

Evolution of *ser* and *estar*

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1. Latin

- In Latin the meaning of STARE was related to physical position – ‘stand, stand still, remain standing, stand up stiffly’ – and it was close to SEDERE – ‘sit, sit in council, sit about, be inactive, be settled, stay fixed’ – in the sense that both expressed position.
- STARE and SEDERE contrasted with ESSE – ‘be, exist, be there’ – in the fact that they were specialized in a spatial locative value, whereas ESSE was used in individual level and stage level predicate copulatives, and also in locatives and existentials.
- ESSE is attested as the auxiliary of the *perfectum* in any kind of Latin passives (resultative and non-resultative).
- In Latin the progressive meaning that we find now in progressive gerunds was mainly expressed by a structure formed by the verb ESSE and the present participle (*sum faciens*), although there are a few examples with ‘ESSE + Ablative Gerund’ (*sum faciendo*) (vid. Stengaard 1991: 65-77).

- (1) a. *Sto ad ianuam*
‘I am in front of the door’
b. *Pugna stetit*
‘The battle continued’
- (2) a. *Puer in sella sedet*
‘The boy sits in the chair’
b. *Toga sedet umero*
‘the toga/gown stays fixed at the shoulder’
- (3) a. *ueri amici fideles sunt.* [Copulative: individual level predicate]
‘Real friends are faithful’
b. *bene est.* [Copulative: stage level predicate]
‘He is well’
c. *Roma in Italia est.* [Locative]
‘Rome is in Italy’
d. *erant omnino itinera duo* [Existential]
‘There were only two tracks’

- (4) a. amatus *sum* [perfect indicative]
 b. amatus *eram* [past perfect indicative]
 c. amatus *ero* [future indicative]
 d. amatus *sim* [perfect subjunctive]
 e. amatus *essem* [past perfect subjunctive]
- (5) a. Quos semper uideas *bibentes esse* in Thermopolio
 ‘Those you see always drinking in Thermopolio’
 (Plauto, *Curculio*, 292)
- b. Tunc in monte *erat* Darius *vociferando et congregando* multitudinem hostium
 ‘Then Darius was shouting and gathering the crowd of the armies in the mountain’
 (Leo, *Historia Alexandri Magni*, 2.14)

Table 1. Latin

TYPE OF SENTENCE		VERB USED
Copulative	Individual level	<i>ESSE</i>
	Stage level	<i>ESSE</i>
Locative		<i>STARE, SEDERE / ESSE</i> [+del] [-del]
Existential		<i>ESSE</i>
<i>perfectum</i> passive		<i>ESSE</i>
Progressive		<i>ESSE</i>

2. Catalan

2.1. Old Catalan

- The progressive extension of *estar* and the consequent reduction of *ser* affect copulative sentences and ‘verb + past participle’ constructions. Batlle (2002: 35) claims that the use of *estar* with predicates that denote state is attested sporadically in Ramon Llull (13th century), and that it is introduced progressively between the 15th century and the first half of the 16th century. Nevertheless, according to her, *ser* is still documented in such contexts in the 16th and 17th centuries.
- (6) a. Fatigat *estic* e enujat de posseir e tractar los béns temporals (Llull, *Bl.*: 24)
 ‘I am tired and angry with possessing and dealing with temporal goods’
- b. *Estaria* tota hora callada (Llull, *Sc.*: II, 220)
 ‘She would always be quiet’

- The extension of *estar* to [+delimited] contexts takes place in a slow but progressive manner.
 - This can be seen through examples from Joan Roís de Corella (15th century), where *ser* is still used with stage level predicates, and from *Tirant lo Blanc* (also 15th century), where *ser* and *estar* appear with the same predicate (vid. Vañó-Cerdà 1998:30).
- (7) a. la mia ànima *era* ja no poc trista (Roís de Corella, *Jos*: 4)
‘my soul was already sad’
- b. Jo *so* molt content e alegre (Roís de Corella, *Jos*: 30)
‘I am very glad and happy’
- (8) e cascú *stava* mortalment *nafrat*, [...] lo qual *era* molt malament *nafrat* (Tirant, 710, 16-20)
‘and everyone was fatally injured [...] who was very seriously injured’
- Par (1923: 165) comments on the fact that Bernat Metge (14th century) uses *ser* in copulative sentences. In all of them the predicate expresses a property (i.e. it is an individual level predicate).
- (9) a. La un dels quals *era* jove fort bell (Bernat Metge: 21)
‘One of whom was young, strong, nice’
- b. La fama *es* vera (Bernat Metge: 55)
‘The fame is real/true’
- Despite Par’s description, some of the sentences that he mentions can be interpreted as stage level predicate copulatives and, consequently, constitute evidence in favour of the occurrence of coercion in Old Catalan. This would be a strong argument against those who attribute the use of this strategy in Modern Catalan to the influence of Modern Spanish.
- (10) a. e *stan* fort magres (Bernat Metge: 2018)
‘and they are very thin’
- b. per la novitat daquest fet *stava* vergonyosa (Bernat Metge: v. 575)
‘she was ashamed because of the novelty of this event/fact’
- The coexistence of *ser* and *estar* in locative structures is well documented in the 13th century. We have examples with *ser* and with *estar* in this kind of constructions.
- (11) a. Una vegada se sdevench que aquell rey *era* en una bataylla (Llull, *Meravelles*, IV, 71, 7)
‘It happened once that the king was in a battle’

b. Esdevench-se una vegada que un canonge *estava* en una seu, e cogità com pogués ésser bisbe (Llull, *Meravelles*, IV, 253, 14)
 ‘It happened once that the canon was in a see and he thought about the way to become bishop’

- Although *estar* is found in locative structures from 13th century Catalan onwards, *ser* is also attested up to Modern standard Catalan, as explained by Vañó-Cerdà (1998: 45-46).
- Extension of *estar* and reduction of *ser* in the structures in which the predicate conveys a spatial and temporal specification (i.e.: [+delimited], and also [+dynamic] in the case of past participles).
- Resultative passives with *ser* and *estar* are already attested in the 13th century.

- (12) a. car en la prudencia *es* feta la temptació e vençuda. (Llull, *Virtuts e pecats*: 77)
 ‘because temptation is placed and overcome by wisdom (/prudence)’
- b. Pots doncs entendre la manera per la qual home habituat de força de coratge e de saviea com *está* ordenat e reglat per sentir e ymaginar e per racionar (Llull, *Virtuts e pecats*: 88)
 ‘You can then understand the way by which a man who is used to courage and wisdom is ordered and ruled to feel and imagine and to think’
- In 13th century Old Catalan three verbs (*ser*, *haver* and *estar*) were used in existential sentences, as in Old Spanish.
- (13) a. En una ciutat *era* un bisbe qui sobre totes coses amava almoyna (Llull, *Meravelles*, IV, 216, 25)
 ‘In a city there was a bishop who loved charity above anything’
- b. En una ciutat *havia* un cambiador molt rich dels béns temporals ... (Llull, *Meravelles*, II, 48, 27)
 ‘In a city there was a very rich usurer (/exchanger of temporal possessions)’
- c. En un arbre *estave* un gall ab moltes de gallines (Llull, *Meravelles*, II, 36, 2)
 ‘In a tree there was a cock with a lot of chicken’

Table 2. Old Catalan

TYPE OF SENTENCE		VERB USED
Copulative	Individual level	<i>ser</i>
	Stage level	<i>ser / estar</i>
Locative		<i>estar / ser</i>
Passive		<i>ser / estar</i>
Existential		<i>haver/ser/estar</i>

2.2. Modern Catalan

- (14) a. El teu cunyat *és* alt. [Individual level predicate]
‘Your brother-in-law is tall’
b. La Maria *és* molt guapa. [Individual level predicate]
‘Mary is pretty beautiful’
- (15) a. El teu cunyat *està* content. [Stage level predicate]
‘Your brother-in-law is happy’
b. Amb aquest vestit la Maria *està* molt guapa. [Stage level predicate]
‘With this dress Mary looks really beautiful’
- In Modern standard Catalan some stage level predicates can take *ser* or *estar* indistinctly (i.e.: with no difference at all in their meaning) – vid. Ramos (2002a: 1963) –so that they can be regarded as two ‘grammars’ or structures in competence, in terms of Kroch (1989), (1994) and (2000).
- (16) a. Aquestes pomes *són* madures. [Stage level predicate]
‘These apples are ripe’
b. Aquestes pomes *estan* madures. [Stage level predicate]
‘These apples are ripe’
- Copulative sentences also allow coercion in Modern standard Catalan, but it is not as generally accepted as in Modern standard Spanish. Although some linguists consider that it is a syntactic loan from Spanish, we have seen above that in Old Catalan it is already attested.
- (17) a. En Joan *és* molt amable [Individual level predicate]
‘John is very kind’
b. En Joan *està* molt amable [Stage level predicate]
‘John is very kind (today)’
- Locative sentences: in Modern standard Catalan *estar* is used to provide the sentence with a durative value – vid. Ramos (2002a: 1995-6) – and this explicit delimitation of space and time can be modified, in turn, by durative expressions that correspond to locatives.
- (18) a. En Joan *és* a casa de l’Anna.
‘John is in Ann’s house’
b. En Joan *està* molt de temps a casa de l’Anna.
‘John spends a lot of time in Ann’s house’
- *Estar* is used to state the limits of permanence clearly, which gives as a result a marked structure where the spatio-temporal anchorage is made explicit

syntactically. This contrasts with that of *ser* where the meaning is compositionally inferred, both semantically and pragmatically.

- Modern standard Catalan passive structures: *ser* is employed in non-resultative passives, while *estar* is used in resultative passives.

(19) a. La porta *és* oberta.
‘The door is opened (by Peter)’

b. La porta *està* oberta.
‘The door is (already) opened’

- Modern Catalan progressive constructions always take *estar*, as in Modern Spanish. However, Modern Catalan existential sentences are either constructed with *ser* + locative or *haver-hi*, but not with *estar*.

(20) a. En Pere *està* treballant
‘Peter is working’

b. La Joana *està* escrivint un article
‘Joan is writing a paper’

(21) a. Els amics d’en Carles *són* al pati. ~ *Hi ha* els amics d’en Carles al pati.
‘Charles’s friends are in the garden ~ There are Charles’s friends in the garden’

b. *Els amics d’en Carles *estan* al pati.
‘Charles’s friends are in the garden’

Table 3. Modern Catalan

TYPE OF SENTENCE		VERB USED
Copulative	Individual level	<i>ser</i>
	Stage level	<i>estar - ser</i>
Locative		<i>ser / estar</i>
Passive		<i>ser / estar</i>
Existential		<i>haver-hi / ser</i>
Progressive gerund		<i>estar</i>

3. Spanish

3.1. Old Spanish

- In 12th century Old Spanish *ser* followed the same pattern as Latin ESSE. In fact, ESSE, SEDERE and STARE descendants can fulfil a wide range of functions in this stage of the language. In *Cantar de Myo Çid*, the verb *ser* is found in perfect compound tenses of ergative verbs (vid. Castillo 2002, 2006, Aranovich 2003 and

Mateu 2006, etc.), in set phrases and in impersonal structures (vid. Batllori 1998, 2000), and it acts as the auxiliary of passives and appears in copulative sentences (vid. Batllori 2006a).

- (22) a. Ezzo fue apriessa fecho (*Çid*, v. 1506) [non-resultative passive]
 ‘This was made quickly’
 b. Moros en paz, ca escripta es la carta (*Çid*, v. 527) [resultative passive]
 ‘The Moorish (are) peaceful, because the letter is already written’

COPULATIVE SENTENCES WITH INDIVIDUAL LEVEL PREDICATE

- (23) a. Longinos era çiego, que nuqas vio alguandre (*Çid*, v. 352) [<ESSE]
 ‘Longinos was blind, since he never saw anybody’
 b. Todos eran Ricos quantos que alli ha (*Çid*, v. 1215) [<ESSE]
 ‘They were all rich the ones who are there’
 c. Quando uos nos casaredes bien seremos Ricas (*Çid*, v. 2195) [<SEDERE]
 ‘When you arrange our marriage, we will be rich’
 d. Sed buenos menssageros (*Çid*, v. 1903) [<SEDERE]
 ‘Be good messengers’

STAGE LEVEL PREDICATE COPULATIVE SENTENCES

- (24) a. cansados son de ferir ellos amos ados (*Çid*, v. 2745) [<ESSE]
 ‘They are both tired of hurting ...’
 b. Alegre es myo Çid por quanto fecho an (*Çid*, v. 1684) [<ESSE]
 ‘Myo Çid is happy with all that they have done’
 c. firmes sed en campo aguisa de varones (*Çid*, v. 3525) [<SEDERE]
 ‘remain firm in the battle as knights would be’
 d. Firme estido Pero Vermuez (*Çid*, v. 3629) [<STARE]
 ‘Pero Vermuez remained firm’
 e. Firmes son los moros, avn nos’ van del campo (*Çid*, v. 755) [<ESSE]
 ‘The Moorish remain firm, they do not leave the battle yet’

- SEDERE is the suppletive verb in ESSE defective tenses (specifically, future, conditional, subjunctive present, and imperatives and also non-inflected forms of the verb).
- (24c), (24d), and (24e) exemplify cases where three different verbs (descendants of SEDERE, STARE, and ESSE) are used with the same predicate, with the same meaning. This is an instance of feature syncretism to express the same semantic content that can be seen as the trigger for the syntactic change.

- (25) a. Hya salieron al campo do eran los moiones (*Çid*, v. 3588) [ESSE + locative]
 ‘They already went to the field, where the boundary stones were’

- b. el señor que es en çielo (*Çid*, v. 1094) [ESSE + locative]
 ‘The Lord who is in heaven’
- c. Amarauilla lo han quantos que yson (*Çid*, v. 2302) [ESSE + existential]
 ‘They consider it marvellous, all the ones who are there’
- (26) a. Aquí esta con myo Çid el obispo don Iheronimo (*Çid*, 2512) [STARE+ locative]
 ‘Here he is with myo Çid, the bishop Mister Iheronimo’
- b. ... al Criador, que en çielo esta (*Çid*, v. 2892) [STARE + locative]
 ‘To the Lord, who is in heaven’
- (27) a. Myo Çid don Rodrigo en Valençia esta folgando (*Çid*, v. 2090).
 ‘Myo Çid Mister Rodrigo is being at leisure in Valencia’
- b. Pagado es myo Çid, que lo esta aguardando (*Çid*, v. 1058)
 ‘Myo Çid, who is waiting for him, is satisfied’
- (28) a. Ala puerta dela eclegia sediellos sperando (*Çid*, v. 2239)
 ‘He was waiting for them at the church door’
- b. Allabandos seyan los yfantes de Carrion (*Çid*, v. 2824)
 ‘The princes of Carrión be singing your praises’

EXISTENTIAL SENTENCES

- (29) a. E Diego & Ferrando y son amos ados (*Çid*, v. 3009)
 ‘Diego and Ferrando are both there’
- b. Abra y ondra ... (*Çid*, v. 1905)
 ‘There will be honour’
- From the 13th century onwards, the verb used in copulatives is *ser* when the predicate expresses a property, while it can be either *ser* or *estar* when it refers to a stage (vid. Pountain 1985, and Batllori 2003). It is worth mentioning that the extension of *estar* in these constructions is quite general (we find approximately the same number of examples with *ser* than with *estar*) and that in some cases we have the same example with *ser* and *estar*.

COPULATIVES WITH INDIVIDUAL LEVEL PREDICATES = [-DELIMITATED]

- (30) a. et llegó a la cueva, et era muy ancha (*Calila e Dimna*: 340)
 ‘and he(/it) arrived at a cave, and it was wide’
- b. un físico muy sabio que era çiego (*Calila e Dimna*: 192)
 ‘a very clever physician who was blind’

COPULATIVES WITH STAGE LEVEL PREDICATE = [+DELIMITATED]

- (31) a. el mur salió de su cueva ... vido al gato estar en los lazos, et fue muy alegre (*Calila e Dimna*: 268)
 ‘the mouse went out of his(/its) cave ...saw the cat trapped in the snares, and he(/it) was very happy’

b. et echóse a dormir porque *era cansado*. (*Calila e Dimna*: 292)
'and he(/it) went to sleep because he(/it) was tired'

(32) a. quando la cabeça está bien, el cuerpo está bien (*Calila e Dimna*: 284)
'When the head is well, the body is well'

b. ca mi muger está doliente (*Calila e Dimna*: 257)
'because my wife is ill'

(33) a. et por qué *eres triste [et] demudado* (*Calila e Dimna*: 286)
'and why are you sad and upset?'

b. ¿por qué *estás demudada?* (*Calila e Dimna*: 353)
'why are you upset?'

c. ¿por qué *estás triste?* (*Calila e Dimna*: 177)
'why are you sad?'

RESULTATIVE PASSIVES = [+DELIMITATED] [+DYNAMIC] SPATIO-TEMPORAL MEANING

(34) a. El libro es acabado (*Calila e Dimna*: 355)
'The book is (already) finished'

b. Pues qu' él fue adormido et dormieron todos (*Calila e Dimna*: 140)
'Then when he fell asleep and they all were sleeping ...'

c. et acaesçió que el pozo era derrundiado, et él tornóse a ella et díxole: -Ya llegué fasta el caño et fallé el pozo caído. (*Calila e Dimna*: 112)
'and it happened that the well was demolished, and he looked at her and said: - I went to the spout and found the well pulled down'

(35) a. Tengo que el asno está escarmentado (*Calila e Dimna*: 260)
'The donkey which learned the lesson'

b. et está ligado de su onbligo (*Calila e Dimna*: 117)
'And he is tied up by his navel'

c. veía otrosí que su cuerpo estava todo bañado en sangre (*Calila e Dimna*: 280)
'Besides he could see that his body was all covered with blood'

LOCATIVE CONSTRUCTIONS

(36) a. et el caño era del pozo çerca (*Calila e Dimna*: 111)
'The spout was near the well'

b. fuese para Caimerón, que era çerca dél (*Calila e Dimna*: 286)
'He went towards Caimerón, who was next to him'

(37) a. el caño que está çerca del pozo (*Calila e Dimna*: 111)
'The spout was near the well'

b. enbíame a ella et está tú en tu lugar fasta que yo torne a ti (*Calila e Dimna*: 135)
'Send me to her and be where you are until I come back to you'

- (38) a. Ca el amor que es entre los buenos (*Calila e Dimna*: 207)
 ‘Because the love that there is among the good’
- b. Et estava en la casa un niño (*Calila e Dimna*: 249)
 ‘And there was a boy in the house’
- c. Et avía y una bestia que l' dezían Jauzana (*Calila e Dimna*, 196)
 ‘And there was a beast which was known as Jauzana’
- (39) a. lo estava aguardando por lo matar (*Calila e Dimna*: 268)
 ‘he was waiting for him so as to kill him’
- b. et están anbos comiendo et solazándose (*Calila e Dimna*: 254)
 ‘and they were both eating and relaxing’

Table 4. Old Spanish

TYPE OF SENTENCE		VERB USED	
		12 th century	from 13 th c. onwards
Copulative	Individual level	<i>ser</i> [< ESSE, SEDERE]	<i>ser</i>
	Stage level	<i>ser</i>	<i>ser - estar</i>
Locative		<i>estar -ser</i>	<i>estar - ser</i>
Passive		<i>ser</i>	<i>ser - estar</i>
Existential		<i>ser - haber</i>	<i>haber - ser (-estar)</i>
Progressive gerund		<i>estar (-SEDERE)</i>	<i>estar</i>

3.2. Modern Spanish

- Marín (2000) and Fernández-Leborans (1999), among many other scholars, regard the aspectual value of the verb as the main difference between *ser* and *estar*. The former is used in copulative sentences with individual level predicates, whereas the latter is employed in copulatives with stage level predicates. As is well known, individual level predicates have no temporal restriction, lack perfective value and do not convey a meaning of transition, whereas stage level predicates require temporal anchorage, have perfective value and denote transition.

COPULATIVE SENTENCES

- (40)a. Paco es alto. [Individual level predicate]
 ‘Paco is tall’
- b. Elena es elegante. [Individual level predicate]
 ‘Elena is elegant’
- (41)a. Esta mañana Carlos está contento. [Stage level predicate]
 ‘This morning Carlos is happy’
- b. Con este vestido María está muy elegante. [Stage level predicate]
 ‘With this dress, Mary looks really elegant’

LOCATIVE CONSTRUCTIONS

(42) a. Juan está en el jardín.

‘John is in the garden’

b. El dinero estará en el banco hasta que muera.

‘The money will be in the bank until the day I die’

PASSIVE SENTENCES

(43) Tu mujer es amada por otro hombre (State [-dynamic, -delimited])

‘Your wife is loved by another man’

(44) El perro ha sido acariciado

(Process [+dynamic, -delimited])

‘The dog has been patted’

(45) a. La casa es construida.

(Event [+dynamic, -delimited])

‘The house is built (by Peter)’

b. La casa está construida.

(Event [+dynamic, +delimited])

‘The house is (already) built’

[Marín (2000), (2004)]

- In accordance with Marín (2000: 151-152, 2004: § 3) in Modern standard Spanish *ser* selects past participles of verbs that denote state, process or event, whereas *estar* only subcategorizes past participles of eventive verbs which convey change.

PROGRESSIVE GERUNDS AND EXISTENTIAL SENTENCES

(46) Juan está durmiendo

‘John is sleeping’

(47) a. Los niños están en el jardín

‘The children are in the garden’

b. Hay niños en el jardín

‘There are children in the garden’

Table 5. Modern Spanish

TYPE OF SENTENCE		VERB USED
Copulative	Individual level	<i>ser</i>
	Stage level	<i>estar</i>
Locative		<i>estar</i>
Passive		<i>ser / estar</i>
Existential		<i>haber / estar</i>
Progressive gerund		<i>estar</i>

4. From *ser* to *estar*: the syntactic change

- Natural languages that lack the distinction between *ser* and *estar* (English and Latin, for instance) use *ser* in all these constructions. This leads us to consider that *ser* is deficient in aspectual features, which means that in languages where *estar* does not exist, *ser* will acquire the space and time delimitation required in locative and aspectual constructions by means of movement of the verb *ser* to a higher functional projection AspP which hosts the [+delimited] feature associated to these constructions.
- In those Modern Romance languages in which *estar* is attested in locative and aspectual constructions, this verb expresses unambiguously the delimitation of the spatial and temporal anchorage.
- The progressive specialization and the process of grammaticalisation undergone by *estar* bring about the loss of movement of the verbal head *ser*. This verb will only occur with [-delimited] predicates, and instead of having movement of *ser* to the higher functional projection AspP in order to obtain the [+delimited] aspectual meaning, there will be Merge of *estar* in the head Asp.

The structures that we attribute to Latin sentences with ESSE and STARE are the ones in (48) and (49), where the [+del] feature in Asp attracts the verbal head:

- (48) a. [TP T (Anterior) [AspP Asp [VoiceP Voice [VP ESSE]]]]
[+del]
b. [TP T (Anterior) [AspP [ESSE]_i [VoiceP Voice [VP ...t_i...]]]]
[+del]
- (49) a. [TP T (Anterior) [AspP Asp [VoiceP Voice [VP STARE]]]]
[+del]
b. [TP T (Anterior) [AspP [STARE]_i [VoiceP Voice [VP ...t_i...]]]]
[+del]

- When the head Asp has a [-delimited] specification no movement of ESSE takes place and the predicate of the sentence is interpreted as individual level. The lexical meaning of STARE conveys a spatio-temporal value incompatible with a [-del] Asp head. For this reason, STARE only appears with a [+del] Asp and always moves to this functional head.
- In Modern Spanish and Modern Catalan *estar* merges directly in Asp, as represented in (24):

- (50) [TP T [AspP [*estar*] [VoiceP Voice [SC]]]]
[+del] SC = Small Clause

- The evolution shown above and every stage involved can be explained taking into account Roberts and Roussou (2003) approach to grammaticalisation. The lexical item that formerly realized a lower head has become the realization of a higher functional head, one of the configurations described by Roberts and Roussou (2003: 198):

(51) $[_{XP} Y+X [_{YP} t_Y]] > [_{XP} Y = X [_{YP} \dots Y \dots]]$
 Asp* Move > Asp* Merge

- Asp is a functional head with a [$\pm$ delimited] feature for time and space specification. Languages, or different stages of a language, differ in the way they satisfy this feature: for instance, in Latin the V head with the verb ESSE moves to Asp, but in Modern Spanish such a movement does not take place because *estar* is directly merged in the functional head Asp. According to Roberts and Roussou (2003: chapter 5), this syntactic change, that consists of a loss of movement and the creation of a new exponent for the higher functional head, is a case of structural simplification. In a similar way, the change is accounted for by the Late Merge Principle posed by van Gelderen (2004) and the reanalysis of a lexical verb as an auxiliary in an outer Aspect head (i.e., loss of the lexical features of the verb, in terms of van Gelderen 2008).
- The motivation for the syntactic change is related to feature syncretism in the sense that the most ambiguous cue is unattended. In Early Spanish and Early Catalan two different ways of expressing location (with minor semantic differences) coexist: Movement of *ser* (< ESSE) to Asp and Merge of *estar* (< STARE) in Asp. The last strategy constitutes a more robust cue because the feature is realized phonetically. The language acquirer would select this option, the less marked one, which progressively generalizes.
- The elements merged in a functional category, for instance *estar* in Asp, would provide the speaker/hearer with an instruction to interpret the lexical categories c-commanded by it in agreement with its semantic features. That is, the Merge of *estar* in an outer [+del] Asp head will act as the trigger for aspectual coercion in cases where an individual level predicate is reinterpreted as stage level.
- The evolution of *estar* is a case of grammaticalisation in terms of Roberts and Roussou (2003), because it involves structure simplification so as to avoid the feature syncretism due to the fact that both *estar* and *ser* were related to the expression of the same feature – the [+delimited] specification. The language acquirer is faced with two cues: an unambiguous one – which is the Merge of *estar* in Asp – and an ambiguous one – which is the movement of *ser* to Asp. The child has two options: either he/she sets the parameters of his/her I-language in relation to both, the ambiguous and the unambiguous cue – which would mean that there would not be any syntactic change – or he/she takes only the robust cue to set the parameter – which leads to the grammaticalisation of *estar*.

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