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**Aspect and the Categorization of States:
The Case of *ser* and *estar* in Spanish**

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**Aspect and the Categorization of States:
The Case of *ser* and *estar* in Spanish**

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Dedication

I wish to dedicate this doctoral dissertation to my entire family, especially my mom and dad, who always believed that, with patience, hard work and perseverance, I could accomplish any goal set before me.

Also, this work is dedicated to every Spanish-speaking friend that I have ever had and the good people of the great state of West Virginia.

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**Aspect and the Categorization of States:
The Case of *ser* and *estar* in Spanish**

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In this work, the primary goal will be to construct the most descriptively and explanatorily adequate analysis possible to account for the complementary distribution of the Spanish copula verbs *ser* and *estar*. Over the past several decades, numerous theoretical accounts have been put forth in an attempt to accomplish this goal. Though such accounts accurately predict most types of stative sentences with the two copulas, they often fall short of predicting a significant number of them that are used in everyday speech. The first chapters of this dissertation will be devoted to reviewing a number of existing approaches that have been taken to account for the uses of *ser* and *estar* by testing their theoretical viability and descriptive adequacy. Among these are traditional conventions such as the *inherent qualities vs. current condition* distinction and the

analysis of *estar* as an indicator of change. Those of a more recent theoretical framework, which will receive the most attention, include the application of Kratzer's (1995) *individual-level vs. stage-level* distinction to stative predicates and Maienborn's (2005) discourse-based interpretation of Spanish copulative predication. Schmitt's (2005) compositionally-based analysis of Portuguese *ser* and *estar*, which treats only *estar* as an aspectual copula, will be of special interest.

After testing each of these analyses, it will be shown that the least costly and most accurate course to take for analyzing *ser* and *estar* is to treat both verbs as aspectual morphemes along the lines of Luján (1981). As aspectual copulas, *ser* and *estar* denote the aspectual distinction [\pm Perfective]. In my proposed analysis, I will argue that aspect applies to both events and states, but does so *internally* and *externally* respectively. By adapting Verkuyl's (2004) feature algebra to states, I will posit that aspect for stative predication is compositionally calculated, and the individual aspectual values for *ser* and *estar* remain constant in co-composition. In light of its descriptive adequacy for Spanish stative sentences and universality in natural language, it will also be shown that the [\pm Perfective] aspectual distinction is very strong in terms of explanatory adequacy as well.

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ABBREVIATIONS

AAE	African American English
AP	Adjectival Phrase
Adj	Adjective
Asp	Aspect
AspP	Aspect Phrase
DM	Distributed Morphology
DP	Determiner Phrase
D-Structure	Deep Structure
Imperf	Imperfective aspect
ILP	Individual-Level Predicate
INFL	Inflection
IP	Inflectional Phrase
K-State	Kimian State
L2	Second (Nonnative) Language
NP	Noun Phrase
Perf	Perfective aspect
SLP	Stage-Level Predicate
Sqa	Specified quantity of A
V	Verb
VP	Verb Phrase
UG	Universal Grammar

CHAPTER ONE

THEORETICAL PREMISES AND BACKGROUND DATA

1.0. Introduction

In every single language spoken on planet Earth, the notion of someone's or something's "state of being" is verbally expressed in one manner or another. The conveyance of this very notion is frequently carried out by means of the use of a *be*-type verb or *copula verb*. Some languages have only one *be* verb that is used for denoting all *be*-type states. For example, English only has the copula *to be*, and French has the copula verb *être*. By contrast, there are other languages, like Spanish, Portuguese and Irish, which contain more than one verb of this type. Typically, when multiple copula verbs are used in a particular tongue, they are not in free variation. In other words, which copula is used depends on the type of state being described. Spanish contains two such *be*-type copula verbs. These are *ser* and *estar* and will be the morphological elements of particular interest in this work.

The amount of literature written on the Spanish verbs *ser* and *estar* is quite vast. Topics related to these two copulas are broad in scope, ranging from their historical development to studies in how they are acquired by L2 learners of Spanish. Over the past several decades, the most common type of treatment of these two copulas has been to determine what precisely dictates the use of one over the other. *Ser* and *estar* are used in complementary distribution and are thus not considered exact synonyms. Therefore, the

respective types of states denoted by their predicates must be clearly defined in order to determine what the semantic properties of these two Spanish verbs are and how they differ. Precisely how the semantic features of *ser* and *estar* as well as the cognitive partition that separates their respective predicates should be analyzed will be the central focus of this dissertation.

The exact reason why one Spanish copula verb is used over the other has never been unanimously agreed upon by linguistic theorists. Though most theoretical treatments of *ser* and *estar* generally espouse one or more common principles, they all exhibit significant fundamental differences. Furthermore, most analyses of the two copulas can readily be called into question simply by citing commonly used sentences that they do not predict. Therefore, *ser* and *estar* also frequently present difficulty and frustration for L2 learners and instructors of Spanish. In particular, most explanations provided by Spanish textbooks for how to use *ser* and *estar* reflect the inadequacy of most theoretical treatments.

The main goal of this dissertation will thus be to attempt to devise the simplest and most accurate theoretical account possible of these copulas. In order to achieve this end, three main criteria must be met. In Chomsky's (1964, 22) terminology, the account must be *descriptively adequate*, or in other words, it must reasonably predict all uses of *ser* and *estar* in the Spanish language. Such a theory must also be *explanatorily adequate*, which means that it could apply to copula verbs and the states they denote

throughout the system of language. Naturally, an ideal theory of *ser* and *estar* should also be as simple, or *costless*, as possible in order to most accurately reflect the linguistic competence that a small native Spanish-speaking child acquires with little or no effort. In this chapter, we will take brief inventory of the basic theoretical foundations that have been used to account for *ser* and *estar* by various authors, as well as those that I will consider for drawing my own conclusions. The second part of this chapter will provide an overview of the types of data that will be the object of analysis in this study of *ser* and *estar*.

1.1. Theoretical Premises

In order to develop the most accurate theoretical account possible for *ser* and *estar*, one should be familiar with the most common ways in which this task has been approached. Upon first glance, the general impression is that *ser* predication applies for a long period of time, and *estar* predication applies for a shorter, more restricted period of time. Defining the precise underlying semantic mechanism through which these two apparently temporally distinct types of predication are manifested has been the focal point of every analysis of these copulas. We will now take a look at a number of common theoretical premises for treating the distinction between *ser* and *estar* predication that will be discussed in this work. The first of these involve more traditional notions, which are linked to cognitive divisions of the world. The rest are of more recent

theoretical frameworks. These include Davidsonian event arguments, pragmatic factors, aspect and aspectual composition.

1.1.1. Cognitive Divisions of the World

One very common approach to explaining the distinction between *ser* predication and *estar* predication is to attribute it to the Spanish speaker's conscious division of the world into two different types of stative realities. In other words, *ser* predication is essentially analyzed as reflecting a state that is not temporally bound and applies for a relatively long period of time. By contrast, *estar* predication would reflect a state or condition that is temporally bound in some way and applies for a relatively short period of time. Such interpretations of *ser* and *estar* are generally considered the most traditional and least theoretically intricate in circulation. For better or for worse, attributing the difference between *ser* and *estar* to a cognitive division of the world is an approach commonly embraced by teachers and students of Spanish. In fact, most Spanish textbooks contain grammar explanations that treat these copulas in this manner. Unfortunately, the number of exceptions that these analyses yield, in many cases, often renders them only marginally better than randomly guessing why one copula is used over the other.

One such manner of viewing Spanish copular predication is to deem states with *ser* as permanent and those with *estar* as temporary. The main problem with this

interpretation is that there are very few, if any states in the universe that can be considered permanent. Furthermore, the copula *estar* is exclusively used for describing geographical or celestial physical location in Standard Spanish, as well as the state of being dead. Another way to treat the Spanish copulas is to claim that *estar* is used to indicate a previous or potential change of state and that *ser* is the elsewhere case (Bull 1965). This approach is also problematic, because any given state may have conceivably resulted from a change. Moreover, *estar* can also be used for describing something that is experienced for the first time. In such a case, the speaker has no way of knowing whether what he or she is describing is in its current state as the result of a change or not.

In addition to these two approaches, another way of cognitively dividing the world into two different sets of stative realities is to interpret *ser* as describing inherent qualities and *estar* for current states. The inherent qualities vs. current state analysis of *ser* and *estar* serves as the inspiration for most analyses of these Spanish copulas printed in textbooks. Though the majority of uses of *ser* and *estar* can apparently be accounted for by treating them in this manner, exceptions to this rule commonly arise in everyday speech. *Estar*, in fact, is quite often used instead of *ser* for describing inherent qualities provided that the speaker's claim is based on immediate evidence. These are just a few examples of how one may attempt to draw a link between *ser* and *estar* predication and a cognitive division of the world. It will be shown that these interpretations, and others of

a similar construct, are not only inadequate, but they place entirely too much cognitive responsibility on the native speaker as well.

1.1.2. Stage-Level vs. Individual-Level Predication

More recently, the general tendency for *estar* predication to apply for a relatively short period of time, and that of *ser* to apply for a significantly longer period of time, has been explained in terms of *stage-level* and *individual-level* predication. The idea of dividing different types of predication into these two categories was developed by Carlson (1977) and most notably reinterpreted and expanded on by Kratzer (1995). A stage-level property would be one that is “transitory,” (Kratzer: 125) such as a person’s state of being tired or in a bad mood. By contrast, an individual-level property would be one that generally applies, such as the quality of being tall or intelligent. According to Kratzer, stage-level predicates contain an extra argument position for events or spatiotemporal locations and individual-level predicates do not. Therefore, stage-level predicates would be analyzed as eventive in nature, taking place at a particular period of time and place unlike individual-level predicates. This stage-level vs. individual-level analysis works in tandem with Diesing’s (1990) VP/IP Split Hypothesis, whereby all verb phrases contain base-generated subjects early in the derivation. According to the hypothesis, subject NP’s originate in the specifier of VP (spec of VP) position. Subjects of stage-level predicates may either remain in that position or raise to the specifier of IP

(spec of IP) position, leaving behind a trace. For individual-level predicates, the subject in the spec of VP position is PRO, and the overt subject must occupy the spec of IP position. In syntactic terms, individual-level predication constitutes a control structure.

The Spanish copulas have been proposed to be lexical components of this analysis with *ser* as an individual-level copula and *estar* as a stage-level copula (Lema 1995, Becker 2000). Under this interpretation, the tendency for *estar* predication to apply during a relatively short and restricted time period would be attributed to its being inherently eventive in nature. For *estar* predicates to be eventive and stage-level seems appropriate, because they tend to describe a state that applies during a particular “stage” in time. *Ser* predication, since it would not apply within one stage of time and not be eventive, would simply describe essential properties with no specific temporal reference implied. Nonetheless, it will be shown that this analysis is also theoretically faulty for *ser* and *estar* and thus fails to predict many of their uses. Eventuality diagnostics will show that *estar* predication is not inherently more eventive than *ser* predication. In fact, stative predication with either copula may be coerced into an event. Furthermore, the analysis of *ser* as a control verb results in a violation of the Theta Criterion in certain types of sentences. Though the stage-level/individual-level interpretation will prove inadequate for *ser* and *estar*, it will raise some valid theoretical and empirical points that will hopefully lead us to a better understanding of how these Spanish copulas function.

1.1.3. The Pragmatic Component

Another way of treating the distinction between *ser* and *estar* predication is to attribute it to factors involving a pragmatic component of natural language. Roughly speaking, pragmatics deals with the relationship between utterances and the discourse environment or context in which they occur. One of its primary goals is to explain how literal meaning and the actual meaning that a speaker wishes to convey interface with each other. In other words, pragmatics often focuses on how the discourse context influences the interpretation of what is literally being expressed on the part of the speaker. Pragmatic conventions that are relevant to the type of language structure used include, but are by no means limited to, politeness, contempt, emphasis and dramatic effect. Since Spanish copula usage does not occur in a vacuum, the relevance of the discourse context in which *ser* and *estar* are used is worthy of scholarly attention and will thus be explored in this work.

One author who has attempted to link the distinction between *ser* and *estar* to a pragmatic component is Maienborn (2005). Among the main facets of her analysis is the requirement of a *topic situation contrast* for *estar* to be used over *ser*. By means of this discourse-related contrast, a speaker restricts his or her claim to a specific *topic situation*. When using *ser*, the speaker is not necessarily referring to a specific topic situation, and there is no such contrast involved (169). According to Maienborn, there are at least three dimensions along which a topic situation contrast can be established. These are a

temporal dimension, a spatial dimension and an epistemic dimension (172). A topic situation contrast along some type of discourse-related division apparently would explain the tendency for *estar* predication to be restricted to one relatively short period of time.

As we will see, however, Maienborn's analysis fails to account for certain Spanish copular sentences involving adjectives and locative phrases, and more than one of its theoretical premises are questionable. Furthermore, it will also be made clear in this dissertation that the use of one copula verb over another cannot entirely hinge on pragmatic conventions. In order to account for *ser* and *estar* in the most descriptively and explanatorily adequate manner possible, the semantic distinction that they denote should be treated as purely grammatically-based. The least costly analysis for explaining what dictates the uses of the two Spanish copulas will naturally be one that reflects grammatical features that a small child effortlessly acquires at a very young age. Unlike the cognitive internalization of pragmatic conventions, which are culturally-based and thus consciously learned, the acquisition of grammatical features is an innate biological process. To analyze the distinction denoted by *ser* and *estar* as pragmatic would be costly, because it would require one to posit that each use of these verbs must be consciously learned. Moreover, since the relationship between grammar and pragmatics varies asymmetrically across different languages, an interface of these two elements could not be explanatorily adequate. Pragmatic considerations are undoubtedly relevant to the uses of the two Spanish copulas in some fashion. Nonetheless, what must be

determined in order to accurately account for *ser* and *estar* is precisely which grammatical parameters dictate their respective uses.

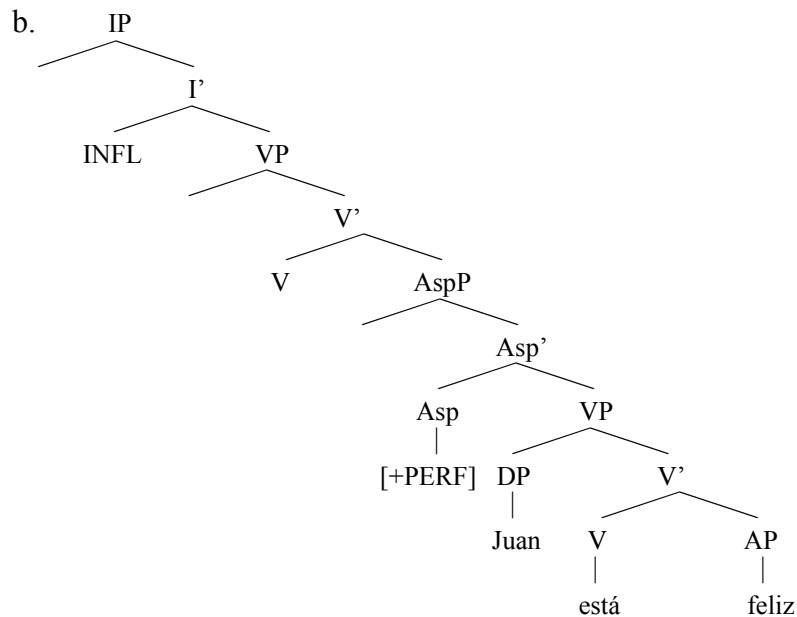
1.1.4. The Functional Category of Aspect

Over the past few decades, another common theoretical approach to treating *ser* and *estar* predication has been to analyze the two copulas as aspectual forms. In other words, *ser* and *estar* would serve as functional verbs, which denote the aspectual distinction [\pm Perfective]. According to Luján's (1981) aspectual interpretation of the Spanish copulas, *estar* predication denotes perfective states, and *ser* predication denotes imperfective states (165). The feature of aspect is generally understood to apply to eventive predication. Events that are [$+$ Perfective] have an implied beginning or endpoint. Those that are [$-$ Perfective] continuously apply or denote habitual reference. Perfective and imperfective events, for example, are expressed by the preterite and imperfect conjugations respectively. The analysis of states as denoting aspectual reference is merely an extension of a functional feature for events to all other types of verbal predication.

According to Luján, states described with *estar* apply within one delimited time period, whose beginning or end (or both) is implied. States described with *ser* apply across a series of several delimited time periods, whose beginning and end are not implied (1981: 165). Unlike a number of other analyses of the Spanish copulas, this one

treats both *ser* and *estar* as denoting temporal reference. With respect to how the aspectual features denoted by *ser* and *estar* interface with syntactic structure, let us consider the following representation of a simple sentence with *estar* predication.

(1) a. Juan está feliz.



The tree diagram above represents what the D-Structure of a sentence containing the copula verb *estar* used with an adjectival phrase might look like. Following along the lines of Zagona (2002), we may assume that there is an aspect phrase (AspP), to where the copular form *está* raises to have its [+Perfective] feature checked. It would eventually raise up to INFL (inflectional phrase) to have its other verbal features checked, and that is where it will show up in the Surface Structure. The subject *Juan* would raise

up to the specifier of IP (spec of IP) position during the derivation (Zagona 2002: 179-180) to check its nominative case feature. This is just one way of representing how the functional feature of aspect may be incorporated into a syntactic representation.

The primary focus of this dissertation will not be to argue in favor of one syntactic representation or another for sentences with *ser* and *estar*. However, how different types of Spanish stative predication are borne out through the syntax-semantics interface will be germane to this investigation at all times. The tree diagram in (1b) may be considered a template, which illustrates that the functional feature of aspect has semantic and structural relevance to both eventive and stative predication. Under an aspectual interpretation, the choice of copula used is dictated by a functional grammatical phenomenon that is present throughout the entire verbal paradigm and exists in all languages. Furthermore, positing that an aspectual distinction [\pm Perfective] is reflected by the use of *ser* and *estar* is costless, because aspect is a grammatical phenomenon that is effortlessly acquired by all children at a very early age. Therefore, the analysis of the two Spanish copulas as denoting an aspectual distinction appears to be a theoretically attractive option for developing an analysis that is both descriptively and explanatorily adequate.

1.1.5. Aspectual Composition

If the copulas *ser* and *estar* are to be analyzed as aspectual indicators in a theoretically and empirically sound fashion, the other aspectual elements with which they combine in syntax cannot be overlooked. Individual verb forms of any type may be interpreted as denoting aspectual properties, but they rarely occur in isolation. Therefore, one must also consider how aspect in their predication is borne out compositionally in order to better understand precisely what individual verbs denote. The aspectual calculation of individual aspectual elements in combination with each other in comprising whole phrases and sentences is known as *aspectual composition*. The aspectual reading of an entire verb phrase or sentence can depend on a variety of different types of grammatical elements used with the verb. Argument noun phrases are among the types of elements that can affect the aspectual composition of a particular verbal predicate. For example, whether a verb phrase is telic, or has a natural endpoint, depends on the type of object noun phrase used along with the verb. If the object of the verb is a mass noun or an indefinite plural, the verb phrase will be atelic, or not have a natural endpoint, as in *John wrote letters*. On the other hand, if the object is quantized, the verb phrase will be telic, as in *John wrote three letters*. This is just one example of how a single type of aspectual element can influence the aspectual composition of an entire phrase or sentence. With respect to how aspectual composition relates to the distribution of *ser* and *estar*, we will examine in depth the work of Schmitt (1992, 1996, 2005). The

theoretical views of Verkuyl (1993, 2004) will also receive considerable attention as we try to determine exactly how compositional aspect is calculated.

A number of authors, most notably Vendler (1967) and including Smith (1991), have classified different types of events based on their aspectual composition. Which category a given event falls into depends on its properties relating to telicity and duration. For example, the sentence *John wrote letters* denotes an event, which is durative and atelic. Thus, it can be classified as an *activity*. The sentence *John wrote three letters* is both durative and telic; therefore it can be classified as an *accomplishment*. We will examine all types of eventive predication in depth in this work as well as the concept of *coercion*. For our purposes here, coercion can be explained as simply the reinterpretation of a structure's typical meaning through the use of certain types of grammatical elements in that structure. According to Escandell-Vidal and Leonetti (2002):

“Coercion is a reinterpretation process set up to eliminate the conflicts between the semantic content of a constituent and the requirements of other elements in the same construction” (163).

With respect to the classification of events, coercion is the process of reinterpreting one event type as another by altering its aspectual composition through the use of certain types of aspectual elements in the syntax. A stative predicate can also be coerced into yielding an eventive reading through the use of a copula verb in the progressive construction as in *Juan está siendo malo*. A key question that will be explored in this work will be whether states, like events, may be categorized into different types and

whether coercion of one type of state into another is possible. We will consider the theoretical and empirical viability of interpreting all states as denoting temporal and aspectual reference just as events do. If such a view of stative predication can be justified, the analysis of *ser* and *estar* as denoting an aspectual distinction can be further justified in compositional terms.

1.2. Data Layout

Most linguistic treatments of *ser* and *estar* present a number of minimal pairs with the two copulas used with adjectival predicates in order to illustrate their semantic differences. This work will provide no exception to this tendency, as it will cite a number of data sets containing examples of one or both copulas used in this particular syntactic environment. However, a variety of other structures containing the two copulas will be analyzed, as well as sentences with different Spanish verbs. In addition to sentences from the Spanish language, data from a number of other tongues will receive considerable attention as well. The following is a brief description of what to expect with regard to the empirical evidence employed in this dissertation.

1.2.1. Spanish Data

For the most part, the different syntactic environments in which *ser* and *estar* may occur are mutually exclusive. There are only three types of structures with which both

copulas are acceptable, and these are adjectival phrases, past participles and prepositional phrases. A significant amount of the empirical analysis in this work will focus on the use of the two verbs with adjectival phrases and locative phrases. The type of adjectival predication that will be of the greatest theoretical concern will be that which is linked to immediate evidence. *Estar* is commonly used instead of *ser* to describe the way something tastes or to describe the way something or someone characteristically looks in certain contexts. Since the general tendency is for *estar* predication to apply within a relatively short period of time, accounting for such sentences will be one of the main goals of this work. Also, the use of *estar* in Standard Spanish with all locative predicates describing physical location contradicts this general tendency. Even if a physical location is geographical, *estar* must be used for describing it instead of *ser* in Standard Spanish. Rather than focus on this standard usage, we will direct our attention more on the complementary distribution of *ser* and *estar* in predication describing physical location in Nonstandard Spanish. Other types of Spanish data that will be examined include, but are not limited to, copular sentences with nominal predicates, sentences in the preterite and imperfect and uses of the *reflexive se* pronoun.

Another important type of data that will be analyzed will be sentences from Portuguese that have been adapted to Spanish for the purposes of this study. In Schmitt's (2005) compositionally-based analysis of *ser* and *estar*, the author cites data from Portuguese instead of Spanish. For the most part, I will simply provide Spanish

translations for the Portuguese sentences that Schmitt analyzes. Though the distribution of *ser* and *estar* in the two languages is not exactly identical, there are very few significant differences. Almost all occurrences of *ser* and *estar* in Portuguese may be used for analyzing the two copulas in Spanish, since both languages are so closely related. In this work, Portuguese data will only be adapted to Spanish if its Spanish translation is serviceable for illustrating the relevant points of discussion. If any doubt comes into play, examples from both languages will be provided.

1.2.2. Cross-Linguistic Data

There are essentially two types of data from other languages that will be dealt with in this dissertation. Since this dissertation is written in English, many points will be illustrated by simply citing examples from this language. In such cases, data involving predication that is not directly related to copula verbs will be used, and the points being discussed will clearly apply to all languages in general. One example of the use of English data for this purpose will be for examining how different event types are classified. Since all of the same event types presumably should exist in all languages, examples of them may be shown in any language when explaining how they are categorized. Moreover, since such data from Smith (1991), Verkuyl (2004) and others was originally given in English, which is the language in which this dissertation is written, translating it to another language is not absolutely necessary.

The other type of cross-linguistic data that will be used in this work will be those involving copula verbs that exhibit behavior similar to that of Spanish *ser* and *estar*. We will do an in depth examination of *be*-type verbs in African American English (AAE) and compare their predication to like predication in Spanish. Specifically, we will analyze the *aspectual be* verb and the *copula/auxiliary be* in AAE and attempt to draw parallels between how they and *ser* and *estar* are distributed. Another verb pair from a language other than Spanish that will be discussed will be the copula verbs *is* and *tá* from Modern Irish. The chief aim of analyzing such verbs from other languages will be to reinforce an aspectual analysis of *ser* and *estar* in terms of explanatory adequacy.

CHAPTER TWO

COMMON INTERPRETATIONS OF *SER* AND *ESTAR*

2.0. Introduction

In this chapter, we will explore a number of ways in which the meanings of the Spanish copula verbs *ser* and *estar* are commonly interpreted which largely fall outside of a recent theoretical framework. The following analyses reflect interpretations of these two verbs which are quite often espoused by instructors, speakers and learners of Spanish alike. They are commonly, and have traditionally been referred to in textbooks and grammar books of Spanish, and they are useful for getting a “workable” or “rough idea” of what dictates the uses of these two verbs. These approaches are useful in that they serve to enable learners to use *ser* and *estar* with an amount of accuracy that is sufficient for communicatively functioning in a Spanish-speaking environment. However, after briefly examining them, it will be clear to the reader that one does not have to search far in order to find counterexamples that render them descriptively inadequate and theoretically unsound. The factors which are claimed to trigger the use of one copula over the other in these interpretations cannot possibly ground the parameters for the use of copula verbs in natural language, much less so in our language-specific case of Spanish.

In Section 2.1, we will examine the interpretation of *ser* to describe permanent states and *estar* to describe temporary ones. Section 2.2 delves into the interpretation of

estar as an indicator of change, which may be considered a corollary of the *permanent* vs. *temporary* interpretation. Section 2.3 focuses on adjectives that are claimed to change meaning when used with either *ser* or *estar*. In Section 2.4, we will explore different views of the Spanish copula as agents of comparison, and in the last section, we will take a look at the interpretation of *ser* as describing inherent qualities and *estar* as describing a current state.

2.1. The Permanent vs. Temporary Distinction

A common lay interpretation of what dictates the use of *ser* and *estar* is the notion of whether the state described in Spanish is ‘permanent’ or ‘temporary’. Under this assumption, *ser* is presumed to describe permanent realities and *estar* to describe temporary realities. The idea of the existence of temporary and permanent realities in the universe, which are reflected in language use, is indeed a very old one. Aristotle espoused the characterization of properties as either permanent or temporary in his collection of essays Topics, which he wrote in 350 B.C. According to the ancient Greek philosopher:

“Any 'property' rendered is always either essential and permanent or relative and temporary: e.g. it is an 'essential property' of man to be 'by nature a civilized animal': a 'relative property' is one like that of the soul in relation to the body, viz. that the one is fitted to command, and the other to obey: a 'permanent property' is one like the property which belongs to God, of being an 'immortal living being': a 'temporary property' is one like the property which belongs to any particular man of walking in the gymnasium” (64).

2.1.1. Evidence for the Permanent vs. Temporary Distinction

Let us assume that Aristotle's assertion that there exist both permanent properties and temporary properties is true for the sake of this analysis. There do exist, apparently permanent properties in the world around us, and these are indeed generally thought to be always represented with the verb *ser*. Observe the following examples:

- (2) a. El hielo *es* agua congelada.
- b. Un loro *es* un tipo de pájaro.
- c. La tierra *es* redonda.

Such equative sentences like (2a) or certain attributive sentences like (2b) and (2c), which take the verb *ser*, describe permanent or very stable realities. The phenomena described are often related to natural laws or descriptions of species of animals among other things. The property of ice being frozen water, a parrot being a type of bird and the earth being round are extremely stable, if not outright permanent properties. With respect to the verb *estar*, it is easy to find cases where this copula is used to describe temporary properties.

- (3) a. Yo *estoy* en el laboratorio.
- b. *Está* lloviendo.
- c. Marisa *está* triste hoy.

These particular states described by *estar* are, in the pragmatically conventional sense, by no means thought of as permanent. The *estar*-described states of one being in the lavatory, it raining, or one feeling sad on a given day, are without a doubt, generally understood as being short lived.

2.1.2. Arguments against the Permanent vs. Temporary Distinction

Though the properties *permanent* and *temporary* may be logically sound realities, the idea of them dictating choice of copula in the system of human language, and for our specific purposes, in Spanish, appears to be too logically costly, and simply unfeasible from the perspective of psycholinguists, despite examples such as those in (2) and (3). One problem with the analysis that *ser* is used for describing permanent properties and *estar* is used for temporary properties, in the words of Roldán, is that it “ascribes too much semantic responsibility to the copula” (1974, 69). In this vein, having to pause and decide whether what one is talking about is permanent or temporary every time either *ser* or *estar* is to be used places too much cognitive responsibility on the native speaker.

Furthermore, the claim that the properties *permanent* and *temporary*, in and of themselves, are stable and reflective of reality enough to ground the parameters for copula choice in human language, or in a language specific case as with *ser* and *estar*, is a tenuous one. Most obviously, the property of *permanency* is not indicative of enough realities to define any linguistic parameter, be it syntactic or semantic. In fact, very few elements in the universe, physical or otherwise, are empirically unchangeable, or in other words, are *truly* permanent, as we know them. According to Solé and Solé (1977):

“The usage of *ser* should not be then equated with inherent or permanent qualities exclusively. There are only a limited number of them, and even these may be altered by the circumstances. Man is inherently human, rational, and free; yet he is just as likely to be subhuman, irrational, and in bondage- literally or figuratively speaking” (254).

Almost every given case in which *ser* is used can conceivably be not necessarily permanent. Most realities are at least potentially changeable, yet many of them are represented in Spanish with the copula verb *ser* instead of *estar*. Note the following examples:

- (4) a. Carlos *es* budista.
- b. Barcelona *es* una ciudad muy poblada.
- c. Mi nombre *es* David.
- d. María *es* rubia.

Although sentences (4a)-(4d) contain the copula *ser*, they all represent changeable realities. Just as *Carlos* could conceivably convert to another religion and *David* could change his name, the population of *Barcelona* could sharply decrease, and *María* could dye her hair another color. Likewise, the idea of *estar* denoting a temporary state or condition falls apart when it is used in sentences like the following:

- (5) a. Ricardo *está* muerto.
- b. Oaxaca *está* en México.

There are few things that are perceived as permanent, and though death is one of the most common, the copula *estar* is obligatorily used with the predicate adjective *muerto*.

Although the location of the city of *Oaxaca* (or any city for that matter) is generally perceived as an extremely stable if not permanent reality, it is always represented in Standard Spanish with *estar* instead of *ser*. Irrespective of one's individual philosophy regarding the notions of permanency and temporality, it can be determined that the

permanent vs. temporary interpretation of *ser* and *estar* is descriptively inadequate merely by virtue of the counterexamples in the data in (4) and (5).

Practically any state represented by the copula verb *ser* may change, and not all states represented by *estar* are necessarily temporary, most notably those describing geographical location. The interpretation of *ser* and *estar* as representing permanent and temporary realities respectively is very common among learners of Spanish as a second language, and often instructors as well. However, after a small amount of scrutiny, it can be determined that this interpretation is simply incorrect. Few properties at all in reality, let alone most described by *ser*, are truly permanent. Since *estar* is not almost exclusively used instead of *ser* in Spanish almost all of the time, a different approach must be taken to determine what exactly dictates choice of copula in the system of language.

2.2. *Estar* Used to Indicate a Change of State

Another approach to interpreting the meaning of *ser* and *estar*, which is very common, is that *ser* is used to describe states that are not thought to be modifiable, and *estar* is used for representing a modifiable state or one that has suffered a change. Effectively, the *estar* as ‘indicator of change of state’ interpretation is a slightly modified version of the *permanent vs. temporary* approach. For our purposes, the concept of *ser* being used to describe what is not modifiable is synonymous with the interpretation of

ser as an indicator of permanency. As we have seen thus far, the concept of permanency or non-modifiability serving as a semantic factor for generating the use of *ser* is theoretically unsound. However, for the sake of clarity, it would behoove us to examine the concept of modification and its oft-proposed association with the verb *estar*. Though *estar* often appears to describe states that are indeed modifiable or reflective of a change, as we will see, this verb is frequently used to describe states that are either not considered modifiable or not possibly reflective of a discernable change in the mind of the speaker.

2.2.1. Apparent Cases of *Estar* Denoting a Change of State

Cases of *estar* being used that may be considered to be reflective of a change that either has taken place or may take place are common and not hard to find. Especially, when the subject is animate or is a moveable object, the use of *estar* is associated with a transient state. Note the following examples:

- (6) a. Lupe *está* triste.
- b. Pepe *está* en la sala.
- c. El libro *está* en la mesa.
- d. Yo *estoy* mirando la televisión.

The states described above are likely considered to be changeable or having resulted from a change. Sentence (6a) describes *Lupe* as being sad at the present time, which very well may entail that she is not normally sad and that she will not be sad for good. Sentence (6b) and (6c) describe the physical location of moveable objects, an animate and an inanimate one respectively. In the pragmatically unmarked sense, the physical locations

described by (6b) and (6c) are ones that are not fixed nor are characteristic of the subjects involved. Sentence (6d) contains the present progressive, constructed with *estar* used with the present participle. By means of the present progressive, *estar* is used in this sentence to describe an event that is in progress at the present moment. This type of predication only describes one specific stage in time during which this event takes place, which is at the present time. Moreover, this use of *estar* also entails that prior to this stage in time, the act of watching television was not in progress and thereafter will not continue indefinitely. Such is an indication of a change that has taken place in regards to a previous state of affairs and one that is expected to take place in the near future. Now let us take a look at data that do not support the *estar as indicator of change* analysis.

2.2.2. *Estar* Used for Geographical or Other Location

Counterexamples to this interpretation of *estar* are numerous and easy to find in everyday language. One type of state that is considered to be extremely stable and not quintessentially dynamic is that of geographic or celestial physical location. Even though locative predicates of this nature denote states that are arguably not modifiable, the copula verb used to represent them is not *ser*, but *estar*.

- (7) a. México *está* al sur de los Estados Unidos.
- b. San Sebastián *está* al este de Santander.
- c. La tierra *está* entre Marte y Venus.
- d. Mercurio *está* más cerca del sol que Júpiter.

The states described in the above sentences are not indicative of a change from the norm or that one is pending. Geographical realities like those described by (7a) and (7b), at one time, came about as the result of a change and may certainly change as the result of war, conquest or by some other means. However, there are countless realities described by *ser* that are much less stable and much shorter in duration such as vocation or a person's physical description. Even more stable and less dynamic are the states described by sentences (7c) and (7d). Though we have no record to officially verify this, the celestial locations described in these examples most likely resulted from a change, but again, these realities are much more stable than most realities described with *ser*. *Estar* is used in (7c) and (7d) even though there is no record of the states described being any different before or being any different in the future. Though examples of *estar* being used to express geographical and celestial location perhaps serve as the most lucid evidence against the *estar as indicator of change* analysis, other data involving the use of this verb with adjectival predicates can be cited that are just as compelling. Such adjectival predication with *estar* will be treated in the next subsection.

2.2.3. *Estar* + adjective as Counterevidence

The use of *estar* that is most commonly alluded to as evidence in favor of the *indicator of change* interpretation is its use with predicate adjectives. As illustrated in sentences such as (6a), *estar* used with an adjective frequently appears under the guise of

representing a state that reflects a change from a previous state and may imply an impending change. This interpretation of *estar* with respect to *ser* is not new and was embraced by Bull (1965), who explained the usage of *ser* and *estar* with predicate adjective phrases according to the criteria of *no change* (norm) and *change* (change from norm) respectively. According to Bull:

“The person who encounters an entity for the first time must decide for himself whether the status of that entity is or is not the result of some change. When logic and previous experience of similar entities indicate that some change has taken place, the entity is described with *estar*... when no change can be inferred, the speaker’s first impression of an unfamiliar entity is reported with *ser*” (1965, 293).

With respect to the use of *estar* with adjectival phrases, it is easy to find data in everyday speech that contradicts Bull’s assertion, especially when pragmatic considerations are taken into account. One such type of sentence containing the *estar + adjective* construction that the *estar as indicator of change* interpretation does not account for are those that describe something that the speaker is perceptually experiencing for the first time, before a norm for it has been established (Roldán 1974, Falk 1979, DeMello 1979).

Observe the following sentences:

- (8) a. Este jamón serrano *está* fenomenal.
- b. Este programa *está* muy interesante.
- c. La hermana de Pepe *está* linda.

In sentence (8a), the speaker’s assessment of the *jamón serrano* cannot possibly be indicative of a change of state, if he or she is tasting it for the first time. In other words, there is no implication that the *jamón serrano* did not taste good prior to its being tasted

and evaluated by the speaker. If there is no prior experience involving the ham, the one who utters this sentence cannot possibly imply that the ham (or his opinion of it) has changed. Without any mental conception (or previous experience) of what the ham may have been like in the past, there is no previously existing state in the universe of discourse from which it is supposedly implied to have changed. Nonetheless, the copula *estar* is used in this sentence.

As for example (8b), let us suppose that it is a commentary on a television program that the speaker is watching which he or she has never seen. Assuming that the viewing of the program is a first time experience, the speaker cannot be implying that the program was bad before or that it has changed in some way. Moreover, if the program is being aired for the first time, the nonexistence of the program's supposed previous state in the universe of discourse alone also invalidates the *estar as indicator of change* interpretation.

Again, in (8c) if the speaker is seeing *Pepe's* sister for the first time, there is no prior experience that would suggest that she was not attractive in the past or suffered a change of state in some way. These examples clearly run counter to Bull's assertion that "when no change can be inferred, the speaker's first impression of an unfamiliar entity is reported with *ser*" (293). Assuming that what the states described in (8a)-(8c) are attributed to are being perceived by the speaker for the first time, they cannot have

resulted from a change in the mind of the speaker. Nonetheless, *estar* is the copula verb that is used to describe them instead of *ser*.

In addition to cases in which *estar* represents states ascribed to entities being perceived for the first time, there are also a number of other quite ubiquitous Spanish sentences in which *estar* is not necessarily used to indicate that a change of state has taken place or will take place. Observe the following minimal pair:

- (9) a. Paco *es* gordo.
 b. Paco *está* gordo.

Let us assume that (9a) describes *Paco* as normally or characteristically overweight. By virtue of the interpretation of *estar* as *indicator of change*, one may posit that the use of *estar* in (9b) indicates that *Paco* has gained weight or will lose weight. According to Roldán, *estar* may be used in cases such as (9b), “not because a change is expected, but because it is potentially possible” (1974, 72-73). However, as we have seen so far in this chapter, almost any state described with *ser* may potentially suffer a change, and on the other hand, there are also many cases in which *estar* describes a state that is not thought to potentially change.

In short, sentence (9b) may be used to simply indicate that *Paco* is overweight at the utterance time irrespective of how much he weighed before or how much he will weigh in the future. Furthermore, there are also pragmatic variables, which are independent of a state’s changeability, to be taken into consideration. Not only may

sentence (9b) depict *Paco* as overweight at this moment, regardless of his prior or future weight, it is also considered a more polite sentence to describe him than is (9a).

Judging from the data presented in examples (7)-(9), it is clear that the copula verb *estar* does not inherently denote that a particular entity has suffered or will suffer a change of state. In the same vein, the use of the copula *ser* to describe modifiable states as in examples like those in (4) is further evidence that the *estar* as *indicator of change* analysis is unsound. As is the case with the *permanent vs. temporary* interpretation of *ser* and *estar*, the analysis of *estar* as *indicator of change* is also faulty on philosophical grounds. According to Luján:

“For the expression ‘that which is modifiable’ itself expresses a generality of such extension that it invalidates the criterion for identifying a state. A similar difficulty arises in trying to identify states as results of modifications: the whole universe and any item in it must be conceived as resulting from modifications. Thus, every predicate attribute in relation to any item in this universe must be constructed with *estar*, and there would be no use for *ser*-predicates” (169).

Excluding the permanent quality of God (whose existence not every person necessarily believes in) asserted by Aristotle, and following the same line of thought as Solé and Solé, all properties may not only be not permanent, but they in and of themselves also result from a change. Not only can *ser* be used to denote obviously modifiable states and *estar* be used to denote states that appear to be extremely stable, but the concept of modification as a plausible factor in semantic logic, is by its very nature,

untenable. Thus, we may conclude that the *estar* does not function as an indicator of change.

2.3. Meaning Change in Adjectives Constructed with *Ser* or *Estar*

Continuing with the theme of Spanish copula verbs used with adjectives, we will now take a look at the claim made by some authors that there is a special class of predicate adjectives that carry a different meaning depending on whether they are used with *ser* or *estar* (Solé and Solé 1977, Higgs 1985, Lunn and DeCesaris 1992, etc). This concept is purported in numerous Spanish language textbooks and reference manuals (See Frantzen 1999 for a list of 40 different such sources.), and assumes that such “meaning changing” adjectives operate differently from normal adjectives when used with either *ser* or *estar*. The inspiration for this claim lies in minimal pairs like the following and their agreed-upon translations or interpretations:

- (10) a. *ser* verde = to be green (the color green)
- b. *estar* verde = to be unripe, immature, inexperienced
- c. *ser* rico = to be rich (have a lot of money)
- d. *estar* rico = to be delicious
- e. *ser* aburrido = to be boring
- f. *estar* aburrido – to be bored

Between (10a) and (10b), there does appear to be a difference in the meaning of the adjective *verde*. Even if there is a semantic relationship between being unripe and being of the color green, being inexperienced and being of the color green are two entirely distinct states of being. In (10c) and (10d), the adjective *rico* carries two entirely

different meanings, while the adjective *aburrido* in (10e) and (10f) carries two separate semantically related, yet still distinct meanings.

The difference in the meaning of adjectives between their use with *ser* and *estar* is quite apparent in the examples in (10). However, data that contradicts the proposal that certain predicate adjectives possess special meaning changing properties when used with *ser* and *estar* are not difficult to find in everyday language. Note the following sentence pairs:

- (11)
- a. La casa *es* verde. = The house is green.
 - b. El semáforo *está* verde. = The traffic light is green.
 - c. Las manzanas *son* ricas. = Apples are delicious.
 - d. Esta manzana *está* rica. = This apple is delicious.
 - e. El profesor *es* aburrido. = The professor is boring.
 - f. Este programa *está* aburrido. = This program is boring.

In both (11a) and (11b), the adjective *verde* means “of the color green”, though it is used with both *ser* and *estar*. In sentences (11c) and (11d), the adjective *rica* means delicious with both *ser* and *estar*, and *aburrido* means “boring” with both *ser* and *estar* in (11e) and (11f), respectively. By virtue of the data in (11) alone, we may conclude that there is no special type of adjective that changes meaning when used with *ser* and *estar*, nor do the copula verbs *ser* and *estar* possess the property of being able to alter the lexical properties of these or any other adjectives.

In light of these data, I will posit that each of the three adjectives *verde*, *rico* and *aburrido* has at least two separate entries in the lexicon, which are completely independent of the choice of copula used with them. *Verde* can mean either a. of the

color green or b. unripe, immature, or inexperienced. *Rico* can either mean a. wealthy or b. delicious. *Aburrido* can mean either a. causing boredom or b. bored, which is the past participle of *aburrirse*. In these cases, and in many others, a particular adjective may be misinterpreted as changing meaning when used with *ser* and *estar*, when in fact one is actually seeing a different lexical manifestation of it listed with each copula exclusively.¹

There are also other adjectives that are claimed to change meaning when constructed with *ser* or *estar* like those in the following set of minimal pairs:

- (12) a. *ser vivo* = to be clever
b. *estar vivo* = to be alive
c. *ser listo* = to be clever
d. *estar listo* = to be ready
e. *ser decente* = to be decent, honest
f. *estar decente* = to be presentable, dressed
g. *ser malo* = to be mean
h. *estar malo* = to be ill

The adjectives in the examples above do appear to carry different meanings when constructed with *ser* or *estar*. However, any perceived difference in the meaning of the adjectives when they are used with *ser* and when they are used with *estar* is not a great one. In fact, the meanings of the adjective *vivo* in (12a) and (12b) are similar in that they both denote a state of mental lucidness, and the same applies for the adjective *listo* in (12c) and (12d). The adjective *decente* in (12e) and (12f) appears to have very similar meanings with the two copulas, because both denote a state of personal integrity. With

¹ For the most part, any lexical interpretation of any given adjective may apply with either *ser* or *estar* provided that it does not yield an ill-formed string, as is the case with adjectives like *descalzo*, *desnudo* and *ausente*, which are only acceptable with *estar*.

the verb *ser*, *decente* refers to integrity of character, and with *estar*, it refers to integrity of appearance. The adjective *malo*, whose most basic meaning is “bad,” denotes a type of negative, unpleasant or bad state in both sentences (12g) and (12h).

The similarity in meaning between the *ser* states and the *estar* states with the same adjective in (12) appears to also disfavor the analysis of certain adjectives changing meaning when used with *ser* and *estar*. Furthermore, the fact that two different translations of the same adjective, one with *ser* and another with *estar*, are frequently listed in textbooks and reference manuals gives the impression that such an adjective carries a different meaning when used with one verb or the other when it actually does not. (Frantzen 1999, 17)²

After a close evaluation of the meanings of predicate adjectives like those in (10)-(12), we may conclude that there are no special adjectives that change meaning when used with *ser* and *estar*. In many cases, there are actually two or more lexical entries for a given adjective that can be used with either copula, though one copula may be used much more frequently than the other with particular lexical entries. By the same token, any perceived difference in the meaning of adjectives between their use with one copula or the other likely results from differences between the type of state that *ser* denotes and the type denoted by *estar*. The use of *ser* or *estar* does not lexically alter the meaning of

² Such perceived ambiguity expressed in the translation of certain adjectives with *ser* and *estar* is liable to cause not only nonnative speakers to believe that some adjectives change meaning, but native speakers as well.

adjectives, rather the entire verb phrase as a whole, which includes the adjective, will differ when one copula is used instead of the other. I will further explore apparent meaning changing adjectives of the type in (10)-(12) and their relationship with the Spanish copulas in Chapter Four.

2.4. The Implied Comparison Interpretation

Another interpretation of what precisely grounds the parameters for the use of the Spanish copulas is *implied comparison*. One of the earliest authors to posit the distinction between *ser* and *estar* in terms of comparison was Crespo (1946). According to his analysis, which focused mainly on the use of the Spanish copula with adjectives, only the verb *estar* was used to represent an *implied comparison* and not *ser*. In his words,

“El verbo *estar* sirve para presentar al adjetivo predicado como estado indicando que alguien o algo está de alguna manera en contraste o comparación con otro estado. Este “otro estado” puede referirse al mismo sujeto o a otra persona, animal o cosa relacionada con el sujeto” (52).

This perspective on the verb *estar* as agent of comparison has its merits in terms of descriptive adequacy. According to this view, *estar* is either used to compare the state in question of a subject to another state that may apply to it in some way, or it is used to compare the subject with a different entity altogether. In other words “*Juan está cansado.*” would imply that *Juan*’s state of being tired is in comparison to some other

state that applies to him. An example of *estar* used for comparing a subject to another entity would be a sentence like “*Yo estoy más cansado que Juan.*”

Crespo’s interpretation, as was pointed out in Bolinger (1947, 364-365), proves to be problematic, because the verb *ser* can also be used in comparisons such as in a sentence like “*Lucía es más guapa que Maite.*” Bolinger also asserts that the type of comparison that *estar* may actually imply is one of “self-comparison,” which means “...*estar* is used for comparisons within a given genus: comparisons of a thing with its archetype or with previous or succeeding states of itself” (365). From Bolinger’s perspective of *estar* as a marker of self-comparison, the sentence “*Juan está cansado.*” implies that *Juan* is tired compared to the way he normally feels.

The idea of *estar* being used for comparing the state of something or someone with “previous or succeeding states of itself” is almost identical to the interpretation of *estar* being used to imply a change of state. As we have already seen in this chapter, this interpretation of *estar* can be ruled out as a trigger for its use over *ser*. Regardless, we will explore the comparison analysis a bit further, focusing on uses of both *ser* and *estar*.

In contrast with Crespo’s analysis of *estar* used for comparison exclusively, and expanding on Bolinger’s assertion that *ser* may also be used for making comparisons, we will now consider the use of both copula verbs as signaling comparisons of different types. Franco and Steinmetz (1983, 1986) present an analysis whereby both *ser* and *estar* signal comparisons. With this approach, *ser* implies a comparison between the entity

being described with one or more different others. *Estar* implies a comparison between a particular entity with itself. Franco and Steinmetz describe this interpretation in the following terms:

“*Ser* is used to express an implied comparison of the type X/Y, i.e., an entity X is compared with one or more entities Y which provide the standard by which a quality is attributed to X. For example, “Pedro es rico.” asserts that Peter is rich in the sense that his wealth is greater than that of some putative average person. By contrast, *estar* expresses an implied comparison of the type X/X, i.e., an entity X is compared with itself, as in the example “Pedro está rico.” which asserts that Peter is rich in the sense that his present wealth is greater than it is known or thought usually to be” (1986, 377).

Franco and Steinmetz’ interpretation of *estar* lines up with Falk’s (1979) categorization of using *ser* to draw a comparison in reference to the norm of members of a class or set (“norma de una clase de objetos”) and *estar* to draw a comparison in reference to an individual norm (“norma individual”) (285). The idea of comparing a subject’s state to its individual norm is simply another way of describing Bolinger’s concept of “self-comparison.” In contrast to Crespo’s analysis, *estar* is only used to compare the subject’s state to its own state and not to that of a different entity.

Let us now look at how the analysis of both *ser* and *estar* as agents of comparison holds up against Spanish data from everyday speech. Since the use of the verb *estar* with the adjective *rico* to describe animate subjects is pragmatically odd for some speakers, let us examine the following sentence pairs with different, lexically unambiguous predicate adjectives:

- (13) a. Maricela *es* rubia.
b. Maricela *está* rubia.
c. Luis *es* feliz.
d. Luis *está* feliz.

Following Franco and Steinmetz' analysis, in sentence (13a), *Maricela* is described as having blonde hair. Presumably, the implication would be that her hair is notably blonde compared to other women's hair. In sentence (13b), the implication would be that, at the present time, *Maricela* has hair that is blonde compared to its normal color, perhaps because she recently dyed it or it turned lighter in the sun. In sentence (13c), the reading would be that *Luis* is a notably happier person or is happier with his life compared to other people. Sentence (13d) would denote that *Luis* is happy at the present time compared to the way he normally feels emotionally.

Judging by the data in (13), this analysis appears to be potentially descriptively adequate. Furthermore, Franco and Steinmetz attempt to apply their theory to sentences involving one or more of the five senses, like those in (8), repeated below for ease of exposition, which the *estar as indicator of change* analysis fails to generate.

- (14) (8') a. Este jamón serrano *está* fenomenal.
b. Este programa *está* muy interesante.
c. La hermana de Pepe *está* linda.

Now, how does Franco and Steinmetz's comparison criterion apply to explain the copula choice in this kind of examples? The following is their explanation for the use of *estar* instead of *ser* in the sentence, *Este acero está duro*, which they view as connected to the sense of touch:

“...the case just described involves no contradiction, but simply a quite natural extension of the comparison X/X , whereby the difference (between this case and others of comparing X/X) consists solely in the fact that the speaker in question is not comparing X (*este acero*) with what he knows to be the usual state of X (*este acero*), but rather that in this case he is comparing the actual state of X (*este acero*) with the anticipated state of X (which pertains to *este acero*).... Thus the comparison X/X may imply one of two actual comparisons: either the comparison of X (now)/ X (in its usual state) or X (in reality)/ X (in its anticipated state)” (1986, 381).

Following this corollary, one must assume that in sentences like those in (8), there is an implied comparison between: a. the speaker’s perceptual expectancy regarding the entity described prior to utterance time and prior to any sensory experience involving it, and b. the speaker’s actual sensory perception of the entity at the moment he or she experiences it. Let us further explore the descriptive adequacy of this corollary by examining a couple of other sensory-related sentences of the type in (8).

- (15) a. Estos limones *están* dulces.
b. Este azúcar *está* amargo.

By virtue of Franco and Steinmetz’s proposed implied comparison of an entity’s actual state with its anticipated state, one could surmise that the speaker of sentence (15a) likely expected the *limones* to be sour before he or she tasted them. Since the *limones* do not taste the way the speaker expected them to taste, the copula *estar* is used. Likewise, under this interpretation, the speaker of (15b) anticipated that the *azúcar* would be sweet, but it was bitter instead. The actual taste of the *azúcar* contrasts with the anticipated perception of its taste, and therefore, the verb *estar* is used in this sentence as well.

Judging from the sentences in (15), the *implied comparison* interpretation appears to account for sentences such as those in (8) as well as those in which *estar* describes someone's current mood or health such as (3c) and (6a). However, this interpretation breaks down when the notion of *anticipated state* as a variable in the choice of *estar* over *ser* is further analyzed. By its very nature, the *anticipated state* element of the special extension of the X/X self-comparison cannot serve as a criterion for defining a state in natural language, because it is empirically vague. One could conceivably argue for the plausibility of the anticipated sourness of lemons and the anticipated sweetness of sugar as reasonable factors in a logical representation.

Nonetheless, in order to argue for the validity of this type of comparison to be implied when *estar* is used in sentences like those in (8) and (15), one must assume that the speaker has some form of *defined* perceptual expectation regarding the entity prior to perceiving it. If there is no *specifically defined* expectation about what is described before the speaker experiences it, or in other words, if he or she “did not know what to expect”, whether a contrast of *actual state* with *anticipated state* would still apply is not clear. Moreover, if the speaker sensorially experiences something unexpectedly or without any prior expectation about it at all, it appears that the comparison would not be one of its *anticipated state* with its *actual state*, but one of *nothing* with its *actual state*.

Though the authors do not address these possible discourse scenarios, they do assert that the implied comparison of an *anticipated state* with an *actual state* also

generates sentences that describe something that the speaker is experiencing for the first time (381). Note the following examples:

- (16) a. Estos chilaquiles *están* deliciosos. (sense of taste)
b. Esta playa *está* bonita. (sense of sight)

If it were to be assumed that the speaker of (16a) is tasting *chilaquiles* for the first time, it would be impossible to qualify precisely what the *anticipated state* of the *chilaquiles* is. Likewise, if the speaker of (16b) is looking at a beach he or she had previously never seen, what precisely defines its *anticipated state* in terms of semantic logic is completely dependent on the speaker's imagination. Moreover, if the speaker expected the *chilaquiles* to be delicious and the *playa* to be pretty, there is no contrast between their *anticipated state* and their *real state*.

It is unlikely that every time a Spanish speaker tastes food, the copula *estar* is used to report his/her experience because he or she is surprised by its taste in some way. Nonetheless, whether an implied contrast is essential for Franco and Steinmetz' rule to apply is of marginal importance. In light of the fact that the *anticipated state* of a never before experienced entity is a product of the speaker's imagination and may vary greatly from individual to individual, it is clear that it cannot carry the necessary empirical value for factoring into any logical construct in natural language.

Like the *permanent vs. temporary* interpretation of *ser* and *estar*, the *implied comparison* interpretation also "ascribes too much semantic responsibility to the copula" (Roldán, 69). The assumption that a native Spanish speaker must always draw a mental

comparison whereupon his or her choice of copula used is always based is a costly one in any logical construct in the system of language. Not only does a proposed implied comparison that dictates copula choice “ascribe too much semantic responsibility to the copula,” it simply places too much of a cognitive burden on the native speaker, especially for a young child who is acquiring such a rule. In light of the aforementioned data, along with the logical, cognitive and discourse related inconsistencies and ambiguities, the *implied comparison* interpretation of *ser* and *estar* thus may be discounted.

2.5. *Ser* for Inherent Characteristics vs. *estar* for Current Condition

Perhaps one of the most widely accepted interpretations of *ser* and *estar*, is that *ser* is used to describe the inherent traits or qualities of something, while *estar* is used to describe the current state or condition of something. This interpretation is the premise upon which most explanations for when to use *ser* and *estar* found in textbooks and reference manuals are based. This interpretation appears to be descriptively adequate with respect to a substantial number of noun phrases used with these two copula verbs.

- (17) a. Juan *es* médico.
b. Juan *está* de médico.

In sentence (17a), *ser* is used with the noun phrase *médico* to indicate that *Juan* is categorized, classified or identified as a doctor. By virtue of the use of *ser* with the predicate noun phrase, it is known that *Juan* possesses the inherent quality or characteristic of being a member of the medical profession. In sentence (17b), *estar*,

which must be used with the preposition *de* with nominal predicates, is used to indicate that *Juan* is “acting” as a doctor, “standing in” as a doctor or “playing the role of” doctor at the current point in time. The use of *estar* in (17b) suggests that although *Juan* is not normally characterized or identified as a doctor, he is in some way, literally or figuratively, defined as fulfilling the requirements for being in the state of being a doctor.

Though this “trait vs. state” interpretation accounts for the sentences in (17), it proves to be descriptively inadequate with respect to sentence pairs such as these:

- (18) a. Eduardo *es* policía.
b. Eduardo *es* policía por un día.

In (18a), the use of *ser* is accounted for by this interpretation, because it defines *Eduardo* as possessing the inherent quality of being a police officer. However, in (18b), the verb *ser* is used even though Eduardo is not inherently a police officer, but simply being one for a day, which is illustrated by the adverbial phrase *por un día*. Examples like (18b), in which a time adverbial phrase limits the description with the verb *ser* to a very short period of time, render the inherent characteristic versus temporary condition interpretation descriptively inadequate.

As is the case with noun phrases, this same interpretation also appears to be descriptively adequate with adjective phrases.

- (19) a. Pedro *es* feliz.
b. Pedro *está* feliz.
c. Mónica *es* impaciente.
d. Mónica *está* impaciente.

Sentences (19a) and (19c), by means of the verb *ser*, describe inherent characteristics of *Pedro* and *Mónica* respectively under this analysis. In (19a), *Pedro* is represented as being a characteristically happy person, or in other words, someone who is happy with his life. Sentence (19c) represents *Mónica* as an impatient person, or someone who is characteristically impatient. In contrast, sentences (19b) and (19d), in which the verb *estar* is the copula, describe a current condition or state. Sentence (19b) describes *Pedro* as being in the current state or condition of being happy, and (19d) describes *Mónica* as being in the current state or condition of being impatient. The examples in (19) are clearly consistent with the inherent characteristics versus current condition interpretation.

However, as is the case with the *estar as indicator of change* analysis and the *implied comparison* analysis, the *inherent characteristics vs. current condition* interpretation does not generate sentences like those in (8), which are uttered in relation to the stimulation of one or more of the five senses. Note the following additional examples:

- (20)
- a. Esta paella *está* fenomenal. (sense of taste)
 - b. Me encanta esta canción. *Está* linda. (sense of hearing)
 - a. Este sofá *está* duro. (sense of touch)
 - b. Esa chica *está* guapa / buena. (sense of sight)

Sentence (20a), which is acceptable in all dialects of Spanish, is a commentary on what the *paella* tastes like. The speaker of this sentence, especially if he or she is trying the *paella* for the first time, cannot possibly be commenting on its current state as opposed to its inherent qualities. Without any prior experience involving the *paella*, the speaker has

no mental point of reference to compare against how it tastes at the utterance time.

Though such a commentary on how food tastes very often does not represent its current state or condition, *estar* is always used instead of *ser*.

Likewise, the verb *estar* is used in sentence (20d), even though this is a very commonly used sentence to describe the appearance of a person whom the speaker has never seen before. Furthermore, the *inherent qualities versus current condition* interpretation of *ser* and *estar* also breaks down in sentences like (20b) and (20c), which are acceptable in some dialects of Spanish. The *canción* in (20b), especially if it is repeatedly heard on the radio, is very unlikely to be thought of as being able to suffer a change of state. Though one may conceivably say something like “Every time I hear it, it’s like a different song.” or “It sounds different each time that I hear it,” it is still empirically the same exact song every time it is played and heard. The properties of the song itself should be completely stable and never change, however, *estar* is used to describe what it sounds like rather than *ser*.

In a similar vein, sentence (20c) may be used to describe the way the *sofá* feels whether or not the speaker has ever sat on it before. If the speaker is commenting on how the *sofá* feels at the utterance time *in contrast* to the way it has previously felt, the *inherent qualities versus current condition* interpretation of *ser* and *estar* accurately generates this sentence. Nevertheless, if the speaker uttering this sentence is sitting on

the *sofá* for the first time, which is a situation akin to the tasting of the *paella* in (20a), then this analysis of *ser* and *estar* fails to generate sentence (20c).

As is the case with the *estar as indicator of change* analysis and the *implied comparison analysis*, the *inherent qualities versus current condition analysis* fails to generate sentences in which *estar* is used to describe a speaker's impression of something based on the stimulation of one or more of the five senses. The key factor in the inability of these three analyses for generating sentences like those in (8) and (20) is that if the speaker is perceiving what he or she is describing for the first time, there is no preconceived prior, normal or inherent state with which to semantically interface. Despite its wide acceptance in pedagogical circles, by virtue of this data in question, we must also rule out the *inherent qualities vs. current condition analysis* in addition to the other analyses discussed in this chapter.

2.6. Summary

After an in-depth overview of five different traditional analyses of what dictates the use of *ser* and *estar*, we can state without reservation that each one of them is descriptively inadequate for generating all types of sentences in which these two verbs are used. Furthermore, the criteria in question for all of the aforementioned interpretations would indeed fail to generate copula usage in natural language in general and not only in the language-specific case of Spanish. The *permanent versus temporary*

analysis is inadequate, mainly because there are too few, if any, permanent states in existence for the property of permanence to productively trigger the use of one copula over the other.

Moreover, either *ser* or *estar* may be used to describe stable and unstable realities of varying degrees. In the same vein, the *estar as indicator of change* analysis is inadequate, because almost any state may have either resulted from a change or may potentially change. The analysis of certain adjectives changing meaning when used with *ser* and *estar* is faulty, because there is actually no discernable change in their meaning, and if there is, it is negligible at best. The *implied comparison* analysis and the *inherent qualities versus current state* analysis are descriptively inadequate, because they fail to generate sentences in which *estar* describes something that is being perceived for the first time. Such is the case with the *estar as indicator of change* analysis as well.

What we can glean from all of these inadequate interpretations as a whole is that in most cases, *ser* describes a state that is longer in duration than one described by *estar*. The most notable exception to this tendency is the use of *estar* to describe certain types of physical location. Though *estar* does not describe a state that is contingent upon any prior, normal or inherent state of its subject in any way, it appears to describe a state that applies at a given point in time or during a specific time frame. States described by *ser*, on the other hand, do not appear to be temporally restricted to any given point in time or any one period of time unless otherwise indicated by an adjunct adverbial phrase. We

will further explore this apparent phenomenon of *estar* applying to one point or period in time and *ser* as the elsewhere case within a more complex and recent theoretical framework in the next chapter.

CHAPTER THREE

RECENT THEORETICAL DEVELOPMENTS

3.0. Introduction

In contrast with the accounts of *ser* and *estar* described in the previous chapter, those that we will examine in this chapter are of a more recent and more intricate theoretical framework. First, citing Kratzer (1995) and Diesing (1990), I will describe the analysis of stage-level and individual-level predicates with respect to copular sentences. This issue will be explored in both semantic and syntactic terms. Second, I will discuss how this analysis stands up to Spanish data involving *ser* and *estar* citing recent counterevidence from Maienborn (2004, 2005) and Schmitt (1992, 1996, 2005). In the last part of this chapter, I will explore Luján's (1981) analysis of *ser* and *estar* as aspectual indicators as well as approaches that Maienborn (2005) and Schmitt (1992) propose as alternatives to the stage-level/individual-level analysis for copular predication. Ideas presented by these authors, as well as other observations made in this chapter, will serve as the basis for an aspect-inspired framework that I will propose for different uses of *ser* and *estar* and copular predication in general, which will be explained in Chapter Four.

3.1. Davidsonian Event Arguments and Stage- vs. Individual-Level Predicates

When considering analyzing predication with *ser* as not being temporally bound and that of *estar* as applying at a specific point in time or during one specific time period, it would behoove one to consider Carlson's (1977) analysis of all particular properties described by the system of language as either stage-level or individual-level properties. These properties are represented in natural language by either stage-level or individual-level predicates. This view of predication has been reinterpreted and expanded on by many authors in the past few decades, namely Kratzer (1995). According to this analysis, for example, that someone is in a bad mood or is tired would be a stage-level property, or to put it in Kratzer's words, a "transitory" property (125). On the other hand, that someone is tall or is an intelligent person would be an individual-level property. In her words:

"An individual can be a kind like the kind of pots or the kind of pans, but it can also be an object like this pot or that pan. A stage is a spatiotemporal part of an individual: this pot here and now, or that pan there and then" (126).

Kratzer proposes that stage-level predicates "are *Davidsonian* in that they have an extra argument position for *events* or *spatiotemporal* locations" (126). By *Davidsonian*, Kratzer is referring to Davidson's (1967) analysis in which he proposed that the semantics of *action sentences* refers to *events*. In summary, the Davidsonian viewpoint

espouses three main ideas. The first is that action verbs are not multiply ambiguous.

Consider the following sentences:

- (21) a. John *baked* a cake.
b. John *baked* a cake in the kitchen.
c. John *baked* a cake in the kitchen at 6:30.

Though the verb *bake* in each of the above sentences takes a different number of adverbials, and the predicate structure is different for each sentence, the meaning of the verb is exactly the same in all three sentences and is thus the same word. This can be determined by the fact that all three sentences are related by entailments. Specifically, if sentence (21c) is true, sentences (21a) and (21b) are also true, and if sentence (21b) is true, then sentence (21a) is true as well. The second idea is that a predicate, such as a verb, closely selects its arguments.³ Each predicate has a set number of argument places or sub-categorization, and it must appear with the correct number of arguments in order to be part of a well-formed proposition. Adverbial phrases are conjoined to the basic proposition, which includes its required argument/s, as adjuncts, and are not part of the basic proposition itself. The third idea involved in the Davidsonian approach is that the event itself is an argument of the action verb and is logically represented as such. Said event is represented by an event variable e and is existentially bound. Observe the representations of sentences (21a)-(21c) in logical notation.

³ Arguments, in a sense, fill spaces or gaps which are part of the meaning of the predicate.

- (22) a. John baked a cake.
 $\exists e$ (BAKE (John, a cake, e))
- b. John baked a cake in the kitchen.
 $\exists e$ (BAKE (John, a cake, e) & IN (e, the kitchen))
- c. John baked a cake in the kitchen at 6:30.
 $\exists e$ (BAKE (John, a cake, e) & IN (e, the kitchen) & AT (e, 6:30))

In all three representations, the first conjunct (the only one in (22a)) contains the predicate from the main verb and its two arguments. In (22b) and (22c), the adverbials are expressed as separate conjuncts, or adjuncts, that are not part of the main proposition. In this type of representation, an event variable always represents the event itself as an argument of adjoined predicate adverbials.

In Kratzer's analysis, one of the main ideas that she proposes, and the principle one that is relevant for our purposes, is that stage-level predicates contain this Davidsonian extra argument position for events and spatiotemporal locations, but individual-level predicates do not. A very basic logical representation of this dichotomy is illustrated in the following:

- (23) a. Manon is dancing on the lawn.
 $\exists e$ [**dancing**(Manon, e) & **on-the-lawn**(e)]
- b. Manon is dancing this morning.
 $\exists e$ [**dancing**(Manon, e) & **this-morning**(e)]
- c. Manon is a dancer.
dancer(Manon) (128)

In sentences (23a) and (23b), the event variable indicates that the act of dancing on the lawn is a stage-level predicate. In sentence (23c), there is no event variable, because *Manon's* quality of being a dancer is an individual-level property. Kratzer does not fully commit to the notion that the Davidsonian variable is necessarily an event variable. She states that it may simply be an argument for spatiotemporal location. Nonetheless, this variable is only found in the logical representations of sentences that describe stage-level predicates.

One phenomenon that Kratzer cites in making her case for a Davidsonian treatment of the difference between stage-level and individual-level predicates is the use of spatial and temporal expressions in German. Observe the following examples:

- (24) ...weil fast alle Flüchtlinge in dieser Stadt umgekommen sind.
since almost all refugees in this city perished are
- a. "...since almost all of the refugees in this city perished..."
b. "...since almost all of the refugees perished in this city..."
- (25) ...weil fast alle Schwäne in Australien schwarz sind.
since almost all swans in Australia black are
- a. "...since almost all swans in Australia are black..."

Sentence (24), which contains a stage-level predicate, has two possible readings. In the *a* reading, the spatial expression modifies the restricting predicate of the quantifier *fast alle* (almost all). In the *b* reading, the spatial expression modifies the main predicate of the sentence. Sentence (25), which contains an individual-level predicate, has only one

possible reading, which is that of the spatial expression modifying the main predicate of the sentence. The reason for this difference according to Kratzer is that:

“...temporal and spatial expressions accompanying verbs relate to the verb they modify via the Davidsonian argument. The verb introduces an event variable, and the modifiers of the verb impose further restrictions on this variable.” Since stage-level predicates introduce an event variable and individual-level predicates do not, temporal and spatial expressions can modify stage-level predicates but not individual-level predicates (128).

Another argument by which Kratzer makes a strong case for the presence of the event variable in the logical representations of stage-level predicates and the absence of it in those of individual-level predicates is through principles of the well-formedness of quantifier-variable structures. She illustrates this with data from English.

- (26)
- a. *When Mary knows French, she knows it well.
 - b. When a Moroccan knows French, she knows it well.
 - c. When Mary knows a foreign language, she knows it well.
 - d. When Mary speaks French, she speaks it well.
 - e. *When Mary speaks French, she knows it well.
 - f. *When Mary knows French, she speaks it well. (129)

Kratzer assumes that the antecedents of conditionals serve no other purpose besides restricting the domain of an operator. She stipulates that when a conditional sentence introduced by *when* or *if* lacks an overt operator, an adverb like *always* or an epistemic necessity operator will figure into the logical representation. Therefore, the logical representation of (26) is as follows:

- (26') a. *Always [knows(Mary, French)] [knows-well(Mary, French)]
- b. Always_x [Moroccan(x) & knows(x, French)] [knows-well(x, French)]
- c. Always_x [foreign-language(x) & knows(Mary, x)] [knows-well(Mary, x)]
- d. Always_e [speaks(Mary, French, e)] [speaks-well(Mary, French, e)]
- e. *Always_e [speaks(Mary, French, e)] [knows-well, (Mary, French)]
- f. *Always[knows(Mary, French)] ∃_e[speak-well(Mary, French, e)]

(130)

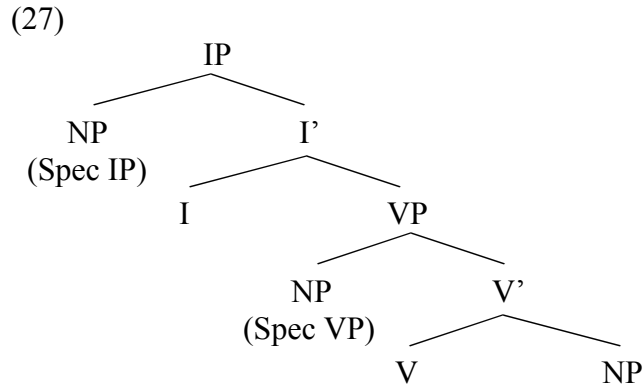
In the logical representations of the ungrammatical sentences, there is a violation of the prohibition against vacuous quantification. In other words, the quantifier in these sentences, which is *always*, must have a variable to bind, and this variable must be bound in both its restrictive clause and in its nuclear scope. Sentence (26a) is ill-formed, because there is no variable to bind at all. Proper names and referential expressions like *Mary* and *French* are constants, which do not introduce a variable into the expression. Moreover, individual-level predicates like *know* do not introduce an event variable either. In (26e), the quantifier *always* binds an event variable, which corresponds to the stage-level predicate *speak*, in its restrictive clause. However, there is no event variable for it to bind in its nuclear scope, since *knows-well* is an individual-level predicate and thus does not introduce a variable. (26f) is ill-formed, because the quantifier *always* does not

have a variable to bind at all, let alone in the restrictive clause. (26b) and (26c) are well-formed, because a common noun introduces a variable which is bound by the quantifier in both the restrictive clause and nuclear scope. Sentence (26d) is well-formed, because there is an event variable, which is bound by the quantifier in both the restrictive clause and the nuclear scope. This variable is present because *speak* and *speak-well* are stage-level predicates.

3.2. The VP/IP Split Hypothesis

Though the semantic representation of different types of predication is what mainly concerns us in this treatment of what determines copula choice in natural language, how both semantic and syntactic representations interface with each other must be taken into consideration. With this in mind, Kratzer and other authors also cite syntactic arguments in support of the stage-level/individual-level distinction. These claims chiefly fall under Diesing's (1988, 1990) VP/IP Split Hypothesis. According to this hypothesis, verb phrases (VP's) contain base-generated or D-structure subjects even if their heads are not unaccusative verbs. These subjects are base-generated in the specifier of VP (spec VP) position. In stage-level predication, the overt subject may remain in the spec VP position or it may raise to the specifier of IP (spec IP) position, leaving behind a trace. With individual-level predicates, the subject that is base-generated in the spec VP position is manifested as PRO, and the overt subject is

generated in the spec of IP, constituting a control structure. These two different subject positions, (spec IP) and (spec VP) can be seen in (27) below.



Kratzer uses data from German to illustrate that there are two different subject positions for stage-level and individual-level subjects.

- (28)
- a. ...weil uns viele Lehrer geholfen haben.
since us many teachers helped have
“since many teachers helped us.”
 - b. Lehrer haben uns viele geholfen.
Teachers have us many helped
“As for teachers, many of them helped us.”

- (29)
- a. ...weil das viele Lehrer wissen.
since this many teachers know
“since many teachers know this.”
 - b. *Lehrer wissen das viele.
teachers know this many
“As for teachers, many of them know this.” (133)

These sentences describe the “quantifier split” construction in German. The *a* sentences contain subordinate clauses with unsplit quantifier phrases. In the *b* sentences, the

language-specific “verb-second” has taken place, and the quantifier phrase is split. Sentence (28b), which contains a stage-level predicate, is acceptable, but (29b), which contains an individual-level predicate, is unacceptable. Quantifier split is acceptable with stage-level predicates but not with individual-level predicates. In (29b), the overt subject originates in the spec of IP position, therefore it cannot have moved there away from the quantifier. For such a subject of an individual-level predicate in German to raise and yield a quantifier split would yield an unacceptable sentence.

This distinction between the position of D-structure subjects in stage-level and individual-level predication, exemplified by Kratzer’s use of data involving quantifier split in German, is borne out in logical semantic representation. According to Kratzer (1995) and Diesing (1990; 1992), a grammatical element’s ability or inability to appear in the nuclear scope or in the restrictive clause of its logical semantic representation is directly derived from its position in the syntax. This syntax/semantics interface is a reflection of what Schmitt (1992) calls the Mapping Hypothesis, whereby material inside VP is mapped into the nuclear scope, and material outside VP is mapped into the restrictive clause. Therefore, in all languages, overt subjects of stage-level predicates, which either remain in spec VP or raise to spec IP at S-structure, are logically represented as being either within the nuclear scope if they do not raise or in the restrictive clause if they do raise. Overt subjects of individual-level predicates, which originate in spec IP and remain there at S-structure, are always logically represented as being within the

restrictive clause. The stage-level/individual-level distinction proposed by Carlson (1977) and supported by Kratzer (1995) and others is intended to apply to all verbal predication. Now, we will examine its application to predication specifically with the Spanish copula verbs *ser* and *estar*.

3.3. *Ser* and *Estar* and the Stage-level/Individual-level Distinction

In recent years, the alternation of *ser* and *estar* in Spanish, as well as that of their cognate verb pairs in other Romance languages, has been interpreted as a lexical reflex of the stage-level/individual-level distinction (Lema 1995, Becker 2000). Thus far, we have concluded that predication with *estar* appears to apply at one given point in time or within one set time frame and that predication with *ser* is not temporally bound.

Somewhat mirroring the *inherent qualities versus temporary condition* interpretation discussed in the previous chapter, it would appear that the stage-level/individual-level distinction would account for the uses of *ser* and *estar* in both syntactic and semantic terms. Under this analysis, *ser*-predication, which is presumably not temporally bound, would fall under the individual-level designation, because it is used most of the time for describing essential properties. *Estar*-predication, which apparently applies at one given point in time or within one set time frame, would fall under the stage-level designation, because it is mainly used for describing properties that are temporary or transitory. Let us now test Kratzer's analysis by observing language-specific data in Spanish with *ser*

and *estar* that parallels that of *hers* and determine what its implications are for the validity of this analysis with respect to copula usage in natural language as a whole.

3.3.1. Arguments in Favor of the SLP/ILP Distinction for *Ser* and *Estar*

At first glance, the application of the stage-level/individual-level interpretation to Spanish, which for our specific purposes is that of *ser* as an individual-level copula and *estar* as a stage-level copula, seems to be descriptively adequate. There are sentences in which *ser* and *estar* are used that appear to serve as evidence in favor of this analysis.

Take for example, the following sentence pair:

- (30) a. Ana *es* simpática.
b. Eduardo *está* cansado.

Sentence (30a), which contains *ser* as the copula verb, describes an essential property belonging to the subject *Ana*. On the other hand, sentence (30b), which contains *estar* as the copula verb, describes a transitory property belonging to the subject *Eduardo*. Since (30a) and (30b) describe an essential property with *ser* and a transitory property with *estar* respectively, these examples meet one of the main criteria for *ser* as an individual-level verb and *estar* as a stage-level verb.

Assuming that predication with *ser* does not contain a Davidsonian event argument and predication with *estar* does, we can expect strings that are similar to and somewhat parallel to the sentences in (26) to follow the exact same pattern of

acceptability. Observe the following examples, which are adapted from similar Portuguese sentences in Schmitt (1996, 363):

- (31) a. *Siempre que María *es* feliz...
b. Siempre que un hombre *es* feliz...
c. Siempre que María *está* feliz...

Assuming that predication with *ser* is individual-level predication, it is logical for (31a) to be unacceptable and for (31b) to be acceptable under Kratzer's analysis. Likewise, assuming that predication with *estar* is stage-level predication; this analysis yields the expected acceptability for (31c). The accuracy of the stage-level/individual-level distinction is also borne out logical semantic notation similar to that in (26')

- (31') a. *Siempre [*es*(María, feliz)]...
b. Siempre_x [hombre(x) & *es*(x, feliz)]...
c. Siempre_e [*está*(María, feliz, e)]...

In terms of quantifier-variable relationships, the unacceptability of sentence (31a) is a result of vacuous quantification. Since every quantifier must have a variable to bind in both its restrictive clause and nuclear scope, (31a) is ill-formed, because there is no variable to bind at all. Since *ser* is assumed to be an individual-level verb, there is no Davidsonian event variable, and since *María* is a proper name, it does not introduce a variable either. On the other hand, sentence (31b) is acceptable, because even though the supposed individual-level verb *ser* does not introduce an event variable, *un hombre*, which is a common noun or indefinite, is represented by a variable in the representation. Judging by the data that we have seen thus far, it would appear that the stage-

level/individual-level distinction wherein *ser* is an individual-level verb and *estar* is a stage-level verb, is descriptively adequate. However, after an examination of further data, it will be clear that the stage-level/individual-level distinction does not accurately account for the uses of these Spanish copula verbs.

3.3.2. Arguments against the SLP/ILP Distinction for *Ser* and *Estar* Presented by Maienborn (2005)

Much evidence that runs counter to the stage-level/individual-level distinction's application for predication with *ser* and *estar* has recently been cited by Maienborn (2005). Based on the definition of Davidsonian eventualities as "spatiotemporal entities with functionally integrated participants (161)," Maienborn cites ontological properties that can follow from this definition.

- (32) a. Eventualities can be located in space and time.
- b. Eventualities can vary in the way that they are realized.
- c. Eventualities are perceptible. (161)

Based on these ontological properties, Maienborn derives linguistic diagnostics for eventualities.

- (33) a. Eventuality expressions combine with locative and temporal modifiers.
- b. Eventuality expressions combine with manner adverbials, instrumentals, comitatives, etc.
- c. Eventuality expressions can serve as infinitival complements of perception verbs. (162)

Maienborn uses these diagnostics as a way to test “predictions of event-based accounts of *ser* and *estar* within the stage-level/individual-level paradigm (162),” in which *estar*-predicates contain a Davidsonian event argument and *ser*-predicates do not. The first diagnostic that Maienborn uses to test the descriptive adequacy of the stage-level/individual-level analysis is that of the ability of *ser* and *estar* constructions to combine with locative modifiers. As would be expected, predication with typical event verbs can be modified with a locative modifier.

- (34) a. Pablo está bailando en la sala.
b. Las chicas comieron helado en la calle.
c. Los estudiantes hacen cola enfrente del cine.

Ser-predications, posited as being individual-level and not describing an eventuality, cannot occur acceptably with locative modifiers as predicted.

- (35) a. *El juguete *es* amarillo debajo del árbol.
b. *Pilar *es* vanidosa delante del espejo. (162)

Given the acceptability of the sentences in (34) and the unacceptability of those in (35), it should follow that *estar*-predicates, which are assumed to contain a Davidsonian event argument, are able to occur acceptably with locative modifiers. However, in the following examples given by Maienborn, we find that this is not the case.

- (36) a. *La camisa *está* mojada sobre la silla.
b. *El champán *está* tibio en la sala.
c. *Carol *está* encinta en su dormitorio. (163)

The inability of these *estar*-predicates to occur with locative modifiers is one example of evidence that *estar* does not introduce an event argument and that the SLP/ILP analysis

for *ser* and *estar* is invalid. According to Maienborn, one must bear in mind that when using locatives as eventuality diagnostics, the locatives must be VP-modifiers and not frame-setting locatives or sentential modifiers. Both sentences with *ser* and *estar* can combine with sentential locatives, as illustrated in the following sentences.

- (37) a. En esta región las fresas *son/están* baratas.
b. En Italia, Maradona *fue* adicto a la cocaína.
c. En esa empresa, la impuntualidad *era* sacrílega. (163)

Such frame-setting or sentential modifiers do not relate to an underlying Davidsonian eventuality argument, but according to Maienborn, “instead provide a semantically underspecified domain restriction on the overall proposition” (163).

Now we will take a look at how predication with *ser* and *estar* stands up to modification by manner adverbials. Following the same pattern of acceptability as that of predication with locative modifiers, manner adverbials may combine with regular eventualities, but cannot combine with either *ser*-predicates or *estar*-predicates.

- (38) a. Irene esperaba pacientemente a Pedro.
b. José Manuel dormía tranquilamente con su osito.
c. *Elena *es* guapa elegantemente.
d. *Luis *es* inteligente interesadamente.
e. *Las uvas *están* dulces sabrosamente.
f. *Mónica *está* cansada tranquilamente.

Maienborn cites examples of *estar*-predication that are acceptable when modified by a manner adverbial. These appear to support the stage-level/individual-level interpretation and contradict the unacceptability of (38e) and (38f).

- (39) a. La ventana *estaba* abierta de par en par.
 b. La caja *estaba* cerrrada fuertemente.
 c. Dolores *estaba* vestida muy elegantemente. (165)

Maienborn explains the acceptability of the examples in (39) by analyzing them as “noncompositional reinterpretations which are triggered by a sortal conflict between the modifier and the copula construction” (165). In other words, the manner adverbials in these sentences do not modify states, but the resultant objects of events. For example, the adverbial phrase *par en par* in (39a) does not modify the window’s state of being open, but the “resultant object of an opening event” (165).

One more diagnostic that Maienborn uses to test the stage-level/individual-level distinction’s application for predication for *ser* and *estar* is their ability to serve as infinitival complements of perception verbs. The following examples illustrate that sentences with regular eventuality expressions yield the expected result for this diagnostic as it does for the other two diagnostics.

- (40) a. Yo vi a Gregorio comer el bocadillo.
 b. Yo vi a Hugo dormir en el sofá.
 c. Yo oí a Maite hablar con Esteban.

Given the virtually identical pattern of acceptability with Spanish yielded by the other two diagnostics with respect to each other, it is no surprise that this diagnostic yields unacceptable or at least odd-sounding sentences with both *ser* and *estar* predicates as well.

- (41) a. ?Yo vi a Esmeralda *ser/estar* guapa.
 b. ?Yo oí a mi abuela *estar/ser* ronca.

- c. ?Yo vi el coche *ser* amarillo.
- d. ?Yo vi el vaso *estar* roto.

Maienborn points out that sentences like these sound better when the context supports an agentive reinterpretation as in the following:

- (42) a. Yo vi a María *ser* cruel con los gatos.
- b. Yo oí al ministro *estar* encantado con los resultados.

Maienborn's explanation for the acceptability of (42a) is that: "Apparently, the perceived entity... is not a state of María being cruel but rather some of María's *activities* that suggest that she is indeed cruel" (166). Her assessment is that no additional contextual material would be required in such a sentence if *estar*-predicates did indeed introduce a Davidsonian eventuality argument and that coercion is available as a last resort for either copula. The fact that coercion makes either predication with *ser* or *estar* acceptable as infinitival complements of perception verbs is evidence that predication with one copula is not inherently more event-oriented than it is with the other (166). Evidenced by the data shown in (34)-(42), predication with *ser* and *estar* fails to pass any of the three diagnostics that Maienborn gives or eventuality as it relates to the stage-level/individual-level analysis.

3.3.3. Arguments against the SLP/ILP Distinction for *Ser* and *Estar* Presented by Schmitt (1992)

Cristina Schmitt (1992) provides numerous counterarguments against the stage-level/individual-level analysis citing data with *ser* and *estar* in Portuguese. Much of the

data that she cites involves how the analysis breaks down with regard to its application to bare plural subjects used with the two copulas. Since bare plural subjects are not allowed in Spanish, whether they refer to generic or existential entities, they will be of no concern to us in this treatment. However, Schmitt does show data with *ser* and *estar* in Portuguese that can be adapted and applied to *ser* and *estar* in Spanish for our purposes of testing the stage-level/individual-level analysis. One example of a breakdown in the application of Kratzer's analysis for *ser* and *estar* that can be derived from Schmitt's findings is the acceptability of the following sentences.

- (43) a. Siempre que María *es* mal educada, ella es muy mal educada.
 b. Siempre que Clark Kent *es* Superman, la ciudad está segura.

In contrast with the accurate acceptability results predicted by the stage-level/individual-level analysis for (26) and (31), the acceptability of (43) is unexpected since these sentences would appear to violate the prohibition against vacuous quantification.

- (43') a. ?Siempre [*es*(María, mal educada)]...
 b. ?Siempre [*es*(Clark Kent, Superman)]...

Pseudo-equative predicates with proper nouns and certain adjectival predicates used with *ser* are acceptable even though there is no variable for the quantifier to bind as evidenced by (43a) and (43b). Since *ser* is an individual-level verb, there is no event variable, and since there is no common noun, or indefinite, there is no variable of any kind to be bound at all. One may posit that *ser* is either interpreted as a stage-level verb in these examples

through coercion or that there is more than one lexical entry for *ser*.⁴ As we have thus far seen various examples that run counter to the application of Kratzer's analysis for *ser* and *estar*, I will avoid adopting this view here and attempt to do so throughout this paper. For our purposes, positing that there are multiple lexical entries for *ser* and *estar* will likely only serve as a costly ad hoc solution for dealing with troublesome data and will thus only be implemented as a last resort.

Another piece of evidence found in Schmitt's (1992) analysis against the SLP/ILP interpretation's application to *ser* and *estar* in Portuguese that can be adapted to *ser* and *estar* in Spanish is related to syntactic structure. Under the VP/IP Split Hypothesis, which interfaces with the SLP/ILP analysis, the stage-level copula *estar* is analyzed as a raising verb. Reiterating this previously mentioned point in more detail, we assume that subjects of the verb *estar* originate in the spec VP position in D-structure where they receive their theta-role and raise to spec IP position where they receive case. The assumed individual-level copula *ser* is analyzed as a control verb. Its overt subject originates in the spec IP position and remains there, where it receives case and a theta role. Such *ser* predicates also contain an unexpressed subject in the spec VP position which is manifested as PRO. The following perfectly acceptable sentences present a particular problem for the VP/IP Split Hypothesis.

⁴ Carlson (1977) suggested that there may actually be up to four lexical entries for BE in natural language: One for stage-level predicates and another for individual-level predicates, as we have seen, plus a third one for shifting SLP's into ILP's and fourth one for shifting ILP's into SLP's.

- (44) a. *Es* tarde.
b. *Es* importante que María escriba la carta.

Since *ser* is analyzed as a control verb under this interpretation, by definition, it should assign a theta-role through INFL to its external subject. However, in (44), *ser* appears with expletive subjects. Since expletive subjects do not receive a theta-role in the system of language, whether they are expressed or not, sentences (44a) and (44b) run counter to the VP/IP Split Hypothesis. The supposed assignment of an external theta-role to the expletive subjects by the copula *ser* through INFL in (44a) and (44b) would be in violation of the Theta-Criterion, and thus these sentences serve as yet another piece of evidence that proves the SLP/ILP analysis descriptively inadequate for *ser* and *estar* in Spanish.

3.3.4. The Descriptive Inadequacy of the SLP/ILP Analysis for Passive Sentences

In addition to Schmitt's observation that the analysis of *ser* as a control verb would result in a violation of the Theta-Criterion in sentences in which *ser* is used with expletive subjects, it may also be assumed that the use of this copula verb in the passive construction would also yield the same type of violation under the VP/IP Split Hypothesis. Observe the following sentences:

- (45) a. El español *es* hablado en muchos países.
b. La casa *fue* destruída por el huracán.

Supposing that *ser* is a control verb, we must assume that its subjects in both (45a) and (45b) originate in the spec IP position at D-structure and remain there at S-structure. Given this assumption, the NP's *el español* in (45a) and *la casa* in (45b) could not have been assigned a theta-role, because passive verbs do not assign an external theta role through INFL to their subjects in spec of IP. The spec IP position is not a theta-marked position in passive sentences. It is generally accepted in Case Theory and Theta Theory that subjects of passive sentences originate as internal arguments of VP and therefore, they receive the thematic role of theme from the passivized verb at D-structure before raising to the spec IP position where they receive nominative case. The fact that the analysis of *ser* as a control verb also results in a violation of the Theta-Criterion in the passive is yet another example of how the stage-level/individual-level analysis proves to be descriptively inadequate in accounting for copular predication.

Although Kratzer's analysis of stage-level and individual-level predicates has been widely accepted in recent years as a grammatical mechanism for accounting for the uses of *ser* and *estar* in Spanish, it fails to generate the numerous data presented in this section and is thus invalid for our purposes here. Given that all of our data thus far suggests that *estar*-predication applies at one specific point in time or during one given time period and that *ser*-predication is not temporally bound, one would assume that the SLP/ILP analysis would accurately serve as a lexical reflex for these two copula verbs. However, Kratzer's analysis fails to account for much Spanish data on both semantic and

syntactical grounds. As the aforementioned data illustrates, *estar*-predicates quite often do not meet the requirements for representing Davidsonian eventualities, and *ser* can behave as a stage-level verb and can also combine with expletive subjects. In light of these and other findings, this analysis can be ruled out in terms of both descriptive and explanatory adequacy. In the remainder of this chapter, we will take a look at Luján's (1981) analysis of these Spanish copula verbs as aspectual indicators, as well as explore solutions that Maienborn (2005) and Schmitt (1992, 2005) propose for accounting for the uses of copular predication in natural language and how they apply to the uses of *ser* and *estar* in Spanish.

3.4. *Ser* and *Estar* as Aspectual Indicators

To reiterate a general observation that has been made throughout this work, it appears that predication with *estar*, with the exception of certain locative phrases, applies at one given point in time or during one specific time period. Moreover, predication with *ser* appears to be longer in duration and is perhaps not temporally bound at all. A common thread shared by all of the analyses that we have previously dealt with up to this point is that they, in one form or another, illustrate this temporally-related dichotomy through the data that they accurately predict. However, at the same time, they fail to define precisely what grounds the parameters for what causes one copula to be used over the other. Perhaps a more viable option for determining what dictates different types of

copular predication in natural language would be to consider the semantic category of aspect.

With respect to copular predication in Spanish, the interpretation of *ser* and *estar* as aspectual indicators is by no means a new one. This theory was embraced by Gili y Gaya (1961), who cites Hanssen (1913) as its originator, as well as Luján (1981). Luján's aspectual treatment of *ser* and *estar* is among those most commonly cited in the relevant literature on these two verbs and will be the one of primary interest to us in this work. Under an aspectual analysis of *ser* and *estar*, *ser* is defined as an *imperfective* copula, and *estar* is defined as a *perfective* copula. According to Luján, the relevant feature [\pm Perfective] specified for predication with these two verbs is assigned to the verb itself rather than to its arguments or a separate categorical node. The reason why, is that this aspectual feature is morphologically assigned to these copulas and to all other verbs in past tense forms. In other words, just as the imperfect and preterite conjugations display imperfective and perfective aspect respectively, so do all forms of *ser* and *estar* (175). Luján describes the aspectual distinction conveyed by *ser* and *estar* as such:

“*Estar*-predicates are perfective and must be interpreted as inherently referring to a delimited time period, i.e. a period of time whose beginning or end (or both) are assumed. *Ser*-predicates are imperfective in that their temporal reference is with respect to an undelimited period of time, covering a number of distinct occasions or delimited time periods, that is, a stretch of time with indefinite beginning and end.” (165)

With this analysis, *estar* is used to describe a state that applies within *one delimited time period*. According to Luján, predication with *estar*, which is perfective, would be logically represented as such:

(46) $A(x)$ at time t_j (177)

This notation expresses that a predicate A is to apply to an individual x within a delimited time period, whose beginning or end (or both) are assumed. This aspectual dichotomy is most evident in the use of *ser* and *estar* with predicate adjectives. For example, in the sentence *Eduardo está feliz*, *Eduardo* is described as being happy at the current stage in time, or in other words, he is in a good mood. By virtue of the use of *estar*, the beginning of his state of being happy is implied.

In contrast with the copula verb *estar*, *ser* describes an imperfective state that applies across an indefinite number of delimited time periods or blocks of time and therefore, predication with *ser* is logically represented as follows:

(47) $A(x)$ at times $t_j \dots t_{j+k}$ (177)

This notation expresses that a predicate A is to apply to an individual x across a stretch of time whose beginning and end are not assumed and extending across a series of several delimited time periods. Luján defines this stretch of time as designating:

”...a relative space of time with some duration (e.g. a moment, an occasion, etc.), such that any portion of the time axis consists of a succession of such periods which are represented here by t_{j+1} , t_{j+2} , t_{j+3} , ..., t_{j+n} , and which are assumed to be linearly ordered (176).”

For example, the sentence *Eduardo es feliz* describes *Eduardo* as being happy during a period of several different “blocks of time” without any implication of when he started being happy or when he may stop being happy. In other words, *Eduardo* is described as being a happy person by nature or generally happy.

This analysis of *ser* as an imperfective copula does not define this verb as atemporal. According to Luján, both *ser* and *estar* have the capacity to denote temporal reference in two distinct manners. The copula *ser* refers to a stretch of time (comprised of several defined delimited time periods) in its *duration*, though neither its beginning nor its end is implied. With *estar*, only one such delimited time period is taken into consideration (176). By virtue of this temporal distinction between *ser* and *estar*, the two verbs are interpreted as being partially synonymous, with *ser* implying *estar* and the inverse not holding true. In other words, at some point in time, all *ser*-predicates have to have been *estar*-predicates (177). For example, in order for a statement like *Eduardo es feliz* to apply, the statement *Eduardo está feliz* theoretically has to have once applied. Conversely, the latter statement may apply without the former ever applying. Moreover, the logical relation of *estar* implying *ser*, but not of *ser* implying *estar* is evidenced by the fact that there are a number of adjectives in the Spanish lexicon that may only occur with *estar*. Examples of such adjectives are *lleno*, *descalzo*, *enojado*, *muerto*, *ausente*, *desnudo*, etc. (182). Any given combination of *estar* with an adjective is conceivably acceptable. This not only holds true for adjectives that typically take *estar* such as

cansado and *enojado*, but also for those that do not typically take *estar* such as *alto*, *grande* and *inteligente*. The use of *estar* with an adjective that is typically used with *ser* may be considered a form of coercion. Such coercion of *estar*-only adjectival predicates into *ser*-predicates, on the other hand, is impossible.

In contrast to the other analyses that we have seen in this work, an interpretation of *ser* and *estar* as aspectual copulas defines the use of these two verbs in terms of a category that applies in all types of verbal predication in natural language. Like tense and mood, aspect is commonly reflected in verbal morphology. As aspectual copulas, *ser* and *estar* may be considered mere allomorphs, whose use solely depends on the temporal reference of the copular predication they describe. Therefore, to posit that *ser* is an imperfective copula and *estar* is a perfective copula would seem costless for writing a rule for when to use them. Though the view of aspect as the main trigger for the use of *ser* and *estar* clearly appears to have its merits, other linguistic factors have been considered in the literature as well. In the next section, we will look at Maienborn's (2005) analysis of *ser* and *estar*, which defines the uses of these two verbs from a discourse-related perspective.

3.5. Maienborn's (2005) Discourse-Based Account of *Ser* and *Estar*

In light of the copious data that runs counter to the stage-level/individual-level analysis and those we observed in the previous chapter, Maienborn (2005) proposes a

discourse-based alternative to account for copular predication in natural language. For our purposes here, we will take a look at how her analysis is claimed to predict the uses of *ser* and *estar* in Spanish exclusively. Utilizing data primarily of *ser* and *estar* with adjectival predicates, Maienborn states three factors which an adequate theory of *ser* and *estar* should account for:

- (48)
- a. In uttering a *ser* or *estar* sentence, the speaker claims (for a certain topic time) that the subject referent has the property expressed by the AP predicate.
 - b. In the case of *estar* predications, the speaker's claim is based on immediate evidence.
 - c. If there is no evidence to the contrary, there is a tendency to correlate *ser* predications with permanent properties and *estar* predications with temporary properties. (167)

Given these criteria for developing a theoretical interpretation that accurately predicts the uses of *ser* and *estar*, Maienborn proposes an analysis that is tripartite. It deals with the alternation between the two copulas within the purview of lexical semantics, compositional semantics and pragmatics.

3.5.1. Lexical Semantics

As is the case with Luján's (1981) analysis, Maienborn assumes that *ser* and *estar* share the same basic meaning, which is identical to that of *be* in English, *sein* in German and copulas in other languages. Her claim is that the only difference between the two verbs is that *estar* carries an additional proposition that links its predication to a specific

discourse situation (167). Citing Clements (1988), Maienborn attributes the lexical distinction between *ser* and *estar* to a distinctive semantic feature that is similar to [\pm NEXUS].

“The basic semantic distinction between *ser* and *estar* is seen in terms of whether a connection to a locus or another situation is presupposed or not. It is argued that *estar* presupposes such a connection ([+Nexus]) while *ser* does not ([-Nexus]) (Clements 1988, 779).”

Maienborn illustrates the idea of the connection to something akin to such a “nexus” for *estar* and the lack of one for *ser* in her proposed logical notation for the lexical entries for these two verbs.

- (49) *ser*: $\lambda P \lambda x \lambda z [z \approx [P(x)]]$
 (50) *estar*: $\lambda P \lambda x \lambda z [z \approx [P(x)] / [s_i | R(z, s_i)]]$ (168)

She claims that rather than introducing an underlying Davidsonian eventuality argument, copula constructions refer to what she calls a “Kimian state” (or “K-state). K-states “combine Kim’s (1969, 1976) notion of temporally bounded property exemplifications with Asher’s (1993, 2000) conception of abstract objects as mentally constructed entities” (168). Maienborn specifically defines K-states as “abstract objects for the exemplification of a property *P* for a holder *x* at a time *t*” (168). Bearing this in mind, the notation in both (49) and (50) expresses that both verbs introduce a referential argument *z* for a K-state that is characterized by the predicate *P* applying to the individual *x*. The difference between the two is that “*estar* carries an additional presupposition that the referential argument *z* is related (via a free variable *R*) to a specific discourse situation

s_i ” (168). Maienborn claims that treating the distinction between *ser* and *estar* in terms of the lexical differences described in (49) and (50) is attractive, because it illustrates their minimal difference in meaning. Also, as she states, no selectional restrictions are placed on either verb, and both may occur with any predicate whatsoever.

3.5.2. Compositional Semantics

Concerning the compositional semantic component of Maienborn’s analysis, meaning composition for *ser* and *estar* is different in terms of the functional category of aspect. Unlike Luján’s (1981) analysis, however, aspect is not the chief factor that determines which copula is used. In this treatment, it is assumed that the category of aspect introduces a “contextually determined *topic time* (Klein 1994),” or in other words, a *topic situation*, which is represented in the logical notation as s^* . The topic situation is defined as the relevant discourse situation (or partial world) to which a speaker’s claim is restricted. A speaker may relate his or her claim to specific or nonspecific (arbitrary) topic situations. Particularly for the verb *estar*, the topic situation serves as the antecedent for the specific discourse referent that it presupposes. Therefore, Maienborn’s hypothesis for *ser* and *estar* with respect to lexical and compositional factors is that:

“By using *estar* speakers restrict their claims to a particular topic situation they have in mind; by using *ser* speakers remain neutral as to the specificity of the topic situation” (169).

As far as aspect is concerned, it contributes to the meaning in copular sentences by establishing a temporal relation between the K-state z and the topic situation s^* . Aspectual operators are introduced into the representation compositionally by a functional head *Asp*. Imperfective aspect indicates that the topic time $\tau(s^*)$ falls completely within the K-state time $\tau(z)$, and perfective aspect indicates that the K-state time $\tau(z)$ falls completely within the topic time $\tau(s^*)$. Predication for verb phrases that denote K-states are thus logically represented by Maienborn as illustrated in (51) below.

- (51) a. (*ser*) IMPERF: $\lambda Q \lambda s^* [z \mid \tau(s^*) \subset \tau(z), Q(z)]$
 b. (*estar*) PERF: $\lambda Q \lambda s^* [z \mid \tau(z) \subset \tau(s^*), Q(z)]$ (169)

In a sense, Maienborn's lexico-semantic approach to *ser* and *estar* is characteristic of an analysis of the Spanish copulas as aspectual indicators. However, rather than aspect being the main factor that determines which copula is used, the topic situation is the main factor, and aspect serves as its source. When a copula construction has imperfective aspect, it does not refer to a specific topic situation, and thus *ser* would be used in Spanish. On the other hand, when a copula construction has perfective aspect, it does refer to a specific topic situation, and thus *estar* would be used in Spanish.

3.5.3. The Pragmatic Component

A third facet of Maienborn's analysis of *ser* and *estar* deals with how pragmatic factors influence which copula is used in Spanish. The chief aim of this part of the analysis is to explain how *estar* predication is restricted to a specific topic situation. For

such a restriction to make sense there must be alternatives to the specific topic time s^* in which the predication does not necessarily apply. In other words, the use of *estar* is justified on pragmatic grounds only if the discourse context supports some type of *topic situation contrast* (s^* contrast). Maienborn claims that there are at least three potential dimensions along which a topic situation contrast can be established. These are:

- (52) a. Temporal dimension: The current topic situation contrasts with previous or later topic situations in which the predicate does not apply to the subject referent.
- b. Spatial dimension: The current topic situation contrasts with differently localized topic situations in which the predicate does not apply to the subject referent.
- c. Epistemic dimension: The current topic situation contrasts with topic situations that do not allow us to decide whether the predicate applies to the subject referent or not. (172)

To illustrate how these topic time contrasts work, Maienborn explains them as they may apply to sentence (53b) of the following minimal pair:

- (53) a. La carretera *es* ancha.
b. La carretera *está* ancha. (171)

A contrast along the temporal dimension (52a) implies that the predication holds temporarily and is similar to the *estar* as *indicator of change* analysis in that there is a contrast between the state described and a previous or future state that applies to the subject. For sentence (53b) the type of contrast described in (52a) would apply if the road that the speaker is describing (perhaps under construction) is wider than it normally is or than it will be. Topic situation contrast (52b) would apply to (53b) if the part of the

road that the speaker is describing is wider in contrast to other parts of the road. The topic situation contrast described in (52c) would apply to (52b) if the speaker is seeing the road for the first time. This is a scenario akin to the sentences in (8), which are problematic for the *estar* as *indicator of change* and *inherent characteristics vs. current state* analyses. Maienborn refers to the use of *estar* in such a case as the discovery interpretation. This claim is inspired by Querido's (1976, 354) assertion that "*estar* is the appropriate copula to report a first sensorial experience." There are likely other potential dimensions along which a topic situation contrast can be established, but for the sake of Maienborn's analysis, the three described in (52) are the most relevant.

In summary, the main factor involved in the alternation between *ser* and *estar* for Maienborn's discourse-based account is the presence or absence of a specificity proposition on the topic situation. *Ser* and *estar* basically share the same meaning with the main difference being that *estar* is the discourse-dependent variant of *ser*. According to the author,

"The discourse dependency is *lexically* triggered by *estar*, *structurally* resolved by means of the functional category of aspect, and finally, *pragmatically* licensed through some kind of topic situation contrast" (175).

Given this discourse-based account for *ser* and *estar*, Maienborn rules out the possibility that the difference between the two copulas is "grounded in a fundamental cognitive division of the world" (174). Moreover, she dismisses the stage-level/individual-level distinction's role (a difference in argument structure) in the grammatical system, as we

saw in Section 3.3.2. In the following section, we will look at Schmitt's (1992, 1996) analysis of *ser* and *estar*, which is based on the relation between aspect and argument structure.

3.6. Schmitt's Analysis: Copula Verbs and Aspectual Composition

One final interpretation of *ser* and *estar* that we will examine in this chapter is that of Schmitt (2005). In this analysis, Schmitt acknowledges that aspect plays a role in copular sentences with *ser* and *estar* in Portuguese. The difference between her interpretation and those of Luján (1981) and Maienborn (2005) is that hers focuses primarily on how aspect is manifested at both the lexical level in combination with the syntactic level in copular predication. For our purposes, we will adapt a few of Schmitt's main points as they may apply to Spanish data.

3.6.1. Distributive Morphology and Generative Lexicon

Schmitt's approach combines principles from Distributed Morphology (Halle and Marantz, 1993) and Generative Lexicon (Pustejovsky, 1995). For Distributed Morphology (DM), the syntactic structure is freely put together out of abstract categories defined by universal features. With regard to aspect, aspectual features appear as part of this set of abstract universal categories. In Schmitt's words, "These features play an important role in combining with lexical roots to generate different verb types and project

argument structures in the syntax” (2005: 1). For Generative Lexicon, logically related sense creation in context is accounted for when words are put together into bigger chunks. However, each new sense that is created through different combinations is not stored in the lexicon. This ensures enough flexibility for predicates to be taken from the lexicon and combined with others in the syntax to produce different but predictable senses (2). The combination of these two principles accounts for how aspect dictates the argument licensing properties of individual lexical items and how aspect is manifested at the phrasal and sentential levels.

3.6.2. *Ser* as Transparent Verbalizer and *Estar* as Non-Transparent Verbalizer

Schmitt adopts the DM assumption that there are actually no verbs in the lexicon. Instead, there are roots that combine with certain features built into the syntax such as category features. Adopting terminology from Kratzer (1996) and Marantz (1997) related to the DM framework, Schmitt assumes that an element called *voice* (or v) represents any type of head related to external arguments. Copula verbs never appear with implicit or explicit external arguments, thus in this DM-inspired framework, they either appear simply as v or $v+P$ (P represents an aspectual feature). $V+P$ is a cluster of features projected as a single head, and while v is obligatory for a head to carry verbal morphology, P is not. V heads that do not carry any aspectual information are called *transparent verbalizers*, and those that do are called *non-transparent verbalizers*.

According to Schmitt, the copula *ser* does not carry any aspectual information but *estar* does. Therefore, *ser* is analyzed as a transparent verbalizer and *estar* as a non-transparent verbalizer. Furthermore, *estar* is claimed to carry the necessary feature for denoting states, while *ser* does not. Now, let us take a look at some data of the type that Schmitt refers to in support of her claims.

3.6.3. *Act Be Readings for Ser and Estar*

Schmitt's analysis of *ser* as a transparent verbalizer largely hinges on its use for describing a person's behavior at a particular point or stage in time. This use is known as the *act be* interpretation of *ser*. In order for an *act be* reading to be acceptable, two requirements must be fulfilled. First, there must be an overt aspectual operator such as the progressive, an adverbial element or the preterite. Such aspectual elements either locate the predicate in time or space or force a non-homogeneous reading. Second, it is also necessary that the complement of *ser* be an open-scale predicate and that it allow an agentive reading of the subject. These requirements are met in the following sentences.

- (54) a. Ella está *siendo* cruel. (progressive)
b. María *fue* simpática. (preterite)
c. Esteban *es* simpático con su novia en la escuela.
(located in space)
d. Yo vi a Pedro *ser* cruel. (perceptual verb report)

Sentences such a (54d) are deemed odd or unacceptable by Maienborn (2005) as mentioned in Section 3.3.2. However, both authors acknowledge that sentences

containing *ser* as an infinitival complement of perception verbs are more acceptable when their subjects carry an agentive reading.

Unlike *ser*, *estar* is predicted to be unacceptable with *act be* readings. In her writings (1992, 1996, 2005), Schmitt does not list *estar* sentences that are syntactically parallel to those like (54a)-(54d). Below, I have listed a set of such *act be* sentences with *estar* in Spanish. The unacceptability of (55a), (55c) and (55d) are predicted by Schmitt's analysis, but the acceptability of (55b) is not. The acceptability of an *act be* interpretation of *estar* with the preterite is a matter that will be addressed in Chapter Five.

- (55) a. *Ella está *estando* enojada.
b. María *estuvo* simpática.
c. *Esteban *está* simpático con su novia en la escuela.
d. *Yo vi a Pedro *estar* cruel.

Schmitt's explanation for the acceptability of *ser* and the unacceptability of *estar* in *act be* sentences lies in the presumption that *estar* is aspectual, but *ser* is not. Being underspecified for aspect and lacking any interpretation as a subevent, *ser* is more flexible with the types and number of aspectual elements and syntactic structures with which it may occur. *Estar*, on the other hand, carries an aspectual specification; therefore, it is more restricted in this regard. Since *ser* is an atemporal, non-aspectual copula in this analysis, the temporal and aspectual scope of its predication wholly depends on its syntactic environment. If there is no such context confining or specifying predication with *ser*, then by default, it applies atemporally or generically. *Estar*, which

carries aspectual information, yields logically contradictory or simply incompatible strings when combined with other aspectual elements in many cases (13-15).

3.6.4. *Ser* and *Estar* and Statehood

In this analysis, Schmitt describes *estar* as denoting a state and *ser* as not denoting a state. Embracing the notion that states have the property of being true at moments in time (Carlson, 1981), Schmitt defines a state as having a “subinterval property.”

- (56) “Every open subinterval I’ of an open interval I where a state is true is also an interval where the same state is true.
(16, modified from Smith, 1991)”

The copula *estar*, since it carries the aspectual feature *P*, is associated with a state type of subevent. Since *ser* by itself does not contain aspectual information, nor does it have a subinterval property, it is atemporal and thus does not denote a state.

Rather than analyze *estar* as a stage-level copula or one whose predication applies within one delimited time period, Schmitt claims that *estar* is just a state whose duration depends on the syntactic context in which it is used. Citing locative sentences like the following, Schmitt claims that *estar* cannot be claimed to apply to one stage in time or one delimited time period.

- (57) a. La casa *está* en la Calle Guadalupe.
b. Los Pirineos *están* en España.

In Portuguese, as in Nonstandard Spanish, *ser* is also acceptable in locative phrases that describe geographical and other types of stable physical location. Therefore, Schmitt

attributes the temporary or stage-like reading of *estar* in other types of sentences to implication. A stage-like reading for *estar* is either implied through the syntactic context in which it occurs or in opposition to the atemporal reading that *ser* gives in the same context (19).

Schmitt's (2005) analysis of *ser* and *estar* in Portuguese is quite different from those of Maienborn (2005) and Luján (1981) in many respects. Rather than attributing temporal structure and aspect to both *ser* and *estar*, the author posits that only *estar* carries these properties. Moreover, pragmatic and discourse-related factors are not considered in this treatment either. While providing an alternative to the application of Kratzer's (1995) analysis to *ser* and *estar*, Schmitt likewise explains the distinction between the two copulas in terms of the syntactic environments in which they occur. By virtue of the Generative Lexicon framework, the lexical properties of *ser* and *estar* may be analyzed in isolation with respect to how they may combine with different elements to create different meanings. At the same time, via Distributed Morphology, their denotation is entirely dependent on the types of elements with which they may be used. Since *ser* is analyzed as non-aspectual and atemporal, it licenses more types of phrases and aspectual elements than does *estar*, which is a temporally specified aspectual copula. This assertion is primarily based on the acceptability of *ser* and the unacceptability of *estar* in *act be* sentences, and it can be applied to other types of sentences as well.

3.7. Summary

In this chapter, we have seen a number of recent theoretical approaches for predicting different types of copular predication in natural language and specifically, how they apply to *ser* and *estar* in Spanish. The key to understanding what precisely triggers one to be used over the other lies in the fact that *ser*-predication is typically longer in duration than *estar*-predication. Though the *stage-level/individual-level* analysis (Kratzer, 1995) has been claimed to account for predication with *ser* and *estar*, there is much data involving these two copula verbs that it does not predict. As evidenced by Maienborn (2005), neither *ser* nor *estar* pass diagnostics for occurring with an eventuality argument. As applied to Spanish, Portuguese data provided by Schmitt (1996) shows that predication with *ser* and *estar* would often violate the Theta Criterion under the *stage-level/individual-level* analysis.

In lieu of attributing a *stage-level/individual-level* distinction to the differences between predication with *ser* and *estar*, we considered the category of aspect. Luján (1981) describes *ser* as imperfective and *estar* as perfective. This describes *estar*-predication as applying during one delimited time period with its beginning or end (or both) implied. By contrast, *ser*-predication would apply across a series of several delimited time periods with no beginning or end implied. Maienborn (2005) claims that while imperfective and perfective aspect play a role in the use of *ser* and *estar* respectively, pragmatic and discourse-related factors are also involved. The crux of her

analysis is that the use of *estar* is primarily triggered by an implied topic situation contrast, which is discourse dependent. Finally, Schmitt (2005) claims that *ser* is atemporal, non-aspectual and does not denote a state, while *estar* does have aspectual properties and does denote a state. The inspiration for this claim is that *ser* is more flexible in the type of phrases and aspectual elements that it can license than *estar*.

From the observations that we have made in this chapter with regard to different points of view and data involving *ser* and *estar*, a few assumptions can be made. The distinction between predication with *ser* and *estar* is related to aspectual and temporal factors in some way. These and other copula verbs in natural language do not occur in isolation. Therefore, their lexical, and specifically, their aspectual properties are intermeshed with those of other syntactic and semantic elements with which they are used. Going beyond the syntactic level, since individual sentences in natural language do not occur in a vacuum, pragmatic and discourse factors may be worth considering when analyzing *ser* and *estar*. In the next chapter, I will test Maienborn's (2005) analysis for descriptive adequacy with *ser* and *estar* in Spanish, as well as evaluate the explanatory adequacy of discourse-based frameworks in general.

CHAPTER FOUR

CRITICAL ASSESMENT OF A DISCOURSE-BASED INTERPRETATION

4.0. Introduction

In this chapter, we will delve further into Maienborn's (2005) discourse-based analysis of *ser* and *estar* in Spanish. For this critique, much emphasis in particular will be placed on the theoretical plausibility of an aspect-pragmatics interface for an adequate model of natural language. In Section 4.1, I will examine some theoretical premises of Maienborn's analysis and test them for descriptive adequacy against various data with *ser* and *estar*. Particular attention will be given to the notion of a topic situation contrast along a given dimension. Section 4.2 deals with arguments in favor of the theory, which are based primarily on the extension of its aspect/pragmatics interface to other aspectual phenomena in Spanish. In Section 4.3, I will present arguments against a discourse-based analysis for natural language in general. These will be based on how grammar and pragmatics are cognitively internalized as well as variation across different languages and dialects. Section 4.4 summarizes the findings in the chapter.

4.1. Testing Maienborn's (2005) Analysis for Descriptive Adequacy

Maienborn's (2005) interpretation of *ser* and *estar* in Spanish takes into account a few factors that many other analyses of these two verbs do not. Among these are the possible roles that discourse and pragmatics play in determining which copula is used in a

given sentence. By positing that *estar* is the discourse-dependent variant of *ser*, which is linked to a specific discourse situation and licensed through a topic situation contrast, most uses of these two verbs can be reasonably predicted. Confining *estar*-predication to a specific discourse situation justified by a situation topic contrast appears to be especially useful for predicting uses of *estar* with adjectives. Unlike other analyses that we have seen in this treatment, Maienborn's gives an account for sentences such as those in (8) and (20), which may describe entities that are being perceived for the first time. Nonetheless, there are assumptions in this analysis about the distribution of these two verbs that appear to be tenuous in nature. Furthermore, a topic situation contrast involving *estar*-predication and a lack of one with *ser*-predication may not be sufficiently adequate for predicting many sentences with these two copulas. I will begin my critique of Maienborn's analysis by examining a couple of its basic assumptions concerning the distribution of *ser* and *estar* in Spanish and testing them for descriptive adequacy.

4.1.1. Evidentiality and the Use of *Estar*

According to Maienborn, there are three factors that an adequate theory of *ser* and *estar* should account for. These were listed in the previous chapter in (48), and for our purposes, one of them in particular will be of special interest to us here. The factor that we will discuss (listed in (48b)) is that in the case of *estar* predications, the speaker's claim is based on immediate evidence (167). For the sake of clarity and brevity, in this

section, we will focus almost exclusively on the use of *ser* and *estar* with adjectival phrases. Judging by Maienborn's reference to Querido's (1976) assertion that *estar* is the appropriate choice of copula for describing a first sensorial experience (354), I will assume that "immediate evidence" refers to evidence that can be immediately seen or perceived in some other way at the speech time. As we saw in Chapter Two, *estar* is indeed frequently the copula of choice in sentences that describe the stimulation of one or more of the five senses. Such sensory stimulation would constitute immediate evidence, and by virtue of Querido's and Maienborn's assertion, the use of *estar* would be justified in (20), repeated below.

- (58) (20') a. Esta paella *está* fenomenal. (sense of taste)
b. Me encanta esta canción. *Está* linda. (sense of hearing)
c. Este sofá *está* duro. (sense of touch)
d. Esa chica *está* guapa / buena. (sense of sight)

Sentences such as these with *estar* may be uttered to describe a first-time sensorial experience, which would obviously involve immediate evidence. This type of reading would correspond to what Maienborn calls the *discovery interpretation* of *estar* (160). Therefore, it would thus meet her criterion, mentioned in the previous chapter, that an adequate theory of *ser* and *estar* predicts that for *estar* predications, the speaker's claim is based on immediate evidence.

The role of evidentiality in the choice of verbal morphology is theoretically sound and can be seen in a number of languages. One example of this phenomenon can be witnessed in spoken Welsh. When a speaker of Welsh is reporting on an event, a verbal

paraphrase is used if he or she is a witness to the event taking place. On the other hand, a synthetic verb form is used if the speaker is aware of the event but is not a witness of it taking place "(Adams, et al. 2005).

- (59) a. Cysg-a-‘r baban.
 sleep-3s.pres-the baby
 “The baby is sleeping (elsewhere).”
- b. Mae-‘r baban yn cysgu.
 be.3s.pres-the baby in sleep
 “The baby is sleeping (I see it).”
- (60) a. Rhed-a-‘r bachgen (y tu allan i)
 run-3s.pres-the boy outside
 “The boy is running (outside).”
- b. Mae-‘r bachgen yn rhedeg
 be.3s.pres-the boy in run
 “The boy is running (I see it).” (3)

Sentences (59a) and (60a), which contain the synthetic verbal construction, would be used if the speaker has no immediate evidence for the proposition expressed but is aware of the event described. Sentences (59b) and (60b), which contain the analytic verbal construction, would be used if the speaker is a witness to the occurrence of the event expressed by the predicate (3). Given these data from Welsh, it would be feasible to posit that copula choice may be based on the presence or absence of immediate evidence in Spanish or in other languages.

Though the idea of the presence of immediate evidence serving as a requirement for *estar* to be used over *ser* is supported by the data in (20), counterexamples involving both *ser* and *estar* are common and easy to find. Let us consider the following sentences.

- (61) a. Estos tacos *están* buenos.
b. Esos tacos en Laredo *están* buenos.
c. Hortensia *está* muy guapa.
d. Hortensia, la chica que conocí anoche, *está* muy guapa.

A sentence like (61a) would most likely be uttered while the speaker is sitting at a table within sight of the *tacos*, having just tasted them. This sentence would thus fulfill the immediate evidence requirement for *estar*. The same would hold true for (61c), which may be uttered at a party at a time during which *Hortensia* is within the speaker's field of vision. However, sentence (61b), which describes the way *tacos* that are not being perceived during the speech time taste, contains the verb *estar*. Likewise, sentence (61d), which may describe a girl that the speaker is not looking at, also contains the verb *estar*. Though *estar* may be used when a speaker directly recalls a sensory experience involving a particular entity, said entity need not be present, and thus immediate evidence (at least during the speech time) is not a requirement for *estar* predication.

Estar can also be used in predication that is not based on any immediate evidence at all, current or otherwise. Let us consider the following sentences.

- (62) a. Juan *está* en el centro ahora. (I do not see him.)
b. Mario *está* enfermo. (Somebody told me he is.)

The speaker of sentence (62a) may very well be referring to the current location of someone who he or she does not see. Likewise, sentence (62b) may be based on information that the speaker received second hand regarding the health of the subject. In contexts such as these, immediate evidence plays no part whatsoever in *estar* predication. Moreover, *ser* may be used instead of *estar* in predication based on immediate evidence as in the following sentences.

- (63) a. *Eres* muy linda.
b. Cruz Azul *es* muy bueno.

We may suppose that (63a) is spoken by a bold man who is standing face to face with an attractive woman at a party, and that (63b) is uttered while the speaker is watching Mexican soccer on television. Given these data and those of (61), we may assume that immediate evidence is neither a requirement for *estar* predication nor is it prohibited for *ser* predication.

It is a fact that *estar* is indeed the preferred copula for describing a first sensorial experience, especially when describing the way something tastes. Furthermore, according to Querido (1976), the use of *estar* for describing something perceived for the first time is necessitated by default if the speaker is describing the current state of something whose usual state cannot be assumed. The example he gives from Portuguese, which can be adapted to Spanish, is that of a botanist describing the color of leaves on a tree, not knowing if they turned that color or if they are always that color (353).

Nonetheless, that *estar* is preferred over *ser* when reporting a first sensorial experience

and necessitated when the speaker cannot assume the usual state of what is being described is insufficient grounds for positing that immediate evidence is required for its use at all times.

When describing a usual or characteristic state, *estar* is often used instead of *ser* with an adjectival phrase when the speaker recalls a sensory experience that he or she is not engaged in at the speech time as in (61b) and (61d). Moreover, *estar* may also be used to describe such an experience in the past tense as in a sentence like *La paella estuvo muy rica*. *Ser* may also be used instead of *estar* to describe something based on immediate evidence, especially if its usual state can be assumed. The use of *estar* for describing a given sensorial experience, initial, subsequent or recalled, also tends to carry more emphatic weight than *ser*. Though immediate evidence is not a pragmatic requirement for *estar* to be used at all times, it enables it to be used over *ser* with adjective phrases in certain contexts. Provided that the speaker's claim is based on at least one encounter with immediate evidence, at the present moment or otherwise, *estar* may be optionally used instead of *ser*. If a speaker perceiving something for the first time cannot logically assume its usual state, *estar* is used by default. Maienborn's claim that immediate evidence is a requirement for *estar* predication raises a very important pragmatic issue for explaining the usage of *ser* and *estar*. However, by virtue of data provided here, we may assume that it must be modified in order for a theory partially based on it to accurately predict the uses of *ser* and *estar* in Spanish.

4.1.2. Selectional Restrictions for *Ser* and *Estar*

Another assumption that Maienborn makes with respect to *ser* and *estar* is that both verbs may occur with any type of phrase and thus have the same selectional properties. Given that both of these verbs fail all three of the author's eventuality tests, listed in (33), she assumes that they basically share the same meaning. The identical results of her eventuality diagnostics for both verbs, along with their thus apparent similarity in meaning, suggest that these two verbs may be syntactically interchangeable.

According to Maienborn:

“...no selectional restrictions are imposed on either *ser* or *estar*, and the two copula forms do not differ in argument structure. That is, in principle, both *ser* and *estar* can combine with any predicate whatsoever. Given this, we do not expect *ser* and *estar* to display any major differences with respect to combinatorial machinery. And in fact, the eventuality tests...have revealed that *ser* and *estar* have the same distribution in all relevant respects” (168).

Maienborn's claim that *ser* and *estar* share the same selectional properties is tenable only to a minor degree. Both verbs may occur with adjectival phrases, which include past participles. *Ser* and *estar* may also both occur with prepositional phrases, which include locative expressions. However, beyond these two syntactic environments, the types of phrases that *ser* and *estar* may select are mutually exclusive.

For the sake of clarity, let us observe their distribution in the following sets of sentences.

- (64) a. Carlos *es* profesor.
b. *Carlos *está* profesor.
c. Lázaro *es* un genio.
d. *Lázaro *está* un genio.
e. *Es* que no tengo dinero.
f. **Está* que no tengo dinero.

As evidenced by (64a) and (64b), *ser* may occur with a noun phrase, but *estar* used with a noun phrase is unacceptable. Sentences (64c) and (64d) illustrate that *ser* is the only acceptable copula that can be used with a determiner phrase. In sentences (64e) and (64f), we can see that *ser* is acceptable when used with a complementizer phrase, but *estar* is unacceptable in this syntactic environment. Here are examples of the behavior of *ser* and *estar* with respect to the progressive construction.

- (65) a. Yo *estoy* hablando.
b. *Yo *soy* hablando.
c. Amparo *está siendo* cruel.
d. *Amparo *está estando* cruel.

As illustrated in (65a) and (65b), *estar* is the copula that serves as the auxiliary verb that is used with the present participle in the progressive construction; *ser* cannot perform this function. On the other hand, *ser* may serve as the main verb in a progressive construction, but *estar* cannot, which is evidenced by (65c) and (65d) respectively.

By virtue of the data presented in (64) and (65) above, it is clear that *ser* and *estar* do not share the same selectional restrictions. When the semantic dichotomy which is morphologically represented by these two verbs is illustrated in textbooks or theoretical treatments, they logically tend to appear in minimal pairs. Since their difference in

meaning is most observable in examples with adjectival phrases, it is the type of phrase most commonly tested by syntactic diagnostics. Save for their usage with adjectival and prepositional phrases, *ser* and *estar* can only occur in mutually exclusive syntactic environments. Given that their semantic properties are different, it is logical that their syntactic distribution would differ as well. This relationship will be further explored later in this chapter.

4.1.3. Topic Situation Contrast along a Spatial Dimension

As previously stated, Maienborn claims that *estar* always refers to a specific discourse situation and that its use is licensed through some type of topic situation contrast, or *s** contrast. One of the three dimensions along which a topic situation contrast can be established that are listed by the author is that of a *spatial dimension* (see (52b)). As we saw in the previous chapter, Maienborn describes a contrast of this nature as one between the current topic situation and “differently localized topic situations in which the predicate does not apply to the subject referent” (172). Let us now consider more in depth what exactly a topic situation contrast along a spatial dimension implies and what types of *estar*-predication it predicts.

Like most of her data involving *ser* and *estar*, the type of sentence that Maienborn gives to illustrate a topic situation contrast along a spatial dimension is one in which *estar*

is used with an adjectival phrase. For the sake of clarity and ease of exposition, let us observe again the sentences in (53) below.

- (66) (53') a. La carretera *es* ancha.
b. La carretera *está* ancha. (171)

In the last chapter, we saw that an s^* contrast along a spatial dimension would apply to sentence (53b), according to Maienborn's analysis, if the part of the road that the speaker is describing is wider in contrast to other parts of the road. Under this interpretation, the spatial dimension, along which the s^* contrast is manifested, encompasses the entire subject itself. In other words, in (53b) the spatial dimension in question is the entire span of the road being described. The "differently localized topic situations" with which this *estar* predication contrasts may be comprised of the rest of the physical subject itself or simply other parts of it. Consequently, when viewed from a logical rather than a pragmatic perspective, this type of predication may be broken down in terms of set theory. All parts of the entire subject may be considered as belonging to a set and the part of it described with *estar* as one element of that set, which is highlighted and contrasted with the others.

If we are to critique a particular analysis of *ser* and *estar* with respect to its treatment of spatial phenomena, it would behoove us to look beyond predication with adjectival phrases. In her analysis, Maienborn does not include uses of *ser* and *estar* with locative phrases, headed by a preposition or otherwise, and how they fit into a discourse-

based framework. Let us now consider the following sentences, in which *estar* is used with a locative phrase.

- (67) a. El libro *está* en la mesa.
b. La biblioteca *está* en la Avenida Nuñez.

In both of these sentences, *estar* is used with a locative phrase to describe the physical location of objects located in space. The object in sentence (67a) is moveable, and the one in (67b) is not. Supposing that *estar* represents an s^* contrast along a spatial dimension in sentences such as these, which describe physical location, we must posit that the spatial dimension in question is different from the one involved in (53b). Unlike the spatial dimension related to *estar* predication with adjectival phrases as in (53b), the one involved with sentences like (67) is not comprised of the entire subject itself. In (67a) and (67b), the predication applies to the entire book and the entire library respectively. Therefore, the spatial dimension along which the s^* contrast is drawn is one that encompasses all points in space. Presumably, the specific topic situation described by *estar* would denote the physical location of the subject, which would contrast with all other physical locations in the universe of discourse. In terms of set logic, for sentences like (67), all physical locations in the universe of discourse would be considered a set, and the location that the subject occupies would be contrasted with the others in that set.

Since it appears that the nature of the spatial dimension and s^* contrast involved in both (67a) and (67b) would be the same, the length of time during which a subject occupies a given position in space would be irrelevant. Moreover, according to

Maienborn, of the three potential *s** contrasts that she describes; only the contrast along a temporal dimension holds temporarily (172). As we have observed thus far in this work, the use of *estar* to describe geographical or celestial location has proven to be typically problematic when analyzing the behavior of the Spanish copulas. In terms of aspect, the use of *estar* to describe a moveable object as in (67a) would meet the criteria for describing predication that is perfective. The location of a moveable object such as a book is thought to be quite static by nature and applying within one delimited time period with an implied beginning and/or endpoint. On the other hand, the location of an immovable object such as the library in (67b) would meet the criteria for being imperfective. Such locative predication would presumably apply across a stretch of time consisting of several delimited time periods, with no implied beginning or endpoint, however, *ser* is not the copula verb used. Though the use of *estar* in examples like (67a) as well as (67b) would appear to conflict with a purely aspectual dichotomy, any inconsistency is resolved in Maienborn's analysis by the pragmatic component. By attributing the exclusive use of *estar* for describing physical location to a topic situation contrast along a spatial dimension, the stability of a given location is not a factor. Therefore, it would appear that the use of *estar* for describing geographical or physical location would not be an exception, but would be accurately predicted by Maienborn's discourse-based interpretation of the Spanish copulas.

Thus far, it appears that Maienborn's analysis accounts for all predication that is related to a spatial dimension or one type or another. However, its descriptive adequacy only holds insofar as only the verb *estar* is used instead of *ser* with locative phrases. Data with *ser* used with locative phrases are quite ubiquitous in all dialects of Spanish, and most of the time their usage is standard. The most obvious standard usage of *ser* with a locative phrase is that which describes where an event takes place, which can be observed in the following examples:

- (68) a. El concierto *es* en el estadio.
b. La fiesta *es* en el parque.

When describing the location of an event, *ser* is always used instead of *estar* regardless of the length of the duration of the event. Concerning Maienborn's claim that a topic situation contrast along a spatial dimension elicits the use of *estar*, sentences such as those in (68) may be problematic. One may assume that a description of the location of an event, just like that of the location of a physical object, would reflect an *s** contrast along a spatial dimension. Nonetheless, the use of *estar* would be unacceptable in (68a) and (68b) unless the predication refers to people or other physical objects involved in the event. Data with *ser* predication like those in (68), therefore potentially contradict the pragmatic component of Maienborn's discourse-based interpretation of the Spanish copulas.

For the sake of this discourse-based analysis, we may suppose that there are other overriding linguistic factors, pragmatic or otherwise, which would account for the

triggering of the use of *ser* instead of *estar* when describing the location of events. What those factors may be and how they would fit into this analysis is unclear. Nonetheless, this dichotomy of *place of event versus physical location* becomes a moot point given that *ser* is also used to describe physical location in Nonstandard Spanish and in Portuguese as well. Now, observe the following sentences, whose acceptability judgments are applicable to many native speakers of Spanish.

- (69) a. El baño *está* allí.
b. El baño *es* allí.
c. ¿Dónde *está* la casa de Alejandro?
d. ¿Dónde *es* la casa de Alejandro?
e. El libro *está* en la mesa.
f. *El libro *es* en la mesa.

In Nonstandard Spanish, the physical locations of objects that are immovable or occupy a fixed position in space are sometimes expressed with *ser* instead of *estar*. For example, for some speakers, either copula is acceptable for verbally locating the bathroom in (69a) and (69b) and the house in (69c) and (69d), whose positions in space are very stable. On the other hand, the location of a moveable object like the book in (69e) and (69f) can only be described using *estar*.

With respect to Maienborn's analysis, the nonstandard option of using either *ser* or *estar* for locating fixed objects seems inconsistent with the notion that an *s** contrast along a spatial dimension always triggers *estar*. If *ser* may be used to describe the location of physical objects as well as events, then the role that pragmatics may play in the use of these two verbs becomes less clear. The exclusive use of *estar* for describing

the location of moveable objects and *ser* for describing where events take place, may still be predicted via Maienborn's discourse-dependent framework. However, since predication reflecting an *s** contrast along a spatial dimension cannot hold temporarily, we must look to other factors involved in this interpretation. Though the distinction between the usage of *ser* and *estar* with adjectival phrases might very well be a pragmatic one, their differences in usage with locative phrases may be better explained in terms of aspect. How the use of *ser* and *estar* with locative phrases would precisely fit into a discourse-based framework is not clear and will not be explored further in this work. How aspect likely plays a key role in the use of *ser* and *estar* with locative phrases will be elaborated on more in the next chapter.

4.1.4. Topic Situation Contrast along a Temporal Dimension

Another dimension along which a topic situation contrast may apply, which Maienborn describes, is a temporal dimension (see (52a)). In this case, the topic situation described “contrasts with previous or later topic situations in which the predicate does not apply to the subject referent” (172). A topic situation contrast of this nature, or lack thereof, would effectively account for most cases of *estar* being used with an adjective phrase. Since the *estar* predication would hold temporarily with such a contrast, minimal pairs like the ones from (19), which are repeated below, would be accurately predicted.

- (70) (19') a. Pedro *es* feliz.
 b. Pedro *está* feliz.
 c. Mónica *es* impaciente.
 d. Mónica *está* impaciente.

For (19a) and (19c), the topic time would fall completely within the K-state time⁵, and thus *ser* is the copula used to show that the predication is imperfective. Independent of any specific context or time period, *Pedro* is described as happy and *Mónica* as impatient in (19a) and (19c) respectively. For (19b) and (19d), conversely, the K-state time would fall completely within the topic time, and thus *estar* is used to show that the predication is perfective. Within a specific topic time, which contrasts with previous or later ones, *Pedro* is described as happy and *Mónica* as impatient in (19b) and (19d) respectively.

Though it appears that the three potential *s** contrasts that are listed by Maienborn predict all uses of *estar* with an adjectival phrase, there may be other pragmatic factors to be taken into account. Let us now take another look at the minimal pair from (9), which was discussed in Chapter Two.

- (71) (9) a. Paco *es* gordo.
 b. Paco *está* gordo.

As previously mentioned, sentence (9b) implies that *Paco* is overweight at the present time but does not necessarily imply that he was not overweight before or will not be in the future. If the choice of *estar* over *ser* in such a sentence does not represent an *s** contrast along a temporal dimension, it would have to be elicited by a different type of

⁵ As mentioned in the previous chapter, Maienborn specifically defines K-states as “abstract objects for the exemplification of a property *P* for a holder *x* at a time *t*” (168).

contrast. Though *estar* predication such as this may instead be based on immediate evidence, or along an epistemic dimension, speaker courtesy may be a factor worth considering. As seen in Chapter Two, a native speaker will often choose sentence (9b) over (9a), because it sounds more polite. If politeness is the main motivation for choosing *estar* over *ser* in a given case, then what type of *s** contrast would be represented? Since Maienborn states that “there are *at least* three dimensions along which an *s** contrast can be established.” (171, emphasis mine), her analysis is open to other types of pragmatic factors coming into play when using *estar*. Precisely what type of contrast that one based exclusively on courtesy would constitute is open to debate. It appears that confining a description to a specific topic situation that is independent of past or future topic situations as in (9b) is a natural reflex of using a more polite speech register. For example, sentence (9a), which describes *Paco* as simply being an overweight person, is naturally more harsh sounding and less polite than sentence (9b), which describes him as merely overweight at the present moment. Pragmatic factors like politeness may either operate independently from or in tandem with one of the three types of *s** contrasts mentioned by Maienborn. How these would fit into a discourse-based interpretation perhaps merit further investigation but will not be further explored here.

Thus far in our critique of Maienborn’s analysis of *ser* and *estar*, we have found that though there are inconsistencies, most of its principles apply or are adaptable for many types of sentences with copular predication in Spanish. On the one hand, the most

strikingly refutable claim made by the author is that *ser* and *estar* do not differ in argument structure. In reality, however, the two copulas do indeed appear in almost completely mutually exclusive syntactic environments. On the other hand, the pragmatic elements involved in this interpretation do appear to influence, in some way, whether *ser* or *estar* is the copula used in a particular context. For example, though immediate evidence is not a requirement for *estar* predication, it is necessary for *estar* to optionally be used instead of *ser* in certain types of sentences. Moreover, the three types of topic situation contrasts listed by Maienborn would accurately predict the uses of *ser* and *estar* in most cases with adjectives. How the usage of *ser* and *estar* with locative phrases and other pragmatic factors such as politeness would fit into this analysis, however, is unclear. Overall, my general assessment of this discourse-based analysis is that while it accurately predicts many uses of *ser* and *estar* quite nicely, how it can be extended to other uses that are not mentioned by the author is yet to be seen.

4.2. Advantages of a Discourse-Based Framework for *Ser* and *Estar*

Thus far in this chapter, we have examined some fundamental principles of Maienborn's analysis and tested them for descriptive adequacy against a variety of data from Spanish. Having now considered the empirical accuracy of this particular discourse-based framework, it would behoove us to focus our attention on the theoretical value of such a framework in more general terms. For Maienborn's interpretation of *ser*

and *estar*, the main factor involved in the choice between the two copulas is a specificity proposition on the topic situation being described. As we have seen, a pragmatically licensed topic situation contrast is required for *estar* to be used. Supposing that *ser* and *estar* are treated as aspectual copulas and their usage is determined by pragmatic factors, an effective way to evaluate a framework such as Maienborn's would be to determine whether it applies to other verbal phenomena in the system of language. We will begin our evaluation by considering the advantages of such a framework.

It may be argued that pure semantic logic in tandem with syntactic factors is the sole cognitive element that plays a part in the choice of particular aspectual forms in natural language. However, the production of language is an interpersonal and cultural, as well as a cognitive phenomenon, which does not occur inside a vacuum. Therefore, to simply ignore pragmatics altogether would be an unrealistic and theoretically unsound approach. As evidenced by data in the previous section, pragmatic factors such as evidentiality and topic situation contrasts along temporal, spatial and epistemic dimensions may have empirical value for predicting uses of *ser* and *estar*. For Maienborn, *ser* and *estar* morphologically indicate imperfective and perfective aspect respectively, and their usage is pragmatically licensed. In other words, *estar* is used to describe predication that applies during one specific time period or topic time, which makes it the perfective copula. The pragmatic licensing of such perfective copular predication is done through a topic situation contrast. One way to test the theoretical

viability of a pragmatically-inspired interpretation of copula verbs in natural language would be to determine if there is a similar aspect-pragmatics interface involved in the use of other verbal morphemes. Let us now consider past tense morphology in Spanish.

4.2.1. The Preterite and Imperfect Conjugations in Spanish

There are two different ways of expressing past tense in Spanish with one verb form, and these are via the preterite and imperfect conjugations. With regard to aspect, the preterite conjugation is perfective, and the imperfect conjugation is imperfective. The preterite is used for describing the beginning or end of an event or state in the past. By contrast, the imperfect is used to describe the middle of an event or state in the past, as well as an event or state that takes place an unspecified number of times in the past, or in other words, is habitual. Let us now observe some examples of these conjugations below.

- (72) a. Yo *cené* a las siete ayer. (preterite)
b. Alfonso *bebió* toda la cerveza. (preterite)
c. José *jugaba* al béisbol cuando lo vi en el parque. (imperfective)
d. José *jugaba* al béisbol todos los días cuando era niño.
(imperfective)

In (72a), the preterite is used to describe the beginning of an event in the past, which is the moment the subject sat down to eat dinner. The use of the preterite in sentence (72b) describes the endpoint of an event, which is the finishing of all of the beer. The imperfect is used in (72c) to describe the middle of a past act of playing baseball, and it is

used in (72d) to describe the habitual act of playing baseball in the past. These sentences exhibit the basic uses of the preterite and imperfect conjugations, which are primarily dictated by an aspectual distinction. Aside from these basic uses of the preterite and imperfect, there are more specific uses of these past tense conjugations that are undoubtedly influenced by pragmatic factors.

4.2.2. Special Uses of the Imperfect

Though the distinction between the preterite and imperfect may be primarily aspectual, there does appear to be an observable aspect-pragmatics interface at work as there appears to be within Maienborn's framework for *ser* and *estar*. One example of a pragmatic function of the imperfect conjugation is for providing background information, or "setting the stage" in a narrative context. When relating a story or some type of series of events that took place in the past, setting the scenario is naturally done using the imperfect instead of the preterite. The setting for a story usually consists of information related to location, weather, time, the people involved, what was happening at the time and so forth. Since this preliminary information naturally describes the middle of states and events, it is expressed by using the imperfect. Furthermore, background information in a narrative often includes a description of events or states that habitually occurred in the past. These types of events are likewise naturally described by using the imperfect as

well. This is one commonly recognized way in which the imperfective along with a pragmatic component operate in tandem with each other.

There are other more marked uses of the imperfect, which are more noticeably pragmatically licensed than others. One such usage is to produce a dramatic effect when describing an event or state in the past. Take for example, the following sentences.

- (73) a. Jaime me *decía* ayer que su padre estaba enfermo.
b. Su novela *se publicaba* en 1977.
c. A su entierro *asistía* mucha gente importante; *moría* un gran poeta.

In these sentences, the preterite could easily be used instead of the imperfect. In fact, the use of the preterite in these sentences would be more conventional. The use of the form *moría* in (73c) is particularly marked, because the death of the poet, which is presumed to be completed, is being seemingly described as still taking place. The pragmatic motivation for describing the events using the imperfect in (73a)-(73c) is one of creating a dramatic effect by suspending them in time. For example, the description of the death of the poet in (73c) is a way of depicting this man in a more reverent light. This marked usage of the imperfect is explained in Westfall (1995):

“Various authors tell us that the IMPF can be used in place of the PRET to give a ‘picturesque’ feel to the narration. Badía (in Rallides, 1971, 33) writes: ‘the imperfect also has a narrative use, substituting the indefinite preterite. Narration, then acquires a descriptive character and appears to gain in aesthetic tone and in affective intensity, that is to say, the imperfect narrative perfectly fits in with interpretation of *live representation* of the action...’ (emphasis the author’s) (270-271).

By using the imperfect in some cases instead of the preterite, the speaker can make a state or event more emphatic or more poignant. This pragmatic device is naturally implemented via the imperfect by placing the listener in the middle of the event or state and suspending the mental image of it to achieve a dramatic effect. This is just one way in which the imperfect may be used for a special pragmatic purpose. Thus, in a similar manner to that of the verb *estar*, the imperfect may also be used for purposes of conveying emphasis.

4.2.3. Special Uses of the Preterite

In contrast to the use of the imperfect for describing background information in a narrative, one pragmatic function that the preterite conjugation serves is to describe information in the foreground of a narrative. Being perfective, the preterite is used for describing the beginning or the end of events or states in the past. Therefore, it is the conjugation that is used to represent events in succession, and its use “moves a narrative ahead in time.” This function of the preterite is one of the most easily recognized ways in which its use is pragmatically licensed. Since the imperfect describes the middle of events or states in the past or those that are habitual, it cannot serve this purpose. The most basic pragmatic motivations for the use of the preterite and imperfect and how they contrast are quite evident in a narrative context, where they are both used together.

Just as the copula *estar* and the imperfect conjugation are sometimes used for emphatic purposes, the preterite may also be used for this reason as well. When describing an event or state that occurs an unspecified number of times in the past, or in other words, is habitual, one uses the imperfect. By contrast, one unmarked use of the preterite is to describe a repeated event that took place a specific number of times in the past. Observe the following examples.

- (74) a. Esa chica me *llamó* cinco veces.
b. Maite *trabajó* todos los días la semana pasada.

Sentence (74a) describes an event that took place a specific number of times in the past, and that exact number is expressed. In (74b), the subject is described as having performed an action every day “last week,” or in other words, “every single day.” This could mean every day Monday through Friday or all seven days of the week, depending on the context. Now let us look at the following minimal pairs that contrast the preterite with the imperfect.

- (75) a. El mes pasado, *me acostaba* a las 2 todas las noches.
b. El mes pasado, *me acosté* a las 2 todas las noches.
c. En 2004, *hacía* ejercicio todos los días.
d. En 2004, *hice* ejercicio todos los días.

When the imperfect is used to describe a repeated event in the past, the number of times it took place is not specific. Thus, in sentence (75a), the implication is that there were nights last month when the subject did not go to bed at two o'clock. Likewise, the use of the imperfect in (75c) implies that there were days during the year 2004 during which the

subject did not do exercise. By contrast, the use of the preterite implies that there were no nights last month when the subject did not go to bed at two o'clock in (75b) and no days during which he or she did not do exercise during 2004 in (75d). Since a year is a relatively long period of time to claim that something happened every single day without fail, sentence (75d) may be considered less conventional-sounding than (75b). The use of the preterite carries more emphasis than the imperfect in sentences such as these, because it makes the methodical, regimental repetitive nature of the event part of the focus rather than simply the event itself. For the sake of clarity, let us consider one more minimal pair with the preterite and imperfect.

- (76) a. Todas las noches, *me despertaba* pensando en ti.
b. Todas las noches, *me desperté* pensando en ti.

By virtue of the use of the preterite, sentence (76b) is more emphatic than (76a). The description of waking up every single night without exception gives the event a more relentless-feeling connotation and suggests a sense of weariness on the part of the subject. The use of the imperfect in (76a) is less emphatic, because it implies that there were nights when the event did not take place. Judging by the data in (75) and (76), we may deduce that just as the imperfect may serve the pragmatic purpose of making a single event more emphatic, the preterite may do the same for repeated events. Now, we will take a look at the role of pragmatics in one particular use of progressive aspect.

4.2.4. Special Uses of the Progressive Construction

The progressive construction is a verbal paraphrase consisting of *estar* as its head along with the present participle. Its primary use is to describe a dynamic or evolutionary process that takes place within one set time frame, or in Maienborn's terminology, during a specific topic time. Typically, the progressive is only used to describe achievements, accomplishments and activities. However, there are special marked cases in which stative verbs may be used in the progressive.

- (77) a. Gregorio *está teniendo* problemas con sus padres.
- b. María *está viviendo* en Madrid en estos días.
- c. Miguel *está lamentando* su decisión.

The situations in these sentences are not to be interpreted as states. Instead, through coercion, they are interpreted as process events or activities. The act of coercing states into activities through the use of the progressive likely serves a pragmatic purpose.

According to Westfall (1995), "Presentation of a state as an activity represents a marked aspectual choice, chosen for certain rhetorical or pragmatic purposes (297)." Perhaps the use of the progressive with stative verbs is yet another emphatic aspectual device.

Coercing a state into an activity likely makes the state seem more vivid and depicts the subject as a more active participant, or agent, in the situation rather than a mere experiencer.

By virtue of the data that we have seen in this section, there appears to be a valid case for the claim that pragmatics plays a role in the use of one aspectual indicator over

another. Aside from its typical use for describing background information in a narrative, the imperfect may also be used to create a dramatic effect. In similar fashion, the preterite may be used for emphatic purposes when describing an event that takes place a specific number of times in the past, especially a large number. Moreover, stative predicates may be coerced into actions via the use of the progressive construction. The existence of specific pragmatic functions for a variety of aspectual indicators in Spanish supports Maienborn's claim that the distinction between *ser* and *estar* is discourse-based. Just as a topic situation contrast along a temporal dimension or lack thereof accounts for most uses of *ser* and *estar*, a foreground vs. background distinction for the preterite and imperfect serves a similar purpose. Likewise, less common or more marked uses of past tense or progressive morphology may be licensed through specific pragmatic or rhetorical factors as is the case with *ser* and *estar*. In contrast to said evidence in favor of a pragmatically-inspired framework, we will now turn our attention to the potential disadvantages involved with analyzing natural language in such a manner.

4.3. Potential Drawbacks of a Pragmatically-Inspired Framework

The extension of an aspect-pragmatics interface to other aspectual morphemes in Spanish besides *ser* and *estar* suggests that a discourse-based interpretation may be theoretically viable for all natural language. However, as we will see in this, the final section of this chapter, there may be some theoretical drawbacks to such an approach.

When attempting to adapt a pragmatic component into a framework of natural language, it is difficult not to compromise the explanatory adequacy of that framework. Issues involved with cognitive processing along with cross-linguistic and cross-dialectal inconsistencies prove to be empirically problematic for a discourse-based interpretation. Let us now begin this section by considering the difference in how the linguistic components of aspect and pragmatics are mentally internalized by the language learner.

4.3.1. The Cognitive Internalization of Pragmatic Phenomena

One major disadvantage of positing that pragmatic elements are grammaticalized in natural language is that they are learned and not acquired. When developing a theoretical framework to account for the use of one type of linguistic structure over another, Occam's Razor must apply whenever possible. In other words, the simplest, least costly method of accounting for language use must be sought in order for it to plausibly reflect what is imprinted in a child's brain at a very early age. A child's acquisition of his or her first language is an innate biological process. Thus, the rules for what is acceptable and unacceptable must be easy to acquire and process with little or no effort. Basic structural linguistic elements related to phonology, morphology, syntax and other phenomena are naturally acquired in a way that is akin to the development of a child's ability to crawl and subsequently walk. With respect to logic and semantics, the aspectual distinctions between copula verbs like *ser* and *estar* or past tense morphemes

like the preterite and imperfect conjugations are acquired in like manner. Therefore, the grammaticalization of such structural “building blocks” of language is costless and theoretically viable for developing an explanatorily adequate framework.

On the other hand, pragmatic phenomena are largely culturally-dependent rather than biological, and are thus learned and not acquired. Just as dining etiquette and standards for appropriate attire are cultural norms that for the most part, must be taught and learned, pragmatic elements in language are internalized in similar fashion. Unlike structural linguistic elements, pragmatic norms, for the most part, require some measure of conscious effort to be cognitively internalized. For example, a child does not need someone to explain to him or her which type of word order to use when uttering a sentence. However, a child does need to actively and consciously learn how to speak politely or use a special rhetorical device for telling a story. Moreover, conveyance of meaning that is not literally expressed by a particular utterance in order to achieve a specific purpose is not something that can be uniformly grammaticalized. An example of this phenomenon, or “speech act,” would be to make a polite request without literally expressing that something is being requested. For instance, if a person sitting at the dinner table asks someone: *Could you pass me the salt?* he or she is not inquiring about the ability of the listener to perform such an action. The speaker, of course, simply wishes the salt to be passed to him or her. The usage of a question formed in this manner in lieu of the use of the imperative mood is on the periphery of a conventional

relationship between literal meaning and communicative function. Though speech acts such as this one may be acquired or “picked up” subconsciously, they do not reflect a uniform grammatical paradigm in natural language. A rule that involves using a structure that serves a purpose other than what its literal meaning conveys cannot be reflective of information that a young child naturally and subconsciously acquires. There is undoubtedly compelling evidence to suggest that there is an aspect-pragmatics interface at work in the system of language. Nonetheless, major fundamental differences between its two separate components suggest that they are unlikely cognitively internalized in the same way. Therefore, melding them together for purposes of devising a general blueprint for natural language may be a theoretically unsound enterprise.

4.3.2. Lack of Cross-Linguistic Uniformity for Pragmatics

In an explanatorily adequate theoretical framework for natural language, structural and grammatical elements ideally fall within an organized and uniform set of principles and parameters. Such cross-linguistic uniformity reflects the reality that the process of natively acquiring such elements is biological in nature. Thus, generalizations pertaining to the grammatical system of natural language as a whole can be made with regard to relationships between form and function. For example, in all languages, nominal forms may always denote subjects and objects, and verbal morphology may always denote events.

Since pragmatics is a culturally-dependent phenomenon by contrast, the parameters for how it is structurally manifested vary between languages. Just as cultures are often very different from each other, culturally-specific pragmatic conventions often differ greatly as well. Attempting to map varyingly different cultural realities onto a uniform grammatical template would likely lead to a cluster of asymmetrical inconsistencies.

To illustrate how the interface between grammar and pragmatics differs asymmetrically across languages, let us now compare a couple of similar structures from English and Spanish. First, consider the following sentence pair expressed in both languages.

- (78) a. Juan *vive* con sus padres.
b. John *lives* with his parents.
c. Juan *está viviendo* con sus padres.
d. John *is living* with his parents.

Sentences (78a)-(78d) all express the subject's current living situation. In (78a) and (78b), the simple present tense is used, and the present progressive is used in (78c) and (78d). Due to aspectual differences, the two structures do not have exactly identical meanings. The use of the simple present tense in (78a) and (78b) denotes where the subject normally calls home and may be considered his "permanent residence." In (78c) and (78d), the present progressive denotes that the subject is living with his parents temporarily or is "staying there for the time being." When the pragmatic component is factored in, the difference in meaning between the use of the simple present and the

present progressive in (78) is greater in English than in Spanish. Supposing that we are dealing with American English, sentence (78b) would likely carry a negative connotation in comparison with (78d), especially if the subject is an adult. In the United States, it is typically frowned upon for a grown adult to reside with his or her parents unless it is a temporary arrangement. Therefore, (78d) is less negative and is often substituted for (78b) for the sake of politeness. By contrast, in Spanish-speaking countries, it is socially acceptable for a grown adult to live with his or her parents; therefore, sentence (78a) never carries a negative connotation. This is one example of a difference in meaning that is purely cultural and thus could not be grammaticalized within a framework of natural language.

Another cross-linguistic example of a purely pragmatic difference in meaning that would not fit neatly into a general framework of the system of language can be seen in the following sentence.

- (79) a. José va a dormir con Mónica esta noche.
b. Joe is going to sleep with Monica tonight.

Though (79a), which is in Spanish and (79b), which is in English, have the same syntactic structure and identical lexical items, they have a very different connotation. Sentence (79a) simply implies that *José* is going to sleep at *Mónica's* house, perhaps even on her couch. On the other hand, sentence (79b) has a suggestive connotation, implying that Joe and Monica are going to sleep in the same bed and have an intimate encounter. Since these two sentences are identical on the surface, there is no operation

that can be empirically accounted for that can explain this difference in grammatical terms. The suggestive connotation of (79a) could possibly be more idiomatic than pragmatic. Nonetheless, the knowledge that this sentence carries this special meaning in English in particular must be learned by native English speakers and not innately acquired by speakers of all languages. Next, we will briefly look at pragmatic differences across dialects of the same language.

4.3.3. Lack of Cross-Dialectal Uniformity for Pragmatics

Just as the relationship between structural form and pragmatic convention may asymmetrically differ between languages, the same likewise often holds true for different dialects of the same language. A substantial number of languages, like Spanish and English, are spoken in many different cultures. Since pragmatic differences are cultural in nature, they need not manifest themselves in different languages exclusively. Therefore, devising a descriptively adequate theoretical model for mapping pragmatic function onto a grammatical template would be challenging for even one single language. Even when grammatical forms exist for specific pragmatic purposes, they are not always used in an identical manner by all speakers of the same language. For example, all dialects of Spanish contain at least two second person singular pronouns: *tú* or *vos* for informal address and *usted* for formal address. Though there is this one on one lexical relationship between choice of pronoun and speech register in all dialects in Spanish,

there is variation between dialects. For instance, the informal *tú* pronoun is used much more frequently in Peninsular Spanish than it is in other dialects. The use of *usted* is mainly reserved for speaking with elders or persons in positions of respect. By contrast, in Colombian Spanish, the formal *usted* pronoun is used much more frequently and is commonly used between close friends who are the same age. Dialectal variation of this nature especially illustrates the difficulty in devising an explanatorily adequate model that attempts to fuse grammar with pragmatics. Even when specific pragmatic conventions are lexicalized for a particular language, they are still subject to dialectal variation.

It would be analytically derelict to say that pragmatics is not a theoretically relevant component for studying grammatical structures in natural language. Data from Maienborn's (2005) discourse-based analysis for *ser* and *estar* in Spanish suggest that pragmatics may play a significant role in at least some uses of the two aspectual copulas. Moreover, there is also evidence that such an aspect/pragmatics interface extends to other aspectual phenomena in the language such as the preterite and imperfect. Though pragmatic conventions often influence the choice of grammatical forms and structures, they are problematic for incorporating into an explanatorily adequate model for natural language. The chief reason why the fusion of grammar with pragmatic conventions is difficult to account for in a theoretically sound manner is that the two components are cognitively internalized differently. The grammatical system of one's native language is

acquired through a biologically innate process, which is largely subconscious. By contrast, pragmatic conventions, which are culturally-based, are largely learned in a consciously active manner. Furthermore, the cultural nature of pragmatic factors cause the way they interface with grammar to vary across different languages and dialects in an asymmetrical fashion. Therefore, an attempt to develop an explanatorily adequate model for natural language purely on the basis of a grammar/pragmatics interface would likely yield many inconsistencies.

4.4. Summary

In this chapter, we critiqued Maienborn's discourse-based analysis of *ser* and *estar* in Spanish with particular attention given to the notion of a topic situation contrast. Also, the theoretical implications for the extension of such an analysis to the entire Spanish language and to natural language as a whole have also been weighed and considered. We began our evaluation of Maienborn's analysis by testing her claim that immediate evidence is a requirement for *estar* to be used instead of *ser*. By virtue of a variety of data examined with *ser* and *estar* used with adjective phrases, it was determined that evidentiality is not a requisite for *estar* predication. In certain contexts, however, *estar* may be optionally used instead of *ser* provided that the speaker's claim is based on immediate evidence encountered at or prior to the speech time. Maienborn's assertion that *ser* and *estar* have the same selectional properties was also found to be

inaccurate. The two copulas always occur in mutually exclusive syntactic environments with the exception of their shared acceptable usage with adjectival and prepositional phrases.

The interpretation of *estar* as the discourse-dependent variant of *ser* apparently accounts for a wide variety of uses of the Spanish copulas with adjectival phrases. Also, the concept of a topic situation contrast, or s* contrast, as a requirement for *estar* predication, raises some valid points regarding the pragmatic component of natural language. If given discourse dictates that copular predication be confined to one specific topic time, the choice of a perfective copula over an imperfective one seems logical, especially with adjectival phrases. However, it is not clear how such a topic situation contrast may be borne out in uses of *ser* and *estar* with other types of predicates such as locative phrases. Furthermore, the types of dimensions along which an s* contrast related to other pragmatic factors such as politeness and emphasis can be established are not defined. Such issues related to the extension of Maienborn's analysis to all uses of *ser* and *estar*, though unresolved at this time, do merit further investigation in the future.

Given the particular data that is accurately predicted by Maienborn's analysis, we considered the possibility that an aspect/pragmatics interface of some type may be extended to other areas of the Spanish language. Indeed, there are many examples of pragmatic conventions playing a role in the use of other aspectual verbal morphology found in Spanish. The preterite and imperfect conjugations as well as the progressive

construction are all clearly pragmatically licensed in certain contexts. There is no doubt that there is a significant relationship between grammatical form and pragmatic function. However, analyzing the grammatical system fused together with pragmatic conventions as a single cognitive unit is likely problematic for devising an explanatorily adequate model for natural language. Grammar and pragmatics are cognitively internalized differently and thus do not manifest themselves in a symmetrically varied way across languages and dialects. Therefore, to ignore the role of discourse and pragmatics in the specific case of the *ser* and *estar* alternation would be theoretically irresponsible and erroneous. Nonetheless, the primary motivation for the use of these two copulas may be purely syntactic and semantic at its very core.

CHAPTER FIVE

ASPECTUAL COMPOSITION AND *SER* AND *ESTAR*

5.0. Introduction

In this chapter, I will examine and evaluate the interpretation of *ser* and *estar* in Spanish from the perspective of aspectual compositionality. The main focus will be to gain some understanding of precisely what the semantic properties of the two copulas are and how their usage is aspectually influenced through their syntactic environments. In Section 5.1, I will test Schmitt's (2005) compositionally-based analysis of *ser* and *estar* in Portuguese for descriptive adequacy with their cognate copulas in Spanish. Section 5.2 specifically challenges Schmitt's interpretation of *ser* as a non-aspectual atemporal copula verb. In Section 5.3, I will look at how different aspectual distinctions and event types are classified with respect to aspectual composition. Also, citing Verkuyl (2004), I will consider whether verbs alone lexically denote aspect and what they contribute to the composition of aspect at higher levels. Section 5.4 will summarize the findings of this chapter.

5.1. Testing Schmitt's (2005) Analysis for Descriptive Adequacy

In Chapter Three, I gave a brief overview of the basic premises of Schmitt's (2005) analysis of *ser* and *estar* in Portuguese and adapted her data to Spanish for our purposes. For the sake of clarity, I will now reiterate what those premises are. In

Schmitt's interpretation, aspect plays an important role in the choice of copula, as it does in the analyses of Maienborn (2005) and Luján (1981). Embracing principles from both Distributed Morphology (Halle and Marantz, 1993) and Generative Lexicon (Pustejovsky, 1995), Schmitt views aspect in purely compositional terms. Throughout her body of work (1992, 1996, 2005, etc.), she has maintained that aspect is always borne out through a combination of verbal and nominal properties and is thus not purely a lexical property of verbs. In contrast to the analyses of Maienborn (2005) and Luján (1981), Schmitt posits that *estar* is an aspectual copula (non-transparent verbalizer) but *ser* is not (transparent verbalizer). Though *estar* is analyzed as aspectual, it cannot denote aspect independently. The non-aspectual *ser* is claimed to be atemporal and not denote a state, which enables it to be used in a broader range of syntactic environments and be coerced into carrying an eventive interpretation. On the other hand, the aspectual *estar* is interpreted as a stative verb, which restricts the range of syntactic environments in which it can be used. Thus *estar* cannot be coerced into denoting event-type predication. In this section, we will take a closer look at these claims regarding *ser* and *estar* predication in Portuguese and test them for descriptive adequacy in Spanish. My main goal will be to challenge, through various data and previous observations made in this work, how Schmitt views the two copulas in terms of aspect and statehood.

5.1.1. Schmitt's *Act be* Data and Grammaticality Judgments

Analyzed as a non-aspectual copula and transparent verbalizer, *ser* is deemed more flexible with regard to the number and types of aspectual elements with which it may be used. Since *estar* is interpreted as the aspectual copula, by contrast, it is to be much more restricted in this respect. According to Schmitt, *ser* behaves as a *polysemous verb*, as it may convey a stative reading in some cases and an eventive one in others. *Estar* is presumed to behave as a stative verb in all cases and thus not be able to denote eventive predicates (2005: 12). As we observed in Chapter Three, the aspectual properties in *ser* predication depend entirely on which aspectual elements are used with the copula. The default interpretation of *ser* is that it is atemporal, thus its predicates may acquire a variety of different senses in context.

The use of *ser* to describe a person's behavior at one particular point or stage in time, or the *act be* interpretation is key to Schmitt's analysis. It is important, because it serves the purpose of illustrating the ability of *ser* to be coerced into an eventive reading in contrast to the inability of *estar* to do the same. For ease of exposition, let us take another look at the sentences in (54) and (55), which are intended to prove this point.

- (80) (54') a. Ella está *siendo* cruel. (progressive)
b. María *fue* simpática. (preterite)
c. Esteban *es* simpático con su novia en la escuela.
(located in space)
d. Yo vi a Pedro *ser* cruel. (perceptual verb report)
- (81) (55') a. *Ella está *estando* enojada.
b. María *estuvo* simpática.

- c. *Esteban *está* simpático con su novia en la escuela.
- d. *Yo vi a Pedro *estar* cruel.

Again, in order for an *act be* reading to be acceptable, there must be some overt aspectual operator, which locates the predicate in time or space or forces a non-homogeneous reading. Schmitt deems *act be* sentences containing *ser* like (54) acceptable in Portuguese, and they appear to be at least marginally acceptable in Spanish. Schmitt does not list corresponding presumably unacceptable *act be* sentences with *estar* in her work (1992, 1996, 2005). Therefore, for the sake of clarity, I have listed such Spanish sentences in (55). As Schmitt's analysis predicts, *act be* sentences containing *estar* like (55a), (55c) and (55d) are largely unacceptable in Spanish as they are in Portuguese. However, as evidenced by sentence (55b), the use of *estar* with an adjectival phrase in the preterite is acceptable. The grammaticality of *estar* used in the preterite conjugation is one clear piece of evidence that *ser* is not the only copula that can occur with an overt aspectual operator.

In Maienborn's (2005) evaluation of the stage-level/individual-level framework, she tests the acceptability of the use of *ser* and *estar* predicates as infinitival complements of perception verbs through an eventuality diagnostic. Unlike Schmitt, she deems the use of *ser* and *estar* in perceptual verb reports like (54d) and (55d) as both odd, but not completely unacceptable. Maienborn acknowledges that sentences containing this type of structure with *ser* or *estar* are more acceptable when the context supports an agentive reinterpretation. This claim is somewhat parallel to what Schmitt predicts for *act be*

sentences, which are proposed to carry an eventive meaning. In contrast to Schmitt, Maienborn claims that additional contextual material is necessary to make such sentences sound better (166). Let us observe this phenomenon in the following sentences which are assigned Maienbornian acceptability judgments.

- (82) a. ?Yo vi a María *ser* cruel.
b. ?Yo oí al ministro *estar* encantado.
c. Yo vi a María *ser* cruel con los gatos.
d. Yo oí al ministro *estar* encantado con los resultados.

Schmitt claims that the *act be* interpretation is acceptable with *ser* and unacceptable with *estar*, but for Maienborn, both verbs are at least marginally acceptable in perceptual verb reports. According to Maienborn, (82a) and (82b) would sound odd, but (82c) and (82d) would sound better because of the extra contextual material. As mentioned in Chapter Three, Maienborn declares that if either *ser* or *estar* were truly eventive, coercion or additional contextual material would not be necessary to bear out such an eventuality (166).

I am not a native speaker, thus I am not qualified to make reliable acceptability judgments regarding sentences like (82). However, after personal communication with native speakers from four different countries, I am under the impression that either *ser* or *estar* is at least marginally acceptable in some types of perceptual verb reports. Both verbs appear to sound odd in this context, with *ser* sounding better than *estar*. Moreover, the type of adjective used and what is being described clearly appear to play a role in the acceptability of such sentences. At this juncture, I am led to believe that Schmitt's

declaration that *ser* is acceptable in *act be* sentences and *estar* is not, may not be the final word on this matter. *Estar*'s acceptability in the preterite conjugation is one immediately observable piece of evidence that runs counter to this claim. Moreover, given that her data is from Portuguese instead of Spanish, there may also be language-specific factors that need to be addressed. The data that we have observed thus far in this section cast some doubt on the empirical validity of the properties that Schmitt assigns for *ser* and *estar*. Moreover, the grammaticality judgments for perceptual verb reports are not perfectly clear-cut. In order to learn more about the true character of the two verbs with regard to aspect and statehood, let us now test Schmitt's analysis against other types of Spanish sentences.

5.1.2. Co-composition with *Ser* and *Estar*

Schmitt defines states as having a subinterval property, which means that they apply during one given time period or at one specific point in time. In Distributed Morphology (DM), verbs that carry the aspectual *P* feature denote predication that applies in such fashion. Since *estar* is interpreted as an aspectual copula that carries said *P* feature, its predication would denote a state. Via implication, such a state denoted by *estar* would apply during one subinterval unless the context suggests otherwise. On the other hand, since the copula *ser* is interpreted as non-aspectual in Schmitt's analysis, it is nonstative and only describes a relation between a property and an entity. By default, *ser*

is interpreted as atemporal and applies generically unless otherwise indicated by the context in which it is used (16). Schmitt uses the following minimal pair from Portuguese to illustrate this point. The grammaticality judgments are hers.

- (83) a. A Maria *é* deprimente às vezes.
b. *A Maria *está* deprimente às vezes. (2005 17)

According to the author, *ser* predicates “can appear with an adverbial that forces some property to hold on an on-and-off basis,” and “*estar* cannot appear with these adverbials” (17). Regardless of whether this statement truly applies for *ser* and *estar* for Portuguese, we can be sure that it is definitely not true for *ser* and *estar* predication in Spanish.

Observe the following examples:

- (84) a. Jorge *está* loco a veces.
b. Rocío *está* triste a veces.
c. Yo *estoy* en la biblioteca a veces.

All of the sentences in (84) contain *estar* predication used with the adverbial phrase *a veces*, which forces a property to hold on an on-and-off basis. In contrast to Schmitt’s assessment of *estar* predication adverbially modified in such a way in Portuguese, syntactically parallel Spanish sentences like (84a) and (84b) are perfectly acceptable. Moreover, this type of adverbial modification is likewise compatible with locative predication with *estar*, as evidenced by (84c). Based solely on these data, Schmitt’s claim that one copula is stative and the other is not in Portuguese would not be extendable to Spanish. Regardless of the temporal and aspectual nature of *ser* and *estar* in Spanish, predication with both verbs may be modified to overtly convey that it applies

intermittently. This is one example of how *estar* predication is, in reality, more flexible to co-composition than Schmitt's analysis suggests.

We have now observed two syntactic environments that Schmitt (2005) claims are acceptable for *ser* predication but unacceptable for *estar* predication in Portuguese. In Spanish, however, it turns out that both verbs are at least marginally acceptable in infinitival complements of perception verbs. Similarly, as we have just seen, predication with either *ser* or *estar* is grammatical when modified by an adverbial phrase that yields an intermittent reading. That *estar* is more selectionally restricted than *ser* can be attested by data from Section 4.1.2 of this work, which refutes Maienborn's claim that both verbs have identical selectional properties. However, the number and type of aspectual elements with which the two verbs may occur do not appear to differ as greatly as Schmitt claims. For example, both verbs may be used in the preterite and imperfect conjugations, which are perfective and imperfective respectively. With that in mind, let us now take a look at one case in which *estar* is actually acceptable with a particular aspectual element and *ser* is not.

One usage of *ser* and *estar* in Spanish that has not received much scholarly attention is their occurrence in commands. Both verbs are acceptable when used in commands, which may be considered a form of coercion into an event-type predicate. Since even copula verbs in command form order the listener to consciously do something or take action in some way, this might be at least somewhat considered an *act be*

interpretation. Irrespective of the situation type represented by these two verbs in commands, a key difference in the way they are used is of clear significance in terms of aspect. Let us first observe a few commands with the verb *estar*.

- (85) a. *Está* tranquilo.
b. *Esté* tranquilo.
c. *Estate* quieto.
d. *Estése* quieto.

In examples (85a) and (85b), the verb *estar* appears in the second person singular familiar and second person singular formal command forms respectively. The two forms are used with an adjective just as they ordinarily often are in other contexts. Examples (85c) and (85d) also contain the *tú* and *usted* command forms respectively for the verb *estar* used with an adjective. However, these two examples display one notable structural difference from (85a) and (85b). The command forms of *estar* in (85c) and (85d) both contain the reflexive *se* clitic to indicate the entrance into a state. This is the same grammatical element that is used in the verb *dormirse*, which means to *fall asleep* or *begin sleeping*. The use of this pronoun in commands with *estar* is not always required, and its usage depends on the type and meaning of the predicate used and the dialect of the speaker. Sentences (85a) and (85b), which do not contain the reflexive *se*, simply command the listener to *be* quiet or calm. By virtue of the reflexive *se* clitic in sentences (85c) and (85d), the listener is explicitly being instructed to quiet him or herself, calm *down*, or completely *enter into a state* of being calm or quiet. There appears to be little discernable difference in meaning between commands with *estar* used with the aspectual

se clitic and those without the *se* clitic. The copula *ser*, like *estar* may be used in commands, however, *ser* is not acceptable with the reflexive *se* element.

- (86)
- a. *Sé* educado.
 - b. *Sea* educado.
 - c. **Sete* educado.
 - d. **Séase* educado.

The acceptability of the use of the aspectual reflexive *se* clitic with *estar* and its ungrammaticality with *ser* may be interpreted as counterevidence to one of Schmitt's principle claims. If *estar* is specified for aspect and *ser* is not, then it should hold that *ser* can be used with aspectual *se* instead of *estar*. As we have seen, however, this is not the case. The data from (85) and (86) along with other observations that we have made in this section suggest that Schmitt's analysis may not accurately extend to Spanish. Thus far, we have been unable to cleanly transpose its basic premises from Portuguese onto Spanish due to empirical inconsistencies.

5.1.3. Implication in *Ser* and *Estar* Predication

In a 1992 article, Schmitt lays out several reasons why she discounts a stage-level/individual-level interpretation for *ser* and *estar*, and some of these were described in Chapter Three. In a more recent analysis, which has been the main focus of this chapter (2005), the author devotes significant attention to what she believes *ser* and *estar* predication to imply. Just as I did in the first chapter of this dissertation, Schmitt cites the use of *estar* with geographical location to dispel the notion that *estar* exclusively

describes temporary predication. She acknowledges that the use of either *ser* or *estar* is grammatical in Portuguese when describing geographical location. As we observed in the previous chapter, the same also holds true for nonstandard Spanish. In order to compensate for examples of both stable and static predication with either of the two copulas, Schmitt cites the factor of implication. Via the DM framework, *ser* and *estar* are simply lexical roots that fill in phrase markers and combine with certain category features built into the syntax. Since *ser* is analyzed as not aspectual and does not take any arguments, it is represented in Schmitt's DM-type framework as simply v (voice). Essentially, *ser* is simply a place-holder that only serves as a head for carrying verbal morphology. *Estar* is represented as $v + P$, with P specifying an aspectual feature. Since *ser* is analyzed as simply a place-holder that carries verbal morphology and links its subject to a predicate, it has an atemporal and generic default reading. Being an aspectual copula, *estar*'s default reading is that its predication "is associated with a state type of subevent" (16). In other words, it applies during one given period of time or at one particular point in time. The temporal nature of *ser* and *estar* predication always hinges on how the default meaning of the verb computes with other aspectual elements in the sentence.

Being a non-aspectual copula, only *ser* is presumed to acceptably combine with other elements to yield an eventive reading, which is what the data thus far presented in this section has called into question. When the context does not indicate that a *ser*

predication is eventive or holds temporarily, the predication will hold atemporally by default. In like manner, when the context does not indicate otherwise, *estar* predication, whose default interpretation is stative, will apply at a given point in time or temporarily. Schmitt describes these default readings as being manifested through implication (2005: 19). Such implied or default meanings are to be most observable in minimal pairs such as the following sentences containing adjectival phrases.

- (87) a. *Ana es feliz.*
b. *Ana está feliz.*

Subject noun phrases, like *Ana*, and adjectives, like *feliz*, always denote the same meaning independently from whichever verb is used along with them. Therefore, the difference in meaning between sentences like (87a) and (87b) is implied through the choice of copula. Sentence (87a) presumably would describe *Ana* as being happy at all times, or generically. By contrast, sentence (87b) would describe *Ana* as being happy at one particular point in time or in a “current state of happiness.” According to Schmitt,

“...The temporariness associated with *estar* predicates comes from implication. If we are asserting that property *P* holds at *t* by implication (because there is another option in the language), we can arrive at an interpretation in which things should be different before” (2005: 19).

Like more traditional accounts of the use of *ser* and *estar* with adjectives, Schmitt’s implication principle does not accurately predict certain data. As has been well documented in this dissertation, the use of *estar* does not necessarily imply that a subject has suffered a change of state. The inference that “things should be different before”

would account for the use of *estar* with the adjective *muerto* in that a previous state of being alive is assumed. Nonetheless, such an analysis of *estar* is problematic for cases that describe a first time experience or involve evidentiality in some other way. Furthermore, strings like *Paco está gordo* do not inherently imply that a current state contrasts with a prior or future one. Schmitt's caveat that allows for "another option in the language" to override the default interpretations of *ser* and *estar* would not predict the use of *estar* with the adjective *loco* in Peninsular Spanish. For speakers of Peninsular Spanish, the use of *ser* with an adjectival phrase headed by *loco* is ungrammatical. In this case, whether the subject is described as being characteristically crazy or just crazy at the present time cannot be inferred through any default meaning implied through the use of *estar*. In light of these facts, we may assume that default readings for *ser* and *estar* predication, as well as those derived from aspectual composition, do not account for all of their uses with adjectival phrases in Spanish.

In supporting her claim that *estar* is not a stage-level copula and does not necessarily denote predication that applies for a short duration, Schmitt cites locative sentences in Portuguese such as the following ones in Spanish:

- (88) a. La casa *está* en la Calle Guadalupe.
b. Los Apalaches *están* en Virginia Occidental.

The author mentions that in Portuguese, *estar* may be used with locative predicates that denote geographical location, and "*ser* predicates are equally appropriate" (19). As stated

in the previous chapter, *estar* is the appropriate verb for this context in Standard Spanish, and in Nonstandard Spanish, either *ser* or *estar* is acceptable.

- (89) a. La casa *está* en la Calle Guadalupe. (all dialects of Spanish)
b. La casa *es* en la Calle Guadalupe.
(optional in Nonstandard Spanish)
c. A casa *está* na Rua Robinho. (Portuguese)
d. A casa *é* na Rua Robinho. (Portuguese)

Schmitt does not explicitly suggest that implication is a factor involved in interpreting locative predication with *ser* and *estar*. If there is an implied difference in meaning between sentences like (87a) and (87b), then one would expect there to be one between the *a* and *b* sentences and the *c* and *d* ones in (89). However, the sentences in (89) share the same meaning regardless of copula choice. The only implication that would play a role in the interpretation of sentences such as (89) would thus have to exclusively involve the nature of the location itself. The location described is very stable or atemporal irrespective of which copula is used. With this said, the precise reason why either copula is acceptable for such pairs and does not imply any difference in meaning as it does in (87) is not clear by means of Schmitt's framework.

Just as Schmitt's analysis does not make clear why either *ser* or *estar* is acceptable for describing geographical location in Portuguese, it also fails to account for other examples of locative predication with these verbs. In Portuguese, as well as Nonstandard Spanish, *estar* is acceptable for describing the location of moveable objects, but *ser* is not.

- (90) a. El libro *está* en la mesa. (Acceptable for all Spanish speakers)
b. *El libro *es* en la mesa. (Unacceptable for all Spanish speakers)
c. O livro *está* na mesa. (Portuguese)
d. *O livro *é* na mesa. (Portuguese)

Schmitt's analysis does not account for the difference in grammaticality between the use of *ser* and *estar* in the sentences in (90). If the aspectual nature of the location described can be inferred independently of the copula as it is for (88), then either *ser* or *estar* should likewise be acceptable for (90). Assuming that the default meanings of these copulas figure into the aspectual composition for sentences like (90), we are still left with some unanswered empirical questions. Stating that an object such as a book is "on the table" suggests that its location is not stable or atemporal, rather that it holds for a specific period of time. If a locative phrase denotes a temporally limited predication independently from the copula, then from Schmitt's perspective, the use of *estar* along with it should be unacceptable. Such a locative predicate could be analyzed as located in time and forcing a non-homogenous reading, akin to an overt aspectual operator in *act be* sentences. Being atemporal and non-aspectual, *ser*, on the other hand, should be able to enter into co-composition with such a "temporary" locative predicate as it does in *act be* sentences. The co-composition of *ser* with a locative predicate of this type should be similar to the coercion of a *ser* predicate into an event. Just as *estar* is analyzed as aspectually over-specified for denoting eventive predication, it should also be incompatible with temporally-limited locative predication. Nonetheless, as evidenced by the data in this section from Spanish and Portuguese, temporally-limited locations may

only be described with *estar*. The use of the aspectual, stative copula with an aspectual, stative predicate apparently does not create a logical contradiction in this case, as Schmitt's analysis would predict. In order for these data to fit into Schmitt's framework, one could make special provision for the default meaning of verbs to override compositional aspect in certain cases. To do so would likely serve as a mere ad hoc solution that contradicts one of the main premises on which this model is based.

In light of the data observed thus far in this chapter, we can draw a few conclusions about the descriptive and explanatory adequacy of Schmitt's (2005) analysis of *ser* and *estar* in Portuguese. Schmitt's principle claim that *ser* may denote eventive predicates and *estar* may not is called into question when considering grammaticality judgments for certain *act be* sentences in Spanish. Both *ser* and *estar* are indeed acceptable in the preterite conjugation, which Schmitt defines as an overt aspectual operator. In addition, Schmitt's assessment that *ser* is acceptable in infinitival complements of perception verbs and *estar* never is apparently does not accurately apply to Spanish data either. Furthermore, the default readings and selectional properties of the two copulas proposed by the author are problematic for predicting Spanish copular predication as well. For example, both copulas may describe predication that applies intermittently, and only *estar* is acceptable with the reflexive *se* clitic in commands. Implication, through default meanings of the verbs or the context in which they are used, appears to account for certain data. It apparently predicts the semantic difference in

minimal pairs and the lack thereof in other identical contexts where either copula is acceptable. However, why sometimes both copulas are acceptable in a particular syntactic environment, and at other times, only one copula is remains unclear. While Schmitt's compositionally-based interpretation of *ser* and *estar* raises many interesting points about how aspect interfaces with syntax, it still leaves us with many unanswered questions.

5.2. Schmitt's Features for *Ser* and *Estar*

Now, we will shift the focus of our critique of Schmitt's analysis to the interpretation of *estar* as an aspectual copula and *ser* as a non-aspectual copula. Though Schmitt maintains that aspect is ultimately functionally borne out through syntactic composition, what the two copulas denote in isolation is of great significance. All of the author's claims related to *act be* sentences, stative predication, co-composition and other phenomena hinge on the individual features posited for *ser* and *estar*. Since we have seen numerous examples of *ser* and *estar* predication that are not adequately accounted for by these claims, the chief premise on which they are built should be under scrutiny. Therefore, in this section, we will briefly challenge the analysis of only one of these two copulas as an aspectual indicator. First, I will consider how aspect is morphologically represented throughout the verbal paradigm in Spanish and what its implications are for

the analysis of copula verbs. I will then provide evidence to suggest that *ser* is in fact an imperfective copula rather than an empty non-aspectual one.

5.2.1. Aspectual Morphology in the Spanish Verbal Paradigm

The system of language is precisely that. It is a system of how sounds, structures and meaning combine to form an organized linguistic mechanism through which human beings communicate their ideas. Though the study of this system does not always yield clean and concise results, certain patterns and regular tendencies are clearly present and easy to find. In the last chapter, discussion of a possible aspect-pragmatics interface at work with *ser* and *estar* led to observation of like phenomena throughout the Spanish verbal paradigm. The purpose of observing other verbal items in the language was to verify the descriptive adequacy of such an interface. Likewise, the theoretical viability of Schmitt's proposed features for *ser* and *estar* can also be tested in similar fashion. When a particular feature may be specified for one type of item belonging to a specific category, it should systematically apply to all items in that category. Therefore, if *ser* were to be non-aspectual, one would expect there to be other non-aspectual verbs or verbal inflection in either Portuguese or Spanish. A brief inventory of the verbal system will show that this is simply not the case.

In addition to being specified for person and number, every finite verb form in the system of language is specified for tense, mood and aspect. Though such features are not

always noticeable or overtly morphologically represented, they are nonetheless still carried by the verb at the relevant stage of representation. Spanish has a morphologically rich verbal paradigm, with one or more of these three features being overtly represented in most cases. Let us take a look at a few examples of Spanish verb conjugations and the features that they overtly carry.

- (91) a. Yo *hablo* español. (present indicative)
b. Quiero que *hables* español. (present subjunctive)
c. Manuel *ha comido* el bistec. (present perfect)
d. Lola *había leído* el libro. (past perfect)

In many cases, one can tell which features, besides person and number, are overtly specified by a particular verb form simply by looking at the name of its conjugation. The present indicative in (91a) and the present subjunctive in (91b) both morphologically display tense and mood. In (91c) and (91d), both tense and perfective aspect are overtly represented as well as indicative mood. By means of the use of the present tense, as in (91a) and (91b), imperfective aspect is implied. The most notable example of how aspectual features are manifested through verbal morphology in Spanish is the use of the preterite and imperfect conjugations. Regardless of how morphologically rich a language's verbal paradigm is, person, number, tense, mood and aspect are features that apply to every finite verb form. Even though such features are most often not morphologically displayed, as for instance in English, they are still present in all finite verbal predication. There will never be a finite verb form that is specified for only one or a couple of these semantic characteristics.

Concerning *ser* and *estar* specifically, either verb may carry morphology that indicates any of the features discussed in this section. As mentioned in the previous section of this chapter, *ser* and *estar* may both be used in either preterite or imperfect past tense forms. Consequently, the acceptability of *estar* in the imperfect, which can carry a habitual reading, runs counter to Schmitt's assertion that only *ser* predication may hold on an on and off basis. The features that Schmitt posits for *ser* and *estar* are lexical, or in other words, make up the root meanings for these verbs. Spanning the system of language, finite predication with any verb is always either perfective or imperfective. Even though this binary opposition remains constant throughout the verbal paradigm, Schmitt posits that it does not extend to the lexical opposition between *ser* and *estar*. In my estimation, analyzing one *be* verb as entirely non-aspectual and the other as aspectual would create a dubious marked inconsistency within the verbal paradigm. When attempting to create an explanatorily adequate model for natural language, maintaining ordered patterns is always one of the main goals. Proposing exceptions or ad hoc solutions that do not fit otherwise consistent patterns should be avoided in order to create the least costly model as possible. Furthermore, one should expect lexical differences between copulas like *ser* and other verbs in the system of language to be symmetrical in nature. As the analysis of *ser* as a non-aspectual copula not only oddly places it in stark contrast with all other Spanish verbs, it is therefore a theoretically unsound approach.

5.2.2. The Case for *Ser* as an Imperfective Copula

Thus far, our findings gleaned from tests for the descriptive adequacy of Schmitt's analysis and a brief overview of the role of aspect throughout the verbal paradigm have cast doubt on the interpretation of *ser* as a non-aspectual copula. Now, we will observe uses of the copula *ser*, which illustrate that it does in fact carry aspectual meaning. According to Schmitt (2005), *ser* in Portuguese is non-aspectual, atemporal and carries a default generic meaning. This view is almost identical to that of Lema (1992), who analyzes *ser* in Spanish as semantically vacuous. Just as Schmitt's aspectual interpretation of *estar* implies temporal reference, Luján's (1981) interpretation of *ser* as imperfective does the same. As mentioned in Chapter Three, by Luján's definition, the copula *ser* refers to a stretch of time (comprised of several defined delimited time periods) in its *duration*, though neither its beginning nor its end is implied (176). As we will see, there are some types of *ser* predication that apparently do not denote temporal reference and some that do. To simply claim that none of them display lexical aspect would be at least somewhat inaccurate.

There are many cases in which *ser* predication indeed appears to denote generic reference. Any potential ambiguity aside, let us suppose that the subjects in the following

sentences are generic. When the subject of a sentence is generic and thus does not refer to anything specific, the use of *ser* instead of *estar* is required.⁶

- (92) a. Los tigres *son* feroces.
b. La literatura chicana *es* interesante.

With respect to composition, the genericity of the subjects in (92), and not necessarily the use of *ser*, is what makes the predication clearly generic. The use of *ser* in these sentences could perhaps be interpreted as imperfective in the habitual sense, which is a reading not mentioned in Luján's 1981 article. One could infer that tigers are sometimes not ferocious and Chicano literature is sometimes not interesting. By contrast, the *ser* predication in the following sentences may be analyzed as both generic and undoubtedly constant.

- (93) a. Las pelotas de tenis *son* redondas.
b. El azúcar *es* dulce.

Both sentences (93a) and (93b) have generic subjects, and the use of *ser* is likely not interpreted as habitual. For all intents and purposes, tennis balls are never any other shape but round, and sugar is never sour, bitter or any other flavor besides sweet.

Therefore, the non-habitual and seemingly atemporal *ser* predication in (93) more accurately reflects Schmitt's interpretation of *ser* than (92). Judging by these two data sets containing generic subjects, we can see that composition is clearly relevant to aspect.

⁶ Bare plural subjects are grammatical in Portuguese, but not in Spanish. Therefore, Schmitt's Portuguese data involving bare plural subjects was not adaptable to Spanish for the purposes of this work.

Moreover, even when *ser* is used with generic subjects, there still remains doubt as to whether it is truly non-aspectual.

Now, we will observe some data showing *ser* predication with subjects that are not generic. First, bear in mind that eventive Spanish present tense verb forms carry habitual imperfective aspect with both quantized and non-quantized objects.

- (94) a. Jorge *bebe* vino tinto.
b. Diego *escribe* libros.
c. Jaime *conduce* dos coches.

In (94a), for example, the present tense form of *beber* denotes that *Jorge* drinks red wine habitually or on an on and off basis. Likewise, sentence (94b), via the use of the present tense form of *escribir*, describes *Diego* as writing books as a regularly occurring activity. No particular quantity of the objects expressed in (94a) or (94b) is specified. Even though sentence (94c) contains a quantized object, the predication is still habitual, because the act of driving the cars is not quantized. Since copulas form part of the verbal paradigm, we should not expect the use of *ser* in the present tense to be an exception to this rule. However, since *ser* is copular and not eventive, the exact denotation we get from its use in the present tense is not as apparent.

- (95) a. Daniel *es* alto.
b. Pepe *es* feliz.
c. El mundo *es* redondo.

The predication in sentence (95a) describes *Daniel* as tall, with no indication that the description applies at any specific point in time. In Schmitt's view, the subject's quality

of being tall is atemporal, and the same would apply to (95c). From Luján's (1981) perspective, the use of *ser* in this sentence would refer to a state of being tall in its duration, which gives it temporal reference. One could argue that temporal reference for *ser* in (95a) can be inferred through the fact that at one point in time, *Daniel's* state of being tall had a starting point. Moreover, since *ser* would imply *estar* in Luján's framework, it would also be fitting that upon the inception of *Daniel's* tallness, *estar* would have been the appropriate verb to denote it. Within this aspectual framework, this idea could extend to sentences like (95c) and even (92) and (93), since "the whole universe and any item in it must be conceived as resulting from modifications" (169). Evidently, the plausibility of an imperfective reading for *ser* to apply to all sentences in this section bodes well for the development of an explanatorily adequate model of copula use.

It may be debatable whether *ser* predication in sentences like (95a) and (95c) denotes temporal reference. However an aspectual denotation for *ser* is more readily apparent in sentences like (95b). The use of *ser* with an adjective like *feliz* could conceivably have a habitual reading. The use of the imperfect past tense conjugation can denote a habitual event or state that took place an unspecified number of times. As observed in the previous chapter, the use of the imperfect with an adverbial phrase like *todos los días* implies that there were days that the predication did not apply. Likewise, we may assume that *ser* denotes such habitual imperfective predication in (95b), because

there is no implication that the subject is never sad. Such an interpretation would hold within Luján's (1981) framework, whereby *ser* and *estar* are partially synonymous. The use of *ser* in (95b) would be justified, because it would describe predication applying across a stretch of time consisting of several delimited time periods. The fact that the predication does not apply during every single delimited time period within this imperfective temporal range makes it habitual. Furthermore, predication applying during any given delimited time period singled out from this range would be described with *estar*. For example, the use of *ser* in (95b) describes *Pepe* as generally happy. When this same *Pepe* is unhappy or notably happy at any given time, *estar* will be the copula to represent this. Given that *ser* predication may not constantly apply to its subject, we may assume that its features somewhat parallel those of the imperfect conjugation, which is unarguably imperfective. Moreover, such an imperfective analysis of *ser* further justifies the perfective analysis of *estar*, because it presents their differences in usage and meaning as more symmetrical in nature.

The analysis of *ser* as a non-aspectual copula, though not novel or radical, appears to be descriptively inadequate for Spanish. Also, it would likely not fit into a theoretically sound model for natural language logically and symmetrically. Positing that finite predication with *ser* is devoid of aspect or temporal reference would set this particular copula apart from every other verb in the paradigm. After analyzing a number of data with *ser* predication, we can assume that both copula verbs in Spanish denote

temporal reference. In both logical and philosophical terms, it is quite conceivable that every predication with *ser* has a beginning point, even with generic subjects. The inception of a *ser* predication may not be implied. However, it is understood, especially if we claim that *ser* predication implies a one time *estar* predication a la Luján (1981). Furthermore, habitual readings for *ser* similar to those of the imperfect conjugation serve as strong evidence in support of an aspectual reading for not one, but both Spanish copulas. One should also bear in mind that though *ser* may carry aspect that is derived from certain finite conjugations, it possesses aspectual features that are lexical in origin. When used in the infinitive, for example, *ser* can still display a habitual reading as in *Pepe quiere ser feliz*. In short, observations of data in this section suggest that *ser* does display aspectual qualities, even in simple sentences with adjectival phrases. Contrary to Schmitt's analysis, there is evidence that coercion of *ser* predication into events or *act be* sentences is not necessary for it to yield an aspectual reading. The ramifications of our findings in this section will be further discussed later in this dissertation.

5.3. General Observations Regarding Aspectual Composition

Having analyzed the use of *ser* and *estar* with a variety of different structures and elements in this chapter, we can be absolutely certain that aspect and syntactic composition are inextricably linked. Naturally, aspectual composition plays a role in predication with any type of verb, be it copular, eventive or otherwise. The semantic

properties of arguments like subjects and objects, and adjuncts like adverbial phrases, factor together in the aspectual makeup of sentences throughout the system of language. Furthermore, one type of predication may be reinterpreted as a different type through the process of coercion.

For example, copular predication may be coerced into carrying an eventive reading, which is what Schmitt refers to as an *act be* interpretation. Since aspect and syntactic structure are both innately acquired, cross-linguistic differences in how they interface with each other should be symmetrical. Contrary to the aspect-pragmatics interface discussed in the previous chapter, aspectual composition undoubtedly should have its role in an adequate model of natural language. Therefore, in order to devise a theory for *ser* and *estar* that is both economical and accurate one cannot ignore how aspect is calculated at the phrasal and sentential levels.

In this section, I will first discuss the classification of aspectual phenomena and how argument structure influences the aspectual properties of events. Next, I will illustrate aspectual composition at work in predication with *ser* and *estar* in Spanish. Lastly, I will compare the claims pertaining to the relationship between aspect and lexical items by Schmitt (2005) and Verkuyl (2004) and consider what such claims entail for the treatment of *ser* and *estar*.

5.3.1. Aspectual Classification and Aspectual Composition

In order to understand and recognize how aspect is borne out compositionally, one must be at least somewhat familiar with how different aspectual distinctions are classified. So far in this work, the majority of our focus regarding aspectual matters has centered on perfective and imperfective morphology. Limiting the scope of one's study of aspect to perfective and imperfective terms alone provides only one piece of the greater aspectual puzzle in natural language. Numerous authors have attempted to classify different aspectual distinctions in a variety of ways. One popular method has been to place different types of verbs and verb phrases in separate categories based on their temporal structure. A very well-known classification of this type was devised by Vendler (1967), which has been modified and elaborated on by other authors such as Dowty (1979) and Smith (1991).

In the Vendlerian classification, verbs or verb phrases fall into five different categories, or in Smith's (1991) terminology, *situation types*. These are: *states*, *activities*, *accomplishments*, *achievements* and *semelfactives*. In this model, *states* "are static, with no dynamic and no internal structure; they have duration of at least a moment" (Smith, 1991: 28). Examples of stative verbs are *be*, *know*, *have*, *love*, etc. *Activities* are durative events, which are atelic, or have no natural endpoint (*run*, *walk*, *swim*, *drive a car*, etc.). *Accomplishments* are durative events that are telic, or have a natural endpoint (*paint a picture*, *bake a cake*, *deliver a sermon*, etc.). *Achievements* are

“instantaneous changes of state, with an outcome of a new state” (Smith 28). Examples of achievements are *win a race, reach the top, find, lose, die*, etc. *Semelfactives* are instantaneous atelic events (*knock, cough, sneeze*, etc.). There is not universal agreement regarding these classes and how they are defined. Nonetheless, for our purposes, those given here will suffice as a point of reference for this general discussion of aspectual composition.

Each of the five classes in the Vendlerian model are commonly defined and categorized in aspectual terms by virtue of a set of specific parameters (Comrie 1976, Smith 1991, among others). These are *stativity, duration* and *telicity*, and are for the most part, self-explanatory. The simplest way to describe a verbal predication as stative is to say that it is not dynamic. Not surprisingly, of the five Vendlerian classes, the only one that is stative is that of states. According to Smith (1991: 28-30), situation types that are telic have a culmination or endpoint, and those that are durative, of course, have duration. The classification of these five situation types in terms of how they are specified for these three parameters is illustrated in the chart below:

(96) **Features of the five situation types** (Smith, 1991: 30)

<u>Situation Type</u>	<u>Stative</u>	<u>Durative</u>	<u>Telic</u>
States	[+]	[+]	[-]
Activities	[-]	[+]	[-]
Accomplishments	[-]	[+]	[+]
Semelfactives	[-]	[-]	[-]
Achievements	[-]	[-]	[+]

There is never unanimous agreement among authors on any one method of aspectual classification, and multiple models have been proposed. For our purposes, the Vendlerian classification provides a general idea of how states and events are semantically constituted in natural language.

Thus far, we have seen that stative predication may be coerced into carrying an eventive reading in certain syntactic environments. In like manner, the aspectual properties of events, and thus the type of events they denote, may change depending on their argument structure. Noun phrases, for example, may affect the aspectual properties of a verbal predication or an entire sentence. This can be observed in the following data excerpted from Mollá-Aliod (1997):

- (97) a. He noticed an error. (achievement)
b. He noticed errors. (achievement → activity)
c. He noticed seven errors. (achievement → accomplishment)
- (18)

Sentence (97a), whose object is a singular count noun, is an example of an achievement, since the event is telic but not durative. In (97b), predication with the same achievement verb is coerced into an activity, since indefinite plurals imply an unlimited duration through iteration. Sentence (97c) represents the coercion of an achievement into an accomplishment, because definite plurals introduce limited duration. The above sentences give us a brief glimpse of how situation aspect can be influenced by the type of arguments used with the verb. The terminology and types of classification used to describe aspect, states and events vary from author to author. Nonetheless, one can expect to find a link between aspect, syntactic structure and event or state type in all languages. Therefore, it is certain that there is far more to the relationship between aspectual composition and *ser* and *estar* than simply coercion into *act be* readings.

5.3.2. Aspectual Influence of Nouns and Adjectives on *Ser/Estar*-Predication

States are defined in different ways by different authors. One popular definition of states is that they are true at moments of time (e.g. L. Carlson: 1981). Another is that they are atemporal (e.g. Bach: 1981, Smith: 1991, Verkuyl 1993). Schmitt (2005), who analyzes *ser* as atemporal and *estar* as having temporal reference, embraces the first of these two definitions for a state. Thus in her analysis, *estar* is deemed stative, and *ser* is not. The analysis and observation of various data in this chapter has cast doubt on such an interpretation of these two copulas. Like Schmitt, Luján (1981) claims that *ser* is used

with both stative and nonstative predicates, and *estar* with only stative ones. However, Luján defines *ser* and *estar* as partially synonymous and both having temporal reference. The aspectual distinction on which her analysis is based determines the use of one or the other copula in stative predication (1981: 165). Let us suppose that both Spanish copulas are indeed aspectual, with *ser* being imperfective and *estar* being perfective. If this is indeed the case, it should be clearly borne out compositionally through the calculation of aspect. Whether *ser* and *estar* should really be defined as states is not the main focus of this dissertation. However, if we follow the Vendlerian classification of different situation types, predication with these two copulas could very well fit into the category of states. Just as arguments and adjuncts influence the aspectual composition of an event and thus the type of event it denotes, the same should hold true for states. In this section, we will look at examples of how nouns and adjectives affect the aspectual composition of copular predication and thus influence the choice of *ser* or *estar*.

For the sake of the discussion of the following data, I will assume Luján's (1981) definition of imperfective and perfective aspect as it applies to *ser* and *estar*, respectively. Again, under this interpretation, *estar* predication refers to one delimited time period, whose beginning or end (or both), is assumed. *Ser* predication refers to an undelimited time period comprised of several delimited time periods, with neither its beginning nor its end implied. First let us consider again the copular predication in sentences (92) repeated below.

- (98) (92') a. Los tigres *son* feroces.
b. La literatura chicana *es* interesante.

These two sentences containing the verb *ser* are ambiguous. The subjects in both (92a) and (92b) may either be interpreted as generic or as referring to specific entities.

Whether *estar* may be optionally used over *ser* in these sentences depends on the reference denoted by the subject noun phrases. If the subjects in (92) are interpreted as generic, the use of *ser* is obligatory, because it is the imperfective copula. Since generic subjects do not refer to specific entities, predication involving them does not apply at any one given point in time or during any particular time period.

On the other hand, the subject *los tigres* in sentence (92a) could also refer to all tigers in a specific set, as in all of the tigers at a particular zoo. Likewise, *la literatura chicana* in (92b) could also refer to specific Chicano literature, as in some that is presented at a particular poetry reading. If the subjects in the sentences in (92) denote specific reference, either copula could be used. For (92a), the use of *ser* would indicate that a particular set of tigers is typically ferocious or ferocious during a series of several delimited time periods. Likewise, (92b) would indicate that specific Chicano literature is typically interesting or interesting across such an extended period of time. The use of *ser* alone would indicate that the predication is general, independently from the subject NP. When subjects have specific reference, they can take predication that applies at specific times. Thus, the use of *estar* would also be acceptable in these sentences. If *estar* were to be used in (92a), it would denote that the set of tigers is ferocious during a specific

delimited time period. The use of *estar* in (92b) would denote that the specific literature is particular interesting at one point in time or the first time it is perceived. This is one example of how noun phrases affect the aspectual composition of copular sentences in Spanish and influence the choice of *ser* or *estar*.

Another example of how noun phrases affect the aspectual composition of *ser* and *estar* predication is evident in locative sentences. As described in Section 5.1.3, *estar* is acceptable for describing the location of moveable objects, but *ser* is not, in both Nonstandard Spanish and Portuguese. This is reflected in the sentences in (90) repeated below.

- (99) (90') a. El libro *está* en la mesa.
 b. *El libro *es* en la mesa.
 (Unacceptable for all Spanish speakers)
 c. O livro *está* na mesa. (Portuguese)
 d. *O livro *é* na mesa. (Portuguese)

Since the physical location of a moveable object such as a book is considered unstable or “temporary,” it could be analyzed as applying during one delimited time period or perfectly. Therefore, in terms of aspectual composition, it is fitting that *estar* is the only acceptable copula in locative predication that applies to such moveable objects. On the contrary, because *ser* predication would apply across a stretch of several delimited time periods with no implied beginning or end, its unacceptability with such perfective locative predication would be expected. Whether or not a subject NP is a moveable object clearly affects the calculation of aspect in predication that denotes its location.

This is yet another example of how the temporal nature of a subject NP alone can influence aspectual composition at both the phrasal and sentential levels. Furthermore, in the case of Nonstandard Spanish and Portuguese, it can also affect the choice of copula verb.

The types of phrases that can affect aspectual composition and choice of copula verb in Spanish are not limited to subject NP's. Sometimes, particular adjectival phrases can also influence the calculation of phrasal and sentential aspect in similar fashion. As I briefly mentioned in Chapter Three, there are a number of adjectives in the Spanish lexicon that may only occur with *estar*. These are adjectives like *lleno*, *descalzo*, *enojado*, *muerto*, *ausente*, *desnudo*, etc. Below are a few examples of copular sentences containing these adjectives.

- (100) a. Adán y Eva *están*/**son* desnudos.
b. Carlos *está*/**es* ausente.
c. Ese actor *está*/**es* muerto.

Adjectives such as *desnudo* in (100a) and *ausente* in (100b) represent states that naturally only hold for one delimited time period whenever they apply. Being naked is a state that is always considered limited in contrast to a normal state of being clothed. Similarly, being absent, or present for that matter, is a state that naturally applies during one delimited time period. Since the predication described by such adjectives in (100a) and (100b) may only be interpreted as delimited or perfective, the use of the imperfective *ser*

is not possible. Sentence (100c) contains the oft-theoretically problematic adjective *muerto*, which may never be used with the verb *ser*.

Though the state of being dead is almost always considered a permanent one, the use of *estar* to describe it in Spanish is obligatory. In aspectual terms, the use of the perfective copula to describe the state of being dead is expected. Though *estar* denotes predication that only applies within one delimited time period, the implication of said time period's beginning or end (or both) is relevant to (100c). To say that a person is dead implies that he or she was alive at some point. Therefore, the use of *estar* with the adjective *muerto* implies a state of being dead at the current stage in time, whose inception is implied. Conversely and not surprisingly, the copula *estar* is also used with the adjective *vivo* to describe a state of being alive, which typically has an implied endpoint. The use of the imperfective *ser* to describe a state of being dead or alive would not be logical, because no beginning or endpoint of such a state would be implied.

In light of the data in this section involving generic, locative and adjectival predication, there is strong evidence suggesting that aspectual composition plays a significant role in sentences with *ser* and *estar*. If *ser* is analyzed as imperfective and *estar* as perfective, their interaction with different types of phrases can be viewed as analogous to that of all other Spanish verbs. Following the Vendlerian model, aspectual composition may influence the type of state denoted just as it does with different types of events.

5.3.3. The Contribution of the Verb to Aspectual Composition

In Schmitt's compositionally-based framework for both eventive and copular predication, individual verbs are not analyzed as individual aspectual units, whose properties are decomposed in the syntax. Aspect is purely compositional and is always principally borne out through the combination of verbal and nominal features. This Gestalt-like view of aspectual composition is one of the main conclusions drawn in the author's 1996 dissertation. The individual contribution of event verbs to phrasal and sentential aspect is always contingent on the properties of their argument noun phrases. Though Schmitt analyzes *estar* as an aspectual copula, its ability to denote aspect is similarly dependent on other aspectual elements (which are not necessarily nominal) with which it is used.

One reason why Schmitt claims that verbs cannot denote aspect individually is that "verbs can't count" (1996: 16). What this means is that like mass nouns, verbs do not have individual discrete parts. Nouns, specifically count nouns, do have individuated parts that can factor into an event's having an endpoint. In Schmitt's words:

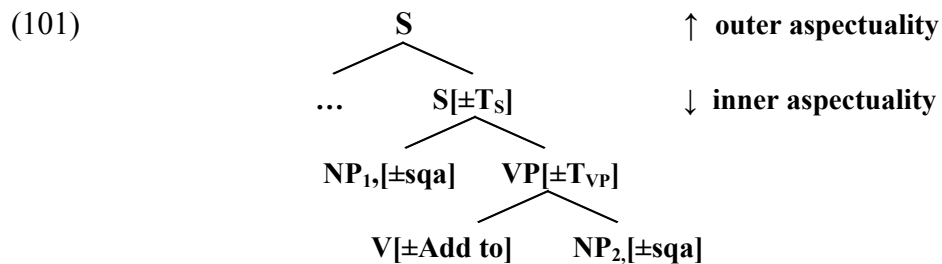
"Any aspectual property that depends on the individuation of participant related parts of the event, or in counting how many partitions of the participants there are in order to define the end point of an event, is to be associated with nouns" (1996: 16).

The author justifies the notion of both event verbs and mass nouns not being quantized and thus being semantically parallel by virtue of their acceptability with the quantifier

phrase *too much*. The use of this quantifier phrase with count nouns, on the other hand, is ungrammatical. For example, one can say *drink too much* or *too much wine*, but one cannot say *too much glasses of wine*. Since all event verbs would presumably not imply any quantization or endpoint of any kind, all verb phrases would have a default durative reading. Whether any given verb phrase carries a telic or atelic reading entirely depends on the type of noun phrase it contains. Under Schmitt's interpretation, a verb form itself represents only one part of the equation necessary for any type of aspectual reading to be manifested.

In her dissertation (1996) and throughout her body of work (1992, 2005, etc.), Schmitt draws heavily on the work on aspectual composition of Verkuyl (1972, 1989, 1993, 1995). Unlike Schmitt, however, Verkuyl does analyze verbs as individually denoting aspect and thus does not embrace a Gestalt view of aspectual composition. In his view, complex aspectual units are best analyzed in a way that is analogous to the way molecules are analyzed in chemistry. Just as molecules are analyzed as made up of atoms, complex aspectual units would be analyzed as made up of individual lexical aspectual units (2004: 1). In Verkuyl's (2004) framework, verbs are specified for a feature [\pm Add to]. Verbs carrying the [+Add to] property express dynamic progress, change or any other feature that distinguishes them from stative verbs, which are classified as [-Add to]. Verbs that are [+Add to] are able to divide time into several stages or along a *path*. Nouns are characterized by the feature plus or minus *specified*

quantity of A or [\pm sqa] (Verkuyl, 1993: 101). Nouns that are [+sqa] may be quantized, such as determined plurals and singular NP's, and those that are [-sqa], such as bare plurals and mass nouns, may not be quantized. Complex units such as verb phrases and those in a higher domain such as entire sentences are specified as [\pm T]. The feature [+T] indicates that the string has terminativity and the feature [-T] indicates that it lacks terminativity. A distinction is made between *inner aspectuality*, which refers to individual verbs and nouns and *outer aspectuality*, which refers to more complex structures in a higher domain (Verkuyl, 2004: 2). These internal and external aspectual interactions are represented in tree form below.



Whether a verb or any other element is analyzed in isolation or as part of a higher structure, it always maintains the same aspectual distinction.

When individual aspectual elements are combined, the aspectual value of the higher structures they comprise is calculated based on the plus or minus values of each element's features put together. The calculation of aspect for verb phrases is illustrated below as it relates to the following sentences.

- (102) a. Mary *walked three miles*.
 $V_{[+Add\ to]} + NP_{2,[+sqa]} \rightarrow [+T_{VP}]$ (terminative)
- b. Mary *walked miles*.
 $V_{[+Add\ to]} + NP_{2,[-sqa]} \rightarrow [-T_{VP}]$ (durative) (2004: 4)

Since the VP in (102a) contains a count noun, the entire verb phrase is telic, and since the VP in (102b) contains an indefinite plural, it is atelic. Notice that though the aspectual properties of the two verb phrases are different, they are the same for the verb *walk* in both sentences. In this same vein, the calculation of aspect for verb phrases as well as the sentences in which they are used is shown in Verkuyl's feature algebra below. To clarify, the letter *S* refers to an entire sentence, and the notation $\pm TS$ indicates whether it denotes terminative or durative aspect. Also, the notation *VP* refers to an entire verb phrase, and the notation $\pm VP$ indicates whether that verb phrase is terminative or durative.

- (103) a. [S Mary [VP walk three miles]]
 $[+TS [+sqa] [+TVP [+add\ to] [+sqa]]] \rightarrow$ terminative
- b. [S Mary [VP walk miles]]
 $[-TS [+sqa] [-TVP [+add\ to] [-sqa]]] \rightarrow$ durative
- c. [S Children [VP walk three miles]]
 $[-TS [-sqa] [+TVP [+add\ to] [+sqa]]] \rightarrow$ durative
- d. [S Mary [VP expect three guests]]
 $[-TS [+sqa] [-TVP [-add\ to] [+sqa]]] \rightarrow$ durative (4-5)

Verkuyl's algebra leads to what is called the *Plus-Principle*, which states that one minus-value in a lower domain yields a minus value for the entire higher domain, as well as the

entire sentence. With this type of approach, the aspectual features of individual verbs and nouns remain constant regardless of the combination in which they are found.

Verkuyl's view of aspectual composition thus also differs from Vendler's (1967) in that the kernel meaning of the verb would not be tuned to the context in which it appears.⁷ According to the author, positing that a verb can carry different aspectual readings is just a more complex way of saying that there are multiple lexical entries for that verb (2004: 7). Positing multiple lexical entries for the same verb is always best avoided in order to maintain as costless an analysis as possible. Furthermore, claiming that aspectual properties are minimally manifested at the phrasal level suggests that verb phrases and not merely verbs alone would represent fixed ontological entities. Such an interpretation would be problematic because of the vast amount of variation in the parts of the complex meanings. For example, verb phrases like *to walk miles* and *to walk three miles* would have to fall into different ontological categories and thus reflect an unnecessarily costly analysis (11). Verkuyl also points out that there is nothing about the lexical meaning of verbs that implies whether they are durative or terminative by default (13).

I am of the opinion that positing the [\pm Add to] feature for all verbs is theoretically attractive for analyzing how they interface with other elements in calculating aspect at higher levels. Verbs would maintain their semantic and ontological integrity, yet at the

⁷ In this work, I have chosen to use the term *coercion* as a general term to refer to this and similar processes. Verkuyl uses the term *low-level coercion* for this specific type of coercion.

same time, they depend on other constituents to bear out the temporal and aspectual nature of their predication. The implication of Verkuyl's framework for analyzing *ser* and *estar* is that if event verbs may be analyzed as individually denoting aspect, then so should copulas. If *ser* and *estar* are to both be analyzed as aspectual copulas, then it would be theoretically sound and costless to also claim that they denote aspect individually. Just as adjectives do not change their meaning based on the verb with which they are used, as we observed in Chapter One, verbs likely do not change their meaning based on their context either.

We have just observed that different types of events may be classified based on their aspectual composition. In the case of Vendler (1967), event verbs in isolation and those used with other constituents are analyzed as yielding an aspectual reading. Depending on the argument noun phrases with which they are used, one type of event may be coerced into denoting another type through the altering of its aspectual properties. A Vendlerian-like analysis may also extend to *ser* and *estar*, if the two verbs are both analyzed as aspectual copulas. Data in this section show that, through their aspectual properties, the type of noun phrases and adjectives used with *ser* and *estar* influence which of the two copulas is used.

Unlike Schmitt (1996, 2005), Verkuyl (2004) analyzes event verbs as independently denoting aspect.⁸ Verkuyl's framework differs from Vendler's in that the aspectual properties of verbs remain constant regardless of the context in which they appear. At this point, it appears that positing that *ser* and *estar* are both aspectual copulas and maintain their aspectual properties at all times is quite costless and thus theoretically desirable. Such a view of Spanish copular predication would be Vendlerian in the sense that aspectual composition would influence the aspectual properties of the predicate used. By the same token, it would also follow along the lines of Verkuyl's framework. Any effect of aspectual composition on the properties of the verb would be reflected in the choice of either *ser* or *estar*, whose respective aspectual properties would remain constant. The theoretical implications for these findings will be further explored in the next chapter.

5.4. Summary

The greater part of this chapter has been devoted to testing the principal claims of Schmitt's (2005) compositional analysis of *ser* and *estar* in Portuguese for descriptive adequacy in Spanish. The adequacy tests covered Spanish data that parallel Schmitt's Portuguese data as well as other types of sentences not addressed by the author. Our findings show that by Schmitt's criteria, both *ser* and *estar* would actually be acceptable

⁸ Though Schmitt analyzes *ser* predication as eventive in *act be* sentences, she does not analyze either copula as an event verb in any way.

in event-type predication. Furthermore, after analyzing different combinations of each copula with other aspectual elements, it can be determined that *estar* is not as selectionally restricted as the author claims. In light of these and other findings, the interpretation of *ser* as an atemporal and non-aspectual copula has been called into question. All finite verb forms throughout the Spanish verbal paradigm are specified for either perfective or imperfective aspect. Therefore, it would be theoretically exceptional and costly to posit that this binary aspectual opposition does not likewise lexically apply to the copulative verbs. Though Schmitt's analysis of *ser* and *estar* in Portuguese does not accurately predict many uses of the two copulas in Spanish, much theoretical insight into aspectual composition can be taken away from it. Unlike pragmatic factors, those involving aspectual composition may interface with verb usage in a way that clearly has its place in an explanatorily adequate model of natural language. Determining precisely how this interface is constructed and how it functions, especially with copula verbs, is clearly a matter of utmost theoretical importance for solving the *ser* and *estar* enigma.

In this chapter, we also examined how different aspectual distinctions and the event types that reflect them may be classified. By considering Vendler's (1967) different situation types, which are borne out through aspectual composition, we can gain a sense of how aspect is calculated in different syntactic domains. Vendler analyzes individual verbs as well as verb phrases as denoting aspect. An event type denoted by a particular verb can be coerced into a different one depending on the type of argument

noun phrase with which the verb is used. If both *ser* and *estar* are analyzed as aspectual indicators, it can be shown that the type of state, and thus the choice of copula, can be influenced by aspectual composition in similar fashion. Schmitt (1996) analyzes individual verbs as carrying aspectual features, but their denotation is entirely dependent on other elements with which they appear. Verkuyl (2004) analyzes verbs as denoting a general aspectual property, which remains constant at all times. After considering all three points of view regarding the aspectual properties of verbs, it seems that Verkuyl's is the least costly for an adequate analysis of predicate phrases with copula verbs. At this juncture, all of our findings have favored an analysis of *ser* and *estar* as imperfective and perfective copulas respectively. Their usage is clearly influenced by syntactic and aspectual composition, and to a lesser degree, pragmatic factors. In the next chapter, I will elaborate on these findings in an attempt to account for the uses of *ser* and *estar*, as well as copula verbs in other languages, in the most adequate and costless manner possible.

CHAPTER SIX

ASPECTUAL DISTINCTION IN SPANISH COPULAR PREDICATION

6.0. Introduction

Thus far, we have observed numerous approaches to predicting the uses of *ser* and *estar* in Spanish. What they have in common is that they all acknowledge that, for the most part, *estar* predication is temporally bound or limited and *ser* predication is not. Among the myriad of analyses that have been proposed for *ser* and *estar*, the strongest case can be made for one involving an aspectual distinction which is part of universal grammar. Therefore, the purpose of this chapter will be to define what a descriptively and explanatorily adequate analysis of this nature entails and how it can be justified.

First, I will argue that the copular opposition of *ser/estar*-predication embodies the universal distinction signaled by the aspectual values [\pm Perfective], which is the same one that is overtly expressed by the two different past tense forms (preterite and imperfect) in Spanish. Second, I will show that this distinction applies to stative predicates as much as it does to eventive predicates, contrary to some current views. It will be posited that, in addition to being denoted by the copula forms themselves, an aspectual reading is also calculated and borne out compositionally in stative sentences with the two verbs. Thirdly, I will argue that by assuming that *ser*-predication is [$-$ Perfective], the meaning and form of several types of *ser*-predication, not generally seen in terms of aspect (e.g. equative, generic sentences, time expressions) are elucidated

and accounted for. Lastly, I show that certain adjectival *estar*-predicates which appear to be [-Perfective] are in reality [+Perfective], thus justifying the use of *estar* instead of *ser*.

6.1. An Aspect-Driven Theory for *Ser/Estar*

Judging from theoretical and empirical observations made in previous chapters, it can be stated that the most accurate approach to accounting for the uses of the Spanish copulas is to analyze them as aspectual morphemes. Aspect is a functional feature, which is prominent throughout the verbal tense system in not only Spanish, but throughout the system of language. Thus, we may predict that the binary aspectual distinction [\pm Perfective] is strong in terms of descriptive adequacy for the Spanish copula verbs. Moreover, such an aspect-driven approach is theoretically costless, because aspect represents a grammatical feature, which is effortlessly cognitively internalized by all language speakers at a very young age. Rather than analyzing *ser* and *estar* as depending on other elements in their predication for their aspectual features to be manifested, it is least costly to analyze them as denoting aspectual values that are constant. With this said, however, aspectual composition in Spanish copulative sentences also plays a crucial role in determining the types of meaning that result when the opposing copular predications fall under the scope of sentential modifiers with which they combine.

In this section, I will begin by defining precisely what the features [+Perfective] and [-Perfective] entail and how they apply to Spanish stative predication in particular.

Second, I will consider how states, like events, have aspectual reference and can thus be categorized into different types based on their aspectual composition. It will become evident that *ser* and *estar* denote constant aspectual values that remain unaltered in composition with other aspectual elements. Such an aspectual analysis of *ser* and *estar* themselves, with consideration for aspectual composition, is not only descriptively adequate, but explanatorily adequate as well.

6.1.1. Aspectual Features for both *Ser* and *Estar*

The aspectual interpretation of *ser* and *estar* that most adequately reflects the way these two copulas are used is that of Luján (1981). For the sake of clarity, I will once more define here precisely what this particular morphologically-represented aspectual distinction entails. Each copula is individually specified for a feature [\pm Perfective]. The verb *estar* is defined as [+Perfective], which means that its use in predication denotes “perfective” states. By contrast, *ser* carries the feature [-Perfective], which means that its predication denotes “imperfective” states. Perfective and imperfective states as denoted by *ser* and *estar* are defined by Luján (1981) as such:

“*Estar*-predicates are perfective and must be interpreted as inherently referring to a delimited time period, i.e. a period of time whose beginning or end (or both) are assumed. *Ser*-predicates are imperfective in that their temporal reference is with respect to an undelimited period of time, covering a number of distinct occasions or delimited time periods, that is, a stretch of time with indefinite beginning and end.” (1981: 165)

Perfective states, which are denoted by *estar+predicate*, apply within one delimited time period. Such a state is represented by the notation shown in (104). For ease of exposition, this notation is repeated below.

(104) (43') $A(x)$ at time t_j (Luján 1981, 177)

This logical representation expresses that a predicate A is to apply to an individual x within one delimited time period, whose beginning or end (or both) are assumed.

Imperfective states, expressed with the copula *ser*, apply across an indefinite number of delimited time periods. Such imperfective copular predication with *ser* is logically represented by the notation previously shown in (44), repeated also below for ease of exposition.

(105) (44') $A(x)$ at times $t_j \dots t_{j+k}$ (Luján 1981, 177)

This notation expresses that a predicate A is to apply to an individual x across a stretch of time whose beginning and end are not assumed and extending across a series of several delimited time periods. According to Luján, this stretch of time represented by *ser* designates:

”...a relative space of time with some duration (e.g. a moment, an occasion, etc.), such that any portion of the time axis consists of a succession of such periods which are represented here by $t_{j+1}, t_{j+2}, t_{j+3}, \dots, t_{j+n}$, and which are assumed to be linearly ordered” (176).

Under this analysis, *ser* and *estar* both denote aspect and thus both have temporal reference. *Ser*-predication refers to a stretch of time, comprised of several delimited time

periods, in its *duration*. Though said period of time is represented in its duration, neither its beginning nor end is implied. With *estar*, only one such delimited time period is described, and its beginning or end (or both) are implied (176). This aspectual dichotomy is readily evident in the use of *ser* and *estar* with predicate adjectives. An adjective by itself denotes a stative predication, and the use of *ser* or *estar* with that adjective indicates whether that state is imperfective or perfective, respectively. For example, the sentence *Ricardo está feliz* describes *Ricardo* as being happy at the current stage in time, or in other words, in a good mood. Via the use of *estar*, a beginning or an end of this state of happiness is implied. By contrast, the sentence *Ricardo es feliz* describes *Ricardo* as being happy during a stretch of time without any implication of when his state of happiness began or when it may end. In other words, *Ricardo* is described as a happy person or as being generally happy. Since such predication with *ser* is temporal, it applies in its duration, with no implied beginning or end. Bear in mind that an adjective never changes its core meaning when used with one copula or the other. Rather, the temporal reference of the state described by the adjective is denoted by whichever copula is used along with it.

By virtue of this aspectual and temporal distinction between *ser* and *estar*, the predicates that combine with the two copulas can therefore be analyzed as being partially synonymous. As such, a *ser+predicate* implies an *estar+predicate* (of equal content), but the inverse does not hold true. In other words, in theory, it is implied that all states

described with *ser*-predication have to have been states that would have been described by *estar*-predication at their inception (177). In fact, out of a stretch of time covering a number of different time periods which comprise a state denoted with *ser*, at least one individually singled out of that stretch of time would represent a state denoted with *estar*. Luján characterizes the partial synonymy of *ser* and *estar* by means of the following logically represented inference drawn from (104) and (105):

$$(106) \quad A(x) \text{ at times } t_j \dots t_{j+k} \supset A(x) \text{ at time } t_j \vee t_{j+1} \vee t_{j+2} \dots \vee t_{j+k} \quad (1981: 177)$$

For example, the *ser* predication *Ricardo es feliz* implies that the *estar* predication *Ricardo está feliz* theoretically has to have applied at least once during that stretch of time with no beginning or end. Conversely, the latter statement (expressed with *estar*) may apply without the former (expressed with *ser*) ever having applied. Moreover, the logical relation of a *ser*-predicate implying an *estar*-predicate, but not of an *estar*-predicate implying a *ser*-predicate, is supported by the presence of a number of adjectives in the Spanish lexicon that may only occur with *estar*. Predication with such adjectives like *lleno*, *descalzo*, *enojado*, *muerto*, *ausente*, *desnudo*, etc. (Luján 1981,182) may only apply during one delimited time period whose beginning or end (or both) is implied. Any given combination of *estar* with any adjective is conceivably acceptable. The copula *estar* can occur with adjectives that typically describe *estar*-states, such as *cansado*, and *enojado*, as well as those that normally describe *ser*-states, such as *alto*, *grande* and

inteligente. The use of *estar*-only adjectives with the verb *ser*, however, is always ungrammatical, because they describe states that naturally can only apply during one delimited time period. As partially synonymous aspectual copulas, *ser* and *estar* may be considered mere allomorphs, whose use solely depends on the kind of temporal reference of the copular predication they describe.

In this aspectual analysis, *ser*, in addition to denoting predication that holds continuously, may denote predication that is habitual, or holds on an on-and-off basis much like the imperfect past tense conjugation does. An imperfective state, described with *ser*, implies a disjunction of related perfective predicates, as represented in (106). The disjunction holds if the state applies at all points throughout a given stretch of time and also in cases when there are some points during that stretch of time in which the state does not apply. Only when a state does not apply at any point throughout the stretch of time, with no implied beginning or end, is the disjunction false (1981: 178-179). For example, the use of the [-Perfective] conjugation in the sentence *Ricardo hacía ejercicio todos los días* does not exclude that there could have been days when *Ricardo* did not do exercise. Similarly, the use of the imperfective *ser* copula in the sentence *Ricardo es feliz* does not exclude the possible existence of points in time when *Ricardo* is not happy. Whether or not a *ser* predication may be interpreted as habitual depends on the elements that are combined with the verb. For example, a predicate adjective like *feliz* can apply to

its subject habitually, but one like *alto* would not, barring pragmatically unorthodox circumstances.

6.1.2. The Compositional Calculation of Aspect

In devising a descriptively and explanatorily adequate framework for *ser* and *estar*, it is not sufficient to merely state that the two copulas are aspectual indicators and stop there. Since these copulas are always used in some type of syntactic context, aspectual composition plays a major role in how the predicates they combine with semantically contribute when they are in the scope of other aspectual elements. In the previous chapter, it was shown that different types of events can be classified based on their aspectual features. A useful way of classifying states based on their aspectual composition is by means of Vendler's (1967) classification, which has been modified over the years by authors such as Dowty (1979) and Smith (1991). In short, events can be classified as belonging to one category or another based on their plus or minus values for the features [\pm Durative] and [\pm Telic]. As the name of the feature suggests, an event is [+Durative] if it has duration and [-Durative] if it does not. An event is specified as [+Telic] if it is telic, or has a natural fixed endpoint. If it does not have a natural fixed endpoint, or is atelic, it is specified as [-Telic]. Event coercion takes place when an event's aspectual composition is altered through the combination of the verb and certain nominal elements. For example, the event *drink* is an *activity*, because it is durative and

has no natural fixed endpoint. By contrast, the event *drink three beers* is an *accomplishment*, because it has duration and has a natural endpoint by virtue of a quantized object noun phrase. Whether or not a verb's arguments are quantized affects an event's aspectual composition and thus which type of event it is. If states are to be analyzed as aspectual, one should expect them to be subject to an aspect-based classification just like events are. Furthermore, coercion of one type of state to another should also be possible. Thus, for the purposes of this dissertation, it is incumbent upon us to define precisely what role aspectual composition plays in stative predication and how it influences the categorization of states. In doing so, we may gain further insight into what drives the complementary distribution of the Spanish copulas *ser* and *estar*.

Within the Vendlerian framework, individual verbs carry their own aspectual features, which vary from verb to verb. Thus, different verbs, independently from their argument noun phrases, denote different event types. In Schmitt's (1996) Distributed Morphology-inspired framework, all event verbs carry an aspectual feature *P*, but they depend on other elements in their predication for their aspectual features to be manifested. Aspectual composition would thus be treated from a Gestalt-like perspective, in which aspect would only be calculated at the phrasal level and at higher domains. In contrast to these two treatments of aspectual composition, Verkuyl (2004) analyzes complex aspectual units in a way that is analogous to the way molecules are analyzed in chemistry. Just as molecules are best analyzed as made up of atoms,

complex aspectual units are analyzed as made up of individual lexical aspectual units (2004: 1). All event verbs individually denote aspect that does not require co-composition with other aspectual elements to be manifested. Furthermore, a verb's aspectual properties remain constant at all times and are thus never altered through co-composition with other elements that carry aspectual properties.

In Verkuyl's (2004) framework, all verbs are specified for a feature [\pm Add to]. Event verbs, which express dynamic progress, change or any other feature that distinguishes them from stative verbs, are specified as [+Add to]. By contrast, stative verbs are classified as [-Add to]. Verbs that are [+Add to], such as *to walk*, are able to divide time into several stages or along a *path*, as in the sentence *Mary walked three miles* (2004: 4). The [+Add to] specification shows that a verb's predication can be telic if it is combined with quantized noun phrases. Verkuyl essentially classifies quantized noun phrases as [+sqa] (specified quantity of A) and those that are not quantized are classified as [-sqa]. The feature [\pm sqa] is defined by the author in the Standard Theory of Quantification as shown by the following representation.

- (107) a. An NP of the form Det N denotes a *Specified Quantity* of A in E relative to B iff $A \cap B$ is bounded.
- b. An NP of the form Det N denotes an *Unspecified Quantity of A* in E relative to B if: (a) $A \cap B = \emptyset$; or (b) $|A \cap B|$ cannot be determined.
- c. A set S is *bounded* if there is an $m \in Z^+$ ($= N \setminus \{0\}$) such that for all $x_i \in S$, $i \leq m$ (i a number assigned to members of S).

(Verkuyl 1993:92)

As indicated by the above representation, an NP is [+sqa] if it represents a bounded set of items or a single item. In other words, if there is information conveyed about a specific number or quantity of item(s) expressed by the NP, the NP is treated as [+sqa]. Noun phrases that are [+sqa] include determined plurals, like *three sandwiches*, and singular NP's, like *a sandwich*, which are capable of triggering a terminative reading for the verb phrase or the entire string. Proper noun phrases such as *John*, *Mary* and *President of the United States* are treated as members of a single item bounded set and are thus [+sqa] as well. According to Verkuyl: "A [+sqa] NP pertains to something discernable that can be separated from other things and as soon as you can do that, one may count or measure" (2004, 2).

By contrast, noun phrases that are [-sqa] are those for which the intersection of A and B is either null or cannot be determined. These include bare plurals, such as *sandwiches*, and mass nouns, such as *peanut butter*, which are not quantized and thus cannot trigger a terminative reading for the verb phrase or the entire string. Examples of [-sqa] NP's representing a null intersection of A and B are *nothing*, *nobody* and *no one*. Such use of negative quantification of an NP cannot trigger a telic reading, because it expresses that no person participates in an event and/or that no object exists on which the event verb can map and establish a path for an event.

When a [+Add to] verb is combined with a [+sqa] noun phrase, a [+Telic] reading for the phrase containing this combination will result. If a [+Add to] verb is combined

with a [-sqa] noun phrase, the phrase in which they are combined will yield a [-Telic] reading. Aspect is calculated in different syntactic levels or domains, whose aspectual readings factor together to yield an aspectual reading for an entire sentence. *Inner aspectuality* refers to the compositional aspect of individual verbs and nouns and *outer aspectuality* refers to more complex structures in a higher phrasal domain (Verkuyl, 2004: 2). The calculation of compositional aspect in verb phrases, as well as the sentences in which they occur, can be represented by Verkuyl's feature algebra shown below.

- (108) (103') a. Mary walked three miles.
 [S Mary [VP walk three miles]]
 [+TS [+sqa] [+TVP [+add to] [+sqa]]] → terminative
- b. Mary walked miles.
 [S Mary [VP walk miles]]
 [-TS [+sqa] [-TVP [+add to] [-sqa]]] → durative
- c. Children walked three miles.
 [S Children [VP walk three miles]]
 [-TS [-sqa] [+TVP [+add to] [+sqa]]] → durative
- d. Mary expected three guests.
 [S Mary [VP expect three guests]]
 [-TS [+sqa] [-TVP [-add to] [+sqa]]] → durative

(2004, 4-5)

As shown in (103a) and (103c), when a [+Add to] verb takes a [+sqa] object noun phrase, the entire verb phrase yields a [+Telic] reading indicated by +TVP (telic verb phrase). In (103b), a [+Add to] verb combines with a [-sqa] object noun phrase, and thus

the entire verb phrase yields a [-Telic] reading indicated by –TVP (atelic verb phrase). The verb phrase in sentence (103d), which contains a [+sqa] object noun phrase, yields an atelic reading, because the stative verb *expect* is [-Add to]. These calculations constitute the *inner aspectuality* of these sentences. With regard to the aspectual calculation in a higher phrase domain, Verkuyl uses the abbreviations +TS and -TS to indicate that the entire sentence is telic or atelic, respectively. In (103a), both the subject noun phrase and the object noun phrase are quantized or [+sqa] and the event verb is [+Add to], thus yielding a [+Telic] reading for the whole sentence. Sentence (103c) is [-Telic] even though the aspectual calculation in the lower domain is [+Telic], because the subject noun phrase is non-quantized or [-sqa]. Such aspectual calculations at the sentential level constitute *outer aspectuality*.

Verkuyl's feature algebra illustrates what he refers to as the *Plus-Principle*, which states that one minus-value in a lower domain yields a minus-value for the entire higher domain, as well as the entire sentence. In other words, the use of any [-Add to] verb or any [-sqa] noun phrase will result in an [-Telic] aspectual calculation for the phrase in which it is used and all higher phrases. By virtue of Verkuyl's representation of sentences like (103), one can see that the aspectual feature of a given event verb never changes. Though it may occur with nominal elements that can result in either a [+Telic] or [-Telic] reading for the verb phrase and the entire sentence, its own aspectual value remains constant (2004, 4-5).

In light of the feature algebra presented above, analyzing individual verbs as maintaining a constant aspectual value is an empirically attractive option. *The Plus-Principle* accurately applies to the compositional calculation of aspect at different domains while maintaining the semantic values of all the morphemes involved in the calculation. Analyzing all verbs as denoting constant aspectual values as such is also theoretically costless. It does not require us to posit that there is a different lexical entry for each verb whose use depends on the aspectual reading of the phrase in which it is used. Therefore, for *ser* and *estar* to be analyzed as aspectual copulas, they would be most accurately interpreted as maintaining constant aspectual values in co-composition with other aspectual elements or with syntactic categories. However, since *ser* and *estar* may be analyzed as aspectual copulas that denote temporal reference, the [-Add to] feature that they would be specified for in Verkuyl's framework is problematic.

6.1.3. How Aspect Applies to States

In designating the specification [-Add to] for all stative verbs, Verkuyl analyzes states in much the same way as Smith (1991). According to Smith, "In temporal schema, they consist only of a period of undifferentiated moments, without endpoints (28)..." Since stative verbs are specified as [-Add to], their predication cannot divide time into stages nor does it have a natural fixed endpoint. According to Verkuyl, all [-Add to] verbs "have a temporal index of zero," because the noun phrases used with them are

“mapped to a point zero” (1993: 345). Such views of states or non-eventive predication as having no temporal reference differ from the aforementioned analysis of *ser-* and *estar-*predicates as aspectual indicators, which I am assuming to be the most accurate possible. By virtue of the fact that all stative predication in Spanish denotes either imperfective or perfective aspect, it cannot be universally analyzed as completely devoid of temporal reference.

As purely aspectual verbs or “light verbs,” *ser* and *estar* obviously do not take objects and thus cannot “map” grammatical items to a particular temporal point like event verbs do. However, since these copulas denote an aspectual distinction, states with which they combine can be analyzed as having a type of temporal reference of their own that somewhat parallels that of different types of events. States, unlike events, do not have internal structure with stages, such as a beginning, middle, and end, etc. Because states do not consist of stages, one cannot analyze different points in time during which they hold as part of any type of progression or path toward an endpoint. In the case of an event such as *walk three miles*, for example, each stage or subinterval of the path of the event involves the completion of part of the distance of three miles being walked. The point in time during which the subject starts walking is the beginning point and the endpoint is the moment at which the subject completes the third walked mile. The exact middle point of the event would be the moment at which the subject completes 1.5 miles of walking. With regard to states, by contrast, at any given moment during which a state

holds, the entire period of time during which it holds is no less “complete” or “incomplete” than it is at any other moment. For example, a stative predication such as *be sad* cannot consist of stages or a progression of any type. At no point in time during which a state of being sad holds does it hold any more or any less than it does at any other moment. In other words, a state of being sad at its inception is exactly identical to a state of being sad at the moment of its termination. A ubiquitous example one can draw from, for the sake of clarification, would be the state of a traffic light being red. When a traffic light is about to turn green, its state of being red is no different than it was once it had changed to red from yellow. Though there is a set length of time during which its state of being red holds, there is no progression or stages of its being red, for either it is simply red or it is not. Since stative verbs cannot divide time into stages, states themselves cannot be analyzed *internally* per se in terms of aspect like events can. In other words, any period of time during which a state applies, in and of itself, may only be analyzed as one indivisible stage in time. Lacking internal stages, or a path, states cannot have a beginning stage or a final stage. Thus, they cannot be said to literally *begin* or *come to an end*. Rather, it is more accurate to analyze them as *holding* or *ceasing to hold*. With that said, states may have an implied natural *inception* or *moment of cessation*. For example, being specified as [+Perfective], *estar*-predicates describe states that apply within one delimited time period, whose beginning or end (or both) is implied. If a moment at which a state ceases to hold can be implied through the use of a particular

copula verb, then neither Verkuyl's [-Add to] feature, nor Smith's definition for states can accurately account for at least some stative sentences.

As [-Perfective], states expressed with *ser*-predicates, by contrast, do not have an implied moment of cessation. Though such states do not have an implied moment at which they cease to hold, they clearly nonetheless carry an aspectual reading. Because predication with *ser* is interpreted as implying a disjunction of predicates holding at successive points in time, it may either apply continuously or on an on-and-off basis. By virtue of its use for describing a habitual state especially, one can see that the [-Perfective] aspectual feature denoted by *ser*-predication parallels that of the imperfect past tense verb inflection. States may hold or cease to hold at given points of time or successive occasions, but they do not consist of internal stages. Unlike events, no period of time during which a state holds can be divided into subintervals that constitute a given state. For example, an eventive predicate like *eat three sandwiches* can be split into three subintervals, one for each sandwich eaten. A stative predicate, even if it involves multiple nominal predicates as in *be a friend, father and teacher*, does not contain a progression or *path* to be divided into subintervals. Therefore, with respect to states, aspect must only apply to occasions in which a state holds or ceases to hold. In other words, aspect applies to states *externally* rather than *internally* as it does for events. Analyzed in this manner, we can assume that aspect applies to states as well as events,

thus from this perspective states are not atemporal. That aspect applies to events *internally* and to states *externally* is consistent with their different semantic classification.

Another argument against the categorization of states as atemporal and non-aspectual is the fact that all Spanish verbs, including stative predicates with *ser* and *estar*, may appear in both the simple preterite and imperfect past tense conjugations. The simple preterite, being the [+Perfective] conjugation, implies the beginning or the endpoint of an event in the past. Its use may also imply the inception or moment at which a state ceases to hold in the past. By contrast, the imperfect, as its name suggests, is [-Perfective] in that it describes events in the past with no implied beginning or endpoint and states with no implied inception or termination. In a way that parallels stative predicates with *ser*, predication described with the imperfect past tense form may either apply continuously or on and on-and-off basis. This aspectual distinction [\pm Perfective] is illustrated in the following sentences below with the event verbs *jugar* and *cenar*.

- (109) a. Rafael *jugó* al tenis ayer.
(simple preterite – end of event implied)
- b. David *cenó* a las siete.
(simple preterite – beginning of event implied)
- c. Rafael *jugaba* al tenis cuando lo vi.
(imperfect - event in progress)
- d. Rafael *jugaba* al tenis todos los días.
(imperfect – recurring event)

- e. David *cenaba* cuando el teléfono sonó.
(imperfect – event in progress)
- f. David *cenaba* con María todos los días.
(imperfect – recurring event)

Just as event verbs may appear in either the simple preterite or the imperfect past tense conjugation, the same holds true for stative verbs. Observe the following sentences with the stative verbs *amar* and *saber* with the two different past tense endings.

- (110)
- a. Yo *amé* a una mujer una vez, pero me abandonó por otro hombre. (simple preterite –state ceased to hold)
 - b. Al oír ese ruido, *supe* que hubo un accidente horrible.
(simple preterite -state came to be)
 - c. Yo *amaba* mucho a esa mujer.
(imperfect – state held at the time / recurring state)
 - d. Yo *sabía* su nombre antes, pero se me ha olvidado.
(imperfect – state held over a number of occasions)

The fact that stative verbs such as *amar* and *saber* may take either simple preterite or imperfect verb endings runs counter to the analysis of states as atemporal and non-aspectual. In sentence (110a), the [+Perfective] preterite form of *amar* “to love” describes the ceasing of a state of loving somebody, or in other words, that the subject “once loved.” Via its use in the preterite, the verb *saber* “to know” in (110b) describes the inception of a state of knowing something, or “finding something out.” As illustrated by stative sentences such as (110c) and (110d), the use of such verbs in the [-Perfective] imperfect past tense form describes a state that held at a particular moment or held

habitually applying in the past. Since stative verbs such as *amar* and *saber* exhibit the same [\pm Perfective] aspectual distinction by means of the simple preterite and imperfect as event verbs like *jugar* and *cenar* do, it is predicted that the copulas *ser* and *estar* applied to predicate nominals, be they N or Adj, may do so as well.

- (111) a. Jimmy Carter *fue* Presidente por 4 años.
(simple preterite – state ceased to hold)
- b. Jimmy Carter *era* Presidente cuando mi sobrino nació.
(imperfect – state holding at the time)
- c. Hugo *estuvo* enfermo la semana pasada.
(simple preterite – state ceased to hold)
- d. Hugo *estaba* enfermo cuando lo vi ayer.
(imperfect – state held at the time)

In sentence (111a), the use of *ser* in the simple preterite describes the moment at which a [-Perfective] state ceases in the past. Though the use of *ser* alone does not imply a moment of cessation for such a state, its use in the [+Perfective] simple preterite does. Similarly, the use of *estar* in sentence (111c), irrespective of the [+Perfective] reading it carries on its own, implies the moment a state in the past ceases by means of its use in the simple preterite. Conversely, the use of *ser* in sentence (111b) does not have an implied moment at which it ceases to hold, because it is the [-Perfective] copula displaying [-Perfective] past tense verbal morphology. The state described with the *estar*-predicate in sentence (111d) has an implied moment of cessation by virtue of the use of *estar* itself, but the implication of its still applying is conveyed through the use of the imperfect.

In light of such past tense sentences with *ser* and *estar* like (111) and those with other stative verbs like *amar* and *saber* in (110), one can see that temporal reference is not limited to event verbs alone. It is evident that, at the very least, stative verbs may denote a [\pm Perfective] aspectual distinction through the conjugations in which they appear. The lone fact that the use of either *ser* or *estar* in the simple preterite implies that the state denoted by an accompanying predicate has an inception or moment at which it ceases to hold clearly illustrates that states do carry aspectual and temporal reference. Thus, we may assert, contrary to Smith's and Verkuyl's predictions, that there is no inherent incompatibility between "stativity" and "(im)perfective temporality."

By virtue of a Vendlerian classification, one can see how one type of event can be coerced into a different type. In that kind of framework, the type of event a verb denotes depends on its own aspectual features and the features of the nominal elements with which it combines. As we have already observed, stative predicates may also be coerced into expressing eventive-type meanings. One example of this phenomenon would be the use of stative verbs in the progressive construction, which gives the subject an agentive reading as in *Yo estoy viviendo con mis amigos* or *El niño está siendo malo*. Just as one type of eventive predication can be coerced into a different type, one would expect the same to hold true for states. Since all states are analyzed as atemporal within Smith's (1991) version of the Vendlerian framework, as well as by Verkuyl (1993, 2004), they would not be specified for aspect. In this vein, states would not be divisible into different

categories, because they would never yield any type of aspectual reading. However, if copulas like *ser* and *estar* are analyzed as carrying the aspectual feature [\pm Perfective], stative predication should therefore be divisible into different categories.

6.1.4. Aspectual Calculation for Stative Sentences

As we observed in the previous chapter, the calculation of compositional aspect plays an important role in whether copular predication in Spanish is perfective or imperfective. For example, when a subject noun phrase does not have specific reference, as in generic sentences, the predication is [-Perfective]. When an *estar*-only adjective, whose predication naturally may only apply within one delimited time period, is used, the copular predication is [+Perfective]. In nonstandard Spanish, as in Portuguese, the physical location of moveable objects is described by means of a [+Perfective] predicate, and that of non-moveable objects by a [-Perfective] predicate. The division of different types of states along aspectual lines should therefore be a serviceable extension of the Vendlerian classification. Furthermore, we can assume that the calculation of aspect in different domains of stative sentences may be analyzed and represented in a manner similar to the way it is for eventive sentences.

One possible approach for representing the compositional calculation of aspect for stative sentences would be to adopt Verkuyl's feature algebra, shown in (103) above. Since aspect does apply to states and does so externally rather than internally, Verkuyl's

- b. Carter *era* Presidente.
 [INFL (imp.) [NP Carter [VP ser Presidente]]]
 [-Perf IP [-Perf. INFL [+sqa] [-Perf VP [-Perf] [+sqa]]]]
 → -Perfective
- c. Hugo *estuvo* enfermo.
 [INFL (pret.) [NP Hugo [VP estar enfermo]]]
 [+Perf IP [+Perf INFL [+sqa] [+Perf VP [+Perf]]]]
 → +Perfective
- d. Hugo *estaba* enfermo.
 [INFL (imp.) [NP Hugo [VP estar enfermo]]]
 [-Perf IP [-Perf INFL [+sqa] [+Perf VP [+Perf]]]]
 → -Perfective

By virtue of this feature algebra for *ser* and *estar*, we can see how aspect is calculated at different domains. As shown in the representation of sentences (112a) and (112b), the [-Perfective] aspect denoted by *ser* and its accompanying predicates is borne out within the aspectual calculation of the lower verb phrase (or VP). The same applies to the calculation of [+Perfective] aspect for *estar* and its accompanying predicates in the lower VP's of (112c) and (112d). By representing the aspectual calculation in this manner, we are able to show that these copulas and their predication maintain their individual aspectual values regardless of tensed verb form. By looking at the aspectual calculation of a higher domain, specifically the matrix clause, one can see that the aspect denoted by the verbal inflection has scope over the entire sentence. When the verbal inflection of the copula is [+Perfective], the entire string is [+Perfective] as in (112a) and (112c). As shown in (112b) and (112d), the entire string is [-Perfective] when the verbal inflection is

[-Perfective]. Therefore, the aspectual scope of the verbal inflection of the copula operates independently of that of the copula itself, be it *ser* or *estar*.

With respect to eventive predication, Verkuyl (2004) refers to coercion in the lower VP involving a verb and its possible complements as *low-level coercion* (6-7). The author posits that aspectual composition relating to the type of event itself, or in other words, its ontological properties, applies independently of any aspectual operator that has scope over the entire proposition (2004, 8-9). For example, the event *walk miles* is [-Telic] regardless of which aspectual operator has scope over it. If one were to say *Mary walked miles*, the aspectual properties of *walk miles* remains unchanged in the aspectual calculation even though a past tense [+Perfective] verb form is used for expressing it. Judging from his data and observations, it appears that Verkuyl's *Plus-Principle* exclusively applies to the calculation of aspect involving an event verb and its arguments. That is to say that it does not apply to any domain higher than one containing an event verb, its object(s) and its subject.

Though states do not involve complements and aspect applies to them in a different manner than it does to events, I will assume that Verkuyl's *Plus-Principle* can apply to the aspectual calculation of copulative sentences. Within the domains containing the copula, the stative predicates used with it and its subject, any negative value in the aspectual calculation will result in a [-Perfective] reading. If all values factored into the aspectual equation in these lower domains are positive, the aspectual

calculation will yield a [+Perfective] reading. In Spanish, the use of *ser* is always elicited by a [-Perfective] aspectual calculation of these lower domains, and the use of *estar* is always elicited by a [+Perfective] calculation. The respective [-Perfective] and [+Perfective] features for *ser* and *estar* always remain unaltered in co-composition with other aspectual elements. However, one copula or the other must only be used when the aspectual reading of a stative predication in which it occurs is identical to its own. Therefore, *ser* can never be used when the aspectual reading of the two lowest domains is calculated as [+Perfective], and *estar* can never be used when it is calculated as [-Perfective]. Judging by our observations, we can claim that the use of *ser* in the preterite or *estar* in the imperfect do not constitute coercion of one type of state into another. *Ser* and *estar*-states maintain their ontological properties regardless of which tensed verb form is used for describing them. In other words, an *estar*-predicate will always describe a state that holds within one delimited time period with an implied beginning or end (or both), irrespective of which tensed verb ending is carried by *estar*. Likewise, a *ser*-state will always describe a state that holds over a stretch of time with no implied beginning or end, regardless of which tensed verb ending *ser* carries.

Because the aspectual values of *ser* and *estar* remain constant and are always used with [-Perfective] and [+Perfective] states respectively, we can assume that stative coercion differs from eventive coercion. An event verb like *eat* can describe a [-Telic] event such as *eat pizzas* or a [+Telic] one such as *eat three pizzas*. It is possible for a

given event verb to describe events that are either telic or atelic, because they may take arguments to which they can map. Since purely aspectual verbs like *ser* and *estar* do not take arguments, their respective predicates may only be [-Perfective] and [+Perfective]. For the most part, neither a [-Perfective] state can be expressed by an *estar*-predicate nor can a [+Perfective] state be expressed by a *ser*-predicate given just the right combination of grammatical elements. Any coercion of a [-Perfective] state to a [+Perfective] one, or vice versa, results in a change of copula to reflect the aspectual reading the “coerced” state carries. Since stative verbs differ from event verbs semantically, they interact differently with other grammatical elements. Therefore, states necessarily exhibit coercion in a different way. For example, one type of stative coercion would be the use of an adjective normally used with *ser* to describe a [+Perfective] state with *estar* as in *Juan está inteligente hoy*. In other cases of stative coercion, any potential logical ill-formedness is resolved syntactically. For example, one can say *Juan es médico*, but not *Juan está médico*. In order for a predicate noun phrase to be attributed to its subject within only one delimited time period, the noun phrase must be part of a higher prepositional phrase as in *Juan está de médico*.

6.2. Theoretical Justification for an Aspectual Analysis

In devising the most theoretically viable approach possible to account for the uses of the copulas *ser* and *estar* in Spanish, there are certain fundamental standards that

should be upheld. The analysis should be as simple and costless as possible in order to accurately reflect what a small native Spanish-speaking child acquires with little or no effort. The difference between *ser* and *estar* predication is best not attributed to a nebulous cognitive division of the world. For example, to have to decide whether a predication is temporary or permanent, or which type of implied comparison is being described when using a copula verb, would demand too much of the native speaker.

Furthermore, the distinction between *ser* and *estar* predication is best analyzed as linked to parameters that are known to be present throughout the verbal paradigm in Spanish. In attempting to devise the least costly analysis of the Spanish copulas, patterning their features after those of other verbal elements in the language is more theoretically attractive than positing an ad hoc solution based on entirely novel concepts.

Lastly, an accurate analysis of *ser* and *estar* should not only be descriptively adequate for Spanish, but it should also be explanatorily adequate as well. Therefore, as we will observe, the analysis of *ser* and *estar* and their predication as reflecting an aspectual distinction, as described above, is both costless and theoretically sound. It will be clear that the features and uses of these verbs neatly blend in with those of other verbal distinctions in natural language, and may thus be acquired with minimal effort.

6.2.1. Aspect as a Grammatical Category

In light of the data and the arguments presented, it is evident that the functional feature of aspect best accounts for the difference between predication with *ser* and *estar*. Some authors, such as Smith (1991) and Verkuyl (1993), claim that stative predication cannot denote temporal reference and thus is never specified for aspect. Others, like Schmitt (2005) and Lema (1995), claim that *estar* predication denotes temporal reference and aspect but *ser* predication does not. Though all of these authors raise valid points concerning the uses of copula verbs, it is clear that the interpretation of one or neither of the two Spanish copulas as aspectual indicators would be counterintuitive.

In order to devise the least costly theoretical framework possible for *ser* and *estar*, one should analyze both verbs as specified for aspect and denoting temporal reference, as defined by Luján (1981). The system of language is best thought of as an intricately designed linguistic blueprint with neatly interlocking parts, consistent patterns and symmetrical oppositions. Just like structures produced by certain other living creatures in nature, such as spider webs and honeycombs, the structure of human language represents order and not chaos. Therefore, when a binary opposition is associated with a particular grammatical item, it should be associated with all items of its class and not just apply at random. The aspectual distinction [\pm Perfective] should be no exception to this rule.

In the Vendlerian framework, events denote temporal reference and thus are specified for aspect. Different events types are classified based on their aspectual

specifications, which are borne out compositionally. The type of event that a particular predication represents depends on how it is specified for the features [\pm Durative] and [\pm Telic] (Smith, 1991: 30). For both Smith (1991) and Verkuyl (2004), events have internal structure, can be divided into differentiated moments and can have a fixed endpoint. States, on the other hand, are analyzed as having no internal structure, no differentiated moments and no fixed endpoint. Therefore, they are deemed atemporal and not denoting aspect by these authors. Though states cannot be divided into stages, the interpretation of them as non-aspectual seems counterintuitive, because it singles out one type of verbal predication as lacking features that are present in all other types. By analyzing events as being internally interpreted by aspect and states as being externally bound by aspect, one can analyze the two types of predication in a manner that is costless, yet reflects their fundamental semantic differences. If states can not relate to aspect and are thus not characterizable into different types, they will represent an exception that does not neatly fit into the general pattern of verbal predication. Analyzing all types of finite verbal predication as temporal and specified for aspect is theoretically costless and maintains a spirit of grammatical consistency and order. In doing so, one is not compelled to treat states as differing from events so greatly and place them on the periphery of types of verbal predicates or “situation types.” If states are analyzed as denoting aspect and thus having temporal reference, they can be categorized into different types just as events are.

Another compelling piece of evidence suggesting that *ser* and *estar* should be analyzed as reflecting the aspectual distinction [\pm Perfective] is the denotation of aspect in all individual finite verb forms. All conjugated verb forms are specified for person, number, tense, mood and aspect. Though such features are not always overtly morphologically expressed, they are still nonetheless carried by the verb at the relevant stage of representation. Since Spanish has a morphologically rich verbal paradigm, one or more of these five features are visible in most cases. Let us observe the following examples, with the conjugated verb forms of interest in italics:

- (113) a. Fabio *escribe* poemas. (present indicative)
b. Espero que *estudies* para el examen. (present subjunctive)
c. Bartolo *ha ganado* el partido. (present perfect)
d. Carolina *había comprado* un coche. (past perfect)

Much of the time, at least in Spanish, one can tell which features, besides person and number, are overtly expressed simply from the name of the conjugation itself. For example, in (113a) and (113b), the present indicative and the present subjunctive display tense and mood respectively. In (113c) and (113d), tense and aspect are both morphologically expressed. By virtue of the use of the present tense in (113a) and (113b), the aspectual feature [-Perfective] is denoted. All present tense verb forms denote imperfective aspect independently from that of other elements with which they combine. In the system of language, person, number, tense, mood and aspect are features that apply to every finite verb form. This holds true whether a language has a morphologically poor verbal paradigm like English, or a morphologically rich one like

Spanish. There will never be a finite verb form that is lacking one or more of these features. Since the aspectual feature [\pm Perfective] is denoted by every finite verb form, it should also apply to the very use of either *ser* or *estar*. Positing that only one of these two copulas denote aspect, as Schmitt (2005) and Lema (1995) suggest, would be inconsistent with the binary aspectual distinction found in all finite verb forms.

Copula verbs are best analyzed as functional words. They do not represent a very productive category of words, and they are mostly used simply for linking a subject to its predicate. As functional words, *ser* and *estar* morphologically represent aspect, which, like tense and mood, is a grammatical category that is present throughout the entire Spanish verbal paradigm. Throughout the system of language, the functional features of tense and mood may either be overtly expressed or unexpressed and thus simply implied. For example, in Standard English, mood is not morphologically expressed in most cases, and the same holds true for tense in American Indian English (Wolfram 1984: 31). Positing that both *ser* and *estar* are aspectual copula verbs would be consistent with the fact that tense and mood are sometimes not morphologically expressed. For instance, some languages, such as Turkish, Russian, Arabic and Hebrew, allow copular sentences in which no overt verb form is used at all. Such a *zero copula* or *null copula* is also present in nonstandard varieties of English and Japanese. The manifestation of tense or mood, which is sometimes morphologically unexpressed, may be analyzed as reflecting one binary feature or another. Tense may reflect the binary distinction [\pm Past], and mood

may reflect one of [\pm Indicative]. Similarly, aspect may be the manifestation of either the binary distinction [\pm Perfective] or [\pm Progressive], which can likewise be expressed or unexpressed morphologically. The fact that some languages have null copulas further suggests that *ser* and *estar* are functional words that denote the binary aspectual distinction [\pm Perfective]. These two verbs, which are in complementary distribution, belong to a category of words that are sometimes null in natural language. Being sometimes null, copula verbs in general exhibit behavior that follows a pattern that is consistent with that of markers of the binary features of tense and mood. Therefore, analyzing only one of the Spanish copula verbs as aspectual would represent a linguistic anomaly within the verbal paradigm in natural language.

It is an indisputable fact that the aspectual distinction [\pm Perfective] is morphologically represented in the preterite and imperfect past tense conjugations in Spanish. The preterite conjugation is specified as [$+$ Perfective], and it denotes the beginning or the end of an event or state in the past. By contrast, the imperfect conjugation is specified as [$-$ Perfective], and it denotes an event or state in progress or one that is habitual in the past. The presence of this overtly expressed binary aspectual opposition in the past tense verb forms would be inconsistent with *estar* as aspectual and *ser* as non-aspectual as in Schmitt's (2005) account. Schmitt analyzes *estar* as specified for an aspectual feature *P*, which allows its predication to denote states with temporal reference. *Ser* is simply analyzed as lacking this *P* feature, and is thus atemporal and

non-aspectual (2005: 11). As is the case with treating all states as atemporal, analyzing *ser* and *estar* as specified for the presence vs. absence of a feature [P] would be inconsistent with the way aspect is denoted in other areas of the language. If *estar* were to be analyzed as having [P] and *ser* as lacking [P], it should be expected that the preterite and imperfect conjugations are to carry the same features, respectively. Doing so would imply that predication described by the imperfect conjugation is atemporal and does not denote aspect, which seems strongly counterintuitive.

Since we know that the imperfect describes events or states in the past that are either habitual or in progress, it cannot be non-aspectual. Rather than posit that aspect is manifested as existing or not existing through one type of verbal form and [\pm Perfective] in all others is not the least costly theoretical approach. Such an approach to *ser* and *estar* would force us to posit multiple types of aspectual distinctions when only one would suffice. Furthermore, both *ser* and *estar* can be used in either the preterite or the imperfect conjugations. It would be unorthodox to claim that *ser* in the imperfect either carries two completely asymmetrically different aspectual features or denotes no aspect at all. The extension of the [\pm Perfective] distinction to all verbal phenomena would be the simplest solution and therefore most indicative of what a small child's brain acquires and processes with the utmost of ease.

6.2.2. Constant Values for *Ser* and *Estar* in Aspectual Composition

Given the prominence of the [\pm Perfective] aspectual distinction throughout the verbal paradigm in the tense system of Spanish, a strong case can be made for that same distinction to apply to *ser* and *estar*. When analyzing these copula verbs, one must bear in mind that they carry their aspectual values independently from those of other aspectual elements with which they are combined. Such aspectual elements are not limited to phrasal constituents like noun phrases, adjectival phrases and time adverbials, but also include aspectual verb inflections. The [\pm Perfective] distinction denoted by *ser* and *estar* is manifested through the mere use of one or the other. By definition, *ser+predicates* denote imperfective states, and *estar+predicates* denote perfective ones, irrespective of the conjugation in which the copulas appear. This view of *ser* and *estar*, which follows along the lines of Verkuyl (2004), is also shared by Luján (1981):

“...The perfective specification signaled by the two different copulas must be distinguished from the specification corresponding to the categorical node that must be assigned to aspect (175).”

The [\pm Perfective] features borne out through a verb's conjugation may be expressed as a syntactic node or category, such as *INFL* or *Tense* for example, but they are not part of the kernel meaning of verbs themselves. Let us now take a closer look at how this aspectual phenomenon may be elucidated.

One way in which we have observed how the aspectual values of *ser* and *estar* remain constant while contributing to the compositional calculation of aspect is by means

of an algebraic representation. By analyzing the aspectual calculation of different domains, we can see that states denoted with *ser*-predicates are always [-Perfective], and those denoted with *estar*-predicates are always [+Perfective]. Therefore, if *ser*, which is [-Perfective], appears in a simple preterite verb form, which would be [+Perfective], there is no inherent semantic contradiction. The same applies to the use of *estar*, which is [+Perfective], appearing in an imperfect verb form, which would be [-Perfective]. Let us now consider these two specific aspectual combinations in further detail, beginning with the observation of the following sentences and their aspectual calculations.

- (114) a. El Imperio Romano *fue* próspero. (simple preterite)
 [INFL (pret.) [NP El Imperio Romano [VP ser próspero]]]
 [+Perf IP [+Perf. INFL [+sqa] [-Perf. VP [-Perf]]]]
 → +Perfective
- b. Maribel *estaba* cansada (a veces). (imperfect preterite)
 [INFL (imp.) [NP María [VP estar cansada]]]
 [-Perf IP [-Perf INFL [+sqa] [+Perf VP [+Perf]]]]
 → -Perfective

In sentence (114a), the use of the *ser*-predicate, which is [-Perfective], denotes that the Roman Empire was prosperous across a stretch of time with no implied beginning or end, though consisting of several delimited time periods. The past tense simple preterite inflection, which is specified as [+Perfective], denotes that the imperfective state described is reported from the perspective of it having ended. The implication of the end of the state described in (114a) by the preterite verb ending does not compromise or negate its [-Perfective] aspectual reference. Conversely, the use of the *estar*-predicate in

(114b), which is [+Perfective], denotes that *Maribel* was tired during one delimited time period, with an implied beginning or end (or both). The imperfect past tense verb inflection, which is specified as [-Perfective], denotes that the temporally delimited or [+Perfective] state described held or “was holding” at the moment to which the sentence refers. Moreover, the use of the imperfect verb form may imply that the delimited state described by the *estar*-predicate applied an unspecified number of times, or habitually in the past. The use of a time adverbial like *a veces* is often used to clarify that such a state habitually occurred. Just as the preterite does not compromise or negate the [-Perfective] aspect denoted by *ser* in (114a), the imperfect does not do so for the aspect denoted by *estar* in (114b) either. The fact that a preterite past tense verb form is used in (114a) does not imply that the Roman Empire existed or was prosperous for only one delimited time period. Likewise, the use of the imperfect past tense verb form in (114b) does not imply that *Maribel* was tired over a stretch of time with no implied beginning or end. Just as the individual aspectual values of the copulas *ser* and *estar* always remain constant in co-composition, the ontological properties of states described by their predication always remain constant as well. Thus, a state described with a *ser*-predicate can never be reinterpreted as one with an *estar*-predicate, or vice versa, no matter which inflected form of the copula is used.

Since all simple present tense verb forms denote [-Perfective] aspect, we may predict that the compositional calculation of aspect in present tense stative sentences

parallels those in which a [-Perfective] imperfect past tense verb form is used. Like the imperfect past tense verb inflections, the use of the present tense denotes that an event either occurs continuously or habitually.

- (115) a. La tierra *gira* sobre su propio eje.
b. Ángeles *cocina* paella.
c. Fabio *fuma* cigarros.

The use of the simple present tense in (115a) denotes that the event described continuously takes place, or is always in progress. This event must be interpreted as continuously occurring, because the earth never stops spinning. Because the simple present tense is [-Perfective] like the imperfect past tense verb inflections, the event has no beginning or endpoint. In sentences (115b) and (115c), the simple present tense verb forms denote that the events described occur habitually, which also parallels the use of the imperfect verb inflections. These events must be interpreted as habitual, because one cannot continuously be in the act of cooking paella or smoking without ever stopping.

Having seen that the simple present tense denotes [-Perfective] aspect for eventive predication, let us now observe how it applies to stative sentences with *ser* and *estar*.

- (116) a. Juliana *es* feliz.
b. Juliana *está* feliz.

Because the use of the simple present tense denotes [-Perfective] aspect, the aspectual calculation of (116) above should be analogous to past tense Spanish copulative sentences in the imperfect. As such, the simple present tense verb endings in both sentences carry the aspectual denotation [-Perfective]. The copula *ser* in (116a) carries

Regardless of how *ser* and *estar* are conjugated, *estar*-states always hold during one delimited time period with an implied beginning or end (or both). Likewise, *ser*-states always apply during a stretch of time with no implied inception or moment at which they cease. Though no inception or termination of the state is denoted through the use of the present tense in (116b), one is denoted by the expression of the *estar*-predication itself. Furthermore, since the simple present tense bears out the feature [-Perfective] for an entire stative sentence with *estar* like (116b), the use of a time adverbial such as *a veces* in them are not ungrammatical. It would simply clarify that the *estar*-state holds habitually rather than simply at the present moment.

Another important piece of evidence that the use of *ser* and *estar* alone denote aspect independently from other aspectual elements is their behavior when they appear in the infinitive. Infinitival predication is never bound by a tense operator and thus never denotes aspect. However, when *ser* or *estar* appear in the infinitive, the state described has temporal and aspectual reference. Let us take a look at the following examples:

- (118) a. Yo quiero *ser* próspero.
b. No quiero *estar* enfermo al llegar a tu casa.

Even though *ser* is used in the infinitive in (118a), it still describes an imperfective state, which is one of being prosperous over a stretch of several delimited time periods. The verb *estar* in the infinitive, as in (118b), still describes perfective state, which is one of being tired during one delimited time period with an implied beginning or end (or both).

Analyzing *ser* and *estar* as carrying aspectual values which remain constant regardless of their co-composition with other elements is not only accurate; it is the least costly as well. According to Verkuyl (2004), interpreting individual verbs as dependent on other elements for their aspectual features to be manifested would be unnecessarily complex and not reflective of how the human brain processes and stores information. Claiming that a given verb can carry different aspectual readings is the equivalent of saying that there are multiple lexical entries for that verb (2004: 7). Positing multiple lexical entries for the same verb should always be avoided whenever possible in order to maintain a simple and manageable analysis.

Furthermore, if aspectual properties are minimally manifested at the phrasal level, then entire verb phrases and not simply verbs alone would represent fixed ontological and lexical entities. Due to the vast amount of variation in the parts of the complex meanings of verb phrases, such an interpretation would be problematic. The aspectual values for *ser* and *estar* are evident even when the two verbs are in the infinitive. Moreover, they remain constant when used in a tensed form such as the preterite, the imperfect or the simple present tense. Therefore, Verkuyl's view of individual lexical aspect is verifiably accurate. To analyze the [\pm Perfective] distinction for *ser* and *estar* in any other manner would be inadequate as well as unnecessarily complicated.

6.2.3. The Spanish Reflexive

Thus far, we have determined that aspect and temporal reference not only apply to events, but to states as well. Therefore, it is possible to place states into different categories on the basis of their aspectual composition. Though the copulas *ser* and *estar* themselves denote the aspectual distinction [\pm Perfective], aspectual composition plays an important role in the choice of using one or the other. In co-composition with other aspectual elements, the individual aspectual values of *ser* and *estar*, as well as those of all verbs, remain constant. Given the evidence that aspect is denoted by light verbs and tensed verb inflections in Spanish, it behooves us to examine other types of functional elements in the language that appear to be aspectual in nature. The most noteworthy of these is the *reflexive se* verbal inflection⁹, whose presence vs. absence yields a [+Perfective] or [-Perfective] reading respectively when used along with an event verb. The implication of an event's natural fixed endpoint through the use of the *reflexive se* clitic is parallel to that of the use of the simple preterite tense and the use of *estar* for implying a moment at which a state ceases to hold.

The *reflexive se* clitic apparently behaves like an overt aspectual morpheme akin to light verbs like *ser* and *estar* and aspectual verb inflections such as the preterite and imperfect verb endings. It will be shown here that this functional element is not an

⁹ Forms of the *reflexive inflection* in Spanish

1st pers. sing. <i>me</i>	1st pers. pl. <i>nos</i>
2nd pers. sing. <i>te</i>	2nd pers. pl. <i>os</i>
3rd pers. sing. <i>se</i>	3rd pers. pl. <i>se</i>

aspectual morpheme *per se*, but it does contribute to the aspectual composition of eventive predicates. By analyzing how the *reflexive se* factors into the compositional calculation of aspect, one can see that individual verb forms do not depend on co-composition with other grammatical elements in order to denote aspect. Let us now take a look at a couple of examples of how the use of this clitic changes, or coerces the type of event expressed by verbs with which it is used.

(119) Examples of event verbs with and without the reflexive *se* clitic

<u>Verb without <i>se</i> clitic</u>	<u>Meaning without <i>se</i> clitic</u>	<u>Verb with <i>se</i> clitic</u>	<u>Meaning with <i>se</i> clitic</u>
<i>dormir</i>	to sleep	<i>dormirse</i>	to fall asleep
<i>caer</i>	to fall	<i>caerse</i>	to fall down

At first glance, it may appear that *reflexive se* is a purely aspectual morpheme, which changes the meaning of the verbs to which it attaches. Infinitival forms like *dormir*, without the clitic, and *dormirse*, with the reflexive clitic attached, are both listed in dictionaries and vocabulary lists as two separate entries. This may lead one to believe that *dormir* and *dormirse*, as well as other such pairs like *caer* and *caerse*, are two separate lexical items, which represent two completely different ontological entities. However, upon further scrutiny, one can see that the *reflexive se* form is best analyzed as a nominal element that factors into the aspectual composition of events in much the same way that full noun phrases do.

In this vein, forms like *dormir* and *dormirse* should not be treated as two separate lexical items. Instead, an event verb like *dormir* should be analyzed as denoting the same aspectual value at all times irrespective of other grammatical elements with which it combines. Adding the reflexive *se* would give a *verb + se* string like *dormirse* or *caerse* a [+Perfective] aspectual reading. With respect to aspectual composition, when used along with an event verb, the reflexive *se* serves the exact same purpose as a fully expressed quantized count noun. For example, the phrases *leer un libro* and *leer cinco libros* would denote events that are telic, or have a natural fixed endpoint, and would thus somewhat parallel *dormirse* and *caerse*. The use of an event verb without this *se* form would yield an aspectual reading identical to that of an ‘activity’ of the event verb used by itself, with a mass noun or with an indefinite plural. For example, the phrases *leer*, *leer libros* and *leer literatura* would denote events as activities that lack a naturally fixed endpoint and would thus parallel the use of *dormir* or *caer* without the *se*. The name *aspectual se* for this particular set of morphemes is therefore somewhat of a misnomer. Since the use of *se* can give an event a telic reading in the same manner as fully expressed quantized noun phrases do, the function of the reflexive should be analyzed as introducing a “dummy argument.” This dummy argument acts as a type of abstract universal quantifier, which reflects that an object was *completely* consumed or acted upon in some way. With respect to verbs that are typically analyzed as intransitive, the use of the *se* clitic apparently denotes either the beginning or the end of an event that does not

involve an object. For example, *dormirse* appears to denote inchoative reference, or the beginning of the act of sleeping, and *caerse* apparently denotes the end of the act of falling. Though viewing such eventive predicates in such a manner is not entirely inaccurate, it fails to account for precisely how the syntax-semantics interface operates in these cases. To shed light on how aspect is compositionally manifested in such predicates, let us now consider the use of the reflexive *se* clitic with transitive verbs.

Though the analysis of the *reflexive se* as signaling the occurrence of a dummy argument can be well attested by its use with intransitive verbs like *dormir* and *caer* in (119) above, it is most frequently used with transitive verbs. Nishida (1994) discusses the use of the *reflexive se* with transitive verbs to indicate that a fully expressed quantized object is completely consumed, used up or finished in some way. Through the presentation of various data, the author illustrates that the *reflexive se* particle is only acceptable when the object noun phrase is quantized or “quantitatively delimited.” In other words, when the object can be numbered or measured, the *reflexive se* is appropriate, but when the object is a mass noun or an indefinite plural, the reflexive form is ungrammatical (1994, 431).

- (120) a. Andrés (se) comió la pizza.
b. Andrés (*se) comió pizza.
c. Yo (me) bebí tres copas de vino.
d. Yo (*me) bebí vino.

In order for the clitic *se* to be acceptable with a transitive verb, a measurable amount of something has to be expressed to which the event verb can map, which is the case in

sentences (120a) and (120c). On the other hand, if an object noun phrase is not quantized as in (120b) and (120c), the event cannot have a natural fixed endpoint. Thus, the use of the reflexive, which would indicate the event's telicity, would yield an inherent contradiction in such cases. Though a quantized object may be fully expressed, as in (120a) and (120c), making such events naturally telic, the additional use of the *se* form is always acceptable. According to Nishida, such verb complexes denote a *homomorphism* between the quantized object and the event involving it (436). For example, in (120a) every part of the event of eating the pizza maps to part of the pizza being consumed. When the eating event is over, the pizza is gone, and vice versa¹⁰.

With respect to the *reflexive se* clitic, one question that remains is the reason why the clitic agrees with the subject in person and number instead of with the fully expressed quantized object. One possible explanation could be that this particular morpheme not only indicates that the event is completed and the object is completely consumed, but also that the subject's involvement in the event is also complete. For example, in (120c), the subject's participation in the drinking event, the drinking event itself and the quantity of wine consumed are all in a homomorphic relationship with each other. In other words, the process of the event simultaneously maps to the subject's participation in the event and the object consumed. This is why the *reflexive se* clitic appears to be coindexed with the consumed object, yet coindexed with the subject at the same time. To merely posit

¹⁰ Examples of such dummy arguments are also found in English, where they resemble prepositions as in *hurry up* and *burn down*.

that the *reflexive se* clitic signals the occurrence of a dummy argument only partially accounts for its use. To analyze this clitic as a morphological manifestation of an abstract universal quantifier that has scope over the entire event is likely the most descriptively adequate approach. Therefore, in order to account for the *se* clitic with intransitive verbs such as *dormir* and *caer*, one may analyze their subjects as being completely involved in every part of the event. Following this line of thought, *dormirse* would mean that every part of a person sleeps or is consumed by the act of sleeping. Similarly, the string *caerse* would mean that all of the person falls, or is involved in the act of falling.

It is evident that the *reflexive se* contributes to the aspectual composition of eventive predication, and its presence can yield a telic, or [+Perfective] reading. With that said, it is most accurately analyzed as a nominal element akin to a quantized NP and not as an aspectual morpheme like the preterite and imperfect past tense forms or the copulas *ser* and *estar*. With respect to devising the most adequate theory of *ser* and *estar* possible, there is useful information that can be taken away from this brief overview of the *reflexive se* clitic. We can assume that the only functional grammatical elements that denote aspect in Spanish and throughout the system of language are verbs and verbal inflections. Though nominal elements such as the *se* clitic contribute to the aspectual calculation of events and states, they themselves do not denote aspect. The analysis of the *reflexive se* as signaling the occurrence of a dummy argument, or more specifically an abstract universal quantifier, reinforces the claim that verbs themselves denote individual

unalterable aspectual features. Though a pair of verbal items like *dormir* and *dormirse* may be listed in dictionaries as two completely separate lexical entries, they should not be analyzed in this manner. Whether an intransitive verb like *dormir* is used alone or with the *reflexive*, its meaning and aspectual features remain constant. The use of the *se* clitic with such a verb simply denotes that the subject is completely involved or consumed with the event. Its use neither alters the unique aspectual value of the verb with which it occurs nor its ontological properties. Transitive verbs such as *comer* and *beber* typically do not have accompanying forms with the *se* clitic listed in dictionaries, because their use with *se* does not yield any discernable difference in meaning¹¹. Such verbs have the same aspectual features and thus the same meaning regardless of their syntactic environment. The use of the *se* clitic along with them merely indicates that the subject is completely involved in the event, and a quantized object is completely consumed. Overall, our analysis of the *reflexive se* clitic reinforces the notions that only verbs and verbal features may denote aspect and that their aspectual features never change in co-composition. To view the denotation of aspect and its compositional calculation otherwise would be explanatorily inadequate and theoretically costly.

It is clear that claiming an aspectual distinction for *ser* and *estar* individually and for the stative predicates of which they and other aspectual elements are comprised is

¹¹ The use of the *se* clitic with the verbs *estar*, which most commonly occurs in commands, and *quedar* result in state to event coercion. The use of the *se* clitic with *estar*, as in *¡Estate quieto!* is only acceptable with certain *estar*-predicates, and there are a limited number of them including *tranquilo* and *de pie*.

adequate as well as economical. Since events are considered to denote aspect, the analysis of states doing the same is simply a natural extension of verbal features to all types of predication. The [\pm Perfective] distinction is clearly ubiquitous throughout the Spanish verbal paradigm and in natural language in general. Its presence is evident in event types, types of states, conjugated verb forms, past tense verb endings and even individual verb forms themselves. To posit that states never denote aspect, or that some do and some do not, would be theoretically uneconomical and would represent inconsistency and asymmetry in natural language. The functional category of aspect is best viewed as one standard type of screw that temporally holds together many different types of interlocking pieces of language. Therefore, the analysis of *ser* and *estar* as denoting the unalterable aspectual values for [\pm Perfective] is the most representative of what a small native Spanish-speaking child first acquires.

6.3. Empirical Evidence

For the most part, the [\pm Perfective] aspectual distinction for *ser* and *estar* is clearly evident when the two copulas are used with adjectival phrases and sometimes with locative phrases in Spanish. There are other types of Spanish copulative sentences, however, for which the use of one copula or the other is usually not attributed to an aspectual distinction. Generic and equational predication, which occurs with the copula *ser*, applies continuously in all cases. Therefore, sentences containing these types of

predicates tend to give the impression that they do not carry temporal reference and thus do not denote a [-Perfective] aspectual reading either. Conversely, there are certain types of predicates that occur with the copula *estar*, which apparently should not be interpreted as [+Perfective]. Sentences containing such predicates appear to describe an entity's inherent characteristics, such as the way food tastes or how attractive someone is. Therefore, one would expect a state of this type to be [-Perfective] and thus prompting the use of *ser* instead of *estar*. The use of *estar* in such sentences is an apparent exception to the [±Perfective] distinction denoted by the two Spanish copulas. In this section, I will show that apparently non-aspectual *ser*-predicates, such as those that are generic and equational, indeed denote temporal reference and thus can be interpreted as [-Perfective]. With respect to *estar*-predicates that apparently describe states that are [-Perfective], it will be shown that these are not exceptions to the proposed aspectual analysis in this chapter, because the states described are indeed [+Perfective].

6.3.1. Attributive Predication

As we have observed, attributive predicates may be used with either *ser* or *estar*. An attributive predicate denotes that the subject is a member of a particular class or set. The use of *estar* denotes that such membership in a set of items holds for one delimited time period, and *ser* denotes that it holds across an extended period of time. With adjectival phrases, these copulas place their subjects within a class of items possessing

whichever property the adjective describes. When *ser* or *estar* is used with a locative phrase, its subject is described as belonging to the set of all items occupying a particular location. *Ser* and *estar* are also used in non-locative sentences in which a predicate containing a noun phrase is attributed to the subject. Observe the following attributive sentences with *ser*:

- (121) a. *Guillermo es médico.*
b. *José es un tonto.*

In sentence (121a), *Guillermo* is described as belonging to the set of all doctors in a given universe of discourse. Similarly, in (121b), *José's* membership in the set of all fools in the universe of discourse is denoted. Via the use of *ser*, the membership described in these sentences is [-Perfective]. *Guillermo*, in (121a), and *José*, in (121b), are described as belonging to their respective sets during a stretch of time whose beginning or end is not implied. Since *ser* describes states in their duration, the beginning and end of those described in (121) are not considered. The use of *ser* in these sentences therefore parallels that of its use with adjectival phrases. Though *médico* is undoubtedly a noun, in the attributive predicate in (121a), it functions much like an adjective. In fact, the noun *tonto* in (121b) would acceptably appear as an adjective if it were not preceded by a determiner.

Because only the use of *ser* and not *estar* is grammatical with noun phrases, exact minimal pairs describing states with these types of predicates do not exist. Noun phrases that immediately follow the copula denote imperfective predicates. Therefore, aspectual

composition dictates that *estar* cannot be used in place of *ser* in (121a) and (121b).

However, it is possible to see the aspectual distinction between the copulas through the observation of approximate minimal pairs. It is possible to say *José está tonto*, but the word *tonto* without the preceding determiner could then be analyzed as an adjective. We already know that the use of *estar* with the adjective *tonto* describes its subject as being foolish during some delimited time period.

On the other hand, the word *médico* can only appear as a noun, therefore, for it to immediately follow *estar* would be ungrammatical. If *estar* is to be used with a noun phrase, that noun phrase must form part of a prepositional phrase, which constitutes a form of coercion. The noun *médico* does not denote a location, rather a profession; therefore, such a noun must appear in a prepositional phrase headed by *de* in order to be acceptable.

- (122) a. *Guillermo *está* médico.
b. Guillermo *está de* médico.

In sentence (122b), the state of being *of* the quality of being a doctor during one delimited time period is described. Since a perfective state of actually being a doctor within just one delimited time period is impossible, the use of *estar* + *de* in (122b) indicates that *Guillermo* is merely serving in the capacity of a doctor within one delimited time period. This may be considered a form of coercion because the unacceptability of a noun phrase immediately following *estar* is syntactically resolved through the use of the preposition

de. Since a person may be a member of his or her profession without ever having exercised it, the following statement would be acceptable.

- (123) *Es médico, aunque nunca ha estado de médico en ninguna parte.*
(Luján, 1981: 181)

Perhaps such a person just received his or her medical degree but has not found a job at a hospital yet to serve as a doctor. However, if a person is a member of a certain profession at a given location, the corresponding *estar + de + NP* statement must be true.

- (124) a. *Es médico en ese hospital, y está de médico allí.*
b. **Es médico en ese hospital, pero nunca ha estado de médico allí.*

Since being a member of a profession at a particular place implies that one has served in the capacity of a member of that profession there, the implication of *estar* through the use of *ser* is not disproved by (123). *Ser* is used to denote that one is identified as a member of a certain profession during a series of several delimited time periods. Any one of those delimited time periods may be singled out and described with *estar* to represent the serving in the capacity of a member of that profession.

The use of *ser* with a noun phrase or determiner phrase as in (121) places its subject within a particular set of entities across a stretch of time with no implied beginning or end. Essentially, this type of *ser* predication therefore identifies what its subject is. Because it is impossible for a subject to literally be identified as a particular type of person or object for only one delimited time period, the use of *estar + de + NP*

describes what the subject is acting as or what it seems like. Let us observe a couple more sentences containing this structure.

- (125) a. Esta piedra *está de* asiento.
b. Este paisaje *está de* postal.

Since the rock in (125a) is not actually a seat, this sentence, by means of the use of *estar*, describes it as serving as a seat or “being a seat for now.” The panorama in (125b) cannot actually literally be a postcard. Instead, via the use of *estar*, it is described as serving as a fitting subject for a postcard. Since the copula *ser* would imply *estar* and not the other way around, corresponding sentences with *ser* for (125), which would be grammatical but pragmatically odd, are not implied. Thus far, all of the data that we have observed thus far in this section supports the [\pm Perfective] distinction for *ser* and *estar*. Even when their predication is analyzed in syntactic environments that are not exactly identical, their aspectual distinction is still evident.

6.3.2. Equational Predication

Another type of predication involving the use of the copula verb *ser* with noun phrases is the so-called ‘equational’ predication. Equational sentences are referential in that they identify the subject by equating it with another entity expressed in the same sentence. The verb *ser* in an equational sentence may be considered a copular “equals sign” that indicates that the subject and the predicate are both one and the same. Equational predicates may only take *ser*, because the state of being equated with

something is always [-Perfective]. Any given state of equivalence will apply across several delimited time periods with no implied inception or moment at which it ceases to hold. The following are examples of equational sentences:

- (126) a. Guillermo *es* el médico.
b. José *es* el tonto.
c. Elena *es* ella.

In (126a), *Guillermo* is not only identified as a doctor, but he is identified as a specific doctor, or “the” doctor. Since this sentence is equational, *Guillermo* and *el médico* are the same exact person. Likewise, in sentence (126b), *José* is identified as “the fool”, as opposed to being identified as someone else. In sentence (126c), *Elena* is identified as “she”, who is a specific female in a specific context. Even though the subject is equated with a personal pronoun, the pronoun denotes one specific person as whom the subject is identified. Since the subject and the predicate both denote the exact same entity in an equational sentence, their order can be reversed, and the meaning of the sentence will remain the same. Therefore, the sentences in (126) and the following are exactly semantically identical.

- (127) a. El médico *es* Guillermo.
b. El tonto *es* José.
c. Ella *es* Elena.

Since equational predicates identify exactly who or what the subject is, they also may be considered referential or deictic expressions, which verbally “point” to the

specific person or thing being identified. Now let us look at the attributive sentences in (121), with the subject and the predicate reversed.

- (128) a. Médico *es* Guillermo.
b. Un tonto *es* José.

As is the case with equational sentences, the subject and the predicate can be reversed in attributive sentences. However, regardless of word order, the subject and the predicate are not equal. *Guillermo* is not equated with the class of all doctors, to which he belongs, nor is *José* equated to the class of all fools, to which he belongs. In (128), the class to which a particular entity belongs is stated first, and the entity belonging to that class is stated last. In such a case in which the category or class is mentioned first, the person or thing that belongs to that particular category or class is mentioned last for purposes of emphasis or clarification. Since *estar*-predicates denote states that are [+Perfective], they cannot denote equational predication, even if the *estar + de + NP* string is employed.

- (129) a. *Guillermo *está del* médico.
b. *José *está del* tonto.
c. *Elena *está de* ella.

As *estar* predication only applies during one delimited time period, it cannot function as a “copular equals sign” like the verb *ser* does in equational sentences. To describe the exact essence of what someone or something is as only applying during one delimited time period would yield an inherent contradiction. In mathematical terms, it would be similar to saying “ $2 + 2 = 4$, for now.” The obligatory use of *ser* in equational sentences

is yet another example of how the [\pm Perfective] distinction operates in Spanish stative predication.

6.3.3. Generic Predication

The most notable use of *ser* that does not appear to have temporal reference or denote aspect is its use with generic subjects. Since generic subjects are not specific and therefore cannot be linked to predication applying within one delimited time period, the use of *ser* with them is obligatory. As aspectual composition dictates, sentences with generic subjects are always [-Perfective]. Moreover, because verbs individually carry aspectual features that never change in co-composition, the coercion of an *estar* state into a generic one is impossible. Let us now take a look at a couple of examples of generic sentences in Spanish.

- (130) a. Los elefantes *son* grandes.
b. La leche *es* nutritiva.

These sentences are ambiguous, because their subjects may either refer to specific items or nonspecific items. For the sake of analyzing the phenomenon of genericity, let us assume that they are non-specific. In (130a), the attributive adjectival predicate *grandes* is described as applying to the set of all members of elephants in the universe of discourse *in general*. Unlike sentence (130a), (130b) contains a mass noun as its subject. This noun, *la leche*, refers to all of the milk in the universe of discourse as one single item *in general*, which is described as nutritious.

Since sentences containing generic subjects, such as (130), describe predication that applies to all members of a set of items at all times, one may be led to believe that they do not carry temporal reference. However, such predication does indeed denote aspect and carry temporal reference precisely for that very reason. The analysis of *ser* as a [-Perfective] copula verb to account for generic attributive predication is in fact the most accurate and costless interpretation possible. Firstly, the verb *ser*, being [-Perfective], is the appropriate copula for describing the meaning of generic states, since they never have an implied inception or moment at which they cease to hold. Secondly, the fact that generic *ser*-states like those in (130) *hold at all times* during a stretch of time with no beginning or end implied justifies their interpretation as [-Perfective] rather than atemporal and non-aspectual.

Recall the implication initially given in (106), which I repeat below for ease of exposition:

$$(106) \quad A(x) \text{ at times } t_j \dots t_{j+k} \supset A(x) \text{ at time } t_j \vee t_{j+1} \vee t_{j+2} \dots \vee t_{j+k} \quad (1981: 177)$$

The implication accurately applies to both predications that denote habitualness as well as genericity. Observe that the formula is true if (and only if) its consequent is true. Since this term contains a disjunction, and disjunction can be true even if one member is false, the two possibilities are correctly covered. The habitual meaning is the option that allows for at least one disjunct member to be false, while the generic interpretation would correspond to the case when all and every disjunct member holds or is true. Hence, the

fact the [-Perfective] copular predication with *ser*, but not *estar*, is the appropriate form for generic copular predication follows from the aspectual analysis of the two copulas.

For a state to have no implied (or even understood) inception or termination point and for it to apply at all times does not make it less temporal or aspectual than any other type of state. Like all other stative predication described with *ser*, generic *ser*-states apply across a stretch of a number of delimited time periods. Such states therefore have duration just as those which do not apply at all times or are not considered to have always applied. Given the observable temporal structure of all other *ser* predication that we have dealt with in this dissertation, the extension of the [-Perfective] feature for generic states is quite natural and intuitive. In fact, positing that generic predication with *ser* is atemporal and not aspectual would be claiming that there is an exception within the Spanish verbal paradigm when doing so is simply unnecessarily costly and untenable.

6.3.4. *Ser* and *Estar* in Expressions of Time:

Another example of how the aspectual distinction [\pm Perfective] is borne out in Spanish stative sentences is through the use of *ser* and *estar* predicates for expressing time. The most notable type of sentence used for this purpose in Spanish are those in which the copula *ser* is used to tell someone what time of day it is.

- (131) a. *Son* las dos.
b. *Son* las ocho.
c. *Es* la una.

Since the time of day appears to be a very static reality that constantly changes and apparently applies for only one delimited time period, it would appear that *estar* should be the copula used for describing this reality instead of *ser*. For example, with respect to (131a), it can be said that it is 2 o'clock twice a day during one delimited time period. This reality appears to exemplify a [+Perfective] state that should be represented with *estar*. Moreover, the physical positions of the hands of a clock, which are constantly moving, would appear to represent such an apparently [+Perfective] reality as well. Nonetheless, *ser* is always used to tell someone what time of day it is.

In order to determine why *ser* is used instead of *estar* for telling time, one must first take note of the syntactic structure of sentences like (131). In each of these sentences, *ser* is used immediately before a determiner phrase, which is a syntactic environment where *estar* would be unacceptable. Given the use of a determiner phrase in postverbal position, the [-Perfective] calculation of the compositional aspect alone in sentences like (131) necessitates the use of *ser*. Sentences that report the time of day, therefore, must be analyzed as equational or quasi-equational. Precisely what exactly is being equated with what in sentences like (131) is the real question that must be answered in order to understand why sentences of this type are used for this purpose. What sentences like those in (131) describe is a specifically numbered hour (or hours), which is/are referred to as the time of day. In Spanish, one does not describe time as a static reality but as a fixed continuum comprised of different axes or positions. Any

given time of day or “hour/s” is not viewed as a current state, which would be an *estar* predicate, but is *identified* as a fixed position in the time continuum that is always exactly the same. In the case of (131a), for example, 2 o’clock is always identified as the exact same 2 o’clock, which is why the time of day is a [-Perfective] state and is thus reported with *ser*. The identification of a fixed position in the time continuum is best reflected in the reading that one gets from a sundial. By the length of the shadow of the gnomon, or pointer on the sundial, one can quite literally determine which fixed position in the time continuum is reflected by the current position of the earth with respect to the sun. Since sentences that express the time of day express predication that is referential, or identifies a particular entity, specifically the time, they are equational in nature. As is the case with existential sentences with *haber*, and those that express the weather with *hacer* or *estar*, there does not exist a possible overt subject of the verb. Since there are not two reversible overtly expressed equal elements in sentences like (131), these sentences may be better categorized as quasi-equational.

The verb *ser*, of course, also refers to or identifies other units of time, or fixed points on the time continuum, such as days, months and years.

- (132) a. Hoy *es* jueves.
b. *Es* el once de enero.
c. *Es* mayo.

These sentences, like those in (132), are also equational and thus describe [-Perfective] state as well. However, they may optionally contain an overtly expressed

subject such as *hoy* in (132a). Much like the semidiurnal equation of the current hour with a fixed position in the time continuum, the day of the week, as in (132a), is periodically equated with such a temporal point once every seven days. Likewise, (132b) and (132c) equate the current date and the current month respectively with a fixed position in the time continuum that is met once a year.

Much less common than the use of *ser* to report the date, month, year and other information of this type as a [-Perfective] state is the use of *estar* to convey the same information as a [+Perfective] state. Let us observe a couple of examples of *estar* predication being used to express of time in Spanish.

- (133) a. *Estamos en noviembre.*
b. *Estamos en 2006.*

Unlike *ser* in expressions of time, which identifies fixed points in the time continuum, *estar* describes where one or more people are *located in time*. Just as the physical location of one or more entities is described as a [+Perfective] state with the verb *estar*, so is the location of the subject in time, as is evidenced in sentences (133a) and (133b). Predication with *estar* in locative phrases may describe either physical or temporal location. In these types of sentences, the subject must be animate and most of the time is first person plural. Though physical location is always denoted with *estar* in Standard Spanish, its use is still justified in aspectual terms. Just as the use of *estar* is obligatory for describing the location of moveable objects in Nonstandard Spanish, it is appropriate in sentences like (133). The description of one's current position as it relates to how one

“moves through time” is parallel to that of a moveable object. Therefore, states like those denoted with *estar* in (133) only apply during one delimited time period. The delimited time period at work, whose beginning or end (or both) is implied, is the current division of time (month, year, etc.) where the subject is located. Therefore, such expressions of time are [+Perfective], unlike those of the equational variety like (131), which are [-Perfective].

6.3.5. Evidential Predicates

Because the inherent qualities of a given entity represent states that apply during a stretch of time, they are always [-Perfective] and described with *ser*. However, as we have seen multiple times in this work, there are sentences containing *estar* predication that appear to describe this very type of imperfective state. Such *estar* sentences, like (20), are typically associated with the stimulation of one or more of the five senses and are very commonly used in everyday speech. For ease of exposition, sentences (20a)-(20d) are again repeated below.

- (134) (20') a. Esta paella *está* fenomenal. (sense of taste)
 b. Me encanta esta canción. *Está* linda. (sense of hearing)
 c. Este sofá *está* duro. (sense of touch)
 d. Esa chica *está* guapa / buena. (sense of sight)

Because *estar* predication describes a [+Perfective] state, which applies during one delimited time period, sentences like (20) above appear to be an exception to the aspectual analysis endorsed in this chapter. In Chapter Four, we determined that there is

a correlation between the pragmatic factor of evidentiality and the optional use of *estar* over *ser* with an adjectival phrase. This particular use of *estar* is acceptable when a speaker bases his or her description of something on immediate evidence. Said immediate evidence may either be encountered at the speech time or at during any previous encounter with the entity described. To say that certain pragmatic factors, like evidentiality, can override the [\pm Perfective] distinction for *ser* and *estar* would be inaccurate. Instead, evidentiality should be treated as a reflection of the [+Perfective] feature for *estar* predication rather than a substitute for it.

As immediate evidence is always linked to the stimulation of one or more of the five senses, predication associated with it is naturally [+Perfective]. Sentences like (20) contain *estar*, because they reflect the occasion of a sensory experience on which they are based. Any given stimulation of one or more of the five senses is a naturally delimited time period with an implied beginning and end. For example, in sentence (20a), the beginning of a delimited time period is described, which is the very moment the speaker tasted the paella. In sentence (20b), the beginning of a delimited time period is being described, which is the moment the speaker hears and recognizes the song. Sentence (20c) describes a delimited time period, which is the moment the speaker feels the hardness of the sofa. Finally, in sentence (20d), a delimited time period is being

described, which is the period of time in which the speaker sees the girl¹². Given the temporary nature of the sensory experiences reflected in (20), it is therefore clear that the use of *estar* in sentences like these is justified in aspectual terms.

As previously stated, the optional use of *estar* instead of *ser* with an adjective phrase in sentences that apparently describe inherent qualities does not have to be based on immediate evidence encountered at the speech time. Let us take a look at the following minimal pairs, which illustrate this point:

- (135) a. Esos tacos en Laredo *son* buenos.
b. Esos tacos en Laredo *están* buenos.
c. Hortensia, la chica que conocí anoche, *es* muy guapa.
d. Hortensia, la chica que conocí anoche, *está* muy guapa.

We can assume that the speaker of sentences (135a)-(135d) is reporting on something that is not in his or her immediate vicinity. The fact that *estar* is acceptable in (135b) and (135d) can be attributed to at least one prior sensory experience that the speaker had involving the *tacos* and *Hortensia* respectively. The only perceivable difference between the use of *ser* and *estar* in sentences like these is that the use of *estar* carries more emphasis. In sentence (135a), *ser* is used to give a general description of the *tacos*, which applies across several delimited time periods. Similarly, sentence (135c) is a general description of *Hortensia*, which is also [-Perfective]. On the other hand, (135b) is a reflection of the way the *tacos* tasted at any given moment when the speaker was

¹² Sentences (20a) and (20d) are acceptable for all Spanish speakers, but (20b) and (20c) are only acceptable in some dialects.

eating them. Likewise, (135d) describes the way *Hortensia* looked at any prior instance when she was in the speaker's field of vision. Since (135b) and (135d) are specifically linked to prior sensorial encounters with immediate evidence, they describe states that are [+Perfective]. The use of *estar* in sentences like these describes the speaker's "reliving" of a prior sensory experience involved with the subject. Because reliving the stimulation of one's senses is more experiential than simply describing the general qualities of something, (135b) and (135d) are naturally more emphatic than (135a) and (135c). Given how the use of *estar* relates to evidentiality, it is clear that pragmatic factors do not dictate which copula is used in any way. Such pragmatic factors, like evidentiality and emphasis, are a reflection of how the [+Perfective] feature is denoted in predication with *estar*. Therefore, sentences like (20) should not be treated as exceptional but as naturally following the [\pm Perfective] aspectual distinction denoted by *ser* and *estar* in Spanish.

In this section, we have observed a number of examples, which further justify the analysis of *ser* as denoting imperfective states and *estar* as denoting perfective states. The uses of *ser* with equational and generic predicates indeed denote temporal reference and are thus aspectual in nature. By taking into account aspectual composition, as well as observing the syntax-semantic interface at work in stative sentences with *ser* and *estar*, the partial synonymy of these two verbs is also made clear. To analyze generic predicates as atemporal and non-aspectual would therefore be inaccurate and costly. It has also been shown that the optional use of *estar* over *ser* with an adjective further

justifies its interpretation as a [+Perfective] copula rather than refute it. Any pragmatic factors that may come into play with respect to the choice of *ser* or *estar* are merely a reflection of the [±Perfective] aspectual distinction which they denote. In the next and final chapter, we will also see examples of how such perfective and imperfective aspect is observable in other languages.

6.4. Summary

We have now observed how stative predication with *ser* and *estar* can very accurately be analyzed as denoting the aspectual distinction [±Perfective]. In light of the theoretical considerations and empirical evidence discussed in this chapter, it is certain that this account is the most descriptively and explanatorily adequate possible. Furthermore, the interpretation of *ser* as a [-Perfective] copula and *estar* as a [+Perfective] copula is indeed a theoretically costless one. Positing that both *ser* and *estar* denote aspect and temporal reference simply defines them as analogous to all other aspectual phenomena throughout the Spanish verbal paradigm. For example, the same aspectual distinction [±Perfective] is clearly denoted by the preterite and imperfect past tense conjugations. This aspectual distinction is thus naturally the most logical option available for predicting the uses of *ser* and *estar*, since it visibly applies to other types of verbal morphology. To claim that neither copula is specified for aspect or that *estar* is and *ser* is not would not be a theoretically attractive option. Such an interpretation of *ser*

and *estar* would represent an inconsistency throughout the Spanish verbal paradigm and would thus be theoretically costly.

We have also observed that states may be categorized into different types based on their aspectual composition just as events are. *Ser*- and *estar*-predicates, like all other predicates, individually denote their own respective aspectual values, and these remain constant regardless of which other aspectual elements are used along with them. For example, the use of a generic subject necessitates the use of the copula *ser*, and adjectives that describe a state that naturally may only apply during one delimited time period must take *estar*. The aspectual distinction [\pm Perfective] for *ser* and *estar* is borne out in all types of stative predication with these two verbs in a variety of syntactic environments. Regardless of the type of stative sentence in which either copula is found, the [\pm Perfective] distinction for *ser* and *estar* can always be accounted for in terms of aspectual composition. One should also note that the denotation of perfective or imperfective aspect by an individual grammatical item is exclusive to verbal morphemes. Though the *reflexive se* clitic, for example, contributes to the aspectual composition of an event, it is most accurately analyzed as a purely nominal element.

Given the high level of descriptive adequacy for the [\pm Perfective] aspectual distinction in accounting for states in Spanish, it is reasonable to assume that it may also predict states and other verbal phenomena throughout the system of language. Rather than being in stark contrast with other verbal morphemes, *ser* and *estar* do nothing more

than denote functional features that are common to all verbs in all languages. The [±Perfective] distinction for *ser* and *estar* represents simple, basic linguistic information that can be acquired by a child at a very early age with as little effort as possible. Since all native speaking children of all languages effortlessly acquire the linguistic competence for expressing this binary feature correctly, it should also exhibit a high level of explanatory adequacy. To analyze *ser* and *estar* in any other way would be unnecessarily costly and would place too much cognitive responsibility on the native speaker of Spanish or of any other language.

CHAPTER SEVEN

CONCLUSIONS

7.0. Introduction

The preceding chapters of this work have primarily dealt with questions of descriptive adequacy regarding Spanish copulative predication. In this, the final chapter, I will now focus on the predictive power of the [\pm Perfective] aspectual distinction denoted by *ser* and *estar* by making a case for its explanatory adequacy. It is argued that the same binary aspectual distinction that dictates the choice of Spanish copula verb is the very one found in its system of verbal tenses. Given that this aspectual distinction is part of the system of language, it should be prevalent cross-linguistically. I will thus further argue for the explanatory adequacy of the [\pm Perfective] aspectual distinction and the compositional computation of aspect by showing how the aspectual distinction and compositionality are manifested in comparable predicative sentences in other unrelated languages. Suggestions for further research pertaining to the explanatory adequacy of the [\pm Perfective] aspectual distinction denoted by all verbs and its compositional calculation will also be presented.

7.1. Aspect and Explanatory Adequacy

We have seen how the analysis of *ser* and *estar* as denoting the aspectual distinction [\pm Perfective] is the most attractive in terms of theoretical viability and

empirical accuracy. As aspectual indicators, these copulas are simply morphological manifestations of a grammatical distinction that is effortlessly developed by a young native Spanish-speaking child and does not have to be learned. In denoting the aspectual distinction [\pm Perfective], the Spanish *ser* and *estar* simply perform a function that is carried out by other morphemes throughout the Spanish verbal paradigm. Though we have now determined that the analysis of *ser* and *estar* as aspectual copulas should pass most any test for descriptive adequacy, it would be derelict to claim that there is nothing more to say regarding this matter. With respect to any given account of grammatical phenomena, the ultimate measure of its predictive power is how it stands up to tests for explanatory adequacy. In other words, a truly effective model of language should not only account for grammatical forms and uses in one particular language, but it ideally should also apply to like forms and uses in all languages. In this section, therefore, I will discuss precisely why the aspectual distinction [\pm Perfective] is best analyzed as a language universal rather than being exclusive to verbal morphemes in Spanish and other Romance languages.

7.1.1. The Theory of Universal Grammar

As mentioned throughout this work, one of the main goals when devising an accurate model for natural language is for it to be as theoretically costless as possible. In other words, one must bear in mind that whatever dictates the use of given linguistic

structures must be simple enough for a small child to effortlessly develop. For example, attributing the uses of *ser* and *estar* to a type of cognitive division of the world such as *inherency vs. transience* ascribes too much semantic responsibility to the copula and too much cognitive responsibility to the native Spanish speaker. On the other hand, a grammatical contrast, such as the [±Perfective] aspectual distinction, not only does not have to be consciously learned, but must be expected to exist throughout the system of language. Moreover, children are born with the capacity to acquire their native language or languages without having to actively learn grammatical rules. Because language acquisition is an innate biological process, it should be expected that all speakers of natural language essentially use the same grammatical elements to communicate verbally.

According to Chomsky:

The language faculty has an initial state, genetically determined; in the normal course of development it passes through a series of states in early childhood, reaching a relatively stable steady state that undergoes little subsequent change, apart from the lexicon. To a good first approximation, the initial state appears to be uniform for the species. Adapting traditional terms to a special usage, we call the theory of the state attained its *grammar* and the theory of the initial state *Universal Grammar* (UG) (1995, 14).

Following along the lines of Chomsky, one may posit that as a functional, rather than lexical feature of language, the [±Perfective] distinction for describing events and states is a component of Universal Grammar. That is to say that the same aspectual distinction that dictates the uses of *ser* and *estar* in Spanish should be present in all languages since it is an innate component of every human being's language faculty.

Since the [\pm Perfective] distinction is clearly descriptively adequate for *ser* and *estar* and other verbal phenomena in Spanish, our main objective is to now verify its explanatory adequacy. According to Chomsky, explanatory adequacy "...aims to provide a principled basis, independent of any particular language, for the selection of the descriptively adequate grammar of each language" (1964, 29). Though languages differ from each other in varying degrees, it is nonetheless predicted by Universal Grammar that there is uniformity among them all. Grammatical elements, when they differ across languages, should do so in a symmetrical fashion or in a way that maintains a set pattern. Therefore, the [\pm Perfective] distinction should not only apply to *ser* and *estar* in Spanish and cognate copulas in other Romance languages, but to like verbal elements in any language spoken on planet Earth. Let us now explore in detail the theoretical viability of the analysis of aspect and its compositional calculation as a universal feature of human language.

7.1.2. Aspect as a Universal Functional Feature

In light of our findings in this dissertation, we have concluded that like events, states indeed have temporal reference and carry aspectual readings. Some states are [+Perfective] in that they are related to an implied beginning or endpoint. Others are [-Perfective] as they are not associated to an implied beginning or endpoint. Similarly, [+Perfective] states have an implied inception or termination point (or both), and those

that are [-Perfective] have neither. Like other natural phenomena in the universe, states and events can be defined and classified by the same properties regardless of where they exist. Just as chemical elements such as hydrogen and carbon have the same atomic structure wherever they are found, states and events can be defined by the same [±Perfective] aspectual distinction irrespective of which language is used to describe them. Therefore, it would be theoretically costly to analyze perfective and imperfective aspect as only applicable to states and events described by certain languages and not others. Moreover, positing that the aspectual feature [±Perfective] only accounts for states in certain languages is akin to claiming that it only applies to certain types of verbal predication within the same language. It is evident that attributing such a functional feature to all grammatical items of a particular class within a language, as well as in all languages, is the least costly and most theoretically attractive possible.

Morphological evidence of the aspectual distinction [±Perfective] is prevalent throughout natural language. For example, in Spanish, it is overtly expressed by the simple preterite and imperfect past tense verb endings. Furthermore, [-Perfective] aspect may also be denoted through the use of the simple present tense, and [+Perfective] aspect is also conveyed via the use of the auxiliary *haber* along with the past participle. The [±Perfective] distinction is also expressed by cognate past tense morphemes in Portuguese and by the *passé composé* and the *imparfait* in French. Being a Non-Romance language, English expresses perfective and imperfective aspect for past tense

events in states in a different manner. Simple past tense forms such as *walked* and *spoke*, denote either perfective or imperfective aspect depending on the aspectual composition of the sentence in which they appear. For example, the sentence *John spoke to Shirley yesterday* denotes [+Perfective] aspect, while a sentence like *John spoke to Shirley every day* denotes [-Perfective] aspect. A past tense auxiliary form of *be* along with the present participle, as in *John was walking to the store*, denotes that an event was in progress and is thus [-Perfective]. Often, the modal auxiliary *would* is used with a bare stem verb form in English to denote a [-Perfective] habitual event or state in the past as in the sentence *John would get up every morning and turn on rap music*. These are just some examples of how the [\pm Perfective] aspectual distinction is morphologically expressed in a few different languages. To attempt to list all of those existing in natural language would result in the creation of a rather voluminous work. What still must be resolved is the question of whether or not the [\pm Perfective] aspectual distinction universally applies to copula verbs.

7.1.3. Aspect as Universal for States

Verbs like *ser* and *estar* (and *haber* in perfective constructions) are what some generative grammarians call *light verbs*. Such verbs are pure aspectual morphemes whose primary function is to simply denote aspect. Unlike *ser* and *estar*, the past tense conjugations in Spanish, which are bound morphemes, denote both tense and aspect

every time they occur in speech. There remains little doubt that the copulas *ser* and *estar* denote an aspectual distinction in Spanish and Portuguese. However, the fact that some languages have only one *be*-type verb may lead one to believe that the [\pm Perfective] aspectual distinction does not account for states in such languages. For example, the verb *to be* in English and the verb *être* in French perform all of the same copulative functions that *ser* and *estar* do in Spanish. Though a particular language may have one *be*-type verb, it does not serve as evidence against the universality of the [\pm Perfective] aspectual distinction for states. As we have discovered, all finite verb forms in natural language are specified for particular functional features. These are person, number, tense, mood and aspect. As functional features, they are overtly expressed in some cases, and in other cases, they are not. The lack of morphology for denoting a particular functional feature by no means implies that the feature does not exist. For example, the subjunctive mood is undoubtedly a feature of the English language, though it is rarely expressed overtly in the present tense. In this same vein, the nearly complete absence of person endings for finite verb forms in English does not suggest that there is no person agreement at all. The use of only one copula verb like *to be* instead of two like *ser* and *estar* is merely an example of the [\pm Perfective] aspectual distinction not being overtly expressed by the verb itself. For English and French speakers, states are either [$+$ Perfective] or [$-$ Perfective], just as they are for speakers of Spanish or any other language. The same should also hold

true for speakers of languages such as Turkish, Russian, Arabic and Hebrew, which allow for sentences with a null copula.

Though languages like English only have one *be*-verb, the aspectual reading for stative predicates used with that verb may still be expressed by means of aspectual composition. Observe the following English stative sentences with different aspectual readings:

- (136) a. Robert *is* drunk.
b. Robert *is* a drunk.
c. Robert *is* silly.
d. Robert *is being* silly.

The use of only one *be*-type copula in English does not prevent the [\pm Perfective] aspectual distinction from being manifested in stative sentences. By virtue of the use of the adjective *drunk* in sentence (136a), the state described is [+Perfective]. Since being drunk is a state that naturally occurs within one delimited time period, whose beginning or end (or both) is implied, the copula must be interpreted as denoting [+Perfective] aspect. If the sentence were in Spanish, the verb *estar* would have to be used instead of *ser*. Sentence (136b) describes the state of being *a drunk*, which is naturally [-Perfective]. As in Spanish, the use of a determiner phrase along with the copula necessitates a [-Perfective] reading for the copula. If sentence (136b) were in Spanish, the copula *ser* would have to be used instead of *estar*. Sentence (136c) is [-Perfective], as it describes its subject as a silly person. The adjective *silly*, in this form and this syntactic environment, denotes a state that is aspectually interpreted as [-Perfective]. As illustrated

by sentence (136d), a [+Perfective] state of being silly is denoted by means of its use with the present progressive form of the copula. Although the presence of only one *be*-type copula in a language would appear to frequently result in aspectual ambiguity, this potential problem is resolved by virtue of aspectual composition. Moreover, in order to maintain contrastive value with adjectival predicates such as *silly*, *sarcastic* and *nice* in English, potential ambiguity is often resolved via the morphology of the verb itself. As evidenced by the above sentences, states in languages containing only one *be*-type copula may indeed be classified as either [+Perfective] or [-Perfective]. Since aspect is calculated at different levels besides that of the verb itself, the use of more than one copula or any copula at all, is not necessary for the denotation of aspect for states in natural language.

Although not all linguists wholly subscribe to Chomsky's Theory of Universal Grammar, the analysis of functional features as a universal in natural language would seem very difficult to refute. Regardless of which language one speaks, concepts such as tense, mood, person and aspect are always relevant to the universe of discourse. The fact that one or more functional features are morphologically null in a particular language does not suggest that they do not reflect realities for its speakers or are not verbally implied through other linguistic means. For example, the lack of overt tense marking in Mohawk should not lead one to believe that its speakers lack any mental concept of the future. Through closer examination of Mohawk, it is evident that the tense of a verb is

implied through its overt morphology that expresses mood (Baker and Travis 1995). Just as future time reference for events and states can be expressed by the present subjunctive in Spanish with conjunctions such as *cuando* and *después (de) que*, mood morphemes can convey future time reference in a similar fashion in Mohawk. With respect to the [±Perfective] aspectual distinction's application to states, the use of only one copula or no copula at all does not imply that states described by certain languages are non-aspectual. Because aspect is calculated compositionally, aspectual reference may be implied through the use of other grammatical elements besides the verb, if the choice of verb does not explicitly denote it. In fact, the use of identical preterite forms for the verbs *ser* and *ir* in Spanish necessitate the conveyance of aspect, as well as type of predication expressed, through other grammatical elements used along with the verb. Often times, as in the use of English *to be* in the progressive, the inflectional morphology of the one available copula verb will resolve any potential aspectual ambiguity. Since verbs are never used in isolation, it is not necessary for them to bear the entire functional-semantic burden of sentences in which they appear. Therefore, if an aspectual distinction for states in a certain language is not apparent through copula choice alone, one need only look to a higher sentential domain in order to find it.

7.2. Cross-Linguistic Considerations

As a universal binary functional feature, the [\pm Perfective] aspectual distinction for stative predication should be apparent through the analysis of any language, even of those with only one *be*-type copula verb. It has been shown that aspectual values are not only denoted by individual verb forms themselves, but are also compositionally calculated. Thus, we may predict that any state's aspectual reading in any language may be interpreted through the morphosyntactic combination of grammatical elements at different levels, from which meaning is composed. Since aspect is a binary functional feature, one may predict that in any language with two *be*-type copula verbs, one would be used with [-Perfective] predicates and the other with [+Perfective] predicates. In Spanish, Portuguese and a number of other Romance languages, this is certainly the case. With respect to non-Romance languages with more than one *be*-type verb, there remains much to be learned about how the [\pm Perfective] distinction for stative predication can be formally attested. Therefore, in this section, we will analyze the behavior of *be*-type verbs from two such languages. The first will be African American English (AAE), which contains a *be*-type verb that functions differently from the verb *to be* in Standard English. This verb, to differentiate it from the standard *to be*, is known as the *aspectual be* verb. It will be shown that the aspectual denotation of this *be*-type verb in AAE reflects that of the universal [\pm Perfective] distinction but in a manner that distinguishes it from verbs that are purely copular in nature. Since the literature on these two verbs has

yet to treat them in terms of the denotation of a binary aspectual distinction, they should serve as ideal subjects for explanatory adequacy tests for our aspectual analysis.

7.2.1. Aspectual *be* in African American English

Unlike Standard English, which only contains one *be*-type verb for use in both perfective and imperfective predication, African American English (or AAE) contains two. Curiously, the bare stem forms of the two *be*-type verbs in AAE are morphologically identical, thus requiring the use of metalinguistic terminology in order to distinguish them. AAE makes use of the same verb *to be*, which is used in Standard English, for carrying out the majority of the same copulative functions. The verb *to be* in AAE is sometimes inflected, other times it is not inflected and quite frequently, it is unexpressed altogether. For the sake of distinguishing it from the other *be*-verb in this variety of English, it is referred to as *copula/auxiliary be*. The other *be*-type verb in AAE is known in the literature as the *aspectual be* verb. Unlike *copula/auxiliary be*, the *aspectual be* verb is never inflected and never morphologically unexpressed. It also differs from *copula/auxiliary be* in that it is used exclusively as an overt aspectual indicator to express that either an event or a state carries habitual reference.

One author who has provided a substantial amount of information on these two verbs is Green (2000, 2002). In her work, Green classifies certain types of eventive and stative predication as either *generic* or *habitual*, which would be denoted by the use of

copula/auxiliary be and *aspectual be* respectively¹³. For our purposes, predication described as *generic* and *habitual* in Green's analysis may be specified as [-Perfective]. Rather than explicitly analyzing different types of events and states from the perspective of the [±Perfective] aspectual distinction, Green treats her data in terms of Kratzer's (1995) stage-level/individual-level framework. To illustrate the difference between *generic* and *habitual* reference with respect to AAE, let us first observe the following pair of sentences from this variety of English.

- (137) a. This printer *print* a hundred pages a minute.
b. This printer *be printing* a hundred page a minute¹⁴. (2000: 4)

In order to clarify the difference between sentences like (137a) and (137b) above, Green, citing Shubert and Pelletier (1989), employs the terms *capacity reading* and *generic/habitual reading*, respectively. Sentence (137a) is ambiguous and can denote either a *capacity* reading or a *generic/habitual* reading. The *capacity* reading for (137a) would describe the general property of the speed at which the printer is capable of printing. It may be that said printer has never printed a hundred pages in a minute and never will. Therefore, sentences with *capacity readings* describe characteristics and not events. The *generic/habitual* reading for (137a) would indeed imply that the event of the printer printing a hundred pages a minute has occurred and may occur again. Unlike

¹³ In Green's treatment of *aspectual be*, the term *generic* is to be interpreted in a way that differs from how I have used it throughout this work. Rather than exclusively applying the term *generic* to sentences with generic subjects, Green also applies the term, as interpreted by Shubert and Pelletier (1989), to sentences that describe general characteristics of specific subjects.

¹⁴ In general, there is no number distinction expressed through verb forms in AAE.

sentence (137a), (137b), which contains the *aspectual be* verb, may only carry the *generic/habitual* reading. Though *capacity readings* and *generic/habitual* readings may both be simply classified as [-Perfective] in terms of aspect, the contrast between the two often gives rise to the use of separate verbs for expressing them in AAE.

Since *aspectual be* may solely denote habitual reference for both events and states alike, it significantly differs semantically from an ordinary copula-type verb. As a light verb that is never inflected and always forces a habitual reading, the contribution of *aspectual be* to the aspectual calculation for states in AAE is noteworthy. For the sake of testing the explanatory adequacy of the [±Perfective] aspectual distinction for states, let us now consider how the two *be*-verbs in AAE are used with stative predicates. Observe the following examples of stative sentences in AAE.

- (138) a. John *is/∅* nice. (like *ser*)
b. John *is/∅* drunk. (like *estar*)
c. John *is/∅* being nice. (like *estar*)
d. John *be* nice. (like *ser* with habitual reference)
e. John *be* drunk. (like *ser* with habitual reference)

In AAE, the complementary distribution of *copula auxiliary be* and *aspectual be* plainly does not represent an aspectual partition of [+Perfective] vs. [-Perfective]. As shown in (138a)-(138c) above, both perfective and imperfective states can be represented by stative predicates used with *copula auxiliary be* as they are in Standard English. The *copula/auxiliary be* verb is typically unexpressed, but for purposes of emphasis it is often uttered with a pitch accent. Note that even when the copula is null, the aspectual reading

of the stative predication is still borne out compositionally. Given the fact that the adjective *drunk* describes a state that naturally only applies during one delimited time period, no copula is even necessary to indicate that (138b) describes a [+Perfective] state. In AAE, the [\pm Perfective] aspectual distinction between states described by adjectives such as *nice* is expressed in much the same way that it is in Standard English. The use of the null copula, as in (138a), indicates that the state is [-Perfective], and the use of the progressive, as in (138c), indicates that the state is [+Perfective]. Even though the copula is null, the main verb, which also happens to be *copula/auxiliary be*, carries the progressive verbal inflection to denote that the state is [+Perfective]. As shown in (138a)-(138c), the use of a copula verb is not necessary for the [\pm Perfective] aspectual distinction to be expressed. Any potential ambiguity that may arise is resolved through the aspectual composition of the stative predication or by means of inflectional morphology.

In sentences (138d) and (138e), the *aspectual be* verb denotes that the states described hold on an on-and-off basis. The adjective *nice* describes a state that may be interpreted as either [+Perfective] or [-Perfective]. By virtue of the use of *aspectual be* with this adjective, the state described in sentence (138d) must be interpreted as [-Perfective], because it must hold intermittently over a stretch of time with no implied inception or moment of cessation. In the spirit of the partial synonymy of *ser* and *estar* in Spanish, any one occasion, or delimited time period singled out during said stretch of

time would represent a [+Perfective] state. In sentence (138e), the adjective *drunk* describes a state that naturally only applies within one delimited time period and is thus [+Perfective]. The use of *aspectual be* with this adjective may be analyzed as coercing the otherwise [+Perfective] state of being drunk to one which is [-Perfective], because it forces a habitual reading. Although some states may be interpreted as either [+Perfective] or [-Perfective], while others must be naturally interpreted as only [+Perfective], the use of *aspectual be* in stative sentences always yields a habitual or [-Perfective] reading for the state described.

In terms of the [\pm Perfective] aspectual distinction in Universal Grammar, we should be able to accurately account for the use of *aspectual be* in AAE. To properly do so, we must bear in mind that the aspectual feature [-Perfective] is most accurately defined in logical terms as a disjunction. In other words, [-Perfective] predication may either apply continuously or intermittently. The logical notation for the disjunction for [-Perfective] stative predication, as presented by Luján (1981, 177), is repeated below for ease of exposition.

$$(139) \quad (106') \quad A(x) \text{ at times } t_j \dots t_{j+k} \supset A(x) \text{ at time } t_j \vee t_{j+1} \vee t_{j+2} \dots \vee t_{j+k}$$

As illustrated by the above logical representation, a [-Perfective] state can either apply at all times or intermittently. In AAE, as in Standard English, *copula/auxiliary be* can denote [-Perfective] aspect regardless of whether a state holds continuously or does not. By contrast, *aspectual be* can only denote a [-Perfective] aspectual reading that indicates

that a state holds on and on-and-off basis. In terms of predicate logic, it appears that the *aspectual be* verb in AAE can only denote [-Perfective] aspect when one or more, but not all disjuncts may be false, i.e. may not hold. In other words, this particular verb can only denote a type of *exclusive* disjunction and not an *inclusive* one.

In light of these observations regarding the *aspectual be* verb in AAE, the [±Perfective] aspectual distinction for states and the role of aspectual composition can be attested by stative sentences in this variety of English. Whether a stative predicate is typically interpreted as applying over a stretch of time with no implied beginning or end or only during one delimited time period, *aspectual be* always gives it a [-Perfective] reading. With *aspectual be*, stative predicates such as *drunk*, *tired* and *absent*, which generally reflect [+Perfective] states, must undergo coercion and be interpreted as [-Perfective], because they must apply intermittently. In the same vein, predication that is generally understood to apply continuously must be coerced into yielding a habitual interpretation with *aspectual be*. For example, predication with the stative verb *know* typically describes a state that continuously holds. In order for a state of knowing to be coerced into yielding a habitual reading it must be reinterpreted in some way. According to Green, in the case of the sentence *Sue be knowing that song*, “the focal point is on the subset of times during which Sue demonstrates that she knows the song.” Although the subject most likely knows the song when she is not singing it, the predication applies to repeated occasions when she is singing it or performing it in some way (Green 2000, 17).

Such a reinterpretation of a continuous state of *knowing* as a habitual act of *demonstrating knowledge* could be considered a form of coercion from stative predication to eventive predication. The use of *aspectual be* with a stative verb like *know* is akin to the use of stative verbs in the progressive construction in Standard English as in *John is living with his parents*. Both cases of each of these types may be viewed as a form of state to event coercion resulting from the use of particular aspectual morphology, and as a result, the subject carries an agentive reading as well.

Regardless of the type of stative or eventive predicate described, or the subject of the sentence, the *aspectual be* verb may only denote [-Perfective] aspect signaling an exclusive disjunction. Precisely how the sentence is to be interpreted must always be a reflection of it. At first glance, it may appear that *aspectual be* is somewhat of an exception to the [\pm Perfective] aspectual distinction in Universal Grammar, because its use is unacceptable for denoting all [-Perfective] aspectual reference. However, its analysis as an indicator of [-Perfective] aspect of an exclusive disjunction is consistent with how the [\pm Perfective] distinction is defined and is thus theoretically costless. Furthermore, when taking into account how the aspectual composition of sentences with this verb influences the way certain predicates are interpreted, it is clear that the aspectual distinction [\pm Perfective] is strong in terms of its predictive power in natural language.

7.2.2. The “Copula” and the “Substantive Verb” in Irish

We have now analyzed two different *be*-verbs in African American English that carry distinct aspectual values. The *copula/auxiliary be* verb may denote either [+Perfective] or [-Perfective] aspect, and the *aspectual be* verb may only denote [-Perfective] aspect with habitual reference. Now, we will take a look at a pair of non-Romance *be*-type verbs, whose respective uses are simply dictated by the aspectual features [+Perfective] and [-Perfective]. These are the verbs *is* and *tá* in Modern Irish. The verb *is* is commonly referred to as “the copula” and *tá* is sometimes called “the substantive verb.” For all intents and purposes, both of these Irish verbs are most accurately analyzed as simply copulas, because they are both used with stative predicates. In general, the copula *is* evidently denotes [-Perfective] aspect, and *tá* appears to denote [+Perfective] aspect. These two copula verbs are also found in Scottish Gaelic, where they also denote the same aspectual distinction.

Like Green does for her analysis of *aspectual be* in AAE, Doherty (1996) also analyzes the two copula verbs in Irish using Kratzer’s (1995) *stage-level/individual-level* distinction. For our purposes, we will observe some of the author’s own data showing stative predicates used with the two Irish copulas and illustrate how they rather easily can be accounted for in terms of the universal [\pm Perfective] aspectual distinction. For the sake of brevity, we will take a look at the use of *is* and *tá* with two types of predicates: nominal and adjectival. According to Doherty, only nominal predicates are productive in

sentences with the verb *is* in Modern Irish (1996: 36). Here are a few examples of *is* used with predicate noun phrases.

- (140) a. *Is mac léinn é.*
is student him
“He is a student.”
- b. *Is teach galánta é seo.*
is house nice this
“This is a nice house.”
- c. *Is éan smólach.*
is bird thrush
A thrush is a bird. (1996: 36)

In each of these attributive sentences, the subject is identified as a member of a particular class of items. Stative sentences of this type are [-Perfective], because they hold during a stretch of time with no implied beginning or end. Since the use of a predicate noun phrase to indicate a set to which the subject is a member represents a [-Perfective] state, the use of the *is* copula is elicited. Paralleling the syntactic behavior of Spanish, sentence (141b) below illustrates that the Irish copula *tá* can also denote a [+Perfective] state with nominal predicates.

- (141) a. *Is sagart é mo dheartháir.*
is priest him my brother.
“He’s a priest, my brother. / My brother is a priest.”
- b. *Tá mo dheartháir ina shagart.*
is my brother in-his priest
“My brother is a priest (right now).” (1996: 39)

Since being a priest, or a member of any profession for that matter, is a [-Perfective] state, sentence (141b) may be considered an example of coercion. In Irish, the aspectual composition borne out through the combination of a copula with a predicate noun phrase is calculated as [-Perfective]. Thus, in order to resolve a potential logical contradiction between the use of the [+Perfective] copula *tá* and a [-Perfective] nominal predicate, a preposition must be used. This is an example of how potential ungrammaticality resulting from apparent aspectual mismatch between the copula and its predicate can be resolved through the syntax-semantics interface in natural language.

In Irish, for the most part, adjectival predicates must occur with the copula verb *tá*. Similar to languages such as English that contain only one *be*-type copula verb, the aspectual reading for states in Irish expressed by adjectival predicates, for the most part, must be implied through aspectual composition. For example, though the adjective *cliste* presumably describes a state that is [-Perfective], the use of the copula *is* along with it, shown in (142a) below, is ungrammatical.

- (142) a. **Is cliste é.*
 Is clever him.
 ‘‘He is clever.’’
- b. *Tá sé cliste.*
 is he clever
 ‘‘He is clever.’’ (1996: 36-37)

Since the adjective used in (142b) may only represent a [-Perfective] state, the aspectual reading of the predication is necessarily implied through its use rather than through the

use of the copula. According to Doherty, “All adjectives which may still appear in copular predicates express a permanent property (1996: 36).” By “copular predicates,” Doherty is referring to those with the verb *is*. For our purposes, we may assume that “permanent” can be treated as [-Perfective].

- (143) a. *Is aisteach agus is iontach bealaigh Dé.*
 Is *strange* and is *wonderful* ways God
 “The ways of God are strange and wonderful.”
- b. *Is ionann an dá rud.*
 Is *equivalent* the two thing
 “The two things are equivalent.”
- c. *Is greannmhar thú.*
 Is *funny* you
 “You are funny.” (1996: 37)

Since the Irish *is* copula can be analyzed as [-Perfective], it is predicted that the only adjectival phrases with which it can occur must describe [-Perfective] states. Judging by the words of Doherty, we may assume that Irish has undergone a diachronic change resulting in a type of partial morpho-aspectual leveling. It appears that in earlier stages of Irish, the pattern of *is* and *tá* exclusively occurring with adjectival predicates for describing [-Perfective] and [+Perfective] states, respectively, was more consistent. The exclusive use of *is* with an adjective for describing some [-Perfective] states and its ungrammaticality with one for describing any [+Perfective] state is a vestige of an earlier form of the language. The [±Perfective] aspectual distinction in Irish stative sentences with adjectival predicates may be implied through aspectual composition independently

from the copula itself. Therefore, any diachronic loss of aspectual contrast between *is* and *tá* can be resolved compositionally. Since some languages only contain one copula verb and others do not contain any, it can be assumed that any loss of aspectual contrast between copulas will not compromise the aspectual denotation for stative sentences.

By analyzing stative predication in Modern Irish, we have witnessed another example of how the [\pm Perfective] aspectual distinction for states can be consistently attested as a universal in natural language. For the most part, the verbs *is* and *tá* overtly express this aspectual distinction themselves, but other times they do not. When used with predicate noun phrases, the two verbs clearly occur in complementary distribution based on their individual aspectual values. With regard to adjectival predicates, a limited number of them that describe [-Perfective] states may occur with *is*, and those describing both [+Perfective] and [-Perfective] states may occur with *tá*. Though the copulas *is* and *tá* do not always denote [-Perfective] and [+Perfective] respectively, the aspectual denotation of states in Modern Irish is always implied through aspectual composition. Whether one analyzes the [\pm Perfective] aspectual distinction for states language specifically or universally, it can be shown that the distinction can still be expressed compositionally if not through the choice of copula verb.

7.3. Implications for Future Research

Through empirical analysis and the consideration of theoretical linguistic principles, we can assume that the predictive power of the [\pm Perfective] aspectual distinction is quite strong. Not only is it strong in terms of descriptive adequacy for Spanish, but explanatorily adequate as well for accounting for stative predication throughout the system of language. In this work, we have analyzed this distinction as denoted by individual copula verbs as well as through the aspectual composition of stative sentences. Since aspect is a universal binary functional feature in natural language, we can predict that the [\pm Perfective] aspectual distinction can be attested by any stative sentence in any language. However, we would be remiss in declaring that significant research on aspect and stative predication should cease here. There is much more work to be done in this area, especially considering that not all linguists agree that aspect applies to both states and events. In this section, I will therefore delineate three potential areas of further research pertaining to the [\pm Perfective] aspectual distinction in Universal Grammar. These are how aspectual composition interacts with syntactic structure, the role of universal quantification in aspectual composition and how aspectual denotation reacts to diachronic language change.

7.3.1. Aspect and the Syntax-Semantics Interface

Since grammatical forms denote semantic information in natural language, it would be difficult to analyze aspectual composition without having to consider the role of the syntax-semantics interface. We have seen that a potential inherent contradiction in the compositional calculation of aspect in stative sentences can be resolved syntactically in some instances. For example, in order for a nominal predicate to grammatically represent a [+Perfective] state in relation to a given subject, an intervening preposition must occur between the [+Perfective] copula and the noun phrase in Spanish and Modern Irish. One issue that remains unresolved is why subjects in some languages seem to have different syntactic functions or Case-marking depending on the aspectual reading of the state or event described.

As shown by the Irish data in the previous section, subject noun phrases occupy different positions and show case differences when occurring with one copula or the other¹⁵. Let us now observe another set of examples exhibiting the two different subject positions and different Case-marking with the two copula verbs in Irish.

- (144) a. *Is dochtúir é.*
Is doctor him (ACC)
“He is a doctor.”
- b. *Tá sé ar meisce.*
Is he (NOM) drunk
“He is drunk.” (Doherty 1996, 2)

¹⁵ The cognate forms of these two verbs also exhibit the same syntactic behavior in Scottish Gaelic (Ramchand, 1996: 166).

In sentence (144a), which contains the [-Perfective] copula *is*, the subject *é* occupies a position in the surface structure lower than that of its attributive predicate *dochtúir* and carries accusative Case-marking. By contrast, in sentence (144b) the subject *sé* occupies a higher position in the surface structure than that of its attributive predicate *ar meisce*, and it carries nominative Case-marking. Doherty cites this difference in subject position as evidence in favor of Diesing's (1988, 1990) VP/IP Split Hypothesis, which is commonly posited in tandem with Kratzer's (1995) *stage-level/individual-level* distinction (1996: 41-43). According to this hypothesis, all verb phrases contain base-generated or D-structure subjects in the specifier of VP (spec of VP) position. For stage-level predicates, the overt subject may remain in the spec VP position or it may raise to the specifier of IP (spec IP) position, leaving behind a trace. With individual-level predicates, the subject that is base-generated in the spec VP position is manifested as PRO, and the overt subject is generated in the spec of IP, constituting a control structure. Kratzer also cites evidence in support of the VP/IP Split Hypothesis through examples of the "quantifier split" construction in German. With stage-level predicates, the overt subject may occupy either the spec of VP position (split quantifier) or the spec of IP position (unsplit quantifier). The quantifier split is ungrammatical with individual-level subjects, because they may only overtly occupy the spec of IP position.

Though we have ruled out the descriptive adequacy of Kratzer's analysis for subjects of *ser*- and *estar*-predicates, and thus its explanatory adequacy, the reason why

subjects for different types of predicates overtly occupy different positions still must be determined. Since the term *individual-level* may roughly be interpreted as [-Perfective] and *stage-level* as [+Perfective], it is possible that said different subject positions and Case-marking are related to the aspectual composition of the sentences in which they occur. As evidenced by German and Irish data, the different subjects' structural properties are found in sentences with both eventive and stative verbs. If the aspectual distinction [\pm Perfective] may be analyzed as universal, perhaps the manner in which it interfaces with syntactic structure can be treated in a parallel manner. By further analyzing how aspectual composition interfaces with syntactic structure in Universal Grammar, one may gain insight into how to account for the observed syntactic differences shown by subjects in certain languages.

7.3.2. Universal Quantifiers and Aspectual Composition

Much of the scholarly focus in this treatment of stative predication has dealt with the aspectual denotation of verbal morphemes and the compositional calculation of aspect. By means of adapting Verkuyl's (2004) feature algebra, one can formally represent the compositional calculation of aspect for states. It can be shown that the aspectual reading for states, as well as events, is calculated within the lowest two sentential domains and is not altered by the contribution of aspectual elements in higher domains. For example, a state described by an *estar*-predicate with a quantized subject

will be interpreted as [+Perfective] even if *estar* is inflectionally marked with a [-Perfective] aspectual morpheme. For example, when *estar* is used in the simple present tense or the imperfect, which denote [-Perfective] aspect, the ontological properties of the state described are unaltered and thus remain [+Perfective]. In such a case, the aspectual contribution of the inflectional element in INFL yields a particular aspectual reading for the entire sentence but not for the type of state itself.

Besides aspectual morphemes and noun phrases, another type of element that can affect a sentence's compositional aspectual calculation is the universal quantifier. In the last chapter, we were able to sketch an account for the use of the *reflexive se* clitic in terms of universal quantification. The *reflexive se* clitic apparently morphologically denotes the presence of an abstract universal quantifier that has scope over an entire event. The *se* clitic, which agrees with the subject, indicates that the event, the consumption of a quantized object and the subject's participation in the event are all in a homomorphic relationship. In other words, every part of the event itself simultaneously maps to a part of the quantized object being consumed as well as the subject's participation in it. For the use of the *se* clitic to be grammatically acceptable, an entire quantized object must be consumed. The use of the *se* clitic to reflect abstract universal quantification, therefore, is only grammatical if the event described has an implied natural endpoint.

With regard to the aspectual composition of stative sentences, we have yet to explore how it may be influenced by universal quantification. Typically, we can expect the use of a generic subject, which would not be quantized, with a [+Perfective] copula to be ungrammatical. For example, a sentence like *Los niños están traviesos* would be ungrammatical if its subject were to be interpreted as generic¹⁶. However, when a universal quantifier is used in such a sentence, the use of a [+Perfective] copula with a generic subject is grammatical as in *Los niños siempre están traviesos*. Likewise, a sentence of this type would also be grammatical with the use of a negated universal quantifier as in *Los niños nunca están traviesos*. It seems that the universal quantification of a [+Perfective] state can compensate for what would otherwise be an aspectual mismatch between a [+Perfective] copula and the generic subject. Furthermore, a state described along with a [-Perfective] copula is also grammatically acceptable when it is within the scope of universal quantification, as in *Los niños siempre/nunca son crueles*. This is just one example of how universal quantification can affect the aspectual composition of stative sentences. The semantic relationship between quantifier scope and aspectual composition is an issue that could likely be studied in much greater detail. If it can be determined how and why the use of universal quantification results in the grammaticality of otherwise ungrammatical stative sentences, we may learn more about their compositional calculation of aspect in natural language.

¹⁶ In Spanish, plurals such as *los niños* are ambiguous. They may either refer to a specific or an indefinite set of items.

7.3.3. Aspect and Diachronic Language Change

In many ways, a human language is like a living, breathing organism. As long as a given spoken language continues to have a population of native speakers, it will be dynamic in nature. Therefore, over time, languages may be subject to changes that alter it phonologically, morphologically, syntactically, semantically and in a variety of other different ways. One type of diachronic language change is one involving the loss of certain types of linguistic elements. With respect to morphological loss, one type of grammatical element that is frequently subject to loss in natural language is overt functional morphology. For example, in earlier stages of the English language, there was rich overt morphology for case marking and the subjunctive mood. In Modern English, case is only overtly marked with pronouns and to show genitive case. Similarly, the Spanish language once contained specific overt morphology for indicating future subjunctive reference. In Modern Spanish, the present subjunctive is used for carrying out the same function that the obsolete future subjunctive once did. When a language loses its overt morphology for denoting certain functional features, it has a way of compensating for that loss so that meaning is not sacrificed. When functional bound morphemes are lost, languages tend to become more analytical than synthetic. In English, the lack of overt inflectional case marking is compensated for by the use of unbound morphemes like prepositions, whose use with nouns can imply case. With

respect to the [\pm Perfective] aspectual distinction for states, how a language responds to the loss of overt aspectual morphemes is of the utmost relevance.

Because the aspectual denotation of a state may be implied through the grammatical items used with the copula, it is conceivable that copula verbs are unnecessary for the aspectual contrastive value of stative sentences to be borne out. Some languages, like English only use one *be*-type copula for stative sentences, yet its native speakers do not encounter difficulty in interpreting aspectual denotation. When a [-Perfective] reading cannot be overtly denoted by the copula verb itself, it can be implied through the use of a predicate noun phrase or certain adjectives that can only refer to [-Perfective] states. When there would otherwise be ambiguity, the inflectional morphology of the copula can reflect the aspectual reference of the state, as in the case of the use of *to be* in the progressive construction with [+Perfective] states. With regard to language change, one may learn much about the denotation of the [\pm Perfective] distinction for states by analyzing how languages respond to the loss of overt aspectual morphemes such as copula verbs. It appears that the loss of an aspectual distinction denoted by more than one copula would necessitate the denotation of aspect for states through their composition or through analytical aspectual morphology. In other words, when copula verbs in a language go through a process of losing their aspectual contrast, the language should simultaneously show signs of expressing the [\pm Perfective] distinction for states similar to the way those with one copula do. This is not to say that

all languages that experience a loss of aspectual contrast through their copulas will necessarily react to it in the same manner. However, by studying different stages of the process of copula loss and how language compensates for it, we may gain understanding of how the syntax-semantics interface operates with respect to aspectual composition universally. Furthermore, the study of the process of a language gaining an overt aspectual denotation through the use of two copulas rather than losing one could teach us a lot about the relationship between aspect and language change as well.

7.4. Summary

In this chapter, we have seen that the [\pm Perfective] aspectual distinction has application far beyond the scope of Spanish stative predication, and is in fact, best analyzed as a universal in natural language. Because it represents a universal functional grammatical feature effortlessly acquired by all native-speaking children, it is very strong in terms of explanatory adequacy. Furthermore, attributing this binary functional feature universally to both stative and eventive predication is theoretically costless as well. It can be shown that the [\pm Perfective] aspectual distinction can dictate the complementary distribution of copula verbs in some languages. In languages containing one copula verb, or no copula verb at all, the aspectual denotation of states can be implied through aspectual composition. Therefore, neither the use of null copulas nor the absence of any type of overt aspectual morpheme constitutes a lack of denotation of the functional

feature [\pm Perfective] in stative sentences. This binary aspectual feature is most simply and accurately analyzed as a component of Universal Grammar regardless of the morphology used for expressing it in its opposing values.

The theoretical and empirical research implications for this aspectual distinction for states are vast. The predictive power of the [\pm Perfective] aspectual distinction for copula verbs and stative predicates should undoubtedly be universally attestable. There still remains much to be learned about how aspectual composition interfaces with morphological and syntactic structure universally. As the binary aspectual feature values [\pm Perfective] are found in all languages, it would take an inordinate number of volumes of work to give it all of the scholarly attention it deserves. However, in light of all of the theoretical and empirical findings in this treatment, it can be said that the [\pm Perfective] distinction is the most accurate for *ser* and *estar* and for every other language spoken on planet Earth. The one question that still remains, therefore, is how the functional grammatical feature of aspect can be further applied, both theoretically and in the language classroom as well.

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