## Language review

Prediction and probability

## There are many ways to talk about prediction and probability:

We can use will or going to.

There are going to be fewer Americans and Europeans to do the jobs available. Even the US will have 5% fewer people of working age by 2015.

We can use modals.

The economic situation may improve.

We can use lexical phrases.

Certain: There's certain to be more outsourcing of production in the next 10 years.

Probable: It's quite probable that Russia will join the European Union.

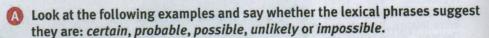
Possible: Maybe we'll have to hire a new CEO.

Unlikely: It's unlikely that Coke will lose its position.

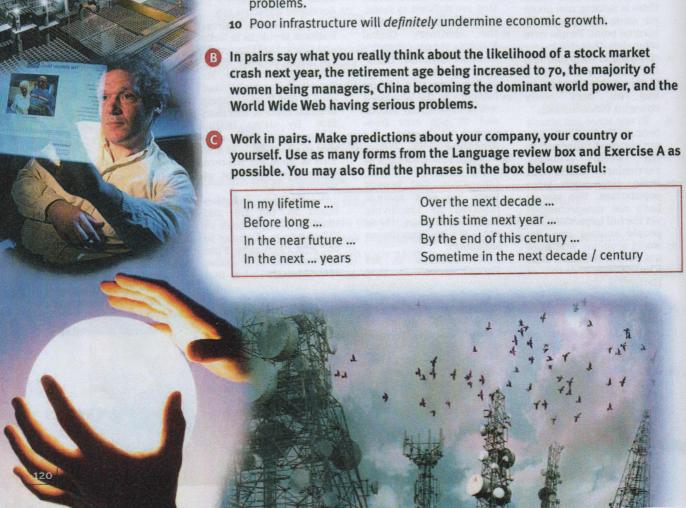
Impossible: It's just not possible to meet that deadline.



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- 1 There's no chance of us entering the European Union.
- 2 There's bound to be an increase in interest rates soon.
- 3 I doubt whether there will be a stock market crash next year.
- 4 They probably won't call off the strike.
- 5 Our CEO's taking a salary cut. It's out of the question.
- 6 It's possible that the retirement age will be increased to 70.
- 7 Perhaps the majority of managers will be women in the future.
- 8 It's highly likely that China will become the dominant world power.
- **9** There's a good chance that the World Wide Web will have serious problems.



## 14 Prediction and probability

A number of modal verbs are used to make predictions. The modal indicates the speaker's degree of certainty.

They will be there by now (100% certain)
They won't have any trouble finding our office,
they've been here many times (100% certain)
They must have arrived by now (80% certain)
They can't have arrived yet (80% certain)
They should have arrived by now (60% certain)
They may / could have arrived by now (40% certain)
They might have arrived by now (20% certain)

Conditional statements contain hypotheses about the way the future may turn out:

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If we use solar power, we'll probably save money.

If you try harder you would be able to do it.

3 The future perfect and the future continuous predict what will be in progress or will have been accomplished in the future:

By 2050 businessmen will be taking orders from the moon.

By 3000 scientists will have discovered how to transmit objects by electronic means.

4 There are a number of lexical expressions of likelihood. These include:

about to bound to going to
He's tapping his glass, I think he's about to / going to
make a speech.

She's bound to be late, she always is.

5 The following lexical phrases can be used to discuss the future: certain, probable, possible, unlikely or impossible.

There's certain to be more changes in the world's weather systems over the next few decades.

It's quite **probable** that an economic upturn will start next year.

**Maybe**, there'll be a change of management in the coming months.

It is unlikely that the retirement age will be increased to 75.

It is just **impossible** to imagine the World Wide Web having serious problems in future.

6 There are a number of useful time phrases that can be used to talk about the future:

In my lifetime I will see China becoming a dominant world power.

**Before long** the company will decide to merge with a bigger company.

In the near future everybody will be using wind power.
In the next ... years there will be a huge change in
the way we travel.

**Over the next decade** governments will start reducing air traffic.

By this time next year I will be promoted.

By the end of this century the way we conduct business in the world will be very different from now.

Sometime in the next decade / century man will inhabit other planets.