

PROBABILITY AND CERTAINTY MARKERS IN FRENCH AND IN SPANISH

(*SANS DOUTE / SIN DUDA*)

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Abstract

In this article, we analyse the modal forms *sans doute* and *sin duda*. Despite their formal similarity, they do not always represent the same degree of certainty in French and Spanish. After a detailed analysis of their use in both languages, our conclusions show that *sans doute* is a probability marker, whereas *sin duda* is an (almost) certainty marker. After examining the relationship of these modal markers with evidentiality, we underscore the epistemic character of both markers; they are related to belief and subjectivity, thus the nature of certainty that they express is indirect and subjective. *Sin duda* manifests a higher degree of conviction than *sans doute*.

Keywords: certainty, discourse genres, evidential, modal, probability

1. Introduction

The forms that we analyse in this article are interesting for two particular reasons. First, they allow us to examine their relationship with evidentiality¹ and modality in order to establish different degrees of certainty. And second, from the point of view of

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translation studies, we are able to observe that their formal similarity does not imply a parallel semantic similarity in both languages. In this article, we focus on the description of both markers in order to illustrate their semantic instructions, the different meanings they adopt in various contexts, and the degrees of certainty they manifest. In our conclusion, we also consider the second aspect, that is to say, the comparison between *sans doute* and *sin duda*.

These locutions belong to the category of epistemic modality and express notions of knowledge, belief and doubt, in line with the subject's cognitive system. The speaker's degree of knowledge and/or information makes him/her present an utterance as a real fact (certain, true) or as a hypothesis (possible, probable, uncertain). However, as pertinently observed by Nølke (1993, 147), the issue is rather more complex in the sense that utterances about actual and verified facts may be tinged by doubt modality (for example, *hier, j'ai trop bu / hier, j'ai sans doute trop bu* [yesterday, I drank too much / yesterday, I undoubtedly drank too much]), whereas certainty markers may introduce a hypothesis not verified by the speaker (for example, *il est certain que Marie arrivera demain* [Mary will certainly arrive tomorrow]). Therefore, these epistemic markers do not simply play a logical role in the utterance; they also have the function of expressing a speaker's subjective comment on his/her utterance.

In order to analyse the semantic instructions of both markers, we studied empirical data containing *sans doute* and *sin duda*. Most of our examples came from different corpora², though some were taken from the Internet, the media, and also narrative and academic genres. By thoroughly examining the meaning of these markers in such different contexts, we are able to propose a general description of their different values. To begin with, we observe that *sans doute* is very frequent in both written and

² We would like to thank Juan Antonio Chica, who helped us form an excellent corpus for our analysis.

spoken French, whereas *sin duda* is less frequent in spoken Spanish. Section two is devoted to the analysis of *sans doute* (studied by E. Miche) while section three examines *sin duda* (studied by C.U. Lorda).

2. The semantic instructions of *sans doute*

Literally, *sans doute* means ‘without doubt’ and comes from the Latin *sine* followed by the verb *dubitare*. As underscored by several authors, particularly Hermoso (2006) and Cerquiglini (in *Merçi professeur !*, a programme broadcast on the French television channel TV5), this modal marker – unlike its Spanish counterpart – has undergone an erosion of its original meaning³. In the 17th century, the locution meant, as in Spanish, (almost) absolute certainty; it was synonymous with *assurément*, *certainement*, *sûrement*. Nowadays, however, *sans doute* manifests the epistemic notion of more or less probability and it is equivalent to *vraisemblablement*, *selon toutes les apparences*, *probablement*.

We must add *nul* or *aucun* (both meaning ‘no’ or ‘none’) between *sans* and *doute* for the marker to express a high degree of certainty. But, even when the locution expresses high probability, as in the first example, certainty is not absolute.

- (1) Pierre est *sans doute*⁴ et sûrement arrivé.

³ My colleague and co-author, Clara U. Lorda, notes the French tendency to diverge from original meanings. Take, for instance, the verb *adorer*, used currently for saying that we like something, while in Spanish it retains its original religious meaning.

⁴ We have translated *sans doute* and *sin duda* by ‘undoubtedly’ in all the examples, even if it is not always the best rendering. Our sole aim in doing so is to make the French and the Spanish texts comprehensible.

[Pierre has undoubtedly and surely arrived.]

Example (1) will never be equivalent to an utterance describing an actual situation.

(2) Pierre est arrivé.

[Pierre has arrived.]

The mere appearance of *sans doute* locates the utterance in the world of the speaker's beliefs, thus constituting an epistemic modal marker of probability referring to subjective and relative knowledge. In contrast, in (2), the speaker presents the action to which the assertion refers (Pierre's arrival) as realised, and as belonging to the sphere of certainty.

From an evidential viewpoint, we could say that (2) can be uttered in circumstances where the speaker knows, either because he/she has seen or heard it happen. In contrast, in (1) the speaker, using *sans doute*, indicates that the source of his utterance is his/her belief, but it has not been verified.

Hence, the pertinent question regarding utterances such as (1) is not to ask *how* he/she knows but *why* he/she thinks that. The modal *sans doute* presents Pierre's arrival as an opinion or belief related to probability, and not to certainty. This first observation allows us to predict that *sans doute* will not appear in utterances or contexts where the facts are directly experienced by the speaker's senses (sight or touch).

(3) a. *J'ai vu *sans doute* le match du Barça l'autre jour.

[I undoubtedly watched the Barça match the other day.]

b. Tu as *sans doute* vu le match hier soir. (Supposition)

[You undoubtedly watched the Barça match last night.]

(4) a. *J'ai *sans doute* senti une brûlure terrible.

[I undoubtedly felt a terrible burn.]

b. Il a *sans doute* senti une brûlure terrible. (Inference)

[He undoubtedly felt a terrible burn.]

In the above examples, there is an incompatibility between certainty coming from the evidential meaning, manifested by the verbs *voir* and *sentir*, and the imagined apprehension of the world expressed by *sans doute*. But, even when the locution expresses high probability, as in the next example, certainty is not absolute. This modal appears frequently in utterances in future (5) and conditional (6) tenses, since they refer to conjectures.

(5) Il est vieux et ne nous causera *sans doute* plus d'ennuis. Laissons-le prendre sa retraite. (Silvestre, Marie. 2012. "Le Maître et les Elfs." *DLire* 162)

[He is old and will undoubtedly not cause us any more trouble. Let him retire.]

(6) Marie serait *sans doute* arrivée.

[Marie would undoubtedly have arrived.]

In utterances in the present tense, as in (7) below, *sans doute* means that the speaker does not have direct access to the facts.

(7) Paul est *sans doute* dans son bureau.⁵

[Paul is undoubtedly in his office.]

The speaker, using *sans doute*, indicates that he/she has not personally seen Paul in his office. However, it should be noted that his/her belief might correspond to high certainty (7a) or to low certainty (7b), and that he/she has to believe minimally that what he/she thinks or says is true (7c). Finally, since *sans doute* is a doubt marker, it is incompatible with an expression of evidence (7d).

(7a) Paul est *sans doute* dans son bureau. J'en suis certain(e), car il y a de la lumière dedans.

[Paul is undoubtedly in his office. I'm sure of it, because the light is on inside.]

(7b) Paul est *sans doute* dans son bureau; mais je n'en suis pas sûr(e) / mais je n'en sais rien.

[Paul is undoubtedly in his office, but I'm not sure of it / I don't really know.]

(7c) *Paul est *sans doute* dans son bureau, mais je suis sûre que non.

[Paul is undoubtedly in his office, but I'm sure he isn't.]

(7d) *Paul est *sans doute* dans son bureau. Il me l'a dit.

[Paul is undoubtedly in his office. He told me so.]

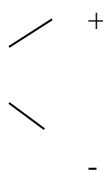
2.1. Degrees of probability

Is it possible to predict the degree of probability manifested by *sans doute*? We think that such a degree does not depend on the modal itself but on the co-text (the linguistic

⁵ Example taken from Corinne Rossari (2012, 66).

elements in the modal's environment) and on the context (discourse genre, intonation, gestures) in which the marker appears. Let's observe the example again (7).

(7) Paul est *sans doute* dans son bureau.



The intonation when pronouncing *sans doute* will indicate whether the speaker believes that Paul is in his office is more or less probable. A neutral pronunciation will mark uncertainty, while a more emphatic pronunciation will indicate high certainty, even if the speaker has not actually seen the fact. In other words, the modal is enriched by the context.

Hence, in negative utterances (8), the marker means low certainty, whereas in affirmative utterances, *sans doute* (9) mean high probability.

(8) Il n'est *sans doute* pas arrivé.

[He undoubtedly hasn't arrived.]

(9) Il est *sans doute* arrivé.

[He has undoubtedly arrived.]

These first observations lead us to describe *sans doute* in the following way: When using this locution, the speaker manifests that the source of his/her information is a belief. Thus, he/she does not have direct access to the facts to which the utterance refers. As a non-verified belief, the notion of probability emerges, which is more or less high

depending on the parameters of the message. Finally, as with all beliefs, it is subjective and the speaker has to be minimally convinced.

2.2. *Sans doute as a probability marker in inferential reasoning*

We are now going to examine the type of reasoning that leads the speaker to a positive assertion in inferential reasoning. We should note that this inferential use does not have an equivalent in Spanish, as Lorda demonstrates below (see section 3).

The speaker departs from certain premises to deduce his/her conclusion. His/her reasoning is a result of an inference calculation. In example (10), “has red eyes” is the result of a calculation and is therefore a deduction, whereas in example (11)⁶, the reasoning is abductive. The speaker observes a fact and he/she extracts a cause.

(10) Caroline a pleuré, elle a *sans doute* les yeux rouges. (Deduction)

[Caroline has cried, she undoubtedly has red eyes.]

(11) Caroline a les yeux rouges, elle a *sans doute* pleuré. (Abduction)

[Caroline has red eyes, she has undoubtedly cried.]

Sans doute is acceptable in both cases, yet the second seems more natural to us. Our intuition is confirmed by the examples taken from our corpus. Almost all belong to abductive reasoning. So why is deductive reasoning less frequent? In a deduction, the conclusion is as certain as the premise; it is well known that crying causes “red eyes”. However, the causes could be several (working on computers, cutting onions, etc.). *Sans doute* seems more frequent in contexts where the relationship between cause and

⁶ Both examples are taken from Corinne Rossari (2012, 66).

consequence is not so evident (and hence probability emerges). The distance between cause and consequence is the basis of the speaker's inferential reasoning. This is why example (10) could be uttered without seeing Marie, but not if Marie is in front of the speaker.

Let's consider an example from a science fiction novel for young readers.

(12) Les deux individus demeurèrent immobiles, l'un près de l'autre. Ils n'osaient *sans doute* pas bouger devant le déploiement de forces qui les entourait. Ils avaient une forme allongée et une bouche avec des sortes de piques blanches à l'intérieur. Ils portaient des bouteilles métalliques sur le dos : des provisions de nourriture, *sans doute*. (Rivière, Anne. 2012. "Le monde des métamorphes." *DLire* 168: 18)

[Both individuals remained still, side by side. They undoubtedly didn't dare move faced with the forces unfolding around them. They were long and their mouths had kinds of white prongs inside. They were carrying metal bottles on their backs: food provisions, undoubtedly.]

The teller is a young shape-shifter living in the ocean that has to accomplish a mission: to discover what alien species (earthlings) is trying to contact them by a sounding line. In example (12), where two instances of the modal are so close, the protagonist, accompanied by an army, describes the invaders (the earthlings) approaching. The first *sans doute* indicates that the teller gives a hypothesis about their stillness. It is abductive reasoning, looking for an explanation of a fact. The second *sans doute* has the same function; the shape-shifter sees the bottles and deduces that they contain food. This example is extremely interesting to us, since it demonstrates the inferential character of

sans doute. The interpretation about the bottles' content will turn out to be false; the aquatic being could not have imagined that earthlings needed air to survive. Thus he has to correct his inference.

Most of our examples belong to this category, and this value of *sans doute* appears in all the discourse genres we analysed. For instance, in example (13), the journalist makes a hypothesis, using the conditional tense, about the troubles (hence not evident) that could force Ernesto Bertarelli to abandon his firm Serono.

(13) C'est également une chance, pour Ernesto Bertarelli, de racheter non seulement un immeuble, mais aussi l'estime des genevois. Lui qui se serait trop habilement départi de Serono, une société dont il avait *sans doute*, à l'époque déjà, conscience des défauts: une pompe à innovations sujette à des crises d'asthme, et dont les Allemands n'ont pas su prendre soin. (*La Tribune de Genève*)

[It is also a chance for Ernesto Bertarelli to buy back not only a building, but also the appreciation of the people of Geneva. He, who would have abandoned Serono too smartly, was undoubtedly aware of its faults at that time; it was an innovations factory suffering from asthma attacks, which the Germans were unable to take care of.]

Worthy of note in example (13) is the ironic and polemic use of *sans doute*, which allows the journalist to attribute to E. Bertarelli the 'true' motives of selling Serono.

Finally, inferential suppositions can refer to the motivations of a subject's behaviour, and can indicate a gap between the conscious and subconscious, in other words, the suspension of the subject's certain knowledge.

(14) Il me plaît bien ce garçon, vraiment, il est cool. Mais y a pas d'urgence. On verra bien. Si je n'ose pas aller vers lui, c'est *sans doute* que je ne suis pas encore prête. (Various authors. 2011. "Avis de recherche." *DLire* 149: 38)

[I like this boy, really, he's cool. But I'm not in a hurry. We'll see. If I don't dare to go to him, it is undoubtedly because I'm still not ready.]

(15) Je ne sais pas ce qui me retint de l'envoyer balader. Ses deux poings de brute, *sans doute*. (Daniel, Stephane. 2010. "Les griffes du temps." *DLire* 142)

[I don't know what's stopping me from telling him where to go. His brutal fists, undoubtedly.]

The examples analysed in this section present the justification of probability as coming from an inferential abductive reasoning; from an observed fact, the speaker tries to understand the causes of that fact. These examples present medium probability, as the inferential process implies a certain cautiousness and objectivity. On the one hand, the speaker is not able to verify his/her premises and, on the other hand, the logical process implies reasoning, a scientific process, contrary to a gut feeling. In every case, *sans doute* indicates that the conclusion comes from an indirect source of information, based on an inferential calculation not experienced by the senses. The equivalents for this value of *sans doute* are *vraisemblablement*, *selon toutes les apparences* and *probablement*.

2.3. Sans doute as an opinion epistemic modal expressing certainty

There are other cases where, rather than triggering inferential processes, *sans doute* nuances the speaker's opinion. Unlike the previous examples, this value has its equivalent in the Spanish *sin duda*, and its degree of probability is high.

In such uses of *sans doute*, the speaker's opinion does not come from an inferential reasoning, but from an experience or a process of reflection. Thus, we have to examine the issue of the inferential or evidential character of this marker. Let's take a look at the following examples taken from criticism and opinion genres.

(17) L'année 2012 aura été marquée par plusieurs évènements dont le plus important est *sans doute* le renouvellement du conseil d'administration.
(Internet)

[The year 2012 will have been marked by several events, the most important of which undoubtedly being the renewal of the Board.]

(18) Son dernier roman est *sans doute* le plus bouleversant de tous. (About Michel del Castillo)

[His last novel is undoubtedly the most gripping one.]

(19) La saison passée, le formidable suspense qui a tenu en haleine les supporters jusqu'à la dernière journée a *sans doute* occulté la qualité parfois décevante du spectacle proposé. (Sports commentary taken from the Internet)

[With the season over, the incredible suspense that had supporters on the edge of their seats right up to the last minute undoubtedly masked the sometimes disappointing quality of the show.]

In all these examples, the speaker is sure of his/her opinion; rather than having to justify himself/herself, he/she asserts certainty nuanced by *sans doute*. However, we believe

that the source of information is always indirect, since the opinion comes from an intellectual deductive process. The very idea of ‘certainty’ refers to a degree of truth in relation to a sort of knowledge. Despite affirming a truth, the speaker is not a guarantor of its value, since this truth is subjective and relative. Therefore, *sans doute* nuances the degree and relativity of the asserted truth. It is presented as a relative truth, as one among others.

2.4. *Sans doute in concessive constructions*

Our analysis of this modal ends by commenting on its use in concessive constructions. The possibility, in French, of expressing probability and certainty allows *sans doute* to appear in situations of open contradiction, where two points of view are confronted (20), and also in situations of partial agreement (21).

(20) *Sans doute* que Paul était très fatigué... mais je l’ai vu danser toute la nuit !

[Paul was undoubtedly very tired... though I saw him dance all night!]

(21) *Sans doute*, l’analyse détaillée de l’objet de cette recherche déborde le cadre du présent travail, néanmoins, ce qui y est exposé permet de déterminer certaines régularités de formation et d’utilisation des unités phraséologiques dans l’aspect pragmatolinguistique. (Zainouldinov, Andrei and Szmidt, Dorota T. “Les étiquettes lexicographiques de la valorisation émotionnelle dans la phraséologie russe et polonaise.” 2009).

[Undoubtedly, the detailed analysis of the object of this research goes beyond the framework of the present work; nevertheless, what has been presented

allows us to determine certain regularities in the formation of phraseological units in the pragmalinguistic aspect.]

In (20), admitting that Paul was tired (ironically), the speaker is able to contradict this fact and link it with an utterance which implies the opposite conclusion. This use is not possible in Spanish. In contrast, in (21), the speaker asserts that “the detailed analysis of the object of this research goes beyond the framework of the present work”, but this fact co-exists with another fact, even if it seems contradictory, which is that “what has been presented allows us to determine certain regularities”. In this case, we assert that certainty is relative, and expand on this notion in sub-section 3.1 below on the Spanish *sin duda*, which performs this function as well.

3. *Sin duda*: an (almost) certainty adverb in Spanish

Sin duda belongs to the category of modal adverbs expressing certainty. Indeed, the Spanish Royal Academy dictionary proposes the following adverbs as synonyms of this locution: *ciertamente*, *indiscutiblemente*, *indudablemente* and *con toda seguridad*, which clarifies the orientation of its meaning. However, as for the French modal *sans doute*, we consider that it is worth discussing the nuances of *sin duda* in order to describe the different degrees of certainty that this locution is able to manifest.

Our first step is to examine the behaviour of *sin duda* in utterances immediately followed by a concessive construction; in this case, the meaning coincides with the French *sans doute* (see sub-section 2.4). Secondly, we observe that the Spanish modal, like its French counterpart, is able to express medium certainty in a future or

hypothetical environment, even though this use is more restricted in Spanish. And lastly, we show that this modal keeps its value of high certainty in Spanish, unlike *sans doute*. Our corpus comprises four different discourse genres: conversations or statements, scientific and academic texts, appreciative utterances in advertising and criticism, and finally, novels. This enables us to see that the instructions given in each case are different.

3.1. *Relative certainty in concessive constructions*

When the modal *sin duda* appears in an utterance that is followed by a concessive proposition, its certainty value is high. However, it is only relative to the total process of reasoning, that is to say, a first assertion (quite certain) is opposed to a second assertion, which makes the first relative. This value appears in several of the discourse genres we have considered.

Example (22) comes from an oral corpus and corresponds to an interview with a runner.

(22) Interviewer: Pero yo creo que debes estar, seguramente, muy contento por la trayectoria que estás teniendo.

Runner: Bueno, la verdad es que sí ¿no? *Sin duda...* estoy bastante contento, pero, claro, siempre... intentar, cada vez un poco más, y bueno, y... por eso un poco de nerviosismo, de a ver cómo sale la carrera y todo esto, ¿no?

[Interviewer: I think you must surely be very happy about your career path.

Runner: Well, indeed, yes, right? Undoubtedly, ... I'm quite happy, but, of course... always... trying, better and better, and well, and... so a few nerves, about how the race'll go, you know?]

There is, first of all, a question formulated in terms of probability, as several question marks indicate; the interviewer uses an opinion verb (*yo creo* – I think), a modal phrasal (*debes estar* – you must be). The answer indicates a high degree of certainty by using *sin duda*. The runner is happy, even though this is attenuated by an adverb (*bastante* – quite). Next, the utterance introduced by “but” (*pero*) restricts the scope of the first utterance. This restriction does not cancel out the fact the runner is happy; it is simply a manifestation of the fact that an athlete always has to improve his/her performance and, therefore, can never be completely happy.

This meaning can also appear in scientific genres.

(23) Un poco a La Fontaine, diré que los humanos podríamos aprender algo de las hormigas. Por lo pronto, si se suspendiesen los conflictos internos, se podrían lograr en el terruño los mismos éxitos colectivos que en el extranjero. *Sin duda* sería un gran paso, pero concluyo citando los límites (fórmicos, mas no formales) de la cooperación. Ni siquiera las hormigas argentinas han logrado la total unificación europea: se encontró que las hormigas catalanas se liaban a muerte con todas sus vecinas. (Godoy, Miguel Rubio. 2004. *Demos, Desarrollo de Medios*. Mexico)

[Somewhat à La Fontaine, I'll say that we humans could learn something from ants. To start with, if internal conflicts were suspended, it would become possible to obtain the same collective successes in our homeland as abroad. Undoubtedly, it would be a great step, but I conclude by referring to the limits (not formal, but for ants) of cooperation. Not even Argentinean ants have reached the total unification of Europe: Catalan ants were found to have fought to the death against all their neighbours.]

The concessive construction means that both utterances concerned are true, even if they seem contradictory. *Sin duda* expresses certainty of the affirmation “sería un gran paso”, in spite of the limits of such a step for obtaining the total resolution of conflicts.

In the genre novel, a modal used in combination with a concession is also possible.

(24) El acarrear piedras durante una eternidad de una esquina a la otra y viceversa poseía su lógica, una lógica *sin duda* morbosa pero exacta (Montero, Rosa. 1985. *Amado Amo*. Page 158).

[Dragging stones from one corner to another – and back again – for an eternity had its logic, an undoubtedly morbid yet exact logic.]

The modal *sin duda* applies to qualification of “logic”. The restriction brought by the other qualification (“exact”) does not diminish the certainty of the first qualification. A sort of contradiction between the two terms is suggested; nevertheless, the two terms are certain, even if the scope of the first is diminished by the second.

3.2. *Medium certainty: future and hypothetical utterances*

When using the future tense, the degree of certainty diminishes. Let’s observe an answer to a question in a sports interview.

(25) ... y el objetivo será *sin duda* llegar al podio. (Radio interview with Alonso Martínez).

[... and the goal will undoubtedly be to reach the podium.]

The interviewee's answer, commenting on his upcoming sports competition presents future hope and will as certain. But the future is, by definition, uncertain. Similarly, this medium degree of uncertainty appears when the modal is used in combination with the conditional tense.

This case of medium certainty is frequent in novels. As has been demonstrated by Mizzau (2012), the teller, both in the first-person narrative and in omniscient author narrative, presents marks of authorship uncertainty. When telling the events that shape a story, he/she also interprets the characters' actions and even their thoughts, or formulates hypotheses about the motivations of his/her characters' actions, as demonstrated above (see sub-section 2.2).

(26) Duroc debe de estar incómodo con la actuación del emperador en la audiencia, pues, *sin duda* para justificarla, anticipó al estudio de documentos más importantes, uno interceptado al príncipe de Asturias en sus primeros días de Bayona. (Nájera, Vallejo. 1985. *Yo el rey*. Page 43)

[Duroc must feel awkward about the emperor's behaviour in his audience, since, undoubtedly to justify it, he anticipated the examination of the most important documents, one of them intercepted, which had been addressed to the prince of Asturias soon after his arrival in Bayonne.]

In (26) the speaker is proposing his/her hypothesis about the emperor's behaviour. His/her proof is nuanced by the modal *sin duda*, which accomplishes two different

functions; it manifests certainty, yet, paradoxically, the very use of this modal suggests that the utterance is actually a sort of speculation.

The value of the modal is very similar in the following example.

(27) La mujer pantera, en cambio, me había decepcionado por completo, y Helena de Troya, por desgracia, era un sueño, nada más que un sueño. Tendría esos teléfonos, *sin duda* y tomaría lecciones de golf en esas canchas tan bonitas, en el aire limpio de las madrugadas, para mantenerme en forma. Y crearía, como primera medida práctica, un "pool" de cerebros: juristas, urbanistas, expertos en computación, un músico de vanguardia... ¿Por qué no? (Edwards, Jorge. 1987. *El anfitrión*. Page 201).

[The panther woman, on the other hand, had totally disappointed me, and Helen of Troy, unfortunately, was a dream, only a dream. She would have these phones, undoubtedly, and would take golf lessons on those nice courses, in the clean dawn air, in order to keep me fit. And she would create, as a first practical measure, a "pool" of brains: lawyers, town planners, computer experts, an avant-garde musician...Why not?]

The modal appears here in the framework of a narrative description. The narrator expresses his disappointment about a woman (a panther woman!) and, from certain events, he imagines features of her behaviour and activities. The hypothetical character of such reflections is reinforced by the use of the conditional tense. As in the above excerpt, the modal's value has a medium degree of certainty. In these cases, we consider that the modal manifests a deductive process, since the narrator concludes his/her hypothesis through speculation.

Unlike the French *sans doute*, this medium certainty value of *sin duda* seems limited in Spanish to the creation of possible worlds, whether hypothetical or fictional.

3.3. High certainty and speaker's strong conviction

As mentioned in the introduction, the adverbial locution *sin duda* is not very frequent in everyday conversations and is even less frequent in colloquial language. *Sin duda* introduces a kind of conclusion following a process of reflection. Therefore, this locution is frequently used in oral political statements, introducing the result of complex political analysis. The next two examples, although taken from journals, are transcribed from interviews.

(28) Griñán: La reforma más necesaria es, *sin duda*, la de la financiación.

[Griñán: The most necessary reform is, undoubtedly, financing.]

Here, a newspaper article reports the statement made by the president of the Autonomous Community of Andalusia and of the Spanish Socialist Party (PSOE). He affirms that financing is the most urgent reform and he emphasises his utterance by using the adverb *sin duda*. It should be noted that this statement is firstly the result of a deliberation about political reforms, and secondly part of a general political discussion.

Therefore, *sin duda* helps to indicate the speaker's firm conclusion drawn from such a debate.

(29) Odón Elorza: Es el peor momento del PSOE, *sin duda*.

[Odón Elorza: This is undoubtedly the worst period for the Spanish Socialist Party.]

In example (29), another member of the same party manifests his opinion about the crisis his party is experiencing. Placing the modal at the end of the utterance, as a kind of coda, makes its certainty higher and the enunciator's conviction stronger. In cases like this one, we could consider that the modal expresses a type of particular evidentiality, as the evidence is not the result of physical perception but of mental examination.

In knowledge contexts such as academic and scientific genres, *sin duda* expresses a grounded choice of an option, after having considered several possibilities. Let's consider the next example, taken from the presentation of an oral corpus.

(30) Pero nuestro corpus oral no es fonético, sino ortográfico. Así pues, estas cuestiones quedan bastante en el aire. No son fácilmente representables sin desvirtuar de alguna manera los tres o cuatro principios básicos de la codificación, que *sin duda* deben ser mantenidos.

[But our oral corpus is not phonetic but orthographic. Therefore, these issues are somewhat up in the air still. They are not easily representable without somehow distorting the three or four basic principles that must undoubtedly be maintained.]

In this excerpt, the mode of a corpus transcription is discussed. The speaker presents the difficulties of such a transcription but he/she also affirms that “three or four basic principles” must undoubtedly be maintained. *Sin duda*, in this context, appears as a result of a scientific reflection, after having considered what is important in this kind of transcriptions.

Sin duda is very frequent in criticism and appreciation genres.

(32) *Sin duda* el viaje ha resultado fenomenal!!!

[Undoubtedly, the trip was wonderful!!!]

This utterance manifests an indisputable appreciation; the travellers are glad that they made such a trip and they unrestrainedly express their enthusiasm. In Internet chats, there are numerous comments manifesting appreciations of this type, where certainty is almost absolute.

When a product or a service is offered to the consumer, its qualities are glossed or compared to others.

(33) *Sin duda* uno de los mejores hoteles de Estambul (Internet).

[Undoubtedly one of the best hotels in Istanbul.]

This advertisement proposes a hotel and affirms its quality by saying “one of the best hotels” introduced by the modal *sin duda*. This marker suggests that the statement is the conclusion of an evaluation of other hotels. Therefore, *sin duda* expresses certainty in utterances manifesting appreciation, yet may also introduce the result of an evaluation by a speaker, and it is to be considered as another case of particular evidentiality resulting from a deductive process. The speaker has an idea about what a good hotel should be like and his/her conclusion indicates certainty about the superior quality of the one he/she is proposing.

However, a minor nuance between example (32) and example (33) should be noted. In the former, certainty is indicated at its highest degree, whereas in the latter, the use of *sin duda* underlines the subjective dimension of appreciation and therefore it may

also be considered as a polite form of expression. These values of *sin duda* are close to those of *sans doute* used in criticism (see sub-section 2.3).

4. Conclusions

E. Miche firstly observed two uses of *sans doute*. In inferential reasoning (see sub-section 2.2), this marker manifests probability, since the speaker does not have access to the causes (premises) of the facts he/she observes. In genres containing expressions of opinion (see sub-section 2.3), *sans doute* manifests high certainty yet relativises the speaker's truth. As the author underscored, the common value of such uses is to show indirect knowledge. The epistemic function of *sans doute* overtakes the function of presenting a source of information. In all the examples, rather than expressing how he/she knows, the speaker expresses why he/she knows. As an indirect source of information, it constitutes the core of this modal marker.

In the case of the Spanish *sin duda*, C.U. Lorda demonstrated that the speaker manifests probability that is more or less close to certainty. Firstly, while its use in combination with a concessive construction does not diminish the certainty of the first term, its scope is restricted (see sub-section 3.1). Secondly, Lorda showed that there is medium certainty when *sin duda* appears with future or conditional tenses, expressing a wish, or a hypothesis in a fictional context, and thus it entails a deductive process (see sub-section 3.2). Finally, the highest degree of certainty expressed by *sin duda* appears in assertions in the present tense, (i) in political statements belonging to interviews or debate genres, (ii) in scientific and academic genres, and (iii) in criticism or advertising

genres (see sub-section 3.3). *Sin duda* implies that the subject has effective knowledge, or, at least, a good foundation of an appreciation or an opinion.

However, the simple fact of using these modal markers, in either French or Spanish, avoids absolute certainty in the utterance for two different reasons. First, because of their polyphonic character; both *sans doute* and *sin duda* contain an implicit negation, and all negation implies rejected affirmation (Ducrot, 1984) and then discussion. Second, certainty introduced by these markers, as our study has demonstrated, is always relative to the speaker. This is the reason why both markers particularly appear in genres related to appreciation and opinion, where they sometimes help to give a polite nuance to the fact asserted.

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