

Distribution of Future Time Forms in Northern Colombian Spanish

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1. Background

To express futurity in the indicative mood Spanish speakers choose from among three interchangeable forms: the morphological future (MF), the simple present tense (SP), and the periphrastic future (PF), illustrated in (1), (2), and (3) respectively.

- (1) *Cantaré mañana.* '[I] will sing tomorrow'.
- (2) *Canto mañana.* '[I] sing tomorrow'.
- (3) *Voy a cantar mañana.* '[I]m going to sing tomorrow'.

The PF is formed by the simple present indicative of *ir* 'go' + *a* 'to' + *infinitive*. It is equivalent to the English periphrastic form *to be going to + infinitive*.

The expression of futurity in Spanish is undergoing a change. Gutiérrez (1995:214) asserts that as part of this change, the PF is favored by Spanish speakers at the expense of the MF. Studies regarding the expression of futurity throughout the Spanish-speaking world report the PF to be the dominant form. Conversely, the use of the MF is reported to have either decreased considerably or disappeared. The earlier studies, qualitative in nature, have been validated by more recent quantitative analyses.

The PF is reported as the preferred expression of futurity in Caribbean Spanish, in Chile (Silva-Corvalán and Terrell 1989), in Venezuela (Sedano 1993), in the Southwest US, Mexico City, and Morelia, Mexico (Gutiérrez 1995), and in the speech of Puerto Rican New Yorkers (Zentella 1997). Similarly, the MF is considered a receding form in educated Mexican Spanish by Moreno de Alba (1970). Moreover, the MF is reported to have disappeared in Colombia (Montes Giraldo 1962), Mexico, Argentina, Ecuador, and Chile (Lope Blanch 1972:144), as well as in the Spanish of the Colombian, Dominican, and Puerto Rican communities in New York City (Zentella 1990). Thus, Silva-Corvalán (1988, 1994), van Naersen (1983, 1995), and Zentella (1997) indicate the preferential use of the periphrastic over the morphological future in all varieties of Spanish.

This study was conceived as an empirical examination of the expression of futurity in Spanish such as that conducted by Gutiérrez (1995). I conducted parallel statistical analyses for each variant as I explored the data in search of correlations among linguistic factor groups. In this study I seek to answer the following research question:

How are the morphological future, the simple present, and the periphrastic future distributed in Coastal Colombian Spanish, and how do internal constraints affect these variants?

I tested eight internal factor groups which operate at three syntactic levels. Three factor groups operate at the whole clause level: imminence of a future event, clause length, and clause type. I tested three factor groups that operate at the subject level: grammatical number of the subject, presence and position of the subject, and grammatical person and animacy of the subject. I focused on the verb in exploring the constraints which operate at the predicate level. In so doing, I tested two factor groups: presence or absence of time markers, and length of MF inflection.

2. The Data and the Speakers

The data I used in conducting this study consist of roughly 30 hours of tape-recorded speech collected during fieldwork in 1997 and 1999. My speaker pool includes 10 female and 10 male individuals born between 1912 and 1984. Three of them were born before 1930; three speakers were born in the 1940s, five in the 1950s, four in the 1960s, one in the 1970s and four in the 1980s. They are all residents of the metropolitan area of Barranquilla, the fourth largest city in Colombia with a population of roughly one million people. They live in middle and working class communities and have lived most of their lives within a hundred miles of their birthplace. Their native dialect is the Northern coastal variety of Colombian Spanish which is the Colombian version of Caribbean Spanish. The level of educational achievement of these speakers ranges from middle school to some graduate education.

3. Results

In general, the results of this study identify the factors which significantly constrain the expression of futurity in Northern Colombian Spanish. These results reveal a complex pattern of linguistic forces with factors that are significant in the occurrence of all three variants such as imminence of a future event. The results also reveal that the occurrence of *ser* and *ver* strongly promote the retention of the MF. However, such factors as the absence of time markers and multi-syllabic verbs exert a favorable effect on the expansion of the PF. To assess the distribution of forms in the expression of the future, I drew on Goldvarb statistical analyses. I focused my analysis on the free alternation of the SP, the MF, and PF when they express future reference. In presenting my results, I begin by setting forth the distribution of the variants. Then I discuss those factors whose correlation with the variants is statistically significant.

3.1. Distribution of Variants

The frequency distribution for future time forms in Colombia is presented in Table 1. This distribution provides evidence that the MF is still strong in Colombian Spanish, despite the report of its disappearance (Montes Giraldo 1962). The frequency registered by the simple present (35.9%) tells us that this paradigm still preserves its role as a future marker which, according to Elcock (1960:105), already existed in later Latin and was preserved subsequently. Besides being an established means to express futurity, its frequency of occurrence suggests that SP will continue to compete with the periphrastic future.

Table 1. *Distribution of forms*

Form	Raw Frequency	Percentage
Morphological Future	269	18.2%
Simple Present Tense	533	35.9%
Periphrastic Future	681	45.9%
Total	1,483	100.0%

The fact that the PF occurs with the greatest frequency is congruent with the reports that this form is the preferred expression of futurity in the Spanish-speaking world (Silva-Corvalán 1988, 1994; van Naersen 1983:58 and Zentella 1997). These results also reflect a pattern that occurs in Romance and, according to Dahl (1985:110), Fleischman (1982:1), and van Naersen (1995:461), crosslinguistically where there has always been more than one way of expressing future reference. The most frequent occurrence of PF has parallels in other Romance languages including most varieties of spoken French

(Poplack and Turpin 1999), Brazilian Portuguese (Thomas 1969, Kahane and Hutter 1953), Lisbon Portuguese, and creole languages (Fleischman 1982).

In the pages that follow, I address the Goldvarb tendencies registered by each linguistic factor group as it affects the distribution and occurrence of the MF, the SP, and the PF in Colombian Spanish. In a Goldvarb analysis with statistical significance determined using a threshold for p of 0.05, individual probabilities greater than 0.5 favor the occurrence of a variant, while those less than 0.5 disfavor it. The further a value is from 0.5, the stronger the effect of that factor. Values presented within brackets correspond to factor groups that did not reach statistical significance.

3.2 *Factors Significant in the Occurrence of the Variants*

The figures presented in Table 2 provide the frequencies for all significant factor groups in the occurrence of the three variants. For the most part, the factor groups which influence the occurrence of each one of the variants under study are the same. The results presented in Table 2 show that for the most part, where MF does not play a role, PF and SP are two sides of the same coin. That is, for the most part, those factors which favor one form disfavor the other and vice versa.

3.2.1 *Imminence of a Future Event*

Imminence of a future event proved statistically significant in the occurrence of all three variants examined. The results presented in Table 2 show that statements in the distant or unbounded future promote the occurrence of the MF but disfavor the occurrence of both SP and PF. While statements in the near future favor the occurrence of both the SP and the PF, these statements also disfavor that of the MF. The results for imminence of a future event also seem to indicate an opposition between the MF on the one hand, and both the SP and the PF on the other. These tendencies run contrary to what Poplack and Turpin (1999:12) report for Canadian French where statements in the near future favor the MF and those in the distant future constrain it. As opposed to many other languages which have separate forms for near and distant future (Singler 1984:343), Spanish does not (Comrie 1985:46). The MF, however, continues to be associated with temporal distance and is favored in the expression of posteriority when a situation is perceived as more distant (Gutiérrez 1995:223). Colombians continue to use this variant in a manner consistent with its traditionally attributed semantic value.

The favorable effect of statements in the distant or unbounded future is also congruent with the semantic nature of MF which is associated with a concept of posteriority or subsequence. The fact that speakers have continued to use MF to indicate the lack of imminence of the events in their statements further indicates that MF has not completely relinquished its traditional semantic domain of posteriority to PF (Fleischman 1982). Another reason why statements in the distant or unbounded future favor MF may be that speakers use this variant to avoid ambiguity since the simple present may lead listeners to interpret certain statements as indicating general truth or as referring to the habitual present rather than to the future.

The fact that statements in the near future promote the occurrence of both the SP and the PF seems to indicate that the meaning of imminence continues to be attached to both of these forms, and the use of the SP and the PF can be argued to convey a sense of immediacy. Additionally, statements in the near future favor the SP for the obvious reason of providing the link of present-tense marking to near-present events. On the other hand, in the case of the PF, the semantic shift away from a specifically imminent meaning found, e.g., in Mexican American Spanish, still has not taken hold in Colombian Spanish. That is, Colombian speakers still do not fully associate the periphrasis with a sense of posteriority.

3.2.2 *Grammatical Number of the Subject*

The grammatical number of the subject reached statistical significance in the occurrence of the MF and the SP but not in the appearance of the PF. Plural subjects favor the occurrence of the MF and singular subjects disfavor it. The tendencies for the SP run contrary to those for the MF, i.e., singular subjects promote its appearance and plural subjects constrain it. One likely hypothesis to account for these results lies on two morphosyntactic features that are characteristic of the SP future conjugation. Firstly, the first person plural paradigm of the simple present, illustrated in (4), is homophonous with that of the simple past tense. If there is not enough contextual information or the speaker does not provide additional details, it would not be apparent whether (4) refers to the past, the present or the future.

Table 2. *Internal factors significant in the occurrence of the three variants*

Factor	MF	N	%	SP	N	%	PF	N	%
<i>Imminence of Future Event</i>									
Distant & Unbounded Future	.639	198/775	25%	.466	253/775	32%	.460	324/775	41%
Near Future	.327	52/616	8%	.543	239/616	38%	.550	325/616	52%
<i>Grammatical Number of Subject</i>									
Plural	.590	72/363	19%	.393	98/363	26%	[.537]	198/363	55%
Singular	.470	197/1119	17%	.535	434/1119	38%	[.488]	488/1119	43%
<i>Length of MF inflection</i>									
Ser & Ver	.739	74/191	38%	.258	37/191	19%	.549	80/191	41%
Multisyllabic	.460	112/747	14%	.456	229/747	30%	.579	406/747	54%
Disyllabic	.458	65/422	15%	.652	206/422	48%	.377	151/422	35%
Ir	.536	14/81	17%	.698	47/81	58%	.288	20/81	24%
Dar	.378	4/41	9%	.509	14/41	34%	.563	23/41	56%
		269/1483	18%		533/1483	35%		681/1483	45%

Table 2. Internal factors significant in the occurrence of the three variants (Continued)

Factor	MF	N	%	SP	N	%	PF	N	%
<i>Animacy of the subject</i>									
Non-Human	.604	140/522	26%	[.508]	192/522	36%	.423	190/522	36%
Human	.443	129/960	13%	[.496]	340/960	35%	.542	491/960	51%
<i>Presence of a Time Marker</i>									
Present	.605	100/404	24%	.600	177/404	43%	.341	127/404	31%
No Time Marker	.460	169/1079	15%	.462	356/1079	32%	.561	554/1079	51%
<i>Clause Length</i>									
<6 words	[.513]	81/462	17%	.553	186/462	40%	.444	195/462	42%
6 or more words	[.494]	188/1021	18%	.476	347/1021	33%	.525	486/1021	47%
<i>Type of Clause</i>									
Declarative or Conditional	[.502]	224/1192	18%	.520	444/1192	37%	.480	524/1192	43%
Interrogative or Negative	[.492]	45/291	15%	.419	89/291	30%	.581	157/291	53%
		269/1483	18%		533/1483	35%		681/1483	45%

- (4) *Comenzamos temprano.*
 '[We] started/start early.'

Secondly, the second and third person plural conjugations of the simple present are also homophonous. For instance, it is not clear whether in (5) the subject is the second or the third person plural.

- (5) *Si salen el lunes temprano, llegan a hora de almuerzo.*
 'If [you/they] leave early on Monday, [you/they], arrive at lunch time.'

An explanation for the favorable effect of plural subjects on the occurrence of the MF may be the frequent occurrence of statements in which the subject has no specific referent, also found in English as in (6). When unknown subjects occur, they are marked in the third person plural.

- (6) *Tendrán que ponerle un reemplazo mientras tanto.*
 'They will have to put a replacement in the meantime.'

3.2.3 Grammatical Person and Animacy of the subject

The grammatical person and animacy of the subject factor group reached statistical significance in the occurrence of the MF and the PF but not in the appearance of the SP. Animacy of the subject, however, proved to exert a greater effect than grammatical person in both cases, with non-human subjects favoring the MF and disfavoring the PF, and human subjects having the opposite effect. These results indicate that the ongoing evolution of the Spanish future is promoted by human and constrained by non-human subjects. As illustrated in (7), non-human subjects occur frequently in the MF. The favorable effect human subjects have on the PF may be prompted by the fact that this variant is most strongly promoted by second and first person subjects, respectively, which refer exclusively to humans.

- (7) *Este... **funcionarán** los servicios, lo que es agua luz telefono gas, todas esas cosas.*
 'Eh... the utilities will work, that is water, electric, telephone, gas, all those things.'

3.2.4 Length of MF inflection

Length of MF inflection exerts strong influences on the occurrence of all three variants. The figures in Table 2 also show that while three monosyllabic verbs, *ser*, *ver* and *ir*, favor the occurrence of the MF, all other verbs disfavor it. *Ir* and disyllabic verbs favor the SP and disfavor the PF. *Ser*, *ver*, *dar* as well as verbs with multi-syllabic MF inflections favor the PF and disfavor the SP. With the exception of *dar*, those verbs that favor the MF also favor the PF.

One reason for the probability levels registered by *ser* and *ver* seems to be the ongoing transfer of domains from morphological to periphrastic futures attested crosslinguistically (Bybee and Pagliuca 1987; Fleischman 1982, 1983; Ultan 1978). This transfer of domains is seen as a natural consequence of the shift from the preference for analytic future forms to the detriment of synthetic ones that the Romance languages are currently undergoing (Schwegler 1990). *Ser* and *ver*, also strongly favor the retention of MF. Moreover, the high frequency with which *dar*, *ser*, *ver* occur in PF—due to the fact that *ser* far outnumbers *dar* and *ver*—is sufficient to cause the statistical result. On the other hand, the tendencies regarding *ir*, which favors the prospective use of SP and disfavors PF, seem to be a consequence of its evolution from lexical verb to auxiliary. In discussing lexical verbs turned future auxiliaries, Fries (1927:92) points out that their original meanings gradually fade as these verbs become or auxiliaries. The newly acquired semantic nature of *ir* is manifested in the fact that it hardly occurs as a main verb in the PF, and when it does, it often appears in its reflexive guise as *irse*. The infrequent occurrence of *ir* in the PF analogous to what Singler (1984:348) reports for Liberian English where *go* rarely occurs as the main verb in the equivalent periphrastic construction.

In explaining these results, for the tendencies registered by *ser* and *ver*, I would like to refer to the relevance of formulaic or fixed expressions such as those in (8) - (10). Formulaic expressions are usually short statements that often have modal connotations rather than indicate full temporal futurity. Since short formulaic expressions containing monosyllabic verbs such as (8) and (9) occur frequently in Spanish, speakers may overgeneralize and expand their use to other contexts.

- (8) *Amanecerá y veremos.* ‘[It] will dawn, and [we] will see’.
 (9) *Otra vez será.* ‘Another time [it] will be/happen’.
 (10) *Ahora verás.* ‘Now [you] will see’.

The fact that most formulaic statements indicate modality in addition to futurity confirms the observations made by Sedano (1993) and Gutiérrez (1995), who note the frequent occurrence of the MF expressing modality. The occurrence of MF in statements that express modality rather than a purely temporal meaning corresponds to a larger crosslinguistic tendency indicated by Bybee and Pagliuca (1987:118 ff.) and Ultan (1978). This development of this semantic domain for the MF reflects semantic bleaching and exerts a significant force in its retention. Despite having morphosyntactic future marking, these statements have modal connotations. Thus, frozen formulaic expressions which indicate modality and which may not fully entail posteriority promote the retention of the MF. MF statements commonly retain the semantic feature of possibility and a degree of uncertainty because they have not occurred yet. Since we are dealing with irrealis events that may not ever occur, we cannot fully determine whether the speaker is certain that the event will take place.

The analysis of the effect of disyllabic verbs is important since these are some of the most frequently occurring verbs in Spanish. As Lloyd (1987:367) and Penny (2002:213) indicate, these verbs still maintain the syncopated future inflections they already had in Medieval Spanish. The effect of disyllabic verbs would also give us additional information as to how irregular verbs impact the expression of futurity. As shown in Table 2, disyllabic verbs favor the SP and disfavor both the PF and the MF. These verbs are irregular in the MF as opposed to their monosyllabic and multisyllabic counterparts. Disyllabic verbs do not occur frequently in the MF. The lack of occurrence of these verbs in the MF seems to have been inherited by the PF as a result of the transfer of domains from MF to PF and may be one of the reasons for the disfavoring effect disyllabic verbs have on the PF. However, since disyllabic verbs are high frequency verbs in Spanish, the fact that these verbs favor the occurrence of SP may result from their appearance in the historical present besides their usual occurrence in present time contexts. If, as Silva-Corvalán (1994:52 ff.) argues, the increased use of verbal periphrases helps reduce the burden of maintaining a productive command of tense marking, this reduction in the maintenance of forms obtains with multisyllabic and monosyllabic verbs but not with disyllabic ones. Then, in Colombian Spanish, the burden of keeping inflectional forms under control in expressing futurity is being shifted from MF to SP.

One reason why multisyllabic verbs promote the PF may be because there are no constraints on the occurrence of these verbs in the periphrasis. While there are constraints on the occurrence of *ir* with the periphrasis, there are none on the occurrence of the other monosyllabic verbs. At the same time, if the occurrence of disyllabic verbs with PF is constrained, that of multisyllabic verbs is not. There are no clearcut patterns regarding the impact of verb length or inflection length on the variable. While monosyllabic and multisyllabic verbs generally favor PF, disyllabic verbs and *ir* do not.

3.2.5 Presence of Time Markers

Time markers also have an impact on all three variants examined. Table 2 shows that time markers, regardless of their position, promote the MF. The tendencies for SP and the PF are the reverse of each other, with the absence of time markers triggering PF while the presence of time markers prompts the occurrence of SP. That is, SP needs overt time markers to express futurity. The significant effect that the absence of time markers has in favoring the occurrence of PF seems to be another result of the ongoing change from below in the expression of future time in the Romance languages attested to by Fleischman (1982, 1983) and Schwegler (1990). As a result of its grammaticalization, the periphrasis has expanded its aspectual meaning to become temporalized and time markers are no longer needed to disambiguate meaning (Hopper and Traugott 1993:68). Further, the relationship between time markers and the variants ratifies PF as the default future form. In the SP, on the other hand, future time is often indicated by an adverbial time marker or some other contextual cue. The tendencies exhibited by the SP are consistent with the crosslinguistic behavior of the simple present, which, as Ultan (1978) asserts, is neutralized with both the past and the future. One reason why the occurrence of time markers favors SP is that they disambiguate the meaning of the verb, disallowing its interpretation as indicating habitual action. This is a direct reflection of SP's flexibility in expressing chronological time, as discussed by Lamíquiz (1972:77; 1982:44). Without sentence-initial *mañana* ‘tomorrow,’ (11) could mean that the subject of the sentence leaves at eight every day, or it could also indicate historical present.

- (11) *Mañana él se va a las ocho de la mañana.*
 'Tomorrow he **leaves** at eight in the morning'.

3.2.6 Clause Length

Clause length reached statistical significance in the occurrence of the SP and PF but not for the MF. In general, the figures for this factor group tell us that statements shorter than 6 words favor the occurrence of the SP and statements longer than 5 words disfavor this variant. On the other hand, statements longer than five words promote the appearance of the PF while statements shorter than six words constrain it. Although we learn from these results what happens in terms of clause length when Colombians express futurity, basically that there are clear patterns in how clause length constrains futurity, the reasons for such patterns are not quite clear, and the explanation of why longer clauses favor the PF and shorter clauses favor the SP proves to be a very difficult task. Perhaps speakers associate the length of the periphrasis (three words) with longer clauses and that of the SP (one word) with shorter ones.

3.2.7 Type of Clause

The results presented in Table 2 regarding type of clause show that type of clause also reaches statistical significance in the occurrence of PF. While both declarative and conditional statements favor the SP, negative and interrogative statements disfavor the occurrence of this variant. In contrast, the figures for PF are largely a reversal of those for SP while this factor group did not reach statistical significance in the occurrence of the MF. The favorable effect that conditional statements have on the occurrence of the SP may be a consequence of the decline in the use of the Spanish conditional tense attested by Silva-Corvalán (1994). As a result, in terms of futurity Colombians seem to be using the SP in place of the conditional since in this case the PF would be an unlikely choice.

On the other hand, the favorable effect that interrogative or negative statements exert on the occurrence of PF may be a reflection of the semantic transformation that the periphrasis is undergoing. One reason why interrogative as well as negative statements favor the occurrence of the PF may be that, in becoming the default future form in Colombian Spanish, the PF started to acquire additional semantic colorations which are natural characteristics of future forms attested crosslinguistically. These include the semantic notions of modality (including supposition, doubt, indeterminacy, and conjecture) that in Spanish are indicated by the expression of future time (Gutiérrez 1995, Sedano 1993, Silva-Corvalán 1994). Consequently, PF is regularly used in interrogative statements of conjecture as in (12). Additionally, speakers seem to have associated the PF with future time negative and interrogative statements, leaving SP as an unlikely choice in interrogative contexts.

- (12) *Donde vamos a dar con un equipo así?*
 'Where **are we going to end up** with a team like that?'

As a consequence of the increasing use of the PF, this form seems to be in the process of acquiring semantic features which were traditionally associated with the MF. As a result of the transfer of domains from MF to PF, the meaning of imminence that, according to Fries (1927), was once characteristic of PF is no longer attached to it. Fleischman (1983:186 ff.) indicates that as go futures became the default futures in Romance and English, they evolved from markers of 'current relevance' to exponents of tense. This former present orientation is also indicated by labels meaning 'immediate future' once given to PF (Binnick 1991). As a consequence of the ongoing transformation of the expression of futurity, now speakers readily associate the periphrasis with a sense of posteriority.

4. Conclusion

The results of this study clearly show the effect of the crosslinguistic evolutionary process of cyclicity which affects verbal morphology and triggers a number of internal syntactic and morphological adjustments. Gutierrez (1995:214), (Silva-Corvalán 1994:52) and van Naersen (1995:461), among others, have discussed this large historical cycle as it affects Spanish. In this cycle, the language changes from being primarily synthetic to predominantly analytic and eventually becomes synthetic again (Fleischman 1982, Givón 1971, Schwegler 1990). As part of this cyclical process, the periphrastic future has undergone grammaticalization on its way to becoming the default expression of future time in Spanish.

As has been attested crosslinguistically, (Bybee and Pagliuca 1991, Ultan 1978), the results of this study suggest that, as with the Spanish subjunctive, the MF has been able to survive by acquiring new semantic domains. Among these domains we have epistemic modality, (Gutiérrez 1995, Sedano 1993) and polite commands (Kany 1951, Niño-Murcia 1992). On the other hand, PF has not only claimed the dominant role in the expression of future time that SP shared with the MF (Kany 1951), but has also largely replaced the morphological form. The frequent occurrence of verbal periphrases to replace inflections in Spanish represents a consequence of the so-called instability of futures, i.e, their tendency to be recast periodically from modal VPs discussed by Fleischman (1982:31) and Schwegler (1990).

As part of the processes of cyclicity, phenomena such as grammaticalization and simplification have prompted PF to become the unmarked expression of futurity in Spanish. On the other hand, MF has become the marked future form and now shares this role with SP. This process is manifested in the Goldvarb figures that explain the finer distinctions shown by the individual factor groups. As a natural result of grammaticalization the PF has also been found to agglutinate (Schwegler 1990) in several contemporary Western Hemisphere Spanish dialects, including the colloquial speech of Panamá City, rural Mexican dialects, and a lower-class dialect of Salvadoran Spanish (Anderson 1979:34). Further, the agglutination of the components of the periphrasis is evidence of an incipient step towards its synthesis, a step in the larger Romance evolutionary tendency mentioned above. The incipient agglutination of the PF paradigm appears to be the onset of the next step in the cyclical process that Romance languages continuously undergo. The agglutination of PF would develop into an instance of a preposed auxiliary. An obvious outcome of this development would be the need to use an overt subject which is currently dispensable in Spanish (Fleischman 1982: 116 ff.). This would also entail further grammaticalization of PF. Moreover, these developments appear to be a manifestation of a larger syntactic change in the direction of verb-initial syntax that has been proposed for Spanish (Givón 1977, Green 1976, Schwartz 1975). The implications of this development, however, are beyond the scope of this study.

In general, internal factors play a crucial role in the choice of variable to express futurity and are, to a great extent, reliable indicators of the constraints affecting the choice of variant used in expressing futurity. Although this study only scratches the surface, its results create expectations as to what social constraints could tell us about the expression of futurity. These results also reflect a pattern that occurs in Romance and, according to Dahl (1985:110), Fleischman (1982:1), and van Naersen (1995:461), crosslinguistically where there has always been more than one way of expressing future reference. Furthermore, in many European languages the specific future form is not the most commonly used (Comrie 1985:45). Although this study only scratches the surface, my results create expectations for what a larger study could tell us about the expression of future time and the Spanish verbal system as a whole.

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