Equative ser in Spanish

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0. Introduction

Copulative verbs have frequently been treated in the literature as semantically empty verbs (cfr. Heggie, 1988; Scholten, 1988 and references cited there), that is, as verbs carrying agreement features and licensing the predication relationship between their complements and subjects. The purpose of this paper is to provide evidence in favor of a syntactic distinction of two types of copulative verbs ser in Spanish: one that corresponds to the description of a copulative verb (henceforth predicative ser) as a semantically empty one and a transitive verb ser (henceforth equative or identificational ser). This distinction is not new: it has been proposed for English since Russell (1919). However, we believe that its status in the literature on Spanish is not clear. For that reason, we will provide syntactic tests to prove that the distinction is not a

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purely semantic but one with syntactic correlates[1].

1. Equative versus Predicative ser

1.1. Equative and predicative ser.

In Spanish, the copulative verb ser appears in two different structures. Predicative ser can be followed by predicative projections, basically, APs, NPs (bare nouns, indefinites and superlatives), some PPs (those that predicate a property of an N) and past participles. Examples in (1) show some of the typical cases:

(1) a. María es $[_{AP}$ buena] María is good
b. $[_{PP}$ de Lima] Maria is from Lima
c. $[_{NP}$ un genio] Maria is a genius
d. $[_{NP}$ artista que conoce su arte]
Maria is artist who knows her craft

Equative ser, on the other hand, has demonstratives, personal pronouns , proper names and definite descriptions in their referential use as post-copular elements, as (2) shows:

(2) a. Juan es ése/él/Luis 'Juan is that one/him/Luis'
b. el hombre de azul 'J is the man in blue'
c. el niño (en un cuarto lleno de niñas)
the boy (in a room full of girls)
d. el hombre que lleva sombrero
the man wearing a hat
e. el que lleva sombrero
the who wears a hat

1.2. Syntactic distinctions

A number of syntactic features distinguish both verbs, lending support to different structural analyses:

1.2.1. Predicate cliticization

One of the most salient characteristics of predicative structures with ser is that they allow predicate cliticization[2] (Sánchez, 1992):

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[1] Cf. Heggie (1988) and Moro (1992) for a syntactically unified account for both types of verbs.

[2]The predicate clitic in Spanish is lo; unlike other clitics, it does not change in gender or number.

(3) a. Teresa es enfermera y María también lo es
Teresa is nurse and Maria CL-is too.
'Teresa is a nurse and Maria is one too'
b. María es buena pero Teresa no lo es
'Maria is good but Teresa isn't (good)'

As noted by Kayne (1975) and Couqueaux (1981) for French and by Burzio (1986) for Italian, predicate cliticization in Romance is limited to subject raising structures as the contrast between (4b) and (4d) shows:

(4) a. María considera [a Teresa buena]
Maria considers Teresa good
b. *María lo_i considera [a Teresa t_i]
Maria CL_i-considers Teresa t_i
'Maria so considers Teresa'
c. $María_i$ parece [t_i contenta]
Maria seems happy
d. $María_i$ lo_j parece [t_i t_j]
Maria CL-seems 'Maria so seems'

(4b) is a subcategorized small clause structure where the subject does not raise, so predicate cliticization is not possible, (4d), on the other hand, is a raising structure, and cliticization is possible.

Equative structures on the other hand do not allow predicate cliticization as illustrated in (5):

(5) a. *Juan no es él y Luis tampoco lo es
Juan is not him and Luis neither CL-is
'Juan is not him and Luis isn't either'
b. *Juan es el tipo sentado aquí y Luis también lo es
'Juan is the man sitting here and Luis also is'

Thus, the impossibility of predicate cliticization with equative ser indicates that its structure is not that of a raising verb, unlike predicative ser.

1.2.2. Qué extraction.

The choice of wh-word is often used as a test to contrast predicative and equative structures. In Spanish, questions about predicates can only be formulated with qué 'what', never with quién 'who'. Thus, (7) is a felicitous answer to the question in (6a) but (8) is not; and (6b) can only be a question for (8), not for (7):

(6) a. ¿Qué es Juan? 'What is Juan?'
b. ¿Quién es Juan? 'Who is Juan?'

(7) Juan es médico (predicative)
Juan is doctor 'Juan is a doctor'

(8) Juan es el hombre parado en la esquina (equative)
'Juan is the man standing at the corner'

These facts follow if qué 'what' can either be a predicate-pro, used for predicate extraction, as in (9b), or it can be an argument-pro, in which case it bears the features [-animate]. In either case, extraction of the postverbal NP in (8) would be disallowed.

(9) a. Considero a Juan un buen médico
(I) consider to Juan a good doctor
'I consider Juan a good doctor'
b. ¿Qué consideras a Juan?
What consider to Juan 'What do you consider J?'

Only quién 'who' or cuál 'which' can be used with equative ser:

(10) a. *¿Qué es Juan? 'What is Juan?'
b. ¿Quién/cuál es Juan? 'Who/which (one) is Juan?'
c. Juan es el hombre parado en la esquina
Juan is the man standing at the corner

Quién 'who' and cuál 'which' are precisely the wh-words used to extract animate arguments.

1.2.3. Selectional restrictions.

Predicative ser can appear with APs and PPs, as sentences (11) and (12) show:

(11) La fiesta es [$_{PP}$ en mi casa]
The party is in my house

(12) Juan es [$_{AP}$ simpático] 'Juan is nice'

But not all PPs can be predicated of the subject:

(13) a. *Ana es en la cocina 'Ana is in the kitchen'
b. Ana es de buen corazón 'Ana is of good heart'

Locatives cannot be predicated of a subject unless it is an event NP, as in (11) indicating that the predicate

imposes certain restrictions on its subject[3].

On the other hand, an equative structure cannot select a PP nor an AP as an internal argument and have an identificational reading.

1.2.4. Agreement.

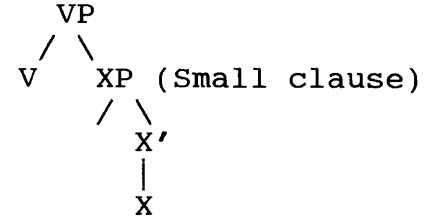
If the predicate of ser is an AP, agreement between the subject and the adjective is obligatory:

(14) a. Juan es bueno Juan is good(masc.sg)
b. *Juan es buena Juan is good(fem.sg)

whereas in equative sentences no agreement is required:

(15) Juan era la mujer de azul en la fiesta de ayer
Juan was the woman(fem.sg) in blue at yesterday's party

If agreement is understood as a structural relation between a specifier and its head, obligatory agreement together with cliticization point towards a small clause analysis, where the subject and the predicate of ser form a small clause at D-structure. This analysis for ser has also been proposed by Vikner and Sprouse (1990), Suñer (1990) and Camacho and Sánchez (1992) and is represented in (16):

(16)


1.2.5. Backwards anaphors.

Bosque (1993) argues that equative sentences[4] can be distinguished from predicative ones in that only the latter admit backwards anaphors, as illustrated in (17):

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[3]Non-eventive NP's require another copular verb, estar:
i. La lista está en mi casa 'The list is in my house'

[4] In Bosques's terminology "especificativas"

(17) a. La $[pro]_i$ de Pedro era una $[familia]_i$ extraña
'Pedro's is a strange family'
b. *El $[pro]_i$ del casino era el $[dueño]_i$ del bar
'The casino's (owner) was the owner of the bar'

Mutual c-command between the antecedent and the empty pronominal is a condition for backwards anaphors, according to Bosque. This condition is met in (16). On the other hand, if equative ser does not form a small clause, the mutual c-command condition cannot be met and backwards anaphora will not be licensed. This provides additional evidence for the existence of two different structures for equative and predicative ser.

The differences (summarized in 18) indicate that equative ser and predicative ser need to be distinguished syntactically and not only semantically:

(18)	Equative	Predicative
Predicate clitic	No	Yes
WH-word	Quién/cuál/*qué	Qué/*cuál/*quién
Select. restrict.	*AP, *PP	AP, PP
Agreement	No	Yes
Backwards anaphora	No	Yes

1.3 Quantifier Phrases (QPs)

Quantified expressions also provide evidence for the distinction between two types of ser. Notice that quantifiers are apparently banned in post-copular position unless they quantify over predicates:

(19) a. Juan es todo lo que deseo
Juan is everything I want
b. V(x) I want (x) Juan is x
c. For every predicate I want him to be, Juan is that predicate

Thus (19a) cannot be understood as an identificational sentence because Juan cannot be 'every thing that I want', as noted by Williams (1983) and Higginbotham (1985) for English. In other words, (19a) cannot have the representation in (19b). (19a) is only good if the quantified expression is interpreted as quantifying over predicates, as in (19c).

These facts raise the question of why should quantifiers be banned from the post-copular position in identificational sentences whereas DPs headed by demonstratives are allowed. Apparently, no other

independent source of evidence distinguishes QPs from DPs. In Milsark (1974), both definite determiners and quantifiers such as every are considered strong quantifiers and are excluded from 'there-insertion' contexts.

Nevertheless, there are some cases in which quantifiers are allowed in identificational sentences, as long as the sentence implies a certain part-whole relationship, such as in (20) (Schein, p.c.):

(20) a. Oro es todo pedazo de metal dorado
Gold is every piece of golden metal
b. ∀x piece of metal x, x is gold

(21) a. Dios es todo niño que sonríe
God is every child smiling
b. ∀x child smiling x, x is God

In these cases, the post-copular argument is not a predicate of the subject, it is an expression that quantifies over objects; that is, (20a), (21a) have the interpretation in (20b), (21b).

Thus, the prohibition against quantifiers is not general as long as the equation is possible, that is, as long as the subject can logically contain the internal argument. This gives us two types of quantifiers: predicate quantifiers and argumental quantifiers.

Evidence in favor of the distinction comes, again, from predicate cliticization. As (22) shows, predicate quantifiers can be cliticized, whereas object quantifiers cannot, as (23) shows:

(22) Luis es todo lo que deseo, pero Ana también lo es
Luis is everything I want, but Ann also CL-is
'Luis is everything I want, but Ann also is (everything I want)'

(23) *Dios es todo niño que sonríe, pero bondad también lo es
God is every child smiling, but goodness also CL-is
'God is every child smiling, but goodness also is (every child smiling)'

Recall that we established that with predicative ser extraction of the predicate was only allowed with qué 'what' (cfr. examples (6) and (7)). Quantified predicate expressions pattern exactly alike with regards to wh-extraction. Thus, extraction of qué in (19a) (repeated

here as (24a)) is not possible, whereas extraction of qué in (20a) (repeated as (25a)) is perfect:

(24) a. Juan es todo lo que quiero
Juan is everything I want
b. ¿Qué es Juan? 'What is Juan?'

(25) a. Oro es todo pedazo de metal dorado
Gold is every piece of golden metal
b. *¿Qué es oro? 'What is gold?'

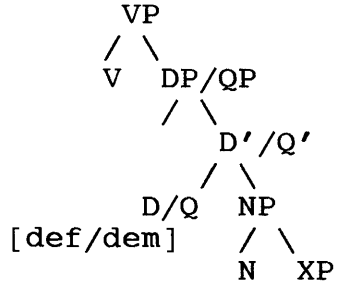
This is the same pattern illustrated earlier. Thus, there is a distinction in selection in these two types of structures, as (26) shows:

(26)

	Equative	Predicative
Pred. Quantification	No	Yes
Argumental Quantification	Yes	No

Given the distinction in selection, it does not seem viable to posit a unique structural representation for both verbs. Based on the fact that identificational ser selects for argumental quantification and on recent proposals that consider argumental positions as the projections of functional categories (as in Abney, 1987), we would like to propose that identificational or equative ser takes a DP or a QP quantifying over objects as its complement, as illustrated in (27):

(27)



It is common in the literature to find analysis of the equative verb to be in English as a verb selecting an internal argument (Higgins, 1973; Safir, 1985; Higginbotham, 1985 and others). This has not been the case for Spanish, however, probably because unlike other internal arguments, the internal argument of equative ser in Spanish does not show two of the properties of typical internal arguments: they require a preposition when the object is [+ animate] and they allow accusative

cliticization. Equative ser does not allow either of them[5]. Nevertheless, the existence of argumental quantification, together with the other evidence shown earlier, shows that a distinction between both types of structures along the lines we have proposed is necessary.

2. Definite descriptions, proper names and quantifiers.

2.1. Definite descriptions

Although there is a clear contrast between structures with predicative and equative ser there are some apparent exceptions. Those are the cases of certain definite descriptions such as:

(28) a. María es la mujer más inteligente del mundo
Maria is the most intelligent woman in the world
b. Juan es el presidente del Perú
Juan is the president of Peru

Thus, expressions such as (28a) and (b) allow predicate cliticization, as (29) ilustrates:

(29) Mario no es el presidente del Perú aunque siempre haya querido serlo
Mario is not the president of Peru although he has always wanted to be it

The ambiguity of definite descriptions in Spanish has been noted by Bosque and Brucart (1991) as the difference in demonstratives in (30b) and (c) shows:

(30) a. Juan es el cocinero
Juan is the cook
b. Juan es ese (referential use)
Juan is that one
c. Juan es eso (predicative use)
Juan is that (Bosque and Brucart, 1991)

The demonstrative eso 'that' may refer only to predicates or [-animate] arguments, in this case only a predicate. Nevertheless, Bosque and Brucart do not correlate this semantic distinction with a different syntactic representation.

Notice that, traditionally, the definite determiner has been considered a strong determiner (in Milsark,

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[5]Presumably for Case-theoretical reasons: equative ser does not assign accusative case.

1974's terminology) and strong determiners have been argued to display Specificity effects (Fiengo and Higginbotham, 1981). Nevertheless, definite determiners do not behave consistently with respect to this test. Thus, when the definite description is selected by equative ser, its complement is not extractable. Let us imagine that at a UN meeting, the representatives of different countries are being identified by their names using sentence (31a) and they are being pointed at at the moment of the identification. In such a context, question (31b) is completely inappropiate.

(31) a. María es la presidenta de Estados Unidos
Maria is the president of the United States
b. ¿De dónde es María la presidenta?
From where is Maria the president?

On the other hand, it is possible to extract the complement of a definite description as in (31) if the expression "president of the United States " is understood as a predicate.

This is similar to cases such as (32):

(32) a. María es esa autora de novelas
Maria is that author of novels
b. *¿De qué es Maria esa autora?
Of what is Maria that author?
(noted by Torrego, 1988)

These facts lead us to propose that definite determiners in Spanish are ambiguous between a strong argumental use and a weak predicative use. The definite article in its use as a strong determiner and the demonstratives disallow extraction.

Similar facts have also been pointed out by Stowell (1989) for English. He proposes to distinguish referential definite descriptions from predicative ones in English by positing a DP structure for the first type and an NP small clause structure for the second type, based on their behavior with respect to extraction. According to his proposal, DPs are barriers to antecedent government. Thus, extraction of complements out of them is not possible. In what follows, we will propose to extend this analysis to account for the behavior of quantified phrases and proper names in Spanish.

2.2 Quantifiers

Argumental quantifiers also show specificity

effects in Spanish, whereas predicate quantifers do not:

(33) a. Dios es todo niño del planeta (equative)
God is every child of this planet
b. *¿De qué planeta es Dios todo niño?
Of what planet is God every child?

(34) a. Juan lo es todo de esta oficina (predicative)
Juan is it everything of this office
b. ¿De qué oficina lo es Juan todo?
Of what office it is Juan everything?

It seems then that the ambiguity of the definite descriptions in Spanish has syntactic correlates that show the same patterns as the distinction of the two types of quantification. As we saw previously, both predicative definite descriptions and quantification over predicates allow predicate cliticization. This implies that, for Spanish equative structures, both DPs and argumental QPs must be barriers to antecedent government whereas the complements of predicative ser never contain barriers to government whether they are quantified or not. This further justifies different syntactic representations for both verbs.

2.3 Proper names

Finally, certain proper names also allow predicate cliticization:

(35) Pavarotti fue Fígaro en la puesta de octubre pero no quiso serlo en la de noviembre
Pavarotti was Figaro in the october performance but he did not want to be it in the november one.

In (35) the behavior of the proper name contrasts with the behavior of the proper name in (36):

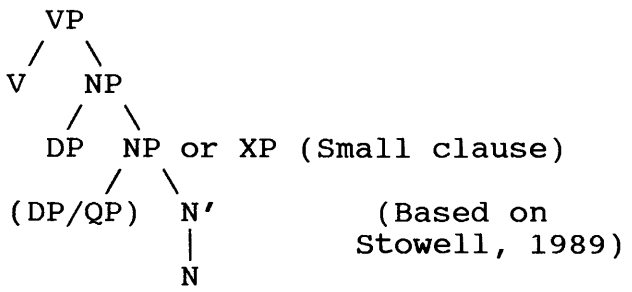
(36) *Juan es Pedro y Pablo también lo es
Juan is Peter and Pablo it is too

This indicates that proper names in Spanish can be also argued to allow for two different syntactic representations, according to whether they are selected by predicative or equative ser. In the cases in which they behave as predicates they are not introduced by a demonstrative-like element. In this respect, we differ from Stowell's proposal according to which proper names are always DPs.

To summarize, there are several arguments to posit

two different structures with the verb ser. Thus, complements of predicative ser show no specificity effects even with strong quantifiers, they allow predicate cliticization even with quantifiers and they show obligatory agreement between the subject and its predicate. All of these phenomena point in the direction of a small clause analysis for predicative ser structures as in (37):

(37) Predicative ser



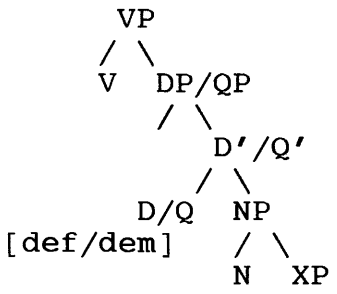
where determiners and quantifiers are not heads and therefore do not disallow extraction. This is also the structure for proper names in their predicative use. This structure allows predicate cliticization and determines extraction with qué 'what'. Unlike English, Spanish does not require an expletive determiner for predication of singular bare NPs, as (39a) and (b) show:

(38) a. María es mujer Maria is woman
b. María es enfermera que sabe su oficio
Maria is nurse who knows her job

This indicates that the adjunction of the expletive DP is optional in Spanish.

On the other hand, constructions with equative ser do not allow predicate cliticization, they do not require obligatory agreement and they show specificity effects both with DPs and argumental QP. The proposal in (41) captures these facts: equative ser selects either DPs or argumental QPs as its complements.

(39) Equative ser



3. Evidence from other languages

Zaring (1993) provides evidence for a similar distinction in Welsh. In this language, there are at least two verbs to be: mae and ydy. In the context of pseudo-clefts, however, only ydy can surface as an identificational be, whereas mae cannot:

(40) a. [$_{AP}$ Anarferol] ydy beth ydy Siôn.
Unusual is what is John
'What John is is unusual'
b. [$_{PP}$ Yn Llundain] mae lle mae Siôn.
In London is where is John
'Where John is is in London'

(40a) can be interpreted either as an predicative or as an equative sentence: "Some property that John has is unusual" (predicative) or "John is unusual" (equative); but (40b) only has the predicative reading: "The place where John is has the property of being is London", and not "John is in London" (the identificational reading)[6].

Hebrew is another language that distinguishes syntactically equative or identificational structures form predicative ones. Rapoport (1987) notes that in Hebrew an agreement marker is obligatory in equative structures:

(43) a. ha-melex hu David
the king [3sm] David
'The king is David'
b. *ha-melex David
the king David

whereas in predicative structures it is not:

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[6]For additional details on the distribution and analysis, cfr. Zaring (1993).

(44) Dani more
Dani (a) teacher
'Dani is a teacher'

These facts indicate that the distinction between predicative and equative structures has syntactic correlates that vary cross-linguistically[7]. In languages with overt copulas the distinctions pertain phenomena such as cliticization or the licensing of backwards anaphors; in languages with no overt copula the distinction is expressed through the presence or absence of agreement[8]. In this paper, we have shown that Spanish has a cluster of syntactic phenomena: predicate clitics, wh-extraction, backwards anaphora and QP selection, among others, that argue for structurally distinct analyses for predicative ser and equative ser.

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[7] Rapoport also mentions similar facts for Irish and for Hatian Creole, see Deprez and Vinet (1992).

[8] According to Rapoport, in nominal constructions the distinction is also one between a matrix small clause (predicative structures) and a full tenseless clause headed by the Case assigning AGR (equative structures).

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