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Analysis of the *SER/ESTAR* opposition based on the origins and evolution of {st} saliencing : a submorphological and enactive approach

Stéphane Pagès[1]

Abstract

The theory of submorphemic saliencing has tried to show that the notion of « stability » is often expressed in Spanish through words that include the consonantal group {st}. However, this saliencing is the constitutive marker of the verb estar*'s paradigm, generally associated with accidental or circumstantial existence with no essentialising projection, as opposed to the verb ser. Taking a diachronic and synchronic approach based on the signifier, this article aims to explain and understand this apparent contradiction, i.e. the systemic and semantic opposition between* ser *and* estar *(*sedere/stare*). The hypothesis defended in this study is that we are faced with a semantic opposition that can also be seen at the level of the signifiers, which are opposed in two different configurations offering an illustrative example of the motivation of the sign.*

Keywords: *SER/ESTAR* ; submorphology ; enaction ; saliencing ; signifier

Résumé

La théorie de la saillance submorphologique a tenté de montrer que la notion de « stabilité » est souvent exprimée en espagnol par des mots qui comportent le groupe consonantique {st}. Or, on peut observer en espagnol que cette saillance est comme le marqueur constitutif du paradigme du verbe estar*, généralement associé à l'expression de caractéristiques accidentelles, circonstancielles, conçues en dehors de toute visée essentialiste, par opposition à* ser*. À travers une démarche à la fois diachronique et synchronique et en s'appuyant sur le signifiant, il s'agit d'essayer d'expliquer, de comprendre cette contradiction apparente, c'est-à-dire l'opposition systémique et sémantique entre* ser *et* estar *(*sedere/stare*). L'hypothèse de cette étude défend l'idée qu'on est bien en présence d'une opposition sémantique que l'on peut retrouver au niveau des signifiants qui s'opposent selon deux configurations différentes qui peuvent illustrer un exemple de motivation du signe.*

Mots-clefs : *SER/ESTAR* ; submorphologie ; énaction ; saillance ; signifiant

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Introduction

For roughly a decade now, a trend has emerged in linguistics that uses submorphological analysis to try to provide possible answers to two major questions in general linguistics : on the one hand, the nature of the sign, in its signifier/signified relationship, and, on the other hand, the question of meaning.

The submorphological approach works at a pre-semantic level – i.e., a level where the sign only exists in an embryonic state – and attempts to identify invariant sub-units that have a particular ontological status. Despite being located at a pre-conceptual level, these units are nonetheless forming elements that convey potential meaning, can be actualised in discourse and can combine morpho-semantic paradigms. Furthermore, they follow a principle of iconicity (convergence between form and meaning) between the two sides of the sign.

Launched by pioneering researchers Pierre Guiraud and Maurice Toussaint for the French language and Maurice Molho for Spanish – who revisited and expanded the notion of « formant » borrowed from phonology[2] – submorphology has since been extended to non-related languages such as English and Arabic. While certain researchers have developed their own theory and terminology to refer to these significant sub-units linked to a pre-signified (*notion* for Philps, *matrix* for Bohas, *cogneme* for Bottineau, *phogneme* for Elimam etc.), these different terms are neither irreducible nor irreconcilable because they actually all run along the same lines.

Where Spanish is concerned, following in M. Molho's footsteps, different Hispanist scholars have explored and applied the methodological approach of submorphology[3], but Michaël Grégoire's work warrants particular attention in this regard. Since his PhD thesis, presented in 2010 (*Exploration of the lexical signifier of Spanish. Structures, mechanisms, manipulations, potentialities*), he has worked at demonstrating the coherence of Spanish lexicon in light of sub-units that he calls « saliences », formal sub-units subconsciously considered salient by the speaker. This work has founded TSS, the Theory of Submorphemic Saliencing, which lies at the intersection of neurophysiology, Francisco Varela's enaction and Alain Berthoz's neurobiology because it underpins an embodied conception of speech that is concomitantly envisaged from an enunciative point of view. The sign is in fact conceived as the product of a cognitive and sensory-motor act that is not only constructed through the speaker's mind and body, but also through the act of interlocution because the speaker is also a potential interlocutor and becomes both through the speech act, due to the reversible nature of the interlocutory relationship. Therefore, in light of TSS, the signifier stops being a fixed physical given. All signifiers are subject to analogical pressure – both paronymic and differentiating – and this relationship is no doubt at the origin of the evolution of languages. All signifiers are therefore the product of a 'corporimental' act, in which the speaking subject's body gradually contributes to constructing them, with a dialogical dimension that takes into account verbal interactions. To summarize, according to TSS, any signifier is the result of a dynamic that is internalised, embodied (and particularly articulatory), and intersubjective.

This article will examine one particular instance of saliencing, in relation to a key question focusing on the SER/ESTAR opposition.

The theory of submorphemic saliencing (TSS) has tried to show that the notion of « stability » is often expressed in Spanish through words that include the consonantal group {st}, whether in implosive or explosive position. This saliencing can express abstract meaning (*asentir*) or

[2] See reference section for further details.

[3] Chrystelle Fortineau-Brémond, Gabrielle Le Tallec-Lloret, Gilles Luquet, Stéphane Pagès, etc. See reference section.

concrete meaning (*situar, estar*) and is also involved in making up words that refer to sticks, posts and seats, either literally or metaphorically (*asiento, sitiar,* etc.) (Grégoire, 2012 : 323-328). In Spanish, this saliencing is the constitutive marker of the copula verb *estar*'s paradigm, generally associated with the expression of accidental or circumstantial existence (*estar enfermo* = to be ill), with no essentialising projection, as opposed to *ser* (*ser alto* = to be tall).

Through an approach that is diachronic, synchronic and based on the signifier, this article aims to explain, understand and shed light on this difference in the configuration of saliencing, i.e., the systemic and morpho-semantic opposition between *ser* and *estar*. {St} saliencing is almost entirely absent from the *ser* paradigm, which is associated with an essentialising projection, but systematically present in the *estar* paradigm, which is associated with a circumstantial and contingent projection, and therefore, it would seem, with the notion of « non-stability ». How, then, can {st} saliencing, which is associated with the notion of « stability », be reconciled with the *ser/estar* opposition and their respective signifieds (in language) ?

The logical implication of this inquiry is that :

- Either TSS is not relevant, valid or operational, at least where this particular point is concerned[4],

- Or, the nature of the opposition between these two verbs as formulated in traditional grammars needs rethinking,

- Or, we are not asking the question in the right terms, which is skewing our thinking, and we should, instead, be looking to how {st} saliencing associated with the notion of stability should be understood, i.e. asking what kind of stability we are actually talking about.

1. Evolution and filiation of {st} saliencing in relation to Latin

As my analytical method lies at the intersection of what is usually called the « linguistics of the signifier », submorphology and an approach that is both synchronic and diachronic, I will begin by describing the observable signifiers of SER and ESTAR.

Taking a modern synchronic and descriptive approach first and foremost reveals that :

- where ESTAR is concerned, {st} saliencing was already present in the Latin (*stare*) and is in fact a constitutive marker of the old and modern forms of Spanish, at the level of the whole paradigm of the verb[5].

- where SER is concerned, today, {st} saliencing, which can be declined according to another pattern {s…d} which we will come back to later[6], is only present in : two forms of the preterit (*fui**st**e, fui**st**eis*) ; two forms of the quasi-nominal mode, the gerundive and the past participle (***s**ien**d**o, **s**id**o***) ; and, finally, one form of the first and second person mode, the imperative, (***sed***), reaching a total of five forms across the whole paradigm.

Furthermore, the most interesting point results from taking a diachronic approach to this syncretic form, which, as we know, derives from the crossover between two Latin verbs *esse* (« to be, to exist », *esse* was analogically remodelled in Vulgar Latin as **ĕssĕre*) and *sĕdēre*

[4] Which is not a problem in and of itself, because any theory must be falsifiable.

[5] The evolution of the language shows that, regarding the Latin *stare*, aside from the apocope of the final vowel, Castilian has simply added a prothetic /e/ (*estar*).

[6] In TSS, the voiceless/voiced opposition is not a relevant feature. The {st} saliencing corresponds to the catenation {occlusive grooved fricative}, which does not necessarily have to be sequential.

(« to be sitting down, to be in a place »)[7]. We can see that the evolution of the verbal paradigms is, in fact, characterised by the progressive loss of {st} saliencing.

Where the infinitive is concerned, **ĕssĕre,* the Vulgar Latin analogical form, gave rise to *ser* by aphaeresis of the initial syllable *es–* and by apocope of the final syllable *–re* ; as for *sĕdēre,* the form gave rise to *seer*[8], after the loss of the pretonic voiced dental occlusive /d/, and then resulted in *ser,* after crasis and apocope of the final /e/. Drawing on traditional terminology, in the present of the indicative, it is the *esse* paradigm that survived in Vulgar Latin and we can also note that, as well as the evolution ***est*** > *es*, ***sunt*** > *son,* the language did not retain the divergent second person plural ***est****is* and used an analogical form instead : ****sut****is* (VL) > ***sod****es* > *soes*, specific to old Spanish, which gave rise to the current form[9] *sois*[10]. Where the present of the subjunctive is concerned, the *sĕdēre* paradigm led to the current form : after the hiatus was absorbed and the yod emerged, the evolution of the language saw the voiced dental occlusive disappear (along with the yod) : *sedeam* > *seya* > *sea.* The imperfect of the indicative and the subjunctive derive from *esse* and correspond to phonetic forms (*eram,* for the imperfect of the indicative, *fueram* and *fuissem* for the *–ra* and *–se* forms, respectively derived from the Latin pluperfect of the indicative and of the subjunctive). As for the preterit, it derived from the perfect of the Latin indicative and corresponds to a phonetic paradigm (*fui, fui****st****e, fue*). Finally, the future of the indicative derives from the infinitive *sĕdēre,* reduced to *ser,* with the inflectional endings of *haber* added in the present of the indicative. As for the forms of the imperative, also taken from *sĕdēre,* they evolved as follows : ***sede*** >*sé* ; ***sedete*** > ***seed*** > ***sed***.

Taking stock of this diachronic approach to the forms that led to the current syncretic paradigm reveals that where *sĕdēre* is concerned, the evolution shifted towards a clear reduction, or even complete disappearance, of {st} saliencing[11], as the only two forms where it is still present are the second person singular and the plural preterit *(fui****st****e/fui****st****eis*). As for the sequence realised by the matrix {s…d}, present in the forms of the current gerundive, past participle and imperative (***siendo, sido, sed***), one can justifiably question whether it is accurate or even relevant to consider it as an allomorphic variant of {st} when, strictly speaking, the patterning of the signified is not the same. Indeed, in the case of {st} saliencing, the consonantal matrix, composed of an alveolar fricative and a dental occlusive, corresponds to a flow of air immediately interrupted by a closure whereas in the case of the {s…d} pattern, the emission of air is not immediately suspended but rather deferred by the articulation of a vowel. Strictly speaking, the configuration of the saliencing is therefore not the same. Moreover, observing the etymons of these three current forms of the quasi-nominal mode (***sedendum, seditum, sedete***) shows that the articulatory feature consisting in closure by

[7] For a detailed study of the filiation and Romance outcomes of *ser* and *estar,* see Zalio (2013).
[8] This form appeared in the 13th century and disappeared at the end of the Middle Ages.
[9] In the present of the indicative, old Spanish also had a complete paradigm derived from *sĕdēre.* Here again, the disappearance of the {st} saliencing can be seen through the attested forms in *El libro de Alexandre, Libro de Apolonio* as well as in Gonzalo de Berceo :
sĕdeo > seyo > seo
sĕdes > **sied**es > sees, †seyes
sĕdet > **sied**e, see, †seye
sĕdēmus > **sed**emos, seemos, †seyemos
sĕdētis > **seed**es, †**seyed**es
sĕdent > **sied**en, seen, †seyen
[10] Also under the analogical pressure of the inflectional ending of first conjugation verbs.
[11] In this sense, the evolution of *estis* is symptomatic of the whole dynamic because the saliencing was present in the etymon, then remodelled by analogy and became {s…d} (old Spanish form) before eventually disappearing completely in the current Spanish form: ***est****is* > ***sod****es* > *sois*

the occlusive, reduplicated in the etymological forms, was eventually simplified over time[12]. In short, {st} saliencing is therefore only strictly present in two forms of the SER paradigm.

All things considered, describing and comparing the respective signifiers of the two current paradigms of SER and ESTAR shows that we are faced with two very different configurations, as if, over time, the language had slowly marked out and put in place a system of opposition[13]. Initially, ESTAR involves a continuous air flow (due to the alveolar fricative phoneme /s/) which is then immediately interrupted by an obstacle and the closure of the dental occlusive (/t/) and {st} saliencing is a constitutive marker of all the forms of its paradigm ; SER, however, involves a different phonetic-phonological matrix, characterised by continuous articulation, with, for the most part, the constitutive phonemes being of the fricative type (alveolar /s/, labio-dental /f/) or the trilled type (/r/), both in old and modern Spanish.

How, then, can we explain {st} saliencing, associated with the notion of « stability », which is omnipresent in the *estar* paradigm, when the latter is associated with the notion of circumstancial existence and therefore apparently unstable ? How can this be explained, or rather, how can it be interpreted ?

2. Signified of SER and ESTAR

The nature of the semantic opposition between SER and ESTAR is no doubt one of the most difficult questions pertaining to the Spanish language[14]. The issue continues to generate a host of theoretical debates and, for pedagogical reasons, is often oversimplified and reduced to criteria that sometimes prove ineffective and not particularly relevant. This is how SER has traditionally come to be linked with what is stable and inherent (*ser alto*) while ESTAR is linked to a transitory and passing quality (*estar enfermo*). As we have seen, presenting the verbs in this way runs completely counter to the saliencing approach to their paradigms, both in synchronic and in diachronic terms.

However, if we turn to the enlightening theoretical models put forward by Marie-France Delport and Yves Macchi, we can lift what, at first glance, seems to be an apparent contradiction and better understand the TSS approach by rethinking the nature of the traditional opposition between these two verbs.

First, M.-F. Delport approaches these two predicates that express existence as two mono-actantial verbs, insofar as their lexical meaning implies a single actant supporting the predication. According to M.-F. Delport, their difference lies in the kind of semantic representation of time that they each imply[15]. SER belongs to the class of thetic verbs that include no semio-temporal differentiation, i.e. the operation expressed by its lexigenesis (the thought operation that forms the word) takes place outside of any temporal consideration because it posits a non-circumstantial existence[16]. ESTAR, on the other hand, is a static verb. It implies two semio-temporal markers (t_1 and t_2) with identical content ($t_1 = t_2$) and its distinctive feature is that it repeats the operation contained in its lexigenesis from one moment

[12] ***Sedendum*** gave rise to *seyendo*, which then created a regular form (the yod allowed the vowel of the radical to be maintained), and then ***siendo***.
[13] In his thesis, D. Zalio (2003) does not talk about opposition, considering instead that *estar* complements *ser*. To my mind, it seems more relevant to distinguish an opposition that relates to the notion of system.
[14] See reference section for details.
[15] M.-F. Delport refers to semio-temporal representation.
[16] It may be due to this feature that, with a view to pedagogical simplicity, certain grammars make the erroneous link between *ser* and the expression of permanence and continuity which can, in fact, only be conceived of in the context of a succession of several semio-temporal units.

to the next (hence its intrinsically static value). In the case of ESTAR, there is circumstantial existence, while in the case of SER, there is non-circumstantial existence ; in other words, there is an opposition that M.-F. Delport summarises in the following terms :

ser offers a thetic representation of this existence, located in a single theoretical moment, with no consideration of any before or any after, a semio-temporal unit ; as for *estar*, it offers a static representation of that existence, developed on two semio-temporal units with the same content (Delport, 2000 : 273)[17].

This aspectual-temporal approach[18] is further bolstered by Yves Macchi's diachronic and synchronic analysis.

Yves Macchi (2011) conducted a meticulous study of a medieval prose text (15th century), the *Victorial*, with a view to identifying the semantic value of the two verbs *ser/estar*, which seemed, at first glance, to be used indifferently. This is the point of view defended by José María Saussol, who sees them as two synonyms[19], a position which Y. Macchi utterly refutes :

> Aside from the fact that such a stance holds the absolute difference between the two verbal *signifiers* to be *insignificant*, it also runs completely counter to the economy of the lexicon. Why would the medieval speaker bother using *two different verbs* to signify *one single idea* ? (Macchi, 2011 : 126. Our translation)

After hypothesising that the medieval verb *estar* – derived from the Latin *stare* – would be associated with a semantic invariant, the feature of /immobility/, with the corresponding mental image being that of an antikinetic verb, Y. Macchi (2011 : 129) eventually abandons this hypothesis in the face of examples that invalidate this perspective (« Unfortunately, this generalisation does not withstand observation »).

His analysis therefore goes on to focus more on the properties of the inert being apprehended by *estar* (referred to as *e*) and the properties of the locating element (referred to as *E*). The constant relations that emerge between these two entities seem to create « one common geometric property » which Y. Macchi expresses in terms of set theory – « no point of the located inert being is a member of the locating space » – concluding that « this constant spatial disjunction between the two terms of the locational relation appears very clearly […] » (Macchi, 2011: 130). This theorisation is illustrated by different examples in which we can see that, in the case of *estar*, the located actant (the being *e*) is conceived as a set that is distinct from, distant from or has a discontinuous spatial relation to the locating element (*E*) :

(1) **Açerca de la grand ysla de Jarrasuy** *está otra pequeña ysla*, en que está una hermita de Santa María. (442)

(*Near the big island of Jarrasuy, there is another small island where there is a hermit of Saint María.*)

[17] Unless otherwise indicated, all translations from the French are mine.

[18] Such a reading means associating SER with an imperfective aspect, and ESTAR with a perfective aspect. This also offers a way of better understanding, for example, the current increasingly frequent use of *estar feliz* which relativizes the idea of happiness by making the quality of *feliz* constructed with ESTAR into an always circumstantial quality (Estoy feliz por la actuación y la victoria ; estoy feliz por volver a San Siro…) [*I am happy with my game and this victory; I am happy to return to San Siro*].

[19] « […] el uso arbitrario de *ser* o *estar* en expresiones de localización nos revela una vez más que en el español del s. XII las funciones de estos verbos no se habían delimitado » [*the arbitrary use of « ser » or « estar » in expressions of location once again shows that in the 12th century in Spanish the functions of these verbs were not clearly distinguished from one another*]. (Saussol 1997 : 67).

(2) E *está* **ençima** una grand mançana de oro, en que dizen que están los huesos del César. (193)

(*And above, there is a large gold apple and they say that César's remains are there)*

(3) E que estavan dentro en ella **tres redomas**, e que **en la una** *estava la cabeça de un moro*, e en la otra una culebra, e en la otra una langosta. (194)

(*And inside there were 3 phials, in the first, there was the head of a Moor, in the second, a grass snake, and in the third, a grasshopper*.)[20]

The specificity of *estar* therefore seems to be that it locates two distinct entities separated by a boundary.

Building out from other examples that illustrate his hypothesis *a contrario,* with *ser* declaring the membership of these two entities[21], Y. Macchi therefore posits that « *estar* […] will only locate an inert being if, and only if, that being is separated from the locating space by discontinuity » (Macchi, 2011 : 132). According to this analysis, *ser* becomes the signifier of merging, inclusion, integration of *e* and *E* (with the located element conceived as indissociable from the whole to which it belongs). *Estar*, on the other hand, indicates instead a relation of separation, fragmentation and spatial discontinuity. With *estar,* the located being is separated from the integrating spatial backdrop as this verb sets up a process of dissociation between the two entities of the verbal image. On this point, Y. Macchi's analysis and conclusion are unequivocal :

> *Ser* is therefore systematically required when the inclusion of a sub-set is being expressed, a holonym including a meronym, an integrating whole including an integral part, a relationship in which the part is envisaged as ontologically indissociable from the whole to which it belongs. In short, when (e) merges with (E), becomes physically part of the same body, *ser* is necessary, whereas when (e) is conceived as spatially separate from (E), *estar* is used instead. *Estar* locates by fragmenting, by dividing space, by positing a relationship of continuity, of consubstantiality, between the two terms of the localisation. […] *Estar* therefore conveys […] the same instruction of discontinuity […]. The immobilisation of a dynamic being and the spatial separation of an inert being are therefore two effects of the same single cause : the disconnection, the tmesis, that *estar* establishes between the located being and a backdrop that is either dynamic and shifting, or static and inert (Macchi, 2011 : 132-133).

The study continues with an analysis contrasting *ser* and *estar* in relation to the temporal conceptions they construct. The author also shows that the distinctive criterion for how the two verbs are distributed is the speaker's representation of the referential relationship between the located entity and the locating backdrop (either spatial or temporal). A consubstantial vision of these two entities logically implies use of *ser* while a disjunctive vision is

[20] Author's emphasis and our translations. Regarding the last example, the author points out that « (e) is confined to a space (E) that is not its natural space of existence […] » (Macchi, 2011 : 131).

[21] « En aquel tienpo çercó el rey de Portugal la çivdad de Tuy, que es <u>en Galiçia</u> (251) [*At this time, the King of Portugal layed siege to the city of Tuy, which is in Galicia*] is a geographer's sentence in which the chronicler declares that a place referred to by its toponym is a member of a political or physical space. This kind of sentence regularly combines the verb *ser* with an interiorising preposition – *en / dentro en* – which marks the inclusion of the thing being located in the element that locates it, the fact that space (e) is a member of space (E). In a sentence such as : [Juan Niño] *E hera su morada <u>en la su casa</u> de Villagómez, donde él era natural.* (231) [Juan Nino's home is an integral part of the village of Villagomez], the located space is also related to the locating space through an interiorising preposition : *en, dentro en, dentro de.* The located space appears here as a constitutive part of the locating space : any point of (e) is therefore a member of (E). » (Macchi, 2011 : 132). Author's emphasis.

« physified by *estar* […]. *Ser* is the sign of the spatio-temporal merging of a being with its environment, *estar* is the sign of its spatio-temporal disjunction » (Macchi, 2011 : 141).

Concerning the modern use of *estar*, Y. Macchi therefore observes that while the verb is now indifferent to whether its medium is mobile or not (and « unable to signify the immobility of a automobile being » Macchi, 2011 : 143) the fundamental feature that has persisted from the old usage to current usage, is that of a process of disjunction :

> In other words, while medieval *estar* carried out the tmesis and synthesis of two fragments of *real* spaces in the universe of reference, modern *estar* carries out the tmesis and synthesis of two *theoretical* spaces or two successive moments that no rule and no clock can measure. […] The stasis of *estar*, which in the Middle Ages was still reliant on referential, exochronic, permanence has today become a lexical stasis […] (Macchi, 2011 : 143, our translation).

Y. Macchi's study confirms first of all that *ser* and *estar* form a system of oppositions, which they have continuously founded throughout the history of the language[22].

Through different approaches, M.-F. Delport and Y. Macchi therefore reach identical conclusions : the spatio-temporal disjunction that Y. Macchi identifies in *estar* can be seen as echoing the two semio-temporal markers that M.-F. Delport identifies ; as for the lexical stasis he identifies as specific to *estar*, this can be seen as another way of expressing the static representation suggested by the verb according to M.-F. Delport's aspectual-temporal approach.

The conclusion seems clear : the image of the signified of *estar* is configured by a static representation, which can shed light on {st} saliencing in the TSS approach. But let us make no mistake, where *estar* is concerned, the {stability} saliencing is not to be found in the stability of a quality that is ascribed to a being ; rather, it lies at the very heart of its semio-temporal structure and therefore of its signified, of which the {st} saliencing provides a trace (and a trace of an iconic nature). Conversely, it is therefore easy to understand why the saliencing in question is absent from the *ser* paradigm when stability is absent from its signified.

3. The morpho-syntactic SER/ESTAR opposition : an example of iconic and embodied motivation of speech.

A descriptive and analytical approach, which is both synchronic and diachronic, therefore allows the following conclusion to be drawn : with SER/ESTAR, there is an opposition of the morpho-syntactic type that illustrates a case of iconic motivation as well an embodied conception of speech.

Comparing the respective signifieds (in language) of these two verbs with the articulatory-phonetic structure of their signifiers show the analogical link of similarity tying together form and content (signification). It is almost as though the articulatory gesture were mimicking the semantic content, given the uniqueness of the signifier/signified relationship. From this perspective, {st} saliencing could be seen as the trace of a pre-signified. The phonemic medium used by SER – associated with a representation of a thetic type and conceived of within the framework of a single semio-temporal unit (from an aspectual-temporal point of

[22] This opposition could almost be considered an opposition between two monosyllables, insofar as that the bisyllabism of *estar* is only due to the phonematic constraint of the Spanish language which does not tolerate any word beginning with the consonantal group *st* and therefore required the Latin verb *stare* to take on an epenthetic vowel (*stare* > *(e)star*).

view) – is precisely the phonemes characterised by uninterrupted articulation and air flow which, for the most part, involve fricative phonation (/s/, /f/). Due to the almost total disappearance of {st} saliencing in the case of *SER*, a diachronic approach addressing the SER/ESTAR issue through the lens of this saliencing highlights the fact that this opposition was progressively reinforced and established in language over time in such a way that it created a deep structure[23]. As for ESTAR, which conveys static representation and discontinuity, what it represents is expressed through {st} saliencing that links two opposite cognematic operators (according to D. Bottineau's theory and to take up the features of his analysis[24]) : the phoneme /s/ is associated with an instruction of the type « continue » while the /t/ activates an operation of the type « interrupt », in a major cognitive position, due to its explosive position. In this way, although it begins just like SER, with a fricative articulation, in the case of ESTAR, this articulation is immediately blocked by the occlusive /t/ constituting the {st} saliencing, which is a stable marker in time. And on this point, a chrono-syntactic approach[25] is particularly appropriate for these two verbs that, in their infinitive form, are immediately in opposition from the onset (initial) position, where their morphology is characterised by an inverted correspondence with the *SE–/ES–* combination, bearing in mind that, symbolically, in Romance languages, the infinitive represents the whole of the verb.

In short, the presence or absence of {st} saliencing in the paradigms of *ser* and *estar* corroborates the way the signified of these verbs can be described in language.

Conclusion – hypothesis

Analysing {st} saliencing allows several conclusions and/or hypotheses to be drawn :

- first, it shows the relevance of TSS which, through a submorphological approach, brings to the fore things that are not immediately apparent and encourages looking at the signifier more closely and in a different way. Indeed, the signifier can be analysed on the basis of minimal patterns (saliencing), below the level of the morpheme, which constitute a trace of the signified or function as a trace of a pre-signified.

- second, it highlights the fact that SER and ESTAR present a case of morpho-syntactic opposition that was progressively established and reinforced over time, and that affects the deep structures of language, reaching down to the most infinitely small element, as salience can be considered a hyposign[26].

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[23] Similarly, such an approach allows us to reach a different understanding of the partial homophony between *ser* and *ir*, because, ultimately, what does *ser* express if not an existence that is dynamic, continuous and in movement ? On this point, see Gracia Barrón & Jiménez (2006).

[24] See, in particular, Bottineau (2016, January).

[25] Y. Macchi's chronosyntax conceives the sentence as a procedural space and time where the value of each signifying unit is linked to the relative moment at which it appears.

[26] I would like to thank Yves Macchi who was kind enough to share the following remarks with me regarding the evolution of the French language, which help bolster my argument in the present article :
In the Bloch-Wartburg etymological dictionary, the entry, *s.v. être* shows that while most of the forms of this verb derive from **essere*, the present participle *étant* and the paradigm of the imperfect, *étais*, derive from *stare*. Moreover, Gaston Zink, in the *Phonétique historique du français* (1986 : 46), states that the infinitive form *es(t)re* was obtained as follows : *éss(ê)re* (stress on the initial) > *és're* (syncope of the internal post-tonic) > *éstre* (dental epenthesis at a syllable boundary). Thus, in the paradigm of this verb, two -ST- groups join together : one inherited from *stare* and one with epenthetic -t- forms inherited from *essere*. However, the next stages in the evolution show that the -ST- group, whatever their origin, have systematically been absorbed by assimilation of the fricative [s] in implosive position : *estais* (from *stabam*) > *étais*, but also *ester* (from *essere*) >*être*. This seems to indicate that the French language has accepted the dissolution of the -ST- ideophone because it was

- Finally, analysis of {st} saliencing seems to be an emblematic touchstone of enaction, i.e. the embodied conception of speech shared by all the contributors to this volume. Indeed, it would be difficult to view this convergence of form and content between the two sides of the sign of SER and ESTAR as a chance relationship, simply the result of coincidence, particularly when considered in light of diachronic analysis.

Therefore, if we subscribe to the Sapir-Whorf conception (rather than hypothesis) of language and thought being inextricably linked, if we also take into account the fact that the brain constructs analogical relationships with the entities it perceives and conceives, and if, finally, we recognise the major role played by analogy in both cognition and language – without of course forgetting the importance of the body in speaking humans, because when they speak, their whole body expresses itself[27] – then there are a number of grounds for arguing in favour of an embodied conception of speech. This is one way of demonstrating the diagrammatic iconicity that structures languages, while at the same time placing the speaker, and therefore enunciation, as the heart of its interplay, at the heart of how it functions. As Laurent Danon-Boileau has underlined :

> […] it is possible that iconicity, the diversion of motivation in favour of the signifying effect, is in fact not the mirror of the thing itself but rather the mirror of how that thing is looked at. Which therefore means it becomes the index of the subject (Danon-Boileau, 1993 : 8).

According to this reading, the iconicity of language/iconicity in language – of which saliencing is the trace – is therefore the index of the subject in his/her full psycho-motor dimension.

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leaning towards a single unique verb *être* in which any image of stasis became useless. For the stasis image to be « physified », *it is necessary to have the continuous consonant + interrupted consonant sequence,* which the simple occlusive forms no longer make legible *(être, êtes, étais, étant, été,* etc.). The only verb that continues to mark stasis in French is the derived prefixed *rester* (< *re-stare*) and what it signifies is precisely permanence *(st*able, *st*atique, *st*oïque, like a *st*op) in a place or in a state at two successive theoretical moments. The verb *ester,* a legal archaic term, is no longer legible as the signifier of stasis : it proves the death of the static conceivability of being in the French language. All these elements would seem to corroborate the reading I'm suggesting here of the opposition between *ser/estar* in Spanish, grounded on the alternation between continuous *s(f)* / (continuous-interrupted) *st,* an alternation that clearly « physifies » two opposing conceptualisations of the idea of being.

[27] Y. Fonagy has shown that anger generates the use of tense phonemes. This can also be related to Bourdieu's bodily hexis in which the speaker speaks in and with his or her body.

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