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SER AND ESTAR: A CHANGING COPULA IN A GUADALAJARA, MEXICO SPEECH COMMUNITY

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In this study I have examined the process of linguistic change in a monolingual Mexican speech community, specifically that of the increased use of the verb estar in place of ser, in the Spanish copula meaning 'to be,' in the context of 'copula + adjective.' This project is a replication of the study that was conducted in Morelia, Michoacan by Gutierrez (1997), who carried out his research "in order to explain the variation between these two forms (ser / innovative estar)." It is recognized that the choice and use of these two verbs has changed throughout the history of the language and is continuing to change. The question I have posed in this investigation concerns the reason underlying this transformation. My preliminary findings support recent speculation that the use of this copula is in fact transforming in the Spanish language. Furthermore, my initial conclusions concur with those of Gutierrez in that this change is attributed to the natural evolution of the language, and is independent of the influence of the English language. However, I argue that the change that is occurring is not the emerging of a new or "innovative" use of the verb estar as Gutierrez calls it, but rather, it is simply an increase in its various prescriptive manifestations where the use of ser has historically been more prevalent.

Works Cited