

Variation in the Lexical Semantics of Dimensional Adjectives in Spanish

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The goal of this paper is to explore the phenomenon of syntactic variation illustrated in (1), related to the appearance of dimensional adjectives [A] in copulative sentences in Spanish. Spanish is a language that has two copulas: *ser* 'be_{EL/relative property}' and *estar* 'be_{SI/absolute property}'. In (1), *estar* is combined with dimensional adjectives that express the *size* of an inanimate entity. The grammaticality of these examples delimits the existence of two large dialectal areas in Spanish: dialectal area A (European Spanish and Southern Cone varieties, which reject this type of construction; sentences would be grammatical with *ser*); dialectal area B (American varieties from Mexico, Venezuela, Guatemala, Peru, where they are grammatical).

(1) ...ella vive de las rentas..., porque **estaba grandísima la casa**, si pues... [la vendió en] ... unos milloncitos, los metió al banco, así que ya no tiene ninguna preocupación...

(México, Gutiérrez 1994, (24))

'...she lives on the rents..., because **the house was very big**, if well... [she sold it in] ... a few million, she put them in the bank, so she no longer has any concern...'

Our proposal is based on the descriptive intuitions of Gutiérrez (1994) and Brown & Cortés-Torres (2012), who point out that examples like (1) express „speaker subjectivity“. The idea we intend to develop is that the notion of „subjectivity“ is obtained because, in variants B, the evaluation of the property that the dimensional As express with *estar* is linked to the experiencer/perceiver that this class of As has in its structure. The dimensional As in variants B have an experiencer argument in their structure just as it happens in general Spanish with evaluative As (according to Lasersohn 2005, a.o.). Thus, „variation is restricted to the lexicon“ (Chomsky 2001: 2). This would be a case of diatopically conditioned argument alternation in the adjectival domain.

References: Brown, E. L. & M. Cortés-Torres (2012). Syntactic and Pragmatic Usage of the [estar + Adjective] Construction in Puerto Rican Spanish: ¡Está brutal! Selected Proceedings of the 14th HLS. Ed. Kimberly Geeslin and Manuel Díaz-Campos. Somerville, MA: Cascadia Proceedings Project, 61–74. Chomsky, N. (2001). Derivation by Phase. Ken Hale: A Life in Language. Ed. M. Kenstowicz. Cambridge, Mass: The MIT Press, 1–26. Gumiel-Molina, S., N. Moreno-Quibén & I. Pérez-Jiménez (2015). A syntactic approach to the relative / absolute distinction: the case of adjectives in copular sentences in Spanish. *Natural Language and Linguistic Theory*, 33, 955–1001. Gutiérrez, M. J. (1994). Ser y estar en el habla de Michoacán. *Publicaciones del Centro de Lingüística Hispánica*, 38. México. México: UNAM / Instituto de Investigaciones Filológicas. Lasersohn, P. (2005). Context dependence, disagreement and predicates of personal taste. *Linguistics and Philosophy* 28, 643–686.