

# Reviewing *Ser, Estar, and Haber*. A Lesson in Culture with Technology

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## Introduction

The final required course of the Spanish language sequence in the Department of Modern Languages and Literatures at Loyola College (Intermediate Spanish II) is designed to teach our students about Hispanic cultures while emphasizing reading, writing, speaking and listening skills. The class consists of a series of lessons that center around topics such as the university, relationships between the United States and the Hispanic world, music, art, culinary delights, and current events, to mention only a few. One of the lessons focuses on the subject of the university and involves the use of technology in reviewing the verbs *ser*, *estar*, and *haber*.

## Objectives

**Grammar:** to review and practice the verbs *ser*, *estar* and *haber*

**Culture:** to compare and contrast Loyola College (or your school) with other universities (schools) in Spanish-speaking countries

**Technology:** to incorporate the use of computers into the learning experience

**Skills:** to practice reading, writing, speaking and listening skills in Spanish

**Level:** Intermediate (college/university or high school)

## Methods

**Step 1:** Review with students the uses of the verbs *haber*, *ser*, and *estar*. I usually stress the following three main differences between *ser* and *estar*:

<i>SER</i>	<i>ESTAR</i>
<p>1) IDENTITY AND CHARACTERISTICS Soy un estudiante trabajador. (I am a hard-working student.) Ella es una mujer alta de Baltimore. (She is a tall lady from Baltimore.)</p>	<p>1) SUBJECTIVITY Mi abuela está joven. (My grandmother seems young.) La sopa de ajo está rica hoy. (The garlic soup tastes delicious today.)</p>
<p>2) LOCATION OF EVENTS ("TO TAKE PLACE") La conferencia será en México. (The conference will take place in Mexico.) La clase es en Loyola. (The class takes place at Loyola.)</p>	<p>2) LOCATION OF PEOPLE AND THINGS La paella está en la mesa. (The paella is on the table.) Los alumnos están en la clase. (The students are in the class.)</p>
<p>3) PASSIVE VOICE El niño es bañado por su madre. (The child is being bathed by his mother.) La cena fue preparada por el cocinero. (Dinner was prepared by the cook.)</p>	<p>3) CONDITIONS El niño está bañado. (The child is bathed.) La cena está preparada. (Dinner is prepared.)</p>

I also remind students that *estar* is used to express the progressive tense and that it often appears in set phrases such as "*estar de acuerdo*," "*estar de vacaciones*," and "*estar de mal humor*." Lastly, I tell students that *ser* will be the correct verb choice for almost all other uses of "to be," excepting those that involve *haber*, *tener* and *hacer* (with which they should already be acquainted).

**Step 2:** Assign students the task of writing and sending e-mail to pen pals in Spanish-speaking countries for homework. Check the Internet or contact language departments at local colleges and universities to find pen pals. Students at Loyola corresponded with their peers studying abroad at the Universidad del Salvador in Argentina. The students in the United States asked those abroad to share information about their school. Since Spanish class does not meet every day at Loyola, there was plenty of time for students to receive electronic

messages. If class meets daily at your institution, an interim lesson may be necessary while students await e-mail from their pen pals. Upon receipt of this correspondence, the students at Loyola wrote sentences using *ser*, *estar* and *haber* in which they stated some of the similarities and differences between the two institutions. Ask your students to do the same. Some typical examples are as follows:

1) ¿Cuáles son algunas semejanzas entre Loyola y la Universidad del Salvador? (What are some similarities between Loyola and the Universidad del Salvador?)

- Para especializarse en español, hay que tomar clases obligatorias. (To major in Spanish, it is necessary to take required classes.)
- Los libros son caros. (The books are expensive.)
- El profesorado de cada universidad es muy bueno. (The faculty of each university is very good.)
- Los alumnos están tratando de conseguir un buen empleo. (The students are trying to get a good job.)
- Ambas universidades son católicas. (Both universities are Catholic.)
- Las clases son pequeñas en las dos universidades. (The classes are small at both universities.)

2) ¿Cuáles son algunas diferencias entre Loyola y la Universidad del Salvador? (What are some differences between Loyola and the Universidad del Salvador?)

- Hay exámenes parciales y examencitos en Loyola. Sólo hay exámenes finales y monografías en la Universidad del Salvador. (There are midterm exams and quizzes at Loyola. There are only final exams and term papers at the Universidad del Salvador.)
- Muchos de los estudiantes de la Universidad del Salvador viven en casa porque son de Buenos Aires. (Many of the students at the Universidad del Salvador live at home because they are from Buenos Aires.)
- Algunos profesores de la Universidad del Salvador son abogados y hombres de negocios. (Some professors at the Universidad del Salvador are lawyers and businessmen.)
- Si la clase es a las cinco y media en la Universidad del Salvador, el profesor no llega hasta las seis y cuarto. (If the class is at 5:30 at the Universidad del Salvador, the professor does not arrive until 6:15.)
- Está permitido fumar en la clase en la Universidad del Salvador. (Smoking is allowed in class at the Universidad del Salvador.)

Begin the next class by calling on students at random to read a statement. The class corrects all *ser/estar/haber* errors as it learns about the Universidad del Salvador or other schools.

**Step 3:** In keeping with the theme of the university, show the students pictures of the buildings at the Universidad Nacional in Mexico. I used my photographs which I projected onto a large screen with a document camera. If you do not have pictures or slides, make one or two color transparencies of plates of the buildings from books on Mexican art. Like Loyola College, many universities and public libraries have a generous supply of these books, and most copyright laws allow some reproduction for use in the classroom.

Ask students to answer oral questions about one or two of the murals or about the mosaic on the library building (Biblioteca Central), using *ser*, *estar* and *haber*. Divide students into groups of three, give each group an 8" x 11" piece of white paper and a few colored pencils, crayons or markers, and ask the students to design a mural for a building at their school. Instruct them to speak only in Spanish while they choose the building they wish to decorate, draw the mural (which should reflect life at their school), and describe their design in four or five written sentences using *ser*, *estar* and *haber*. The groups then report on their murals to the class by reading their sentences, and the class corrects errors involving the three verbs. Some examples of the murals and descriptions created by Loyola students follow:



Figure 1

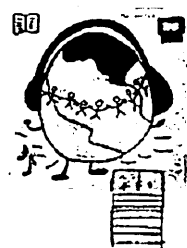


Figure 2

- 1) La cruz es un símbolo de Loyola porque la universidad es católica. (The cross is a symbol of Loyola because the university is Catholic.)
  - 2) Hay equipos de baloncesto y lacrosse en Loyola. (There are basketball and lacrosse teams at Loyola.)
  - 3) En Loyola el galgo es el símbolo de los atletas porque es un perro rápido. (At Loyola the greyhound is the symbol for the athletes because it is a swift dog.)
  - 4) El partido de baloncesto será en Reitz Arena este fin de semana. (The basketball game will be in Reitz Arena this weekend.)
- 1) Voy a decorar Maryland Hall porque es feo. I am going to decorate Maryland Hall because it is ugly.)
  - 2) Los estudiantes que están en Loyola son de muchos países. (The students who are at Loyola are from many countries.)
  - 3) Hay auriculares en el mundo porque hay mucha comunicación entre Loyola y otros países. (There are headphones on the world because there is much communication between Loyola and other countries.)
  - 4) ¡El mundo está bailando mientras está escuchando la música latina! (The world is dancing while it is listening to Latin music!)

**Step 4:** For the lesson's final exercise, select a brief video segment about another university in a Spanish-speaking country. These segments can be found in video magazines or programs, some of which accompany textbooks. I chose a segment about the Universidad de Puerto Rico from volume 2 of Cámara 1 (Holt, Rinehart and Winston). Show the video segment without its sound to the class. Pause on a scene, and ask the students to describe in Spanish what appears on the screen by using *ser*, *estar*, or *haber* in complete sentences. Give the class a hand-out which you have prepared ahead of time. The hand-out should be a paragraph written in Spanish of about ten sophisticated statements employing the three verbs and a few new vocabulary words from the video. While the students read the hand-out silently, write the vocabulary words and their definitions on the blackboard. Two sentences from my sample paragraph figure here:

- Puerto Rico es una isla que está cerca de la República Dominicana en el Mar Caribe.
  - La Universidad de Puerto Rico, un centro cultural, fue construida en el siglo veinte.
- (- Puerto Rico is an island which is near the Dominican Republic in the Caribbean Sea.
- The Universidad de Puerto Rico, a cultural center, was built in the twentieth century.)

Instruct students to watch the video segment with its sound and to indicate, based on what they see and hear, whether or not the information given in each sentence of the paragraph is true (verdad), false (mentira), or not stated (no dice). Next ask them to note the reasons why the verbs *ser*, *estar*, and *haber* have been employed correctly. Review the exercise with the class.

## Results

The Loyola students enjoyed the lesson; they liked using the computer and learning about some of the similarities and differences between universities in the Spanish-speaking world and their college. Moreover, the students were able to review and practice the uses of *ser*, *estar* and *haber* while exercising their reading, writing, listening, and speaking skills. The final outcome was that the class performed well on the *ser*, *estar*, and *haber* portion of the midterm exam. ♦

## Bibliography

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