

Estar = Ser + P

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GOAL: One of the most intriguing puzzles of Spanish syntax concerns the distinction between the copular verbs *ser* and *estar* (Eng. *be*), a pair that has been analyzed by invoking, in one form or another, [2]'s *stage-level* vs. *individual-level* distinction (cf. also [9]). The goal of this paper is to argue that the stage-level version of *be* in languages of the Spanish type (namely *estar*) should be analyzed as *ser* plus a preposition. The proposal clearly entertains [1]'s claim that *have* is 'be plus something,' an insight that we push in order to account for the syntax of the *ser/estar* cut.

THE DATA: A fairly standard assumption about predicates is that they come in individual or stage guises (cf. [2,9]). Notice, though, that when the relevant morphology is absent, adjectives can select both *ser* and *estar*, a picture that changes if present/past participial morphemes (including suppletive forms) show up:

- (1) {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'
- (2) a. {Es /*Está} *amenazante*, *ilusionante*, *alucinante*, *valiente*, *durmiente*,... (Spanish)
be-IL/SL.3.SG threatening encouraging amazing valiant asleep
'(S)he/It is threatening, encouraging, amazing, valiant, asleep,...'
- b. {*Es /Está} *amenazado*, *ilusionado*, *alucinado*, *molido*, *renacido*,... (Spanish)
be-IL/SL.3.SG threatened encouraged amazed ground, reborn
'(S)he/It is threatened, encouraged, amazed, ground, reborn,...'
- c. {*Es /Está} hecho, puesto, cubierto, descrito,... (Spanish)
be-IL/SL.3.SG done put covered described
'(S)he/It is done, put, covered, described,...'

The contrast between (1) and (2) was already observed by [6], who capitalized on it to argue for the aspect generalization in (3):

(3) *Aspect Generalization*

- a. Imperfective (=IL) predicates select *ser* b. Perfective (=SL) predicates select *estar*

Interestingly, the facts in (4) below show that 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 invoked. At first glance, this is unexpected if the *ser/estar* trigger (perfectivity, boundedness, or whatever relevant property) is lexical (*as per* [9]):

- (4) 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.PAST.3.SG brilliant
'Ronaldinho is brilliant, but he was not brilliant last year'
- b. Ronaldinho (siempre) es *emocionado, *ilusionado, (*)contratado,... (Spanish)
Ronaldinho always be-IL.3.SG thrilled excited hired
'Ronaldinho is (always) thrilled, excited, hired,...'

THE ANALYSIS: The data in (1) through (4) 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 [1]'s analysis of *have* (cf. [3,7] too), that *estar* is more complex than *ser*. Slightly more precisely, we contend that *estar* is *ser* plus a preposition, an element that will provide the relevant context for *estar*-selection to be licensed. The idea is roughly depicted in (5):

- (5) a. [_{ser}P *ser* [_{SC} DP AP]] b. [_{estar}P P+*ser* [_{SC} DP t_P]]

The analysis in (5) 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; cf. 6a and 6b), and DPs with a full fledged P providing aspectual properties (cf. 6d).

- (6) a. Estoy avergonzado. b. Está suelto (#soltado). c. Estoy *(de) profesor.
be-SL.1.SG ashamed be-SL.3.SG loose released be-SL.3.SG of teacher
'I am ashamed' 'I am loose' 'I work as a teacher'

Furthermore, (5) 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*)):

- (7) a. Obama está siendo ovacionado. b. *Obama es estando ovacionado. (Spanish)
Obama be-SL.3.SG being-IL ovationed Obama be-IL.3.SG being-SL ovationed
'Obama is being given an ovation' 'Obama is being given an ovation'

For the punch line, note that an analysis along these lines predicts that the locative/P element in (5b) should be spelled-out in some languages. We believe such a language is Catalan. Spanish can use *estar* in a context like the one in (8), but Catalan must resort to *hi* (Eng. *there*), a locative clitic, plus *ser*.

- (8) A: Está Juan (ahí)? (Spanish) A': Que *(hi) és, en Joan? (Catalan)
be-SL.3.SG Juan there Q CL.there be-IL.3.SG the Joan

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'Is Juan there?'
B: Sí, está (aquí),
yes, be-SL.3.SG there
'Yes, he is here'

'Is Joan there?'
B': Sí, (sí que) *(hi) és.
yes yes that CL.there be-IL.3.SG
'Yes, he is here'

AN L-SYNTAX FOR ADJECTIVES: In order to reinforce (5), and more to the point the relevance of the P element as the *estar* trigger, we would like to adopt [10]'s l-syntactic analysis of adjectives as involving the merger/conflation of a relational element (typically, a preposition) and a non-relational element (typically, a noun or $\sqrt{\text{Root}}$). [10]'s analysis readily derives [4,5]'s claim that adjectives must have a specifier (because all Ps have one, being birrelational), and is further supported by empirical facts such as (9), which show that PPs and APs share the same distribution. Furthermore, notice that [10]'s idea would also explain why adjectives have Case/agreement properties in the relevant languages: because their l-syntax involves a noun.

(9) a. Tinc [el cotxe al garatge] (Catalan) b. Tinc [el cotxe espatllat] (Catalan)
have-1.SG the car to-the parking have-1.SG the car broken
'My car is in the parking' 'My car is broken'

Assuming [10]'s analysis forces us to treat a sentence like *María es lista* (Eng. *María is clever*) pretty much like we treat *María está en París* (Eng. *María is in Paris*). From such a perspective, predicating (saying) that X (*María*, in the case at hand) is 'such-and-such' boils down to 'place X (the Figure) in such-and-such Ground.'

Here we would like to give a minor twist to [10]'s treatment of adjectives. In particular, we would like to argue that whereas *ser*-selecting (IL/imperfective) adjectives have the syntax in (5b), *estar*-selecting (SL/perfective) adjectives involve a more complex configuration, with an additional P layer. Most importantly, we argue that the nature of these Ps is different: the lowest shell contains a *central coincidence* P (P_C), while the highest one does a *terminal coincidence* P (P_T). Consequently, we take it that it is [5]'s *terminal coincidence* flavor (spelled-out as a *bona fide* P or as participial morphology) that adds the the aspectual properties necessary to force *estar* selection, by means of incorporation into *ser*.

(10) a. [P_C [N]] *imperfective/IL adjectives* b. [P_T [P_C [N]]] *perfective/SL adjectives*

Note that the fact that perfective adjectives (and thus *estar*) involve more structure may provide an answer to the contrast in (11). 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 11b must be ignored):

(11) a. Estará el hombre tonto. (Spanish) b. *?Será el hombre tonto. (Spanish)
be-SL.FUT.3.SG the man silly be-IL.FUT.3.SG the man silly
'The man must be feeling silly' 'The man must be silly'

PROBLEMS: Although our proposal covers the basic facts, there are nonetheless some empirical issues that deserve further comment. Consider the facts in (12), which are problematic for the present account: (12a) shows that locative PPs may appear with *estar*, even though they signal essential (IL-like) qualities; likewise, (12b) shows that gerunds force *estar* selection, which is unexpected if these verbal forms involve a covert *central coincidence* preposition (as argued by [10] on empirical grounds):

(12) a. Vitoria {está /*es} en el País Vasco. b. Nadal {está /*es} machacando a Djokovic.
Vitoria be-SL/ IL.3.SG in the Country Basque Nadal be-SL/ IL.3.SG beating to Djokovic
'Vitoria is in the Basque Country' 'Nadal is beating Djokovic'

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*. The case in (12b) is trickier: if gerunds involve a P_C , we must conclude that the source of *estar* is not in the verb. To be specific, we claim (in part following [8]'s recent work) that *estar* is forced because of the present of a contextual (null) element with the semantics of NOW.

CONCLUSIONS: In this paper we have argued that the distinction between *ser* and *estar* can be treated within a decompositional framework. Following [1]'s insight about *have/be*, we have put forward the hypothesis that *estar* is the spell-out of *ser* after P incorporation. An important trait of our account concerns its dispensing with the (popular) idea that (im)perfectivity is a lexical (hence, immutable) property of predicates; if correct, our proposal provides evidence that (im)perfectivity is a semantic consequence of a particular (l-)syntax, which crucially involves a P with a 'flavor' that determines *ser* or *estar* selection.

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