

Assertion Strength and Commitment Modification in Spanish: An Experimental Study

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1 Introduction¹

This article examines how different expressions have a strengthening or mitigating effect on assertions. The empirical focus is on European Spanish, reporting and analyzing the results of an experimental study on epistemic and commitment modifiers in this language. In particular, the article sets out to solve the following puzzle.

- (1) a. It will be sunny on the weekend. (unmodified)
b. It really / seriously will be sunny on the weekend. (commitment modifier)
c. It surely will be sunny on the weekend. (epistemic modifier)

- (2) Spanish
 - a. *El finde har  sol.* (unmodified)
the weekend will-be sun
'On the weekend it will be sunny.'

 - b. *El finde de verdad / realmente har  sol.* (commitment modifier)
the weekend in truth really will-be sun
'On the weekend it truly / really will be sunny.'

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- c. *El finde seguramente hará sol.* (epistemic modifier)
 the weekend isurely will-be sun
 ‘On the weekend it surely will be sunny.’

In (1) and (2) there are three assertions, the examples in (1,2a) do not contain any modifier, but the remaining examples do. The assertions in (1b) and (2b) are modified by what I will call *commitment modifiers*, namely en. *really* and *seriously*, and sp. *de verdad* ~ ‘truly’ and *realmente* ~ ‘really’. The epistemic modifiers in (1c) and (2c) encode strong epistemic modality. These are usually interpreted as expressing a strong belief or strong certainty on the part of the speaker. The puzzle is that, despite these being strong epistemic modifiers, the impression is that the utterance in (1c) and (2c) are somewhat weaker than the ones in (1a), (2a) and (1b), (2b). This raises the questions why this is so, and what it is that is perceived as strong or weak about these assertions. Based on experimental results, the argument I will make in this article is that the expressions have different impacts on the strength of the commitment a speaker expresses. While the epistemic modifiers in (1c) and (2c) express a strong belief of the speaker, their commitment to the proposition is still weakened compared to (1a,b) and (2a,b).

The structure of the article is as follows. § 5.2 presents the notion of assertion I assume and establishes how it relates to commitments. § 5.2.1 presents the general ideas of commitment-based theories of assertions. According to recent ideas in speech act theory, when a speaker asserts a proposition, they take up a commitment towards this proposition in front of their interlocutors (see, for instance, Brandom, 1983, 1994, 2000, MacFarlane, 2011, Geurts, 2019, Shapiro, 2020, Krifka, 2023a). This notion of commitment views the social obligations that arise from performing a speech act as their defining property. It follows that assertions are predicted to have social consequences. For instance, if a proposition turns out to be false, a speaker can be held accountable, might be asked to justify their assertion by providing evidence, may lose reputation or trustworthiness, or will have to retract their commitment to the proposition (Brandom, 1983, 1994, 2000, Kibble, 2006). § 5.2.2 deals with assertion strength which can be understood as commitment strength in the context of the commitment-based view on assertion. While all assertions express commitments, the strength of these commitments varies and can be boosted or attenuated through the use of linguistic devices (see Sbisà, 2001, Northrup, 2014, Krifka, 2023b). § 5.2.3 presents the layered model of assertions (Krifka, 2023a), a first elaborate linguistic model that is firmly grounded in a commitment-based approach and formalizes the structure of meaning involved in assertions. § 5.2.4 offers an interim summary and § 5.3 synthesizes previous experimental

studies on commitment. Finally, § 5.4 reports on an experiment designed to test social consequences as an indirect measure of commitment strength in Spanish (see also Mazzarella et al 2018, Krifka, 2023b, Hall and Mazzarella, 2023). In § 5.4.1, I present the methods, stimuli and predictions. Participants were confronted with target assertions that were either unmodified or contained judgment (*probablemente, quizás*) and commitment modifiers (*realmente*). They were asked whether they would request justification from the person who uttered the target assertion if it turned out to be false. § 5.4.2 summarizes the results. The expectation of receiving a justification was significantly higher when the assertion was unmodified or contained a commitment modifier and was significantly lower with judgment modifiers. In § 5.4.3 I discuss the results and in § 5.5 they are interpreted and analyzed in the layered model of assertions proposed by Krifka (2023a). Finally, § 5.6 concludes the article.

2 Assertions

This section lays out the notion of assertion I assume and establishes its relation to commitments. The more general question that will be addressed here is, what happens when a speaker asserts a proposition.² In some theories it is assumed that, with an assertion, a speaker expresses that they believe or know that the asserted proposition is true. This view is maintained for instance by Bach and Harnish (1979), Zaefferer (2001, 2006) and Truckenbrodt (2006). One central argument in favor of belief-based theories is Moore's paradox, i.e. the fact that it is contradictory to assert a proposition while simultaneously disavowing a belief in it.

(3) # Mary is pregnant, but I don't believe it.

According to the proponents of belief-based theories, the utterance in (3) is infelicitous because, when asserting that Mary is pregnant, a speaker expresses that they believe it, and hence the rejection of this belief is not adequate.

In other theories of assertions that I will follow in the present article it is assumed that what is important for assertions is not so much whether the speaker believes the proposition to be true or not, but that they publicly com-

² I am only going to focus on two alternative theories of assertions here. But see MacFarlane (2011) for a comprehensive comparison of further theories of assertions.

mit to it. This means that they take up the social obligations to vouch for the truth of the proposition in front of the addressees and defend or retract it if it turns out to be false. This normative and social dimension of assertions has been recognized at least as early as Peirce (1994) and was followed by extensive discussion in philosophy of language (for instance Brandom, 1983, 1994, 2000, MacFarlane, 2011, Geurts, 2019, Shapiro, 2020). Only recently it has attracted interest in theoretical linguistics (Farkas and Bruce, 2010, Geurts, 2019, Krifka, 2023a). Commitment-based theories acknowledge that private belief and public commitment often align, which means that speakers usually commit to propositions they also believe. However, this is guaranteed independently because cooperative speakers follow Grice's Maxim of Quality and will usually assert only propositions they consider to be true. Furthermore, also in a theory that views assertions primarily as public commitments, speakers have good reasons to assert propositions they believe, because believing something usually means a speaker is in a place to take up the responsibility to defend the proposition. Accordingly, within a commitment-based approach, Moor's paradox and the oddness of examples like (3) is explained as a result of Grice's Maxim of Quality.³ Contrary to the opposing theoretical view, a belief in the proposition is not viewed as the defining property of an assertion.

Numerous authors (e.g. Kibble, 2006, MacFarlane, 2011, Geurts, 2019 and Krifka, 2023a) brought in theoretical arguments in favor of a commitment-based rather than belief-based approach to assertions. Empirical evidence from Kneer (2018) supports this view, showing that belief or knowledge alone is not sufficient for assertion—justification, such as evidence, is also required. Here, I am only going to mention two central arguments in greater detail. The first observation is that belief or knowledge are not necessary conditions for asserting a proposition. Geurts (2019) illustrates this with the example in (4).

- (4) [Context: at the sentencing a judge utters:]
I find the defendant guilty of armed robbery. (Geurts, 2019, 14: ex7)

When a judge asserts that they find a defendant guilty at a sentencing, it does not matter whether the judge privately believes the sentenced person to be guilty. All that matters is that the judge takes up the public commitment for this proposition and acts in accordance with its truth. The example in (4) is

³ An anonymous reviewer pointed out that (3) also violates Grice's Maxim of Relation.

a performative speech act, but the same argument can be made for constative speech acts, especially in the case when speakers deliberately choose to ignore the sincerity condition and assert things they know or believe to be false.

(5) Mother to toddler: There is no more candy. Daddy ate it all.

A mother can assert (5) even in a context where she knows (and hence believes) that there is still candy left. What matters, according to a commitment-based theory, is again that the mother, even when lying as in (5), commits to the proposition and acts in accordance with its truth. Similarly in hypothetical contexts, speakers can assert propositions they do not believe to be true.

- (6) A: Let's say the earth is flat. How does the sun rise and set then?
 B: Easy: It rises on one side of the flat earth and sets on the other.
 A: And what if you reach the end of the disc?
 B: Well you fall off, of course.

In the conversation in (6) speaker A establishes that they are in a hypothetical context, by asserting something they do not believe namely that the earth is flat, making clear that this is a fictitious discussion by the use of *let's say*. Speaker B not only accepts A's assertion, but continues the discourse based on assertions they do not believe to be true. What is important again is that in the limited setting of this hypothetical conversation, even when uttering assertions known to be false, the speakers commit to and act on them.

Contrarily, in a belief-based theory of assertions, the utterances in (5) and (6) do not, by definition, qualify as assertions, since they lack the defining property of expressing a speaker's belief.

A second argument in favor of a commitment-based theory is illustrated in (7).

- (7) a. It will be sunny on the weekend.
 b. I believe it will be sunny on the weekend.
 c. I vouch that it will be sunny on the weekend.

If assertions expressed beliefs, it would be predicted that (7a) and (7b) would mean the same or at least match closely in meaning, it would certainly not be expected that (7b) should be a weaker assertion. But this is exactly what happens: the example in (7b) where the fact that speaker believes the proposition is expressed directly, appears to be weaker. It is not clear how this can be

reconciled with in a belief-based theory. In turn, if the social commitment is expressed directly as in (7c), the assertion is comparable to (7a) in strength, which an additional performative overtone.

2.1 *Commitment-Based Approach to Assertions*

As stated above, in this article I adopt a commitment-based theory of assertions. In this section, I will present this view in more detail. The central idea is that what is important for assertions and other speech acts are the public commitments speakers take up rather than their private or mental attitudes, such as beliefs or intentions. Public commitments are viewed as obligations speakers assume towards other agents (cf. Brandom, 1983, 1994, 2000, Kibble, 2006a, 2006b, Geurts, 2019, Shapiro, 2020, Krifka, 2023a among others).

Asserting involves taking up responsibility for a proposition and receiving authority over the same proposition (Brandom, 1983, 1994, 2000, cf. Marsili, 2020 for a slightly different conception of commitment that distinguishes between accountability and discursive responsibility). The responsibility a speaker assumes over a proposition requires them to show that they are entitled to the commitment, in other words they are responsible to defend the proposition if it is called into question, or if they are unable to do that, they have to retract their assertion of the proposition. The retraction of an assertion, i.e. of a public commitment, does not mean that a speaker no longer believes a proposition. They can still believe it to be true, but might not be in a place to adequately justify it, because they lack convincing evidence. This is again in support of the view that assertions give rise to public commitments which are different from private beliefs (see also MacFarlane, 2011).

The authority a speaker holds over a proposition means that they license further assertions and the commitments they express. These can either be inferential or communicational. For instance, if a speaker asserts *54 is divisible by 9*, they also consequentially commit to *54 is divisible by 3*, independent of if they know this or not. They are however not responsible for consequential commitments. An addressee, when challenged for their re-assertion of a proposition, can pass justificational responsibility to the original asserter of the proposition (on consequential commitments see also Kocher, forthcoming).

- (8) [Context: Andy and Bobby plan their weekend. They want to go canoeing at a nearby river, but Bobby is unsure about the weather:]
 Andy: It will be sunny on the weekend.
 [Context: They make arrangements to go canoeing but then on the weekend it is raining heavily.]
 Bobby: Why the hell did you say it was going to be sunny?

With Andy's assertion in example (8), they take up responsibility and authority over the proposition. When the proposition turns out to be false, Bobby calls Andy out and asks them to justify their assertion. It is likely that this false assertion will have social consequences and Bobby will consider Andy to be less reliable. The reverse scenario is also possible, if the weather turned out to be good and an assertion is (unexpectedly) true, this can lead to a boost of an asserter's social authority in the eyes of the addressee.

Although mental attitudes such as beliefs and intentions are not perceived to be the fundamental component of assertions, commitment-based theories acknowledge that they do play a role in communication and, as stated above, if speakers follow the Maxim of Quality, commitments should align with beliefs. Krifka (2023a, 120: ex 5) formulates this as a plausible inference rule, that states that if a speaker publicly commits to a proposition it can be assumed that they also believe it to be true.

Beliefs and intentions also have a conceptual function in the two linguistically more elaborate models of commitments. In Geurts (2019) there is a distinction between public commitments and private commitments. The latter correspond to mental attitudes like beliefs and intentions. In his model they play a role in particular for self talk and sincerity implicatures. Krifka (2023a) uses the term *judgment* for mental attitudes like beliefs in his model. When asserting a (bare) proposition, a speaker does not express a belief of the proposition, but they commit directly to a proposition and a belief of it is inferred (see above). Judgments, however, can be specified through epistemic and evidential expressions, which are termed *judgment modifiers* by the author. Although they directly modify a belief, hence judgment, this also impacts the strength of a commitment expressed. Some judgment modifiers imply doubt or low certainty. These permit a disavowal of a belief of the proposition. In (9) this is illustrated with the reportative evidential *allegedly*. Contrary to the example in (3), (9) which contains the evidential is felicitous and thus an exception from Moor's paradox.

(9) Allegedly Mary is pregnant, but I don't believe it.

From the weakened belief, one can infer that the speaker also mitigates or even negates their commitment to the bare proposition. In the following §5 2.2, assertion strength and the impact that commitment and judgment modifiers have on it, will be dealt with in greater detail.

2.2 *Assertion Strength*

That assertions and speech acts in general can vary in strength is a fairly uncontroversial and established insight in formal pragmatics. Holmes (1984), building on Fraser (1978, 1980) and Fraser and Nolen (1981), establishes the concepts of attenuating and boosting, and discusses effects and strategies to modulate the strength of speech acts. It is notable that she also mentions epistemic and evidential expressions as well as what Krifka (2023a) later calls *commitment modifiers* as possible lexical devices of speech act boosting and attenuation.

In Searle and Vanderveken (1985) and Vanderveken (1990) the strength of speech acts is related to different modes of achievement, where commanding and testifying express higher degrees of strength than requesting and asserting. In Sbisà (2001), the social standing of the asserter is brought in as a factor in impacting the strength of speech acts, in particular entitlement and status of power can affect whether a speech act by a particular speech participant is perceived as strong or weak. This relation of social status and assertion strength is particularly interesting in the context of commitment-based theories of assertions, as it addresses the social dimension of speech acts.

Wolf (2015) develops a probabilistic approach to assertions, in which every assertion is endowed with a degree of strength, which has consequences for whether they are accepted by an addressee and consequently added to the common ground. He also analyzes epistemic expressions as lexical devices encoding degrees of strength.

Incurvati and Schlöder (2019) also identify differences in strengths of assertions. However, different from Wolf (2015), they do not adopt a probabilistic notion of strength, but a categorical one. They distinguish between levels of strong and weak assertions and rejections. In their system, with a strong assertion of a proposition p a speaker proposes to add p to the common ground. With a strong rejection of p , the speaker proposes to add *not* p to the common ground. A weak assertion of p prevents *not* p from being added to the common ground. And finally, a weak rejection of p prevents p from being added to the common ground (Incurvati and Schlöder, 2019, 774–775).

The latter two approaches are based on a theory of assertions that views them in terms of their potential to changing the common ground (Stalnaker, 1978). Northrup (2014), in turn, relates assertion strength to the strength of commitments a speaker assumes. Similar to previous authors, he establishes a relation between commitment strength and epistemic authority, but he also attributes an even more important role to evidentiality. Northrup's view is that commitments are underwritten by evidential and epistemic bases, where different types of bases correspond to different strengths of commitments. The

bases can be overtly introduced with epistemic and evidential expressions, or remain unpronounced. The default base, which is not overtly introduced, is generic and results in a strong commitment that is assumed to be based on (solid) evidence. A weak base, in turn, can be encoded linguistically, and is used to indicate that the evidence a speaker has for their assertion is not sufficient, which results in a weak commitment.

Krifka (2023a) develops a commitment-based model to assertions (see § 4.2.3. below) and consequently, like Northrup, also assumes that assertion strength follows from commitment strength. Krifka investigates different types of modifiers as expressions that impact a commitment. Just as others before him, he identifies evidential and epistemic modifiers as one class of expressions, which he terms *judgment modifiers*. As stated above, in his model subjective evaluations based on mental attitudes like beliefs are called judgments, and thus the terminological choice reflects his view that epistemic and evidential modifiers primarily impact a judgment. There is a large amount of previous research on evidentials and epistemic modals (for instance Kratzer, 1991, Fintel and Gillies, 2007, Aikhenvald, 2004, 2018) and some authors, independently from the current theoretical discussion on assertions and commitments, established that these expressions have an impact on assertion strength or commitments (Bary and Korotkova, 2023, van Elswyk, 2023).

While epistemic modifiers appear to express different degrees of certainty (*surely vs. probably vs. maybe*), evidential expressions encode how information was gathered or on what type of evidence the speaker relies for their assertion. Different sources of evidence are linked to different degrees of certainty. The linking of an evidential expression and the degree of certainty or belief, appears to be context dependent and inferred by the addressee. With reportative evidentials, for instance, the inferred degree of certainty depends on the status and reliability of the original source.

- (10) a. According to my first-grader, Super Wings is cooler than Paw Patrol.
 b. According to my first-grader, the inflation will rise.

A typical first-grader will potentially be viewed as a reliable source on cartoons and thus the assertion in (10a) could implicate that the speaker also believes the proposition. In turn, one usually does not consider a typical first-grader to be a strong authority on macroeconomics, therefore the assertion in (10b) could implicate that the speaker does not believe the proposition.

The second group of modifiers Krifka (2023a) investigates are what he calls *commitment modifiers*. This is a heterogeneous group of expressions and until Krifka (2023a) it has not been treated as a unified class. They are used in con-

texts when regular commitments might be deemed too weak and might require more support. Some commitment modifiers explicitly refer to the potential sanctions of wrong assertions. Others establish the commitment as a serious or true one. Both strategies are employed by speakers with the aim to appear more trustworthy and confident. Following this reasoning, Krifka (2023a) proposes a number of potential meanings commitment modifiers can encode. He distinguishes the following types. Modifiers that explicitly refer to truth or realness (ger. *wahrlich*, *wirklich*, sp. *realmente*, *de verdad*, ‘truly’, ‘really’). Modifiers that explicitly refer to seriousness (ger. *ehrlich*, sp. *en serio*, ‘seriously’). Modifiers that explicitly refer to speech act verbs or are explicit performatives (ger. *ich schwöre*, *ich sag mal*, sp. *lo juro*, *diría*, ‘I swear’, ‘I’d say’). And finally, modifiers that explicitly appeal to authorities (ger. *bei Gott* ‘by God’).

The difference between commitment and judgment modifiers is that, while the former directly modify a commitment, the latter only do so indirectly through the modification of a judgment. Krifka’s (2023a) proposal on how to model this difference will be presented below in § 5.2.3. A formal theory of the relation between judgment and commitment however is still lacking (see also Schmitt, 2020).

As mentioned above, judgment modifiers can vary in strength (*surely* vs. *maybe*), while the expressions grouped under the umbrella-term of commitment modifiers appear to always express a strong commitment. The intuition of Krifka is that judgment modifiers are used to mitigate commitments and commitment modifiers are used to strengthen commitments (Krifka, 2023a, 140).

Apart from the descriptions provided by Krifka, little is known about the category of commitment modifiers and how they empirically differ from judgment modifiers. The present article is an attempt to extend the concepts to Spanish by adopting the definitions and characterizations given by Krifka (2023). This should be viewed as a first cautious approach to the issue. More empirical testing on this language and related languages is necessary, as language-specific differences in the dominant functions as judgment or commitment modifiers are to be expected in cognate expressions. In addition to the descriptive differences between commitment and judgment modifiers summarized above and the intuitively higher degree of commitment expressed by the former, which is also supported by the experiment described in § 5.4, there are also some empirical differences I could determine for Spanish modifiers. These are illustrated in the examples (11–13). Judgment modifiers can be used relatively freely as answers to polar questions, while commitment modifiers are more restricted in this respect, as shown in example (11).

- (11) Spanish
 – ¿Viene María? – Seguro. / – Quizás. / – Aparentemente. /
 comes María sure maybe apparently
 – *Realmente. / – *De verdad.
 really truly
 ‘– Is Maria coming? – Surely. / – Maybe. / – Apparently. / – *Really. / –
 *Truly.’

As illustrated in (12), commitment modifiers are compatible with performative speech acts, while judgment modifiers are not.

- (12) Spanish
*Gracias realmente. / de verdad. / *seguramente. / *quizás. /*
 Thanks really truly surely maybe
 **aparentemente.*
 apparently
 ‘Thanks for real/truly/*surely/*maybe/*apparently.’

Finally, the examples in (13) demonstrate that commitment modifiers (13a), but not judgment modifiers (13b), can be embedded under predicates of doubt:

- (13) Spanish
 a. *Dudo que venga realmente. / de verdad.*
 doubt that come really truly
 b. *Dudo que *seguramente / *quizás / *aparentemente / venga.*
 doubt that surely maybe apparently come
 ‘I doubt they’ll *surely/*maybe/*apparently/really/truly come.’

All these properties could be indicative of more fundamental differences between commitment and judgment modifiers. Further empirical investigation is required to determine to what extent they hold for different modifiers and languages.

2.3 Layered Model of Assertions

In this section, I present the layered model of assertions that was developed by Krifka (2023a). It constitutes an elaborate formal linguistic model of assertions adopting a commitment-based approach. The model distinguishes hierarchically ordered layers of meaning involved in speech acts and maps the functional meaning onto syntactic structure. The mapping of pragmatic meaning to syn-

tax has a relatively long tradition (see for instance Ross, 1970, Lewis, 1979, Rizzi, 1997, Cinque, 1999, Speas and Tenny, 2003, Wiltschko, 2014, 2021, Wiltschko and Heim, 2016, Miyagawa, 2022). The model by Krifka (2023a) is unique in that it is grounded in concise semantic notions that are then mapped onto syntax. While the other models often take syntax as a starting point and develop semantics from it. As stated above, the model by Krifka is also the first one among these that clearly adopts a commitment-based approach. In this article, I focus primarily on the semantic part of the model.

Each layer of the model represents one of the central functions identified for assertions in the literature. Thereby, the model, although grounded in a commitment-based view, offers an integrative solution to the theoretical debate on what constitutes an assertion. In the model, assertions express beliefs (11a), public commitments (11b) and perform common ground updates (11c) at the same time.

Each layer of meaning in the model is represented by a semantic operator that impacts the semantic object it scopes over. Assertions contain a judgment operator J , a commitment operator \vdash and a speech act operator \cdot . The judgment operator scopes directly over the core proposition. This layer makes a judger variable j available in assertions that is usually bound by the speaker, who judges the proposition to be true. (14a) can be paraphrased as, at time i , judger j judges the proposition that Max snores loudly to be true. The commitment operator \vdash scopes over the judgment layer and turns the subjective judgment of j into a public commitment. (14b) can be paraphrased as at time i , judger j bound by the speaker publicly commits to the proposition that Max snores loudly. The last operator is the speech act operator \cdot , which in assertion expresses the assertive force in the sense of a performative common ground update (14c), meaning that at time i , judger j proposes a common ground update so that the updated common ground at time i' , immediately following i , contains the proposition that Max snores loudly. In short, the meaning of an assertion will be written as in (14d). Being committed in the model results in the desired meaning that the judger, bound by the speaker, is publicly responsible for the asserted proposition.

- (14) a. J -[Max snores loudly] = $\lambda_j \lambda_i$ [Max snores loudly, according to j , in i]
 (with j : judger, i : world-time index; adapted from Krifka, 2023a, 125: 20)
- b. \vdash [J -[Max snores loudly]] = λ_j [$j \vdash i \lambda_i$ [Max snores loudly, according to j , in i]]
 (with j : judger, i : world-time index; adapted from Krifka, 2023a, 125: 21)
- c. \cdot [\vdash [J -[Max snores loudly]]] = $\lambda_c \{i' \mid \exists i \in c [i \circ \vdash i' [s \vdash i \lambda_i$ [Max snores loudly according to s , in i]]]

(with s: speaker, i: world-time index, c: common ground, adapted from Krifka, 2023a, 126: ex 24)

d. $\cdot \lambda i \exists e [s \vdash_i e p]$

(with s: speaker, i: world-time index, e: commitment event, adapted from Krifka, 2024, 55: ex 3)

All of the semantic operators in the model can be modified. In addition to commitment and judgment modifiers, that were discussed above in § 5.2.2., Krifka (2023a) also introduces a third class called *speech act modifiers*, affecting the speech act operator \cdot , which however will not be discussed in this article. Krifka's analysis of (125a), containing the judgment modifier *sicherlich* 'surely' is given in (125b).

(15) German

a. $\llbracket \text{Das Buffet ist sicherlich eröffnet.} \rrbracket^{s,a}$

'The buffet is surely open.' (with s: speaker, a: addressee) =

b. $\cdot \lambda i \exists e [s \vdash_i e \lambda i [s \text{ is certain at } i \text{ that } \text{BO} \text{ is true at } i]]$

(Krifka, 2024, 55: 17; with i: world-time index, e: commitment event)

The epistemic modifier *sicherlich* affects the judgment layer of meaning, qualifying the type of judgment as *sicher* 'certain'. (16) is another example containing a judgment modifier, this time the weaker *wahrscheinlich* 'probably'.

(16) German

a. $\llbracket \text{Das Buffet ist wahrscheinlich eröffnet.} \rrbracket^{s,a}$

'The buffet is probably open.' (with s: speaker, a: addressee) =

b. $\cdot \lambda i \exists e [s \vdash_i e \lambda i [s \text{ considers it probable at } i \text{ that } \text{BO} \text{ is true at } i]]$

(with i: world-time index, e: commitment event)

Since the judgment layer is within the scope of the commitment operator, in both cases a speaker commits to a subjective judgment about the proposition, i.e. the qualification of the judgment is part of what a speaker vouches for. This means, they do not commit to the unmodified proposition. From the mitigated judgment, particularly in (16b), one can infer that the speaker's commitment to the unmodified proposition is also weakened.

The semantics for the same proposition containing the commitment modifier *wirklich* 'really' is given in (17). Here the modifier affects the commitment operator and specifies the flavor of commitment as a *real* one.

(17) German

a. $\llbracket \text{Das Buffet ist wirklich eröffnet.} \rrbracket^{s,a}$

'The buffet is really open.' (with s: speaker, a: addressee) =

b. $\cdot \lambda i \exists e [s \vdash i, e \ p \wedge \text{real commitment}(i)(e)]$

(combination of Krifka, 2024, 55: 18 and Krifka, 2023a, 143: 65, with j: judge, i: world-time index, e: commitment event)

The modifier directly qualifies the commitment and therefore, other than with judgment modifiers in (15) and (16), the speaker does in fact commit to the unmodified proposition in this case.

Krifka proposes slightly different semantics for commitment modifiers in the 2023a and the 2024 publication. In the 2024 version, the commitment modifiers are taken to directly encode strong commitments, while in the 2023a version the precise meaning of the modifier is preserved in the analysis. My intuition is that the 2023a version is more suitable and this is the reason I adopt it here. Commitment modifiers form a heterogeneous group and therefore have different basic meanings, which leads to subtle differences in their felicity conditions. This would be lost if all were analyzed to simply encode a strong commitment as in the 2024 version of Krifka's analysis. For instance, the modifier *realmente* 'really' appears to require that whether *p* or not *p* is a (controversial) question under discussion. The requirement for modifiers like *fijo* 'definitely' and *100 por cien(to)* 'a 100 per cent', seems to be weaker and it seems to be sufficient for *p* to be salient. A crucial consequence of the analysis in (17b), is that with commitment modifiers the strength of the commitment is also derived indirectly through inference, just as with judgment modifiers.

2.4 Interim Summary and Research Questions

§ 5.2 laid out the notion of public commitments I assume and how they relate to assertions. I also discussed how the direct and indirect modification of commitments through certain types of expressions can lead to a strengthening or weakening of assertions. Finally, I presented Krifka's model, that relies on a commitment based view and isolates the semantic layers of meaning involved in assertions. Krifka's model is derived mainly from empirical evidence from German. Krifka's intuition is that judgment modifiers lead to a weakening of the commitment strength, whereas commitment modifiers boost it. Building on this, in the next sections, I will present an experimental study on Spanish with the aim of testing the predictions of the theory for this language. The central questions are whether public commitments are truly impacted by commitment and judgment modifiers alike and whether their impact differs in strength, as Krifka assumes.

3 Previous Experimental Studies on Commitment

In this section, in § 5.3.1. I will summarize three recent linguistic experiments by Mazzarella et al. (2018), Hall and Mazzarella (2023) and Krifka (2023b) that explore public commitments and I will compare them to the method used in § 5.4. While several other studies, for instance by Tenney et al. (2007; 2008; 2011), Vullioud et al. (2017) and Bonalumi et al. (2020), also indicate that strong commitments to false propositions lead to severe social consequences, the three studies mentioned above are more in line with the scope of my investigation, and therefore will be discussed in greater detail here. In § 5.3.2. building on the results of pretests, I will motivate the choice of the task I employed in the experiment summarized in § 5.4.

3.1 *Published Experimental Studies*

All three studies I will summarize here adopt a notion of commitment and its role in assertions akin to the one I present in this article, namely assuming that speakers take up responsibility for their assertions before their interlocutors.

Mazzarella et al. (2018) present studies on English to examine the level of social accountability when false propositions are presupposed, directly asserted, or implicated. They designed scenarios in a work setting, where participants assessed the social consequences for the employee when providing false information. Participants evaluated whether to assign the employee a tedious task or trust them in unrelated contexts. Results showed that confident speakers faced harsher repercussions than less confident ones, with implicating speakers being trusted more than those asserting or presupposing.

Hall and Mazzarella (2023) replicated this design in two further experiments on English, investigating the impact of the explicitness of false assertions on reputational costs. Both experiments demonstrated again that the more explicitly a false proposition was stated, the more severe the social sanctioning.

The study by Krifka (2023b) investigates how different modes of modification affect the severity of social sanctions. The study used scenarios with various modifiers influencing the strength of assertions. Participants used a 4-point Likert scale to evaluate the assertor's trustworthiness after the assertion. Although not all effects were statistically significant, results largely aligned with Krifka's model, showing decreased trustworthiness when assertions turned out false, with the epistemic modal *es ist sicher* 'it is certain' leading to highest consequences in trustworthiness.

3.2 *Pretests and Motivation*

The study I present in § 5.4 is strongly inspired by the work of Krifka (2023b), as both experiments investigate whether the use of commitment and judgment modifiers results in social sanctions. In Krifka's experiment, social sanctions manifest as changes in the confidence and trust an addressee places in a speaker regarding a specific topic. This differs from the tasks of Mazzarella et al. (2018) and Hall and Mazzarella (2023), where changes in trust extend beyond the topic of assertion. In my version of the experiment, the social sanction is operationalized as the expectation of a justification.

Operationalizing social cost and indirectly commitment strength as changes in trust and expectation of justification follows from commitment-based approaches, which hold that speakers are socially accountable for their assertions. Building on theories by Zahavi (1997), Brown and Levinson (1978), Dunbar (1997), and Tomasello et al. (2012). Krifka (2023b) uses the theoretical concepts of speaker's reputation and links it to their trustworthiness. He suggests that assertions can impact a speaker's reputation; a false assertion may decrease trustworthiness, while a true assertion may either increase trustworthiness or maintain it. The theoretical motivation for expecting justification in my experimental task comes directly from the assumption in commitment-based approaches (e.g., Brandom, 1983, 1994, 2000, MacFarlane, 2011, Marsili, 2020), that state that speakers are discursively responsible for their claims. Thus, if an assertion is challenged, speakers are obliged to defend and justify it. From this perspective, I hypothesize that an interlocutor's expectation of a speaker's justification is higher when an assertion is false, as it presents an opportunity to challenge it, than when it is true, wherein the expectation of justification is low.

The assumption that modifiers have a strengthening or weakening effect on the social consequences of (false) assertions holds, regardless of whether these consequences relate to reputation and trustworthiness or the need for justification. This is based on the idea, discussed in preceding sections, that certain modifiers impact a speaker's commitment to a proposition. Consequently, a bold assertion indicating strong commitment should provoke more severe social consequences—heightened justification expectations and increased trust loss—when proven false. Conversely, a cautious assertion with a weaker commitment should result in milder social consequences if the assertion is false.

To sum up, the central difference between Krifka's (2023b) version of the experiment and the one I will lay out in § 5.4 is how social sanctions are conceptualized and operationalized. In Krifka (2023b), they are changes in trust and are operationalized by asking participants if they perceive the speaker as less

trustworthy concerning the assertion topic. This primarily affects the hearer internally. In my study, in turn, the social sanction is the expectation of justification, operationalized by asking participants if they would expect the speaker to justify their assertion in a given context. While still affecting the hearer internally, this expectation is more outwardly directed at the speaker.

Before settling on the justification task, I conducted pretests comparing two versions of the experiment: one aligned with Krifka's original, focusing on trust changes, and the other on justification. Both experiments yielded similar results, with a high negative correlation coefficient of -0.92 between item judgments, indicating that reduced trustworthiness in the first version corresponds to higher justification expectations in the second.

It is important to note that the commitment view assumes that assertions generate social obligations and both consequences—change in trust and expectation of a justification—are theoretically plausible, as has been laid out above. However, this does not imply a clear theoretical basis for why lack of trustworthiness should correlate with higher expectation of justification, despite my pretest results indicating this. My interpretation is that both operationalizations—one focused on trust, the other on justification—test the same underlying variable: social accountability linked to public commitment. Statistical correlation should not be misunderstood as causation: the correlation suggests that asserting a proposition might simultaneously affect trust and justification expectations without one causing the other.

In sum, both pretests support the theoretical hypothesis: commitment and judgment modifiers give rise to social sanctions and differ in strength. The second version is preferable in my context because participants provided more nuanced judgments using the full scale, whereas they relied mainly on extremes of the scale in the first version.

There are two further aspects in which my final experiment diverges from Krifka (2023b): it uses a slider scale instead of a 4-point Likert scale, allowing for more varied statistical analysis methods, and it includes filler items.

4 The Experiment

This section summarizes the experiment that is set out to test whether different modes of modifications lead to different degrees of commitment strength. The central questions driving this research repeated from §5.2.4 are whether public commitments are truly impacted by commitment and judgment modifiers alike and whether their impact differs in strength, as Krifka would assume. I adopt the view that assertions express public commitments and that these

lead to social obligations a speaker takes up towards their interlocutors. Among these obligations is the responsibility to justify a proposition if it is challenged. Since commitment strength cannot be elicited directly, (testable) social consequences will be exploited to draw conclusions about the strength of commitments. The experiment tests whether assertions containing different types of modifiers in Spanish lead to different strengths of social sanctions if the assertion turns out to be false.

4.1 *Method*

The experiment was run online on the open platform for hosting experiments PCIBex farm.⁴ Participants were recruited through Prolific and paid 1£ each for their participation. On average participants took 6 minutes to finish the experiment. All participants were native speakers of European Spanish, coming from different regions of Spain. In total 101 people participated, their mean age was 32 (SD: 9.3). There were 43 female, 55 male and 3 diverse participants. Three of the participants had to be excluded because of outlier behavior. The outliers were detected by fitting a linear mixed-effect model. Based on this, participants with extreme by-participant random intercepts were excluded.⁵ The judgments of the remaining 98 participants form the final dataset.

4.1.1 Items and Conditions

The experiment contained a total of 12 experimental items, distributed into eight experimental stimuli and four fillers. They were presented in a counter-balanced manner following a Latin square design.

Each stimulus consisted of a context, a target assertion, either unmodified or containing one of three modifiers, a second context that resulted either in a positive outcome, confirming the assertion (= positive condition) or a negative outcome, contradicting the assertion (= negative condition) and finally the target question.

For this experiment, the choice was to keep the syntactic factors as minimal as possible, choosing the least marked position for each modifier in the target assertion. This position was determined in consultation with a native speaker of Spanish.

The participants were asked to provide their answer to the question on a slider scale, where the low extreme was labeled with *no espero para nada que dé una justificación* 'I do not expect at all that they give a justification' and the

⁴ <https://farm.pcibex.net/>

⁵ model formula: `lme4::lmer(Value~Modifier*Condition+Gender+(1|Itemid)+(1|Participant-id))`.

TABLE 1 Example of stimulus with the full range of possible modifications and the two alternative conditions

Context:

'Your parents will visit you next weekend and you want to invite them for dinner. They like Italian food but you have little experience with the Italian restaurants in your city. Your friend Isabela goes out a lot and she recommends.'

Target assertion:

El Al Sole quizás/probablemente/realmente/∅ es el mejor.

'The Al Sole maybe/probably/really/∅ is the best.'

Positive condition:

'You look for reviews online to confirm this. There you see that in fact the Al Sole has almost exclusively 5 star reviews.'

Negative condition:

'You look for reviews online to confirm this. There you see in the last months there were various cases of food poisoning after having eaten at the Al Sole.'

Target question:

¿Te parece que Isabela debe dar una justificación para su afirmación anterior?

'Do you think that Isabela should offer a justification for her previous assertion?'

top extreme was labeled with *definitivamente espero que dé una justificación* 'I definitively expect that they give a justification'.

The modifiers that were tested are the commitment modifier *realmente* 'really' and two judgment modifiers of the epistemic type: *probablemente* 'probably' and *quizás* 'maybe'. The categorization as commitment and judgment modifiers is based on the characterization in Krifka (2023a) as well as the empirical differences illustrated in the examples (11)–(13) in §5.2.2. Although strength of certainty is not derivable from the results of the experiment, my intuition is that the two epistemic modifiers differ in this respect, with the former expressing moderately higher certainty than the latter one. As stated above, the experiment also included the unmodified assertion.

The fillers matched the stimuli closely. They consisted of similar contexts and the same target question. What differed were the target assertions. In the fillers the assertions contained quantities of countable nouns that were

unmodified (*hoy hará 5 grados*. ‘Today it will be 5 degrees Celsius.’) or modified by different scalar expressions (*como mucho 5 grados* ‘at most 5 degrees’, *más o menos 5 grados* ‘more or less 5 degrees’, *como mínimo 5 grados* ‘at least 5 degrees’).

4.1.2 Predictions

The hypotheses posit that the anticipation of receiving a justification is generally higher in the negative condition. This expectation is based on the findings of studies by Mazzarella et al. (2018), Hall and Mazzarella (2023), and Krifka (2023b), which demonstrated that false assertions lead to social sanctions. Furthermore, the prediction, aligning with these previous studies, is that different modes of modification result in varying degrees of expectations for justifications. Specifically, unmodified assertions and those containing the commitment modifier *realmente* are expected to lead to higher justification expectations compared to the weaker epistemic modifiers like *probablemente* and *quizás*.

The prediction is grounded in the idea that unmodified assertions and assertions with commitment modifiers involve a strong speaker commitment to the proposition. In contrast, judgment modifiers indirectly weaken this commitment. As previously mentioned, more explicit or stronger commitments have been shown to result in more severe social sanctions in earlier studies (see Vulliamou et al., 2017; Mazzarella et al., 2018; Hall and Mazzarella, 2023; Krifka, 2023b).

4.2 Results

For ease of illustration, the results are analyzed with T-Tests and ANOVAs.⁶ The post-hoc Tukey test is used to detect differences in significance across the different modifiers. All statistical analyses were done in R. The results are plotted in figures 5-1, 5-2 and 5-3.

A T-Test reveals that the difference between the negative and positive condition is highly significant ($t = 31.349$, $p < 0.001$). Across conditions (Figure 5-1), the effect on the expectation to receive a justification differs significantly depending on the type of modifier or its presence and absence ($f = 6.536$, p

6 A conditional inference tree fitted to the dataset confirms the same tendencies as the ANOVA and finds an additional effect of gender: in the positive condition female participant's expectation of a justification is significantly lower than that of male and diverse participants (model formula: `party::ctree(Value~Modifier+Condition+Gender)`). A linear mixed-effect model supports an effect of gender (female participants show significantly lower expectation of justification) and condition (the expectation of a justification is significantly higher in the negative condition). The model also detects a boarder-line significant effect of the interaction between negative condition and the modifier *quizás*, resulting in a lower expectation of justification (model formula: `lme4::lmer(Value~Modifier*Condition+Gender+(1|Itemid))`).

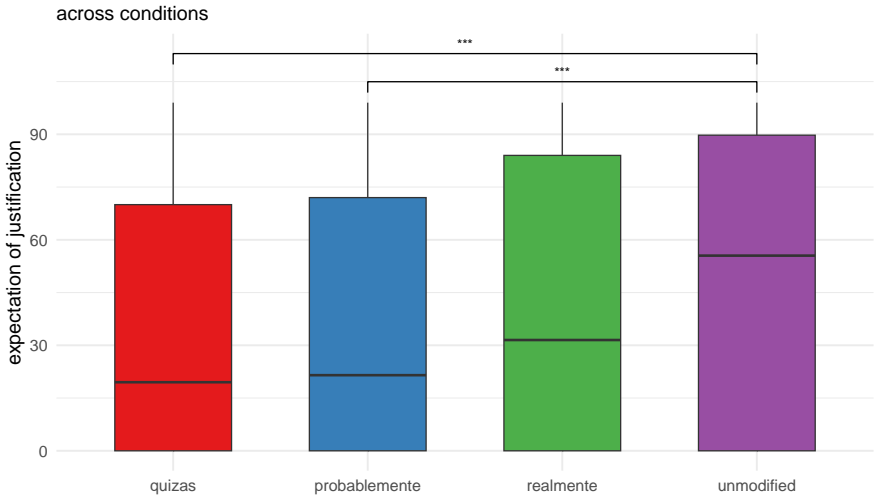


FIGURE 5.1 Expectation of justification by type of modification across conditions

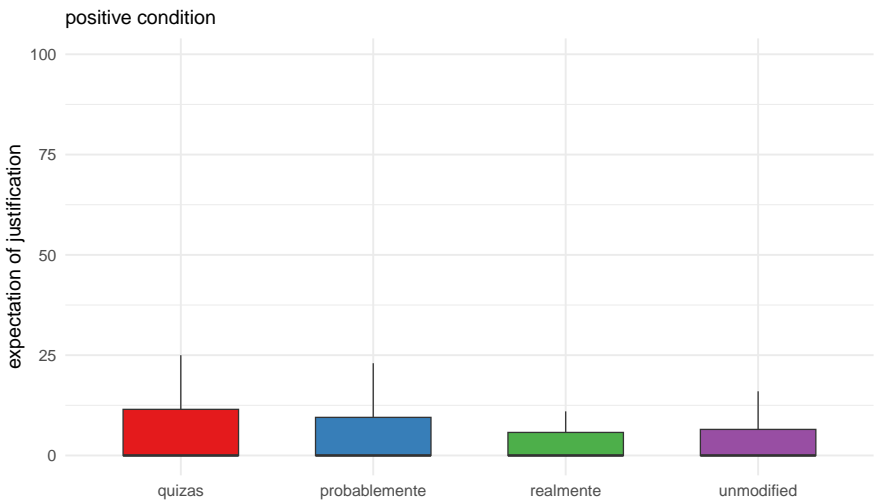


FIGURE 5.2 Expectation of justification by type of modification in the positive condition

< 0.001). The post-hoc Tukey test shows a significant difference between the unmodified assertion and the one containing *quizás* and also the unmodified assertion and the one containing *probablemente*.

There are no significant differences in the positive condition, independent of the presence or absence of a modifier and irrespective of the modifier, the expectation to receive a justification is low ($f = 0.655, p > 0.05$) (figure 5–2).

In turn, in the negative condition, the expectation to receive a justification is high and the effect of the type of modification is significant ($f = 4.411, p < 0.01$).

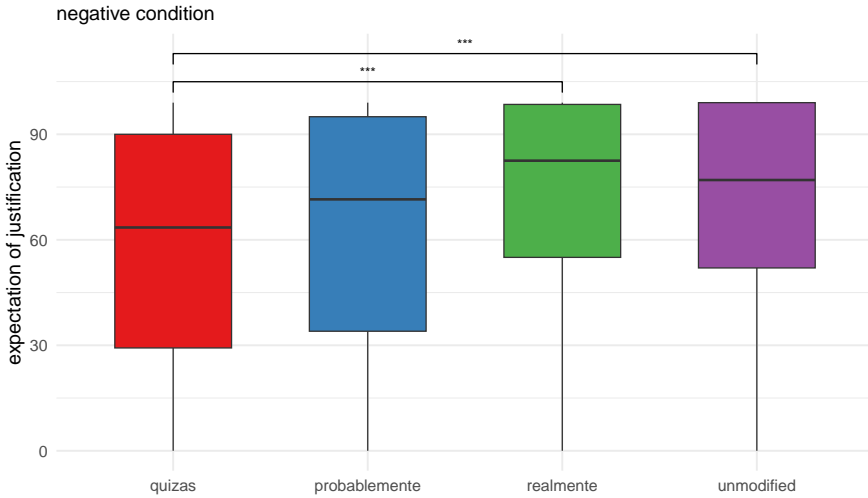


FIGURE 5.3 Expectation of justification by type of modification in the negative condition

The post-hoc test reveals a significant difference between *quizás* and *realmente* and *quizás* and the unmodified assertion (Figure 5–3). There is no significant difference between the two judgment modifiers *quizás* and *probablemente*.

The wide spans for *quizás* and *probablemente* in the negative condition require further investigation in future studies. Potentially these reflect a larger amount of variation and possibly context dependence with respect to the degree of commitment they express. No effects of demographic factors (Gender, Age, Region) could be detected with the ANOVAs and t-tests, however see footnote 6 for an effect of gender detected in a conditional inference and a linear mixed-effect model based on the same dataset.

4.3 Discussion

The experiment supports the predictions formulated in § 5.4.1.2. Modified and unmodified assertions give rise to social sanctions when the assertion turns out to be false. The results also show clearly that the strength of the social sanctions differs gradually by the type of modification. As predicted, unmodified assertions and the commitment modified assertions lead to more severe social sanctions than judgment modified ones. These results are compatible with the assumption that the tested modifiers impact the (public) commitment of a speaker to different extents.

There are tendencies clearly visible in Figure 5–3 that indicate that the commitment modifier expresses the strongest commitment, followed by the modified assertion, and that the judgment modifiers lower the commitment

compared to the unmodified assertion. However, only some of these visible differences reach the level of statistical significance. It is likely that if the number of participants were increased in future studies, the contrasts would be significant and therefore even more informative. The chosen modifiers appear to be suitable to detect these gradual differences. Still, in future studies one could include judgment modifiers of different types and strengths as well as a larger number of commitment modifiers to test whether the effects can be replicated more broadly. The judgment modifiers in the experiment express moderately high (*probablemente*) to moderately low certainty (*quizás*) and there is no significant difference between them. An anonymous reviewer rightly observes, that this suggests that they instantiate the same sort of modification. It also suggests that the fine intuitive differences in certainty that these modifiers appear to express, do not lead to significant differences in commitment-strength. It would therefore be particularly interesting to test whether an effect is detectable for epistemic modifiers that express high degrees of certainty like *seguramente* 'surely'.

The operationalization in the present experiments targets an internal state of the hearer that is however oriented towards a call to action for the speaker. A further variant of the experiment to be tested in the future could operationalize the demand for justification even more clearly, by asking directly whether the hearer will ask the speaker to justify their assertion.

Finally, although the results of the experiment are in support of a commitment-based view of assertions, they do not straightforwardly disprove the alternative belief-base view. The results are also compatible with the view that the tested modified and unmodified assertions expressing different strengths of beliefs. While, as far as I know, this has not been stated yet, proponents of a belief-based theory could argue that expressing a strong belief towards a proposition that turns out to be false leads to social consequences. While this goes beyond the scope of the present study, it is still necessary to reflect on this issue and developing ways of testing the two theoretical approaches against each other would certainly be a worthwhile endeavor to ultimately determine the role of (private) belief and (public) commitments in assertions.

5 Interpretation

This article started out with the puzzle in (18a–d) (repeated from (1a–c)), namely that the assertion in (18c) appears to be weaker than (18a) and (18b), even though it contains an epistemic modifier expressing strong epistemic

certainty. I proposed that what differs are the strengths of commitments speakers express.

- (18) a. It will be sunny on the weekend. (unmodified)
 b. It really will be sunny on the weekend. (commitment modifier)
 c. It surely will be sunny on the weekend. (epistemic modifier)

The results of the experiment show the same pattern. Participants had higher expectations of justifications for assertions that were unmodified or commitment modified than for assertions with epistemic modifiers when these assertions turned out to be false. I interpret this to mean that the assertions in (19a) and (19b) express stronger commitments than the assertion in (19c).

- (19) Spanish
- a. *El 'Al Sole' es el mejor.* (unmodified)
 The Al Sole is the best
 'The 'Al Sole' is the best.'
- b. *El 'Al Sole' es realmente el mejor.* (commitment modifier)
 The Al Sole is really the best
 'The 'Al Sole' is really the best.'
- c. *El 'Al Sole' es probablemente el mejor.* (epistemic modifier)
 The Al Sole is probably the best
 'The 'Al Sole' is probably the best.'

Within the layered model of assertions by Krifka (2023a) the puzzle as well as the results of the experiment receive a straightforward explanation. The commitment operator scopes over the judgment operator, this means that if a judgment is modified, a speaker commits to a subjective judgment over a proposition and not its unmodified counterpart. This is illustrated in (2). The semantic analysis of (19c) with the judgment modifier *probablemente* is given in (20a). Paraphrased (20a) means that the speaker commits that they consider it probable that the 'Al Sole' is the best ($s \vdash \text{probable}(p)$). A semantic analysis of (19b) with the commitment modifier *realmente* is given in (20b). Paraphrased (20b) means that the speaker commits that the 'Al Sole' is the best ($s \vdash p$) and the speaker commits that this commitment is real. The crucial difference that explains the perceived difference in commitment strength is that a commitment to the unmodified proposition p is entailed by (20b) but not by (20a).

- (20) a. $\llbracket (19c) \rrbracket^{s,a}$ (with s: speaker, a: addressee) =
 • $\lambda i \exists e [s \vdash_{i,e} \lambda i [s \text{ considers it probable at } i \text{ that } p \text{ is true at } i]]$ (with i: world-time index, e: commitment event)
- b. $\llbracket (19b) \rrbracket^{s,a}$ (with s: speaker, a: addressee) =
 • $\lambda i \exists e [s \vdash_{i,e} p \wedge \text{real commitment}(i)(e)]$ (with i: world-time index, e: commitment event)

Krifka states that if a speaker aims to mitigate their level of commitment, they typically do this by qualifying the judgment with epistemic or evidential expressions. These do not in fact directly modify nor reduce the commitment itself, but they do so indirectly because a speaker commits to a different proposition that, being merely a subjective judgment over a proposition is easier to defend and harder to challenge than a regular assertion (see Krifka, 2023a, 140).

In turn, commitment modifiers directly affect the commitment operator and qualify it, in case of (18b) and (19b) as a real one. Compared to regular assertions, this raises the stakes, as speakers take on more liability and thereby present themselves as confident and trustworthy. Unmodified assertions and commitment modified ones both express strong commitments. The extra effort (and responsibility) of using a commitment modifier is done when the modified proposition is given or controversially discussed and a regular assertion would not be deemed sufficient. In other words, commitment modifiers are realized in contexts where it is precisely the commitment that is at-issue.

6 Conclusion

The first part of this article laid out the theoretical background of this investigation. It established the commitment-based-view of assertions that assumes that with an assertion, a speaker takes up social responsibilities in front of the interlocutors. It also presented the layered model of assertions by Krifka (2023a) that formalizes this idea. This part furthermore dwells into central ideas on the strengthening and weakening of assertions and relates assertion strength to commitment strength. I then showed how different types of modifiers impact commitments directly or indirectly and how this is dealt with in the layered model of assertions.

The second part of the article presented an experimental study focusing on different types of judgment and commitment modifiers in Spanish. The aim was to determine whether different types of modifiers lead to different strengths of commitments. This was operationalized by testing the social consequences (expectation of justification) if a (modified) assertion turned out to

be false. The results confirmed the predictions: judgment modifiers lead to less expectations of justifications than unmodified assertions or assertions containing a commitment modifier. The theoretical interpretation of the results in the layered model of assertions links the second, empirical part to the first theoretical part of the article.

Appendix

Experimental items (context, target assertion, negative condition, positive condition, target question)

Tu conocido Miguel está estudiando Ciencias de la Nutrición. Conversáis a menudo sobre alimentos y dietas saludables. En este momento estáis hablando sobre los superfoods. Él te comenta:

“Los superfoods son una invención de las empresas de marketing.”

“Los superfoods realmente son una invención de las empresas de marketing.”

“Quizás los superfoods son una invención de las empresas de marketing.”

“Los superfoods probablemente son una invención de las empresas de marketing.”

Poco después, escucháis en la radio una entrevista con una experta en salud. Pero ella afirma que los superfoods realmente son ricos en nutrientes y muy saludables.

Poco después, escucháis en la radio una entrevista con una experta en salud. Ella también afirma que los superfoods son una invención de las empresas de marketing.

¿Te parece que Miguel debe dar una justificación para su afirmación anterior?

Estás viajando por Italia con un grupo turístico. Una de las participantes, Marta, se ha preparado muy bien para el viaje. En este momento, estáis frente a una pequeña capilla de piedra. Marta dice:

“Es el edificio más antiguo de Italia.”

“Es realmente el edificio más antiguo de Italia.”

“Quizás es el edificio más antiguo de Italia.”

“Es probablemente el edificio más antiguo de Italia.”

Os acercáis y veis un panel explicativo en la capilla que dice que es una réplica del siglo xx.

Os acercáis y veis un panel explicativo en la capilla que confirma que de hecho es el edificio más antiguo de Italia.

¿Te parece que Marta debe dar una justificación para su afirmación anterior?

Tu vecina Claudia suele utilizar el transporte público y por eso conoce bien la zona. Justo cuando estás saliendo de casa para ir a una cita importante en el centro de la ciudad, te encuentras con ella. También está en camino al centro. Le preguntas si llegáis más rápido en autobús o en metro. Ella te dice:

“En metro llegaremos en, 20 minutos.”

“En metro realmente llegaremos en, 20 minutos.”

“En metro quizás llegaremos en, 20 minutos.”

“En metro probablemente llegaremos en, 20 minutos.”

Tomáis el metro, pero en realidad tardáis 40 minutos en llegar.

Tomáis el metro, y de hecho llegáis dentro de, 20 minutos.

¿Te parece que Claudia debe dar una justificación para su afirmación anterior?

Estás considerando adoptar un perro. Una preocupación que tienes son los pelos. Tu amigo Pedro sabe mucho sobre perros y dice:

“Los caniches son los que sueltan menos pelo.”

“Los caniches realmente son los que sueltan menos pelo.”

“Los caniches probablemente son los que sueltan menos pelo.”

“Los caniches quizás son los que sueltan menos pelo.”

Para asegurarte, consultáis un libro. Allí descubriste: En realidad, los schnauzer son la raza de perro que suelta menos pelo.

Para asegurarte, consultáis un libro. Allí se confirma que los caniches son la raza de perro que suelta menos pelo.

¿Te parece que Pedro debe dar una justificación para su afirmación anterior?

Sientes dolores extraños en tu costado desde hace unos días. Tu hermana Lola estudia medicina y te dice:

“Es el riñón.”

“Realmente es el riñón.”

“Quizás es el riñón.”

“Es probablemente el riñón.”

Vas al médico y te examinan. El diagnóstico es que solo es un dolor muscular.

Vas al médico y te examinan. El diagnóstico confirma lo que ha dicho Lola: es un cálculo renal.

¿Te parece que Lola debe dar una justificación para su afirmación anterior?

Tus padres vienen de visita el próximo fin de semana y quieres invitarlos a cenar. Les gusta la comida italiana, pero tienes poca experiencia con los restaurantes italianos en tu ciudad. Tu amiga Isabela sale con frecuencia y te sugiere:

“El ‘Al Sole’ es el mejor.”

“El ‘Al Sole’ realmente es el mejor.”

“El ‘Al Sole’ quizás es el mejor.”

“El ‘Al Sole’ es probablemente el mejor.”

Buscas reseñas en línea para confirmarlo. Ahí descubriste que en los últimos meses había varios casos de intoxicación alimentaria después de comer en el “Al Sole”.

Buscas reseñas en línea para confirmarlo. Ahí descubriste que de hecho el “Al Sole” tiene casi solo reseñas de cinco estrellas.

¿Te parece que Isabela debe dar una justificación para su afirmación anterior?

Tu vecino Sergio generalmente está bien informado sobre dónde se puede comprar de manera económica. Estás a punto de salir por la puerta para comprar pan y te encuentras con él y le dices que quieres comprar pan para el desayuno. Él te dice:

“El pan está en oferta en la panadería de la esquina.”

“El pan realmente está en oferta en la panadería de la esquina.”

“El pan quizás está en oferta en la panadería de la esquina.”

“El pan probablemente está en oferta en la panadería de la esquina.”

Vais juntos a la panadería, pero en realidad el pan no está en oferta allí, sino que está bastante caro.

Vais juntos a la panadería, y de hecho el pan está en oferta allí.

¿Te parece que Sergio debe dar una justificación para su afirmación anterior?

Tu prima Sara es carpintera. Quieres repintar una antigua mesa de madera y Sara te ha acompañado a una tienda de pinturas. Estáis en frente a un estante con pinturas y has elegido un verde oscuro. Sara dice:

“Este tipo de pintura es perfecto para muebles de madera.”

“Este tipo de pintura es realmente perfecto para muebles de madera.”

“Este tipo de pintura quizás es perfecto para muebles de madera.”

“Este tipo de pintura es probablemente perfecto para muebles de madera.”

Os acercáis y veis que en la lata dice que no se puede usar para superficies de madera sino solo para superficies de metal.

Os acercáis y veis que en la lata dice de hecho que la pintura es ideal para superficies de madera.

¿Te parece que Sara debe dar una justificación para su afirmación anterior?

Filler items (context, target assertion, negative condition, target question)

Quedaste con tu amiga Clara para un concierto. Estáis llegando tarde y te preocupa si conseguiréis buenos asientos cerca del escenario. Clara asiste a menudo a conciertos y dice:

“La sala está a la mitad de su capacidad.”

“La sala está como mucho a la mitad de su capacidad.”

“La sala está más o menos a la mitad de su capacidad.”

“La sala está como mínimo a la mitad de su capacidad.”

Finalmente, entráis. La sala está casi llena, encontrando solo asientos lejos del escenario.

¿Te parece que Clara debe dar una justificación para su afirmación anterior?

Acompañas a tu madre que va al médico. Nunca has estado en la consulta de este médico y preguntas cuánto tiempo tendréis que esperar. Tu madre ha visitado al médico muchas veces y dice:

“Esperamos veinte minutos.”

“Esperamos como mucho veinte minutos.”

“Esperamos más o menos veinte minutos.”

“Esperamos como mínimo veinte minutos.”

Cuando llegáis hay muchísimos pacientes en la sala de espera y al final esperáis una hora.

¿Te parece que tu madre debe dar una justificación para su afirmación anterior?

Has comenzado un nuevo trabajo y hoy es la primera reunión de equipo. En el camino te encuentras con tu colega Jaime y le preguntas cuánto tiempo durará. Jaime ha estado en la empresa durante mucho tiempo y dice:

“La reunión dura media hora.”

“La reunión dura como mucho media hora.”

“La reunión dura más o menos media hora.”

“La reunión dura como mínimo media hora.”

Vais juntos a la reunión y, de hecho, dura dos horas.

¿Te parece que Jaime debe dar una justificación para su afirmación anterior?

Te encuentras con tu amiga Bea en la biblioteca para estudiar. A las 14:30 teneís hambre y decidís comer en la cafetería. Normalmente, comes en casa y no conoces bien el horario de apertura de la cafetería. Bea, por otro lado, come allí a menudo y dice:

“La cafetería está abierta hasta las 15:00.”

“La cafetería está abierta como mucho hasta las 15:00.”

“La cafetería está abierta más o menos hasta las 15:00.”

“La cafetería está abierta como mínimo hasta las 15:00.”

Os dais prisa y llegáis a la cafetería antes de las 15:00. En la puerta, veis el horario de apertura, y de hecho, la cafetería está abierta hasta las 18:00.

¿Te parece que Bea debe dar una justificación para su afirmación anterior?

Tu amigo Alberto te lleva a un viaje a un pequeño lago. Veis un barco de pasajeros llegando y decidís subirlo espontáneamente. Te preguntas cuánto costará el viaje. Alberto ya había tomado ese viaje en una visita anterior y dice:

“El viaje cuesta 3 euros.”

“El viaje cuesta como mucho 3 euros.”

“El viaje cuesta más o menos 3 euros.”

“El viaje cuesta como mínimo 3 euros.”

Os subís al barco y, de hecho, el viaje cuesta 10 euros.

¿Te parece que Alberto debe dar una justificación para su afirmación anterior?

De camino a casa desde el trabajo, te encuentras con tu antigua colega Lucía en el metro. Decidís ir a tomar una cerveza y bajáis en la próxima estación. No conoces bien la zona y preguntas si hay muchos bares ahí. Lucía vive a pocas calles de distancia y dice:

“En esta zona, hay dos bares.”

“En esta zona, hay como mucho dos bares.”

“En esta zona, hay más o menos dos bares.”

“En esta zona, hay como mínimo dos bares.”

Salís de la estación de metro y, de hecho, hay diez bares en la misma calle.

¿Te parece que Lucía debe dar una justificación para su afirmación anterior?

Tu amigo Carlos está celebrando su cumpleaños en tu casa porque la suya está siendo renovada. Le preguntas cuántas personas vendrán. Él dice:

“Vienen 15 personas.”

“Vienen como mucho 15 personas.”

“Vienen más o menos 15 personas.”

“Vienen como mínimo 15 personas.”

La fiesta comienza y al final hay 30 personas.

¿Te parece que Carlos debe dar una justificación para su afirmación anterior?

Estás en Helsinki para visitar tu primo Víctor, que está haciendo un semestre en el extranjero ahí. Estáis a punto de salir a explorar la ciudad y no estás seguro de cómo abrigarte. Tu primo dice:

“Hoy hará 5 grados.”

“Hoy hará como mucho 5 grados.”

“Hoy hará más o menos 5 grados.”

“Hoy hará como mínimo 5 grados.”

Os vistáis abrigados y salís, pero os dais cuenta en seguida de que en realidad hace, 20 grados.

¿Te parece que Víctor debe dar una justificación para su afirmación anterior?

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