"Ser" and "Estar": Individual/Stage level predicates or aspect?
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1. Introduction

The distribution of copular verbs in Spanish is one of the most researched topics in Spanish linguistics: from traditional grammarians to contemporary linguists, many have attempted to capture a very complex and puzzling distribution. As is well-known, Spanish has two main copular verbs, *ser* and *estar*, that overlap in a number of contexts. As a first approximation *ser* combines with predicates that denote a permanent characterization of the subject, whereas *estar* + predicate denotes non-permanent traits, as seen in (1). In the first example, *being pleasant* is perceived as a character trait of Alejandro's, whereas in the second one, it is seen as a temporary situation that happens to be true today.[1]

(1)   a.   Alejandro   es   agradable.
            "Alejandro   is.IL pleasant."
      b.   Alejandro   está   agradable.
            Alejandro   is.SL   pleasant
            "Alejandro is being pleasant (today)."

One influential line of thought on the difference between *ser* and *estar* asumes that these contrasts embody the distinction between stage-level (SL) and individual-level (IL) predicates. Stage-level properties denote transient characterizations, whereas individual-level properties denote permanent or classificatory ones. This dichotomy is assumed to be a conceptual partition of the world. In particular, speakers conceptualizes properties like "being intelligent/Chinese" as permanent (IL), whereas "being available/in my house" is conceptualized as transient stages in someone's life (i.e. SL). These properties are manifested in a predicate's lexical specification, and those specifications may have syntactic and semantic consequences, just as *die* and *kill* are conceptually close but syntactically very different.

An alternative to the SL/IL conception of the *ser/estar* traces its roots to aspect. Specifically, *estar* is assumed to be a [+Perfective] copula, and *ser* either [–Perfective], or as a default, unmarked copula.[2] The aspectual analysis tends to focus more on the nature of the event, and predicts interactions with other aspectual markings (such as the preterite/imperfect tense marking).

In this chapter I will review the two lines of analysis and present some challenges that the SL/IL view faces. The chapter is organized as follows: In section 2, I introduce the basic distribution of *ser* and *estar,* in section 3, I sketch the SL/IL solution and present the predictions it makes, as well as the challenges it faces. In section 4, I describe the aspect-based alternative and how it fares with the data.

2. The distribution of *ser* and *estar*.

    2.1. Non-overlapping contexts

Ser and *estar* appear in several contexts (cf. Fernández Leborans 1999), and in most of them, they do not contrast with each other. For example, *ser*, but not *estar* can be used as an identificational predicate, i.e. contexts where the speaker signals to one alternative in the discourse, as in (2).

(2)   La presidenta es/*está ella.

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[1] I will gloss *ser* as be.IL and *estar* as be.SL, as a mnemonic device for "individual-level" and "stage-level", which will be more precisely defined below. It will become clear that I will argue against this characterization for *ser/estar*.
[2] Luján (1981) defines a perfective predicate as one that holds over a delimited, bounded period of time, whereas an imperfective predicate holds of "a stretch of time with no beginning or end assumed and extending a number of delimited time periods (Luján 1981:177). Bosque's (1990) characterization of perfective is closer to telic, i.e. the result of a change of state.

"The president is.IL/*is.SL her."

Both *ser* and *estar* can be use as auxiliaries of different kinds: *ser* appears in passive constructions, as in (3), and *estar* as an aspectual auxiliary, as seen in (4): *estar* + gerund indicates a durative tense, *estar* + *a punto de* + infinitive indicates prospective aspect. As auxiliaries, then, the two verbs cannot be interchanged. Furthermore, *estar*, as an aspectual auxiliary, cannot appear with *estar* as a main verb (cf. (5)a).

(3)   El tiburón fue/*estuvo visto en la playa por los bañistas.
      "The shark was.IL/*was.SL seen at the beach by the bathers."

(4)   a.   Domitila está/*es cantando.
           "Domitila is.SL/*is.IL singing."
      b.   Domitila está/*es a punto de dormirse.
           "Domitila is.SL/*is.IL about to fall asleep."

(5)   a.   *Blanca está estándo cansada.
           "Blanca is.SL being.SL tired."
      b.   Chuck está siendo sarcástico.
           "Chuck is.SL being.IL sarcastic." (example from http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=J933-H2BU9g)

A third context in which *ser/estar* do not overlap is with DP complements: only *ser* can appear with a DP predicate, as seen in (6). When preceded by *de*, the DP becomes grammatical with *estar* but not with *ser* (cf. (7)).

(6)   Obama es/*está (el) presidente desde el 2009.
      "Obama is.IL/*is.SL (the) president since the 2009."

(7)   Obama está/*es de presidente desde el 2009.
      "Obama is.SL/is.IL of president since the 2009."

   2.2. Overlapping contexts

      2.2.1. Adjectival predicates

Many predicates, typically adjectival, can appear with both *ser* or *estar*, as seen in (8). Adjectives with *ser* characterize the subject: in (8)a, being cold is a typical characteristic of the North Pole, whereas in (8)b *cold* is a transient property of the meat.

(8)   a.   El polo norte es frío.
           "The North Pole is.IL cold"
      b.   La carne está fría.
           "The meat is.SL cold."

Some adjectives appear only with *estar*, as seen in (9). Notice that some of these do not necessarily imply a temporary meaning (like *arruinado* "ruined", *muerto* "dead", *lleno* "full", *contento* "happy", *ausente* "absent", cf. Luján 1981:172). These adjectives cannot usually be coerced into use with *ser*:

(9)   a.   El millonario está/*es arruinado.
              "The milionnaire is.SL/*is.IL ruined.
         b.   La ajedrecista está/*es cansada.
              "The chess-player is.SL/*is.IL tired."

Other adjectives appear mostly with *ser* (cf. (10)a). Among them, some can be coerced into uses with *estar* (cf. (10)b and Luján 1981: 172, Escandell and Leonetti 2002). Other adjectives can never appear with *estar* (cf. (11) and Fernández Leborans 1995:265). As Fernández Leborans points out, those adjectives that denote properties inherent to a genus or species are usually not coercible into use with *estar*.

(10) a. La ajedrecista es/*está inteligente.
          "The chess-player is.IL/*is.SL intelligent."
      b. Aunque ese ajedrecista no suele mostrar mucha inteligencia en sus jugadas, hoy estuvo bastante inteligente.
          "Although this chess-player usually doesn't show much intelligence in his moves, today, he was fairly intelligent."

(11) Todos los seres vivos son mortales, pero los que están en peligro de extinción son/*están muy mortales.
      "All living beings are mortal, but those in danger of extinction are.IL/*are.SL very mortal."

2.2.2. Prepositional phrase predicates

The transient/permanent distinction also drives the distribution of many PP predicates. Most of them appear only with *ser*, while a few appear only with *estar*, as seen in (12)–(13) (the former examples from Fernández Leborans 1999: 2368).

(12) a. El vestido es/*está a rayas, con cuello y sin mangas.
          "The dress is.IL/*is.SL to stripes, with neck and without sleeves."
      b. El anillo es/*está de oro.
          "The ring is.IL/*is.SL (made) of gold."
      c. Juan es/*está de Madrid
          "Juan is.IL/*is.SL from Madrid."

(13) María está/*es con una amiga.
      "Maria is.SL/is.IL with a friend"

The situation is slightly more complicated with locative prepositions, where the distribution depends on several variables. First, there is a contrast between prepositions that indicate strict location vs. those that indicate path (cf. Zagona 2010, ex. 9-10):

(14) a. Los turistas están/*son en Egipto.   (Location → *estar*)
          "The tourists are.SL/*are.IL in Egypt."
      b. Este regalo es/*está para José.   (Path → *ser*)
          "This gift is.IL/IS.SL for Jose."

Second, among preposition that express location, there are two other factors. On the one hand, if the subject refers to a motionless inanimate individual, the copula can be either *ser* or *estar* (cf. (15)a), whereas movable entities (animate or inanimate) appear with *estar* (cf. (15)b-c), as observed by Luján (1981:187).

(15) a. El baño está/es ahí.
          "The bathroom is.SL/is.IL there."
      b. Mi hermano está/*es en Buenos Aires.
          "My brother is.SL/*is.IL in Buenos Aires."

c. Los libros están/*son en el estante.
   "The books are.SL/*are.IL on the shelf."

On the other hand, if the subject is interpreted as an event, *estar* is not possible, if it is interpreted referentially, *ser* is not possible:

(16)   a. La pelota está/*es en la mesa.
          "The ball is.SL/*IL on the table."
       b. La fiesta es/#está en la discoteca.
          "The party is.IL/is.SL at the disco."

3. Stage-level vs. individual-level predicates.

Carlson (1977) originally proposed the distinction between stage- and individual-level properties. *Ser* and *estar* have frequently been considered primary candidates to lexicalize the SL and IL distinction, and several proposals have explicitly assumed this to be the case but, as far as I know, never explored the specific details and consequences of such an analysis (cf. Mejías-Bikandi 1993, Fernández Leborans 1999, Gulmiel 2008, Escandell and Leonetti 2002, and in particular Roby 2009 for an excellent summary and discussion). The challenges and counterexamples the SL/IL analysis faces are well-known (cf. Schmitt 1992, Maienborn 2005 and below). In this section, I offer a short summary of the properties of IL/SL and see how *ser/estar* pattern.

   3.1. Properties of state-level and individual-level predicates

Jaeger (2002) offers the following summary of the linguistic properties for SL/IL predicates (cf. also Carlson 1977/1980, Stump 1985, Diesing 1992, Kratzer 1988/1995, de Hoop and de Swart 1989, Condoravdi 1992, McNally 1994, and Fernald 2000 among others).

A) **Perception reports.** Complements of perception verbs (*see, hear*, etc.) are uniformly ungrammatical if they are nominal and uniformly acceptable if they are PPs. If they are APs or VPs, only those interpreted as SL predicates are acceptable, as seen in (17). The set of acceptable complements are precisely those that can appear with *estar*, as seen in (18). Whenever a typically IL predicate can appear as the complement of the perception verb, it is interpreted as if it would be with *estar* (cf. (17)c and (18)d). Notice that *estar* itself is not grammatical as a complement to a perception verb (cf. (18) and Maienborn 2005:166).[3]

(17)   a. María vio a Oscar sentado/en su casa/listo para el colegio.   (SL)
          "Maria saw Oscar sitting/in his/her house/ready for school."
       b. *María vio a Pedro inteligente/alemán.   (IL)
          " Maria   saw Pedro intelligent/German."
       c. Después de muchos años de traiciones de Damián, María lo vio más leal.
          "After many years of betrayal by Damian, Maria saw him more loyal."

(18)   a. Oscar está sentado/en su casa/listo para el colegio.   (SL)
          "Oscar is.ILsitting/in his/her house/ready for the school."
       b. Pedro es inteligente/alemán.   (IL)

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[3] Maienborn (2005:166) argues that both *ser* and *estar* are impossible as complements to perception verbs. As Schmitt (1992) has argued, *ser* complements are attested in Brazilian Portuguese, and, I might add, also in Spanish. This example is a comment about soccer player Messi, taken from http://valechumbar.com/9189/como-ver-barcelona-vs-arsenal/ (4/29/2010):

(i) Todo el equipo fue fundamental pero en las bravas nunca lo vi ser figura como en partidos como el Almeria…
     "All the team was essential, but in the difficult situations, I never saw him be(ing) a star like in the games against Almeria…"

"Pedro is.ILintelligent/German."
c. *Pedro está inteligente/alemán.
   "Pedro is.SL intelligent/German."
d. Damián está más leal.
   "Damian is more loyal."

(19)   *María vio a Oscar estar sentado/en su casa/listo para el colegio.
       "Maria saw Oscar be.SL sitting/in his/her house/ ready for the school."

B) **Subject effects.** In English, (preverbal) bare subjects with IL predicates can only be interpreted as generic, whereas with SL predicates, they can also be existential (cf. Carlson 1977, quoted in Kratzer 1988/1995:125). In Spanish, bare subjects are not possible with copular verbs, and postverbal subjects with other verbs can be interpreted both as generics and as existentials (cf. Benedicto 1998). No subject effects track the *ser/estar* distinction.

C) **Restrictions on modifying adverbials**. Only SL predicates can be modified by temporal or frequency adverbials (Kratzer 1988/1995), as seen in (20). Once again, this correlation doesn't hold strictly with respect to *ser/estar*, as seen in (21). As expected, the SL predicate is possible with a frequency adverb, but so is the IL predicate. Interestingly, the interpretation one gets in (21)b is that Luisa used to act in an altruistic way several times a day. In other words, it seems like is coerced into an SL interpretation, but without requiring a switch to the copular verb *estar*. Notice, by the way, that such coercion into SL meaning is not readily available in (20)b.

(20) a. Luisa habló inglés hoy/varias veces.   (*hablar* "speak", SL predicate)
         "Luisa spoke English today/several times."
     b. *Luisa supo inglés hoy/varias veces.   (*saber* "know", IL predicate)
         "Luisa knew English today/several times."

(21) a. Cuando vivía en Quito, Luisa estaba disponible varias veces al día.
         "When she lived in Quito, Luisa was.SL available several times a day."
     b. Cuando vivía en Quito, Luisa era altruista varias veces al día.
         "When she lived in Quito, Luisa was.IL alutristic several times a day."

Along the same lines, IL predicates are banned from appearing as the restrictor of *when* conditionals as seen in (22)–(23) (Kratzer 1988/1995, Fernández Leborans 1999:2438–9, her examples). In (22), *estar alegre* `being.SL in a good mood' and *hablar francés* "speak French" are SL predicates, and can appear as restrictors of the conditional. In (23), on the other hand, *ser alegre* "being.IL in a good mood" and *saber francés* "know French" cannot.

(22) a. {Siempre que/Cuando} María está alegre, todo le sale bien.
         "Whenever Maria is in a good mood, everything turns out well for her."
     b. {Siempre que/Cuando} María habla francés, lo habla muy bien.
         "Whenever Maria speaks in French, she speaks very well."

(23) a. *{Siempre que/Cuando} María es alegre, todo le sale bien.
         "Whenever Maria is.IL in-a-good-mood, everything CL turns out well."
     b. *{Siempre que/Cuando} María sabe francés, lo habla muy bien.
         "Whenever Maria speaks French, she speaks it very well."

While the contrast in (22)a–(23)a suggest that *ser/estar* pattern as expected if they are IL/SL predicates, Schmitt (1992: 414) has observed examples like (24) in Brazilian Portuguese where IL *ser* can appear in the

antecedent of a *when* conditional. Notice also, that in this case, one gets the impression that *ser grosera/ cruel/amable* is interpreted as an SL predicate, i.e. (24) is interpreted as "María acts rudely, cruelly, nicely", not as a permanent characteristic of hers, but no change of copula is required.

(24) {Siempre que/Cuando} María es grosera/cruel/amable, es bastante grosera/cruel/amable.
      "Whenever Maria is rude/cruel/nice, she is really rude/cruel/nice."

D) **Depictive adjuncts**. IL predicates cannot appear as depictive secondary predicates (Rapoport 1991, Demonte 1991: 168, McNully 1994, Demonte and Masullo 1999: 2473–4, examples from this work):

(25) a. Juan manejó nervioso/*mortal.
          "Juan drove nervous/*mortal."
      b. Juan está/*es mortal.
          "Juan is.SL/*es.IL nervous."
      c. Juan es/*está mortal.
          "Juan is.IL/*is.SL silly."

E) **Lifetime effects**. Tense modifies different elements depending on the SL/IL nature of the predicate (Kratzer 1988/1995: 155–157). In (26)a with the IL predicate, tense seems to apply to the referent of the subject, so we can draw the implicature that Doris is dead, whereas in (26)b, tense applies to the predicate "being-in-Bogota."

(26) a. Doris era de Bogotá.
          "Doris was.SL from Bogota."
      b. Doris estaba en Bogotá.
          "Doris was.IL in Bogotá."

F) **Spatiotemporal modification.** As Maienborn (2005:163) points out, SL predicates are supposed to include a spatiotemporal variable that makes them stages. Hence, they should be modifiable by locative adverbs, whereas IL predicates should not. However, as she notes, if one controls for the difference between true location PP adjuncts (VP-modifiers) and what she calls frame-setting modifiers, it turns out that SL predicates are not compatible with location PP adjuncts, as seen in (27), from Maienborn (2005:163). Contrast these examples with the ones in (28), where the location PP adjunct is possible.[4]

(27) a. *La camisa está mojada sobre la silla.
          "The shirt is.SL wet on the chair."
      b. *El champán está tibio en la sala.
          "The champagne is.SL warm in the living-room."
      c. *Carol está encinta en su dormitorio.
          "Carol is.SL pregnant in her bedroom."

(28) a. La camisa terminó seca sobre la calefacción.
          "The shirt ended up dry on the heater."
      b. El champán resultó tibio en la sala.

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[4]As mentioned, Maienborn distinguishes location PP adjuncts from frame-setting locatives (sentential modifiers). Frame locatives "provide a semantically underspecified domain restriction on the overall proposition" (Maienborn 2005:163), and they may also be sensitive to the SL/IL distinction:

(i) En esta región las fresas son/están baratas.
     "In this region, strawberries are cheap."

"The champagne ended up warm in the living-room."
   c. Carol terminó encinta en su dormitorio.
      "Carol ended up pregnant in her bedroom."

As this brief survey of the tests suggested in the literature for IL/SL predicates shows, *ser* does not always pattern with IL predicates.

   3.2. The Diesing/Kratzer analysis of IL/SL

Diesing's (1988, 1992) and Kratzer's (1988/1995) influential proposal follows from a combination of three ideas: first, SL predicates are associated with a spatio-temporal variable, IL predicates are not. Second, SL and IL predicates have different syntactic structures. The subject of IL predicates must appear in the highest position for the external argument (Spec, IP), controlling a null category in the lower subject position. The subject of an SL predicate may raise (leaving a trace) or remain in situ.[5]
   The final component of the analysis is based on Heim's (1982) mechanism to parse semantic scope. This mechanism has material in VP mapping onto the Nuclear Scope at LF, and material outside the VP onto the Restrictive Clause. Given the distinct clausal structure proposed IL and SL predicate, some of the differences follow. Specifically, IL subjects will always be interpreted outside VP, hence mapped to the Restrictive Clause, whereas SL subjects may be mapped to either the Restrictive Clause or the Nuclear Scope.
   The Diesing/Kratzer analysis presents some difficulties with respect to the position of the subject. As Schmitt (1992: 415) points out, the analysis predicts that there should be no expletive subjects with *ser*, since Spec, IP is the theta position in those instances. But examples like (29) show this is not the case.[6]

(29) Es tarde.
      is.IL late
      "It's late."

Other pieces of data seem to challenge the underlying notion that *estar* represents or combines with SL predicates and *ser* with IL predicates. The first one involves adjectives like *muerto* "dead," *vivo* "alive," *loco* "crazy" appear only with *estar*, but are hard to classify as stage-level, as seen in (30).[7]

(30) a. Napoleón está/*es muerto/vivo.
         "Napoleon is.SL/is.IL dead/alive."
      b. Su hermano está loco, internado en un asilo desde su temprana infancia.
         His brother is.SL crazy, locked-up in an asylum since his early childhood."   (Luján 1981: 125)

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[5] This is supposed to correlate with the additional spatio-temporal variable for SL predicates, but the details are not clear. Specifically, the spatio-temporal variable is not necessarily mapped to the external subject position with SL predicates.
[6] The idea that IL subjects appear in Spec, IP and control a PRO in Spec, VP clashes with current assumptions that theta-roles are assigned under sisterhood by V or V'. If one believes that floated quantifiers are evidence of subject position (cf. Koopman and Sportiche 1993), then subjects of both *ser* and *estar* pattern alike with respect to where the floated quantifier can appear:

(i) Los estudiantes están todos contentos
     "The students are all happy."
(ii) Los estudiantes son todos felices
     "The students are all happy."
[7] As Roger Schwarzchild (p.c.) points out, the same is true of "dead" in English: it patterns like an SL predicate, for example in allowing an existential reading:

(i) Birds are dead in that field.
(ii) There are dead birds in that field.

By many of the tests seen in previous sections, *muerto* or *vivo* pattern like an IL predicate. For example, they cannot appear in the antecedent of a *whenever* clause (cf. (31)a) or with frequency adverbs (cf. (31)b). However, *muerto/vivo* can appear as depictive adjuncts, as other *estar* predicates do (cf. (32)).

(31) a. *Siempre que Napoleón estaba muerto/vivo, todo le salía mal.
        "Whenever Napoleon was dead/alive, everything would turn out wrong for him."
    b. *Napoleón estuvo muerto/vivo varias veces ese día.
        "Napoleon was dead/alive several times that year."

(32) a. El tiburón apareció muerto en la playa
        "The shark appeared dead on the beach."
    b. El secuestrado fue liberado vivo.
        "The kidnapped person was freed alive."

A second type of pattern that challenges the IL/SL partition was illustrated in (16) above: locative PPs can appear with both *ser* and *estar*, but no strict correlation holds between the stage/individual interpretation of the predicate PP and the copula. Recall that the reference of the subject (eventive or referential) is key to the distribution. Notice, by the way, that the nature of the subject does not affect the IL/SL interpretation of the predicate when it is not a locative PP. In the examples in (33), whether the subject is eventive or not does not preclude or affect an SL or IL interpretation of the adjective.

(33) a. La fiesta fue/estuvo divertida.
        "The party was.SL/was.IL fun."
    b. La pelota es/está grande.
        "The ball is.SL/is.ILbig."

A third difficulty for the SL/IL classification stems from the use of geographical locative predicates. In (34) (from Roby 2009: 16), it is hard to argue that the location of México or San Sebastián is somehow a stage in the existence of those cities, although *estar* is possible (and preferred for many speakers).

(34) a. México está al sur de los Estados Unidos.
        "Mexico is.SL south of the United States."
    b. San Sebastián está al este de Santander.
        "San Sebastian is.SL to the East of Santander."

A fourth challenge for the *estar*~SL connection stems from the so-called evidential uses of *estar* (Roby 2009:17). If the speaker has direct sensory evidence, s/he can use *estar* with a predicate that clearly doesn't have a stage interpretation. For example (35) from Roby (2009:17) can be uttered in a context where being excellent is a defining characteristic of that particular ham (not a temporary stage). Many have observed that in these cases there is an implicit comparison with the speaker's expected quality about ham.[8]

(35)   Este jamón serrano está fenomenal.
        "This Serrano ham is.SL phenomenal."

Finally, Luján's (1981) observes that *ser* predicates can be coerced into uses with *estar* much more easily than the converse (cf. Luján 1981, Querido 1976).[9]

(36) a. Este perro es inteligente.   (*intelligent*, a canonically *ser* predicate)
        "This dog is.IL intelligent."
    b. Este perro no está muy inteligente hoy.
        "This dog is.SL not (being) very intelligent today."

(37) a. Este cine está siempre vacío.   (*vacío*, a canonically *estar* predicate)
        "This movie-theater is.SL always empty
        "This movie-theater is always empty."
    b. *Este cine es siempre vacío.
        "This movie-theater is.IL always empty."

To summarize, the observations made so far are the following:

(38) a. *Estar* predicates do not seem to systematically encode SL/IL differences, although they do tend to encode a "temporary" vs. " permanent" distinction.
    b. Predicates that appear with *estar* coincide with predicates that appear as secondary predicates (ex. (25)).
    c. *Estar* predicates can also appear as complements of perception verbs (ex. (17)a-b).
    d. *Estar* itself cannot appear as a complement of a perception verb (ex. (17)c).
    e. *Estar* is an aspectual auxiliary (ex. (4)) but cannot be the main verb in a progressive (*estar* + gerund) construction (ex. (5)).
    f. Postverbal subjects of *ser* are marginal, postverbal subjects of *estar* are acceptable.
    g. With locative predicates, eventive subjects appear with *ser*, referential subjects appear with *estar* (ex. (16)).
    h. NPs/DPs can appear with *ser*, not with *estar* (ex. (6)).
    i. *Ser* predicates can be coerced into SL readings, but *estar* predicates are usually not coercible into IL readings (ex. (21)).

4. Towards a descriptively adequate analysis.

    4.1. Criteria for descriptive adequacy.

The preceding description suggests that the SL/IL distinction doesn't quite capture the distribution of *ser* and *estar*. Furthermore, it is not enough to assume that the copula has a particular feature that derives the distribution in isolation. Such an analysis would have *ser* be a spell-out of IL predication and *estar* a spell-out of SL predication. If that were the case, one would expect IL/SL interpretations with any predicate depending on what copula is chosen. Since this is not the case (we find specific areas where the copulas don't overlap), the copula must interact with the rest of the sentence to derive these asymmetries.
    This conclusion challenges Luján's (1981) and Zoby's (2009) approach, since their proposal places the aspectual features exclusively on the copula, disallowing any effect from the predicate.[10] But, as we have seen, not only does the copula interact with its predicates (cf. *estar + DP), but in certain contexts, the denotation of the subject also plays a role (with locative PPs, as seen). A similar problem arises for

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[9] Although a few *ser* predicates cannot be coerced into *estar*: *ser/*estar mortal* "be.IL/*be.SL mortal," as pointed out by Fernández Leborans (1995).

[10] Zoby (2009:151) suggests that DPs are not possible with *estar* because "[n]oun phrases that immediately follow the copula denote imperfective predicates."

Maienborn's (2005) approach, since she assumes that *ser* and *estar* have an identical lexical and semantic contribution of *ser*, and neither involves aspectual content. In her analysis, the distributions follow from *estar*'s pragmatic presupposition that the predication is related to a contrasting situation topic (this feature is related to Clements' 1998 [+nexus]).

The fact that *estar* cannot appear in certain contexts where *estar*-predicates can (the progressive tense and perception verb examples in (5) and (19) above) suggests that the copula doesn't simply inherit the values of its predicate in a transparent fashion.

Aside from the preceding discussion about what elements contribute to determining the distribution of *ser/estar*, another important issue relates to the specific semantic or grammatical content that drives the distribution of *ser/estar*. For Luján (1981) and Zoby (2009), it is [Perfectivity]. Zoby, in particular, relates the [±Perfective] feature of *ser/estar* with the aspect of the imperfect and preterit tense. However, all verbs appear in all tenses, whereas not all predicates appear with both copulas, as seen above. In other words, aspect as manifested on the preterit and imperfect does not show the same kind of asymmetries that it does when it appears on the combination of copula and predicate. This suggests that the aspectual features on the copula (and/or the predicates that appear with them) must be partially distinct from those of the imperfect/preterit.

Fernández Leborans (1995) and Zagona (2009, 2010) argue that the crucial property driving the *ser/estar* distinction is related to lexical or situational aspect. In the following sections, I will articulate a proposal for aspect that builds particularly on Luján (1981), but also on Fernández Leborans'(1995) and Zagona's (2009, 2010) proposals. This analysis includes a mechanism in which *estar* has a specific aspectual requirement, satisfied only by a set of predicates.

4.2. The features of *estar* and the predicate.

As noted in the preceding section, the distribution of *ser*/*estar* requires an analysis that takes into account the interaction between the copula its predicate and its subject. I will assume one of the current syntactic mechanisms to relate syntactic elements, agreement, formalized as a checking operation by which on category's feature (a probe) looks for another category's feature that can value it (cf. Chomsky 2000, 2001 among others). This checking operation can be blocked by an intervening item of similar type but with different values. For example, a feminine N could block checking of masculine gender, because all categories denote gender.

What feature does *estar* need to check? In Fernández Leborans's (1995) analysis, *estar* denotes an event that is composed of a transition (T) and an end state (ES), as in (39) (cf. Pustejovsky's (1990) typology of aspect).

(39)   E
         /\
        T   ES
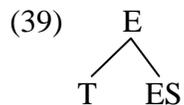
For Fernández Leborans (1995:271), *estar* selects for the transition phase, because it implies a relationship with another event. The ES, however, should not always be conceived the consequence of a resultative event, "so, for example, *estar soltero* ['being.SL single', J.C.] isn't necessarily the result of 'becoming single'" (my translation). While it is clear that *estar* indicates a transition in some instances, the so-called evidential cases of *estar* ((35) above), where the predicate simply suggests a comparison with other ideal or expected situations, are hard to conceive of as transitions of any kind. Rather, there seems to be an implication or link to another situation.

An additional difficulty for this conception relates to the ungrammaticality of DP predicates with *estar*. One would have to argue that DPs do not denote transitions, but the addition of *de* somehow makes them transitions. However, there is no evidence that *de* does this in other contexts, for example in DP complements

of matter, etc. (*la casa de madera* "the house of wood"). In this context, there doesn't seem to be a change in the aspectual properties of the complement.

   Zagona's proposal suggests that *estar* has an uninterpretable prepositional feature, [*u*P], which must be checked by a complement (cf. also Gallego and Uriagereka 2009 for a similar analysis).[11] The complement matching the [*u*P] feature has two properties: it must also be prepositional and it cannot contain a certain lexical-aspectual content, which Zagona characterizes as a Path (roughly comparable to the transition just described).

   Perhaps the most direct application of Zagona's theory is the contrast just mentioned between *estar* **(de)+* DP, as seen in (40). In (40)a, the uninterpretable feature [*u*P] remains unchecked because the complement is a NP. In (40)b, on the other hand, the dummy preposition *de* checks the feature. One would need to further assume that *de* is the default preposition in Spanish, hence the only one that can appear in that particular context, since no other P is possible in place of *de*.

(40)   a.   *Obama está[*u*P]   [DP [N president]]
             "Obama is.SL president."
       b.   Obama está[*u*P]   [P de [DP [N president]]]

             "Obama is.SL president."

   4.2.1. Prepositional complements of *estar/ser*

Zagona's account assumes two types of locative PP complements: those involving a Path (like *hacia la casa* "towards the house") and pure-location PPs (*en la casa* "in the house", *con su amigo* "with his friend"). The former type appears with *estar*, the latter can't, as seen in (41) (from Zagona 2010, ex. 21).

(41)   a.   El libro está en/encima de/debajo del escritorio.
             "The book is.SLin/on top of/under the desk."
       b.   *El libro está del/al/hacia el escritorio.
             "The book is from/to/toward the desk."

Path PPs are headed by an aspectual head, P~ASP~, whose value is incompatible with *estar*'s [*u*P] feature, leaving it unchecked, as in (42). In (42)a, a non-Path PP checks the [*u*P] feature of *estar*, whereas in (42)b, that feature remains unchecked because P~ASP~ is incompatible with [*u*P], but it interferes with checking by the lower P.
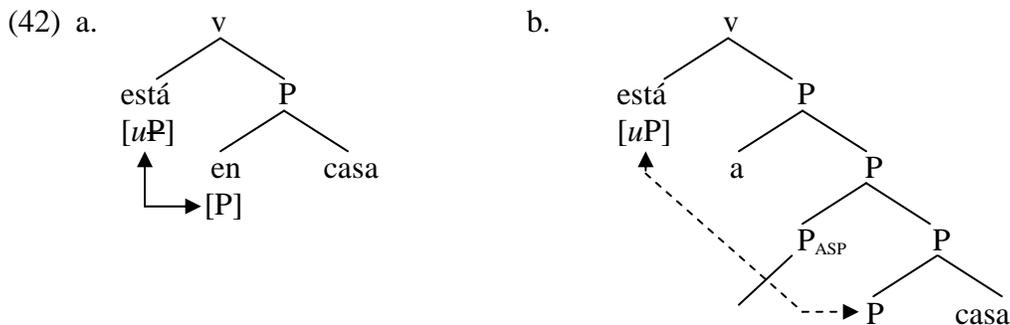
(42) a.

b.

Zagona's analysis can also explain the contrast observed above between eventive and non-eventive subjects (cf. (16) above, repeated below). Assuming that subject nominals with an eventive interpretation denote a Path but non-eventive nominals do not, the structure for (16) would be (44). Since the eventive nominal has an aspectual feature (P$_{ASP}$, which represents the Path), it blocks checking by of [uP] by the lower P. We will assume that copular structures start out as small clauses whose subject and predicate form a constituent (cf. Stowell 1982, Camacho 1994), so that the subject is in a structural position to block agreement between the verb and the predicate.

(43) a. La pelota está en la mesa.
          "The ball is.SL on the table."
      b. *La fiesta está en la discoteca.
          "The party is.SL at the disco."

(44) a. está$_{[u\text{P}]}$ [$_{vP}$ [$_{DP}$ la pelota] [$_{P}$ en [la mesa]]]
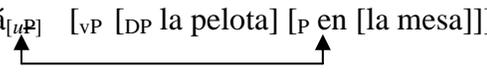
      b. está$_{[u\text{P}]}$ [$_{vP}$ [$_{DP}$ P$_{ASP}$ la fiesta] [$_{P}$ en [la discoteca]]]
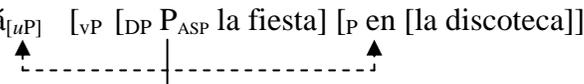
As it stands, Zagona's proposal runs into difficulties with non-locative PPs, since it predicts that the default use should be with *estar*, contrary to what we have established (cf. (12)-(13)). Furthermore, given that *ser* lacks a [uP] feature, it should be able to appear with all PPs, but this is not the case. This objection suggests that the content of the prepositional feature has more content than assumed by Zagona.

4.2.2. Beginning and end boundaries

Perfective events are events with a beginning or ending boundary. Usually, the ending boundary is the most grammatically active, but beginning points may also be relevant. If we modify Luján's (1981) proposal and assume that *estar* selects for the beginning boundary of a state, some of the problems of Zagona's analysis disappear. In other words, when a speaker says *Juan está alegre* "Juan is.SL happy", *estar* is selecting for the inception of the state of being happy. Notice that this conception of *estar*'s selectional properties is consistent with Luján's (1981:185)'s observation that certain *estar* predicates compatible with the periphrastic construction *ponerse* "become" or *quedarse* "remain" + adjective:

(45)   Adjective   *Ponerse*+A   *Quedar*+A
      a. *soltero* "single"   *ponerse soltero   quedar(se) solero
      b. *maltrecho* "battered"   *ponerse maltrecho   quedar maltrecho
      c. *listo* "ready"   *ponerse listo   quedar listo
      d. *intacto* "intact"   *ponderse intacto   quedar intacto

The fact that *ponerse* "become" is not possible with certain *estar* adjectives seems to suggest that *estar* does not always select for a change of state (Fernández Leborans's transition).
    With this assumption in mind, one can modify Zagona's assumptions accordingly: what *estar* has is an uninterpretable feature [uP] with the value [INCH] (inchoative). This makes the feature incompatible with a directional preposition, since a Path does not necessarily encode a beginning. In the case of purely locative prepositions, recall Luján's observation about the contrast between movable and unmovable subjects with PPs (cf.(15)) :

(46) a. El baño está/es ahí.
          "The bathroom is.SL/is.IL there."
      b. Mi hermano está/*es en Buenos Aires.

"My brother is.SL/*is.IL in Buenos Aires."

Arguably, when a DP that denotes a movable referent is the subject of *estar*+locative, one can infer that the situation is temporally bounded. Assume, then, that the small clause [mi hermano en Buenos Aires] has a feature [INCH] that stems from its movable subject (cf. Luján 1981). This feature checks *estar*'s [*u*P-INCH]. In the case of [el baño ahí], the feature is optionally present, depending, perhaps on the dialect, or on the speaker's perception of the situation. This feature checks [*u*P] of *estar*.

   Turning to the contrast between eventive and non-eventive PPs, the analysis assumes the representation would be the one in (47)b-(48)b. Following the reasoning just developed, the small clause has an [INCH] feature that checks the [*u*P] feature of *estar* in the case of the non-eventive subject ((47)b):

(47)   a. La pelota está en la mesa.
       b. está[*u*P-~~INCH~~]   [*v*P la pelota [INCH] en la mesa]

For eventive DP subjects, the representation would be the one in (48), where the DP *la fiesta*, by virtue of being an eventive nominal, has an additional aspectual, durative feature that cannot check [*u*P], but that blocks checking by the [INCH].

(48)   a. *La fiesta está en la casa.
       b. está[*u*P]   [SC la fiesta[+DUR] [INCH] en la casa]

Other non-locative PPs lack the relevant [INCH] feature, hence *estar* cannot appear with them. The one exception is *con* "with", which arguably denotes the beginning boundary of a state.

       4.2.3. Verbal passive versus adjectival predication

As suggested earlier, both *ser* and *estar* appear with participials (cf. (3) above). Zagona (2010), following Carrasco et al. (2006), argues that true passives with *ser* take a verbal complement (a verbal participle), whereas predicates with *estar* appear with an adjectival participial. In Zagona's system, this categorial difference correlates with an aspectual one: verbal participials involve a Path, hence an aspectual projection (P$_{ASP}$). With *estar*, they also denote an aspectual feature, but not a Path, i.e., they do not denote a change of state, but rather the result of a change of state, as in (49), from Zagona (2010 ex. 39).

(49)   a. *ser*+participle: b. *estar*+participle:
           onset   telos   onset   telos

           -----O-----------O------>   -----O--------O------------->
           |///////////////| |///////////|
           Includes Event boundaries   Excludes Event endpoint
           (Non-homogenous event)   (Homogenous situation)

In the slightly modified framework adopted here, the adjective has a beginning point (hence [INCH]), but the verbal participle has a more complex structure (in particular, a change of state feature), that cannot check the [*u*P] feature of *estar*.

   4.2.4. Secondary predicates

As Zagona (2010) points out, her analysis (and the modified version proposed here) accounts for why secondary predicates are the same set as *estar* predicates, providing one assumes a null counterpart of *estar* for the secondary predicate. Like the overt counterpart, it has an [INCH] feature and the checking mechanism is identical as for cases with *estar*, as in (50).

(50) a. Greta llegó contenta/*inteligente/*médica.
          "Greta arrived happy/*intelligent/*doctor."
      b. llegó [$_{Asp}$ Asp$_{[uP\text{-}INCH]}$ [[INCH] contenta]

      c. llegó [$_{Asp}$ Asp$_{[uP\text{-}INCH]}$ [inteligente]]

   4.2.5. *Estar* as aspectual auxiliary

   One apparent vexing paradox about *estar* is the fact that it is the aspectual auxiliary that forms the progressive tense with a gerund. The issue is that, under most accounts, progressive tenses are unbounded (see, for example, Smith 1997: 84). If suggestions about *estar* + predicate are right, it does not associate with unbounded predicates (this is explicitly encoded in Luján's 1981 and Zoby's 2009 analyses). Hence it is at least puzzling that it would be the only possible auxiliary for progressives. In this section, I address this problem.
   Zagona (2010) suggests that gerunds denote a different type of aspect than *estar* predicates. From a certain point of view, this must be true: gerunds are verbs, and as such they can have situation aspect, and additionally, their verbal morphology seems to denote a different type of aspect (viewpoint aspect, cf. Smith 1997, Zagona 2010), each represented in (51).

(51)   AspP$_{Viewpoint}$
             /   \
      Asp$_{Viewpoint}$ AspP$_{Situation}$
                        /   \
                 Asp$_{Situation}$ …
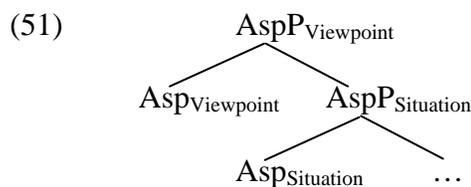
In fact, I will argue that we need to distinguish between a low viewpoint aspect (stative vs. dynamic, telic vs. atelic), a high situation aspect denoted by verbal inflection (Spanish *canté* "I sang.PERF" vs. *cantaba* "I sang.IMPERF") and an intermediate, perhaps situational aspect denoted by the morphological ending encoded in the gerund. To see why, consider Smith's (1997:75) examples in (52), used to distinguish between situation and viewpoint aspect. In (52)a, the main clause has a bounded (closed) interpretation only, whereas in (52)b, the main clause is ambiguous between an open, stative interpretation (John was already happy before Mary's knocking) and a closed, event reading, where John became happy when Mary knocked.

(52) a. John sang when Mary knocked at the door.
      b. John was happy when Mary knocked at the door.

However, the availability of a closed reading is arguably due, to verbal tense aspect. In Spanish, if those same examples have the main verb in the imperfect, the asymmetry disappears and both examples are ambiguous between a bounded and unbounded interpretation, suggesting that boundedness is not determined by the progressive.

(53) a. Lupe estuvo contenta cuando Miguel tocó la puerta.
          "Lupe was.SL.PERF. happy when Miguel knocked at the door."
      b. Lupe estuvo cantando cuando Miguel tocó la puerta.
          "Lupe was.SL.PERF. singing when Miguel knocked at the door."

Let us assume, then, that the auxiliary merges with an intermediate-level aspectual projection, rather than the highest viewpoint aspect. For Zagona (2010), the projection auxiliary *estar* merges with contains a "full event structure, including both the external argument and a higher temporal head that instantiates the onset of the event" (Zagona, 2010, p. 15).[12] This is confirmed by one of the tests Smith (1997:74) proposes to check for boundedness, once we control for the aspect of the verbal inflection. A clause introduced by *after* requires a semantically bounded event (and in particular, a bounded beginning of event) so it is only compatible with unbounded events.[13] As (54) shows, a perfective progressive is acceptable. This suggests that progressive aspect can include at least an initial point, hence they are better viewed as neutral viewpoints, in Smith's terminology. In fact, Smith suggests that "[b]y a default inference, one can conclude that the initial point of the event has occurred. The inference follows from the fact that part of the event is visible." (1997:63). The example in (54) suggests that the initial point is more than an inference.

(54)   Enrique estuvo escondiendo el botín después de que el teléfono sonó.
        "Enrique was.SL.PERF hiding the loot after the telephone rang."

Further evidence to this effect comes from another test for boundedness (cf. Smith 1997: 64). Use of the progressive in the first clause of (55)a yields a contradiction, because the second clause denies the beginning point asserted by the first clause. By contrast, (55)b, with prospective aspect, is not contradictory.

(55)   a. #Adrián estaba comiendo, pero no había empezado/empezó a comer
            "Adrian was.SL eating, but hadn't begun/didn't begin to eat."
        b. Adrián estaba a punto de comer, pero no había empezado/empezó a comer.
            "Adrián was.SL about to eat, but hadn't begun/didn't begin to eat."

These considerations lead me to propose that a progressive aspect projection is selected by *estar*, it involves a beginning boundary, encoded by more an [INCH] feature that can check the [*u*P-INCH] feature of *estar* (cf. Fernández Leborans 1995).

        4.2.6. *Estar* contexts without *estar*

Recall that *estar* cannot appear as a complement to perception verbs and as a main verb in the progressive form (*estar estando), although *estar*-predicates can (cf. (38)c–e above). This means that *estar* itself cannot satisfy its own selectional restrictions. In other words, although *estar* selects for an [INCH] feature, *estar* itself denotes a different type of aspect.

    For the progressive tense, the ungrammaticality of *estar estando must be a consequence of the relation between auxiliary *estar* and gerund *estar*, given the grammaticality of the gerund by itself (cf. (56)). Let us assume that the projection that merges with auxiliary *estar* blocks checking of [*u*P-INCH] by progressive [INCH], as in (57).

(56)   Estando yo sentado en el parque, vi un pájaro.
        "(Being.SL) sitting in the park, I saw a bird."

(57)   [estar[*u*P-INCH] [Asp1P Asp1[Asp2P Asp2[INCH] [*v*P estando[*u*P-INCH] [[INCH] contenta]]]]
                                          ↑   ↑

---

[12] In her analysis, Viewpoint aspect projection is also prepositional, hence it can check the [*u*P] feature of *estar*. This aspect is [–Fin], i.e. lacking a transition and hence unbounded. Clearly this contrasts with the assumptions made above that [*u*P] is [INCH].
[13] In Smith's original progressive example in English, the counterpart of (56) is ungrammatical, arguably because it is not possible to control for the perfectivity of *was*.
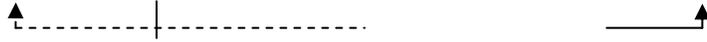
There is some evidence that progressive auxiliary *estar* neutralizes the aspectual properties of the gerund. For example, a telic VP like *comerse la manzana* "eat up the apple" can normally appear with temporal adverbs like *en diez minutos* "in ten minutes." However, it is no longer compatible with that adverbial when it appears in the progressive (cf. (58)a). Furthermore, if the gerund appears without *estar* in an absolute clause, then *en diez minutos* becomes possible (cf. (58)b). This suggests that *estar* projects an unbounded aspect, supporting the analysis in (57).

(58) a. Luisa se estuvo comiendo la manzana ??en diez minutos/(por) diez minutos.
          "Luisa was eating the apple in ten minutes/for ten minutes."
      b. Comiéndose la manzana en diez minutos, Luisa podría usar el resto del tiempo para descansar.
          "Eating the apple in ten minutes, Luisa could use the remaining time to rest."

Turning now to perception verbs, if they can take only *estar*-predicates, the logic developed so far suggests that they have a [uP-INCH] feature that needs checking. If *estar* is absent, as in (59), then the appropriate type of complement with [INCH] will check the perception verb's [uP-INCH], in the same way as with *estar*. However, if *estar* is present, as in (60), the perception verb's [uP-INCH] will remain unchecked.

(59) a. Vi a Carol guapa.
          "I saw Carol beautiful."
      b. vi$_{[u\text{P-INCH}]}$ a Carol [[INCH] guapa]

(60) a. Vi a Carol estar guapa.
          "I saw Carol being.SL beautiful."
      b. vi$_{[u\text{P-INCH}]}$ a Carol [AspP pro Asp [estar$_{[u\text{P-INCH}]}$ [[INCH] guapa]]]

5. The features of *ser*

Certain predicates (APs like *inteligente* "intelligent", PPs headed by *con*, certain locatives, see above) can only appear with *ser*, and certain others cannot appear with *ser* (*muerto* "dead", *vivo* "alive", etc.). Assume that *ser* is unmarked for aspect (as Zagona 2010) does. The ungrammaticality of the *estar* predicates with *ser* would follow if the [INCH] feature on the predicate also needs to be checked.[14] This would mean that for some predicates, the feature cannot be lexically erased, whereas for others, it can. Alternatively, one could assume, with Luján (1981) and Zoby (2009), that *ser* has the opposite value of *estar*, i.e. [–Perfective] or unbounded. This requires some additional assumptions, such as saying that DPs are aspectually marked as [–Perfective] (but never as [+Perfective]), which seems unwarranted. For these reasons, I will assume that *ser* is unmarked for aspect.

6. Summary

In this paper, I have summarized the distribution of *ser* and *estar*, and the different proposals in the literature based on the aspectual properties of the copulas and/or the predicates. I have concluded that *estar* agrees with its complements in an inchoative feature, which encodes the beginning point of an event. I have also argued that the aspect denoted by *estar* itself is different from the one its complements denote. Regarding *ser*, I have proposed, following Zagona (2010), that it is unmarked for aspect.

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[14] This conception of checking departs from the standard theory, where only uninterpretable features must be checked. For this idea to work, both features would need to be checked through agreement.

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