

**Estar = Ser + P**

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GOALS: (i) defend the hypothesis that *estar = ser +* (a terminal-coincidence) *P*

(ii) argue that *estar*-licensing predicates are more complex than *ser*-licensing ones

1. Background

A customary assumption about predicates is that they come in *stage level* (SL) and *individual level* (IL) guises (see Carlson 1977 and Kratzer 1995).

a. Obama {es/*está} americano. (Spanish)  
Obama be- IL/ SL-3.SG American  
‘Obama is American’

b. Obama {*es/está} preocupado. (Spanish)  
Obama be-IL/SL.3.SG worried  
‘Obama is worried’

Notice, though, that when the relevant morphology is absent, adjectives can select both *ser* and *estar*, a picture that changes if present (e.g. –nte) or past participial morphemes (–do; including the suppletive forms in (d)) show up:

a. {Es/Está} alto, gordo, moreno, rojo, suave, bonito, estúpido, alegre, manso ... (Spanish)  
be-IL/SL.3.SG tall fat dark red soft pretty stupid happy tame  
‘(S)he/It is tall, fat, dark, red, soft, pretty, stupid, happy, tame’

b. {Es/*Está} amenazante, ilusionante, alucinante, valiente, durmiendo ... (Spanish)  
be-IL/ SL.3.SG threatening encouraging amazing valiant asleep  
‘(S)he/It is threatening, encouraging, amazing, valiant, asleep,…’

c. {*Es/Está} amenazado, ilusionado, alucinado, molido, cansado, renacido ... (Spanish)  
be-IL/SL.3.SG threatened encouraged amazed ground, tired reborn  
‘(S)he/It is threatened, encouraged, amazed, ground, reborn,…’

d. {*Es/Está} hecho (#hacido), puesto (#ponido), cubierto (#cubrido) ...  
be-IL/SL.3.SG done put covered  
‘He/It is done, put, covered, described . . .  
. . . descrito (#describido), roto (#rompido), dicho (#decido) ... (Spanish)  
described broken said  
. . . described, broken, said’
Lexicalization of morphemes:

e. Es {algo /alguien} aburrido, leído, cansado, complicado, ... (Spanish)
   be-IL-3.SG something/someone bored read tired complicated
   ‘It/(S)he is {something/someone} boring, read, exhausting, difficult’

(3) The contrasts in (2) were already observed by Hanssen (1913), who capitalized
   on it to argue for the Aspect Generalization below (see Bosque 1990, Leonetti
   1994, and Marín 2004 for additional discussion):

Aspect Generalization (first version)
a. Imperfective (=IL) predicates select ser
b. Perfective (=SL) predicates select estar

(4) Together with the participial facts just discussed and their suppletive forms, as
   Luján (1980) observed, we find typical ser selection with adjectives ending in –
   oso, –és, –az, –al, –to, –ario, and –ble:

a. {Es/*esta} ruidoso, cortés, capaz, cabal, discreto, temerario, imposible ...
   be-IL/ SL-3.SG noisy corteous capable trustworthy discrete daring impossible
   ‘This/(S)he is noisy, corteous, capable, trustworthy, discrete, daring, impossible’

(5) Interestingly, whereas predicates that usually select ser can be used with estar (if the
   appropriate context is provided), predicates that select estar cannot be forced into the
   ser-mode, regardless of the context (unless a different, passive, reading is at stake).

a. Ronaldinho es genial, pero el año pasado no estuvo genial. (Spanish)
   Ronaldinho be-IL.3.SG brilliant but the year passed not be-SL.PST.3.SG brilliant
   ‘Ronaldinho is brilliant, but he was not brilliant last year’

b. *Ronaldinho está agotado, pero normalmente no lo es. (Spanish)
   Ronaldinho be-SL-3.SG exhausted but normally not CL-it be-IL-3.SG

c. Ronaldinho (siempre) es *emocionado, *ilusionado, (*)contratado … (Spanish)
   Ronaldinho always be-IL.3.SG thrilled excited hired
   ‘Ronaldinho is (always) thrilled, excited, hired,…’

Æ This is unexpected if the ser/estar trigger (perfectivity, boundedness, or whatever
   relevant property) is ‘lexical’ (= inherent; as per Kratzer 1995).

2. Estar = Ser + P

(6) The data seen so far lead to the conclusion that ser selection is more basic than
   estar selection, a fact we take in order to argue, in the spirit of Benveniste’s
   (1960) analysis of have (see Freeze 1992 and Kayne 1993), that estar is more
   complex than ser.

More precisely, we would like to follow Uriagereka (2001) and argue that, just
like have is be plus a preposition, estar is ser plus a preposition, an element that
will provide the relevant context for estar-selection to be licensed.
A similar proposal has been recently put forward by Karen Zagona (see Zagona 2009), who takes *ser* and *estar* to be “a byproduct of a difference in their formal features. Briefly stated, I argue that *estar* has an uninterpretable prepositional feature […] checked by a preposition in the complement of *estar*."

a. *estar*: \[ v [aP] . . . \]

[from Zagona 2009: 3]

Uriagereka’s (2001) analysis can readily explain the data discussed so far, once we assume that the P that incorporates into *ser* is present in Spanish past participles (including suppletive forms; see examples (a) and (b)), and DPs with a full-fledged P providing aspectual properties (see (c)).

a. Estoy avergonzado. (Spanish)
   ‘I am ashamed’

b. Está suelto (#soltado). (Spanish)
   ‘I am loose’

c. Estoy *((de) profesor. (Spanish)
   ‘I work as a teacher’

Furthermore, (6) can also be taken as the key to account for the fact that *estar* is higher than *ser* in the hierarchy of auxiliaries –just like *haber* (Eng. *have*) is higher than *ser* (Eng. *be*):

a. Obama ha sido elegido. HABER >> SER (Spanish)
   ‘Obama has been elected’

b. *Obama es habido elegido. SER >> HABER (Spanish)
   ‘Obama is having elected’

c. Obama está siendo ovacionado. ESTAR >> SER (Spanish)
   ‘Obama is being given an ovation’

d. *Obama es estando ovacionado. SER >> ESTAR (Spanish)
   ‘Obama is being given an ovation’

The general idea is consistent with a simple fact about languages that present the *ser*/*estar* distinction, vis-à-vis those which do not. Consider the question-answer pairs in (a) and (b):
a. A: Is John *(there)?
   B: No, he’s not *(there).

b. A: Está Juan (ahí)?
   ‘Is Juan there?’
   B: No, (él) no está (aquí).
   ‘No, he is not here’

(11) Languages like Catalan are relevant in this respect, since it must overtly express the locative clitic Spanish optionally spells-out: hi.

A: Que *(hi) és, en Joan?
   ‘Is Joan there?’
   B: Sí, (sí que) *(hi) és.
   ‘Yes, he is here’

(12) Catalan data are a bit more complicated, though, since both estar and ser can appear in locative sentences. Typically, the contrast below is phrased in terms of ‘length’: (12a) is used as if the sentence contained a null indexical with the rough meaning of ‘now;’ on the other hand, (12b) is used to indicate that Joan is home, but has stayed there for some time (see Ramos 2002, Rigau 1997, and references therein for discussion).

a. En Joan és a casa.
   ‘Joan is at home (now)’

b. En Joan està a casa.
   ‘Joan is at home’

(13) Interestingly, estar and the locative clitic hi cannot coappear unless the pronominal variant, estar-se (Eng. be-SE), with the meaning of ‘remain,’ is used.

a. En Joan hi és.
   ‘Joan is there (=at home)’

b. *En Joan hi està.
   ‘Joan is there (=at home)’

c. En Joan s’hi està.
   ‘Joan remains there’
(14) Catalan manifests the same basic *ser*/*estar* asymmetries (as the data below indicate). However, the facts involving the clitic *hi* raise the following question: what is the distinction between *estar* and *ser-*hi? Why do they both exist, if the former is (allegedly) the incorporated version of the latter?

a. {És/*Està} agradable, intel·ligent, al·lucinant …
be-IL/SL-3.SG nice intelligent amazing
‘(S)he is nice, intelligent, amazing’
b. {*És/Està} cansat, fet, arreglat, ofès, modificat …
be-IL/SL-3.SG tired done fixed ofended modified
‘(S)he is tired, done, fixed, ofended, modified’

The form with the clitic has a transparent semantics (= be there), but the SL version appears to involve a meaning related to Latin *STARE*, which means ‘stand (still)’ or ‘remain.’ If this is correct, then *estar* and *ser*-hi do not actually compete, even though the former covertly involves the syntax of the latter (i.e. be + P). See Batllori (1992) and Batllori & Roca (2004) for discussion.

(15) Therefore, we need to qualify the analysis above in order to capture the fact that *estar* only appears with adjectives that involve the relevant (aspectual) morphology. We do that assuming that all adjectives can actually be decomposed as an adposition plus an incorporated noun (see Amritavalli & Jayaseelan 2003 and Mateu 2002).

a. [serP ser [SC DP [P+N]]]
b. [estarP P-T+ser [SC DP [tP [P+N]]]]

In a nutshell, we take it that the P that incorporates into *ser* is of the ‘terminal-coincidence’ sort (using Hale & Keyser’s 2002 terminology), which we signal by means of the subscript ‘T.’ For us, then, all adjectives involve a P, but *estar*-licensing ones must crucially involve an extra aspectual layer, indicating telicity, perfectivity, or the relevant analogous notion. If correct, what incorporates into *ser* is not any kind of contextual (=aspectual) element, but one deploying SL-like properties.

This may require further qualification of the data in (10)-(11) in that *estar* involved a contextual element with the semantics of NOW or HERE (see Kayne 2005), analogous to “context variables,” whose range is left to the speaker to confine, as in Higginbotham (1988) and Raposo & Uriagereka (1995).

(16) Stativity (IL) = central-coincidence
Perfectivity (SL) = terminal-coincidence

The opposition that emerges […] appears to be rather pervasive in the lexical and functional systems of the grammars of natural languages. It is probably to be identified with the well-known telicity opposition, and with the central and terminal coincidence opposition to which we have referred on occasion […] Central coincidence consistently corresponds to stativity. Terminal coincidence, on the other hand, corresponds to change and therefore to the various active, dynamic, and otherwise nonstative event types […] If stativity is identified with central coincidence, then it is probable that this identification is the only way in which stativity is attributable to a head, as opposed to a construction […] [from Hale & Keyser 2002: 218-221]
(17) The syntax of adjectives must therefore be as follows:

a. Morphologically simple AA

```
P  √R  (e.g. alto, gordo, moreno, rojo, suave, bonito, estúpido, alegre, manso)
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- P is of the central-coincidence sort (spelled-out as ∅, or –nte, –ble, –ario, –al, etc.)
- license ser selection (and estar, by adding a second p in the relevant context)

b. Morphologically complex AA

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P  √R  (e.g. amenazado, ilusionado, alucinado, molido, cansado, renacido)
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- P is of the central-coincidence sort (spelled-out as ∅)
- p is of the terminal-coincidence sort (spelled-out as –do, and suppletive forms)
- license estar selection

(18) However, if p is spelled-out (say, as –do), what is incorporating into ser? Technically, there are two options: either p incorporates into ser, but the downstairs copy is also pronounced, as part of the adjective’s morphology (option (a)), or else a double does (option (b)). Another option, which we dismiss here, is that the process involves not incorporation, but Chomsky’s Agree.

a. 

```
serP
  
  ser        pP
  \          /  \  
    p       PP    
  \    /  \    /  
    do    P  √R

  iliUSIÓN
```

```
spelled-out as estar
```

b. 

```
serP
  
  ser        pP
  \          /  \  
    p       PP    
  \    /  \    /  
    NOW/HERE    
    do    P  √R

  iliUSIÓN
```

```
spelled-out as estar
```
(19) The fact that perfective adjectives (and thus estar) involve more structure may provide an answer to the contrast below. As this pair shows, only estar allows postverbal subjects, a fact we relate to the availability of an extra landing site (a focus reading for (b) must be ignored):

a. Estará el hombre tonto. (Spanish)
   ‘The man must be feeling silly’

b. *Será el hombre tonto. (Spanish)
   ‘The man must be silly’

3. Some problematic cases

(20) The analysis just sketched must face some complicated scenarios:

a. ser/estar as auxiliaries
b. locative sentences
c. non-copulative uses of ser
d. linguistic variation (Catalan-Spanish)
e. some PPs asymmetries

(21) Consider the auxiliary uses of ser and estar:

a. Es {*conquistar/*conquistando/conquistado} (Spanish)
   be-IL-3.SG conquer-INF/GER/P.PART
   ‘He is conquer/conquering/conquered’

b. Está {*conquistar/conquistando/conquistado} (Spanish)
   be-SL-3.SG conquer-INF/GER/P.PART
   ‘He is conquer/conquering/conquered’

(22) One other problematic datum is (a) below, which shows that locative PPs that licenses estar, even though they appear to signal essential (IL-like) qualities.

a. Vitoria {está/*es} en el País Vasco. (Spanish)
   Vitoria be-SL/IL-3.SG in the Country Basque
   ‘Vitoria is in the Basque Country’

   In order to square this data we propose that locative properties (holding for cities or people) are in general transitory, despite our world (=encyclopedic) knowledge, and therefore select estar.

(23) There are also some cases where ser is used, but the meaning seems to be similar to “happen,” “take place,” and others:

a. El partido es a las cinco. (Spanish)
   the game be-IL-3.SG to the five
   ‘The game is at five’ (The game starts at five)
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b. Eso ya fue.  
that already be-IL-3.SG  
‘That already happened’  

(24) Also, we want to note that the different behaviour shown by Catalan and Spanish (see Brucart 2005 for discussion of the basic facts, and a proposal).

a. {És/*Està} mort.  
be-{IL/SL}-3.SG dead  
‘(S)he is dead’  

b. {*Es/Está} muerto.  
be-{IL/SL}-3.SG dead  
‘(S)he is dead’  

(25) Finally, notice that although some PPs trigger estar selection, others do ser selection.

a. María {*es/está} de profesora.  
María be-{IL/SL}-3.SG of teacher  
‘María is here as a teacher’  

b. María {es/*está} de Zamora.  
María be-{IL/SL}-3.SG of Zamora  

4. Conclusions

4.1. In the spirit of Benveniste’s analysis of have (= be+P) we have defended Uriagereka’s (2001) analysis of estar, according to which this copula is a more complex version of ser: ser + P.

4.2. The p element that is incorporated into ser to yield estar has a terminal-coincidence flavor (in Hale & Keyser’s 1998; 2002 sense).

4.3. The analysis has consequences for the analysis of adjectives (and, in general, of predicates): (i) adjectives can be decomposed as an adposition and a noun (see Amritavalli & Jayaseelan 2003, and Mateu 2002), and (ii) Kratzer’s (2995) SL - IL cut cannot be a lexical (=inherent/oblivious) property, but in fact a semantic consequence of a specific syntax, in line with so-called exoskeletal (neo-decompositional) approaches to lexical items (see Borer 2005, Hale & Keyser 1998; 2002, Ramchand 2008).
REFERENCES


