessibility relation between IS and the eventuality situation ES. Since ES must be outside IS, and IS must be included in DS, the consequence is that ES must be outside the speaker's perceptual field.

Interlinguistic variation results from different choices in a small set of micro-parameters that place additional constraints on some components of the formula. In Escandell-Vidal (2022), Catalan was described as imposing conditions on the relevance of the SPF (as a result of selecting [-deictic]) and also a [+forward] feature, forcing temporal interpretations. No parameter was suggested to account for the differences between Spanish and Portuguese.

Here, I suggest a modification of that proposal and argue that the only micro-parameters relevant to explain the differences among Ibero-Romance languages are those establishing constraints on the legitimate dimensions for the location of ES. Since there are three dimensions (temporal, modal and perceptual space), the hypothesis is that differences are limited to these three available possibilities. In this respect, the current proposal refines that in Escandell-Vidal (2022) by invoking fewer categories, thus providing a simpler and more powerful explanation.

4.1 The $[\pm T]$ Parameter

In a language that allows only temporal interpretations, a future-tensed sentence can only be interpreted as indicating that the ES is not accessible from the speech situation because it belongs to a future time. Therefore, the sole legitimate dimension for the location of the represented, non-accessible eventuality is the temporal one.

The first micro-parameter needed to account for variation among Ibero-Romance languages targets the temporal dimension. It can be labelled as $[\pm T]$ and controls the location of ES along the temporal axis. This parameter has two values. When the marked value $[+T]$ is selected, an extra condition is added to the semantic representation of the core meaning of the future tense, requiring that ES be obligatorily located forward along the temporal line. The ES is inaccessible from the IS and DS because it is positioned in the future, a time to which the speaker has no perceptual access. In languages selecting the $[+T]$ value, only the temporal dimension qualifies as a legitimate space to establish the non-accessibility of the ES. The selection of the marked value $[+T]$ creates an additional ordering relation between DS and ES: $[DS > ES]$. $[+T]$ languages allow only temporal, forward-looking readings. Interpretations that place the eventuality in other dimensions are excluded.

In contrast, languages selecting $[-T]$ do not impose this condition. Remember that $[-T]$ represents the unmarked option (the one not imposing a condition), not the negative one. Therefore, $[-T]$ languages can still have temporal interpretations, though these are not mandatory as they are in $[+T]$ languages. Unless further restricted, $[-T]$ languages can accommodate a wider range of interpretations in addition to the purely temporal one, allowing the simple future to represent not only eventualities that will occur in the future but also possibilities, predictions, or hypothetical scenarios.

Therefore, the $[\pm T]$ parameter makes it possible to establish the primary distinction between Catalan, on the one hand, and Spanish (Galician) and Portuguese, on the other. Catalan selects the positive value $[+T]$, determining that the only legitimate space for the ES to be located is ahead in time. In contrast, Spanish and Portuguese select the unmarked value $[-T]$, allowing the ES to be placed on the temporal axis as well as in other dimensions. This analysis aligns with the characterisations found in descriptive grammars and is corroborated by corpus data.

Needless to say, $[+T]$ languages permit a wide variety of more detailed temporal interpretations, ranging from private intentions to scheduled events, from directions for action to predictions based on objective knowledge, from imminent events to astronomically distant ones, as demonstrated by the examples in section 3. However, all these interpretations develop from a single abstract instruction,

requiring the represented ES to be ahead of IS and DS. As previously mentioned, this semantic import can be further exploited for additional illocutionary purposes, such as politeness, irony, surprise and adding vividness to a narrative. In all these cases, it is not the use of the future tense *per se* that has various meanings and encodes different interpretations. Instead, it is the interplay between the semantic features of the future tense and other grammatical features (such as person, control, generic operators, adverbials, and sentence type) along with contextual factors (such as the contrast with the current situation and the desirability of the outcome) that gives rise to interpretations that may be paraphrased in different ways, thereby creating the illusion of different readings. The encoded meaning provides a basic schema for constructing the final interpretation, and other linguistic and non-linguistic resources are then recruited to flesh out this abstract meaning with additional nuances.

4.2 The [\pm S] Parameter

Spanish, Galician and Portuguese are all [-T] languages, which entails that the non-accessibility relation between IS and Es is not restricted to the temporal dimension. Spanish, Galician and Portuguese also have conjectural interpretations, which indicates that eventualities out of the speaker's perceptual field can also be treated as non-accessible, together with temporal ones. However, only Portuguese has modal interpretations, which suggest that a second parameter must be in force that accounts for this difference.

A conjecture is a speculative proposition about a present state of affairs occurring in a space of the real world to which the speaker has no direct access. Therefore, languages such as Spanish and Galician, which allow conjectural readings but lack modal interpretations, seem to have a second condition establishing that the perceptual fields of other individuals (when non-overlapping with the speaker's own) also qualify as non-accessible locations.

The second parameter can be labelled [\pm S] and controls the access to others' perceptual spaces. Spanish and Galician select the marked value [+S]. This means that for these languages there is only another option for the location of the non-accessible ES: the perceptual field of a different individual. The speaker cannot have direct access to an eventuality that is outside her own perceptual field, even if the eventuality belongs to the real world. A conjecture expresses a present eventuality occurring in a non-accessible space.

The selection of the [+S] value creates an additional relation of simultaneity between the represented eventuality ES and the discourse situation DS: [DS, ES]. The two situations occupy the same temporal coordinates, though each is located in a different perceptual

space. The [+S] value also entails that the simple future is not licensed for eventualities in the modal dimension.

Since the $[\pm S]$ parameter is active only for languages having previously selected the [-T] value, Spanish and Galician are both [-T] [+S] languages. This means that inaccessible future times and others' perceptual spaces are the two legitimate dimensions where the non-accessible ES can be located. Eventualities in a future time and a different set of spatial coordinates are treated alike.

In contrast, languages that select the unmarked value [-S] place no such constraint. Crucially, this opens the option of having also modal interpretations, i.e., of locating the non-accessible ES in a possible world as well. Therefore, [-S] languages, being also [-T] languages, treat all three dimensions as legitimate options for the location of the non-accessible ES: they have temporal, conjectural and modal interpretations.

4.3 A Structured System of Distinctions

The two parameters described determine how the formula of the core meaning of the future tense is further constrained for Ibero-Romance languages. The resulting model can be represented as shown in Figure 7.

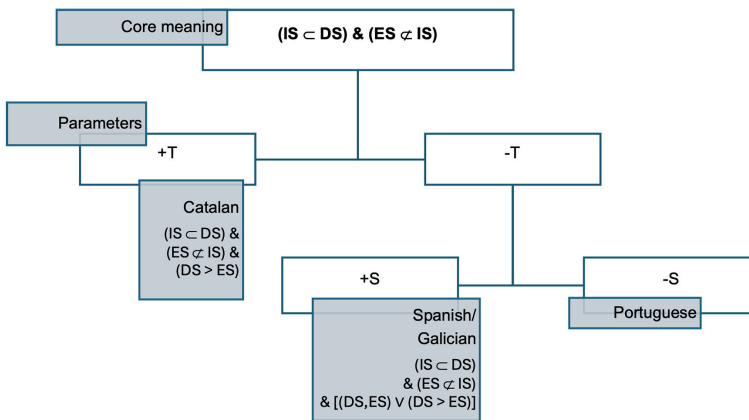


Figure 7 Core meaning and micro-parameters for the Ibero-Romance simple future

The model developed here aims to support the monosemic hypothesis by emphasising that the future tense has a single meaning, represented by its core layer and the parametric choices selected by each language. These two layers establish a unified set of semantic

features for each language, constraining the range of possible interpretations by defining the dimensions where the non-accessible eventuality can be located.

The meaning encoded by the future tense is neither temporal, conjectural, nor modal. None of these interpretations represents THE meaning of the simple future; rather, they are different ways of satisfying a single, more abstract interpretative instruction to interpret the propositional content as representing an eventuality outside the speaker's perceptual field. Temporal interpretations are just one way to satisfy this encoded instruction, as are conjectural and modal readings. The fact that different languages permit different types of interpretations merely indicates that each one establishes its own range of options, not to be confused with distinct meanings.

5 Discussion

5.1 The Simple Future as an Indirect Evidential

Characterising the simple future as an anti-experiential present amounts to saying that it is a marker of indirect evidentiality. As assumed in the literature (Willett 1988), the main divide among evidential distinctions is set between direct and indirect evidence. The speaker has direct evidence when she has perceptual or experiential access to an eventuality; otherwise, she has indirect evidence.

The idea that the future is an anti-experiential present is sometimes misunderstood in two ways. Some interpret it as suggesting that the future tense encodes two meanings: the temporal meaning and a new evidential meaning. Others believe that the future encodes only an evidential meaning at the expense of its temporal import. However, from the above proposal, it should be clear that both conclusions are wrong.

The three basic interpretations of future-tensed sentences (future eventualities, conjectures and possibilities) are manifestations of the same non-accessibility relation across the three dimensions where an eventuality outside the SPF can be located. All varieties of temporal readings (predictions, scheduled events, plans, proposals, commitments or directions for action, to name just a few) express eventualities located in the temporal dimension ahead of DS. As for conjectures and possibilities, these also fall outside the speaker's perceptual field, though in different dimensions. There are indeed strong ontological grounds for distinguishing between unobserved facts, on the one hand, and ideas in alternative worlds, on the other. Conjectures attempt to explain situations by positing non-observed causes presented as real events outside the speaker's immediate

perception. In contrast, possibilities involve hypothetical alternatives to reality. Adopting a three-dimensional model makes this difference clear.

Indirect evidentials fall into two categories: inferential and reportative. Inferential markers indicate that the speaker has inferred or deduced the informational content based on indirect signs, such as a perceived situation, general or specific knowledge, or a combination of both; conversely, information is marked as reported when the speaker has acquired it from another source as a result of some communicative activity: second-hand report, hearsay or rumour.

The three primary uses of the future tense depend on the speaker's mental processes, based on subjective or objective knowledge. As a result, the future tense might seem to mark a specific subclass of indirect evidence: inferential evidence. However, this does not cover the facts accurately: firstly, because in Portuguese, reportative readings are also present; and secondly, because in Spanish, the future tense is prohibited for expressing deductions, a subset of inferential uses. Consequently, the situation is more intricate than it initially appears. These issues will be explored in the following sections.

5.2 Conjectures and Deductions

Consider inference first. As is well known, not all inferences are of a kind. A further distinction must be drawn between intuitive and reflective inferences (Plungian 2001; Mercier, Sperber 2009). Intuitive inferences draw plausible conclusions in a fast and automatic way, without considering all the possibilities or gathering all the relevant information. Reflective inferences, in contrast, involve a conscious reasoning process that postulates a causal connection between a set of well-established premises and a conclusion, following a valid procedure. Conjectures are typical instances of intuitive inferences, whereas deductions are cases of reflective inference.

Spanish and Portuguese behave quite differently in this respect. In Spanish, only conjectures are possible. Portuguese, in contrast, can convey conjectures and deductions.

Conjectures have a number of distinguishing properties: i) they are the result of an intuitive process (i.e., a case of abductive, not deductive reasoning); ii) by putting forward a conjecture, the speaker offers the best explanation that comes to her mind for a situation; iii) the speaker does not commit herself to the truth of her propositional content; and iv) the explanation is presented as part of the real world, though the eventuality belongs to a different space, inaccessible to the speaker at speech time. This latter property places conjectures in the dimension of the perceptual space of other individuals.

Both Spanish and Portuguese define others' perceptual space as a legitimate dimension for non-accessible ES. The specific conditions of use, however, are not alike. Spanish can express conjectures about observed facts, the only condition being that the speaker cannot provide better grounds for the propositional content than her own mental processes (Escandell-Vidal 2014). Portuguese, in contrast, cannot. As Marques (2020, 15-16) puts it, in Portuguese, "the partial knowledge on which the speaker bases his inference does not include facts available at the context of utterance". This suggests that there are additional constraints on the status and nature of the situation motivating the conjecture: in Spanish, it can include worldly facts, whereas in Portuguese, it can contain only representations.

However, this is not a problem for the model presented here. The requirement in the core meaning of the simple future establishes that the ES cannot be included in the IS. It places no further conditions on other facts that can be causally related to the ES without being the ES. Therefore, both Spanish and Portuguese satisfy the condition on the non-accessibility of ES, though Portuguese does so by adding extra constraints. The competition with other legitimate forms to express conjectures, such as the modal verbs, might have forced this restriction. Determining the exact nature of this requirement is beyond the scope of this paper since the constraints involved do not target the situations related by the formula.

Portuguese diverges from Spanish also in the possibility of using the future to indicate the result of deductive reasoning, i.e., to introduce a conclusion drawn from explicit, objective premises. This is illustrated in the examples in (27), both from Marques (2020, 7).

(26) a. *Na última contagem havia 73 pessoas inscritas. Entretanto já passou algum tempo e houve divulgação, mas o programa não é muito apelativo. Por isso, o número atual não ultrapassará as 100 inscrições.*

'At the last count there were 73 people enrolled. Meanwhile, some time has passed and there have been publicity actions, but the program is not very appealing. Therefore, the current number will not surpass 100 people inscribed.'

b. *Sabemos que os casos mais complexos são enviados para outra unidade e que o caso da Ana era particularmente complexo. Portanto, terá sido encaminhado para os serviços centrais.*

'We know that the more complex cases are sent to another unit and that Ana's case was particularly complex. Therefore, it will have been sent to the central services.'

In the corresponding Spanish examples, the simple future would be excluded. This might seem undesirable since deduction is a subclass of indirect evidence. However, in the model presented here, deduction aligns with modal uses, not with conjectures. Conjectures present unobserved facts as the explanation for a situation, thus locating

the eventuality in a non-accessible region of the real world. By contrast, the conclusion of a deductive process is a proposition derived from combining premises through a valid procedure, not an unobserved worldly fact in the perceptual space of others. Reflective inferences are demonstrative or apodictic processes and are, therefore, true in all possible worlds by definition. What is involved in deduction, therefore, is universal quantification over possible worlds, rather than the location of an eventuality in a non-accessible experiential space.

If deductions are a kind of modal use, it is no surprise that Portuguese can use the future to express the conclusions of demonstrative processes. Portuguese licenses the simple future to express eventualities in the modal dimension. The fact that Spanish does not allow this use follows from the broader principle that excludes the modal dimension as a legitimate space for the simple future. In this respect, Spanish aligns with other Romance languages such as French and Italian, which do not permit the future tense for deductive inferences either (see Dendale 2001 for French and Pietrandrea 2005 for Italian).

5.3 Reportative Readings

Reportative evidence is the second subclass of indirect evidence. Portuguese is the only Ibero-Romance language that uses the simple future for reportative purposes. The examples in (26) above from Cunha (2021) and the ones in (28), from Marques (2020), illustrate this possibility.

- (27) a. (*Segundo o INE,*) a taxa de desemprego estará atualmente em 9,3%.
'According to the NSI, the unemployment rate will now be at 9.3%.'
b. (*De acordo com a polícia,*) o suspeito terá feito reféns.
'According to police, the suspect will have taken hostages.'

The reported nature of these examples is clear from the frames that identify the source of the information. This use seems legitimate since the speaker has no direct evidence about the eventuality at speech time. However, the fact that the speaker is reproducing information obtained from others suggests that the situation where the propositional content was acquired is in the past, not included in the discourse situation as predicted in the model. In fact, Spanish would use the so-called journalistic conditional in these contexts, to emphasise that the information was acquired previously. How do these examples fit in the model presented here?

Crucial in these examples is the need to identify overtly the information source. Without this, these utterances would be interpreted as conjectures. This suggests that in Portuguese, reported pieces of

information are treated as part of the perceptual/epistemic space of other individuals (or institutions), provided that the source is explicitly named. My hypothesis is, therefore, that in Portuguese the future tense can locate not only worldly facts but also propositions in the space of others. If this explanation is correct, reportative uses can be considered part of the subclass of readings related to spaces in the real world that fall outside the speaker's own. Some adjustments would be needed to account for this requirement. Again, I will not pursue this issue here since it is not related to the three situations in the model.

Knowledge obtained from others may also play a role in determining the falsehood of a future-tensed sentence, even in non-reportative environments – an issue raised by one of the anonymous reviewers. The reviewer writes:

Consider a situation in which it is part of the common knowledge of the participants that Comet X passes through Earth's orbit on January 15th. The sentence *O cometa X passará pela órbita terrestre no próximo dia 1 de dezembro* ('Comet X will pass through Earth's orbit on the 1st of December') is clearly false, even though it is not part of the evidence of the speaker and hearer; however, if the absence of perceptual information at the utterance time is the only relevant source to license the simple future, it should be considered true, contrary to facts.

If the sentence *O cometa X passará pela órbita terrestre no próximo dia 1 de dezembro* seems "false", it is not because it does not correspond to the facts, but because it misreports the information provided. What is crucial here is that the speaker reproduces information learned from others. The use of the future tense is not the speaker's but the astronomers' choice. Therefore, I would say that *Comet X will pass through Earth's orbit on January 15th* accurately reflects astronomers' predictions, whereas *Comet X will pass through Earth's orbit on the 1st of December* does not. In this situation, we will be more inclined to refute the utterance by saying *You are wrong*, or *You got it wrong*, rather than *That's false*.

Therefore, in this scenario, rather than saying that the sentence is false, I would argue that neither *Comet X will pass through Earth's orbit on January 15th* nor *Comet X will pass through Earth's orbit on the 1st of December* can be true at speech time, as there is no actual state-of-affairs that exemplifies those propositions yet. As of today, despite the accuracy of astronomers' calculations, it is impossible to know for certain whether 'Comet X passing through Earth's orbit on the 15th of January' will eventually be a worldly fact, given that several unforeseen, catastrophic events could still prevent this from happening.

5.4 Concessive Readings

Finally, let me add a quick note on so-called concessive readings. These are found in examples like (29) and (30).

(28) A: – *Juan es muy inteligente.*

Juan is very intelligent

B: – *Será muy inteligente, pero no estudia.*

He be.FUT.3SG very intelligent, but he doesn't study (enough)

(29) A: – *Estás desvairada.* (from Boléo 1973 *apud* Marques 2020)

You are out of your mind

B: – *Sim, estarei. Mas que me deixem.*

Yes, I be.FUT.3SG. But leave me alone

As the above examples illustrate, concessive readings occur only in very specific discourse settings: when speaker B refutes a statement by speaker A, repeating A's words in the future tense and adding an adversative clause to invalidate or diminish the argumentative force of the previous statement. Two considerations are in order here: first, there is nothing concessive in the future *per se*; instead, it is the whole structure and the entire discourse situation that creates this interpretation; and second, the future-tensed sentence must repeat the same propositional content from the previous conversational turn.

I propose that concessive uses of the future tense strategically exploit conjectural interpretations. Specifically, concessive interpretations require a context where the speaker presents the propositional content that the interlocutor has just uttered as something that is not part of her current perceptual experience. This sets up a contrastive or adversative dynamic: by not accepting the previous assertion, the speaker distances herself from her interlocutor, reinforcing the refutative intention. This use exploits the same mechanism as irony, where the contrast between the attested situation and the utterance content creates a distancing effect.

This context-dependency interpretation is key to understanding concessive uses. The use of modals in English translations should not obscure the fact that a very specific context is required, one in which a previous statement with the same content has been uttered.

6 Conclusions

In this paper, I have argued that a monosemic account of the simple future in Ibero-Romance languages is feasible despite the apparent diversity in interpretations. The active and productive grammar of

the simple future can be explained through a two-layered system, as proposed by Escandell-Vidal (2022), comprising a core meaning and a set of semantic micro-parameters. The core meaning is represented by the formula $FUT = (IS \subset DS) \ \& \ (ES \not\subset IS)$. The first conjunct establishes an inclusion relation between the information situation IS and the discourse situation DS. The second conjunct imposes a non-accessibility relation between IS and the eventuality situation ES.

While adhering to the general framework in Escandell-Vidal (2022), I have suggested a modified version in which variation among Ibero-Romance languages involves only micro-parameters that define the legitimate dimension where the ES can be located: temporal, modal and perceptual. To this end, only two semantic micro-parameters are needed: $[\pm T]$ and $[\pm S]$.

$[+T]$ governs the obligatoriness of temporal readings. The $[+T]$ value imposes temporal readings as the only dimension where the non-accessible ES can be located; the $[-T]$ value is the unmarked option, placing no such constraint.

When the $[-T]$ value is selected, a second parameter $[\pm S]$ activates. It specifies the availability of others' perceptual spaces as a legitimate dimension for a non-accessible ES. The $[+S]$ value imposes conjunctural interpretations, specifying that only the perceptual space of other individuals is a legitimate option; the $[-S]$ value, in contrast, leaves open the whole array of possibilities.

Together, these two parameters determine how the future tense is used and interpreted in each Ibero-Romance language. The differences among Ibero-Romance languages – and, presumably, among other Romance varieties not considered in this study – are rooted in the licensing conditions governing the location of the ES in the three-dimensional space presented in § 2.3.

The instructions encoded for each language are as follows:

Catalan: $FUT_{Cat} = (IS \subset DS) \ \& \ (ES \not\subset IS) \ \& \ (DS > ES)$

Spanish: $FUT_{Sp} = (IS \subset DS) \ \& \ (ES \not\subset IS) \ \& \ [(DS, ES) \vee (DS > ES)]$

Portuguese: $FUT_{Port} = (IS \subset DS) \ \& \ (ES \not\subset IS)$

The uses deriving from this system are summarised in Table 2.

Table 2 Dimensions and uses of the future tense in Ibero-Romance languages

		Catalan	Spanish Galician	Portuguese	
Dimensions	T (Temporal)	Future events	+	+	+
	S (Perceptual space)	Conjectures (+concessive uses)	-	+	+
		Reportative uses	-	-	+
	W (Modal)	Possibilities	-	-	+
		Deductions	-	-	+

The system presented here does not aim to account for all the aspects of the various readings of future-tensed sentences. As already mentioned, the semantics of the future is underspecified and many other factors also contribute to the final interpretation. Among these factors is the existence of other competing forms (such as the simple present and the *go*-future) that express meanings closely related to those of the future tense, and the preferences in their distribution certainly impact their attested uses. Neither in Spanish nor in Portuguese is the future the preferred form to convey futurity (indeed, in some Spanish-American varieties, the simple future has almost disappeared with this interpretation). However, this should not obscure the fact that temporal readings are still a possible option for the system. If this option were to disappear entirely, a new system would emerge – one forbidding the location of the represented eventuality ahead in the timeline.

For Portuguese, additional constraints seem to be in force, relative to the kind of knowledge or evidence that can be used in inferential processes. Portuguese also allows placing propositional content in others' space, not only worldly facts. These differences surely deserve more detailed consideration but are out of the aims of this paper.

One of the advantages of this model is that it postulates a single mechanism for the three families of readings. Starting from the present, the interpretation 'moves' in one of the possible directions (depending on the language) to locate a non-accessible eventuality. Thus, intentions and predictions 'move' along the timeline, conjectures 'move' to a parallel space in the real world, and possibilities 'move' to an alternative world. Both conjectures and possibilities target eventualities aligned with the temporal point in the speaker's real world: conjectures invoke present, though unobserved, eventualities, while modal readings express present, imagined alternatives.

The most important advantage of the framework presented in this paper is, I think, that it offers a simpler and more uniform explanation for the patterns in the use of the simple future in Ibero-Romance languages. It reveals how each language can impose unique

constraints on the properties of represented eventualities within a common structure. By limiting possible variation to a restricted set of micro-parameters, this proposal simplifies the understanding of linguistic differences and allows clear predictions about a central set of questions: how, why and to what extent languages can differ.

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