

**THE SHIFT FROM LEXICAL TO SUBJECTIVE READINGS OF SPANISH
PROMETER ‘TO PROMISE’ AND *AMENAZAR* ‘TO THREATEN’. A CORPUS-
BASED ACCOUNT.**

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Abstract. The Spanish verbs *amenazar* ‘to threaten’ and *prometer* ‘to promise’ do not only have a lexical reading but can also yield a subjective one, whereby the likelihood of the event expressed in the infinitive receives a negative, resp. a positive, evaluation. Three hypotheses are being tested: 1) as an outcome of the illocutionary force and the subject commitment attached to lexical *prometer*, the subjective readings of the latter may be expected to score high on the probability scale, whereas the event introduced by subjective *amenazar* will score low, in line with the lack of illocutionary force and weak subject commitment in lexical reading of this verb. 2) The viewpoint substantiated by the two verbs also differs: whereas *amenazar* renders an event-oriented evidential reading from an internal point of view, *prometer* projects an external viewpoint leading to a more speaker-oriented subjective reading. 3) As a result of (1) and (2), *prometer* should easily combine with negatively oriented complements, whereas *amenazar* should resist taking positively oriented ones. The corpus research fully corroborates the first two hypotheses. The data, however, fail to unequivocally sustain the third one, especially because *amenazar* displays more flexibility than expected.

Keywords: subjectification, subjectivity, epistemic modality, illocutionary force, viewpoint, Spanish verbs, *prometer* ‘to promise’, *amenazar* ‘to threaten’.

0. Introduction¹

The Spanish verbs *prometer* ‘to promise’ and *amenazar* ‘to threaten’ are commonly used as lexical verbs, as exemplified in (1) and (2). However, they can also yield a more subjective reading, as shown in (3) and (4), oriented towards a positive, respectively a

¹ Several sections of this paper were presented at the 36th annual meeting of the Societas Linguistica Europaea (Lyon, september 2003) and the 8th Congreso Internacional de Lingüística Hispánica (Leipzig, october 2003). I would like to thank the audiences for their interesting comments. I am greatly indebted with Frank Brisard, Concepción Company, Nicole Delbecque, Martin Hummel, Karen Lahousse, Ricardo Maldonado, Jan Nuyts, and Pieter Seuren for the lengthy conversations on this topic. I also want to thank the anonymous reviewer for his/her thoughtful and detailed referee report. The advice and encouragement of all these people have proved very stimulating. Last but not least I am grateful to Nicole Delbecque and my father Noël Cornillie for the revision of the last version of the paper. I am responsible for all remaining errors, of course.

negative, evaluation of the likelihood attached to the eventual realization of the event expressed by the infinitive.

- (1) *Los vecinos recorrieron todas las calles del barrio con gran alboroto, hasta que se presentaron autoridades del Partido Comunista, que **prometieron hallar** una solución a la grave crisis.* (Cuba:CubaNet:Junio 11, 1998)
'The neighbours went through all the streets of the district with much racket, till officials of the Communist Party appeared [and] promised to find a solution for the serious crisis.'
- (2) *El MBL [Movimiento Bolivia Libre] vuelve a **amenazar con dejar** la coalición* (Notic: Bolivia:ERBOL:06/13/96)
'The MBL once again threatens to leave the coalition.'
- (3) *Este invierno **promete ser** llovedor. -Llovedor, patrón, **promete ser** este invierno. -Se ve mucha chicharra en el monte. Y es la señal.* (Barrios, Eduardo. *Gran señor y rajadiablos*)
'This winter promises to be rainy. Rainy, boss, this winter promises to be. One notices lots of crickets in the mountains. And this is the signal.'
- (4) *El importante encuentro **amenaza ser** ensombrecido por medidas de presión de varios sectores, por lo que el gobierno dispuso la intervención de las Fuerzas Armadas.* (Notic: Bolivia:ERBOL:04/15/96)
'The important meeting threatens to be overshadowed by pressure measures from several sectors, as a consequence the government ordered the intervention of the Armed Forces.'

So far, little attention has been paid to subjective *amenazar* and *prometer* in Spanish. Hernanz (1999) briefly tackles the question of subject raising in the non-lexical reading of *amenazar* and *prometer*, in what appears to be a partial application of the formal analysis of French *menacer* 'to threaten' by Ruwet (1972). Hernanz (1999) considers the non-lexical readings of *amenazar* and *prometer* alternative expressions for the ones with the evidential verb *parecer* 'to seem'. Although the former verbs are somehow similar to the latter, they remain a special case, however. Subjective *prometer* and *amenazar* belong to the category of subjective quasi-modals: on the one hand, they syntactically and conceptually differ from a truly epistemic modal such as *poder* 'may', and on the other hand, they are also different from truly evidential verbs such as *parecer* or *resultar* 'to turn out'.² Vázquez-Laslop (2001), for her part, analyzes among other things the difference between lexical *prometer*, which she refers to as "deontic control verb" and subjective *prometer*, "which shows some features of a raising verb". Vázquez-Laslop (2001:246-255) mainly deals with the semantic and syntactic constraints on non-deontic or epistemic *prometer*, which she paraphrases in terms of "it is quite likely/it is expected that". However, the author does not discuss subjective *amenazar*.

² In Cornillie (2003), I give a detailed overview of the syntactic and semantic characteristics of the subjective quasi-modals.

The subjective quasi-modal verbs *promise* and *threaten* have received the label “epistemic” in seminal papers by Traugott (1989, 1997) for English and by Verhagen (1995, 1996) and Vliegen (forthc.) for Dutch. Since Traugott’s and Verhagen’s analyses brought the modality in the subjective, non-lexical readings of *promise* and *threaten* to the general attention of the linguistic scene, the term “epistemic” has been used once and again. The adjective “epistemic” is perhaps not the most appropriate one, however, since there is an undeniable evidential import in the subjective constructions with *promise* and *threaten* (cf. Nuyts 2001:27-28, 344 for a discussion on evidentiality). Indeed, *promise* and *threaten* are not uniquely concerned with the speaker’s autonomous assessment of reality in that for his/her inferential statement the speaker can take recourse to evidence from the empirical world.³ Instead of “epistemic”, henceforth I will use the term “subjective”.

The choice of “subjective” is in line with preceding studies of *promise* and *threaten* in terms of increasing subjectification (cf. Traugott 1989, 1997). In Traugott’s words, subjectification is “the historical pragmatic-semantic process whereby meanings become increasingly based in the speaker’s subjective belief state, or attitude toward what is said” (Traugott 1997:185). The central claim of Traugott --also made by Verhagen-- is that there exists a narrow relationship between the lexical reading and the subjective one, which eschews the idea that the verbs are “accidental homonyms” (Verhagen 1996: 801). As a matter of fact it is assumed that the shift from lexical to subjective readings cannot be unmotivated. I will follow this approach in this paper arguing that the lexical semantic differences of *prometer* and *amenazar* are bound to also produce divergent subjective readings.

Vliegen’s (forthc.) study of *dreigen/drohen* and *beloven/verspreken* is a good complement to Traugott’s and Verhagen’s analyses in that it extensively relies on a quantitative analysis of the infinitival complements that follow the Dutch and German counterparts of subjective *threaten* and *promise*. Vliegen (forthc.) shows that for Dutch and German (i) there is “a higher likelihood of a subjective reading with the verb pair *dreigen/drohen* and a related much higher variation in meaning in the infinitive associated with this verb pair”; (ii) there is “increased likelihood of non-realization” of the process expressed by the infinitival complement that follows the verb pair *dreigen/drohen*.

The present paper specifically deals with constructions in which *prometer* or *amenazar* are followed by an infinitive in order to empirically test for Spanish what Vliegen did for Dutch and German. Hence, significant differences are expected to show up between *amenazar* and *prometer*. The present paper is innovative with respect to the existing literature on *promise* and *threaten* in two respects: I argue that the two verbs are based on different viewpoints, on the one hand, and, on the other hand, I seek to uncover the relevance of negatively oriented complements with *prometer* and the possibility of combining *amenazar* with positively oriented ones in discourse.

The paper is organized in the following way. I first present the central hypotheses of the analysis (1.). In a second section, I present the corpus and the distribution of *amenazar* and *prometer* in the corpus (2.). The third section is dedicated to the likelihood of the event expressed in the infinitival complement of subjective

³ In my doctoral dissertation, I extensively comment on the relation between epistemic modality and evidentiality (cf. Cornillie forthcoming b).

prometer and *amenazar* (3.). In the next section, I analyze the semantics of the infinitival complements in terms of the viewpoint the subjective verbs under examination allow for (4.). The fifth section deals with the type of evaluation subjective *prometer* and *amenazar* imply. In the sixth and last section, I formulate the conclusions of this study.

1. Three hypotheses

Before I formulate the hypotheses, I will shortly comment on the lexical readings of *amenazar* and *prometer* that lay the basis for the hypotheses to be tested in this paper. This way of proceeding is motivated by the assumption that lexical patterns encountered in the lexical reading form a firm basis for analyzing the respective subjective readings.

The agentive pattern present in the lexical readings, e.g. (1) and (2), is absent from the constructions with subjective *amenazar* and *prometer*, e.g. (3) and (4). The subjects *invierno* ‘winter’ and *encuentro* ‘meeting’ in the subjective reading do not express any commitment to the event expressed in the infinitive, whereas in the lexical reading *autoridades del Partido Comunista* ‘officials of the Communist Party’ and *Movimiento Bolivia Libre* ‘Free Bolivia Movement’ obviously have an agentive relation with the event expressed in the infinitive. Although there is no agentive participant (anymore), the subjective reading is indirectly enabled by the agentivity of the lexical reading in that the agentive pattern moves “a discourse “forward” by orienting the reader/hearer towards particular conclusions” (Verhagen 1996: 801).

The agentive patterns of *amenazar* and *prometer* differ. Example (5) shows that the relation between the subject and the event denoted by the infinitival complement is different in lexical *prometer* and *amenazar*. The subject of lexical *prometer* is a central, exclusively human or humanate, entity, which assumes responsibility for the event promised, here *vender libros* ‘to sell books’. Hence with *prometer* in (5), the *promiser*, here *amigo* ‘friend’, conveys some kind of commitment to the accomplishment of the action expressed by the infinitive.

- (5) *Su amigo [promete/amenaza con] vender sus libros si su padre no le puede dar más dinero.*
‘His friend promises/threatens to sell his books if his father cannot give him more money.’

In line with Searle (1969:63), we can say that for the subject the utterance of the promise “counts as the undertaking of an obligation to do [the future act] A”. In the default communicative interaction, the act of promising implies that the *promiser* agrees with the *promisee*, i.e. the (explicit or implicit) indirect object, on the positive horizon of expectations, i.e. the likelihood of the accomplishment of the infinitive, whenever the latter may eventually take place.⁴

⁴ In line with the Gricean conversational maxims, it is expected that the *promiser* ideally tends to hold his/her promise. When one knows that (s)he is not in a position to comply with the promise, it is socially preferred that no promise is emitted. Hence, when a promise is not held, the would-be *promiser* displays socially unacceptable behavior, while the *promisee* feels cheated. Starting from the assumption that communication is originally and intentionally positive for the community, a promise is, thus, by default expected to be accomplished by a committed subject. Although the insincere *promiser* can lie with malice aforethought or change his/her ideas about the promised action, a promise is a special commitment which

By contrast, the subject or *addresser* of lexical *amenazar* behaves in a different way. The subject of *amenazar* is not as committed as the one of *prometer*, since the former verb uses to introduce an action that is not undertaken for its own sake, but is considered a means for achieving something else. This has to do with the prominent position of another entity on which the realization of the threat depends. In (5), it is not the implicit *addressee* but the subject of the conditional clause, i.e. *su padre* ‘his father’, who is associated with the final responsibility for the accomplishment of the action expressed in the infinitive. Since the *addresser* him/herself is often reluctant to undertake action and since the outcomes of an unmaterialized threat are usually positive for the *addressee*, there is a tendency towards non-realization of the threat expressed. Besides speaker commitment, illocutionary force also differentiates between *amenazar* and *prometer* (cf. Searle 1969, 1979), as shown in (6) and (7).

- (6) a. “*Vamos a encontrar una solución a la grave crisis*” *les prometieron autoridades del Partido Comunista*.
 ‘“We will find a solution for the serious crisis” officials of the CP promised them’
 b. “*Voy a encontrar una solución a la grave crisis*” *te lo prometo*.
 ‘“I will find a solution for the serious crisis” I promise you’
 c. “*Mi padre te va a denunciar*” *te lo prometo*. (colloquial Mexican Spanish, Maldonado, pc)
 ‘“My father will inform against you” I promise you’
- (7) a. “*Vamos a dejar la coalición*” *el MBL [Movimiento Bolivia Libre] les amenazó*.
 ‘“We will leave the coalition” the MBL threatened (them)’
 b. **“Voy a dejar la coalición” te lo amenazo*.
 ‘“I will leave the coalition” I threaten you (*it)’

Examples (6) and (7) show that the subject or *addresser* of *prometer* involved in communicative interaction can direct a proposition to the *addressee*, whereas this is impossible with *amenazar*. The distribution of *prometer*, illustrated in (6), shows that the promise expressed can be either descriptive, “without involving speaker commitment to it at the moment of speaking” as in (6a), or performative, when the speaker commitment is involved at the moment of speaking, as in (6b,c) (cf. Nuyts 2001:39). In the latter case, the promise is expressed with illocutionary force. As shown by the clitic doubling in (6b)⁵ and by the use of a negatively oriented proposition in (6c), an interpretive shift can take place from promising to predicting. By contrast, in direct speech the threat expressed by *amenazar* is only descriptive, as shown in (7a), and cannot have illocutionary force, as in (7b).

A further indication of this difference is the significantly higher frequency of first person constructions with *prometer* than with *amenazar*, as shown in Table 1.⁶

requires a special effort. In Searle’s (1969:59) words, “the only way my audience can interpret my utterance [of the promise] is to assume that I believe that it is not obvious that I am going to do the thing promised. A happily married man who promises his wife he will not desert her in the next week is likely to provide more anxiety than comfort”.

⁵ Lo ‘it’ takes up the propositional content of the direct clause.

⁶ The corpus data will be introduced in greater detail in section 2.

	<i>yo</i> 'I'	<i>nosotros</i> 'we'
<i>Amenazar</i>	5	2
<i>Prometer</i>	60	12

Table 1. Animate subjects: *yo* and *nosotros*

Let us now formulate the hypotheses to be tested for Spanish *prometer* and *amenazar* on the basis of corpus data. The **first hypothesis** assumes that subjective *prometer* expresses higher **probability of realization** of the event expressed in the infinitive than *amenazar*, due to the fact that, in its lexical reading, the subject of the former verb is endowed with illocutionary force and commitment to the infinitive, whereas the latter's subject is not. This corresponds to the discourse function and lexical semantics of *prometer*: it conveys expectations of accomplishment, while with *amenazar* the realization tends to be avoided. The shift towards a subjective reading will therefore have a different effect: with *prometer* the open perspective will licence a future view on the event communicated in the infinitive which can certainly differ from immediateness. In contrast, a subjective reading with *amenazar* will rather stand for a near future view since the event being approached in terms of non-realization is attached to immediateness.

The combination of commitment and illocutionary force present or absent in the lexical readings can further be expected to lead to **different viewpoints** in the subjective readings. The **second hypothesis** is therefore that strong commitment of the subject and illocutionary force in *prometer*'s lexical reading will lead to the adoption of an external subjective viewpoint on the event expressed in the infinitival complement. An external viewpoint allows the speaker to comment on an event from a vantage point outside the state of affairs: "the content of the sentence as a whole is seen from the point of view of the utterer" (Ruwet 1991:80). An external point of view is based on the speaker's viewing without influence of the characteristics associated with the subject or with the course of the evolution sketched in the speaker's discourse. By contrast, the weaker commitment of the subject and lack of illocutionary force in *amenazar*'s lexical reading is expected to confine subjective *amenazar* to an internal viewpoint on the event expressed in the infinitival complement. An internal viewpoint is limited to the ongoing evolution presented in the utterance and does not licence the speaker to view the state of affairs from another vantage point than the process mentioned.⁷ The subject-oriented

⁷ Ruwet (1991:80-81) bases the different points of view on syntactic properties. According to the author, an internal point of view reading, "where the content of the complement clause is seen from the point of view of the main subject", is related to the absence of subject-to-subject raising. Vázquez-Laslop (2001:259), for her part, distinguishes between an external point of view and an internal one on the basis of different types of modality: the former viewpoint corresponds to epistemic modality, whereas the latter viewpoint stands for "some sort of target-oriented modality" (in verbs like *permitir* 'to allow' and *obligar* 'to oblige'). In this paper, I will show that the different viewpoints of *amenazar* and *prometer* include epistemic modality and differ as to the status of the course of evolution (*amenazar*) and the speaker's own judgment (*prometer*).

reading of *prometer* with illocutionary force can sustain the move to a subjective reading of *prometer* with a strong speaker-oriented dimension, whereas this is not the case for *amenazar*, where a broader viewpoint is blocked.

As for the evaluation of the verbs, *promise* is expected to introduce a positively evaluated event expressed in the infinitival complement, while *threaten* is associated with an infinitive expressing an event that is to be avoided. Hence, negatively evaluated complements with *promise* and positively oriented ones with *threaten* seem to be semantically incompatible. In the literature it is often argued that subjective *promise* by default stands for a positive speaker evaluation, whereas subjective *threaten* leads to a negatively oriented evaluation. As for as subjective *beloven* ‘to promise’, Verhagen (1995: 117) mentions both negatively and positively oriented complements. In (8), it is shown that *prometer* can precede a negatively oriented complement in Spanish.

- (8) *Tomé aquel desayuno y me dirigí a encarar mi trabajo de mecánico. El sol prometía ser inmisericorde, y no me resultó extraño que Nila apareciera de nuevo trayendo para mi uso un sombrero pirí ancho.* (Halley Mora, Mario. *Los habitantes del abismo*)
‘I had that breakfast and I went to start my job as a mechanic. The sun promised to be merciless, and I wasn’t surprised that Nila reappeared bringing me a very wide sombrero.’

In (8), the subjective reading of *prometer* makes for a mitigated outcome: although the evaluation by means of *inmisericorde* ‘merciless’ can hardly be perceived as positive, the whole construal is not necessarily negative. Thus, the kind of prediction expressed transcends the difference between a positive or a negative evaluation. Verhagen (1996:801-802) suggests that an utterance like the one in (8) is a kind of ironical statement that proves the opposite of what is said, whereas the subjective reading of *threaten* “necessarily indicates a negative evaluation”. Yet there should be a motive for the opposite complements of both *prometer* and *amenazar*. In view of this possibility, I will propose to interpret *promise* and *threaten* in terms of an external and an internal viewpoint, respectively.

The **third hypothesis** thus goes as follows: the notion of external viewpoint can explain why *prometer* can emphasize the likelihood of a negative event despite its default positive connotation, whereas, due to its internal viewpoint, *amenazar* cannot introduce a positive event. In line with *prometer*’s external viewpoint, the speaker can view both negative and positive coming events. Since *amenazar* emphasizes more the course of the events, i.e. the natural, internal evolution of reality, the complement is expected to be in line with the elements mentioned in the utterance. The inability to transcend the internal viewpoint is expected to be the reason why *amenazar* does not readily combine with positive complements.

The first hypothesis concerning the likelihood of realization vs. non-realization of the event expressed in the infinitive will be checked in the corpus by means of a detailed scrutiny of the contexts in which the examples of subjective *prometer* and *amenazar* appear (cf. Section 3). The second hypothesis with regard to the different viewpoints yielded by *prometer* and *amenazar* will be analyzed by means of an exhaustive investigation into the infinitival complements that follow *prometer* and *amenazar* (cf. Section 4.). Finally, the discussion about the last hypothesis concerning

the correlation between viewpoint and evaluation will be based on examples of *prometer* with negative complements and examples of *amenazar* with positive complements (Section 5). Before starting the inquiry into the validity of the hypotheses, I comment on the corpus used for the research. I also give a survey of the distribution of *prometer* and *amenazar* in the corpus (2.).

2. The distribution of *amenazar* and *prometer* in the corpus

The corpus of more than 20 million words contains 741 examples of *amenazar* and 985 of *prometer*, lexical and subjective ones together. After a brief presentation of the corpus used (2.1.), I will discuss the distribution of the different readings of the verbs over the corpus (2.2.), and deal with the complement types with subjective *prometer* and *amenazar* (2.3.).

2.1. Corpus del español

The corpus research is based on the on-line *Corpus del español*, compiled by Mark Davies (Brigham Young University)⁸. The corpus used for this paper is the 1900's section that constitutes approximatively a fifth of the whole 100 million word corpus. The 1900's section includes three types of discourse of the last century: 1) literary discourse, 2) oral discourse and 3) journalistic and encyclopaedic discourse. All three parts are made up by more or less the same amount of words. As for the geographical distribution, the corpus contains both Spanish and Latin American texts.

The major advantage of the corpus is the very fast and powerful search engine which allows "a wider range of searches than almost any other large corpus in existence" (Davies 2003). The frequency and use of all of the forms (conjugations, plurals, etc) are available for more than 20000 words. The main problem of using the corpus for research purposes is the limited access to the context of the forms requested. Another problem of the material presented on-line is that one has to manually export it to a database.

1900s-Lit	6,750,000	850 novels and short stories	• Biblioteca Virtual [INFO]
1900s-Oral	6,800,000	2040+ interviews	• Habla Culta [INFO]
1900s-Misc	6,800,000	4770+ articles	• Encarta [INFO]
1900s-Lit	6,750,000	850 novels and short stories	• Biblioteca Virtual [INFO]

Table 2. The 1900's section of the Corpus del Español.

2.2. Distribution of lexical and subjective readings

The distribution of the subjective and lexical readings with *amenazar* and *prometer* is given in Table 3. The columns show the number of subjective and lexical constructions and their respective percentages.

⁸ The corpus can be consulted at the following website: <http://www.corpusdelespanol.org>.

	<i>Amenazar</i>		<i>prometer</i>	
		%		%
Subjective	141	19,03	81	8,22
Lexical	600	80,97	904	91,78
Total	741	100	985	100

Table 3. Lexical and subjective readings.

The proportion of subjective and lexical uses of *amenazar* differs considerably from that of *prometer*. The subjective readings appear to be more than twice as frequent in constructions with *amenazar* as in the ones with *prometer*. With *amenazar*, there is one subjective reading for four lexical ones, whereas with *prometer* there is less than one subjective reading for eleven lexical ones.

Table 4 shows that both verbs are most frequently encountered in literary texts. However, notice that there are considerable differences in percentage. *Prometer* appears almost trice as much in literature as in journalistic and encyclopaedic texts, whereas for *amenazar* there is only a slight difference between its frequency in literary texts and journalistic/encyclopaedic texts. On the other hand, *amenazar* is relatively less frequent in oral and literary discourse than *prometer*.

General	literature	oral	texts	total
<i>Amenazar</i>	320	120	301	741
%	43,18	16,19	40,62	100
<i>Prometer</i>	546	247	192	985
%	55,43	25,08	19,49	100

Table 4. Registers - general overview.

The overwhelming majority of subjective readings of *prometer* and *amenazar* occurs in written discourse. As shown in Table 5, the proportions in journalistic and literary texts are similar for *prometer* and *amenazar*. However, there is a significant frequency difference in oral discourse where, proportionally speaking, subjective *prometer* is almost twice as frequent as subjective *amenazar*.

Subjective	literature	oral	texts	total
<i>Amenazar</i>	87	12	42	141
%	61,70	8,51	29,79	100
<i>Prometer</i>	44	13	24	81
%	54,32	16,05	29,63	100

Table 5. Registers and subjective readings.

To a certain extent, these figures corroborate the performative nature of subject-oriented *prometer*, on the one hand, and the less performative nature of *addressee*-oriented *amenazar*, on the other.

2.3. The complements of *prometer* and *amenazar*

It is worth taking a closer look at the different constructions that admit a subjective reading. In general, *prometer* and *amenazar* can take a verbal complement, a non-verbal one, or no complement at all. The verbal complements occur in two types: infinitives and subclauses. Among the non-verbal complements, the nominal object alternates with pronominal and adjectival forms, which are dealt with in the footnote below.⁹ As shown in Table 6, the global distribution differs significantly from one verb to the other. The most striking difference is that subjective *amenazar* takes an infinitive in more than 87 % of the cases, while *prometer* does so only in 42 % of the cases.

⁹ Besides the infinitival complement, *amenazar* can combine with three types of complements and can also appear without complement at all.

(i) **clausal** complement

Esa es la realidad, y amenaza con que la solución se dilate injustificable y hasta quizás indefinidamente. (Fidel Castro 14/12/99)

‘This is the reality, and [lit.:]it threatens [to be the case] that the solution will be inacceptably delayed, perhaps, without a limit.’ (and the solution threatens to be delayed)

(ii) **nominal** complement:

Por extraño que pareciera, en aquel momento en el que la lluvia se había apoderado de la situación y la tormenta amenazaba un día desastroso. (Morón Sosa, Francisco José. Un descuido mortal)

‘How strange it may seem, at the moment when the rain took possession of the situation and when the storm threatened [to start] a terrible day.’

(iii) **prepositional** complement

...es un reacomodo de fuerzas hacia dentro del poder político, con miras, primero a la sucesión presidencial que se vislumbra dura, competitiva, y que amenaza incluso en fractura dentro del PRI (Entrevista (PAN), Calderon Hinojosa - 1998)

‘... it is a reshuffle of forces toward the inner circle of the political power, in consideration of the presidential succession which appears to be hard and competitive, and which even threatens to [end up] in a crack within the PRI.’

(iv) **zero** complement

[La organización] fue suscrita por los dirigentes políticos para asegurar la unidad del movimiento luterano en un periodo en el que amenazaban nuevas guerras religiosas. (Enciclopedia Encarta: Luteranismo)

‘[The organization] was supported by the political leaders in order to assure the unity of the Lutheran movement in a period in which new religion wars loomed ahead.’

Subjective	I. Verbal		II. Non-verbal				III. Zero	Total
	1. infinitive	2. subclause	1. noun	2. preposition	3. adjective	4. pronoun		
<i>amenazar</i>	124	1	4	5	0	0	7	141
%	87,94	0,71	2,84	3,55	-	-	4,96	100
<i>prometer</i>	34	0	20	0	13	3	11	81
%	41,98	-	24,69	-	16,05	3,70	13,58	100

Table 6. Complements of subjective constructions.

As announced before, this paper is only concerned with constructions in which *amenazar* and *prometer* have an infinitival complement. They will now be examined in turn.

2.3.1. Amenazar

The infinitive is the most prototypical complement of subjective *amenazar*. In example (9), the elements *un cielo negro* ‘black sky’, *rayos y truenos* ‘lightning and thunder’ and *un viento de huracán* ‘a whirlwind’ are the background against which *amenazar* and its complement are expressed. The indications in the context make the speaker assume that something can happen. More concretely, the fact that these indications are rather negative corresponds both to the negative semantics of *amenazar* and to the adversative nature of the infinitivally expressed event. There is, thus, full cohesion between the negative event expressed in the context and the negative evaluation by *amenazar*.

- (9) *Un cielo negro de cartón sobre un campo devastado. Rayos y truenos, y un viento de huracán que amenaza arrancar de cuajo el techo de la casilla. En el horizonte aparece, fantasmática, la figura de Tatita.* (Patricia Zangaro. *Por un reino*)
 ‘A pitch-black sky over a devastated field. Lightning and thunder, and a whirlwind that threatens to tear loose the thatched roof of the box. In the horizon the figure of Tatita appears as a ghost.’

The event expressed in the infinitive is a further elaboration of an ongoing process and is often seen as its endpoint. Since the description of a state of affairs appears to be needed to build the evaluation upon, the scope of *amenazar* is limited to the state of affairs evoked. This pattern could explain why with *amenazar* it is impossible to project a completely new state of affairs in the future. The evolution of an ongoing process typical of *amenazar* can explain the higher probability of non-realization with this verb, as will be shown in the next section.¹⁰

¹⁰ Notice that in (9), the infinitive *arrancar* ‘to pull loose’ is not preceded by the usual preposition *con* ‘with’. For reasons of space, I cannot go into the details of this interesting alternation here. This topic will be discussed in Cornillie (forthcoming a).

2.3.2. Prometer

Even if only 41 % of the complements belong to the infinitival type, the infinitive remains the most prototypical case. With an infinitival complement,¹¹ *prometer* projects the event or state of affairs denoted by the infinitive into the future and makes its accomplishment conceived as likely.

- (3) *Este invierno promete ser llovedor. -Llovedor, patrón, promete ser este invierno. -Se ve mucha chicharra en el monte. Y es la señal.* (Barrios, Eduardo. *Gran señor y rajadiablos*)
'This winter promises to be rainy. Rainy, boss, this winter promises to be. One observes lots of crickets in the mountains. And this is the signal.'

In (3), the subsequent observation *se ve mucha chicharra en el monte* 'one observes lots of crickets in the mountains' warrants a posteriori the assumption expressed by subjective *prometer*. Rather than elaborating upon a state of affairs, however, it motivates the utterance *promete ser llovedor* 'it promises to be rainy'. *Prometer* in (3), thus, has an important speaker-oriented dimension: it relates to the speaker's belief that the event or state of affairs expressed in the infinitive is likely to come about. This example is representative of the open perspective subjective *prometer* is expected to give.

3. The likelihood expressed in *prometer* and *amenazar*

The present section deals with the likelihood attached to the infinitivally expressed event. Corpus data will test the hypothesis that subjective *prometer* and *amenazar* differ as to the realization of the process expressed by the infinitival complement. In (4.), I discuss the semantics of the infinitives, thereby emphasizing that *amenazar* and *prometer* yield different viewpoints.

First of all, I should mention that the idea of considering the realization or non-realization of the event expressed in the infinitive construction is not new. Vliegen (forthc) adds this important point to the discussion on subjective quasi-modals by empirically underpinning the broadly held assumption that the proposition is generally

¹¹ As far as subjective *prometer*, there are three possibilities besides an infinitival complement.

(i) **nominal** complement

Cada grupo está marcado por la diferencia. Los une el eco del agua que promete puertos, detenciones, exilios, el migrar constante. (Karlík, Sara. *Nocturno para errantes eternos*)
'Each group is defined by difference[s]. What brings them together is the echo of the water that promises ports, arrests, exiles, continuous migration.'

(ii) **adjectival** complement

[Estaba] esperando el segundo compromiso. El encuentro se prometía apasionante, máxime cuando el Mallorca no había dado una buena imagen. (España Oral: EDEP007A)
'S/he was waiting the second date. The encounter promised [to be] fascinating, the more because Mallorca hadn't left a good impression.'

(iii) **zero** complement:

...el otro alto y moreno, con dos rendijas en la cara, una nariz aplastada, y un refulgente objeto en la diestra que no promete nada bueno. (García-Candás, José Manuel. *Encuentro en la Ciudad del Olvido*) '... the other [was] tall and tanned, with two grooves in his face, a crushed nose, and a glittering object in the right hand which does not promise anything good.'

realized in the case of subjective *promise*, whereas it is not in the case of subjective *threaten*. Vliegen (forthc) shows that with *dreigen/drohen* ‘to threaten’ “there is an appreciably higher probability of non-realization”. My data will confirm this point, albeit with restrictions on the tense of these forms, since the higher probability of non-realization is exclusively found in past contexts. Furthermore, an exception should be made for meteorological expressions.

For all infinitival complements of the subjective constructions, I analyzed whether the infinitival action is or is eventually not accomplished. I looked at the context of subjective *amenazar* and *prometer* in order to find out whether the event expressed in the infinitive was ultimately realized. Since in some cases, I could not rely on the whole paragraph as context, it is not excluded that in the broader context of examples without positive evidence, the event could still turn out not to be realized. In a great number of utterances, though, the (complete) realization of the infinitive was clearly blocked, as shown below, in the examples (10-13).

- (10) *Al lado de la mesa en el suelo y dentro de un brasero de latón, borboteaba una tetera y amenazaba subirse, dentro de un jarro de hierro enlozado, una porción de leche. La mujer removió el fuego, puso unas tazas y unos platillos. (Rojas, Manuel. Hijo de ladrón)*
‘Next to the table on the ground and in a tin fire, a tea can was bubbling and in the iron pitcher a portion of milk threatened to pull up. The woman removed the fire, placed cups and a couple of saucers.’

In (10), a *porción de leche* ‘portion of milk’ is about to boil over. Before this happens, the woman removes the fire that makes the milk boiling and, thus, avoids the accomplishment of the event expressed in the infinitive.

- (11) *En la oscuridad blanquean las camisas de los trabajadores y en el aire hay algo tenso que amenaza romperse de un momento a otro. Nada llegó a romperse, sin embargo. (Rojas, Manuel. Hijo de ladrón)*
‘In the darkness the workers’ shirts appeared white and in the air there is something tense that threatens to break down from one moment to another. Nothing happened to break down, however.’

In (11), something tense (*algo tenso*) is about to break down. In the utterance that follows the tension, however, it is literally mentioned that nothing happened. This is also the case in the more prosaic example of (12), in which the protagonist by miracle does not dump his intestinal load.

- (12) *Apretó los dientes y jaló con todas sus fuerzas. Los intestinos comprimidos por los músculos abdominales amenazaron con disparar su carga y de milagro no se cagó. (Armonía, Antonio. Penitencia)*
‘He pressed his teeth and pushed with all force. The intestines compressed by the abdominal muscles threatened to drop their load and it is a miracle that he didn’t shit.’

- (13) *Los neumáticos se enterraban en el fango, pero Santana se las agenciaba para sacarlas y seguir. Los arbustos espinosos amenazaban con detener su guagua, pero que va: Santana era un chofer de mucha experiencia.* (de la Paz, Jorge Luis. *La guagua*)
'The tires grave themselves in the mud, but Santana managed to pull them out and to go on. The prickly bushes threatened to stop his car, but not so. Santana was a very experienced driver.'

In (13), the bushes (*arbustos*) threatened to stop his car (*detener su guagua*); yet this is immediately followed by an adversative sentence *pero que va* 'but not so'. By further mentioning that Santana is a good driver, the potential reality is even more downgraded. This leads to the inference that the bushes did not stop the car. In other words, examples with clear inferential knowledge about non-realization are also taken into account.

As the preceding examples show, contextual cues often offer conclusive evidence. This does not mean, however, that the exact number of non-realizations could be entirely predicted. Some contexts of *amenazar* remain undecided as to the realization of the event expressed by the infinitive, as the one of example (14) for instance. Here, the protagonist seems to be unable to hold his false teeth in his mouth properly. In this example --as in certain others-- one can assume the non-accomplishment of the infinitivally expressed event. However, since the analysis is stated on formal terms, an example as (14) receives the label "open", in conformity with the lack of any concrete evidence for the non-realization or realization of the event expressed in the infinitival complement.

- (14) *Natalicio, Gondra, Coronel Jara, Eligio Ayala, todo lo que podía recordar y cada nombre desataba un torrente de amarga verbosidad que amenazaba llevarse la dentadura postiza que bailaba enloquecida y parecía salirse una y otra vez.* (Halley Mora, Mario. *Manuscrito alucinado: las mujeres de Manuel*).
'Natalicio, Gondra, Coronel Jara, Eligio Ayala, all what he could remember and each name unleashed a stream of bitter word-mongering that threatened to take away his false teeth which foolishly danced and seemed to pop out several times.'

Let us now discuss the figures of the corpus results. As shown in Table 8, in up to 26 % of the subjective constructions with *amenazar*, there is evidence that the infinitive is ultimately not realized, whereas the realization of more than 73 % of the infinitives following *amenazar* is left open. Yet examples such as (14) show that the percentage of non-accomplished actions or events with *amenazar* may be much higher. Moreover, no examples were found in which the realization of the event was explicitly communicated. It may also be of interest to mention that these figures are higher than those available for Dutch and German. For Dutch *dreigen*, the context of 18,1 % of the examples points to non-realization, whereas with German *drohen* it does so in less than 14 % of the cases (cf. Vliegen forthc).

Yet it should be mentioned that all examples attested with ultimate non-realization of the event expressed in the infinitive are in the past tense or the historic present tense. This observation is not without importance since it implies that further generalizations on the basis of corpus evidence should be carefully considered. In narrative discourse, a past form of *amenazar* acquires a sort of aspectual reading with the meaning 'to be about to+inf'. As a matter of fact, *amenazar* introducing an

eventually non-realized event can be seen as a means used by the author for emphasizing a climax in the succession of actions or events in the narrative discourse (Nuyts p.c.). It is not possible to compare with the Dutch and German corpus data, since Vliegen (forthc) does not take recourse to the tense criterion. Importantly, the question is to what extent this specific reading bears a general pattern that is also present in the overall subjective reading of *amenazar*.

	subjective		open	total
	non-realization	realization	perspective	
<i>amenazar</i>	33	91	0	124
%	26,61	73,39	0	100
<i>prometer</i>	0	34	0	34
%	0	100	0	100

Table 8. Realization or non-realization of the event expressed by the infinitive

A more refined description of the past and the present tense examples of subjective *amenazar* and *prometer* is needed. It should be clarified whether the reading of *amenazar* in the present tense is somehow influenced by its orientation towards non-realization when it comes in the past tense. Before I proceed to do so, I first briefly comment on the distribution of the present and the past tenses in the subjective readings of *amenazar* and *prometer*. As shown in Table 9, almost two thirds of all subjective readings with *amenazar* are situated in the past. From these data, in combination with those of Table 8, it appears that around 40 percent of the examples in the past go accompanied by non-realization of the event expressed in the infinitive.

	gerund	imperfect	simple	subjunctive	total	%
<i>past</i>	5	66	8	3	82	66,13
<i>present</i>		42			42	33,87
					124	100

Table 9. *Amenazar*: distribution of tense

It begs the question whether there is a correlation between the present tense and higher likelihood of the accomplishment of the event. In other words, can the examples in the present tense --not related to the historic present-- somehow escape the tendency to non-realization of the event they introduce? The examples (15-17) below show that their orientation is far from clear cut.

- (15) *Las fricciones y tensiones que los afligen en la actualidad amenazan con llevarlos a un motín. Pero somos, lastimosamente, una minoría y poco caso se hace de nuestros consejos y recomendaciones.* (González Real, Osvaldo. *El Mesías que no fue y otros cuentos*)

‘The frictions and tensions that plague them currently threaten to lead them to a mutiny. But we are, unfortunately, a minority and they don’t listen to our advice and recommendations.’

In (15), *amenazar* appears in the present tense and communicates that the existing tensions (*fricciones y tensiones*) bear the potential of leading to mutiny. However, the speaker does not say that (s)he thinks that there will be disorder, but rather expresses the presupposition that ongoing tensions can certainly lead to more disorder. Tension can disappear, however, in which case there will be no mutiny. Hence, the focus is on the potential nature of the state of affairs, rather than on the outcome.

(16) ... *la FNCA denunció el reciente viaje del gobernador republicano de Illinois, George Ryan, y afirmaron que ‘aventuras mal orientadas como estas **amenazan con tener** serias repercusiones políticas para el Partido Republicano’.* (Fidel Castro, 01/11/99)

‘... the FNCA denounced the recent trip of the Illinois Republican governor, George Ryan, and they affirmed that ‘ill disposed adventures like these threaten to have serious political repercussions for the Republican Party.’

In (16), *aventuras mal orientadas como estas* ‘badly aimed adventures like these’ mean that more of the same activities could have serious political repercussions for the governor in question. Still, it is not sure whether the governor’s first trip to Cuba will have these consequences. In line with the lexical semantics of *amenazar*, some steps of the agent involved in the adventures --here the governor-- suffice to avoid serious drawbacks. Thus, in the end the utterance keeps an open perspective on the event, including non-realization and realization.

(17) *Eso, unido a la escasez crónica del fluido eléctrico y a las esporádicas interrupciones en el suministro de agua, **amenazan con acabar** con la paciencia de los ciudadanos.* (Notic:Col:Semana:820)

‘This, together with the chronic scarcity of electric power and with the sporadic interruptions in the water supply, threaten to consume the patience of the citizens.’

In (17), the enumeration of infrastructural problems concerning electricity and water supply have the potential to inflame the citizens in rage. Once again it is said that when this situation gets worse, patience will come to an end, involving realization of the event communicated in the infinitive. However, when improvements are done, non-realization of the event is in sight.

Importantly, with complements expressing meteorological situations such as in (18), the reading of *amenazar* is not based on different phases of the potential evolution of the state of affairs.

(18) a. *Amenaza con llover.*

‘It threatens to rain.’

b. *El día amenaza con ser muy deprimente.*

‘Today threatens to be very depressing.’

When there is no elaborate subject interfering in the reading of *amenazar*, as in (18b), there is no real choice between non-realization or realization. In such cases, probable realization is presented as the most natural evolution. Since, in the utterances in (18), there is no underlying potential that can prevent the accomplishment of the infinitive, nothing can influence the outcome of the event expressed in the infinitive. Note that meteorological verbs or verbs with subjects like *el día* ‘the day’ in the present tense do not depend on a preceding context and the evolution sketched. In such a construction the speaker’s assessment of the probability is more prominent.

So far, I have not dealt with specific examples of *prometer* with regard to the discussion on non-realization. Table 8 clearly shows that *prometer* is associated with an open perspective with respect to the choice between realization or non-realization of the event expressed in the infinitive. The fact that all examples of subjective *prometer* yield an open perspective points to high likelihood that the event will be realized. As far as Dutch *beloven* and German *versprechen* are concerned, 5,8 % and 2,9 % of the examples are accompanied by non-realization (Vliegen forthc). On the other hand, I could not find clear acknowledgement of the realization of the event expressed by the infinitive in the Spanish examples, either. As a matter of fact, we can only conclude that despite the speaker’s belief in realization of the event, subjective *prometer* leaves the future open.

As for the tense of subjective *prometer*, the distribution in Table 10 highlights the reverse proportion of *amenazar*: two thirds of the subjective readings of *prometer* are in the present tense. In spite of the fairly limited amount of examples at our disposal, this is a strong indication that *prometer* is more frequently used to refer to a state of affairs in the future that is likely to take place.

	imperfect	subjunctive	total	%
<i>past</i>	10	1	11	32,35
<i>Present</i>	23		23	67,65
			34	100

Table 10. *Prometer*: distribution of tense

In order to further examine the likelihood of realization of the event introduced by *prometer* and to compare with that found with *amenazar*, I will now discuss two examples in the past tense and two in the present tense.

- (19) *Los sonos del arpa, las guitarras y el bandoneón daban el condimento especial a una alegría que prometía prolongarse por lo menos hasta el alba del día siguiente.* (Dimas Aranda, Santiago Vida, *ficción y cantos*)

‘The harp sounds, the guitars and the bandoneon gave a special flavor to a [atmosphere of] joy that promised to be continued at least to the next day’s morning.’

In (19), the past form of *prometer* describes the likelihood of the continuation (*prolongarse*) of the state of affairs defined as *alegría* ‘joy’. The belief in the realization is not influenced by the potential changes in the subject, i.e. it is not related to certain actions undertaken to change the state of affairs.

- (20) *Traían sólo unas pocas botellas, pues una mayor parte la habrían ocultado en algún lugar del bosque. Empezaba a caer una lluvia fina que **prometía persistir** y levantada la barbacoa se trasladó el fogón al amparo del techo de tacuapí.* (Rivarola Matto, José María, *Follaje en los ojos : Los confinados del Alto Paraná*)

‘They only had a couple of bottles with them, because they had hidden the major part of these at some place in the forest. The drizzle began to fall, which promised to go on and once the barbecue came to an end, the burner was passed under the reed roof.’

The same reading is at issue in (20), where all knowledge available points to the continuation (*persistir*) of the state of affairs. Although there is no margin of doubt with subjective *prometer*, this does not mean that the realization ultimately takes place. The speaker does not keep control over the course of the events, but expresses his/her belief state concerning the events.

- (21) *Más allá, casi colgando de un barranco, un atisbo de otra casa. Son cuatro paredes que se levantan y **prometen transformarse** en algo especial, un atelier quizás.* (Karlik, Sara, *Nocturno para errantes eternos*)

‘Farther away, almost hanging on a gorge, a glimpse of another house. It is four walls that stand up and promise to become something special, a workroom perhaps.’

In (21), the walls are expected to be transformed (*transformarse*) in something special (*algo especial*), which can be many different things. The important element of this construction is that the belief state of the speaker can no longer balance between a possible non-realization or a possible realization, as is the case with *amenazar*. The speaker can only express the likelihood of the realization of the event expressed in the infinitive. This is also the case for (22):

- (22) *La muestra, que **promete ser** apasionante, empieza en el XIX, con el alemán Leibl o el norteamericano Eakins, Maillol, Ensor, Munch, Khnopff y otros simbolistas.* (Notic:España:ABC)

‘The exposition, that promises to be fascinating, begins in the 19th century, with the German Leibl or the North American Eakins, Maillol, Ensor, Munc, Khnopff and other symbolists.’

In sum, our first hypothesis is partially confirmed: in Spanish, there is higher likelihood of non-realization with subjective *amenazar*. Many examples with *amenazar* include non-realization of the event, whereas with *prometer* no non-realization has been attested. Although nearly all *amenazar* examples found in the corpus are situated in the past, I have shown that subjective *amenazar* in the present also bears the potential of non-realization. This possible non-realization of *amenazar* in the present tense, I have argued, has to do with the elaboration of the subject. That the final accomplishment can

be avoided is in line with the lexical-semantic structure of *amenazar*: a threat can also be annulled. Furthermore, since non-elaborate subjects do not invite for non-realization readings, the availability or absence of features associated with the subject determine whether *amenazar* tends to non-realization or realization of the event expressed by the infinitive. In sum, my analysis adds another dimension to Vliegen's (forthc) analysis of higher likelihood of non-realization.

4. Viewpoint and the semantics of the infinitival complements

In this section, I will argue that the semantics of the infinitival complements following subjective *amenazar* and *prometer* corroborates the second hypothesis concerning the internal viewpoint of *amenazar* and the external one of *prometer*. The illocutionary force of *prometer* in the lexical reading is expected to lead to a viewpoint that remains external to the state of affairs evoked in the utterance. *Amenazar*, by contrast, has no such illocutionary force and, hence, is limited to an internal viewpoint reading. The infinitives with which *amenazar* and *prometer* combine, yield valuable evidence of the kind of process the subjective verbs modalize. It is my contention that these process types correlate with the different viewpoints expressed by subjective *amenazar* and *prometer*.

For the following analysis of the infinitival complements, I have distinguished between four semantic categories, namely, copulas, change-of-state verbs, action verbs and aspectual verbs. As for the criteria of the categorization, the group of linking verbs or copulas includes verbs of 'being', e.g. *ser/estar* 'to be', verbs of 'becoming', e.g. *convertirse* 'to become', *hacerse* 'to get', verbs of 'remaining', e.g. *seguir* + *adj.* 'to remain' and verbs of 'impression', e.g. *parecer* 'to seem', *resultar* 'to appear' (cf. Declerck 1991:35). I consider verbs that do not imply the existence of an agent as verbs expressing a change of state, e.g. *romperse* 'to break down' in (11), whereas those with a real agent are seen as action verbs, e.g. *llevar* 'to take/carry' in (15).

- (11) *En la oscuridad blanquean las camisas de los trabajadores y en el aire hay algo tenso que amenaza romperse de un momento a otro. Nada llegó a romperse, sin embargo.* (Rojas, Manuel. *Hijo de ladrón*)
'In the darkness the workers' shirts appeared white and in the air there is something tense that threatens to break down from one moment to another. Nothing happened to break down, however.'
- (15) *Las fricciones y tensiones que los afligen en la actualidad amenazan con llevarlos a un motín. Pero somos, lastimosamente, una minoría y poco caso se hace de nuestros consejos y recomendaciones.* (González Real, Osvaldo. *El Mesías que no fue y otros cuentos*)
'The frictions and tensions that plague them currently threaten to lead them to a mutiny. But we are, unfortunately, a minority and they don't listen to our advice and recommendations.'

Yet the borderlines between the two categories are fuzzy. While some action verbs can be interpreted as expressing a change of state, most of the change-of-state verbs cannot be considered action verbs with an agentive pattern. In order to facilitate the linguistic description, the infinitival complements listed below most often include the infinitival form and its object(s) or attribute. Albeit an imperfect one, the fourfold categorization complies with the need to differentiate between copular verbs, aspectual verbs and other verbs, which is the main aim of this analysis.

The distinction between copular verbs and action or change-of-state verbs is not without importance for determining the viewpoint of *amenazar* and *prometer*. Copular verbs are considered as the most prototypical verbs expressing static states of affairs. Since these verbs do not stand for an active process, they lend themselves very well to conceptualizations from an external viewpoint. By contrast, the action verbs and change-of-state verbs are inherently part of a dynamic state of affairs. Since these verbs present a step in an ongoing process, they are most easily conceptualized from an internal viewpoint. Interestingly, Table 11 clearly demonstrates that verbs expressing action and change of state have the lion's share of the infinitives with subjective *amenazar*. In the case of *prometer*, by contrast, the most extensive group is formed by copular verbs. This corroborates that the verbs under examination correspond to different viewpoints.

	Subjective	Action verb	aspectual	copula	change-of-state	Total
<i>Amenazar</i>		61	4	11	48	124
%		49,19	3,23	8,87	38,71	100
<i>Prometer</i>		9	3	19	3	34
%		26,47	8,82	55,88	8,82	100

Table 11. Infinitives in subjective constructions.

Amenazar does not often combine with copular verbs whereas *prometer* prefers this type of verbs. Table 11 also corroborates the general tendencies revealed by Vliegen's (forthc) analysis of the German and Dutch equivalents of *amenazar* and *prometer* to the extent that it confirms *beloven/verspreken*'s preference for copular verbs (94,2 % and 93,2 %, respectively) and *dreigen/drohen*'s tendency to combine with other verbs (80,8 % and 67 %, respectively). On the other hand, our data show that Spanish *prometer* is far more flexible as to combining with other verbs than copular ones (which take only 55,88%), whereas *amenazar* does not combine as much with copular verbs (only 8,87 %) as Dutch *dreigen* and German *drohen* do.

In the following subsections I will specifically deal with the infinitives of *amenazar* and *prometer*. I will illustrate that *amenazar* and the semantics of the infinitive invite the reader to conceptualize the state of affairs from an internal viewpoint, whereas *prometer* and the infinitive favor an external viewpoint on the state of affairs.

4.1. Infinitives with subjective *amenazar*

As shown in Table 11, almost 88 % of the infinitives with *amenazar* are categorized in terms of action or change of state. Interestingly, the majority of these infinitives follow a past form of *amenazar*, whereas the aspectual and copular verbs are equally distributed over the past and the present tense. This means that *amenazar* most often introduces dynamic activities or events in the past.

	action verb	aspectual	copula	change-of-state
past	37	2	6	37
present	24	2	5	11

Table 12. *Amenazar*: infinitives in subjective constructions

I will now give an overview of the different infinitive types that combine with *amenazar*, starting with the action verbs. Example 23 shows that most of the action verbs with *amenazar* express a further elaboration of an ongoing process.

- (23) *De ese modo, la mercadería extranjera subsidiada copó el 40% del mercado argentino y amenaza con destruir nuestra industria nacional* (Notic:Arg:Cronista:696_laet) (65)
 ‘In that way, the foreign subsidized products took 40 % of the Argentinian market and threaten to destroy our national industry.’

In (23), the event expressed in the infinitival complement is seen as a final stage of the ongoing process of deterioration of Argentina’s economic output: the destruction of its industry (*destruir nuestra industria*). The fact that the accomplishment of the event expressed in the infinitive is an endpoint entails a conceptualization effectuated from the viewpoint of other stages of the ongoing evolution. Other action verbs or verb phrases that follow subjective *amenazar* are listed in the footnote below.¹²

¹² Other action verbs and verb phrases with subjective *amenazar* are: *arrancar el techo de la casilla* ‘to tear loose the thatched roof of the box’, *revelar misterios o intrigas* ‘to reveal enigma’s and intrigues’, *comerse los hospitales* ‘to eat up the hospitals’, *anular todo valor* ‘to annul all value’, *destruir nuestra industria* ‘to destroy our industry’, *impedir su viaje* ‘to impede his journey’, *incendiar al país* ‘to inflame the country’, *deglutirla* ‘to swallow it’, *disparar* ‘to shoot’, *tragarse el patio* ‘to eat up the patio’, *llevarse la dentadura postiza* ‘to take away the false teeth’, *devorar al mundo* ‘to devour the world’, *quemarle la ropa* ‘to burn the clothes to someone’, *vomitarse encima* ‘to vomit on him’, *tragarse mi jardín de las delicias* ‘to eat up my garden of delicacies’, *obstruir el comercio* ‘to hinder the commerce’, *llevar a Clinton a pique* ‘to lead Clinton to the ground’, *confluir con el silencio* ‘to converge with the silence’, *disparar su carga* ‘to drop his load’, *llevarse la mujerada por delante* ‘to take with him the women’, *detener su guagua* ‘to stop his car’, *asentarse en mi mente* ‘to fix in my mind’, *apoderarse de todo el terreno nacional* ‘to take possession of the whole national territory’, *derribar la Tercera República* ‘to bring down the Third Republic’, *derribar el cobertizo de palma* ‘to bring down the palm shelter’, *destruir las frágiles carrozas* ‘to destroy the fragile covered wagons’, *descargar su ira cielo abajo* ‘to relieve his rage down’, *tomarse a Santa Fe* ‘to occupy Santa Fe’, *tirar la puerta* ‘to kick down the door’, *destruir barcos y vidas humanas* ‘to destroy boats and human lifes’, *socavar la autoridad eclesiástica* ‘to undermine the ecclesiastic hierarchy’, *sobrepasarlas* ‘to surpass’, *llevarlos a un motín* ‘to lead them to a mutiny’, *arrastrar el resto* ‘to drag the rest’, *estallar mi cabeza* ‘to burst my head’, *devorarlo* ‘to devour him/it’, *llevarlo al exterminio* ‘to lead him to the ground’, *regalarme* ‘to give away’, *pasar a la arboleda y destruirlo todo* ‘to go to wood and destroy it all’, *asfixiarlo* (1) ‘to asphyxiate him’, *asfixiarle el corazón* ‘to asphyxiate the heart’, *llevar a la ruina al Bolshoi* ‘to destroy Boshoi’, *tirarla al suelo* ‘to throw it/him to the ground’, *quebrar la superficie de la tierra* ‘to break the surface of the earth’, *quebrar la celebración* ‘to break the celebration’, *sacar* ‘to pull out’, *hacer chirriar el engranaje de la programación* ‘to make the chainwheel of the programming crunch’, *subir la tasa de interés* ‘to raise the interest rate’, *disolverle los huesos* ‘to dissolve the bones’, *soltarse* ‘to break away’, *hacerlo reventar* ‘make him burst open’, *borrar la huella de los hombres* ‘to erase the track of the people’, *extender el fuego* ‘to extend the fire’, *invadirme* ‘to descend upon me’, *invadir la base fluvial* ‘to enter in the fluvial base’, *elegir el precio* ‘to raise the price’, *hacerla estallar* ‘to make it burst’,

The second most frequent group are the change-of-state verbs, such as *romperse* ‘to break down’ in (11). Note that these verbs frequently come in middle voice constructions with *se*. Such a form reflects a major focus on the event itself and on the absorption of the subject entity in this event, to the detriment of the agentivity of the subject. These constructions most often imply a sudden change, which can be interpreted as the culminating stage of an evolution. The subject *algo tenso* ‘something tense’, in (11), for example, has a potential of different states of affairs: the tension is increasing and awaits a climax. Other infinitives expressing change of state are mentioned in the footnote below.¹³

The aspectual verbs found in the corpus express an evolution in which the subject entity is involved or affected. In (24), for example, the buildings (*edificios*) are already in a bad state and risk to further deteriorate. Hence, the perspective given by *amenazar* is in line with the state of affairs already affecting the subject entity.¹⁴

romper el equilibrio constitucional ‘to break the constitutional balance’, *estrangularme y acabar con la posibilidad de sobrevivir* ‘to strangle and end the possibility of surviving’, *meterse dentro de la habitación* ‘to go inside the room’, *aplastar* (2) ‘to crush’.

¹³ Other change-of-state verbs and verb phrases with subjective *amenazar* are: *abrirse* ‘to open’, *desplazarse* ‘to move on’, *explotar* ‘to explode’, *subir* ‘rise’, *deshacerse* (2) ‘to fall apart’, *podrinos a todos* ‘to rot us all’, *afectar los intereses de 10 hoteles* ‘to affect the interests of 10 hotels’, *subirse* ‘to go up’, *caer* ‘to fall’, *inundar la habitación entera* ‘to drown the whole room’, *venirse abajo* (2) ‘to come down’, *romper toda esperanza* ‘to break all hope’, *sumir al país en el caos* ‘to lose the country in chaos’, *terminar con su paciencia* ‘to end his patience’, *diluirse en una bronca insoportable* ‘to end up in an unbearable tiff’, *generalizarse* ‘to generalize’, *desplomarse* ‘to crash’, *apagarse* ‘to die away’, *extenderse* ‘to extend’, *evolucionar hacia una guerra civil* ‘to evolve into a civil war’, *derramarse y caerse* ‘to flow away and fall down’, *devorarme* ‘to devour me’, *llegar hasta donde se encontraban* ‘to get where they were’, *reventar las costuras de la prenda* ‘to burst the sewing of the clothes’, *derrumbarse* (2) ‘to collapse’, *hacerla desaparecer* ‘make her disappear’, *perderse* ‘to lose oneself’, *sumir a Europa en una situación de anarquía* ‘to lose Europe in a situation of anarchy’, *desbordar toda medida* ‘to surpass all measures’, *quebrarse* ‘to break’, *desgranarse* ‘to fall into pieces’, *inundar los resquicios de su mente* ‘to flood the meshes of his mind’, *reventar* ‘to burst’, *radicalizarse* ‘to radicalize’, *tener serias repercusiones políticas* ‘to have serious political repercussions’, *afectar a zonas habitadas* ‘to affect inhabited zones’, *acabar con la paciencia de los ciudadanos* ‘to end the citizen’s patience’, *romper la barrera del sonido* ‘to break though the sound barrier’, *caer sobre el pueblo silencioso* ‘to fall over the silent village’, *desbordarse* ‘to overflow’, *hacerse trizas* ‘to be picked to pieces.’

¹⁴ Next to *seguir* + gerund ‘go on V-ing’, other aspectual verbs with *amenazar* found in the corpus are: *no terminar* ‘to not stop’, *acabarse* ‘to stop’ and *acabar en guerra* ‘to end up in war.’

- (24) *Nuestra tribu se estableció en el territorio que parecía más seguro: el parque México. Ahí estaríamos lejos de los edificios que amenazaban con seguir cayendo. Ahí reiniciamos la vida como pudimos.* (Cadena, Agustín, *Los Tiquiliches*)
'Our tribe settled in the territory that seemed most secure: the Mexico park. There we would be far away from the buildings that threatened to crash further down. There we restarted our life like we could.'

The copular verbs, on the other hand, depict an attributive relation between the subject and the complement of *amenazar*. Interestingly, these complements of *amenazar* with *ser* 'to be' and *convertirse* 'to become' can also be described as expressing a change of state, as in (4).

- (4) *El importante encuentro amenaza ser ensombrecido por medidas de presión de varios sectores, por lo que el gobierno dispuso la intervención de las Fuerzas Armadas.* (Notic: Bolivia:ERBOL:04/15/96)
'The important meeting threatens to be overshadowed by pressure measures from several sectors, as a consequence the government ordered the intervention of the Armed Forces.'

The meeting mentioned in (4) runs the risk of being overshadowed by actions from several groups. As in the case of *ensombrecer* 'to overshadow', verbs with *amenazar* report on the change experienced and do, hence, not yield a static view on a state of affairs. Other copular verbs which follow *amenazar* are mentioned in the note.¹⁵

In conclusion, in one way or another, most infinitival complements that follow *amenazar* express some kind of change, that is, an elaboration of the state of affairs sketched in the context. The endpoint of an evolution is conceptualized according to the preceding stages of the same evolution. This is in line with the hypothesis that *amenazar* favors an internal viewpoint on the state of affairs.

4.2. Infinitives with *prometer*

Whereas the infinitives with *amenazar* often express an endpoint, with *prometer* the infinitive often stands for the starting point of a process or expresses an ongoing process. As a consequence, the conceptualization of *prometer* often includes a horizon of expectations toward the starting point. I will argue that this starting point in the future is conceptualized from an external viewpoint.

¹⁵ Other copular verbs with subjective *amenazar* are: *ser más largo* 'to be longer', *convertirse en un grave problema* 'to become a big problem', *convertirse en la ciudad de las puertas enrejadas* 'to become the city of fenced doors', *convertirse en la trampa más siniestra* 'to become the most sinister pitfall', *convertirse en un viento más ligero* 'to become a lighter wind', *convertirse en un conflicto internacional* 'to become an international conflict', *ser una rotunda esfera* 'to be a plain field', *convertirse en un nuevo incidente diplomático con Italia* 'to become a new diplomatic incident with Italy', *convertirse en el inicio de un enfrentamiento regional* 'to be the beginning of a new regional conflict', *convertirse en delincuentes juveniles* 'to become young delinquents.'

As said before, *prometer* also differs from *amenazar* as to tense. As shown in Table 13, the overwhelming majority of the action verbs follow present tense forms of *prometer*.

	action verb	aspectual	copula	change-of-state
past	1	3	6	1
present	8		13	2

Table 13. *Prometer*: Infinitives in subjective constructions.

Action verbs such as *generar* ‘to generate/engender’ in (25) necessarily combine with an inanimate subject in order to avoid a lexical reading of *prometer*. A human or humanate subject would directly activate the agentive patterns present in *prometer*.

- (25) *La Asobancaria planea revelar un estudio de los logros y retos de la política social en el país que en el contexto de la actual contienda política **promete generar** un debate interesante.*

(Notic:Col:Semana:840) (852)

‘The Asobancaria plans to unveil a report of the achievements and the challenges of the social policy of the country, which in the present political combat promises to generate an interesting debate.’

The infinitival complement *generar un debate* ‘to generate a debate’ in (25) is the probable result of a study (*un estudio*) that is yet to come. Hence, it is not the result of an internal evolution or the elaboration of previous stages of a given evolution. The debate in (25) is not associated with elements of the study from an internal point of view but is conceptualized in relation to the context of a battle for the market position (*el contexto de la actual contienda*). By means of example (25’), I will emphasize the difference between the viewpoint of *prometer* and the one of *amenazar*.

- (25’) *?? La Asobancaria planea revelar un estudio de los logros y retos de la política social en el país que en el contexto de la actual contienda política **amenaza con generar** un debate **difícil**.*

‘The Asobancaria plans to unveil a report of the achievements and the challenges of the social policy of the country, which in the present political combat threatens to generate a difficult debate.’

In (25’), it is shown that when *prometer* is replaced by *amenazar* and *interesante* ‘interesting’ by *difícil* ‘difficult’, the utterance sounds odd. When *amenazar* is used, one presupposes that the study (*estudio*) is already there and that the speaker has specific knowledge about it. This setting associated with *amenazar* allows the speaker to conceptualize a potential scene of the subject with different outcomes (open perspective vs. non-realization). With *prometer* in (25), by contrast, the speaker is able to conceptualize the subject and the event without having additional knowledge at his/her disposal. Conceptualization without relying on the given potential of the state of affairs

yields an external viewpoint. Other examples of action verbs with *prometer* are listed in the footnote.¹⁶

As far as the copular infinitival complements are concerned, the overwhelming majority of the examples of *prometer* differ from those with *amenazar*. In lieu of expressing a change of state, the complements of *prometer* often categorize the subject entity by referring to nouns such as *cosaco* ‘cossack’ or by using qualifying adjectives such as *explosivo* ‘explosive’, *formidable* ‘fantastic’ or *inmisericorde* ‘merciless’. Other complements of the copular verbs are listed in the note.¹⁷

In sum, the amount of examples in which the complement has a categorizing function corroborates the speaker’s tendency to conceptualize *prometer* and its complement from a viewpoint external to the state of affairs presented in the utterance. Hence, the second hypothesis is also corroborated for *prometer*.

4.3. Non-realization and viewpoint

There is a correlation to be established between the relative likelihood of non-realization (hypothesis one) and the internal viewpoint (hypothesis two). The fact that *amenazar* rather easily allows for non-realization of the event expressed by the infinitive and that *prometer*’s pattern keeps an open perspective can be linked with the nature of the infinitive. The copular verbs preceded by *amenazar* frequently stand for a change of state, whereas the copulas that combine with *prometer* generally express a static view on the state of affairs.

Prometer includes both the near and the distant future. Many infinitives with *prometer* render processes which range over a long term and represent actions that cannot be accomplished in a flash. With *prometer*, in both the near and the distant future an open perspective is given to the expected realization of the event expressed in the infinitive. This is related to the fact that *prometer* most often refers to the starting point of an event or a situation. Both observations are in line with *prometer*’s ability to conceptualize an event from an external viewpoint

Amenazar, on the other hand, can be followed by the accomplishment of the event communicated in the infinitive, which is in many occasions an action or a change of state seen from an internal point of view. It is often a momentary view an an action or change of state that is in line with the ongoing course of evolution described or assumed. The different perspectives on the endpoint of the evolution certainly include non-realization. Thus, the likelihood that the possible realization of the event fades away without major consequences is real. In other words, *amenazar*’s relation to course

¹⁶ Other examples of action verbs or verb phrases with subjective *prometer* are: *recuperar la armonía de ese barrio protagónico* ‘to get back the harmony of this central quartier’, *mostrar toda la riqueza* ‘to show all wealth’, *dilucidar misterios* ‘to clarify enigmas’, *llevar todavía más lejos sus originales propuestas visuales* ‘to improve his original visual proposals’, *remover* ‘remove’, *llegar hacia ninguna parte medianamente iluminadora* ‘to get to nothing enlightening’, *sustituir a numerosos procesos fotográficos* ‘to replace various photographic processes.’

¹⁷ Other examples of copular verbs with subjective *prometer* are: *ser la más agresiva contienda comercial de los próximos años* ‘to be the most aggressive trade war of the coming years’, *ser llovedor* ‘to be rainy’, *ser una de las satisfacciones de mi vida* ‘to be one of the satisfactions of my life’, *ser uno de los grandes atractivos* ‘to be one of the big attractions’, *ser duradero* ‘to be lasting’, *ser apasionante* ‘to be fascinating’, *convertirse en una melena indómita* ‘to become an untamed coiffure’, *ser más fría que de costumbre* ‘to be colder than usual’, *ser soleado y caluroso* ‘to be sunny and warm’, *ser grande, excitante* ‘to be great, exciting’, *ser inmisericorde* ‘to be merciless’, *convertirse en los mayores inversionistas publicitarios* ‘to become the biggest advertising investors’.

of evolution entails the higher probability of non-realization of its infinitival complement.

5. The evaluation with subjective *prometer* and *amenazar*

My third hypothesis is that the external viewpoint of subjective *prometer* and the internal one of subjective *amenazar* lead to a bigger, resp. a smaller, flexibility as to combining with a negative or a positive complement. In this section, I analyze whether there is evidence that confirms this hypothesis.

First of all, I should mention that lexical *prometer* and *amenazar* generally express a positive or a negative evaluation of the possible accomplishment of the event communicated in the infinitive. Importantly, as (6c) shows, negative events can follow *prometer*, which illustrates that the prediction reading of *prometer* can be stronger than the positive evaluation.

- (6) c. “*Mi padre te va a denunciar*” *te lo prometo*. (colloquial Mexican Spanish, Maldonado, pc)
“My father will inform against you”, I promise you.’

Importantly, an example such as (6c) is non-existent for *amenazar*, which not only does not have the extended speech act function of *prometer*, but lacks any positive complement whatsoever in the lexical reading. Now it begs the question to what extent these elements of the lexical reading influence the subjective reading.

As to the subjective readings of *prometer*, complements with negatively oriented semantics can follow the verb without therefore inducing a negative evaluation, as shown in (26).

- (26) *Con un merengue hip-hop del grupo dominicano Sandy & Papo, Telecom lanzó el primer golpe en la que **promete ser** la más agresiva contienda comercial de los próximos años: la lucha por el mercado de la larga distancia.* (Notic:Col:Semana:840)
‘With a hip hop merengue by the Dominican group Sandy & Papo, Telecom launched the first assault of what promises to be the most aggressive trade war of the coming years: the struggle for the long-distance market.’

In (26), the aggressive battle for a good commercial position on the economic market is not seen as something negative, although the complement is not inherently positive at all. Besides the evaluation, *prometer* also expresses the likelihood that the event of the complement will take place. From (26), we can conclude that the likelihood in subjective *prometer* or *promise* is more prominent than the evaluation it bears, which is in line with Verhagen (1996: 802). This is also the case in (27) and (28).

- (27) *Lleras Restrepo tuvo que dirigir las controvertidas elecciones del 19 de abril de 1970. Su libro, que promete ser explosivo por las nuevas revelaciones que hace, tuvo sin embargo varios obstáculos.* (Notic:Col:Semana:831)

‘Lleras Restrepo had to coordinate the controversial elections of April 19th 1970. His book, which promises to be explosive because of its new revelations, nevertheless had several obstacles.’

The adjective *explosivo* ‘explosive’ bears a negative evaluation by nature. However, in (27) the adjective is being used in a metaphorical way, thus overriding incompatibilities between the default positive evaluation of *prometer* and the negatively oriented complement. This metaphorical or figurative use cannot be the main explanation, however. In (28), for example, the night (*noche*) is expected to be literally colder (*más fría*).

- (28) *Ha empezado a colar por tu ventana abierta mientras te devuelve a la conversación el delicioso ritmo de su plática risueña y el peso de una noche que promete ser más fría que de costumbre.* (Hernández Flores, José álvaro. *Sitio*)

‘S/he started to hang in your open window while s/he returns to the conversation the delicious rhythm of his/her jolly talk and the value of a night that promises to be colder than usual.’

In (28), the comment on the colder night is not a thematic elaboration of an ongoing evolution. As the *prometer* construction is not embedded in any activity related to the state of affairs evoked in the utterance, the expression is to be situated on another level, which is external to the state of affairs. The external viewpoint directly involves the speaker in the evaluation of the likelihood. Rather than a positive or a negative evaluation, the likely realization of the event expressed in the infinitive is the most important element of the subjective reading in (28). I argue that the tendency towards realization reduces the impact of the positively or the negatively oriented complement.

In the remainder of this section, I will show that *amenazar* combines with positive complements and I will examine whether this has to do with the speaker’s viewing of the event from an internal viewpoint.

- (29) *..., las nubes multiplican su volumen, ganan peso y amenazan con quebrar la superficie de la tierra liberando a las criaturas del abismo.* (Ledrado, Arturo. *Viceversa*)

‘the clouds increase their volume, become heavier and threaten to break the surface of the ground liberating the living things from the abyss.’

In (29), the clouds are about to break the surface of the ground in pieces which is not positive, but not negative either. Examples like this one show that with *amenazar*, too, the dimension of likelihood can overrule that of evaluation. In this literary example, the speaker describes an event that is about to occur from an internal viewpoint. Yet, example (29) also shows that there is no tendency to non-realization when the evaluation is backgrounded. Although in many subjective examples with *amenazar* the lexical semantics of threat remains present, the utterance in (29) suggests that *amenazar* may also defocus the evaluation dimension. This is also the case of *amenazar* in (30).

- (30) *El sol se ocultaba lentamente detrás del cerro San Francisco, dos mbiguás nadaban en pareja hacia el sur. La correntada era fuerte y una tenue brisa amenazaba con convertirse en un viento más ligero.* (Gayoso Manzur, Milia. *Ronda en las olas*)
'The sun went slowly away after the San Francisco hill, two mbiguá-birds swam together southwards. The stream was strong and a persistent breeze threatened to become a lighter wind.'

In (30), two birds are swimming in a strong stream; in the background a breeze is about to change to a lighter wind, which cannot be viewed as negative. In this example, *prometer* could replace *amenazar* as far as the likelihood and evaluation are concerned. However, the two verbs differ as to the temporal perspective they bear. *Amenazar* usually stands for immediateness, whereas *prometer* can easily involve futurity. In other words, *amenazar* without evaluation appears to witness an increasingly more pronounced aspectual dimension to the detriment of its evaluative dimension, whereas *prometer* is always characterized by a future dimension that is stronger than the evaluation.

In the corpus, the examples of *prometer* with negative complements are more frequent than the ones of *amenazar* with positive complements. Due to the illocutionary force in the lexical reading and the external viewpoint in the subjective reading, *prometer* can be assumed to more easily background the evaluative dimension. Paradoxically, the possible alternation of positively and negatively oriented complements with *prometer* does not appear to increase the number of subjective constructions with this verb. Indeed, subjective *amenazar* appears four times as much with an infinitive as *prometer* and admits a greater variety of infinitival complements. This difference could be due to the speaker's preference to express possible realization of the event in the infinitive by means of *amenazar*, as opposed to the commitment associated with *prometer*.

In conclusion, although subjective *amenazar* and its internal viewpoint do not necessarily impose a negative complement, the verb does not easily show up with a positive complement either. Hence, the third hypothesis as formulated above is not completely corroborated. *Prometer*, for its part, shows more flexibility as to the negatively oriented complements, which is in favor of the hypothesis that the illocutionary force and the external viewpoint lead to positive and negative complements.

6. Conclusions

This paper has clearly illustrated that the lexical and the subjective readings of *prometer* and *amenazar* and their English/Dutch/German equivalents are indeed not "accidental homonyms" (Verhagen 1996: 801). The relationship between the lexical and the subjective readings of *prometer* and *amenazar* have proved to be crucial for interpreting the likelihood dimension (hypothesis one) and the viewpoint expressed (hypothesis two). Yet, the lexical readings do not successfully account for the possible combination of *amenazar* with positively oriented complements, whereas they do for the negatively oriented complements of *prometer* (hypothesis three).

The first hypothesis concerning the higher probability of eventual realization with *prometer* has been confirmed for Spanish. Section 1 has dealt with the presence or

absence of illocutionary force and strong or weak commitment of the subject displayed in the lexical readings of *prometer* and *amenazar*, respectively. The features of illocutionary force and commitment have turned out to be crucial for the kind of perspective expressed by these verbs. The corpus data presented in Section 3, have proved that with *prometer* the speaker considers the realization of the event expressed in the infinitive likely, whereas with *amenazar* non-realization of this event expressed frequently occurs. Interestingly, meteorological contexts and other constructions without elaborate subjects make an exception to this tendency of *amenazar*.

Section 4 has presented a detailed analysis of the infinitival complements introduced by *amenazar* and *prometer* corroborating the hypothesis that with *amenazar* the speaker usually views the infinitival process from an internal viewpoint in line with the course of evolution sketched, whereas with *prometer* (s)he does so from an external viewpoint, more in line with the speaker's own interpretation. The corpus data have indicated that infinitivally expressed events introduced by *amenazar* are often an endpoint of an ongoing evolution, while those of *prometer* focus on the starting point of a process.

Finally, in Section 5, corpus examples have yielded counter-evidence for the hypothesis concerning the correlation between viewpoint and evaluation. It was expected that the internal viewpoint of *amenazar* blocked the combination with an positively oriented complement. Corpus data have shown that, although subjective *prometer* can introduce negatively oriented infinitival complements, subjective *amenazar* is not precluded from introducing positively oriented ones. The combination of *amenazar* with a positive complement illustrates that the verb is undergoing a process of semantic change. Hence, *prometer* does not have the monopoly on the expression of likelihood without positive or negative evaluation.

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