


The expression of (abstract) location/situation: the case of *estar*. Capturing new challenging data.

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Abstract

Perhaps one of the most widely accepted descriptions of *ser* and *estar* is that the former is used to describe the inherent properties of an entity, while the latter is used to describe a current state or temporary situation; thus encouraging, among other options, their analysis in terms of IL vs. SL predicates, respectively (Bosque 1989, Demonte 1999; Fernandez Leborans 1999, Arche 2006 among many others). Of course this interpretation seems descriptively adequate with respect to a substantial number of instances. Still, there are also sets of data challenging this classification¹.

In this presentation we will address a set of *estar* constructions which do not necessarily convey temporally bounded states or current conditions holding for short time gaps, but properties probably holding through the entire lifespan of the entity —i.e., not holding true only in a specific situation or stage, showing a behavior associated to IL rather than to SL predicates in several respects², contrary to what would be expected for *estar*. This divergence leads to two further observations. On the one hand, even if these cases could be argued to mirror the aspectual implications usually ascribed to *ser* (e.g., IL predication), this does not imply a trivial copular alternation, as the semantic implications of the alternates differ significantly. On the other hand, those semantic properties setting *estar* constructions apart from those delivered by *ser* could be shown to conform to the same core predicative semantics and lexical syntax proposed for regular instances of *estar* (Mangialavori 2013)³, by virtue of the abstract use of spatial relations.

In order to address this question, we will depart from Franco & Steinmetz' (1983,1986) model of (implied) comparisons in order to put forward the idea that these occurrences can also be accommodated within the expression of a relative (abstract) location/situation, along with regular *estar* occurrences. From our perspective, the difference would lie in the kind of comparison (what this location is relative to); in other words, these situations yielded by *estar* could either (i) apply to the individual, in which case the situation is be relative to the position/location occupied by other (comparable) entities (thus rendering IL predicates), or (ii) apply to a stage, in this cases being relative to former states/conditions in which the same entity was found (i.e., the usual case for *estar*, associated to SL predicates). Accordingly, a pair of two cognitive-semantic construals (involving syntactically relevant facets) would be delivered from a single (perspectival) event of location, i.e., one considered to signify one physical object or entity located in a position —which can be relative either to the position of other objects/entities, or to other positions in which the same object was found at other stage (i.e., setting an individual norm, in the sense of Falk (1979))—. Furthermore, the proposed semantic and (lexical)syntax, as well as the conceptual structure (in the sense of Talmy 2000), proposed here would accurately capture (i) *estar*'s selectional restrictions on both the adjectival head projecting the coda and the NP, (ii) the additional flavor inviting a subjective reading of the property ascribed to the subject (i.e., entailing the speaker's point of view) through *estar* (described in F. Leborans 1999:2428 *i.a.*), and (iii) the contrast rendered by the use of *ser* in the same context.

¹ cf. Arche 2006 *i.a.* on *ser* occurrences.

² Considering, among other things, (i) LifeTime Effects (Musan 1997), (ii) ascription of permanent, classificatory traits, (iii) incompatibility with *dejar de* and temporal adjuncts circumscribing the state predicated to a specific temporal phase or situation), (iv) (no) implication of a change or result (or linkage to *external reasons*, following Arche's definition of SL), nor perfectivity, telicity or inchoativity, as usually expected for *estar* along the different mainstream analysis and descriptions.

³ Among other things, underlying the different constructions *estar* can give place to (i.e., both attributive and locative constructions) and also accounting for its semantic and syntactic properties in the two verbal alternations in which this verb is engaged.