

SER-I, ESTAR-S

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ABSTRACT: This paper argues in favour of the relation between the Spanish copular alternation (*ser/estar*) and the Individual/Stage-Level distinction, which has generally been put into doubt by the latest studies in the field. I build the proposal on a new understanding of the IL/SL dichotomy as a basic aspectual distinction, and I argue that Individual Level Predicates (ILPs) and Stage Level Predicates (SLPs) are two aspectual classes that are essentially distinguished by the lack (ILPs) or the presence (SLPs) of inner aspect. Following a syntax-based account of inner aspect, I argue that SL-structures, unlike IL, are characterized by an Asp projection, which is triggered in narrow syntax by an uninterpretable aspectual feature in the lexical VP-domain. The presence of such a feature on *estar*, and any other lexical SLP, is argued to account for the entire distribution of *ser* and *estar* copulas. The study shows how this novel approach to the IL/SL distinction thoroughly grasps the *ser/estar* alternation and provides considerable insights into the study of *Aktionsart*. Moreover, the proposed analysis provides a formal explanation for the traditional descriptive IL/SL accounts of the *ser/estar* alternation.

KEYWORDS: *ser*, *estar*, Individual-Level, Stage-Level, inner aspect.

1. INTRODUCTION *

It is widely known that Spanish alternates between two copular verbs: *ser* (1) and *estar* (2). Innumerable studies have tried to find out the criterion that drives the distribution of these verbs, and most of the approaches concluded that the *ser/estar* alternation depends on some aspectual distinction.¹

- (1) *Ana es {inteligente / guapa / joven}.*
'Ana is_{ser} {intelligent / beautiful / young}.'
- (2) *Ana está {cansada / triste / muerta}.*

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¹ Some others relied on pragmatic criteria. See Maienborn (2005b) for a recent contribution.

‘Ana is_{estar} {tired / sad / dead}.’

The classical assumption that *ser-* and *estar-*predicates denote permanent and transient qualities, respectively, was rejected on very common data such as the last options in (1) and (2): one is only temporarily young, but will surely be dead forever. Later, the SCA was studied as a distinction between imperfective and perfective predicates, until the last two decades, when the phenomenon has been related to the Individual-Level/Stage-Level distinction (Leonetti 1994; Fernández Leborans 1999; Arche 2006, 2012; RAE & ASALE 2009; among others).² Again, the proposal was not unanimously accepted by grammarians, who pointed out some apparent counterexamples to this approach: (i) the evidential use of *estar* (3), in which the speaker conveys some characteristic property of the subject as a perception; (ii) the case of *loco* (‘crazy’), that combines with *estar*, even though it may be conceived as a permanent quality (4); and (iii) the permanent location of entities (5) (see Roby 2009: 16-17; Camacho 2012: 462; Fábregas 2012: 22-24).

- (3) *La tarta está exquisita.*
‘The cake is_{estar} delicious.’
- (4) *Ana está loca.*
‘Ana is_{estar} crazy.’
- (5) *Madrid está en España.*
‘Madrid is_{estar} in Spain.’

On these observations, recent studies have questioned the alleged *ser-IL/estar-SL* relation by proposing alternative analyses, which resort to the traditional imperfective/perfective criterion (Camacho 2012) and other notions, such as the central/terminal coincidence (Gallego & Uriagereka 2009; Brucart 2012; Zagona 2012) or gradability (Gumiel Molina & Pérez Jiménez's 2012).³ However, such a tendency can be seen as a direct consequence of the lack of a unified and clear definition of the IL/SL dichotomy, which has generally been understood as a blurred distinction between permanent and transient qualities.

Here, I put forward a new insight into the IL/SL distinction and I argue that the SCA follows it completely. The work is organized as follows. In section 2, I focus on the IL/SL contrast: I study it as a basic parameter of inner aspect, and I lay the theoretical foundations of this approach. Then, I

² Complete states of the art can be found in Leonetti (1994), Fernández Leborans (1999), Marín (2004) and Silvagni (2013).

³ For reasons of brevity, it is not possible to review these proposals here. The reader is referred to Arche (2012) for a critical assessment of these last contributions.

show that the *ser/estar* alternation relates directly to such an aspectual distinction. In accordance with both the previous theoretical and descriptive assumptions, in section 3 I propose a feature-driven analysis that accounts for the distribution of Spanish copular verbs.⁴ Finally, in section 4 I conclude the paper with some open questions to be addressed in future research.

2. THE IL/SL DISTINCTION: A NEW INSIGHT

2.1 *A basic parameter of inner aspect*

The IL/SL distinction finds its origins in Milsark (1974) and Carlson's (1977) observations about two kinds of predicates, which strongly differ in their semantic and syntactic properties. From then on, many linguists have tried to determine how this contrast is implemented in grammar, that is, what makes a typical ILP (e.g., *to be intelligent*, or *to love someone*) different from an SLP (e.g., *to be tired*, *to paint the table*, *to enter the room*, etc.).⁵ Nevertheless, linguists have never reached an agreement on how to study the contrast (see Fábregas 2012 for a complete state of the art).

Even if, on the one hand, all the studies have dealt with the linguistic encoding of the distinction, on the other, they have not really inquired into the notions of IL- and SL-ness. In fact, the literature did not deeply call into question what an ILP and an SLP denotes or means, and all the proposals have been built on the general assumption that ILPs denote permanent qualities, while SLPs refer to transient ones.⁶ Nevertheless, it is widely known since Carlson that a “time-limitation” criterion cannot successfully account for the IL/SL distinction (see Carlson 1977: 72-73):

⁴ Regarding the lexical status of *ser* and *estar*, I follow Fernández Leborans (1995a, 1999). Specifically, I defend the existence of only one pseudo-copular *estar* verb; while for *ser*, I distinguish between (i) a predicative *ser*, with an eventive meaning (e.g. *La invasión será mañana* ‘The invasion will be tomorrow’), and (ii) a meaningless *ser*, functioning as either a copular or an auxiliary verb. In this paper, I exclusively deal with the copular *ser*, which is the only verb in complementary distribution with *estar*. Moreover, I do not address those copular constructions in which the attribute is coerced into a structure whose aspectual content coincides with Vendler's “activities” (e.g., *Ayer Ana fue cruel con su novio* ‘Yesterday Ana was cruel to her boyfriend’), because these cases need a subsequent approach (see Arche 2006 and Fernández Leborans 2007 on this matter).

⁵ The ILPs and SLPs provided are taken from Carlson (1977).

⁶ The assumption about ILPs' permanence and SLPs' transience underlies many other additional criteria, such as “lifetime” (Kratzer 1988), “temporal persistence” (Condoravdi 1992), “habituality” (Chierchia 1995), and so on.

“Something does not have to be *big* (a property) longer than it is *open* (a state) [...], though we generally expect this to hold. [...] So it is clear that the sole criterion for separating the classes of predicates cannot be a temporal one.”

As pointed out by Arche (2012), although a permanent/transitory account of IL/SL-ness has to be rejected, we cannot deny that the dichotomy has some temporal foundation, i.e., that ILPs and SLPs convey notions that differ in their temporal makeup. But, what “temporality” are we referring to?

In accordance with most of the previous approaches, I conceive the IL/SL distinction as a matter of inner aspect. Nevertheless, contrary to the common view, I argue that such a distinction does not need to be explained by means of subordinate criteria (e.g., permanence/transience, (a)telicity, or other similar notions).⁷ I propose that the IL/SL dichotomy is in and of itself an aspectual criterion; more specifically, I follow on from Hoekstra's (1992: 159) hypothesis that such distinction is “the first parameter of *Aktionsart*”.

The proposal I put forward relates directly to Milsark and Carlson's original insights and its core idea is that ILPs are those predicates that describe the essence of entities: they denote “properties” (Milsark 1974: 211), that is, intrinsic characteristics of the subject. Since essential properties are notions that lack any conceptual spatiotemporal anchorage —because they are conceived apart from time and space—, ILPs are aspectually unmarked. Conversely, SLPs denote situations, or “happenings” (Carlson 1977: 75), in which the subject is involved, and hence they are commonly interpreted as describing “conditions” (Milsark 1974: 211), “appearances” or “manifestations” (Carlson 1977: 68) of the subject. Situations, as such, are intrinsically defined in the spacetime; therefore, SLPs encode an aspectual content, depending on the spatiotemporal structure of the situation they describe.⁸

This hypothesis on the aspectual nature of the IL/SL dichotomy leads us

⁷ Following Borer's (2005) telicity-quantity relation, Husband (2012) suggested that the IL/SL distinction relates to the non-Quantized/Quantized nature of the predicate. See Arche (2012: 116-122) for an accurate criticism of this approach in relation to *ser* and *estar*.

⁸ It is important to bear in mind that I am referring to inner aspect (or *Aktionsart*). Inner aspect concerns the temporal information encoded within a predicate by virtue of the temporal structure of the event it denotes. Since the time and space dimensions go hand in hand, it is more appropriate to talk about “spatiotemporal” information. The spatiotemporal structure of a predicate (i.e., inner aspect) does not necessarily coincide with the spatiotemporal structure of real world events; and in fact, one of the main goals of research on inner aspect is to figure out which spatiotemporal primitives are encoded in predicates. Inner aspect should not be confused with tense and outer (or grammatical) aspect. Tense locates an eventuality in the spatiotemporal realm with reference to the time of the utterance, while outer aspect describes how a particular eventuality takes place in the spatiotemporal realm from the point of view of the speaker (see Klein 1994). In this study, I exclusively refer to inner aspect.

directly to the distinction between States and Events, which has commonly been considered as a fundamental aspectual distinction. Since Vendler (1957), States and Events have been distinguished on the basis of their dynamism: static (non-dynamic) predicates have typically been studied as States, while dynamic predicates as Events.⁹ Unfortunately, this taxonomy does not contemplate the IL/SL distinction, and, moreover, it does not account for pure, homogeneous, aspectual classes: in fact, SLPs would fit in both the stative and eventive class, depending on their dynamism; therefore, States would consist of both ILPs and static SLPs (see Fig. 1).

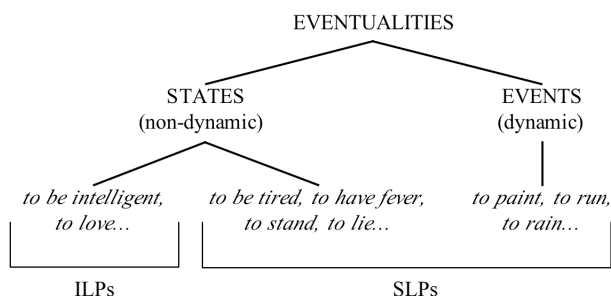


FIGURE 1. TRADITIONAL ASPECTUAL TAXONOMY AND ITS INTERACTION WITH IL/SL

The fact that States cannot be successfully studied on the basis of their non-dynamic nature is very well known since Dowty (1979). From then on, many linguists have tried to solve this problem; nevertheless, they all have considered States as a heterogeneous class, avoiding—or even rejecting—the aspectual nature of the IL/SL distinction (see, for example, the recent proposal about K- and D-States: Maienborn 2005a, and subsequent works).¹⁰ In short, nowadays we are still not able to make a clear-cut distinction between States and Events.

However, if we consider the presence or the lack of inner aspect—and not dynamism—as the very basic aspectual criterion, we could then distinguish between pure States, as non-aspectual predicates (ILPs), and pure Events, as aspectual predicates (SLPs). This theory would considerably improve the research on inner aspect, as it would provide a more refined aspectual taxonomy, where “the category of Statives is limited to the individual level predicates” (Hoekstra 1992: 159), while Events coincide with SLPs and are arranged depending on their dynamism, and, possibly,

⁹ Here, I use “dynamism” in its canonical sense, as the event's progression in time, which has traditionally been studied as a sequence of subevents, and related to the notion of “action”.

¹⁰ See Marin (2000) and Jaque (2014) for a state of the art on Stativity.

other properties, such as telicity, etc. (Fig. 2).¹¹

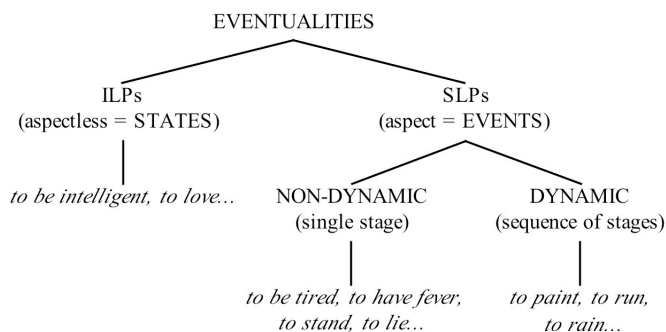


FIGURE 2. NEW ASPECTUAL TAXONOMY (ADAPTED FROM HOEKSTRA 1992: 160)

Accounting for all SLPs as Events, on the basis of their aspectual nature, and severing them from pure States, is not reckless.¹² In fact, as I show in examples (6-9), non-dynamic SLPs (a. examples) act like traditional Events (or dynamic SLPs, b. examples) in all those properties that do not depend on dynamism. First of all, they accept eventive modifiers: typically, locative PPs (6).¹³ Secondly, non-dynamic SLPs (7a) can head absolute constructions with a temporal interpretation, in the same way as traditional Events do (7b). It is well known that absolute constructions can express a temporal, causal, conditional or concessive relation with the main sentence, but only Events

¹¹ Here, I only address the State(IL)/Event(SL) distinction, as directly concerning the SCA.

¹² In the literature there have been various attempts to sever SL-ness from eventivity, conceived as dynamism (see Arche et al. 2014). However, note that here I am assuming a different core notion of eventivity: the mere presence of inner aspect.

¹³ Modification requires a semantic compatibility between the event and the modifier, thus different modifiers are allowed depending on the predicate's aspectual information: locative PPs highlight a Stage (see § 2.3), so they can test the presence of inner aspect, while other modifiers highlight whether the eventuality is controlled (e.g., *deliberately, intentionally*), dynamic and telic (e.g., *gradually, little by little*), etc. Maienborn (2005b) argues that *estar*-phrases do not allow for eventive modifiers; nevertheless, Spanish data clearly prove the contrary (examples from the RAE CORPES XXI, date consulted: 24/04/2015): *Estaba desnudo en la tina del baño, y ella...* ('I was_{estar} naked in the bathtub, and she...'); *Sus trabajos también están disponibles en internet* ('Their works are_{estar} also available on the internet'). Moreover, multiple modification is also possible with *estar*-phrases, as it normally happens with dynamic SLPs: *Piensa que estamos solos en un desierto con nuestra víctima* ('Imagine that we are_{estar} alone in a desert with our victim'). As pointed out in the literature, the attribute and the modifier show a non-rigid order in *estar*-phrases (e.g., *Ana está en el hospital enferma* is possible for (6a)), thus the syntactic treatment of these "modifiers" should be thoroughly analysed in future research. Even so, what is crucial here is that event related adjuncts are possible only with *estar*, not *ser*.

allow for a temporal interpretation (for Spanish, see Hernanz 1991 and Fernández Leborans 1995b). Third, both non-dynamic and dynamic SLPs can function as depictive secondary predicates (8), and they can be quantified (9).

- (6) a. *Ana está enferma en el hospital.*
 ‘Ana is_{estar} sick in the hospital.’
 b. *Ana pinta la mesa en el salón.*
 ‘Ana paints the table in the living-room.’
- (7) a. *Con Ana (estando) enferma, siempre llegamos tarde.*
 ‘With Ana (being_{estar}) sick, we are always late.’
 b. *Con su padre pintando la mesa, Ana nunca habla.*
 ‘With her father painting the table, Ana never talks.’
- (8) a. *Ana dio la clase (estando) muy enferma.*
 ‘Ana taught the class (being_{estar}) very sick.’
 b. *Ana habló con su padre pintando la mesa.*
 ‘Ana talked to her father (while) painting the table.’
- (9) a. *Cada vez que Ana está enferma, su marido sufre.*
 ‘Every time Ana is_{estar} sick, her husband suffers.’
 b. *Cada vez que Ana pinta la mesa, su marido sonríe.*
 ‘Every time Ana paints the table, her husband smiles.’

Semantically, both non-dynamic and dynamic SLPs are interpreted as situations, circumstances, occurrences, happenings, that is, as events. This is evident when the predicate is located in time: it is interpreted as an atomic event, thus it can be read as happening once or several times (10).¹⁴

- (10) a. *El mes pasado, Ana estuvo enferma (una sola vez / varias veces).*
 ‘Last month, Ana was_{estar} sick (only once / many times).’
 b. *El mes pasado, Ana pintó la mesa (una sola vez / varias veces).*
 ‘Last month, Ana painted the table (only once / many times).’

In sum, the observed similarities among SLPs support the hypothesis that these predicates share an aspectual content that determines their similar syntactic behaviour and semantic interpretation as events. This does not

¹⁴ Note that I am referring to an inference. Obviously, the unique-happening reading and the repetitive reading also depend on other factors, such as grammatical aspect, world knowledge, etc. Nevertheless, what is important here is that SLPs allow for these readings, while ILPs do not. When located in time, ILPs are not interpreted as happenings, but only as a loose or prospective property of the subject: *De joven, Ana fue guapa. (Ahora ya no / #Solo una vez / #Varias veces)* ‘When she was young, she was_{ser} beautiful. (Now she is not / #Only once / #Several times)’; *Muy pronto serás médico. (Aún no / #Solo una vez / #Varias veces)* ‘Soon you will be_{ser} a doctor. (Not yet / #Only once / #Several times)’.

mean that SLPs are all equivalent: as stated before, the difference in this class can subsequently be established on dynamism. Conversely, none of the aforementioned properties are satisfied by ILPs: they are excluded from syntactic contexts as those in (6)-(9), and they cannot be interpreted as occurrences (see also footnote 14). This shows their non-aspectual, non-eventive, purely stative, nature.

Following MacDonald's (2008) syntactic approach to inner aspect, I assume that the difference between States and Events is represented in syntax by an aspectual projection (AspP) between ν P and VP.¹⁵ The AspP projection determines a domain of aspectual interpretation, that is a syntactic space in which the inner aspectual information of a predicate (i.e., event structure) is delimited. The core idea is that Events have AspP (Fig. 3), while States lack AspP (Fig. 4) (MacDonald 2008: 27), and it directly applies to the present treatment of IL/SL-ness, in which the presence of inner aspect (thus, the domain of aspectual interpretation) is argued to be responsible for the aforementioned syntactic and semantic properties of SLPs.

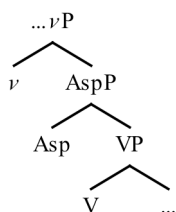


FIGURE 3. EVENTS (SLPs)

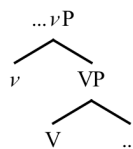


FIGURE 4. STATES (ILPs)

In accordance with the aspectual ontology detailed above (Fig. 2), I propose that the basic portions of event structure are Stages, that is, I take Stages as the primitives of inner aspect. But, what is a Stage? I define a Stage as an intersection of time and space, i.e., a spatiotemporal point. In other words, aspectual predicates (SLPs, or Events) encode spatiotemporal points as the building blocks of their aspectual design.¹⁶ On this basis, I suggest that what distinguishes non-dynamic SLPs from dynamic SLPs is

¹⁵ Here, ν is the head projecting the external argument, while V is the head of the lexical projection of the verb. As regards Asp, it must be kept in mind that it is a functional category introducing inner aspect, which has nothing to do with other possible AspPs related to outer aspect (i.e., (im)perfective, progressive, etc.) and, thus, situated higher in the tree, outside ν P.

¹⁶ Relating linguistic events to spacetime points (or “Stages”, here) seems to be a promising point of view. In fact, according to Einstein's relativity, in modern physics spacetime points are considered as the fundamental units of the four-dimensional spacetime (Minkovski 1909) and, curiously enough, they are studied as “events”. The label “Stage” is taken from the 4D philosophy (Sider 1996, 2001, and subsequent works).

that non-dynamic predicates denote an event that depicts a single spatiotemporal point, while dynamic ones refer to an event that involves a sequence of points. Therefore, I claim that the event structure of non-dynamic SLPs consists of a single Stage, unlike dynamic SLPs, whose dynamicity can be thought of as derived from a plurality of Stages.

In this regard, it is important to remark that the spatiotemporal point, or Stage, is an abstract—rather than a concrete—element: it is the “measurement unit” for inner aspect. Hence, the Stage encoded by an SLP should not be confused with a specific and real spatiotemporal point, nor it has implications on the truth of the predicate in the real world (i.e., the real spacetime).¹⁷ The fact that a predicate encodes Stages means that it denotes a concept whose identity is built on spacetime (i.e., an Event): on a single point, if the event is conceived as non-dynamic, or on a series of points, if it is conceived as dynamic.

Now, considering that the event structure of a predicate is determined by features (MacDonald 2008: 73, 90), I propose that Events (SLPs) are typified by, at least, a Stage feature.¹⁸ More specifically, I claim that lexical predicates with an aspectual content encode an uninterpretable Aspectual Stage feature [uAsp:S], which receives interpretation on the Asp head, resulting in an SL-structure. Conversely, as expected, States (ILPs) have no aspectual features, because they lack inner aspect (i.e., event structure) altogether. We will return to this proposal in § 3, while analysing the syntax of *ser-* and *estar-*phrases.

2.2 Matching copulas with the IL/SL contrast

Coming back to the SCA, on the basis of the previous discussion, it can be noted that there is no need to sever *ser/estar* from the IL/SL distinction. In fact, the claim that ILPs are property-descriptive predicates, while SLPs are situation-descriptive predicates, perfectly fits with the *ser/estar* distribution.

As has been commonly noted in the Spanish grammatical tradition, *ser* is the copula *par excellence*, in that it lacks any conceptual content and it functions as a mere linker between the subject and the attribute. Via *ser*, predicates are assigned to an entity as inherent characteristics, that is, as properties (i.e., Individual-Level Predicates) (11).

¹⁷ Obviously, everything takes place at a certain point—or points—, hence with a certain duration, and in a particular way, within the real spacetime. Nevertheless, this information is conveyed through tense, grammatical aspect and other possible elements that are beyond the scope of our research regarding the spatiotemporal structure that defines a predicate, i.e., inner aspect.

¹⁸ Here, I only focus on non-dynamic Events (as I account for *estar-*phrases), and future research should address how plurality of Stages is derived in syntax (see also footnote 24).

Conversely, *estar* is semantically marked: its meaning derives from the Latin *stare* (‘to stand’, ‘to stand still’, ‘to stand firm’) and at present it functions as a synonym of *encontrarse*, *hallarse*, *sentirse* (‘to find yourself’, ‘to feel yourself to be...’), both in their purely locative and abstract senses (12). *Estar* introduces non-dynamic situations (i.e., events consisting of a single stage, see § 2.1) in which the subject is —or appears to be— involved. Therefore, *estar*-constructions are commonly interpreted as describing conditions, appearances or manifestations, of the subject.

- (11) *Ana es_o {alta / guapa / (una) niña / oriental / de Madrid}.*
 ‘Ana is_{ser o} {tall / beautiful / a girl / oriental / from Madrid}.’
- (12) *Ana está_(se siente, se encuentra, se halla) {harta / mal / en casa / en las nubes}.*
 ‘Ana is_{estar} (feels, finds herself) {fed up / ill / at home / in the clouds}.’

In this respect, it is crucial to bear in mind that the notion of “single-stage” situation is not related to transience, or similar criteria. A predicate that encodes a single-stage aspectuality describes a situation that is conceived of as a single spatiotemporal point; thus, contrary to dynamic events, such situation is not understood as having progression in time (i.e., it does not involve a sequence of stages). A single-stage situation can last more or less in the real world, but this does not seem to be relevant for the grammar, as far as inner aspect is concerned.

As pointed out in the previous section, the duration of an eventuality exclusively relates to world knowledge, and it is not valid to discriminate between classes of predicates. In fact, the permanence/transience account of IL/SL-ness is only a partial generalization about reality: ILPs can describe properties that typically change, and, in the same way, SLPs can refer to situations that take place over an indefinite time span. For example, someone can be French only for a brief period (some years, months, or even days), if he changes his nationality; and someone can be satisfied for some reason during all his life. Nevertheless, *to be_{ser} French* is still an ILP (that is, a property of entities, which is encoded in language as a non-aspectual predicate), and *to be_{estar} satisfied* is still an SLP: it denotes a non-dynamic situation in which the subject is involved, that is, a single-stage event. This is what matters linguistically, and now it is clear that it cannot be explained by relying on a permanent/transitory criterion.

The widespread tendency to reject the IL/SL account of *ser/estar* derives precisely from the criterion discussed above. Indeed, the alleged arguments against the *ser*-IL/*estar*-SL relation take advantage of the idea that the flavour of a dish (3), an attribute such as *loco* (4), and persistent locations (5) are permanent qualities, even if they merge with *estar*. But if we abandon the permanent/transitory criterion for the sake of a more refined and explanatory

notion of IL/SL-ness, such as the one followed here, these data become irrelevant.¹⁹ Moreover, these phenomena are predicted and follow on directly from the present syntax-based model, in which predicates are allowed in syntax by a strict feature-sharing process (as we will see in § 3.2).

For example, the first case (3) is a typical case of speaker-oriented coercion with *estar*: a canonical property-descriptive predicate (ILP, *exquisito*) surfaces with *estar* to express a quality that is perceived by the speaker as an appearance of the subject (in this case, the flavour). In (4) and (5), lexical SLPs are involved, so they exclusively allow *estar*. *Loco* is a typical situation-descriptive participial adjective (*enloquecer - enloquecido - loco*): it describes a mental situation of the subject. Likewise, locative PPs are typical SLPs: a locative predicate (such as *en España*) denotes a spatial coordinate in which the subject is located, that is to say, it describes a spatial situation of the subject. The SL-nature of locative predicates can be easily grasped by observing that locations are spatio(temporal) notions *par excellence*: a location is nothing but a spatial coordinate, that is, a point in the spacetime (a Stage). Therefore, predicates denoting a location are codified in language as spatiotemporal (i.e., aspectual) predicates consisting of a single Stage.

3. SER-I, ESTAR-S

3.1 Towards a suitable analysis

In order to analyse the SCA properly it is essential to consider some previous

¹⁹ It is true that the resulting structures can receive a sort of property reading, which normally does not characterize *estar*-constructions. Nevertheless, first of all, it is important to note that these structures also allow for the canonical situation reading, in an appropriate context: *Con Ana tan loca, hay que tener cuidado* ('With Ana this crazy, one has to be careful'); *Con Cataluña fuera de España, habrá cambios* ('With Catalonia out of Spain, there will be changes'). As regards the property reading, it must be noted that it depends on the subject and the communicative context, and not on the *estar*-phrases themselves. In fact, any unambiguous SLP, thus understood in the first instance as a condition of the subject (*Ana está {pensativa / en el Louvre}* 'Ana is_{estar} {pensive / in the Louvre}'), can receive this sort of property reading when applied to a subject that holds such a condition as a characteristic (*La Mona Lisa está {pensativa / en el Louvre}*). So, in these cases, the property inference is a sentential one: the sentence describes that being in the condition of thinking, or being situated in the Louvre, characterizes the subject (e.g., la Mona Lisa). In short, the *estar*-phrase still denotes a situation, and that is what directly concerns the *ser/estar* distribution. The consequent interpretation for a situation to be typical of a subject derives from the association between the predicate and the subject in a specific context, and it is an interesting phenomenon that future inquiries might address.

evidence about the *ser/estar* distribution. These are (i) predicates' selectivity, (ii) copulas' supremacy, and (iii) the restrictions on copulas' supremacy.

(i) “Predicates' selectivity” refers to the fact that predicates show a sort of lexical or pre-syntactical preference for a copula, depending on their semantics and their grammatical category. Indeed, characterizing predicates (ILPs) combine with *ser*, while situation-descriptive ones (SLPs) go with *estar*. Lexical ILPs are classifying predicates (i.e., nouns and relational adjectives), and property-descriptive qualifying adjectives and PPs (11). Lexical SLPs are adverbs, and situation-descriptive qualifying adjectives (typically, participial adjectives) and PPs (i.e., PPs denoting a concrete or abstract location) (12).

(ii) Copulas have supremacy, in that they play a decisive role in the interpretation of attributes, and the value of the whole copular construction ultimately depends on them. In fact, *ser*- and *estar*- phrases always describe respectively properties and conditions of the subject. Such a supremacy is clearly attested in copular structures with a pro-form attribute (13): in *ser*-constructions the attribute can be interpreted only as a property-descriptive one (13a), while in *estar*-constructions the attribute has to be interpreted as situation-descriptive (13b).

- (13) a. *Ana {lo / así} es.* [= alta, guapa]
‘Ana is_{ser} like that.’ [= tall, beautiful]
b. *Ana {lo / así} está.* [= harta, enfadada]
‘Ana is_{estar} like that.’ [= fed up, angry]

All this suggests that copulas are ultimately responsible for allowing the predicates to enter into the syntactic computation.²⁰

(iii) The aforementioned copular supremacy on attributes is not an unconstrained phenomenon: while in an appropriate context *estar* can impose its meaning on canonical *ser*-predicates (cf. (11) and (14)), *ser* can never merge with canonical *estar*-predicates (cf. (12) and (15)). The first phenomenon is known as “coercion”: a typical characterizing predicate (ILP) is combined with *estar* in order to describe a condition of the subject (SLP) (see Escandell & Leonetti 2002).²¹

²⁰ In fact, copulas can be expressed even in a structure in which they are apparently not needed (e.g., absolute constructions (7a) and secondary predication (8a)). Thinking of copulas as the syntactic exponents of the IL/SL distinction perfectly fits in with Carlson (1977: 107-121) and Diesing's (1992: 27-28) theorizations about the existence of two different *to be* verbs (one for ILPs, and another for SLPs), which suggests that we are on the right track.

²¹ Coercion can be speaker-oriented (or evidential), if the speaker perceives a quality of the subject as an appearance (e.g., the flavour of a dish (3)), and/or subject-oriented, if the subject actually finds himself in such a condition. Because of its dependence on the communicative

- (14) *Ana está* (muy) {*guapa / niña / oriental*} (*así vestida*).
 ‘*Ana* is_{está} (feels, looks like) (very) {beautiful / young / oriental} (dressed like that).’
- (15) **Ana es* {*harta / mal / en casa / en las nubes*}.
Ana is_{ser} fed up ill at home in the clouds

From these basic observations we can descriptively conclude that the <CopV + Attribute> structure derives from some kind of agreement operation between its components. Such agreement gives rise to a CopVP, which has a single semantic (aspectual) content and has CopV as the syntactic exponent of it. As we have seen before, *ser* heads property-descriptive (IL) CopVPs, that is, lacking any kind of aspectual information. Conversely, *estar* carries an explicit aspectual content (Stage, non-dynamic), and *estar*-phrases carry the same aspectuality, denoting a single-stage situation in which the subject is involved. This means, following our IL/SL approach, that *estar*-phrases are actually AspPs.²²

The distribution of predicates would be as in (Fig. 5): lexical ILPs go with *ser*, and they can be coerced into an SL-reading with *estar*. SLPs only combine with *estar*, and cannot be coerced into ILPs.

$\frac{Ser > < \text{ILPs (guapo, alto, joven...)} }{Estar >> \text{ILPs (guapo, alto, joven...)}}$	$\frac{Estar > < \text{SLPs (harto, lleno, loco...)} }{*Ser >> \text{SLPs (harto, lleno, loco...)}}$
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FIGURE 5. PREDICATES' DISTRIBUTION WITH *SER* AND *ESTAR*

3.2 A feature-driven analysis

Based on the previous discussion, we are now able to analyse how the SCA fits into the general picture of the Stativity(IL)/Eventivity(SL) distinction. First of all, allow us to further elucidate the way aspectual features drive the derivation of SL-structures.²³ As outlined at the end of § 2.1, the core idea is

context, coercion's spontaneity varies considerably. Nevertheless, what is crucial here is that *estar*-coercion is a syntactic phenomenon that is, in principle, available for every *ser*-predicate (ILP). Only adverbial adjectives (e.g., *falso* ‘false’, *real* ‘real’) and classifying *de*-PPs (e.g., *de Madrid* ‘from Madrid’, *de buena familia* ‘from a well-to-do family’) strictly exclude coercion, and future research should address this topic.

²² It should be noted that this AspP is not equivalent to the AspPs of recent analyses such as Zagona (2012) or Camacho (2012), in which Asp is claimed *ad hoc* for *estar*.

²³ I follow Pesetsky & Torrego's (2007) system, according to which features can differ along two dimensions: interpretability (i.e., the relevance of the feature at the syntax-semantics interface) and valuation (i.e., the content of the feature) (see also Adger & Svenonius 2011). Valuation is a precondition for the successful interpretation of the feature at the interface, thus here it is an unvalued instance of a feature F at a location α that acts as a probe and gets its value by agreeing with another valued instance of F (a goal) at a location β in its c-command domain. Moreover, in order to be processed at the interface, every feature must receive

that lexical predicates with an aspectual content (i.e., SLPs) carry an uninterpretable Aspectual feature, whose value —at least for non-dynamic predicates— I postulate to be Stage: [uAsp:S]. These predicates require an Asp projection in the syntactic structure, which is the functional category that is in charge of giving them syntactic interpretability, thus, activating a domain of aspectual interpretation. Therefore, I assume that Asp has an interpretable unvalued Aspectual feature [iAsp:] that gets valued by the lexical predicate located in its immediate domain (typically, the verb), and thus allows any uninterpretable instance of the same feature to be deleted.

Like any non-aspectual predicate, *ser* has no aspectual features; in turn, *estar*, as a non-dynamic SLP, has an [uAsp:S] feature. As detailed above, in order for its feature to receive interpretability, *estar* combines with a functional category Asp. Asp acts as a probe and finds its value in *estar* (16a). *Estar* moves to Asp, in order to value [iAsp:] on Asp, and [uAsp:S] on *estar* will finally be deleted by virtue of the [iAsp:S] counterpart on Asp (16b). The resulting structure is a canonical SL-structure (cf. Fig. 3), where the domain of aspectual interpretation is correctly triggered: Asp receives its value from the verb and makes it interpretable as Asp (16c).²⁴

- (16) a. $[_{AspP} [_{Asp} [iAsp:]] [_{VP} [v \textit{estar}_{[uAsp:S]}]]]$
 b. $[_{AspP} [_{Asp} [v \textit{estar}_i [uAsp:S]]] [_{Asp}^0 [iAsp:S]]] [_{VP} [v t_i]]]$
 c. $[_{AspP} [_{Asp} \textit{estar}_i [iAsp:S]]] [_{VP} [v t_i]]]$

Following standard assumptions about copular structures, I assume that copulas are verbs that select for a small clause headed by a lexical predicate, whose subject is in its specifier (Stowell 1981, among others).²⁵ *Ser* or *estar* surfacing will depend on the predicate heading the small clause, and

interpretability at some syntactic location (following Brody's 1997 "Radical Interpretability"). Therefore, at the end of the derivation, a feature F must have at least one interpretable instance at some location, and hence all the other uninterpretable instances of the same feature are deleted.

²⁴ Although I am exclusively addressing the SCA, it is important to note that the way the domain of aspectual interpretation is triggered with *estar* is applicable to every SL-VP. Here, I focus only on the Stage value, as the basic unit of inner aspect. Nevertheless, for the sake of coherence, future research must address whether dynamicity (as well as telicity and other possible notions) depend on different projections, or if they are encoded in grammar as additional values of the Asp feature.

²⁵ This is not the only way to treat Small Clauses and copulas. Different points of view on the structure of Small Clauses and the syntactic status of copular verbs can be found in Bowers (1994), Moro (1997), Baker (2003) and Roy (2013), among others. Here, I follow a traditional view and I focus on the matching operation between the predicate and the copula.

functioning as an attribute at the end of the derivation.²⁶ As stated before, lexical ILPs have no aspectual features (17a), while lexical SLPs carry an [uAsp:S] feature, because they encode a single Stage aspectuality (17b).²⁷

- (17) a. ILPs: *guapo* ('handsome'); *intelectual* ('intellectual'); *joven* ('young')...
 b. SLPs: *harto*_[uAsp:S] ('fed up'); *lleno*_[uAsp:S] ('full'); *loco*_[uAsp:S] ('crazy')...

The *ser/estar* canonical distribution (see Fig. 5) would be accounted for as follows. *Ser* surfaces with ILPs, which lack any Aspectual feature, giving rise to an IL-structure (i.e., purely Stative, without Asp) (18). By contrast, SLPs merge with *estar*, in order for their [uAsp:S] feature to receive interpretability (19). In fact, *ser* could not give interpretability to their feature, and the derivation would collapse (20). This directly accounts for the inability of *ser* to coerce SLPs into an IL-reading, and for their typical inability to appear in an IL-structure.

(18) *Ser*-I: [VP [V ser] [AP ... [A guapo]]]

(19) *Estar*-S: [AspP [Asp estar_i [jAsp:S]] [VP [V t_i] [AP ... [A harto_[uAsp:S]]]]]

(20) **Ser*-S: [VP [V ser] [AP ... [A harto_[uAsp:S]]]]

Conversely, *estar* can combine with an ILP, coercing it into a SL-structure, thus, a SL-reading (21).

(21) [AspP [Asp estar_i [jAsp:S]] [VP [V t_i] [AP ... [A guapo]]]]

²⁶ At the end of the derivation, the subject of the small clause ends in the preverbal [Spec, TP] position. Here, I do not take the subject into account because it has no influence on the domain of aspectual interpretation of atelic predicates (see MacDonald 2008: 54-60), thus in the selection of the copula. Moreover, since subjects are DPs, they function as ILPs; thus they always lack any aspectual feature. Obviously, the subject has pragmatic implications, in that it influences the speaker in talking about its properties (ILP) or conditions (SLP). Nevertheless, the syntactic possibility of building a *ser*- or an *estar*-construction only and directly depends on the predicate heading the small clause.

²⁷ Here, the existence of ambiguous lexical entries, thus, ambiguous features, is not assumed. I assume a lexical entry to correspond to a lexical meaning associated with a word. So, the same morphophonological instantiation can hide different lexical entries. It is the case of *listo*_{SLP} ('prepared') or *listo*_{ILP} ('clever'), for example. However, not all cases are so evident. For instance, some participles have experienced a semantic evolution from denoting situations (SLPs) to denoting properties (ILPs): *despistado*_{SLP} ('not paying attention'), *despistado*_{ILP} ('absent-minded'); *abierto*_{SLP} ('open'), *abierto*_{ILP} ('open-minded', 'friendly'), etc.

4. CONCLUSIONS AND PENDING INQUIRIES

In this paper, I have argued for an IL/SL account of the *ser/estar* alternation, and I have provided a formal analysis for the distribution of the two copular verbs in association with lexical predicates. To this end, I have put forward a new insight into the IL/SL dichotomy as a basic aspectual distinction, which simply lies in the lack (ILPs) or the presence (SLPs) of inner aspect. The proposal brings significant advantages. Firstly, such a refined notion of IL/SL-ness allows for a full account of the *ser/estar* distribution, which in turn reinforces the traditional descriptive studies on the *ser*-IL, *estar*-SL relation with a formal explanation. Moreover, by this approach the SCA is studied as a phenomenon belonging to a more comprehensive, thus coherent, picture, without the need to resort to other *ad hoc* explanations, as promoted instead by the latest studies in this field. Finally, as regards the IL/SL dichotomy, such an inner aspectual approach paves the way for a new promising insight into the distinction as part of a general aspectual taxonomy, which helps us to drop other typical criteria, such as permanence/transience, that have been known to be more troublesome than explanatory.

Further research is needed at this point. First of all, it still remains to be addressed how predicates inherit their aspectual features in I-syntax. Answering this question is especially urgent for PPs, since we know that the same P can give rise to both IL and SL-PPs, suggesting that their aspectual content does not depend exclusively on the nature of P: *de papel*_{IL} ('made from paper') / *de compras*_{SL} ('to be shopping'); *a rayas*_{IL} ('striped') / *al tanto*_{SL} ('being aware'); etc. Secondly, a formal explanation of the relation between aspectual classes and grammatical categories has to be provided. In fact, as has generally been noted in the Spanish grammatical tradition, when nouns and relational adjectives are coerced with *estar* (that is, as SLPs) (14), they suffer a categorical shift to qualifying adjectives. Finally, it should be explained why only adverbial adjectives and IL *de*-PPs cannot be coerced in any way with *estar* (see § 3.1). It would seem that a satisfactory answer to the first question may shed light on the other unknowns.

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