$E_{STAR} = S_{ER} + \mathbf{X}^{*}$

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ABSTRACT. This paper studies the SER / ESTAR alternation in Spanish. Following the logic behind Freeze's (1992) and Kayne's (1993) analysis of Benveniste's (1960) approach to HAVE, it is argued that ESTAR derives from SER plus the incorporation of an additional functional element, labeled X. It is this element (which we argue has a prepositional nature in different languages), and not some lexical property (a feature), that is responsible for the oft-noted aspectual (i.e. non-standing, perfective, stage-level) flavor of ESTAR. Even though we focus on the SER / ESTAR cut, our analysis ultimately argues for the idea that the distinction between Individual Level and Stage Level predicates does not indicate a 'lexical' (meaning 'primitive,' 'intrinsic,' or 'inherent') property of predicates. In line with recent neoconstructionist approaches to the lexicon (cf. Borer 2005, Hale & Keyser 1993, 2002, Marantz 1997, Ramchand 2008, among others), we pursue the idea that properties (transitivity, lexical aspect, stativity, etc.) that were interpreted as lexical in projectionist and lexicalist models are actually the consequence of a specific syntax.

Keywords. *ser*; *estar*; neoconstructionism; incorporation; light verbs; individual level predicate; stage level predicate.

RESUMEN. Este artículo estudia la alternancia SER / ESTAR en español. Siguiendo la lógica del análisis de Freeze (1992) y Kayne (1993) basado en el tratamiento de HABER de Benveniste (1960), se defiende que ESTAR deriva de SER más la incorporación de un elemento funcional adicional, etiquetado X. Es este elemento (al que atribuimos una naturaleza preposicional en diferentes lenguas), y no una propiedad léxica (un rasgo), el que es responsable del conocido carácter aspectual (i.e., no permanente, perfectivo, de nivel estadio) de ESTAR. A pesar de que nos centramos en la distinción SER / ESTAR, nuestro análisis defiende, en última instancia, que la distinción entre predicados de Nivel Individuo y Nivel Estado no indica una propiedad 'léxica' (es decir, 'primitiva,' 'intrínseca' o 'inherente') de los predicados. En línea con los recientes enfoques neoconstruccionistas del léxico (cf. Borer 2005, Hale & Keyser 1993, 2002, Marantz 1997, Ramchand 2008, entre otros), exploramos la idea de que las propiedades (transitividad, aspecto léxico, estatividad, etc.) que se interpretaban como léxicas en los modelos proyeccionistas y lexicalistas son de hecho consecuencia de una sintaxis específica.

Palabras clave. *ser*; *estar*; neoconstruccionismo; incorporación; verbos ligeros; predicado de nivel individuo; predicado de nivel estadio.

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1. Introduction

Cross-linguistically, copulative structures feature different types of light verbs (*be*, *look*, *seem*, *turn*, *become*, etc.), participating in various types of sentences: predicational, specificational, identificational, and equative (cf. Bolinger 1947, Declerck 1988, Mikkelsen 2005, Moro 1997, 2006, and references therein). A much-debated issue concerns the distinction, in languages where it is found, like Spanish, between the copulative verbs *ser* and *estar* (Eng. 'be'). As (1) shows, these elements exhibit different selection constraints: descriptively, *ser* selects imperfective predicates (denoting enduring, immutable or inherent properties), whereas *estar* selects perfective ones (which denote transient, temporary or circumstantial properties).[1,2]

(1)   a. Mourinho {es/*está} portugués   (Spanish)
            Mourinho be-3.SG   Portuguese
            Mourinho is Portuguese
        b. Mourinho {*es/está} agotado   (Spanish)
            Mourinho   be-3.SG spent
            Mourinho is spent

The literature on the *ser* / *estar* distinction has explored different analyses to account for the asymmetry in (1), adopting syntactic, semantic, and pragmatic approaches (cf. Camacho 2012a,b, and Fernández-Leborans 1999 for up-to-date discussion). All these analyses entertain the idea that *ser* is the basic copulative (light) verb, *estar* being more complex, and thus closer to so-called pseudo-copulative (or aspectual) verbs.[3] Such a view, however implemented, has often been used to support the well-known distinction between *individual level* and *stage level* predicates (henceforth, IL and SL; cf. Carlson 1977, Diesing 1988, Kratzer 1988, and much subsequent literature), according to which predicates are listed in the lexicon as attributing immutable (IL) or transient (SL) properties, to either individuals or stages thereof, respectively.

In this paper we claim that the *ser* / *estar* distinction follows from the vP internal configuration, which we take to be richer in *estar* sentences. In particular, we argue for the idea that the IL / SL distinction is not lexical (idiosyncratic, inherent, primitive, or non-decomposable), but follows from the presence of a functional category (which can appear in a prepositional guise, following Uriagereka 2001, though see section 3 for qualifications; cf. Kayne 1993, Kempchinsky 2000, 2004, Torrego 1999). In our view, this category contributes to alter the dependencies established between a subject and a predicate, which has an impact on the logical

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[1] The labels "perfective" and "imperfective" belong to the aspect domain, where they are used to indicate whether a given state of affairs is presented as completed (having an endpoint or *telos*; e.g. *I have drunk wine*) or not (having no endpoint; e.g., *I drink wine*) (cf. Tenny 1994, Verkuyl 1993, and subsequent literature). Nonetheless, in the literature on the *ser* / *estar* distinction, it is customary to use these labels with adjectival predicates to signal whether they express permanent (having no endpoint) or transient (having an endpoint) properties (cf. Bosque 1990, De Miguel 1992, Hernanz 1994).

[2] As a reviewer observes, not all bicopular languages have a disctinction similar to the *ser* / *estar* one. Cf. Pustet (2003).

[3] In semantic accounts, complexity is typically encoded through some feature or additional argument position within the theta-grid of *estar* (cf. Kratzer 1988, De Miguel 1992, Diesing 1988, Hernanz 1994, etc.). Pragmatic approaches, on the other hand, take complexity to be related to *estar* involving an additional presupposition linking the predication to a specific discourse situation (cf. Maienborn 2005).

forms that correspond to that syntax—and more specifically the way in which relevant context variables interact with one another under those circumstances.

Following the logic behind Freeze's (1992) and Kayne's (1993) analyses of Benveniste's (1960) approach to *have*, we argue that *estar* derives from *ser* plus the incorporation of an additional functional element, labeled "X" in (2). It is this element and the configuration it gives rise to, we claim, that is responsible for the marked (more complex) nature of *estar*. To be precise, we propose the syntax in (2a) and (2b) for *ser* and *estar*, taking the latter to properly include the former. We take the role of X to be not merely morphological (triggering *ser > estar* conversion, akin to the *be > have* one), but syntactic too: Its presence is necessary for a configurational change of the subject-predicate dependencies created within the lowest (predicative) level, as in (2c) (cf. Raposo & Uriagereka 1995).

(2) a. $[_{\text{serP}}$ ser $[_{\text{SC}}$ WP YP]]
    b. $[_{\text{estarP}}$ ser $[_{\text{XP}}$ X $[_{\text{SC}}$ WP YP]]]
       ↑_____|
    c. $[_{\text{estarP}}$ ser $[$ YP $[_{\text{XP}}$ X $[_{\text{SC}}$ WP t_{YP}]]]
           ↑_____|

                                        [where WP = subject, YP = predicate]

The analysis just depicted is a refinement of Uriagereka's (2001) proposal that *estar* involves *ser* plus a prepositional element, whose status we discuss in section 3. This approach predicts that, just as no language exhibits *have* without exhibiting *be*, no language has *estar* without having *ser*, a prediction that is cross-linguistically borne out. Our analysis further predicts that it should be easier for *ser*-selecting predicates to go into the *estar*-mode than the other way around, which, as argued by Luján (1980, 1981), is also correct. Although some approaches take the *ser > estar* switch to be a matter of coercion without a morphological trigger (cf. Escandell-Vidal & Leonetti 2002, Partee 1987), we argue not only that the process can be accounted for in syntactic terms, but also that the change from *ser* to *estar* is a productive process.

Our proposal adopts Raposo & Uriagereka's (1995) approach to the SL / IL distinction, which argues for the idea that the subject is, in a pragmatic sense to be discussed below, "under the scope" of the predicate in SL (categoric) judgments / predications, whereas the predicate is "under the scope" of the subject in IL (thetic) judgments / predications.

Discussion is divided as follows: Section 2 introduces the basic data with respect to the distribution of *ser* and *estar* in Spanish copulative sentences. Section 3 puts forward the hypothesis that *estar* is to be analyzed as involving *ser* plus the incorporation of a prepositional element. In section 4 we discuss the relevance of context for *ser* / *estar* licensing, and how this notion can be incorporated into our proposal. Section 5 summarizes the main conclusions, considering other, non-copular, structures where adjectives also contribute to yield a categorical (IL) or thetic (SL) interpretation.

2. Adjectival clues to *ser* and *estar*

In this section we introduce basic *ser* / *estar* asymmetries, focusing on the case of canonical copulative clauses containing adjectives. Both copulative verbs are licensed whenever the adjective is in its barest form, showing no morphological manipulation. Interestingly, the moment we use adjectives formed by certain affixes, only *ser* or *estar* can be licensed. Such a behavior is at odds with the idea that the licensing of *ser*

/ *estar* is determined by the lexically imperfective (IL) or perfective (SL) nature of adjectives. We argue instead that *ser* is more basic than *estar*, since *ser* is licensed whenever the l-syntax of the predicates it selects is less complex than that of the predicates *estar* selects.

2.1. The data

Predicates are often assumed to come in IL or SL guises from the lexicon, leading one to expect this trait to be inherent and unmodifiable (cf. Carlson 1977, Diesing 1988, Kratzer 1988). However, in languages where relevant distinctions are syntactically coded (in particular through the appearance of *ser / estar*), the same predicates can appear in contexts yielding each type of interpretation. For instance, the Spanish adjectives in (3) can be selected by *ser* or by *estar*:

(3)   {Es/Está} alto, gordo, rojo, suave, bonito, estúpido, alegre, . . .   (Spanish)
          be-3.SG tall fat   red soft   pretty stupid   happy
          (S)he/It is tall, fat, dark, red, soft, pretty, stupid, happy, tame

The flexibility in (3) is plausibly due to the fact that the predicates are morphologically neutral, being deprived of IL/SL-inducing morphology. When the relevant morphology is present, though, predicates do show selection constraints. In particular, adjectives with present participial affixes (i.e., *-nte*)[4] are selected by *ser*,[5] whereas verbs with past participial affixes (i.e., *-do*) are generally selected by *estar*:[6]

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[4] The morphology in the examples in (4) is participial, in the sense that it yields a telicity entailment. The predicates in (4a) are adjectives, since there are no present participles (i.e., verbs) in present-day Spanish. In contrast, those in (4b) can be either participles, thus licensing *by*-phrases (*Juan está amenazado por todos sus trabajadores* – Eng. "Juan is threatened by all his empoyees"), or adjectives, giving rise to adjectival passives (*Juan está agotado* – Eng. "Juan is tired"). For a detailed discussion about participial morphology, we refer the reader to Embick (2004) and Kratzer (2004).

[5] Needless to say, *ser* can also be licensed in (4b) under a passive reading (e.g., *Juan fue amenazado* – Eng. "Juan was threatened"), which is irrelevant here.

[6] There are counterexamples to the general patterns in (4). Consider, for instance, adjectives with past participial morphology (so-called perfective adjectives; cf. Bosque 1990) that license *ser*.

(i)   El sobre   es   alarga*do*   (ii)   El asunto es   complica*do*   (Spanish)
        the envelope be-3.SG enlarged   the issue   be-3.SG complicated
        The envelope is long   The issue is complicated

We assume that *ser* is licensed here due to the lexicalization of the participial morphology, which in fact has an "enduring" reading, as shown by the fact that the adjectives in (i) and (ii) can be replaced by morphologically unmarked adjectives: *largo* (Eng. "long") and *difícil* (Eng. "difficult"). Additional tests (modification by the quantifier *muy*, use of superlative morphology, etc.) confirm this conclusion. Lexicalization should be at stake even in contexts like (iii):

(iii)   A: Tienes   los pantalones rotos.   (Spanish)
             have-2.SG the trousers   stripped
             You got your trousers stripped.
         B: No, es   que los   fabrican   así.   Son   rotos.   (Spanish)
             no be-3.SG that CL-them make-3.PL like-that be-3.SG stripped
             No, it's just that they are made this way. They are stripped trousers.

The adjective *roto* (Eng. "stripped") is generally incompatible with *ser* in Spanish (*Los pantalones {*son/están} rotos* – Eng. "The trousers are stripped"), and yet in cases like (iii) it is licensed. Although coercion/type shifting (cf. Leonetti & Escandell 2002, Partee 1987) has been invoked to account for cases like these, we believe this example amounts to *rotos* (Eng. "stripped") being

(4)   a. {Es/*Está} amenaza*nte*, ilusiona*nte*, alucina*nte*, valie*nte*, durmie*nte* (Spanish)
            be-3.SG   threatening encouraging amazing valiant   asleep
            (S)he/It is threatening, encouraging, amazing, valiant, asleep
        b. {*Es/Está} amenaza*do*, ilusiona*do*, alucina*do*, moli*do*, cansa*do*   (Spanish)
             be-3.SG threatened encouraged amazed   ground tired
             (S)he/It is threatened, encouraged, amazed, ground, tired

The contrasts in (4) were already observed by Hanssen (1913), who capitalized on them to argue for the *Aspect Generalization* below (where the terms 'perfective' and 'imperfective' are intended to capture whether a given predicate denotes a transient or immutable property, respectively, as pointed out in footnote 1; cf. Arche 2004, Bosque 1990, Camacho 2012a,b, Fábregas 2012, Fernández-Leborans 1999, Leonetti 1994, Luján 1980, 1981, Marín 2004, Siegel 1976, and Schmitt 1992, 2005 for discussion):

(5)   *Aspect Generalization (first version)*
        a. Imperfective (IL) predicates license *ser*.
        b. Perfective (SL) predicates license *estar*.

As Luján (1980, 1981) showed, the generalization goes beyond the facts in (4). Thus, some of the participles above have adjectival readings which retain auxiliary selection as in (4), as seen in footnote 6. In fact, even adjectives with the appropriate morphology and no participial reading do (as in (6a)); this is also the case of frozen adjectives whose format corresponds to suppletive participles (as in (6b)):

(6)   a. {Es/*está} inteligente, prepotente, decente, penitente, etc.   (Spanish)
            be-3.SG   intelligent boastful   decent   penitent
        b. {Está/*es} suelto (#soltado), despierto (#despertado), frito (#freido) (Spanish)
            be-3.SG loose$_{ADJ}$ released$_{PART.}$ awake$_{ADJ}$ awaken $_{PART.}$ fried$_{ADJ}$ fried$_{P.PART.}$

The use of the *ser / estar* distinction is also revealing with derived adjectives. Thus, Luján (1980, 1981) noted that we find typical *ser* licensing with adjectives ending in -*oso, -és, -az, -al, -to, -ario*, and -*ble*, in stark contrast with what we saw in the case of underived adjectives like those in (3).

(7)   {Es/*está} ruidoso, cortés,   capaz, cabal, discreto, temerario, . . . (Spanish)
        be-3.SG noisy   corteous capable trustworthy discrete daring
         He is noisy, corteous, capable, trustworthy, discrete, daring

Finally, consider the example in (8), which is also relevant for the main claim of this paper. Adjectives that typically license *ser* can in some circumstances be forced into the *estar* mode, as Luján (1980, 1981) also pointed out:[7]

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interpreted as an enduring property of *pantalones* (Eng. "trousers"), hence involving a relevant lexicalization to that effect. As an anonymous reviewer observes, similar cases are *Este carmelita es descalzo* (Eng. "This Carmelite is discalced") or *Esta puerta es metalizada* (Eng. "This door is metallic"), where the adjectives have a classificatory flavor; if correct, this would suggest that their structures contain a covert N, thus accounting for the presence of *ser*.

[7] Note that this argument requires excluding the passive reading with *ser*. As noted in footnote 4, *ser* can be licensed with past participles in eventive passives (*El ejército fue reducido* – Eng. "The army was reduced"), but this is expected. The fact that we can have both *El ejército está reducido*

(8)   No es   ruidoso, pero está   ruidoso últimamente   (Spanish)
        not be-3.SG noisy   but be-3.SG noisy   lately
        He/It is not noisy, but it is lately

To recap so far, these facts are unexpected of lexical differences among predicates, suggesting that the distinction under discussion should not be expressed as an inherent (lexical) property that cannot be determined syntactically. This view, which departs from the supposition that the IL/SL distinction is primitive, has been independently argued for by Higginbotham & Ramchand (1997), Maienborn (2004, 2005), Ramchand (1996), and Raposo & Uriagereka (1995).[8, 9]

2.2. Revising the Aspect Generalization

The data in (4a) indicate that *estar* clashes with present participial forms, which can nonetheless be licensed in the right context. The examples in (9), in turn, show that *ser* can select past participial forms, which leads to either a different (passive) reading or plain ungrammaticality (if a passive form is out):

(9)   (Siempre) es   (*)amenazado, *ilusionado, *alucinado, *renacido, . . . (Spanish)
         always   be-3.SG threatened   encouraged amazed   reborn
        He is always threatened, encouraged, amazed, reborn

(resultative passive) and *El ejército fue reducido* (eventive passive) is consistent with the approach we outline below if the former contains just a participial projection (a VP), whereas the latter contains also a vP or voiceP, in addition to VP. Assuming that *estar* obtains after the participial morphology incorporates into *ser*, the fact that *ser* is licensed in eventive passives is expected, since there are additional projections between *ser* and the participial phrase.

[8] It is almost always possible to turn an IL predicate into an SL one—which is unexpected for a lexical trait. Consider (i), taken from Higginbotham (1985):

(i)   John came to college dumb and left it intelligent

Maienborn (2004) further observes that the status of sentences like (ii) is not due to grammaticality:

(ii)   John was {#intelligent/tired} at the bar

As this author argues, if the relevant context is provided (e.g., imagine that John is intelligent compared to the other people in the bar). In such cases, the reading of the adverb is frame-setting and not event-related (close to that of so-called "free adjuncts;" cf. Stump 1985, Hernanz 1994, etc.). But what matters for our purposes is that the relevant IL property can be interpreted in an SL fashion.

[9] An anonymous reviewer points out two cases where *estar* coercion is impossible: propositional predicates of the *cierto / falso* (Eng. "true / false") type, as in (i); and relational adjectives, as in (ii):

(i)   Que Trump ha   sorprendido a todo el   mundo {*está/es} cierto   (Spanish)
        that Trump have-3.SG surprised   A all   the world   be-3.SG true
        That Trump has surprised everyone is true
(ii)   El compuesto {*está/es} químico   (Spanish)
        the compound   be-3.SG chemical
        The compound is chemical

The facts in (i) and (ii) are different. The latter is expected if relational adjectives involve a hidden noun in their lexical structure (cf. Bosque 1993, Fábregas 2005), whereas the former is presumably due to the presence of a CP, given that *estar* is possible when the predication involves individuals (*María está muy falsa últimamente* – Eng. "María is very insincere lately"). See footnote 29.

The fact that *ser* manifests a less rigid behavior suggests that this verb is the default option, being more basic than *estar*. This makes a strightforward prediction: Whereas predicates that usually select *ser* can be used with *estar* (if the appropriate context is provided), predicates that select *estar* resist the *ser*-mode or a passive reading emerges, as just pointed out. The examples in (10) confirm that this prediction is borne out.[10]

(10)   a. Tiger Woods es   genial, pero el año pasado no   estuvo genial (Spanish)
          Tiger Woods be-3.SG brilliant but the year passed not be-3.SG brilliant
          Tiger Woods is brilliant, but he was not brilliant last year
       b. *Tiger Woods está   agotado, pero normalmente no lo   es   (Spanish)
           Tiger Woods be-3.SG exhausted but   normally   not CL-it be-3.SG
           Tiger Woods is exhausted, but he usually is not
       c. Tiger Woods (siempre) es *emocionado, *ilusionado, (*)sorprendido (Spanish)
          Tiger Woods always   be-3.SG thrilled   excited   surprised
          Tiger Woods is (always) thrilled, excited, surprised

In the approach we would like to pursue in this paper (building on Benveniste's 1960 insight that *have* is "*be* plus something"), *estar* ought to be thought of as "*ser* plus something." From this perspective, the sentences in (8) and (10a) meet the demands of *estar* licensing because they already contain *ser*, and somehow the modified syntactic context provides this "something" extra needed for *estar* to be licensed.

The nature of the context in (8) should tell us what we have to add to *ser* in order to get *estar*. An adverb such as *lately* clearly dissociates a state of affairs at a given time interval or context from a more habitual state of affairs. We could then think of the relevant element as introducing a contextual confinement, in a sense to be discussed below, perhaps in the guise of a covert locative.

That idea is consistent with a contrast arising in languages that present the *ser / estar* distinction, vis-à-vis those that do not. Consider the exchanges in (11) and (12):

(11)   A: Is John *(there)?   (12)   A: Está   Juan (ahí)?   (Spanish)
       B: No, he's not (here)   be-3.SG Juan there
                                              Is Juan (there)?
                                      B: No, (él) no está   (aquí) (Spanish)
                                            not he not be-3.SG here
                                            No, he is not (here)

The English and Spanish sentences are word for word translations, but in the Spanish case one does not need the locative—as (12) shows, *estar* appears to be

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[10] One may ask whether it is possible to have (i):

(i)   Tiger Woods está   deprimido, pero normalmente no lo   es   (Spanish)
        Tiger Woods be-3.SG depressed but   normally   not CL-ATR be-3.SG
        Tigers Woods is depressed, but he normally is not

(i) seems clearly out in Spanish, due to the fact that *deprimido* is a perfective adjective (as the *-do* morphology indicates), which can only be selected by *ser* if it has been recategorized as a noun:

(ii)   Con la crisis, en España hay   muchos más deprimidos   (Spanish)
        with the crisis in Spain there-be many   more depressed
        With the crisis, there are many more depressed people in Spain

enough.[11] Using this (bare) verb has the same interpretive effect as using it with an overt locative adverb in English (see (11B)), which is grammatical only if the sentence is meant emphatically.

Likewise, the optional locative in Spanish ought to be coded as an implicit element, the way an agreeing subject is in pro-drop languages. Inasmuch as (12) is peculiar to languages like Spanish, it cannot be the predicate that correlates with *estar* which has a special spatio-temporal determination; otherwise (11) should be good in English. So the auxiliary *estar* itself (or, more generally, the frame that goes with the relevant predication) somehow involves contextual specifications (cf. Higginbotham 1988, Raposo & Uriagereka 1995, Maienborn 2005).[12]

The analysis of *estar* as *ser* plus some implicit contextual element has one further advantage. Spanish distinguishes the auxiliary uses of *ser* and *estar* in the verbal skeleton in cartographic terms. Our hypothesis is consistent with the fact that *estar* must be higher than *ser* in the hierarchy of auxiliaries.[13]

(13)   a. La deuda económica está   siendo   negociada   ESTAR >> SER (Spanish)
           the debt economical be-3.SG being-IL negotiated
           The economical debt is being negotiated
        b. *La deuda económica es   estando negociada   SER >> ESTAR (Spanish)
           the debt   economical be-3.SG being-IL negotiated
           The economical debt is being negotiated

This is analogous to the facts concerning *have* / *be* selection, which reveal that the former is structurally higher than the latter within the "clausal spine."

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[11] Facts like these led traditional grammarians to analyze *estar* as ambiguous between a copulative use (see (i)) and an intransitive use (see (ii)). According to such analyses, the locative adverb in (ii) is not an attribute, but an adjunct.

(i)   Luis está   cansado   (Spanish)   (ii)   Luis está   (aquí)   (Spanish)
       Luis be-3.SG tired   Luis be-3.SG here
       Luis is tired   Luis is here

Here we depart from this proposal, taking the adverb *aquí* in (ii) to be an attribute, whose optional nature depends on the possibility to recover it contextually.

[12] This view is reinforced by facts in Catalan, which also manifests the *ser* / *estar* distinction. Unlike Spanish, Catalan has locative clitics (like French and Italian), which are obligatory in contexts like (11) and (12). Such clitics may be, or correlate with, the contextual "something else" that *ser* requires to yield *estar*.

(i)   A: Que *(hi)   és,   en Joan?   (Catalan)
          Q   CL-there be-3.SG the Joan
          Is Joan there?
       B: Sí, (sí   que) *(hi)   és   (Catalan)
          yes yes that   CL-there be.3.SG
          Yes, he is here

[13] A scenario where *ser* also takes *estar* as a complement is easy to imagine, as in (i):

(i)   [serP ser [estarP estar [serP ser . . .]]]

In a compositional approach to hierarchies (where X is more complex than Y if X is structurally higher than Y; cf. Ramchand 2006, Uriagereka 2008) (i) would be problematic, since Spanish would present two morphologically identical instances of *ser*—one more complex than the other. If nothing else, this would pose learnability problems, which should be avoided by morphophonemic (suppletive) rules (as in those operating with clitic combinations; cf. Uriagereka 1995).

(14) a. Mourinho ha   sido sancionado   HABER >> SER (Spanish)
          Mourinho have-3.SG being elected
          Mourinho has been punished
      b. *Mourinho es   habido sancionado   SER >> HABER (Spanish)
          Mourinho be-3.SG having punished
          Mourinho is having punished

In Kayne's (1993) analysis, the auxiliary superiority is a consequence of the syntax of incorporation. More specifically, the lower *be* "picks up" an extra element in the phrase-marker to transform into the higher *have*. The analysis for *estar* can follow the same fate, with the incorporation of a prepositional element of a locative sort into *ser*.

These facts have an implicational consequence noted by Gili Gaya (1961:64). Consider the following:

(15) a. La patata está   frita,   así que ha   tenido que ser freída.
          the potato be-3.SG fried$_{ADJ}$ so that have-3.SG had   to be fried$_{P.PART}$
          The potato is fried, so it must have been fried
      b. La patata ha   sido freída,   #así que tiene   que estar frita.
          the potato have-3.SG been fried$_{P.PART}$ so that have-3.SG to be   fried$_{ADJ}$
          The potato has been fried, so it must must be fried

The proposition expressed by (15a) is true—the adjectival presupposes the verbal passive—, but that in (15b) is not. This is consistent with the auxiliary analysis, if the general implicational structure is computed off of syntactic complexity.

From all of the above we ought to refine the *Aspect Generalization* as in (16):

(16) *The Aspect Generalization (final version)*
      Predicates are selected by *ser* (and superior perfective (SL) predicatives are
      selected by an implicit locative).

The parenthesized part is to be understood in the sense of the *Elsewhere Condition*: *a marked instance of a generalization whose default is the rest.* We take *estar* to be the lexicalization of the default *ser* plus the marked, implicit locative in (16).

In sum, selection data argue against copulative verb selection being parasitic on lexical properties (the imperfective / perfective or IL / SL distinction). Instead, it seems to be sensitive to the morpho-syntactic make-up of the relevant predicates. Furthermore, we have shown that *ser* licensing is more basic than *estar* licensing, a fact that we have taken to follow from an analysis of *estar* based on Freeze's (1992) and Kayne's (1993) treatment of *have* as involving *be* plus a prepositional element. We discuss that next.[14]

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[14] Concerns may arise about cases like the following (judgments were provided after a presentation):

(i)   {Fuiste/*Estuviste} injusto / inteligente   (ii)   Tu clase {es/*está} a las nueve
          be-3.SG   unfair   intelligent   your class be-3.SG at the nine
          You were unfair, intelligent   Your class is at nine

We have to disagree with the judgment in (i)—a simple search in the Google repository immediately provides different examples of *estar* in those contexts. The example in (ii) is more interesting (see the appendix for additional discussion), but even for those cases *estar* sentences can be provided:

3. The analysis: *Estar = Ser* + X

The data in the previous section is puzzling if the choice of *ser* / *estar* is determined by the IL / SL distinction (cf. Kratzer 1988).[15] Consider again the example in (10a), repeated as (17):

(17)   Tiger Woods es   genial, pero el año pasado no estuvo genial (Spanish)
       Tiger Woods be-3.SG brilliant but the year passed not be-3.SG brilliant
       Tiger Woods is brilliant, but he was not brilliant last year

This example poses a problem for accounts where the IL / SL distinction is regarded as ontologically primitive—thereby the notion of a predicate "of *individuals*" vs. a predicate "of *stages* of individuals." Given (17), the predicate *genial* (Eng. 'brilliant') ought to be both IL and SL, which entails a duplication of lexical entries for all the relevant adjectives. This is counterintuitive, as *genial* is interpreted the same way in both cases.

A technical alternative is to say that some adjectives are [+IL] (those in (4a)), while others are [+SL] (those in (4b)), and still others are neutralized (the ones in (3)) (cf. De Miguel 1992, Fernández-Leborans 1999, Hernanz 1994, Hernanz & Suñer 1999, among others). However, that entails that the [± IL/SL] feature is optional, which is unusual of lexical properties and certainly unexpected in minimalist terms.

This is an issue for those accounts that take the IL / SL cut to reflect a deep conceptual distinction that, in the end, should reflect "the way humans think about the universe" (cf. Fernald 2000:4). Maienborn (2004, 2005) provides empirical and theoretical arguments against the idea that the IL / SL dichotomy is a primitive cut to differentiate predicates. Building on accounts where SL predicates involve a "location-dependence" (cf. Chierchia 1995, McNally 1998), this author argues that the distinction between *ser* and *estar* follows from discoursive (pragmatic) conditions, whereby *estar* "carries an additional presupposition linking the predication to a specific discourse situation" (p.10). Maienborn (2005) proposes (18) to capture *ser* / *estar* distinctions in interpretation:

(iii)   El partido está   a esa hora y   hay   que jugarlo
        the game   be-3.SG at that hour and have-to that play-it
        The game is at that time and we have to play it

Moreover, RAE-ASALE (2009:§37.8.d) discusses similar examples where dates can be used with *ser* or *estar*, depending on the specific Spanish dialect:

(iv)   Ya   estamos (en) viernes   (Andine Sp.) (v) Ya   somos (en) viernes (Chilean Sp.)
       already   be-3.SG in friday   already be-3.SG in   friday
       It's already Friday   It's already Friday

[15] Kratzer's (1988) IL / SL cut is not strictly speaking a s(emantic)-selection condition, but a restriction on semantic composition that forces the relevant predicates to combine with specific types (i.e., individuals or states of individuals). This is different from the lexical aspect of predicates, which is subject to certain degree of modification (so-called "transitions"), depending on non-lexical matters (cf. Smith 1991, Tenny 1994). See Ramchand (1996) for relevant observations with respect to the way the IL / SL is understood by Carlson (1977) (as involving different types of *entities*) vis-à-vis Diesing (1988) and Kratzer (1988) (as involving different types of *predicates*).

(18)   *Ser / Estar Hypothesis*
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   [from Maienborn 2005:12]

Maienborn's (2005) analysis amounts to saying that, when speakers use *estar*, they restrict their claims to a particular discourse setting, assuming that there are other situations (i.e., other contexts) where the relevant predication need not apply.

Details aside, this analysis is consistent with most approaches to the *ser* / *estar* distinction. All of them, including Maienborn's (2005), agree with the idea that *estar* is more complex than *ser*, and that such complexity is to be related, in one form or another, to the context. For Maienborn (2005), the relevant complexity concerns "an additional presuppositon" that *estar* has and *ser* lacks. In our view, this contextual complexity does exist, but it can and should be represented in syntactic terms.
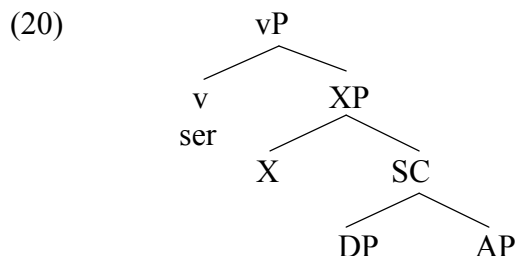
Section 2.2 offered evidence suggesting that *estar* structurally contains *ser*, and not vice-versa. We hinted at an analysis of *estar* à la Benveniste (1960), building on Freeze's (1992) and Kayne's (1993) proposal that *have* should be analyzed as *be* incorporating an implicit contextual element, which could morphologically manifest itself in the guise of a preposition in relevant languages. It may seem tempting to postulate that adjectives selected by *estar* contain an aspectual feature related to such contextual encoding projection. However, this would take us back to lexicalist approaches and would be problematic in light of data like (8) or (17), where *ser* and *estar* are seen selecting the same adjectives.

The key to *estar* appears to be that its associated adjective should be predicated of the subject *in a more confined context*—a "particular discourse setting," in Maienborn's (2005) terms. Let us start by assuming a fairly standard analysis of copular sentences (cf. Moro 1997, 2006), as shown in (19):

(19)
```
              vP
           ／    ＼
          v        SC
         ser     ／   ＼
               DP      AP
```
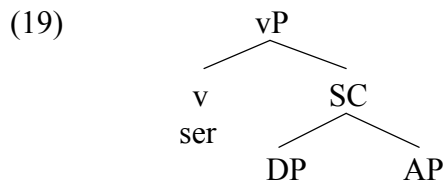
Given the evidence reviewed in section 2, we also want for the structure in *ser* sentences to be present in *estar* sentences. Whatever the specifics of our analysis of *estar* turn out to be, they should capture two things: (i) they must motivate the *ser* > *estar* morphological change; and (ii) they must account for the interpretive, IL > SL, difference. Both aspects should ideally be connected, but we clearly do not want one to be dependent on the other, since the IL / SL is clearly not restricted to the realm of copular sentences.

We propose the syntax in (20) for *estar* sentences:

(20)
```
              vP
           ／    ＼
          v        XP
         ser     ／   ＼
               X       SC
                     ／   ＼
                   DP      AP
```

We are postulating an additional functional layer above the SC containing the subject and the predicate.[16] Two questions that this proposal raises are: (i) Why do we need an additional projection? And (ii) what is its morphosyntactic status?[17]

Consider (i) first. We take the additional projection to be related to the morphological *ser > estar* alternation (which is determined by X-to-*ser* incorporation; cf. Kayne 1993, Freeze 1992, Uriagereka 2002), and the semantic IL > SL one (which we want to relate to Raposo & Uriagereka's 1995 approach to the categorial / thetic distinction; see section 4 for details). Once X is introduced into the derivation, two things happen: X incorporates into *ser* (yielding *estar*) and the predicate moves to [Spec, XP].

(21)
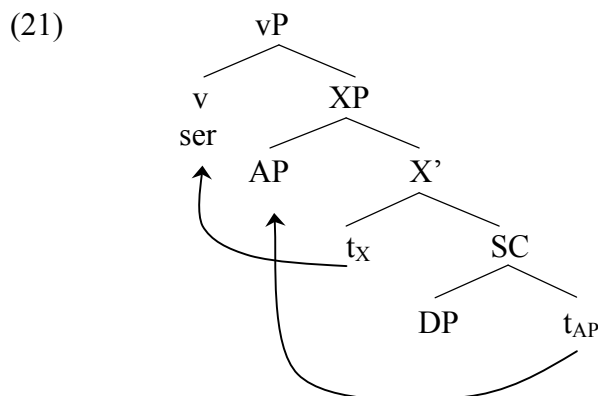
The derivation in (21) aims at reflecting the idea that morphological (*ser > estar*) and semantic (IL > SL) effects have syntax as their source.[18]

Once the presence of an extra projection is assumed, one question that could be raised is why the predicate (AP) moves and not the subject (DP). Last resort considerations (cf. Chomsky 1995) provide an answer: If the subject moved the outcome would be vacuous, as it would replicate the same contextual dependencies we already had (see below for details on those).[19]

Consider now question (ii): What is the morphosyntactic label of the extra projection?[20] The logic of our proposal does not commit us to a specific label, but

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[16] Our analysis of the *ser-estar* alternation is similar to the proposal in Zagona (2008). In this proposal, also, *ser* and *estar* are independent predicates with a different subcategorization due to the presence of an unvalued prepositional feature (i.e., [uP]) that *estar* (not *ser*) encodes.

[17] Although the logic of our proposal does not force us to use a specific morphological label for the hypothesized X category (be it P or any other), this element does not introduce an extra subject position, but rather a site that the adjective can exploit to ground the subject's context (see below).

[18] One could ask why X incorporation occurs in l-syntax, suggesting an alternative whereby incorporation takes place in s-syntax, with subsequent late insertion of vocabulary items. Although this is consistent with our view, two clarifications are in order. First, we assume that X incorporates in Hale & Keyser's (1993, 2002) l-syntax, but do not take that as different level of representation—for us it is a derivational stage devoted to argument-taking processes (in effect a D-Structure component, in the sense of Uriagereka 2008). Second, we see no problem with positions created in l-syntax being available in s-syntax, these being labels for different stages in a derivation.

[19] Our approach to *estar* is different from predicate inversion (Moro 1997; e.g., *John is the problem – The problem is John*). Although our logic recalls such a transformation, predicate raising in *estar* scenarios takes place in an l-syntax (effectively D-structure) component.

[20] We remain neutral about the X element's semantics. Agreement markers, shells, case markers and similar elements have been postulated for similar cases (cf. Den Dikken 1995, 2006, Torrego 1998, 1999). X in (20) cannot be expletive, though, as it is subject to morphological restrictions—but its interpretive impact seems orthogonal to the syntax required to deploy the IL / SL distinction.

there are independent arguments to attribute prepositional traits to this projection (as noted in Uriagereka 2001).[21] The data in (4) showed that adjectives that are only selected by *estar* have a revealing participial-like morphology (e.g., amenaza*do*, ilusiona*do*, alucina*do*), which is aspectual in nature (cf. Bosque 1990, Demirdache & Uribe-Etxebarria 2000). Demirdache & Uribe-Etxebarria (2000), Ramchand & Tungseth (2006), and others argue that aspect and prepositions interact. Different scholars have postulated that Romance languages of the Spanish sort involve a prepositional projection between vP and VP (cf. Kayne 1993, Torrego 1999, Kempchinsky 2000, 2004). Torrego (1999) argues that Spanish light verbs can select a prepositional projection that is subject to variation, depending on whether P realizes itself as a Case marker (in so-called Differential Object Marking) or as an accusative clitic (in clitic-doubling dialects). This is shown in (22):[22]

(22)   [$_{vP}$ SUBJ v [$_{XP}$ **D/P** [$_{VP}$ . . . V D-NP]]]

The same basic idea is explored by Kempchinsky (2004), who argues for an aspectual projection as the locus of aspectual clitics like Spanish ergative / inchoative *se* (see (23)).

(23)   [$_{vP}$ La niña [$_{AspP}$ Asp **se** [$_{vP}$ comió   *(el) helado]]]   (Spanish)
             the child   CL   ate-3.SG the ice-cream
         The child ate ice-cream

Evidence that *estar* sentences contain a preposition can also be gathered from other languages. As noted in the literature, Irish and Scottish Gaelic (Adger & Ramchand 2003, Doherty 1996, Ramchand 1996, Roy 2004, and references therein) provide support to the idea that there is a preposition in cases where the interpretation is *estar*-bound. As discussed by Roy (2004), Irish has two copulative verbs: *bí* (productive with AP, PP and VP predicates) and *is* (productive with NP predicates alone). Now, importantly, for a predicate NP to appear with *bí* (the Irish counterpart of estar, as already argued for by Ó Máille 1912), it must be the complement of a linker: the preposition *ina* (see (26) below).

(24)   a. Tá   mo dheartháis *(**ina)**   shagart   (Irish)
             be-BÍ my brother   in-AGR   priesty
             My brother is a priest

(i)   Juan está   siendo cruel   (Spanish) (ii)   Juan fue   cruel   (Spanish)
       Juan be-3.SG being cruel   Juan be-3.SG cruel
       Juan is being cruel   Juan was cruel

But there is no SL interpretation in these cases. The first sentence contains a progressive periphrasis; just as we saw above for passives in footnote 4, this is not to be treated as a copulative construction. Sentence (ii) is certainly copulative, but an SL interpretation does not arise here. What we have is an instance of *ser* inflected in a perfective tense (simple past), presenting the entire event as happening in the past. When we say that Generalísimo Francisco Franco was a cruel dictator, the fact that this event only lasts until his death in 1975 does not make the property any less defining or standing, for that relevant period – i.e. assuming that he is still dead has no bearing on the relevant semantics..

   b. Tá   sé   *(**ina**)   fhear láidir (anois)   (Irish)
      be-BÍ he   in-AGR man   strong (now)
      He is a strong man (now)

[adapted from Roy 2004:38, 53]

Scottish Gaelic facts point in the same direction. As Adger & Ramchand (2003) and Ramchand (1996) note, SL copulative sentences in this language cannot license predicative NPs unless a preposition (*ann*, Eng. "in") is spelled out:[23]

(25)   Tha Calum *('**na**)   thidsear   (Scottish Gaelic)
        be   Calum   in-3.masc.sg teacher
        Calum is a teacher

[from Adger & Ramchand 2003:332]

The Celtic data is analogous to the Spanish example in (26),[24] where *estar* is licensed if the predicate is introduced by a preposition (cf. Roy 2004).[25]

(26)   a. {Soy/*Estoy} profesor   (Spanish)
           be-1.SG   teacher
           I work as a teacher
        a. {*Soy/Estoy} *de* profesor   (Spanish)
           be-1.SG   of teacher
           I work as a teacher

A final observation to reinforce the prepositional status of X in (20) comes from possessive structures, if analyzed as in Kayne (1994) or Szabolcsi (1983). According to these authors, possessive and locative structures contain a P/D/Agr projection that can be spelled-out in different ways: *'s* (e.g., *My car's engine*), *in* (e.g., *There is an engine **in** my car*), and *of* (e.g., *The engine **of** my car*). Under the assumption that possessive (featuring *have*) and copular/existential (featuring *be*) structures involve a similar syntax, as the "have = be + P" analysis assumes (cf. Freeze 1992, Kayne 1993, Uriagereka 2002), the possibility that the projection that licenses *estar* is prepositional suggests itself.[26]

A legitimate parametric concern is whether other languages deploy the very same projection we are linking *estar* to. An additional projection between vP and VP has been proposed for reasons that go beyond the *ser / estar* distinction, and for languages

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[23] The element *ann* becomes '*na* after incorporation of a possessive pronoun.

[24] Hagit Borer (p.c.) asks why the preposition needs to be overt, given that P incorporation should prevent its morphological realization. We suggest that this is a morphological constraint on nominals, which are attracted by the preposition (in a Probe-Goal dependency, along the lines of Kayne's 2005 analysis) in a tucking-in fashion. For other instances where P-incorporation is followed by PF realization of the preposition (so-called "P cognation"), cf. Mateu & Rigau (2009).

[25] Similarly, *estar* locative sentences also require a preposition:

(i)   María {*es/está} en el parque   (Spanish)
        María   be-3.SG in the park
        María is in the park

We briefly discuss locative structures in the appendix, although we will not consider all their intricacies (cf. Brucart 2009 and references therein for discussion).

[26] Though compatible with this analysis of *estar*, an idea we will not pursue in this paper is that the *a* present in this verb (i.e. *est – A – r*) is actually, in some form, the preposition that incorporates into *ser*.

other than Romance ones (cf. Borer 1994, Chomsky 1993, Johnson 1991, Koizumi 1995, Lasnik 1999, Pesetsky & Torrego 2004, Ramchand 2001, Tenny 1994, etc.). The specific label of this projection varies from author to author (AspP, Agr$_O$P, T$_O$P, Appl, etc.), but the common idea is that it participates in the aspectual-Case/agreement systems. We must thus conclude that the extra X projection is not exclusive of languages featuring the *ser / estar* distinction, and the same goes for its morphosyntactic realization—which does not have to be prepositional. This is welcome, since we take the relevant projection to help create a configuration for the SL interpretation to emerge, something available in all languages. What we do not expect (and actually do not find) in all languages is the (morphological) *ser / estar* contrast. In order to account for that, we have to assume that the X projection is morpho-phonologically parameterized, so that its actual realization and incorporation into v (giving rise to *estar*) may vary.

That the vP headed by *estar* is more complex than that headed by *ser* predicts more subject sites in *estar* sentences. It is interesting, in this respect, how subjects placed immediately behind the auxiliary are degraded in *ser* sentences (a fact investigated in depth by Moro 1997, 2000), but fine in *estar* ones, in a out-of-the-blue contexts:[27]

(27)   a. Está   tu   hermana tonta   (Spanish)
           be-3.SG your sister   silly
           Your sister is silly
        b. ??Es   tu   hermana tonta   (Spanish)
           be-3.SG your sister   silly
           Your sister is silly

While the asymmetry in (27) is surprising in a language licensing post-verbal subjects (cf. Belletti 2004, Ordoñez 1997, Zubizarreta 1998), the analysis in (20) offers a reasonable approach to the fact, since the PP provides an extra landing site.[28]

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[27] A question arises as to what position the subject moves into in (27a), if the PP specifier is already filled with a moved predicate (according to (21)). Assuming verb movement to T, the position of the post-verbal subject could be [Spec, vP] or [Spec, PP] (taking multiple specifiers to be possible). Evidence from adverb placement suggests that the subject moves to [Spec, vP]. Consider (i), where low adverbs such as *probablemente* (Eng 'probably') are better in a position after the subject:

(i)   (probablemente) está   (?*probablemente) Juan (?probablemente) agotado   (Spanish)
          probably   be-3.SG probably   Juan probably   spent
          Juan is probably spent

Similar results obtain for subextraction, barred in cases like (27a):

(ii)   ?*De quien está un amigo agotado?   (Spanish)
           of whom is   a friend spent
           Whom is a friend of spent?

We take this to indicate that the position occupied by the subject DP *un amigo de quién* (Eng. "a friend of whom") is in a derived position, where island effects emerge (cf. Belletti 2004, Rizzi 2006, Ormazabal et al. 1994, Takahasi 1994, and Stepanov 2001, among others).
[28] Post-verbal subjects in *ser* clauses can be licensed if they are focal, contrastively or not:

(i)   Es   TU   HERMANA tonta (…no la mía)!   (Spanish)
          be-3.SG YOUR SISTER   silly   not the mine
          YOUR SISTER is silly (not mine)!
(ii)   Es   ella tonta (… no yo)   (Spanish)

One general question worth raising about the analysis in (19) and (20) is whether adjectives in general provide a position for subjects generated in a higher position. So, Irimia (2013), building on Williams (1983), shows that an indefinite DP does not reconstruct below the predicate *seem* in sentences like (28b):

(28)   a. John seems angry
        b. A student seems angry

Of course, if APs fail to license a subject position (unlike PPs, or infinitivals, following Baker 2003, Hale & Keyser 1993), one needs to explain what precludes second-Merge of a DP with an adjective, arguing against the most direct dependency between a subject and its predicate (cf. Chomsky 2008, Moro 1997, 2000, Rizzi 2013, Hale & Keyser 2002). It is certainly not obvious what would prevent adjectives from involving various specifiers, a view supported by Amritavalli & Jayaseelan (2003), Mateu (2002), and Kayne (2011), who propose that APs are actually covert PPs. Empirically, the issue in (28) resembles the debate on whether A-movement reconstructs. Consider the following pair, taken from Lasnik (1999), who observes, following Chomsky (1995), that *everyone* cannot reconstruct below negation in (29c).

(29)   a. (It seems that) everyone isn't there yet
        b. I expect [everyone not to be there yet]
        c. Everyone seems [t not to be there yet]

[from Lasnik 1999: 194]

Lack of reconstruction in (29c) can be captured in different ways (A-movement leaves no copy, there is a Case conflict effect that precludes activation of lower copies, etc.). It does not entail that the DP was not generated in its base position at an earlier derivational stage. The same logic carries over to the *ser / estar* cases. Note, also that the facts in (30) and (31) would be hard to account for if the subject was not generated with the adjective in a small clause configuration. (30) shows an indefinite DP *un estudiante* (Eng. 'a student') that presents both strong and weak readings, thus presumably structurally different subject positions. (31) contains a floating quantifier, customarily used to trace a subject position.

(30)   En la   clase de latín, un estudiante siempre está aburrido   (Spanish)
        in the class of Latin a student   always be-3.SG bored
        In Latin class, there is always a student that is bored
(31)   Estamos los estudiantes aburridos todos   (Spanish)
        be-1.PL the students   bored   all
        We students are all bored

So although (28b) requires further discussion (which we set aside now), (30) and (31) argue in the direction presented here. We thus assume that APs, like any other predicate, can license a second-Merge (specifier) position for a DP.

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        be-3.SG she silly   not me
        She is silly (not me)

In these examples the subject can stay in a post-verbal position because it is contrastively focused (see (i)) or because it is inherently focal (as Romance strong pronouns typically are; see (ii)). In either case, as Belletti (2004) argues on empirical grounds, the subject has left its base (first-Merge) position.

   In this section we have explained how the idea that *estar* is more complex than *ser* can be approached from a syntactic viewpoint. We have argued that *estar* sentences contain an additional projection (prepositional in some languages, judging from different pieces of evidence), which has two consequences. Morphologically, it constructs *estar* from *ser* (given nuances of incorporation; cf. Baker 1988, Kayne 1993, Freeze 1992). Semantically, it is responsible for predicate-to-specifier movement, whose consequences we discuss next.[29]

4. The relevance of context
We have emphasized that predicates selected by *ser* can also be selected by *estar*, not vice-versa. This is straightforward when the predicate is morphologically neutral, but *estar* can be licensed under more adverse circumstances: even apparently exclusively IL predicates can license *estar* if the right context is provided (cf. Camacho 2012a,b, Schmitt 2005, and Schmitt & Miller 2007). Some relevant cases are the following:[30]

(32)   a. Tu hermano está   ruidoso #(últimamente)   (Spanish)
           your brother   be-3.SG noisy   lately
           Your brother is noisy lately

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[29] The fact that X attracts the predicate is of course related to the idea that it is this element, and not the subject, that determines the choice of the copula. Such view is challenged by Costa (1998) and Romero (2009), who argue that the subject type also determines the choice between *ser* and *estar*. A noun like *neve* (Eng. snow), for instance, goes with *ser*, not *estar* in (i)-(ii):

(i)   A neve é   branca   (European Portuguese)
          the snow be-3.SG white
          The snow is white
(ii)   *A neve está   branca   (European Portuguese)
          the snow be-3.SG white
          The snow is white   [from Costa 1998:146]

In comparable Spanish contrasts, however, we would regard the unacceptability of (ii) as pragmatically odd (thus signaled as #), not strictly ungrammatical. If the right context is provided (see next section), sentences like (iii) are clearly fine:

(iii)   Es   increíble: la nieve está   más blanca que ayer   (Spanish)
          be-3.SG incredible the snow be-3.SG more white   than yesterday
          It's incredible: the snow is whiter than yesterday

[30] The only robust exception involves NP / DPs, which cannot be selected by *estar*, unless some prepositional element is added, as noted above (see (25)):

(i)   María está   *(de) profesora   (Spanish)
          María be-3-SG   of teacher
          María works as a teacher

However, Raposo & Uriagereka (1995) mention Schmitt's (1993) observation:

(ii)   Ele está   um homem   (Portuguese)
          he be-3.SG a   man
          He looks like a man

The transient interpretation of (ii), akin to Spanish *Está hecho un hombre* (Eng. "He is made a man"), suggests that the problem may be Case theoretic, Spanish requiring an extra Case licenser.

b. La nieve está   más blanca #(que ayer)   (Spanish)
   the snow be-3.SG more white   than yesterday
   The snow is more white than yesterday

Descriptively, we can express the situation as follows:

(33)   a. SER-predicates can be selected by ESTAR if the relevant context is provided.
       b. ESTAR-predicates cannot be selected by SER.[31]

The statements in (33) are consistent with an analysis in which *estar* involves more structure. If that is correct, then adding structure (to get *estar* from *ser*) should be easier than destroying it (to obtain *ser*, once the *estar* level is reached). Under a coercion / type-shifting scenario, it is not obvious why this should be, but the facts align with a compositional view where removing structure entails "tampering"—a process that goes against constraints guaranteeing structure preservation (Emonds 1976, Chomsky 2008).

4.1. Grounding Context Variables
   The question is how "context" in (33a) is to be understood, technically. Although this notion has been largely regarded as a semantic / pragmatic tool (cf. Barwise & Perry 1983, Kamp 1981, McCarthy 1993, among many others), we would like to consider it from a syntactic point of view, assuming that the context of a predicate is provided by some element that is more prominent (in configurational terms) than the predicate itself.
   Such an approach was suggested by Raposo & Uriagereka (1995), who put forward an analysis of the IL / SL distinction reinterpreting an insight present in Kuroda (1972) and Milsark (1977), namely that IL subjects (e.g., *John is clever*) are what the sentence "is about," whereas SL ones (e.g., *John is tired*) more neutrally convey the assertion of the sentence. Building on this idea, Raposo & Uriagereka (1995) recast the IL / SL cut in configurational terms, assuming the following:

(34)   (i) all predicates introduce an event variable e;[32]
       (ii) all predicates can optionally be associated with a free second-order context variable X, whose range, according to Higginbotham 1988, is left for the speaker to confine; and
       (iii) IL (in these terms "categorical") and SL (in these terms "thetic") predications emerge in "surface-syntax" conditions (for instance topicalization) so long as:

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[31] Apparent exceptions to this involve lexicalization of the relevant adjectives (see footnote 4). Also, notice that (33) is not saying that "*ser+X*" plays a selection role as a whole. In our analysis, predicates selected by *estar* are predicates also selected by *ser*, plus an extra element (our X). Therefore, the additional element is not playing any selectional role: it is simply there to provide the relevant syntax for a thetic reading to come out.
[32] One may be concerned with what would motivate the introduction of event variables associated to each predicate. In Davidson's classical (1967) proposal, predicates for which "poliadicity" issues arise are assumed to take an implicit event variable, which allows adjunctal modifications to hold of this variable without changing the adicity of the predicate with each new modification. Raposo & Uriagereka (1995) show how "poliadicity" considerations hold for IL predications just as much as they do for SL predications, thereby motivating the event variable in the IL instance just as much as it is motivated in the SL instance.

(iv) Either the subject grounds the (categorical) predication or the predicate grounds the (thetic) predication, where:

(v) A category A, containing context variable X, *grounds* a predication involving context variable Y if A c-commands the Category B that contains Y:

…[[…X…]$_A$ … [… […Y…]$_B$ …]]…

Raposo & Uriagereka (1995) propose that the IL / SL cut is not a matter of thematic structure,[33] but a consequence of structural factors arising in surface syntax. In particular, they argue that the key to each of these interpretations is whether a given context-variable grounds the other, in the sense that, under given structural conditions, speakers are limited in their ability to confine the range to variable Y *in terms of the confined range of variable X*. In other words, under these conditions, variable X is taken to provide the ground for variable Y, so that the speaker's ability to confine variable Y's range depends on relevance conditions determined by the background range of variable X. The specific structural conditions for this situation to emerge are the ones in (34v): whenever the category containing X c-commands variable Y.

IL / categorical readings are easier to obtain than SL / thetic ones. Thus a sentence like *César conquistó las Galias* (Eng. "Caesar conquered Gaul") can either denote a statement about a military conflict or, instead, an aboutness statement concerning Caesar. The categorical interpretation can arise in two ways: (a) if the subject is promoted to a structural prominent position, from which its context variable grounds the main event's context variable;[34] or (b) so long as the main predicate's context-variable is not grounded on context variable contained within the subject. In effect, interpretation (b) arises by default, if nothing special happens: it can be seen as a "decontextualized" reading. In contrast, the thetic interpretation, inasmuch as it necessitates a ground-setting context variable within the main predicate, requires a syntax where the subject's context variable is structurally lower than the predicate's.

4.2. Syntactic Possibilities

For these sorts of situations to arise, a variety of syntactic processes can be invoked – so long as the structural dependencies arise. For example, as Raposo & Uriagereka (1995) argue, a morphological Case marker, presumably with associated structural correlates, may be used to distinguish IL subjects. This is what happens in languages like Irish, where such subjects receive accusative Case, the default option in Irish (see (35), where CAT and THET stand for "categorical" and "thetic").[35]

(35) a. Is   fhear e   (Irish)
         be-CAT man   he-acc
         He is a man
      b. Ta   se   ina   fhear   (Irish)
         be-THET he-nom in-his man
         He is a man (now)

---

[33] Possibly involving an event argument (cf. Kratzer 1988), or a difference in the first-Merge position of the subject (cf. Diesing 1992).

[34] This, and even more so the thetic reading, presupposes a predicative treatment of names (cf. Quine 1960, Burge 1973), or at the very least that names carry context variables. Implementing this matter in detail (e.g. establishing what specific element introduces a name understood as a predicate, and whether it is demonstrative or some other rigidity marker) would require a separate paper.

[35] See Camacho (2012b) for evidence concerning evidential morphology in Tibetan. As this author shows, evidential morphemes are used whenever the sentence receives a *estar*-like interpretation.

Similar observations have been made for Russian. Here too, a different Case marking is resorted to in order to determine a thetic (transient) or categorical (enduring) reading. As Roy (2004:41) observes, building on Bailyn & Rubin (1991), predicates that are marked with instrumental Case express properties perceived as transient, whereas predicates in nominative Case yield an enduring interpretation:[36]

(36)   a. Saša byl muzykantom   (Russian)
          Sasha was musician-INST
          Sasha was a musician
       b. Saša byl muzykant   (Russian)
          Sasha was musician-NOM
          Sasha was a musician

A second strategy to (more directly) determine the thetic / categorical distinction involves phrasal arrangements: Promoting the grounding phrase to a topic-like position.[37] This is plausibly, also, what makes (37a) and (37b) differ. Whereas the former can be either a statement about what happened or one concerning Cantona, the left-dislocated sentence, inasmuch as it is felicitous, seems to strongly favor an aboutness statement that concentrates on the controversial French forward:[38]

(37)   a. Cantona won the Premier League with Manchester Utd.
       b. Cantona, he won the Premier League with Manchester Utd.

In (35) above not only Case specifications change: Auxiliary selection too is different. Interestingly, if one explicitly asks in Spanish about a specific individual, *ser* is typically used in the response (38); if, however, one asks a neutral question (not about an individual), then *estar* is typically used instead (39) (cf. Jiménez Fernández 2012):

(38)   A: Qué piensas   de Ángela?   (Spanish)
          what think-2.SG of Ángela
          What do you think about Ángela?

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[36] The data in (36) are not meant to capture the intricacies of Russian Case alternations. For relevant discussion we refer the reader to Jägger (2001) and references therein.

[37] The second strategy is also deployed in Absolute Small Clauses, whose subject must be postverbal and receive a thetic / SL interpretation (Hernanz & Suñer 1999:2542, 2544)

(i)   (*El capitán) Enfermo (el capitán), tomó el mando un oficial   (Spanish)
           the captain sick   the captain   took the lead   an officer
         Since the captain was sick, an officer took over
(ii)   (*María) Harta (María) de tanto   esperar, abandonó el local   (Spanish)
          María tired   María of so-much waiting left-3.SG the place
        Tired of waiting so much, María left the place

As these authors note, IL predicates (intelligent, tall, etc.) cannot participate in this construction:

(iii)   *Inteligente Pepe, . . .   (Spanish)   (iv)   *Alta la torre, . . .   (Spanish)
         intelligent Pepe   tall the tower
         Being Pepe intelligent, . . .   Being the tower tall, . . .

[38] These facts should be considered along with well-known restrictions on topicalized constituents (cf. Diesing 1992, Fodor & Sag 1992, Rizzi 1997). Due to space constraints we cannot investigate this issue in the present paper.

B: #Ángela está   aburrida / Ángela es   muy divertida   (Spanish)
     Ángela be-3.SG bored   Ángela be-3.SG very funny
     Ángela is bored / Ángela is very funny

(39)   A: Qué   pasa?   (Spanish)
      what happen-3.SG
      What's up?

      B: Ángela está   aburrida / #Ángela es   muy divertida   (Spanish)
         Ángela be-3.SG bored   Ángela be-3.SG very funny
         Ángela is bored / Ángela is very funny

The contrast above makes sense if *ser* is used to indicate a categorical judgement, while *estar* associates with a thetic judgement, where the predicate is in some sense higher than the subject. We discuss this more technically next, but the point we are trying to emphasize is this: Just as general predication is not restricted to the subject of a main clause (it can appear in small clauses, topicalizations, NP internal adjectival modification, absolute small clauses, secondary predicates, etc.), so too the thetic / categorical nuances that depend on context-grounding associate to a variety of relevant structures.

4.3. Logical Forms

Raposo & Uriagereka (1995) follow Higginbotham (1988) in the idea that predicates are endowed with a second-order context variable, whose range is left for the speaker to confine.[39] Sentences like (40a) and (40b) present the rough logical forms indicated in (41) (with two ways of obtaining categorical readings) and (42), respectively:

(40)   a. El hombre es   simpático   (Spanish)
            the man   be-3.SG nice
            The man is nice (always)

            b. El hombre está   simpático   (Spanish)
            the man   be-3.SG nice
            The man is nice (now)

(41)   a. Categorical reading
       $\exists$e [[$\exists$x *hombre* (x) & X(x)] [*simpático* (e, x) & Y(e)]]
       "There is an *e* for which it is true that: there is a unique x of which *hombre* holds at context X; such that *simpático* holds of x at e at context Y, where the speaker pragmatically confines the range of Y to the range of X."

       b. Equivalent Categorical reading
       $\exists$e [$\exists$x [*simpático* (e, x) & Y(e) & *hombre* (x) & X(x)]]
       "There is an *e* for which it is true that: there is a unique x such that *simpático* holds of x at e at context Y, and *hombre* holds of x at context X; where the speaker pragmatically confines the range of Y and X take these to be contextually independent."

---

[39] Contextual variables have of course been proposed for all kinds of quantifications (cf. Martí 2003 and von Fintel 1994 for more general discussion). Bear in mind that all predicates, not just stage-level ones as in Kratzer 1988, involve an event variable, and moreover all of them are taken to come with a second-order context variable.

(42)   Thetic reading:
         ∃e [∃x [*simpático* (e, x) & Y(e) [*hombre* (x) & X(x)]]]
         "There is an *e* for which it is true that: there is an x such that *simpático* holds
         of x at e at context Y, and *hombre* holds of x at context X; where the speaker
   pragmatically confines the range of X to the range of Y."

In (41a), the context variable of the subject grounds the context variable of the
main predicate. Under these conditions the speaker must confine the range of the
variable within the c-commanded expression to the variable within the c-commanding
expression. The categorical reading arises because, of a subject whose context
variable is free for the speaker to confine, a predication is said to hold. The situation is
equivalent in (41b), where the two context variables are "in parallel" (neither of the
expressions containing one variable c-commands the other). The speaker, then, is
unconstrained on how to confine the subject's context variable, and therefore a
predication holding of that subject is not limited in any way. This is a
decontextualized predication, which results in a default categorical reading, as it were.
Finally, there is the situation in (42). Here, the expression containing the main
predicate context variable c-commands the expression containing the subject context
variable. The system makes the speaker confine the range of the variable within the c-
commanded expression to the relevance domain of the variable within the c-
commanding expression. This results in the main predicate, thus, being grounded on
the subject, which is behind the thetic reading. The subject under these circumstances
is neither ground-setting (as in (41a)) nor even decontextualized (as in (41b)). Rather,
the presupposed predication within this expression is taken to have its range confined
to the contextual characteristics of the main predicate. This circumstance is what
limits the predication holding of the subject to some (relevantly confined) range.

4.4. *Ser* vs. *estar*

Within Raposo & Uriagereka's (1995) framework, the reason a quality predicated
with *estar* is circumstantial has to be that the context variable introducing the subject of
whom this quality holds must be grounded on the predication context. Of a subject thus
contextualized, one judges a quality to hold *at some relevant context* (determined by the
speaker), without further commitments. This is a thetic judgement.[40] In contrast, the
reason a quality predicated with *ser* feels independent from any circumstance must be
because the subject is, in a sense, scoped out of the domain of the predication.
Consequently, the relevant quality to hold of this subject is established *irrespective of
contextual confinements*. This judgement is thus interpreted as categorical.

Assuming (21), which we repeat in (43) below, we could say that the predicate scopes
over ("grounds," in Raposo & Uriagereka's 1995 terms) the subject.

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[40] Thetic comes from the Greek *thetikós* "placed." This is thus a placed or contextualized judgement.

(43)
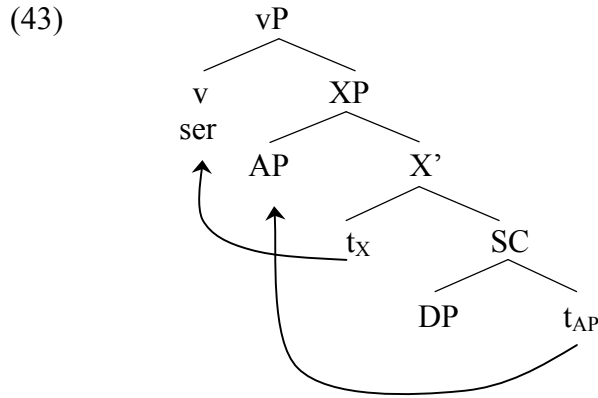
The relevant configurational effect arises in (43) after the AP moves to [Spec, XP]. That is, only after the predicate moves to the prepositional projection can it scope over (a copy of) the subject (chain)—even if the latter is later on promoted to a higher position. This approach, together with the morphological effect that P-to-*ser* incorporation has, predicts that *ser* could not emerge if the predicate grounds the subject.

4.5. *Further considerations*

We argued that X (P) creates a configuration that makes it possible for the context variable in the predicate to ground the subject's. But that, in itself, could clearly be achieved by simply moving the predicate over the subject, as in (44):

(44)   [estarP ser [SC YP [SC XP tYP]]]
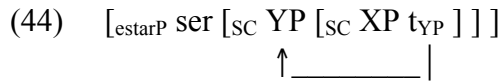
The problem with (44) is morphological: If X (P) is not present, we can still get the right interpretation, but incorporation will not occur, and neither will *estar*. If (44) were possible, we would expect sentences like (45) to be grammatical, contrary to fact:

(45)   *Los estudiantes son   agobiados   (Spanish)
          the students   be-3.PL overwehlmed
          The students are overwhelmed

We would also expect (46) to present categorical and thetic readings. But it does not.

(46)   María es   alegre   (Spanish)
          María be-3.SG happy
          María is happy

Future work needs to determine what limits a derivation as in (44), or whether it is in fact possible in some language with the relevant reading.

One thing is clear: It is easy to show that the thetic reading of adjectives is not parasitic on *estar* (and thus X (P)). Consider the non-copular structure in (47):

(47)   a. El (alegre) estudiante (alegre)   (Spanish)
            the happy student   happy
            The happy student

b. El (*agobiado)   estudiante (agobiado)   (Spanish)
   the overwhelmed student   overwhelmed
   The overwhelmed student

Here we have pre and post-nominal adjectives (cf. Demonte 1999, Bosque 1993, 2001, Cinque 1994, 2010). If prenominal, adjectives yielding categorical and thetic interpretations are interpreted as categorical; if postnominal, they are ambiguous. Adjectives that only yield a thetic interpretation (*agobiado*, Eng. 'overwhelmed', in (47b)), must be postnominal.[41] Other structures where predicate position determines the categorical / thetic distinction are predNPs (48a) and absolute small clauses (48b):

(48)   a. {Inteligente/*Cansado}, este Luis!   (Spanish)
          clever   tired   this Luis
          {Clever/*Tired}, this Luis! ("How clever, this Luis guy!")
       b. {Encontradas/*Concluyentes} las pruebas, terminó el juicio   (Spanish)
          found   decisive   the proofs   ended   the trial
          {found/*decisive the proofs}, the trial ended
          ("with the proofs found, the trial ended")

This is not the place to go into the specifics of all these constructions (cf. Paul 2006, Hernanz 1994, Hernanz & Suñer 1999), but they clearly indicate that whatever is behind the categorical (IL) / thetic (SL) cut is not restricted to contexts with *ser / estar*.

5. Conclusions

In this paper we have entertained Benveniste's (1960) intuition about the relationship between *have* and *be*, and used it to address the core intricacies that *ser* and *estar* pose in the languages of the Spanish type. We have argued that *estar* is *ser* plus an additional element: X, which we have speculated may be prepositional in nature. This is depicted in (49):

(49)   [$_{estarP}$ ser [$_{XP}$ X [$_{SC}$ WP YP]]]

                        [where WP = subject, YP = predicate]

The syntax in (49) has two consequences. Morphologically, it accounts for why *ser* becomes *estar*, after X (P) incorporates (generalizing Freeze 1992, Kayne 1993). Semantically, (49) accounts for why an SL / thetic interpretation arises: Once X (P) is merged it probes the adjective, which raises to X (P)'s Spec (Kayne 2005), from where its context variable can ground the subject's. Both consequences are depicted in (50):

(50)   a. [$_{estarP}$ ser [$_{XP}$ X [$_{SC}$ WP YP]]]   *ser > estar*
            ↑_____|

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[41] These facts relate to the proposal in Cinque (1994, 2010) that adjectives are base generated in prenominal positions, and the N-ADJ order is obtained via N movement:

(i)   a. [$_{DP}$ D   [$_{XP}$ ADJ [$_{NP}$ N]]]
       b. [$_{DP}$ D [$_{XP}$ N [$_{X'}$ ADJ [$_{NP}$ t$_N$]]]
                ↑_____|

Needless to say, banning adjectives that can only have a thetic interpretation from a prenominal position requires an explanation, but reasons of space prevent us from going into the matter here.

b. [$_{\text{estarP}}$ ser [YP [$_{\text{XP}}$ X [$_{\text{SC}}$ WP t$_{\text{YP}}$]]]   Categorical (IL) > Thetic (SL)
   ↑_____|

Our proposal predicts the well established fact that *estar* is more complex than *ser*, which has been previously pursued from lexico-semantic and pragmatic perspectives. The proposal is consistent with an arguably aspectual connection between *estar* and prepositional elements, and has a bearing on when "coercions" from IL to SL predications are possible, though not so clearly in the opposite direction. Perhaps most interesting is the idea that nuanced semantic distinctions with a contextual implication have a crucial representation in the syntax. Future research must explore under what circumstances mere subject or predicate positioning and displacement yields relevant contextually grounded interpretations, including logically possible ones that do not arise, at least in Spanish. Once again, a topic with a great descriptive tradition continues to be alive and generating new questions, with consequences for grammatical architecture at large.

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Appendix: Attributive PPs

The syntax proposed for *estar* in section 3 involves an additional projection (labeled X), whose main consequence in our terms is to license the configuration for thetic / SL readings—more precisely, for the context second-order variable of the predicate to ground the subject's (following Raposo & Uriagereka 1995). We noted that the specific morphological label of X is orthogonal to the categorical / thetic interpretation, just like the (morphological) *ser* / *estar* distinction is (see section 4.5.).

This said, we also suggested that there are grounds to take X to be prepositional in some languages. It would of course be interesting to extend the range of data as to include discussion of nominals as predicates, as well as PPs.[42] Although we cannot review the different constructions where copulative verbs appear (the recent reference grammars and handbooks of Spanish offer a more robust description of the data; cf. Camacho 2012b, Fernández-Leborans 1999, RAE-ASALE 2009), it may indeed be relevant to consider the PP case, given our suggestion on X's nature. In order to do so, we will build on the discussion contained in the reference grammars of Spanish.

Fernández-Leborans (1999:§37.2.2.5) discusses two scenarios where copulative verbs appear with PPs. The first concerns PPs that act as characterizing attributes,

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[42] Bear in mind the comments in footnote 30, where we noted that NPs/DPs are not licensed with *estar* in Spanish, which we attributed to a morphological parameter.

where preposition *de* (Eng. 'of') is the most frequent, typically deploying a possessive / locative interpretation.

(1)   a. La sortija es   de oro   b. Eso es   de acceso restringido
          the ring   be-3.SG of gold   that be-3.SG of access restricted
          The ring has gold   That has restricted access
    c. María es   de Madrid   d. La temperatura es   de 40 grados
          María be-3.SG of Madrid   the temperature be-3SG of 40 degrees
          María is from Madrid   The temperature is of forty degrees

Fernández Leborans (1999) further observes that *con*, *sin*, *a*, and *para* (Eng. "with," "without," "to," and "for") can also head the PP, and again with a possessive-like interpretation:

(2)   a. El vestido es   sin   mangas b. La pulsera es   con diamantes
          the suit   be-3.SG without sleeves   the bracelet be-3.SG with diamonds
          The suit has no sleeves   The bracelet has diamonds
    c. La falda es   a rayas   d. La pulsera es   para Marta
          the skirt be-3.SG to lines   the bracelet be-3.SG for   Marta
          The skirt has lines   The bracelet is for Marta

The prepositions in (1) and (2) are compatible with *ser*, but in many cases with *estar* too (sometimes with a slight interpretive twist; cf. RAE-ASALE 2009:§37.3):

(3)   a. Las niñas   están   sin   zapatos b. Estamos con ganas de verte
          the children be-3.SG without shoes   be-1.PL   with desires of see-you
          The children don't have shoes   We have the intention to see you
    c. María está   de profesora   d. La carne está   a trazos finos
          María be-3.SG of teacher   the meat be-3.SG to lines thin
          María works as a teacher   The meat is with thin lines

The second relevant scenario targets locative sentences. Here the PP is headed by *en* (Eng. 'in'), and *estar* is traditionally regarded as non-copulative (cf. Fernández-Leborans 1999:§37.6.1):

(4)   a. Su familia está   por Asturias   b. María ha estado en Londres
          his family be-3.SG for Asturias   María has been in London
          His family is in Asturias   María has been in London

In this case, *ser* is impossible in Spanish (although not in other Romance languages, as we saw in footnote 12). This raises the question why locations do not behave like standing (categorical, IL, etc.) properties. The question is relevant if we consider sentences like (5), bearing in mind that it is unlikely, in human experience, for the Rubicon river to change its location:

(5)   El río   Rubicón está   en Italia   (Spanish)
        the river Rubicon be-3.SG in Italy
        The Rubicon river is in Italy

However, notice that the standing nature of locations should not be taken for granted too quickly. The sentence in (6) is a case where a given location has a standing nature as of today, but it may well change in the future:

(6)   Cataluña está   en España   (Spanish)
        Catalonia be-3.SG in Spain
        Catalonia is in Spain

To examples like (6) we should add the data in (7). As one can easily see, the use of *ser* has been reported even with locative prepositions (cf. RAE-ASALE 2009:§37.8e):

(7)   a. La reunión será   en el local   b. La cocina es   por ahí
           the meeting be-3.SG in the local   the kitchen be-3.SG for   there
           The meeting will be in the local   The kitchen is that way

All these data point to a tentative conclusion: The choice between *ser* and *estar* is not lexically determined by prepositions. Although there are some restrictions, they do not seem to depend on the specific preposition, but on a different (sometimes abstract) component of the structures they participate in. Thus, for instance, *de* can license both *ser* and *estar* in (1c) and (3c), repeated for convenience, even though the structures have different interpretations:

(8)   a. María es   de Madrid   b. María está   de profesora
           María be-3.SG of Madrid   María be-3.SG of teacher
           María is of Madrid   María works as a teacher

This in turn suggests that there is no special morpho-syntactic dependency between the postulated X in (20) and the small clause predicate: YP in (9a) and (9b).

(9)   a. [$_{serP}$ ser [$_{SC}$ WP YP]]   b. [$_{estarP}$ ser [$_{XP}$ X [$_{SC}$ WP YP]]]

It is interesting to ask, also, what happens with PPs if there is no copulative verb present. Recall that, under our approach, *estar* is not necessary for thetic readings (*estar* is nothing but a consequence of X's incorporation into *ser*). Thus, for the same reason, we expect for both categorical and thetic readings to be available with PPs in the absence of the copulative verb. In section 4.5., we saw that this prediction is borne out with APs, so we should consider PPs, to find out what interpretive contribution these make. Let us consider the pair in (10), where PPs can be either categorical or thetic:

(10)   a. El libro {es/*está} de María   b. El monumento {*es/está} en Madrid
           the book be-3.SG of María   the monument   be-3.SG in Madrid
           The book is María's   The monument is in Madrid

It is interesting to see next what happens if the PPs in (10) are placed in a nominal environment. As (11) shows, a nominal version of (10b) may deploy a categorical reading (along with a thetic one, of course), which is in fact compatible with the use of the preposition *de* (again, playing a possessive role).

(11)   a. El libro de María   b. El monumento en (de) Madrid

| the book of María | the monument   in   of Madrid |
| María's book | The monument in Madrid |

Moreover, this interesting state of affairs seems to correlate with a property of PPs: they can never be prenominal. That is to say, the grammar of Spanish features the following restriction:

(12)   D (*PP) N (PP)

Given the syntax necessary to yield a thetic reading (cf. (21)), the constraint in (12) is revealing. If nothing else, it reinforces the idea that the categorical reading is more basic, the thetic one requiring a transformation. We hasten to add that the thetic reading is not impossible in (11b) above.[43] However, what interests us here is that the IL / SL interpretation is not parasitic on a given lexical item (*ser* or *estar*) or a particular preposition, but it is dependent, rather, on the configurational dynamics of predicates. This is welcome inasmuch as it aligns with a configurational approach to the IL / SL distinction.

That conclusion tells us little about the role of predicative PPs in sentences with the form of "Subject BE PP." But this is actually expected, for two reasons. On one hand, if IL / SL interpretations are not lexically encoded (as we have argued), it would be surprising for a given lexical category to determine their distribution. On the other hand, the syntax in (20) is neutral with respect to the morphological manifestation of X and its connection with the small clause predicate (YP). Crosslinguistic empirical evidence suggests that X has a prepositional nature (as suggested in section 3), but this is just an option—Raposo & Uriagereka (1995) already show that categorical / thetic interpretations may be coupled with different morphological cues (agreement, specific auxiliaries, Case markers, etc.). As a consequence, the relevance of predicative PPs with respect to the IL / SL distinction goes as far as their capacity to ground the subject.

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