An evidential modal in Bulgarian: the inferential future.

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In Bulgarian, invariable **shte** (FUT), also used in ordinary futures like English *will*, may have an evidential meaning. It may then signal a present inference about a present event when followed by a verb with present morphology, (1), or a present inference about a past event when followed by a present perfect: (2-3).

(1) **Context**: Your friend asks which one among 3 singers in a photo won a TV context. You listen to a tape where each singer sings. Pointing to one singer in the photo you state:

Tazi **shte** e pobeditelkata.
This.Fem FUT be.Present.3Sg winner.Sg.Fem.the

‘This one must be the winner.’

(2) **Context**: You wonder why Ivan never went to Paris. Since his mom lives there, you suppose that she often told him to visit. You state:

Tja **shte** (da) mu kazvala mnogo pati da ja poseti.
She FUT (da) him.DAT be.Present.3SG told.PP.Impf. many times da her.ACC visit.Present.3SG

‘She must have told him to visit her many times.’

(3) Maria smjatashe che Petar **shte** (da)
be.Pres.3Sg consider.Ind.Imperfect.3Sg that Petar FUT (da)
e iztarpjal mnogo prez vojnata.
be.Pres.3Sg endure.PP.Perf a.lot during war.the

‘Maria thought that Peter must have endured a lot during the war.’

Inferential **shte** in (1-3), noted in descriptive grammars ([10], [11], [14], a.o.), is not discussed in the literature on Bulgarian evidentials ([5], [7], [13], [15], [16], a.o.). In this paper, we will examine its morphosyntax and semantics, arguing that they are of interest for current theories of modality and evidentiality, and for comparative purposes, since the properties of **shte** resemble at the same time those of *must* ([3]), the Greek future marker *tha*, and Romance future affixes ([4] a.o.).

We argue for three points. First, **shte** is an evidential with the properties of a modal, not an illocutionary marker: (a) it can be embedded under propositional attitude verbs: (3); (b) it can be embedded under question operators (not illustrated). Illocutionary evidentials lack these characteristics ([2], [8], [9] a.o.). Second, **shte** lacks a rigid quantificational force. It may express a high level of confidence close to certainty, and thus resemble a necessity modal: (1). In some contexts including questions, however, it associates with a level of certainty closer to possibility. Given that (evidential) modals need not be restricted to universal or existential force ([6], [12], [17] a.o.), we explore the idea that **shte** may be a degree modal. Third, **shte** takes a propositional complement with tense (including past), and aspect, which makes it resemble both Greek *tha* and fully inflected epistemic modals in Romance ([4]) and at the same time differ from English epistemic modals within analyses for English of the type in [1].

In sum, a well-known evidential system is a hallmark of Bulgarian ([5], [7], [10], [11], [13], [14], [15], [16], a. o.), but does not exhaust the grammar of evidentiality in this language. An interesting evidential is less known **shte**, a modal specialized for inferences, which {interacts with/scopes over} the complex morphological and semantic tense and aspect system of Bulgarian.
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Cited references: