

This paper focuses on Brazilian Portuguese future-oriented constructions from the perspective of construction grammar and recent work on mental space theory (Goldberg 1995, 2006, Langacker, 1990, Fauconnier, 1997; Ferrari e Sweetser, ms.; Sanders, Sanders and Sweetser, ms). Our main argument is that there is a constructional network for periphrastic future-oriented constructions, which has the general linguistic pattern [(NP) AUX_{pres} V_{inf} (X)] and may instantiate *auxiliary* by the movement verb *ir* (“to go”) or by the modals *poder* (“may”) and *dever* (“must”), which are inflected for tense and agreement:

(1) Ele vai cantar
He go:Pres:3ps sing:Inf
“He is going to sing”

(2) Ele deve cantar
He must:Pres:3ps sing:Inf
“He must sing”

(3) Ele pode cantar
He may:Pres:3ps sing:Inf
“He may sing”

It is argued that the semantics involved in (1) and (2) can be represented as a category of related meanings which points to subjectivity, since these constructions refer to what the “speaker thinks” without directly mentioning the speaker (Langacker,1990). It is also assumed that periphrastic future constructions have different subjective senses, given that subjectivity can be also viewed in a mental space framework as upwards projection of implicit information in the mental space configuration (Ferrari & Sweetser, ms.). More specifically, we claim that different auxiliaries prompt upwards projection of different kinds of implicit information to different spaces in the Base Space. It is worth noting that, according to Sanders, Sanders and Sweetser (ms.), the Base Space is not viewed as an unanalyzable whole, but as a complex of interrelated spaces – the Base Space Conceptual Network (BSCN), which includes: (a) a speech act space wherein S and H engage in communicative actions, (b) the Ground or Real Space, the physical and temporal models of reality relevant to S and H, (c) an epistemic space or spaces, containing the reasoning processes of S and possibly H. It is also argued that morphological future constructions are more objective than any of the instantiations of periphrastic future, since it takes the BSCN as viewpoint, but do not prompt upwards projection of information.

Based on the analysis of transcriptions of Brazilian president official speeches, our main findings are:

1. When reference is made to future “Ground” events, only periphrastic future constructions are used.
2. When it comes to future events which are not restricted to the “Ground”, the choice

of periphrastic future over morphological future seems to be related to the semantic role of the subject NP in terms of animacy and/or control.

3. Periphrastic future constructions may prompt epistemic or speech act predictions along the following scale of “certainty” or “commitment”: *ir* (*to go*) > *dever* (*must*) > *poder* (*may*). We found evidence that what signals implicit elaboration of either the Epistemic or the Speech Act Space is the speaker’s role in the speech event (e.g. authorized vs. non-authorized speaker) as accessed by the addressee.

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