On word order in Spanish copular sentences*

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This paper deals with the interaction between the *ser/estar* distinction and word order. In Spanish the VSX order imposes a thetic, wide focus interpretation (Leonetti, 2014a). This word order pattern is compatible with *estar* predication. In contrast, *ser* predication is typically excluded with VSX in spoken Spanish, with the only exception of a small set of cases that share an exclamative/mirative/emphatic interpretation. The well-formedness of *estar* VSX sentences can be explained assuming that thetic constructions always include a stage topic: as *estar* requires the predication to be dependent on a topical situation (Maienborn, 2005), and such situation is identified as a possible stage topic, the conditions for a thetic interpretation are easily met. With *ser*, in contrast, the predication is not connected to a topical situation, and thus cannot be linked to a stage topic. Exceptions are accounted for by invoking a strategy of mismatch resolution that leads the hearer to interpret the utterance as a manifestation of an exclamative/mirative attitude.

Keywords: information structure, thetic, word order, stage-level, individual-level

1.   An underestimated fact about *ser* and *estar*

Studies on word order generally grant a privileged place to verbal predication constructions, with both intransitive and transitive verbs, and tend to pay less attention to non-verbal predication, in particular to copular sentences. The literature on subject inversion in the Romance languages is a good example of this trend. At the same time, it should be noted that the extensive and detailed research conducted on copular sentences with *ser* and *estar* in Spanish has not considered word order in detail. However, there are issues concerning word order that deserve further discussion, as they may shed some light on the old problem of how to characterize the two copulas. This work aims to crosslink the two areas, word order and subject inversion on one hand, and the alternation between *ser* and *estar* on the other, to figure out how the two copulas constrain the connection with information structure. The problem has not been addressed in grammatical studies on *ser* and *estar*, as far as I know, until very recently. Importantly, my analysis will deal exclusively with European Spanish.

   A reasonable starting point is identifying the word order patterns to be considered. Excluding the marked patterns that are the result of independent operations of dislocation and focalization, as well as patterns corresponding to interrogative and exclamative sentences, there are three remaining basic schemes: SVX, representing the unmarked word order, and VXS and VSX, which are the two possible inversion patterns in Spanish. I will concentrate on the last one, VSX, in what follows.

   As for the unmarked SVX pattern, exemplified in (1), one significant difference between *ser* and *estar* has to be pointed out. SVX usually allows for three readings defined by so-called 'focus projection', namely, focus on the minimal final constituent (X), focus on the predicate (VX), and finally wide focus on the whole sentence (SVX). The three possibilities represent acceptable readings for (1a), with *estar*. In (1b), however, the wide focus reading – which corresponds to a thetic, 'all-new' reading, i.e. the description of a situation as a whole, without informational highlighting of any of the participants – is very difficult to obtain, while the remaining readings with focus on the predicate are perfectly normal.[1]

(1) a. La   policía está   en el   patio
         the police   be.ESTAR.PRS.3SG in the courtyard
         'The police is in the courtyard'

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[1]   A reviewer correctly notes that it is not impossible to imagine a context that allows for a thetic reading in a predication with *ser*, if certain conditions are met. I will deal with such conditions in Section 5.

b. La   policía   es   muy   eficaz
the   police   be.SER.PRS.3SG   very   effective
'The police is very effective'

At this point, it will suffice to note two facts concerning the difference between (1a) and (1b). On one hand, this difference has no consequences for acceptability and grammaticality – this is probably the reason why it had never been discussed in the classic literature on *ser* and *estar*. On the other hand, it seems clear that the difference has to do with the nature of the lexical predicate, as a particular case of the general difficulty of obtaining thetic readings from stative predicates of the individual-level type (hereinafter, IL predicates; see Ladusaw, 1994; Kratzer, 1995; Raposo & Uriagereka, 1995; Erteschik-Shir, 1997; McNally, 1998; Jäger, 1997, 2001; Maienborn, 2005; Jiménez-Fernández, 2012; Fábregas, 2012), to which I shall return later (see Section 5). It is well known that stage-level predicates (hereafter, SL predicates), in contrast, favor thetic readings, and the interpretation of (1a) confirms it. This is related to another fact that has already been signaled in studies about *ser* and *estar*: in principle, only copular sentences with *estar* are appropriate answers to 'out-of-the-blue' questions like *¿Qué pasa?* 'What's up?' (cf. *¿Qué pasa? – Ángela está aburrida/#Ángela es muy divertida* 'What's up? – Angela is bored/#Angela is very funny'; Maienborn, 2005, p. 174; RAE, 2009, § 37.7g; Jiménez-Fernández, 2012, p. 12; Fábregas, 2012, p. 11). This is because predications with *ser*, allegedly IL, give rise only to categorical judgments, and not to thetic ones, while *estar* predications may correspond to both kinds. This asymmetry provides us with the general framework where the whole ensuing discussion should be rooted.

As for the patterns with subject inversion, there is nothing remarkable in VXS, typically interpreted with narrow focus on the final subject, except that the possibility of extending the focus to the whole sentence again is an option with *estar* (cf. *Está en el patio la policía*), but only under very restrictive conditions would it be an option with *ser* (cf. *Es muy eficaz la policía*) – such conditions are probably related to the factors that will be discussed in Section 4. The difference observed in SVX is therefore reproduced in VXS.

The VSX pattern, in contrast, with a postverbal subject that is not in final position and is therefore incompatible with a narrow focus interpretation, does indeed give rise to a contrast in acceptability, which can be noticed in (2) and in other examples such as those in (3) and (4), taken from Fábregas (2012) and Gallego and Uriagereka (2011).

(2) a. Está   la   policía en el   patio
       be.ESTAR.PRS.3SG the police   in   the courtyard
    b. #Es   la   policía muy eficaz,   en estos   asuntos
       be.SER.PRS.3SG   the police   very efficient in   these   matters

(3) a. Estará   el   hombre harto
         be.ESTAR.FUT.3SG the man   fed-up
         'The man must be fed up'

     b. #Será   el   hombre alto[2]
         be.SER.FUT.3SG   the man   tall
         'The man must be tall'

(4) a. Está   tu   hermana tonta
         be.ESTAR.PRS.3SG your sister   silly
         'Your sister is acting silly'

     b. #Es   tu   hermana tonta
         be.SER.PRS.3SG   your sister   silly

Estar predication is compatible with VSX order, but *ser* predication is not. The contrast has not gone unnoticed in the most recent contributions, and is in fact mentioned in Brucart (2010, p. 130), Gallego and Uriagereka (2011), Jiménez-Fernández (2012, p. 24) and Fábregas (2012).[3] At first glance, what the data in (2)–(4) suggest is the following. First, it is not a case of sharp contrast between grammatical and ungrammatical sentences. The anomalous sentences might well be acceptable in certain linguistic registers (perhaps very formal, literary or stylistically marked ones) and in certain contexts, and not all VSX sequences with *ser* are odd to the same extent. It is reasonable, therefore, to think that they do not actually violate any syntactic rule, but just reflect some interpretive conflict.[4]

Second, it also seems logical to assume that the anomaly in (2b)–(4b) is connected to the subtle interpretive differences observed in SVX and VXS patterns. Indeed, the simplest hypothesis leads us to believe that these are manifestations of the same phenomenon. If VSX is associated in Spanish to a wide focus interpretation, as will be shown in Section 2, then all the above contrasts are explained by

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2. Example (3b) could actually be acceptable under certain conditions, with a modal reading of the future and a concessive flavor, in response to a previous utterance (something like 'He must be a tall man, then'). Here I cannot investigate the connection between VSX and modal/concessive readings of the future in detail.

3. Remarks on word order in copular sentences have always stressed the difficulty of having postverbal subjects with *ser*, without considering the distinction between VSX and VXS orders. I intend to show that acceptability contrasts arise essentially with VSX.

4. In Gallego and Uriagereka (2011) a syntactic account of the contrast in (4) is put forward. Informally, the idea is that *estar* constructions are structurally more complex than *ser* constructions, so that with *estar* the syntax provides an additional landing site for the postverbal subject that is not available with *ser*. This explains the degraded status of (2b), (3b) and (4b). Here I adopt a different perspective: rather than looking for a syntactic solution for word order facts, I choose an approach based on notions from semantics and IS.

the incompatibility between this interpretation – the thetic reading – and the type of non-verbal predicates that combine with *ser* (IL predicates). Therefore, these are contrasts that originate from the relationship between information structure and lexical aspect. The main goal that I will pursue will be to unravel what contrasts due to changes in word order can tell us about the *ser/estar* distinction.

As for the syntactic structure of examples like (2)–(4), I will assume that it is essentially the same in all cases, and that the weight of the explanation lies in the relationship between the semantics of the copula and information structure. This approach would be, in any event, compatible with a more articulated syntax for copular sentences.

The paper is organized as follows. Section 2 is devoted to reviewing the properties of VSX order in Spanish, its typical wide focus interpretation, and some preliminary issues about the relationship between theticity and stativity. With this background, in Section 3 the results of combining *estar* predications with VSX order are analyzed, and in Section 4 the same is done with respect to *ser* predications. Once these data have been collected, in Section 5 the general problem of the relationship between stativity and theticity is addressed through its specific manifestation with *ser* and *estar*, and some ideas on the nature of the contrast between the two copulas are put forward. Finally, Section 6 presents the conclusions.

2. VSX order in Spanish and theticity

2.1 Spanish VSX

The VSX pattern[5] has recently attracted the interest of grammarians because it creates a wide divide between two groups of Romance languages: those that admit it – Spanish, Portuguese, Romanian – and those that reject it – Catalan, Italian, French. In Leonetti (2014a) some purely syntactic approaches to the problem (including Ordóñez, 1998, 2007 and Gallego, 2013) are reviewed, and an alternative approach is put forward based on interface requirements on the mapping between syntactic structure and information structure (IS).

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5. This study is exclusively concerned with those cases in which the VSX order is freely chosen by the speaker, and not imposed or favored by some syntactic factor, such as Focus Fronting or preposing of interrogative, exclamative and negative expressions. Thus, only declarative sentences will be discussed, and fronting phenomena will be carefully avoided, except in cases in which they have no consequences for word order – for instance, preposing of topics or discourse markers.

The main proposal in Leonetti (2014a) is as follows. The mapping may be more or less direct and transparent depending on the informational partitions (topic/comment, focus/background) that each language imposes on syntactic strings. Catalan and Italian, for instance, show a strong tendency to avoid marked orders – typically, orders with subject inversion – taken as single informational units without partitions, and therefore, they limit the internal complexity of the constituent processed as comment/wide focus, by means of several syntactic devices that introduce some kind of partition (dislocation, cleft sentences, changes in the relative order of verbal complements). In this group of languages, an increase in structural complexity naturally leads to an obligatory informational partition. Other languages, in contrast, with Spanish as the most representative example, are more permissive and allow for marked orders (such as, for instance, VXS, VSX and XVS) without informational partitions, i.e. as single informational units, interpreted as 'comments' or wide foci. In such languages, the requirement of establishing explicitly marked partitions in the syntax is not as strict as in the first group. As a consequence, the conditions for wide focus readings are notably relaxed: such readings are available even under conditions that would typically block them in languages of the first group.

The asymmetry between the two groups of languages can be observed in the contrast in (5) between Catalan and Spanish. The VXS Catalan sentence in (5a), from Vallduví (2002, p. 1247), is of dubious or limited acceptability due to the accumulation of constituents in postverbal position, even if the subject in final position is taken as narrow focus: *ficar les galetes al calaix* is too complex as background. In contrast, the version in (5b), where the direct object appears dislocated in initial position, is perfectly acceptable, having reduced the internal complexity of the VP[6] by means of a topic/comment partition; note that the Spanish version in (5c) literally reproduces the order in (5a), and the result is perceived as natural by any speaker – no dislocation of postverbal material is needed to restore acceptability.

(5) a. ?Va ficar   les galetes al   calaix   ma mare
          put.PST.3SG the cookies inside.the drawer   my mother
          'My mother put the cookies inside the drawer'
     b. Les galetes, les   va ficar   al   calaix   ma mare
          the cookies   them put.PST.3SG inside.the drawer   my mother

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6. Constraints on the structural complexity of constituents in the predicate equally affect constituents that are interpreted as wide focus – the case I consider prototypical – and constituents that are taken as background: in (5a), *ficar les galetes al calaix* is the background. In both cases languages such as Catalan and Italian tend to impose informational partitions. In what follows, for simplicity reasons, I will only refer to conditions for wide focus.

c. Puso   las galletas en el   cajón mi   madre
   put.PST.3SG the cookies   in the drawer my   mother

The asymmetry manifests itself in various ways, and one of them – the one which is relevant here – is the availability of VSX.[7] The focus structure that consistently corresponds to the VSX pattern is commonly referred to as 'wide focus', 'all-focus' or 'thetic' (also 'all-new' and 'neutral description'), i.e. an interpretation lacking informational partitions, with no aboutness topic and no Focus/Background distinction. The examples from (6) to (8), from the *Base de Datos Sintácticos del Español Actual* <http://www.bds.usc.es>, illustrate this property.

(6) A: ¿Qué precauciones? – B: Me   dio   una amiga las   píldoras
         what precaution   me.OBL give.PST.3SG a   friend the   pills
     'What precaution? – A friend gave me the pills'

(7) …y abandonamos la Emilia y   yo el   edificio…
     and leave.PST.1PL the Emilia and I   the building
     'And Emilia and I left the building…'

(8) …cogía   yo a la Merche y
     take.PST.IMP.1SG I to the Merche and
     nos íbamos   al   cine
     CL go.PST.IMP.1PL to.the cinema
     '…I used to pick up Merche to go to the cinema'

The absence of informational partitions is the fundamental condition imposed by VSX. On the one hand, VSX prevents the possibility that any component be interpreted as (aboutness) topic. On the other hand, both the subject and the complement are postverbal, and thus part of the focal domain. None of them is highlighted as narrow focus. The subject does not occupy the final position, and therefore cannot be narrow focus, according to the general rule in the Romance languages – except if it were emphatically stressed, but in such case we would actually have a different construction, with the final constituent right-dislocated. Finally, the complement – i.e. the X constituent –, despite occupying the final position, cannot represent the informational focus, probably because that would lead to integrate the subject into a 'background' VS constituent (Costa, 2004, p. 82 observes the same data in European Portuguese), and this is not possible,[8] except under very strict contextual conditions (when the VS constituent has already

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7. A list of additional effects related to the asymmetry is discussed in Leonetti (2014b).

8. External arguments are well-known for their resistance to integration into wide foci or background constituents (see Section 2.2 below for the notion of *integration*).

appeared in the discourse). The result is that a wide focus reading is the only natural interpretive choice for the VSX order, and is the one obtained by default.

Once it is established that the VSX pattern is regularly associated with the absence of informational partitions, one can deduce that languages that necessarily impose informational partitions on marked orders – i.e. subject inversion – should reject this pattern. If this is correct, then it is feasible to derive the possibility of having a VSX pattern, at least in the Romance domain, from the requirements that each language imposes on informational partitioning in the syntax: only languages that allow for marked orders with no information partitions will use VSX. This is the case of Spanish. In Leonetti (2014a) this idea is formulated as the VSX Generalization reproduced in (9):

(9)   VSX Generalization
       VSX is a possible word order in a language with SVX as unmarked order only
       if the language allows for complex non-partitioned informational chunks.

Although such an approach, based on conditions on IS, is not in principle incompatible with alternative configurational solutions that capitalize on there being an additional position available for the subject in the functional structure of sentences (see Ordóñez, 2007; Gallego, 2013), I assume that no extra condition on Spanish syntax is needed to explain the availability of VSX sentences. In any case, it is not the precise structural position of the subject that will allow us to explore the nature of the contrasts in (2)–(4).

2.2   Theticity and stativity

The connection between VSX and the thetic/wide focus interpretation has interesting implications for the *ser/estar* distinction, as we shall see. The first one has to do with the notion of 'stage topic' (see Erteschik-Shir, 1997; Jäger, 1997; Lahousse, 2008). It is customary to assume that thetic sentences, although lacking an explicit 'aboutness topic', imply the existence of a 'stage topic' (explicit or implicit), i.e. a locative-temporal expression functioning as the framework for predication, and as a pivot for the assessment of the clause. The interpretation of the stage topic can be deictic, if its reference matches the 'here and now' of the discourse situation, or anaphoric, if it depends on spatio-temporal parameters that have been mentioned or are implied in the context. VSX sentences like the ones in (6)–(8), as they introduce situations through a wide focus perspective, are typically associated with a stage topic whose content depends on the context: in (7) and (8), for instance, such content could be made explicit by means of an item like *then*. As we shall see, the presence of stage topics is relevant for VSX inversion in copular sentences.

Another consequence of the fact that VSX gives rise to a default wide focus interpretation is that it requires some kind of "integration" between predicate and arguments in order to obtain a single informational chunk – I take the term *integration* from Jacobs (1999), assuming that when there is no partition verbal arguments integrate into the predicate. A quick review of the factors that determine integration and theticity, mainly taken from Sasse (1996), Jacobs (1999) and Sæbø (2007), shows that the stative (or eventive) nature of the predicate plays a main role. Stative predicates, and in particular IL ones, typically require a topic/comment partition, since their subject arguments must count as aboutness topics. As a result of this, they tend to be excluded in constructions that lack a predication topic, and therefore in thetic sentences. Such predicates block integration. Eventive predicates show the opposite behavior: they favor the integration of arguments into larger informational units.

If IL predicates are incompatible with the thetic interpretation and therefore with integration, as has been repeatedly pointed out (Erteschik-Shir, 1997, pp. 36–37), they are expected to be incompatible with the VSX order. This incompatibility manifests in different languages in certain marked orders. To the well known facts studied in Diesing (1992, pp. 31–41), which showed that IL predicates prevent bare plural subjects in German to appear in a position internal to SV – where integration into the predicate would be possible –, we can add the data in (10), (11) and (12), taken respectively from Alexiadou (2000), Giurgea and Remberger (2012), and Maleczki (1999).[9]

(10) *Misi   i   Maria   ton   Petro   (Greek)
     hate.PRS.3SG   the   Mary   the   Peter
     'Mary hates Peter'

(11) #Ştie   Maria   să   cânte   la   vioară   (Romanian)
     know.PRS.3SG   Mary   SUBJ   play   at   violin
     'Mary can play the violin'

(12) *Utál   egy   béka   minden   gólyát   (Hungarian)
     hate.PRS.3SG   a   frog   every   stork
     'A frog hates every stork'

In the three sentences, to be taken with neutral intonation, with no prosodic emphasis on any constituent – which would give rise to a Focus/Background partition, and integration would be blocked by it –, a stative IL predicate ('hate', 'know how to play violin') is anomalous because it is used with a word order pattern that forces

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9. See also Calabrese (1992) and Floricic (2013) for some remarks on theticity and stativity in Italian subject inversion.

a thetic interpretation. In the same context, an eventive, preferably telic, predicate would lead to perfectly acceptable sentences. The same effects are to be expected in Spanish: in fact, the contrasts in (2)–(4) seem to confirm this assumption, and the Spanish versions of (10) and (12) are also anomalous, as (13) and (14) show:

(13) #Odia   María a   Pedro
        hate.PRS.3SG María to Pedro
        'María hates Pedro'

(14) #Odia   una rana a   las cigüeñas
        hate.PRS.3SG a   frog to the storks
        'A frog hates storks'

However, the situation in Spanish is not so clear. Although stativity results in slightly odd VSX sentences in the cases mentioned above, it is not impossible to obtain acceptable examples with clearly stative predicates, as in (15), which is to some extent expected, given the low sensitivity of Spanish syntax to the factors that limit integration, in comparison with other languages (see Leonetti, 2014a, b):

(15) a. Conoce   mi hija   a   un chico que…
            know.PRS.3SG my daughter to a   boy   that
            'My daughter knows a boy that…'
       b. Tenía   Pedro una finca   en Cercedilla
            have.PST.3SG Pedro a   country-house in Cercedilla
            'Pedro had a country house in Cercedilla'

Since in this paper I deal exclusively with copular sentences, I will leave aside the general problem of the presence of lexical stative verbs in the VSX order – as further research is certainly needed on this issue – and assume without discussion that stativity is in principle a factor that hinders integration into a predicate. Therefore, it is the tension between VSX and IL predicates that underlies the contrasts in (2)–(4). The central question is where the incompatibility between theticity and IL predicates comes from. If we grant a primary role to IS, we can assume that such incompatibility is due to two facts:

a. As repeatedly noted, IL predicates require their subject argument to be topical, but such condition cannot hold in thetic sentences (I will come back to this point in Section 5).
b. Thetic sentences include a stage topic that cannot be the subject of predication for IL predicates (see Erteschik-Shir, 1997, p. 27 "only stage-level predicates can have stage topics", and Jäger, 1997, 2001, for possible explanations of this prohibition: following Jäger, 1997, a predication on a stage topic should be temporarily contingent, to establish a contrast with other topics, but this is in contradiction with the aspectual nature of IL predicates).

Later on, in Section 5, I will discuss some resolution strategies for this mismatch. For now, this is enough to establish the nature of the problem I intend to deal with, starting from the contrast in (2)–(4). It is time now to move on to a more detailed review of the behavior of *ser* and *estar* in VSX sentences.

3. VSX with *estar*

3.1 *Estar* and the relation to a specific discourse situation

According to the previous discussion, it is expected that VSX order with *estar* will always produce acceptable sentences, and this is in fact true in most cases. The examples in (16)–(19) include all possible combinations, with *estar* followed by adjectives in (16), by participles in (17), by gerunds in (18), and by SSPP or adverbs in (19).

(16) a. Está el bosque precioso
    be.ESTAR.PRS.3SG the forest wonderful
    'The forest is wonderful'

    b. A las siete estaba todo el mundo listo
    at the seven be.ESTAR.PST.3SG all the world ready
    'At seven o'clock everyone was ready'

    c. Está el público indignado, y con razón
    be.ESTAR.PRS.3SG the audience outraged and with right
    'The audience feels outraged, and rightly'

    d. Están los niños insoportables
    be.ESTAR.PRS.3PL the children unbearable
    'The children are unbearable today'

    e. Estaba el portal cerrado
    be.ESTAR.PST.3SG the entrance closed
    'The entrance was closed'

(17) a. Están las sábanas recién lavadas
    be.ESTAR.PRS.3PL the sheets just washed
    'The sheets are freshly washed'

    b. Estaban todas las mesas ocupadas
    be.ESTAR.PST.3PL all the tables occupied
    'The tables were all occupied'

(18) a. Habían estado tus amigos trabajando en el taller
    have.PST.3PL been your friends working in the studio
    'Your friends had been working in the studio'

b.   Estaba   Raúl   ensayando   con   el   grupo
      be.ESTAR.PST.3SG Raúl   practicing   with   the   group
      'Raúl was practicing with the group'

(19) a.   Están   los   niños   con   los   abuelos
      be.ESTAR.PRS.3PL the   children   with   the   grandparents
      'The children are with their grandparents now'

b.   Es   que   está   la
      be.SER.PRS.3SG that   be.ESTAR.PRS.3SG   the
      encargada   de   vacaciones
      manager   on   holidays
      'The thing is that the manager is on holidays now'

c.   Están   las   cosas   muy   mal
      be.ESTAR.PRS.3PL the   things   very   bad
      'Things are going really badly'

d.   Estaba   María   en   la   terraza,   y...
      be.ESTAR.PST.3SG María   in   the   terrace   and
      'María was on the terrace, and...'

In all cases the relevant interpretation is the thetic reading previously described for VSX in Spanish, and in all cases it is perfectly compatible with the meaning of SL predicates. Acceptability is also maintained when the insertion of a predicate which is usually combined with *ser* is forced, as shown in (20) with the adjectives *rebelde* 'rebel' and *berlusconiano* 'related to/connected with Berlusconi'.

(20) a.   Está   María   rebelde
      be.ESTAR.PRS.3SG María   rebel
      'María is acting out'

b.   Ha   estado   el   director   de
      have.PRS.3SG been   the   director   of
      lo   más   'berlusconiano'
      the   more   'Berlusconian'
      'The director was absolutely 'Berlusconian''

However, there is a construction with *estar* that consistently produces anomalous results in combination with VSX order: it is the use of *estar* with locative expressions, where the meaning conveyed is of stable location, instead of episodic location, as in (21).

(21) a.   #Está   San   Antonio   en   la
      be.ESTAR.PRS.3SG San   Antonio   in   the
      costa   oeste   de   la   isla
      coast   west   of   the   island
      'San Antonio is on the island's west coast'

b. #Está   la   ermita de San
   be.ESTAR.PRS.3SG the chapel of   Saint
   Bartolomé   en   el   cañón del   río
   Bartholomew   in   the canyon of.the   river
   'Saint Bartholomew's chapel is in the river's canyon'

Sentences like these would be appropriate in a bookish, emphatic style, as part of a literary description or some consciously planned use (for example, if pronounced by the 'in off' voice commenting a geographical or historical documentary), but not in oral spontaneous use – except perhaps in some of the environments that generally favor the use of VSX, listed at the end of this section. The examples in (21) thus give rise to a sharp contrast with respect to all the above examples. The most important feature is that in (21) the interpretation cannot be episodic, since we cannot conceive the location of a city or a country on the map as a transitory location. When the location of an entity is transitory, locative predicates are acceptable in VSX, as seen in Examples (2a) and (19d) above. The subtle contrast between (22a) and (22b) confirms this observation.

(22) a. El   espejo está   en el baño
         the mirror be.ESTAR.PRS.3SG in the bathroom
         'The mirror is in the bathroom'
      b. Está   el   espejo en el baño
         be.ESTAR.PRS.3SG the mirror in the bathroom

Whereas (22a) is compatible with a stable location reading ('The place of the mirror is the bathroom') as well as an episodic location reading ('At the moment, the mirror is in the bathroom/I just found the mirror in the bathroom/I just left the mirror in the bathroom'), (22b) clearly favors the second reading and is hardly compatible with the first one. The reason for this difference is probably that stable location readings with SVX order form categorical judgments, with a topical subject, while episodic location readings may correspond also to thetic judgments: therefore, only the latter can be found in VSX. Actually, the term 'episodic location' is not itself accurate: it is not that the location must be transitory in VSX, but rather that the relationship between the subject and the predicate must be linked to a specific contextually given situation, either the moment of speech, or some other reference point established in the discourse, i.e. a stage topic. This is the basic condition that is relevant to the use of *estar* in VSX: all the examples in (16)–(20) obey it, as their interpretation requires retrieving a contextual anchor for the predication. I will return to this in Section 5.

Further confirmation of the condition comes from the low degree of accept-ability[10] of the sentences in (23), where *estar* is combined with adjectives like *chalado*, *pirado* 'freak, nuts' and *loco* 'mad, crazy', at least in their use as isolated utterances:

(23)   a.   #Está   ese   tío   pirado
             be.ESTAR.PRS.3SG   that   guy   nuts
             'That guy is nuts'
       b.   #Están   estos   romanos   locos
             be.ESTAR.PRS.3PL   these   romans   crazy
             'These romans are crazy'

With this group of adjectives the predication with *estar* is detached from a par-ticular situation (see Fábregas, 2012, p. 23), as evidenced by the fact that it easily allows a generic interpretation. As a result, such adjectives tend to be rejected in VSX order.

If the only significant restriction on the use of *estar* in VSX is that the predica-tion should be contextually linked to a particular situation, then we can conclude the following: *estar* is (most of the times) perfectly acceptable in VSX copular sentences because it meets the conditions to produce a thetic interpretation, with no internal partition and associated with a stage topic (explicit or implicit), as other authors had already pointed out (see Brucart, 2010; Fábregas, 2012; Jiménez-Fernández, 2012). The fundamental mechanism lies in the relationship with a specific situation introduced by the copula *estar* in virtually all its uses: this natu-rally provides the stage topic needed to license VSX. Only those uses of *estar* that convey permanent or stable properties, unrelated to a given specific situation, are excluded in the VSX pattern (recall that constructions such as (21) and (23) are always mentioned among the counterexamples for a treatment of *estar* in terms of 'SL predication'; see Section 5.2).

3.2   Factors that increase acceptability in VSX

Just to complete the review of the main points, it is worth recalling that there are several factors that can influence the acceptability of copular sentences in the VSX order. They are basically the same in any VSX sentence (see Leonetti, 2014a for a brief review), which suggests that they are not related to the particular case of *estar*. Some of them appear in the following list.

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10. As a reviewer points out, there is some variation in native speakers' intuitions concerning the examples in (23), possibly related to dialectal differences.

a. The presence of elements in initial position acting as stage topics or facilitating the recovery of an implicit stage topic (for instance, aspectual adverbs like *ya* 'already' and *todavía* 'still', cf. *Ya está la habitación limpia* 'The room is already clean', or temporal deictic expressions, cf. *Hoy está la merluza a 25 euros* 'Hake is 25 euros today') optimizes the task of contextualization and ensures access to a satisfactory interpretation – this factor may also be relevant for acceptability in other inversion patterns.

b. The acceptability of many VSX sentences clearly improves when they are subordinate clauses, for reasons that may have to do also with the process of contextualization and with some asymmetries in IS between root and subordinate sentences (cf. #*Estuvo Manuel en Cuba* 'Manuel went to Cuba' vs. *Me han contado que estuvo Manuel en Cuba* 'I have been told that Manuel went to Cuba'). This is an important factor that I cannot deal with in this paper.

c. The presence of a discourse marker like *pues* 'then' also improves the acceptability of VSX, perhaps for reasons related to the introduction of new information through thetic structures (cf. #*Era Julia muy guapa, de joven* 'Julia was very pretty, when she was young' vs. *Pues era Julia muy guapa, de joven* 'Well, Julia was very pretty, when she was young').

d. Evaluative items often give rise to subtle effects on acceptability, as shown in (24) with degree adverbs and intensification:

(24) a. #Está   tu   madre   bien/
          be.ESTAR.PRS.3SG   your   mother   well/
          Está   tu   madre   {MUY   bien/   estupenda}
          be.ESTAR.PRS.3SG   your   mother   {VERY   well/   great}
          'Your mother is well/Your mother looks great'

      b. #Está   Lorenzo   alto/
          be. ESTAR.PRS.3SG   Lorenzo   tall/
          Está   Lorenzo   {altísimo/   casi
          be.ESTAR.PRS.3SG   Lorenzo   {very.tall/   almost
          más alto   que   yo}
          taller   than   me}
          'Lorenzo is {tall/very tall/almost taller than me}'

The nature of these effects is difficult to pinpoint. On the one hand, degree modifiers may enhance the acceptability of SL readings, by indicating that a certain degree of a property is obtained in a specific circumstance, in contrast with what happens in other alternative circumstances: briefly, they provide a suitable path for connecting the predication with a specific circumstance, and thus with a stage topic. On the other hand, superlative evaluative predicates such as *great*, *incredible* and *awesome* convey the implicit assumption that some epistemic agent – by

default, the speaker – has directly perceived the property denoted (see Martin, 2006, pp. 288–292 for convincing arguments in favor of such evidential value), and moreover, they express the emotional reaction of the agent in perceiving the property. Bearing this in mind, I would tentatively suggest that the presence of some evaluative content leads the hearer to infer that the speaker's epistemic commitment is particularly strong and the speaker himself is the direct source of information, which favors an emphatic statement. In VSX emphasis is the result of combining a marked order, without partitions, and evaluative items. This allows the hearer to justify the use of the VSX pattern by the speaker. I will try to be more explicit on this point in Section 5. It is important to recall that there is an interesting connection between VSX and the expression of emphatic attitudes, especially perceptible in ironic statements in Spanish (Escandell-Vidal & Leonetti, 2014). It seems that irony is a common way to solve the interpretation of strings without informational partition, especially VSX sentences, according to the evidence provided by examples such as those in (25), among others.

(25) a. Estoy   yo   para canciones
          be.ESTAR.PRS.1SG I   for   songs
          'I am not in the mood for songs'

     b. ¡Está   el   maestro   bueno!
          be.ESTAR.PRS.3SG the   master   good
          'The teacher is fine indeed!'

In Escandell-Vidal and Leonetti (2014) a proposal is made that there is indeed an indirect relationship between lack of informational partitions and salience of ironic interpretations, and the link is emphasis. Emphasis favors ironic readings because it enhances the mismatch between the content of the utterance and the situation in which it is employed, and forces its interpretation as a content that is echoically attributed to another speaker, i.e. as content from which the speaker dissociates him/herself. The mechanism by which the hearer gets the ironic interpretation is obviously inferential and context dependent. The crucial question is how emphasis originates and why it is associated with VSX. I return to this point in Section 5. To sum up, the role of evaluative content and degree modification is to pave the way for accessing an emphatic interpretation that justifies the use of the VSX pattern.

After a review of the data concerning *estar*, it is now necessary to examine the data concerning *ser*, which turn out to be more complicated than initially expected.

4. VSX with *ser*

In line with what seems to emerge from the initial contrasts in (2)–(4), *ser* produces anomalous results in the VSX order with adjectival and prepositional predicates. The sentences in (26) do not belong to spontaneous use in spoken Spanish and, as noted above, they would only be acceptable in written or planned use, in a stylistically marked register that aims to consciously convey a refined and old-fashioned tone (but recall that some factors may improve the acceptability of VSX,[11] and that I am assuming that VSX sentences with *ser* may be odd, but not ungrammatical).

    (26) a. #Es   Venecia única   en el   mundo
                 be.SER.PRS.3SG Venice   unique in   the world
                 'Venice is unique in the world'

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11. One of those factors is negation, which I have not mentioned so far: the presence of negation gives rise to a salient contrast in certain VSX copular sentences. The negative counterpart of (26b), *No fue el rey Ciro muy tolerante en asuntos religiosos*, is perfectly natural, even in spoken language. Minimal pairs like (i) and (ii) confirm the effect of negation:

  (i) a. #Es   esa   profesora injusta
           be.SER.PRS.3SG that   teacher   unfair
      b. No   es   esa   profesora tan injusta
          not be.PRS.3SG that   teacher   so   unfair
          'That teacher is (not) unfair'
  (ii) a. #Es   la *ropa*   *vieja* un   plato típico
           be.SER.PRS.3SG the clothes old   a   dish typical
      b. No   es   la *ropa*   *vieja* un plato típico
          not be.SER.PRS.3SG the clothes old   a   dish   typical
          '*Ropavieja* is (not) a typical dish'

The most noticeable fact in these examples is that negation is interpreted as external negation, typically as a response to a previous utterance (for instance, in (ib), with a reading equivalent to *No es cierto que sea esa profesora tan injusta* 'It is not true that that teacher is so unfair'). In principle, this looks like a consequence of IS in VSX order: since the sentence is presented as a single informational chunk, without partitions, and without an inner focus for an operator to associate with, the only plausible interpretation for negation is the external one. Word order constrains interpretive options for negation so that only an external reading is available. For some reason, this happens to increase acceptability in VSX copular sentences with *ser*. The factors that contribute to a more natural use of VSX typically provide the hearer with clues about a possible justification of the word order pattern chosen by the speaker. In the case of the external reading of negation, VSX is typically associated with contexts of replying – truly or ficticiously – to previous utterances, as can be observed in (i) and (ii): combining negation and VSX – and possibly other factors that will be discussed in Section 5.3 – gives rise to an ideal formal tool for the expression of a certain discourse function.

b. #Fue   el   rey Ciro   muy tolerante en asuntos religiosos
   be.SER.PST.3SG the king Cyrus very tolerant in matters religious
   'King Cyrus was very tolerant in religious matters'

c. #Era   la   pared de un color claro, uniforme
   be.SER.PST.3SG the wall   of a   color light uniform
   'The wall had a uniform, light color'

d. #Era   Ernesto buen   cocinero
   be.SER.PST.3SG Ernesto good   cook
   'Ernesto was a good cook'

The question that arises is why the sentences with *ser* are possible in a planned register, but are usually excluded in spontaneous use. In my opinion, the old-fashioned tone of VSX with *ser* is probably due to the fact that the construction is reproducing an ancient stage of the language in which VSX was a possible order, and it was free of discourse constraints in most medieval Romance languages; later on, the pattern disappeared in some of such languages, and survived in Spanish as a productive order, but with no informational partitions, and with a typically thetic interpretation: in contemporary spoken Spanish this results in an interpretive incompatibility with IL predicates and *ser*. Given the general toler-ance of Spanish for VSX sentences, the insertion of *ser* is not radically excluded, but just stylistically marked and judged as odd in spontaneous use. This makes it possible to reconcile two seemingly contradictory facts: VSX with *ser* is not acceptable in most of contemporary spoken Spanish, and at the same time it is not completely ruled out, but rather relegated to a particular register. In what follows, I will only analyze data from the perspective of what is acceptable in the spoken language.

However, the data concerning *ser* are a bit more complicated than this, and it is fair to note that, under certain conditions, VSX with *ser* is natural even in spon-taneous use. The first of these conditions is the nominal category of the predicate, particularly with definite DPs that include some kind of lexical marking of unique-ness (*único* 'single', *primero* 'first', superlatives): the sentences in (27) are relatively good, and stylistically neutral, in spoken Spanish.

(27) a. Era   tu   madre la   única persona
         be.SER.PST.3SG your mother the   only   person
         que lo sabía
         that it know.PST.3SG
         'Your mother was the only one to know it'

      b. …era   esta mi primera visita a   la capital de España
         be.SER.PST.3SG this my first   visit   to the capital of Spain
         '…this was my first visit to Spain's capital'

c. No es   Juan la persona más   indicada (para hacerlo)
   not be.SER.PRS.3SG Juan the person more suitable for   doing-it
   'Juan is not the most suitable person to do it'

The fact that the DP has to be definite[12] could suggest that the special status of these sentences is perhaps linked to an identificational or specificational interpretation, instead of an attributive one as in all previous examples.[13] I have no clear explanation for these data, and therefore I just point them out, without trying to integrate them into a unified approach.

   The second of the conditions that give rise to a natural use of VSX with *ser* is the exclamative and emphatic value of the sentence, as discussed in the previous section. In (28) it can be observed that combining VSX with an exclamative intonation, or an emphatic tone of disbelief or surprise, may give rise to acceptable examples in colloquial use. Sometimes it is enough that the propositional content be presented as a novelty to the audience (as in 'news reporting').

(28) a. Eres   tú   bastante testarudo ¿eh?
        be.SER.PRS.2SG you quite   stubborn huh
        'You are quite stubborn, huh?'

   b. ¡Eres   tú   muy curiosa!
      be.SER.PRS.2SG you very curious
      'You are very curious!'

   c. ¡Pues va a ser   el   premio un coche!
      then   be.SER.FUT.3SG the prize   a   car
      'The prize is going to be a car'

   d. ¡No es   Teresa poco   agarrada! (ironic)
      not be.SER.PRS.3SG Teresa little clawed
      'Is Teresa close-fisted!'

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12. With indefinite DPs the result is again stylistically marked, as with adjectival and prepositional predicates:

   (i) #Era   su   primo un hombre alto y   fuerte
       be.SER.PST.3SG his/her cousin a   man   tall and strong
       'His/her cousin was a tall and strong man'
   (ii) #Fue   D. Antonio profesor de Derecho y   periodista
        be.SER.PST.3SG D. Antonio lecturer of Law   and journalist
        'D. Antonio was a lecturer in Law and a journalist'

13. A reviewer suggests that the classical test involving the substitution of the predicate with the clitic *lo* could help as a way to discriminate between attributive and identificational readings: if the substitution is deviant, the reading should not be attributive. In (27), in fact, this substitution gives unacceptable results (cf. #*Lo era tu madre*, #*Lo era esta*, #*No lo es Juan*), which suggests that in fact the examples could convey an identificational interpretation. I leave the issue open.

These data have not received much attention so far, for all I know, but the combination of VSX and exclamation/surprise is the same that I noted in the examples in (24) with *estar*, and the presence of some kind of degree modification (*bastante testarudo* 'quite stubborn', *muy curiosa* 'very curious') on evaluative adjectival predicates was also observed in the examples with *estar*. These factors are all related. Exclamation, in particular, has a decisive role. The expressive component of exclamative sentences consists in the expression of an emotional attitude of the speaker toward a degree (Castroviejo, 2008, p. 57): such expressive component combines with the descriptive component, which is a propositional content that the speaker takes for granted, and is represented by a single informational chunk without internal partitions. If this is correct, the expression of degree and evaluative items is essential in conveying the speaker's exclamative attitude. Since the values of exclamation and surprise are decisive for the acceptability of VSX in cases like (28), the role of degree could be to strengthen the exclamative value and contribute to an interpretation that justifies the use of VSX by the speaker. However, the main role of exclamation is still to be explained. We'll see what the interpretive mechanism is in the next section.

Once we have verified that VSX copular sentences with *ser* are usually anomalous, due to the incompatibility between VSX and IL predicates, the problem we face is how to explain that, under certain conditions, in examples like (28), IL predicates can appear in a word order pattern that forces integration, i.e. an interpretation without informational partitions, which should be rejected.

5.   Stativity, theticity, and the *ser/estar* distinction

5.1   Interim summary

At this point, it is worth summarizing the data and the problems introduced so far. The behavior of *estar* in VSX is as we would expect: the resulting sentences are always acceptable, except in cases in which the predication cannot connect to a specific contextual situation and, therefore, does not satisfy the condition on stage topics imposed by VSX. Again as expected, the predication with *ser* produces sentences of degraded acceptability in spoken Spanish, thus confirming that IL predicates do not fit well in a thetic pattern, despite the permissiveness of Spanish in this regard. However, some VSX sentences with *ser* sound perfectly natural when they convey a chunk of new information with exclamative, emphatic or surprise intonation. These cases seem to involve some factor that allows speakers to solve the interpretive mismatch between VSX and *ser*: such factor drives the hearer towards pragmatically inferring a satisfactory interpretation of the utterance. In

principle, this interpretation should be in some sense analogous to the readings of acceptable cases with *estar*. Since this is a special case of the more general problem of contextual conditions for theticity, the basis for an explanation should be sought among the strategies that enable wide focus even with IL predicates.

The data presented so far lead us to formulate the following questions:

1. What does the behavior of *estar* in VSX tell us with respect to the characterization of *ser* and *estar* in the recent literature?
2. How is the presence of *ser* accepted in the VSX order?
3. Is the interpretive mechanism that licenses *ser* an exceptional phenomenon?

Each of the following sections is an attempt to answer one of these questions.

5.2   *Estar* provides a natural link with the stage topic

What we know about the behavior of *estar* in VSX gives support to the view of the *ser/estar* distinction that from the initial intuitions in Clements (1988) and Raposo and Uriagereka (1995), among others – cf. Higginbotham and Ramchand (1997) for the IL/SL distinction –, develops into an explicit proposal in Arche (2006) and in more detail in Maienborn (2005): the basic idea is that the predication with *estar* must be linked to a contextually specifiable circumstance or external situation.[14] In Arche's (2006, p. 251) terms, *estar* "refers to a circumstance where an individual is", by virtue of a characteristic lexical property; more generally, "the semantics of SL-hood would consist, precisely, in the association to a particular situation" (2006, p. 250). In Maienborn's (2005, p. 169) proposal, it is claimed 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."

Thus, *estar* introduces a presupposition that must be satisfied in the discourse context, and the antecedent that naturally binds such presupposition is what Maienborn calls *topic situation*, the situation referred to by an utterance. *Estar* is used when it is assumed that there are contextual alternatives to the topic situation, i.e., when the context provides some "topic situation contrast" (otherwise it would be pointless to resort to *estar*, and *ser* would appear). Maienborn shows that the contrast may be based on a temporal dimension – when the situation contrasts with other situations that occur earlier or later –, on a spatial dimension – when the situation contrasts with other situations in different spatial locations –, and

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14. The same intuition about context dependence with *estar* has also been exploited in some recent contributions, such as Gallego and Uriagereka (2011) and Romeu (this volume).

on an epistemic dimension – when the situation contrasts with different expectations by the speaker. The temporal dimension leads to the episodic or temporally bounded interpretation that has traditionally been attributed to *estar*, and is the simplest way to solve the contrast among topical situations. It is clear that adopting this view of the *ser/estar* distinction implies accepting that the copulas, rather than being mere manifestations of the presence of certain features in the lexical predicate, have their own meaning.

The approach proposed in Maienborn (2005) has significant advantages. On the one hand, it is economical, as it assumes that the only difference between *ser* and *estar* is the presupposition that there is a specific topical situation to be considered, potentially contrasting with other alternative situations. On the other, it maintains the classical idea that *estar* is in some sense a marked copula in comparison to *ser* (see Fernández Leborans, 1999) – more specifically, the discourse-dependent version of *ser*, and provides a pragmatic explanation of why the *permanent/transitory* notions are so salient in the intuitions of speakers when characterizing the interpretation of *ser* and *estar*. Furthermore, it can be successfully applied to other grammatical systems that do not have two copulas but express similar distinctions to those marked in Spanish by other means, as shown by Geist (2006) in her analysis of case alternations in copular clauses in Russian. But the reason why this approach is relevant here is that it also makes it easier to understand the contrasts in (2)–(4) with VSX and place them in the general framework of the relations between theticity and stativity.

The connection with the data concerning VSX is quite simple. As we have seen, VSX order imposes a thetic interpretation, without informational partitions, and this implies that the propositional content needs to be associated to a stage topic, since thetic structures predicate on a situation, and not on an individual. The stage topic corresponds to the topic situation invoked by Maienborn, and therefore provides the 'particular topic situation' required by *estar*: the predicates that naturally combine with stage topics are SL predicates. Since the predication is not anchored to a specific situation with *ser*, it can hardly be associated with a stage topic in a thetic judgment. This explains the different behavior of the two copulas in VSX.[15] In short, anchoring to a particular situation with *estar* is the condition that explains the relationship with theticity.

A problem that arises with the analysis in Maienborn (2005) – as with any analysis based on the IL/SL distinction – concerns the status of non-episodic *estar* plus locative predications, those expressing permanent location, like in *Ibiza está*

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15. Notice that the whole discussion here concerns the semantic characterization of the two copulas, but not necessarily the semantics of lexical predicates. The problem of how to characterize the IL/SL distinction in lexical predicates falls beyond the limits of this paper.

al suroeste de Mallorca 'Ibiza is southwest of Mallorca'. Recall that it is these uses that produce anomalous results in the VSX order, since they block the connection with the stage topic. Not incidentally, they are always mentioned in the list of mismatches between the *ser/estar* distinction and the IL/SL distinction (Camacho, 2012, pp. 459–463; Fábregas, 2012, §3.1): despite being a syntactic environment where *estar* is obligatory, they lack the typical properties of SL predication, and do not result in thetic judgments. Is there a way to integrate them into a unified analysis and explain why *estar* is needed in these cases? It seems clear that anchoring the predication to a specific topical situation with *estar* is the result of the historical development of the original locative meaning of *estar*: the connection with the stage topic and the spatial location of entities are actually two related aspects of a single requirement. In order to obtain a unitary characterization, we should build an explicit link between Maienborn's analysis and the proposals that define *estar* by means of a locative feature (see Brucart, 2010; Gallego & Uriagereka, 2011). I cannot address this issue here, so I leave the question open, assuming that it does not represent an obstacle for an account of word order patterns with *estar*. Up to this point, the basic finding is that the behavior of the copulas in VSX lends empirical support to Maienborn's proposal about the *ser/estar* distinction.

5.3   How to make a thetic statement out of an IL predicate

The next question has to do with the mechanism that licenses the use of *ser* in VSX. Colloquial examples such as those in (28), reproduced here again, should be rejected, if we assume that IL predications cannot be linked to a stage topic as the one VSX requires, but, unexpectedly, they are well-formed.

(28) a. Eres tú bastante testarudo ¿eh?
      b. ¡Eres tú muy curiosa!
      c. ¡Pues va a ser el premio un coche!
      d. ¡No es Teresa poco agarrada!

A review of the literature on the incompatibility between theticity and IL predication suggests that the data in (28) correspond to a regular pattern whose effects can also be observed in English: the generalization is that counterexamples to the ban against stative IL predicates, i.e. cases of thetic statements built on IL predicates, are always exclamations or expressions of surprise at some new, unexpected information. This leads to the assumption that the phenomenon exemplified in (28) is not an idiosyncratic feature of Spanish. A couple of relevant examples are in (29), respectively taken from Erteschik-Shir (1997, p. 49) and Jäger (1997) – attributed to C. Heycock:

(29) a.   Look out! A boy has a gun
      b.   A: – Why didn't you come here by car?
           B: – The ROAD is bad

In (29) the predicate is IL – *to have a gun* is actually a basic IL predicate that can be easily reinterpreted as SL in (29a) –, and yet the sentence, in its exclamation/surprise reading, is processed as a single informational unit without partitions (making it equivalent to a thetic structure).[16] In Spanish the same happens with unmarked SVX in news reports or in the introduction of new situations, not previously known (like in *¡El agua es potable! ¡Venid!* 'The water is drinkable! Come!'). The examples in (28), thus, seem to be a particular, restricted case of a more general phenomenon related to mirativity, as one reviewer rightly notices. Exclamation/surprise is in some sense able to solve the incompatibility between IL predicates and stage topics. I think the explanation of these facts is pragmatic, and is based on the way in which speakers, in the interpretive process, pragmatically infer parts of the communicated proposition – the explicature, and higher level explicatures, in relevance-theoretic terms, see Sperber and Wilson (1986) – with the aim of solving certain interpretive mismatches.

The starting point for an analysis of the data in (28) and (29) is the observation that the speaker emphatically states a fact that, in principle, is linked to his personal experience in a circumstance that corresponds to the speech situation (the 'here and now' of the utterance). What the utterance conveys, along with the propositional content, is the speaker's reaction to a new stimulus, to some extent contrary to his expectations. Now, the problem is, as stated before, how can the IL predicate be linked to the circumstance serving as stage topic. I propose that, in the search for a relevant interpretation by the hearer, the interpretative mismatch between the predicate and the stage topic is solved by inferring that it is not the predication itself that is anchored to the stage topic, but a representation of the speaker's emotional reaction towards the propositional content: thus, the propositional content is a subordinate representation with respect to the propositional attitude, which in turn is linked to the topical situation. In this way the incompatibility with the stage topic disappears. The following scheme reproduces the components of the resulting interpretation.

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16. Exclamation is also involved in a closely related phenomenon: focus projection from the subject argument in languages like English (see Diesing, 1992, p. 51 and Kennedy, 1999 for an overview of the data). Informational focus, in principle, can project from the subject only in thetic environments. However, exclamative intonation contributes to the availability of thetic readings by making them accessible even with thematically prominent subjects – i.e. with external arguments, where focus projection is usually precluded.

(30)   stage topic [propositional attitude of the speaker [propositional content]]

In (30) the two conditions imposed by VSX are respected. On the one hand, there is a stage topic, i.e. an anchor to the speech situation, and it is the propositional attitude of the speaker – exclamation, surprise, emphasis on some news report – that is contextually anchored, as a reaction to a particular circumstance. On the other hand, there are no informational partitions in the subordinate representation, corresponding to the sentence: the content is a single informational chunk, taken as new information. Consequently, as the conditions for the VSX order are respected, the sentences in (28) and (29) are acceptable. The obstacle raised by the incompatibility between stage topics and IL predicates is overcome by inserting a representation of the speaker's attitude: this is pragmatically inferred as part of the proposition expressed by the utterance, just to solve the interpretive conflict generated by the presence of *ser* in VSX. I assume that inferential mismatch resolution is a regular and systematic phenomenon, whose best known cases are the processes of coercion, accommodation of presuppositions and modulation of lexical meaning (see Leonetti & Escandell-Vidal, 2015). The mismatch is satisfactorily solved because it is semantic in nature, and not syntactic. The result is as shown in the schematic representation in (31), an attempt to provide paraphrases for the examples in (28):

(31)   With respect to the contextual situation *x*, {I notice/realize/deduce/am surprised…} that [you are quite stubborn/you are very curious/the prize is going to be a car/Teresa is a bit stingy]

In my view, adopting this hypothesis has some clear advantages. First, the emergence of an exclamative/surprise intonation is explained: it is forced by the need to link the sentence to the stage topic, since it is the propositional attitude that anchors the utterance to the context. Note that the schemas in (30) and (31) reproduce the internal composition of exclamative sentences: an emotional attitude associated with a propositional content without partitions. In fact, exclamation is the most natural way to resolve the abovementioned mismatch. Being subordinated to the propositional attitude, IL predication no longer conflicts with the presence of a stage topic. The speaker's attitude is inferred in the interpretive process, so it depends on the contextual information available, and may vary along various parameters.

Second, this solution is quite economical: it exploits a mechanism which is independently justified and seems to be very productive (see Leonetti & Escandell-Vidal, 2015). In the framework of Relevance Theory (Sperber & Wilson, 1986), inferential reconstruction of the speaker's attitude is a necessary step to specify the set of higher level explicatures of an utterance, i.e. those representations of the

proposition communicated by the speaker that include the speech act that is being performed and the attitude that is attributed to the speaker. This implies that the interpretation of any utterance includes some kind of higher level explicature: no ad hoc mechanism is invoked here, but rather the general use of so-called *meta-representations* (see Wilson, 2000). What is crucial in examples such as (28) is that the attitude attributed to the speaker is associated with the stage topic, so that the propositional content can introduce new information. This is why in the examples attitudes correspond to meanings such as 'I am surprised that *p*' or 'I have noticed that *p*', and not just to 'I believe that *p*' or 'I say that *p*'. The speaker's attitude is included in the higher level explicature, which explains that it is neither an implicature – it cannot be cancelled – nor a part of the asserted information – in fact, it is not affected by negation.

Finally, the hypothesis allows, perhaps unexpectedly, to relate the data presented here to so-called *evidential* uses of *estar*, which gives additional support for the proposal. The next section deals with this point.

A brief comment is worth bringing up here concerning the second factor that hinders the insertion of IL predicates in thetic contexts: it is the fact that such predicates require a topical subject (in the sense of *Aboutness Topic*), extensively mentioned in the literature. The requirement should be rephrased in more general terms: IL predicates do not necessarily need a topic, but some informational partition – in fact, their subject may appear as narrow focus if it is postverbal, in a VXS sentence, as in *Es inteligente [María_{Foc}]* '[Mary_{Foc}] is intelligent'. In this way the intuition is captured that IL predicates block integration of their arguments in a single informational unit. However, it seems that this factor is suspended under the conditions holding for the examples in (28)–(29), since the propositional content lacks partitions, despite containing an IL predicate. I will just assume that, indeed, this factor has a lower weight than the connection to the stage topic, possibly because the propositional content appears to be subordinated under a verb of propositional attitude, and the conditions on informational partitions are much weaker in subordinate clauses.

5.4   Two different problems, a single pragmatic solution

We call *evidential* those uses of *estar* that convey information derived from the speaker's direct personal experience and from his perception and evaluation of a given circumstance. The examples in (32), taken from Camacho (this volume) and Escandell-Vidal and Leonetti (2002), show certain evidential nuances, since the facts are presented under the subjective perspective of the speaker, and with the speaker himself as the source of information:

(32) a. Este jamón serrano está   fenomenal
          this ham serrano be.ESTAR.PRS.3SG awesome
          'This serrano ham is awesome'

       b. John Goodman está   genial en esa película
          John Goodman be.ESTAR.PRS.3SG great in that film
          'John Goodman is great in that film'

As Camacho points out, evidential effects occur only in some contexts. They seem to be pragmatically derived from the use of *estar* under certain conditions, in particular when it alternates with *ser*. In Escandell-Vidal and Leonetti (2002) it is claimed that evidentiality appears as a result of the need to solve – inferentially – the mismatch between *estar* and the IL adjective in the predicate: in fact, it is typically absent from regular uses of *estar* with SL predicates. With adjectives like *fenomenal* 'awesome' and *genial* 'great', an interpretive process that makes them compatible with the copula has to be activated to avoid an anomalous reading, and this involves connecting them with a topical situation that contrasts with other situations contextually available. The simplest way to obtain it is inferring a transitory, episodic reading of the adjective, based on a temporal contrast. However, as Fábregas (2012, p. 22) points out, this is not the reading of the adjectival predicate in examples like the ones in (32), possibly because it is difficult to reconcile with the meaning of the adjectives in the context of (32). In order to find an alternative way of establishing a dependency with respect to a topical situation, recourse is made to a more elaborate solution, namely a contrast between the situation in which the speaker perceives or experiences the state of affairs described, and other possible situations. To present a property as dependent on someone's perception is a way to relativize it with respect to a circumstance, and therefore to reinterpret it as a 'stage'. The "discovery" reading described in Maienborn (2005, p. 172), in which it is inferred that the topical situation contrasts with alternative situations in the speaker's expectations, is essentially a variety of evidential interpretation that also introduces a subjective perspective. Thus, an IL predicate can "survive" in a SL environment – such as *estar* predication – if it is taken as the result of someone's perception and evaluation in a specific circumstance. Evidentiality effects arise here as a means of solving an interpretive mismatch (see Escandell-Vidal, 2015 for a detailed account).

The relationship between SL and evidentiality in (32) is based on the contextual anchoring required by the copula *estar*, since it is that kind of context dependence that leads to infer that the speaker is the primary source of information, relying on his own perception in a given circumstance. If *estar* is used, the predication must be understood as relativized to a particular situation. This suggests that using *estar* instead of *ser* is due to the intention of conveying a judgment

that is limited to a particular experience or perception. Briefly, the copula is the element that provides the basis that makes the evidential meaning prominent – though other factors may be involved as well. Note that this does not imply that the meaning of the adjective in (32) is necessarily coerced: actually, coercion is no longer needed, at least in a strict sense, against the view held in Escandell-Vidal and Leonetti (2002) – IL adjectives, in fact, retain their properties.

Taking all this into account, a clear parallelism emerges between evidential uses of *estar* and the uses of *ser* in VSX. In both cases a central role is played by the inferential resolution of interpretive mismatches. It is essentially the same phenomenon. When other possibilities for reinterpretation, such as coercion, are excluded, inserting a 'subject of perception' in the proposition communicated by the utterance, with a typical subjective burden, is the only way to adjust the interpretation to the requirements imposed by the grammar. In the evidential use of *estar*, the subject of perception is needed to justify the use of the copula with an IL adjective and solve their mutual incompatibility. In the use of *ser* in VSX, the subject of perception – that is, the speaker expressing his reaction to the perception of the facts described – is needed to obtain a thetic reading that is consistent with the VSX order and that does not conflict with the IL predicate. As the speaker's attitude/reaction in a specific situation is involved, and the propositional content is viewed as a result of the speaker's perspective, there is an evidentiality effect, in some sense, also with *ser* in VSX. It is, therefore, the same type of solution for two different problems. Far from being an exceptional phenomenon, it just looks as a particular instance of a recurrent and regular mechanism. There are at least two other cases in which the notion of "subject of perception" is relevant to explain interpretive facts – the trigger is, systematically, a mismatch that blocks some basic interpretive path. One is represented by 'interpretive' or 'perspectival' uses of tenses (Sthioul, 1998; Saussure, 2003, 2013), i.e. uses that force the interpreter to assume that the situation is viewed through the perspective of some subject of perception. The most outstanding example is the 'narrative' value of the imperfective past in Romance languages. Another case in point is the behavior of evaluative predicates in 'eventive environments', thoroughly investigated in Martin (2006) on the basis of French data – *predicats evaluatifs employés occurrentiellement* –. The issue is worth a brief discussion. Martin (2006, Ch. 7) shows that when evaluative adjectives like *jolie* 'pretty' are used as SL predicates they acquire an evidential value. In a context like the one in (33), the interpreter has to infer that the speaker was able to perceive Marie's prettiness personally – the speaker is the default subject of perception:

(33) Marie est   passée cet après-midi. Elle était   jolie
      Marie have.BE.PRS.3SG passed this afternoon   she be.PST.3SG pretty
      'Marie came this afternoon. She was pretty'

The context forces a SL reading of the predicate in which the property is relativized to a certain circumstance. The question is why evaluative adjectives trigger an evidential interpretation only if they are used as SL predicates. It seems that here we have another instance of the general resolution mechanism already observed: the tension between the lexical predicate and the context is solved by resorting to an epistemic subject that perceives the property denoted by the adjective in a specific circumstance. Notice that the Spanish version of the second sentence in (33) obligatorily contains *estar*, and not *ser*. Evidentiality effects are again linked to reinterpretation. As Martin (2006, p. 285) points out, most true SL predicates do not give rise to any evidential reading: this is expected, if no reinterpretation process is needed with them.

6.   Conclusions

A study of how the *ser/estar* distinction interacts with word order allows us to achieve interesting results at several levels, both for our understanding of the distinction and for the more general problem of the relationship between theticity and stativity. The word order pattern that provides the most significant data is VSX, which is quite productive in Spanish, and systematically associated with a wide focus interpretation, without informational partitions.

   The distribution of the two copulas in VSX confirms that only predication with *estar* leads in a natural way to a thetic/wide focus interpretation as required by this word order pattern. Most of the uses of *estar* are fully acceptable in VSX. Only those in which predication is not linked to a particular circumstance are rejected. If we assume that thetic sentences include a stage topic, implicit or explicit, the data concerning *estar* can be explained in a simple way along the lines of Maienborn (2005) and related hypotheses: the copula requires the predication to be dependent on a topical situation, and such situation is identified as the stage topic, so that the requirements for a thetic interpretation are met. With *ser*, however, there is no requirement to relativize the predication with respect to a topical situation, and the lexical predicate belongs to the IL kind. As this kind of predicates is incompatible with a stage topic, its presence in a VSX sentence is excluded, at least in spontaneous oral use – VSX with *ser* is acceptable in written Spanish, but with an additional old-fashioned and literary tone, probably as an echo of a historical period when VSX was not subject to the restrictions that are in force in contemporary Spanish. The contrast between the two copulas appears as one more manifestation of the well-known incompatibility between thetic interpretation and IL predicates.

The less studied data I have reviewed in this paper are examples of sentences with *ser* and VSX order that are acceptable also in spoken, spontaneous Spanish. They are highly restricted cases in which intonation and other factors conspire to produce an exclamative/mirative/emphatic interpretation, sometimes simply a news report reading. The explanation proposed to account for these exceptional cases in which the IL predication is not excluded by the VSX order is purely pragmatic, and is a particular manifestation of the general strategy of interpretive mismatch resolution that is activated when the hearer faces a combination of semantically incompatible items. When interpreting an utterance, the hearer must infer what the speaker's attitude with respect to the propositional content is, in order to obtain a complete representation of the communicated proposition. In VSX sentences with *ser*, the aforementioned mismatch disappears if the speaker's attitude is taken as a reaction linked to a particular circumstance, according to the conditions imposed by VSX: in this way the link with a situation that provides a stage topic is maintained, although indirectly, through the attitude that is attributed to the speaker, and avoiding a conflict with the IL predication. It is precisely the attitudes of exclamation/surprise/news announcement that represent an adaptation to the conditions of VSX, and VSX sentences with *ser* just show the lexical and prosodic features needed to favor an interpretation based on such attitudes. Thus, the two basic questions find an answer. The process of inferential adjustment of interpretation is essentially the same one operating in evidential uses of *estar*, which suggests that it is by no means an isolated phenomenon.

At a more general level, the results show that even in a language like Spanish, which admits the processing of complex strings as single informational units in a rather natural way, the combination of thetic interpretation and stative – especially IL – predicates gives rise to anomalous, odd utterances. The pragmatic solution I endorse to account for those cases in which such combination is, surprisingly, acceptable in spontaneous use should apply, in principle, to any other language.

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