

On (Un)certainty: The Semantic Evolution of Galician *seguramente*

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Abstract This paper investigates the semantic development of the Galician adverb *seguramente*. Special attention is paid to the meanings and uses of this item in different periods. The medieval epistemic meaning of certainty contrasts with the present-day meaning of probability. This shift in meaning is explained as a gradual development from certainty to uncertainty with an intermediate stage where the adverb displays features of both certainty and uncertainty markers. It is argued that the rise and fall of manner, strategic, and pragmatic uses correlate with the change in the epistemic use. The ultimate cause for the semantic change of *seguramente* lies in the paradigmatic relations among epistemic markers, and can be better understood if studied in the bigger context of shared discourse traditions.

Keywords adverb · epistemic modality · Galician · semantic change · (un)certainty

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1 Introduction

Seguramente is a prominent epistemic adverb in Galician, a Romance language spoken in Galicia and bordering areas in the northwest of the Iberian Peninsula. This linguistic item is interesting because (i) it underwent a semantic change leading from certainty to uncertainty, and (ii) it provides a benchmark of the reshaping of the linguistic subsystem for epistemic modality during the 20th century. Furthermore, *seguramente* is an instance of *-ment(e)* adverbs, a very productive type of adverbs in Romance languages—analogueous to English *-ly* adverbs—of great importance to many linguistic systems, and, in

the particular case of Galician, a key to understanding the present subsystem for epistemic modality.

The reference dictionary for Galician, the *Dicionario da Real Academia Galega* (DRAG) (Real Academia Galega 2012: s.v.), features only one sense for *seguramente*—‘with a high degree of probability’. Galician grammars group this adverb together with *quizais* ‘maybe’ as a device to mitigate an assertion (Freixeiro Mato 2003:160) and with *posiblemente* ‘possibly’ and *probablemente* ‘probably’ as part of a system to express different degrees of probability (Álvarez & Xove 2002: 627–628). Some of the examples they offer are the following ones (here and elsewhere, *seguramente* is in italics for perspicuity):

- (1) a. Aínda que non o dixese, *seguramente* irá.
 ‘Even though she didn’t tell, she will (most) probably go.’
 (DRAG: s.v. *seguramente*)
- b. *Seguramente* o señor concelleiro estará moi ocupado todo o día e non atopará un só intre para vir ata aquí.
 ‘Most probably the city councilor will be too busy the whole day and will not find a moment to come here.’
 (Álvarez & Xove 2002:600)

In these examples *seguramente* expresses (high) probability, and, hence, lack of complete certainty. This is especially true for (1a), where *seguramente* could be replaced by *probablemente*, with the former implying a (slightly) higher degree of likelihood. In (1b), uncertainty is exploited to produce a tendentious interpretation which ascribes responsibility to the subject for the negative state of affairs. Such a reading would also arise if *probablemente* were to be used in this context.

The fact that *seguramente* belongs within the paradigm of probability forms can only be surprising if taking into consideration that this adverb derives from *seguro* ‘safe, sure’, which conveys epistemic certainty—see Vázquez Rozas 2010 for illustration with Spanish data. Nonetheless, it will become obvious from the forthcoming analysis that such a development is not surprising, since there is only

a thin line between certainty and uncertainty. Still, the fact that a certainty marker becomes a fully-fledged uncertainty form and loses all certainty semantics deserves further investigation. The aim of this paper is to address this phenomenon through the particular example of Galician *seguramente*.

I will consider epistemic modality a basic semantic category of a scalar nature used to qualify states of affairs (see Nuyts 2001, 2005). Consequently, it will be defined as an estimation of the degree of likelihood that an event takes/has taken/will take place, as made by the speaker. Several positions may be distinguished on the epistemic scale, ranging from positive to negative certainty, with intermediary uncertainty values in between. The case that will be addressed here involves a demotion on the scale, leading from certainty to the uncertainty value of probability.

Corpus data will be used as the main source of evidence. I will resort primarily to the *Tesouro informatizado da lingua galega* (TILG) (Santamarina 2014), which contains over 26 million words written between 1612 and 2013. It currently includes 1070 distinct occurrences of *seguramente*. For medieval data I will use the *Tesouro medieval informatizado da lingua galega* (TMILG) (Varela Barreiro 2007), consisting of 16000 textual units corresponding to the period c. 1200–1600. 23 different instances of the adverb are found in this corpus. Both TILG and TMILG were developed at the Instituto da Lingua Galega. I will consider three chronological periods: medieval (1200–1500), early contemporary (1880–1930), and present day (1975–2013).

This paper is organized as follows. Section 2 reviews previous work on (un)certainty adverbials. Section 3 presents the data, showing the different ways in which the adverb under consideration is and was used. Section 4 provides an interpretation of the diachronic path of *seguramente*. Section 5 adds some discussion and concludes.

2 Markers of (Un)certainty

The default expression for certainty in language is a bare assertion. Therefore, the use of marked expressions of certainty must be for a

compelling reason. In fact, it is commonly accepted that this part of the epistemic modal system lies in a paradox: “the fact that we only say we are certain when we are not” (Halliday 2004:625). Sometimes speakers/writers are fully aware of this:

- (2) E, obviamente, nos territorios da incerteza antes referidos, en que, máis unha vez, nos moveremos, non poderei evitar os «tal vez», os «quizais», os «segura-», os «probábel-» ou os «posibelmente», e mais os «sen dúbida», os «con certeza» ou os «evidentemente», que, de maneira directa ou paradoxal, sosteñen as precarias reconstrucións e as salutareas dúbidas (...) (1999, MPRIND999, 78, TILG)

‘And, obviously, in the aforementioned territories of uncertainty, in which more than once we will be moving, I will not be able to avoid «tal vez» [‘perhaps’], «quizais» [‘maybe’], «seguramente» [‘surely’], «probabelmente» [‘probably’] or «posibelmente» [‘possibly’], nor «sen dúbida» [‘no doubt’], «con certeza» [‘for sure’] or «evidentemente» [‘evidently’], which directly or paradoxically support the precarious reconstructions and the salutary doubts.’

Crucially, the author of this excerpt—from a study on Galician medieval literature—divides the inhabitants of the land of uncertainty into two groups: those directly pointing to doubt (possibility and probability adverbials), and those doing so paradoxically (certainty adverbials). Interestingly enough, *seguramente* is included in the first group.

Expressions of certainty signal that certainty cannot be taken for granted. They are exploited rhetorically to confront any shadow of doubt that may concern the state of affairs they introduce, and, thus, they lead to inferences of uncertainty (cf. Aijmer 2002, Simon-Vandenberg 2007, Simon-Vandenberg & Aijmer 2007). This is, in essence, the paradox of certainty expressions.

A good illustration of how certainty expressions work is found in *certainly*. According to Aijmer (2002), *certainly* is used as an emphasizing device, either in negative contexts or to reinforce agreement, and can also serve a contrastive function. Byloo et al. (2007) found

that the emphasizing, or strengthening (the term used here, see section 3.3), function is absolutely dominant for *certainly*, as compared to the epistemic function: according to their minimal count, the epistemic use of *certainly* accounts for around 8% of cases, whereas the strengthening use represents more than 40%.

In contrast with certainty markers, epistemic expressions of uncertainty, like *probably* and *maybe*, are not paradoxical. They qualify a state of affairs as (im)probable or possible, and, when used strategically,¹ they mitigate illocutionary force. In this connection, uncertainty markers are the mirror image of expressions of certainty.

There is, however, a third type of markers, considering both their epistemic and non-epistemic functions. Byloo et al. (2007) compared English *certainly* with Dutch *zeker*, and found that the epistemic meaning was infrequent and differed in both expressions. Both adverbs express certainty, but only *zeker* can also convey a weaker value of (high) probability.

A good deal of attention has been devoted to English adverbial forms *no doubt* and *surely* (Aijmer 2002, Carretero 2012, Downing 2001, 2008, Simon-Vandenberg 2007, Simon-Vandenberg & Aijmer 2007, Traugott 2014). Like Dutch *zeker*, these epistemic markers are characterized by semantic variability: they convey either certainty or uncertainty depending on the context. When *no doubt* co-occurs with the auxiliaries *will* and *would*, it “clearly expresses the speakers’ conviction that the state of affairs took or will take place but that they are not in a position to have absolute certainty” (Simon-Vandenberg 2007:15). This use is in line with the paradoxical nature of certainty markers. *No doubt* also functions as an expression of certainty when preceding a contrastive clause with *but*, in which it has a concessive meaning, just like *certainly* (Simon-Vandenberg & Aijmer 2007:95, 131). However, *no doubt* can also express probability, as evidenced by translation equivalents: it may correspond to am-

¹Following Nuyts 2001, I refer to strengthening and mitigation as *strategic uses*, since their occurrence depends on factors aimed at achieving special effects in discourse, that is, they are the result of a discourse strategy.

bivalent expressions like Dutch *zeker* or Swedish *säkert*, but also to forms coding probability, like Dutch *waarschijnlijk*, Swedish *nog*, and French *il est probable* (Simon-Vandenberg & Aijmer 2007:129–132).

Surely, like *no doubt*, developed a contrastive function and usually collocates with *but*. Like *certainly*, but unlike *no doubt*, *surely* features strengthening uses in which, rather than expressing epistemic certainty, it emphasizes the truth of the utterance (Downing 2001, Simon-Vandenberg & Aijmer 2007:137–139, Traugott 2014). Nevertheless, there is agreement that *surely* has become dissociated, in several contexts, from the meaning of assurance it overtly points to. In the “confirmation-seeking” function, for instance, *surely* expresses probability and invites the hearer to agree (Aijmer 2002, Simon-Vandenberg & Aijmer 2007, Traugott 2014). Furthermore, this adverb features a variety of other functions, ranging from inferential evidentiality and mirativity to challenge and persuasion (Downing 2001, Carretero 2012), which make it an interesting object of inquiry.

Given the previous considerations, we can conclude that there are limits to the ways epistemic and strategic uses combine within a linguistic unit. Those units conveying an epistemic value of certainty may be used to reinforce an assertion (strengthening), whereas those coding values of probability or possibility may be used to lower the strength of the utterance (mitigation). There are also linguistic devices whose epistemic value varies depending on the context, and that exhibit a wide range of non-epistemic functions, one of them usually being strengthening, but not mitigation.

3 Data and Uses of *seguramente*

The history of the Galician language is characterized by different periods of splendor and darkness, which directly determine to what extent the language was used for writing and, consequently, how much linguistic data from past eras have reached us. Galician was the main written and spoken language in Galicia during the late Middle Ages (c. 1200–1500), but after 1500 three centuries of darkness follow in which the written form of the language is almost completely aban-

done. As a consequence, little is known of the modern language in its early stages—see Mariño Paz 2008 for details on the history of Galician.

Adverbs in *-mente* are scarce in medieval documents, at least as compared to present-day language. Nevertheless, they feature interesting characteristics which signal future paths of development. According to TILG, (epistemic) *-mente* adverbs are rare in the modern language until the 1880s. Since the corpus at this point was of considerable size, their (re)emergence can be linked to the functional expansion of the language: prose, the new text type, requires “new” epistemic and discourse markers. Thus, the emergence of *-mente* adverbs in modern Galician can be taken to signal the transition from a “rural” written language, used primarily for folk-like poetry, to a “learned” written language, used for different types of prose (fictional, journalistic, essayistic, technical). It is significant that the main certainty marker in TILG from the 18th century to the late 19th century is *abofé* (from Latin *AD BONA FIDE* ‘in good faith’), today regarded as archaic, and that this item decreases in frequency from 1900 onward. It is at this point that other, more nuanced expressions of certainty arise, namely *-mente* adverbs like *certamente* ‘certainly’, *realmente* ‘really, actually’, *seguramente* ‘surely’, and *verdadeiramente* ‘truly’. In present-day Galician, these items play a central role in the expression of certainty and strengthening.

In the following, I will illustrate the different uses *seguramente* could and can be put to. This will set the basis for the interpretation of its evolution. Ideally, this will show that, despite the empirical limitations, an interpretation of the diachronic path of this adverb is of interest to current research on language change.

3.1 Manner Uses

In Latin, an adjective modifying the feminine noun *MENS*, *MENTIS* ‘mind, mood’ in the ablative case was used to convey a manner of action. In Romance languages, the ablative form *MENTE* led to a fully-fledged derivative suffix which creates adverbs out of adjectives in

their feminine form. This mechanism was already operative in the medieval period of the Galician language (see Ferreiro 2001:206–207). Thus, *seguramente* derives from the feminine form of the adjective *seguro* ‘safe, secure’.

Manner uses of *seguramente* account for half of the data in the medieval period. In these cases, the adverb refers to how the action is carried out. This may pertain to different meanings, such as ‘safely’ (3a), ‘confidently’ (3b), or ‘steadfastly’ (3c), which are reminiscent of manner uses of English *surely* (see Downing 2008, Traugott 2014).

- (3) a. Et sabede que en aquel tẽpo era costume que todo messageyro andasse en saluo per huquer, et que *segurament* cõtasse seu messagẽ, et nõca por ende mal rreçebessen. (1370–1373, CT 20/236, TMILG)
 ‘Be it known unto you that at that time it was customary for a messenger to safely walk everywhere, and that he safely told his message, and that no harm was done to him because of that.’
- b. Sal ja da arca *seguramẽte* tu et tua moller et teus fillos et suas molleres contigo, et todaslas anymalias que convosco forõ ãna arca; (1300–1330, XH II/8, TMILG)
 ‘Now get out of the ark confidently you and your wife and your sons and their wives with you, and every animal that was with you in the ark.’
- c. Et mandoos que laurassem et criassem *seguramente* et que llij dessem seu peyto, segũdo que o dauã a seu rrey. (1295–1312, TC 346/512, TMILG)
 ‘And he ordered them to work and breed steadfastly and to pay him a tax, as they did with their king.’

In present-day language, manner uses like the ones in (4) constitute less than 1% of all occurrences. They are very rare, but prove that the manner use is still accessible for contemporary speakers/writers. Since the suffix *-mente* is a fully productive mechanism to create adverbs in present-day Galician, *seguramente* can be used as the manner adverb for *seguro*.

- (4) a. ... mesmo se non pasa de especie fraudulenta a afirmación idealista de que a URSS desenvolveríase tan rápida e *seguramente* que de contado había ultrapasar en tódo-los terreos ós Estados Unidos ... (1980, MEFCRO980 26, TILG)
 ‘... even if merely deceitful, the idealist affirmation that the USSR would develop as fast and securely/steadfastly that it would immediately surpass the United States at all levels ...’
- b. Mais, polo que toca á súa preocupación polo modo no que poden estar seguros do seu estado de salvación e de graza, será máis *seguramente* obtido dos nosos ... libros ca dos escribáns ingleses. (2006, WBRETNo06 166, TILG)
 ‘But, regarding your concern about the way you can be sure of your state of salvation and grace, it will be more securely obtained from our books than from the English scribes.’

3.2 Epistemic Uses

Epistemic uses are prone to ambiguity, at least in two ways: they may be ambiguous (i) with other uses, namely, strategic ones (strengthening and mitigation), and (ii) between several epistemic values, namely, certainty and (high) probability (Byloo et al. 2007, Simon-Vandenberg 2007). In this section, I intend to show that *seguramente* conveys different epistemic values in different periods.

In the Middle Ages, *seguramente* was used to express epistemic modality from the earliest attestations. This is in contrast to *certainmente* and *realmente*, which were used as manner adverbs at that time.

- (5) E por que esto que dizian non era mui sen razon, ca d’aver ela seu fillo estava ena sazon; e avia tan gran fever, que quena viya enton dizia: “*Seguramente*, desta non escapará”. (1264–1284, CSM 256/26, TMILG)
 ‘And they said so not without reason, because she was about to have her child; and she had such a big fever, that those who saw her at that moment said: “Surely, she will not get out of this”.’

(5) is a stanza from the *Cantigas de Santa Maria*, a literary work consisting of poems focusing on the Virgin Mary. Many of them, like the present one, tell a story in which the Virgin performs a miracle. Although for the modern reader the probability meaning of *seguramente* is available in (5), it is very unlikely that this was the meaning coded by ancient speakers/writers. First, the adverb expresses the certainty of an imminent death, which is the prelude for the miracle to take place. Of course, the writer knew this, but “those who saw her” did not know about the coming miracle. In any case, the writer made sure that the sick woman looked really bad: in (5) we learn that she was about to give birth and that she had a terrible fever, and in the preceding context some physicians say that she will not live long. In short, the context does not allow for a shadow of doubt, so the use of a probability expression would be odd. Second, the most suitable diachronic path for *seguramente* is one where the manner function leads to strengthening and epistemic certainty uses, and the Middle Ages represent the early stages of this process (see section 4.1).

In present-day Galician, examples like (2) clearly show that *seguramente* is seen as an expression of uncertainty. Indeed, it is used to convey (high) probability. This is especially frequent in essayistic prose, where writers tend to assess the likelihood of a proposed explanation, as in (6).

- (6) a. Costume aínda practicado de deixar pan e o lume aceso na noite de Nadal, para as visitas que nos fan as ánimas dos nosos parentes mortos. *Seguramente* é unha pervivencia dos rituais funerarios prehistóricos e romanos. (1999, CUADIC999 86, TILG)

‘Tradition still in force of leaving bread and the fire burning on Christmas Eve, for the visits that will be paid to us by the souls of our dead relatives. This is (very) probably a preservation of prehistorical and Roman funerary rituals.’

- b. Carlos Rico, un antigo emigrante en Bos Aires[,] aprende alá o oficio, *seguramente* por influencia italiana. (2008, LLRFER008 68, TILG)

‘Carlos Rico, a former expatriate in Buenos Aires, learns the trade there, (very) probably by Italian influence.’

Early contemporary examples of epistemic *seguramente*, like those in (7), represent a middle ground between the two other stages.

- (7) a. Dios lle conserve a vida ó señor Pondal e lle dea saúde pra que, canto antes, poidamos saborear súas novas producións, que *seguramente* serán unha notable adquisición prá literatura rexional. (1886, RODFIL886 119, TILG)

‘May God preserve the life of mister Pondal and give him health so that, as soon as possible, we can relish his new works, which will surely/no doubt/?(very) probably be a remarkable acquisition for the regional literature.’

- b. Dáme o corpo que quen fixo tal escamoteo é, *seguramente*, partidario de qu’as imaxes se arromben[,] nin máis nin menos, que asegún foron. (1886, GALo76886 4, TILG)

‘I have a feeling that the person who did this legerdemain is surely/no doubt/(very) probably in favor of arranging the statues nothing less than as they were.’

(7a), with the modalized verb in the future tense, strongly reminds one of the collocations of *no doubt* with *will* and *would* (see section 2). In such contexts, the epistemic item conveys the speaker’s conviction that the state of affairs will or would apply (i.e., certainty), even though this certainty is weakened by the association of the situation with futurity—see Dahl 2000 on the different grounds for talking about the future. Nevertheless, a meaning of uncertainty does not seem to fit in with the context, because it would conflict with the (flatterer) first part of the utterance.

The meaning of *seguramente* in (7b) seems closer to probability than to certainty, especially because of the influence of the opening expression pointing to the realm of intuition. Moreover, the broader

context of this example, which cannot be reproduced here for the sake of space, is clearly ironic and reminiscent of the tendentious interpretation achieved in (1b) by means of expressions of probability.

3.3 Strategic Uses

Strategic uses refer to a modification of illocutionary force rather than a qualification of a state of affairs. The use of linguistic expressions in this fashion is due to pragmatic factors: the need to reinforce an assertion has to do with the speaker's rhetorical purposes (show agreement with the interlocutor or push one's ideas), whereas the motivation to mitigate an utterance is usually related to a face-saving strategy (regarding either the speaker's or the hearer's public image)—see, for example, Brown & Levinson 1987, Caffi 1999.

In accordance with its epistemic meaning of certainty, *seguramente* was used as a strengthening device during the Middle Ages.

- (8) Et cõ todo esto era tã ben feyto ãno corpo et ãno rostro que nõ achariades nehũ tãto, et *segurament*, cõmo diz Dayres, ben pareçia caualleyro estando en praça. (1372–1373, CT 75/274, TMILG)

'And because all of this he had such a well-made body and face that you would not find another like him, and, indeed, as Dares says, he looked like a knight standing in the battlefield.'

(8) is part of a description of Hector, the Trojan prince, where the writer glorifies his physical and moral qualities. Here, *segurament(e)* reinforces the writer's aesthetic judgment, which, in turn, is based on an external source. Thus, *segurament(e)* is used by the writer to underscore his assessment, but also to show agreement with a third party.

Clear cases of strengthening uses like (8) are not the norm. In fact, strategic uses in general are very difficult to tell apart from epistemic uses:

- (9) Vedes, fremosa mia senhor, *segurament(e)* o que farei: Entanto com'eu vivo for, nunca vus mia coita direi; ca non m'avedes a creer, macar me vejades morrer. (1220–1240, LP 031/327, TMILG)
 'See, my beautiful lady, what I will surely do: as long as I am alive, I will never tell you my grief; since you would not believe me, even if you saw me die.'

The male voice in (9), a fragment of a love poem, is devastated by the indifference of the lady he loves. *Seguramente* in this case can be read as a strengthening marker: in a context of bold determination such as this one, the writer uses the adverb to express that he means what he says, that he will of course honor his word and refrain from conveying his passion and grief. However, it also makes sense for the writer to qualify his own intentions epistemically: in this reading, he estimates as 100% likely that he will refrain from sharing his feelings, since the lady will not believe him, no matter what happens. This kind of ambiguity is quite frequent, and it represents a cornerstone for understanding the diachronic relations between meanings (see section 4).

The examples in (6) are clearly purely epistemic, and so is the vast majority of examples in TILG for present-day Galician. The idea, present in Caffi 1999, that any instance of an expression of uncertainty constitutes a case of mitigation is not adequate, "since that would leave the notion of strategy void of meaning" (Nuyts 2001:101). An example in my data that can tentatively be interpreted as mitigating is the following one:

- (10) Cando nota a cara seria e incrédula dela descúlpase. Vós na cidade *seguramente* tendes outras ideas, non vos podedes preocupar dos alumnos fóra das horas de clase. (1989, HEIANA989 66, TILG)
 'When he notices her serious and skeptical face, he apologizes: "In the city you probably have other ideas, you cannot worry about students outside of school hours".'

(10) features *seguramente* in a context where the speaker directly ad-

dresses his interlocutor. The use of *seguramente* here can be seen as an attempt by the speaker to mitigate a statement that assigns a particular view to the hearer, which in itself is problematic. Still, it is difficult to tell whether this is a real strategic use or just a byproduct of the epistemic meaning.

Early contemporary examples of strategic uses are scarce but show clearly that the strengthening use was still in force at the time.

- (11) *Seguramente* que é un absurdo que un rapaz galego non poda chegar a ser arquitecto na súa terra quedando así a carreira d'arquitectura reservada non aos mellores senón aos que poidan té-los medios económicos. (1922, REX004922 5, TILG)

'It is surely nonsense that a Galician boy cannot become an architect in his homeland, thus resulting in the situation that the architecture career is reserved not for the best but for those who can afford it.'

(11) is part of an opinion article where the writer expresses some critical thoughts on the university situation of Galicia at the time. In that context, an epistemic qualification of the nonsense of a state of affairs is odd, as compared to a strengthening use through which the writer underscores her or his position.

3.4 Pragmatic Uses

Pragmatic uses are identified for Dutch *zeker* by Byloo et al. (2007) as cases where the adverb modifies the nature of the speech act, particularly, turning a declarative into a special kind of interrogative—what they call a “declarogative.” The speaker uses this mechanism to ask for confirmation of her claims. This matches perfectly what Simon-Vandenbergen & Aijmer (2007:136), discussing *surely*, term “the opening-up function, reaching out to the addressee for confirmation.” Some of the examples they offer are these:

- (12) a. Hij zal wel weten wat ie kan *zeker*?
 'He'll know what he can do, won't he?' (Byloo et al. 2007:52)
- b. Of course the chaos when the Supreme Being was discovered tied up and concussed on the floor would be indescribable, but

surely they would need to be more than just lucky to win much more time out of mere chaos?

(Simon-Vandenbergem & Aijmer 2007:136)

A good indicator of the unique nature of these interrogatives is the fact, as pointed out by Byloo et al. (2007), that they retain declarative syntax. They are not real questions and the adverb does not function as an epistemic or strengthening device, but as a signal of this particular kind of speech act. In my data, there is a single instance of *seguramente* used in this way, corresponding to the early contemporary period.

- (13) Mar.:—¿Xa pensas botarlle o lazo? Mer.:—Como poida atrapá-lo... Non é fácil atopar un bon partido non saíndo d'aquí, de sorte que se algún aparece por casualidá, hai que tratar de cazá-lo... Inda que teña que correr atrás del, como cando andamos perseguindo as bolboretas. Mar.:—¿E *seguramente* irá hoxe ao baile do Casino? Mer.:—Por eso vou eu. Mar.:—Daquela é mellor para o éisito dos teus proieitos que m'eú quede na casa (rindo). (1920, CREPEC920 10, TILG)
 'Mar.:—Are you already thinking of getting him? Mer.:—If I could catch him... It isn't easy to find a good catch without getting out of here, so if someone appears by chance, one must try to catch him... Even if you have to run after him, like when chasing butterflies. Mar.:—And surely he will go today to the ball at the Casino? Mer.:—That's why I'm going. Mar.:—Then it will be best for the success of your plan that I stay at home [laughing].'

The use of *seguramente* in (13) is a clear case of a declarogative: Mar. seeks confirmation of a fact that she assumes to be the case. It is significant that Mer.'s reply does not answer the question but elaborates on the topic, thus treating Mar.'s question as a declarative clause.

4 Development and Change of the Epistemic Function

(Inter)subjectification is a highly influential notion in diachronic language change (Traugott & Dasher 2002, Traugott 2010; see also López-

modality, the evolution of *seguramente* would be partially alien to (inter)subjectification, and partially contrary to it. In the next sections, I will try to show that this is, indeed, the case. After some considerations on the development of the “post-manner” functions in section 4.1, I address the semantic change of this adverb in section 4.2, and add some additional evidence in section 4.3.

4.1 From Manner Adverb to Discourse and Modal Marker

The available medieval data offer no clear proof for the claim that the manner use preceded the epistemic or the strengthening use: the three meanings are present from the earliest moment. Nevertheless, some factors strongly suggest that the manner use is older, and that it led to non-manner meanings. First, as stated in section 3.1, there was a construction with *MENTE* in Latin that already conveyed manner of action. Second, we observe an overall tendency for the manner use to disappear, with a radical contraction from more than 50% in the Middle Ages to less than 1% in the whole contemporary period. Other present-day epistemic and discourse markers, like *certamente* and *realmente*, also show this tendency. Finally, there exists a suitable semantic path from the manner meanings of the adverb to the strengthening use, but it seems difficult to reach manner meanings from either strengthening or epistemic modality.

Traugott (2014:79) argues that the meanings ‘carefully’ and ‘steadfastly’ led to implicatures of truthfulness in the case of *surely*, and that these implicatures became conventionalized, in particular with verbs of locution and hearing. In the case of *seguramente*, the meanings ‘safely’ and ‘confidently’ may have led to the same implicatures in similar contexts:

- (15) E por ende disso hũ sabio que ouo nome Tulio, que en nehũa cousa nõ pode homẽ auer amĩgo a quẽ podesse dizer *seguramente* sua uoentade, assi coẽmo a ssi meesmo; (1300–1350, CPa XXVII, 4/126, TMILG)

‘Thereby a wise man named Tullius said that no one in any respect can have a friend to whom he can confidently/truthfully tell his will, as he does to himself.’

According to Traugott (2014:88), the manner adverb with the meaning ‘in a truthful manner’ led to an epistemic marker. However, she does not make a clear difference between strengthening and epistemic uses, so it is difficult to know which one was first. Interestingly, she explains that in the older period *surely* “has mainly an emphasizing function, foregrounding the speaker/author’s stance toward the content of the clause” (Traugott 2014:82). Therefore, it is not unlikely that *surely* was first a strengthening device, and only later an epistemic marker.

Let’s pay attention to ambiguities, that is, the presence of several meanings in a particular use of a linguistic item. Ambiguities are important, since they may reveal the presence of invited inferences, which may lead to the conventionalization of a new meaning (Traugott & Dasher 2002). If we take a look at older occurrences of *seguramente*, we find ambiguities between manner and strengthening (16), and also between strengthening and epistemic modality (recall (9)), but not between manner and epistemic modality.

- (16) Et ela quando descobrio os nẽbros do moço, forõ eles tã espãtados, que nõ poderõ falar. Et ela lles diso: —Meus fillos, comede *seguramẽte* que meu fillo he, et o trouxe ãno ventre et ja del comĩ ... (1390–1420, MS III, 2/43, TMILG)

‘And when she uncovered the limbs of the kid, they were so scared that they could not speak. And she told them: —My children, eat with confidence since he is my child/eat since he is indeed my child, and I carried him in my womb and I already ate him.’

Manner uses related to safety, confidence, steadfastness, or truth eas-

ily lead to inferences of reinforcement of the whole state of affairs: if someone walks safely, works steadfastly, or speaks truthfully the adverb contributes to strengthening the fact that the event takes place. Moreover, epistemic modality does not seem compatible with such manner uses, since the former implies the questioning of the factuality of the state of affairs, which the latter entails. As the implicated meaning of reinforcement becomes more frequent and spreads across contexts, the adverb gets positional freedom, thus developing sentential syntax.

The transition from strengthening to epistemic modality is not a radical one. Once the adverb scopes over the clause reinforcing its content, it may be employed in contexts where (it is known that) the speaker does not (or cannot) have absolute certainty about the factuality of the state of affairs, like (9) and (17), which are ambiguous between a strengthening and an epistemic reading.

(17) Et mays te digo; ño era Troylos vilão que fose asi rroubado ñe perdido ñe prendido de ñegũ ca ben sey que ño mũdo ño ha mellor cauleyro que el et *seguramẽte* que el querra seer ben entregado d'esta prenda. (1350–1399, HT 199/192, TMILG)

'And I will tell you more; Troilus was not a villain that could be robbed, nor lost, nor captured like that by anyone, since I well know that there is no better knight than him in the world, and he will surely want to be satisfied like this.'

4.2 From Certainty to Uncertainty

From a diachronic point of view, it is fair to assume that certainty preceded, and, thus, led to, uncertainty in cases like those of *zeker*, *no doubt*, and *surely*, presented in section 2. The aforementioned paradox of certainty expressions provides the enabling context for the change to take place: since qualifying a state of affairs as certain is semantically redundant, doing so gives rise to inferences that the statement is disputed, and that there may be some reason to doubt it. When such an inference conventionalizes, the epistemic meaning of certainty becomes inaccessible, and a new marker of uncertainty

emerges. Given the continuous nature of a large part of semantic change (Traugott & Dasher 2002), the logical next step after certainty would be a high value of probability: in contrast to possibility, probability is a gradual category (witness the ability of probability expressions to be modified by degree adverbs), and it is closer to certainty in that it implies a stronger commitment to the state of affairs, as evidenced in (18).

- (18) a. Maybe she is at home, but I don't think so. [possibility]
 b. She is probably at home, #but I don't think so. [probability]
 c. She is certainly at home, #but I don't think so. [certainty]

I will contend that the semantic evolution of *seguramente* followed a pathway from certainty to (high) probability, and that the non-epistemic uses present at the different stages of the process further support this claim.

Two main types of strategic uses have been distinguished: strengthening and mitigating. The latter is linked with uncertainty expressions, whereas the former is associated with expressions of certainty and also with ambivalent expressions like *zeker*, *no doubt*, and *surely* (see section 2). *Seguramente* features the strengthening use during the Middle Ages and the contemporary period until at least the 1920s—see (11). This means that during that time the adverb functioned as an expression of either certainty or both certainty and uncertainty. As pointed out in section 3.2, during the medieval era it coded certainty, while in the early contemporary language it expressed either certainty or uncertainty, depending on the context.

Byloo et al. (2007) relate the pragmatic use of *zeker* to its weaker epistemic meaning. They also point out that *zeker* does but *certainly* does not feature this use. Of course, epistemically ambivalent expressions are a very tight fit to the hybrid clause type declaratives represent: the speaker seeks confirmation from the hearer but at the same time wants to assert her near certainty. Interestingly enough, the pragmatic use is not available for certainty and uncertainty items. It seems, in fact, to be exclusive of expressions like *zeker* and *surely*.

Given the considerations above, it seems safe to claim that epistemic *seguramente* arose as a marker of certainty during the Middle Ages, and became weaker over time. Considering the available data for Galician, it is impossible to know precisely when *seguramente* started to behave as an epistemically ambivalent expression —but see section 4.3. What we do know is that as late as in the 1920s *seguramente* had some properties that made it different from its current status as a pure marker of probability. This is what the latest strengthening and pragmatic uses are telling us.

The question remains as to why *seguramente* changed in the first place. The answer may have to do with the principle of ‘no synonymy’ (e.g., Croft 2000:176–178), which predicts that situations of synonymy tend to be avoided by speakers. This is probably what happened with the paradigm of strengthening and epistemic *-mente* adverbs in Galician, and presumably in other Romance languages as well. Many of these items evolved from manner adverbs to discourse and modal markers, for instance *certamente*, *efectivamente*, *realmente*, *seguramente* (see Rivas & Sánchez-Ayala 2012 and Villar Díaz 2013 for data on Spanish). Some of them specialized in certainty and strengthening uses (*certamente*), others developed different discourse functions (*efectivamente*, *realmente*), whereas others had to go down the epistemic scale to find their place in the paradigm of epistemic expressions (*seguramente*). One must still account for why *seguramente* developed further in the direction of weak epistemic meaning, instead of stabilizing as a weakened certainty item, as *surely* has presumably done. The emergence of the adverbial uses of the adjective *seguro* is likely to be connected with this, since the latter displays the typical characteristics of epistemically ambivalent forms and, furthermore, is lexically related to *seguramente* (see Company Company 2017, Vázquez Rozas 2010). The final question would be, then, how *seguramente* deviates from *probablemente* as to be kept as a distinct probability marker. I can only suggest here that *seguramente* must code a (slightly) higher probability value, and be a subjective (in the sense of Nuyts 2001) epistemic adverb.

4.3 Semantic Change, Language Contact, and Discourse Traditions

Thus far, this paper has discussed data from Galician, an understudied language which presents drawbacks for historical investigation. Both Galician and Spanish are official in Galicia, and Galician speakers usually have a good command of Spanish and use it to differing degrees. For the case at issue, it would be difficult to maintain that Galician-Spanish bilingual speakers have separate semantic representations for *seguramente* in each language: the functions of the adverb in the two languages are too close. Conversely, it would be too simple to argue that a change generated in one of the languages, namely Spanish, the hegemonic language, and was adopted by the other. The situation seems more complex.

Hummel (2013) studies the diachronic expansion of *-ment(e)* adverbs in Romance languages and warns about the prevalent habit of operating under the logic of national languages with loanwords. This usually leads to ignoring the continuity between Latin and Romance (learned) spoken and written traditions, and to overlook the influence of the shared practice of writing Latin on the development of written Romance and English—no doubt one should also include other European languages on the list. Hummel (2013) highlights the fact that the English equivalents of the 10 most common *-mente* adverbs in European Spanish are also widely used. This is assumed to prove the cross-cultural nature of *-ment(e)* (and *-ly*) adverbs and their development within a long shared culture. Of special interest for the present study is the idea that some particular historical developments can also be common to a wide number of languages: according to Hummel, the discourse functions of *-ment(e)* adverbs in the main European languages arose in the 19th century and became general in the 20th century.

When looking at (the change in) the use of particular units, it may be sometimes necessary to pinpoint a more specific context than a general European linguistic tradition. The development of *seguramente(e)* as a pure marker of probability appears to be a “Spanish

phenomenon,” that is, a feature telling apart languages spoken in Spain from neighboring languages.

- (19) Epistemic meanings of *segurament(e)* and cognates in the main languages of the Iberian Peninsula²
- a. Asturian: *de manera cuasi segura* ‘almost certainly’. (DALLA: s.v. *seguramente*)
 - b. Basque: *segur aski*, used to express what you think will be the case. (EH: s.v. *segur*)
 - c. Catalan: *probablement* ‘probably’. (DIEC: s.v. *segurament*)
 - d. Galician: with a high degree of probability. (DRAG: s.v. *seguramente*)
 - e. Spanish: *probablemente, acaso* ‘probably, perhaps’. (DRAE: s.v. *seguramente*)
 - f. Portuguese: with great certainty; *certamente, decerto* ‘certainly, by all means’. (*Dicionário Priberam da Língua Portuguesa*: s.v. *seguramente*)

Lexical entries³ (19a) to (19e), corresponding to the languages of Spain, link *segurament(e)* to different degrees of uncertainty, ranging from high probability to possibility. Even Basque, a genetically unrelated language, has a form with the same Latin lexical stem and similar meaning. The entry for Portuguese (19f), by contrast, clearly links *seguramente* to certainty.

Nevertheless, dictionary entries should not be taken as hard proof for this claim, since they usually disregard the polyfunctionality of epistemic and discourse markers. What is really interesting is the fact that none of the lexical items (19a) to (19e) allows strengthening uses, whereas they are common in Portuguese, for example, (20).

²DALLA = Academia de la Llingua Asturiana (2015), EH = Euskaltzaindia (2016), DIEC = Institut d’Estudis Catalans (2007), DRAE = Real Academia Española (2014). All online dictionary entries were retrieved on 03-28-2018.

³The resort to dictionaries responds to practical criteria: there are no better sources of semantic evidence for most of the items considered, and they offer comparable information.

- (20) Há de haver um código de indumentária e acho isso aceitável, mas *seguramente* não obriga ao fato e à gravata. (2010, http://avesso-do-avesso.blogspot.com/2010_04_01_archive.html)
 ‘There must be a dress code, and I find that acceptable, but it surely does not force one to wear a suit and a tie.’

Since uncertainty markers are incompatible with the strengthening use, we must conclude that Portuguese *seguramente* is either a marker of certainty or an ambivalent epistemic expression. The latter seems to be the case: according to Hummel (2018) the cognates of *seguramente* in the main Romance languages have developed uncertainty semantics. In order to conclusively prove the claim that *seguramente* and equivalents have become pure markers of probability only in the languages of Spain, it is crucial to know whether the adverb in other Romance languages, such as French and Italian, still features the strengthening use. As far as I know, no relevant data is available.

If we assume that the emergence of *seguramente* as a pure marker of uncertainty is a phenomenon of the languages of Spain, does this mean that it is an innovation of Spanish that spread over its most immediate area of influence? Of course, Spanish plays a leading role in the exchange of linguistic elements through language contact in the context of the Spanish State (see Gugenberger et al. 2013 for an overview of the Galician situation). Furthermore, one cannot ignore the facts that (i) *-ment(e)* adverbs were learned, (mostly) written forms until the 20th century and (ii) many of the languages in (19) were scarcely written before that time. Nevertheless, a “loanword” scenario would be an oversimplification (at least for the Middle Ages and from the late 19th century onward), and a more realistic picture is one where speakers/writers, taking part in the same discourse tradition, make different languages interact with each other through their own linguistic activity. In fact, it would be inadequate to talk about linguistic borrowing, since we are confronted with the reactivation of (pre)existing linguistic devices. This reactivation is a case of “linguistic convergence,” which is triggered by “communicative convergence,” a situation where “contact speakers are saying something

new, communicating an idea that was hitherto not usually expressed by speakers of that language” (Otheguy 1995:219). In such a scenario, one would expect parallel developments between languages if contact remains stable over time. This is, I contend, the case of *segurament(e)*.

The Galician data above show patterns not reported for Spanish. It is unlikely that this is a consequence of different evolutions. Rather, it may be due to different research interests and analytical criteria in the works dealing with the matter. According to Villar Díaz (2013) (see also Suárez Hernández 2018), the current epistemic value of Spanish *seguramente* can be detected in ambiguous instances between the 16th and 18th centuries, and spread during the 19th century. This author neglects the difference between epistemic, strategic, and pragmatic uses, and puts an end to her analysis with the emergence of the probability meaning. The examination of Galician data conducted in this paper adds complexity to the contemporary situation, showing that the adverb was an ambivalent epistemic form between the 1880s and the 1920s. If the same criteria were to be applied to Spanish, similar results would probably follow.

Likewise, the Spanish data reveal the missing pieces in the Galician puzzle. After the initial medieval period in which *seguramente* was used to convey certainty, it became epistemically weaker, conveying both certainty and uncertainty. We can say that this situation lasted several centuries, probably from the 16th to the beginning of the 20th century. This explains why strategic and pragmatic uses are so scarce in the data examined: the period from the 1880s to the 1920s represents the final moments of the transition from a weakened certainty expression to an uncertainty marker. In accordance with this is the fact that the reference dictionary for Spanish includes ‘probably’ as a meaning for *seguramente* for the first time in its 1927 edition (Polo 2014). Prescriptive dictionaries are not known for going along with linguistic change, so the probability meaning would presumably have been too prominent in the 1920s to be ignored. In fact, no clear certainty epistemic use was found in the 20th century, which

may mean that the conventionalization of probability was already far advanced, and that the marginal strengthening and pragmatic uses of this period were outdated.

5 Final Remarks

The semantic evolution of *seguramente* consists of two main phases. In the first one, the original manner use led to a strengthening function, which in turn set the path for an epistemic modal meaning. In the second phase, the adverb underwent a semantic change involving the weakening of the epistemic meaning, that is, leading to a lower value on the epistemic scale. With the exception of the shift from manner to discourse marker, these changes are either alien or opposite to the well-established tendency in semantic change known as (inter)subjectification. This fact may be taken to mean that (inter)subjectification can be circumvented if more powerful factors are at play, namely: the way linguistic items are used in discourse (e.g., in the case at issue, to reinforce something the speaker is not sure about), and the paradigmatic pressure to avoid synonymy.

In explaining the historical path from certainty to uncertainty, several types of markers have been identified, which are the result of different combinations of epistemic values and discourse functions. Items coding epistemic certainty can be used as strengthening devices; those coding uncertainty can be used as mitigators; and epistemically ambivalent markers (coding certainty or uncertainty depending on the context) can be used to yield a special kind of interrogative. The (apparently contradictory) character of the latter type is the natural result of the accumulation of functions caused by semantic change.

Shared discourse traditions between European languages in general and between the languages of Spain in particular help us to better understand the history of *-ment(e)* adverbs. It seems that epistemic and discourse markers easily spread across languages through shared discourse traditions. In fact, items from different languages appear to evolve simultaneously in the same direction, which points

towards discourse traditions, rather than national languages, as the macro-locus of language change.

Further research includes diachronic studies on *segurament(e)* in the Spanish context, and synchronic studies on the contrast between present-day *seguramente* and *probablemente*. It would also be interesting to look at *sure(ly)* and equivalent lexical bases in other languages, since it is unclear whether their weakening when used as epistemic items is a general cross-linguistic trend or an European phenomenon.

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