



Explaining the uses of *ser* and *estar*: A didactic proposal for English learners of Spanish

MAIKA VICIEN PALOMINO

Degree in English Studies
Departamento de Lingüística y Estudios Vascos
Área de Lingüística General

Supervisor: Arantzazu Elordieta Alcibar

Academic year: 2018/2019

Abstract

The distinction between *ser* and *estar* is one of the most difficult aspects of Spanish grammar for English learners of Spanish. There are many authors from different backgrounds that have dealt with this topic aiming to explain the contexts in which both copulas can appear and those in which only one of the two may occur. Nevertheless, this specific subject of Spanish grammar still creates confusion among non-native speakers of Spanish. Due to the large amount of exceptions within the norm and the incomplete and unclear explanations of the topic provided in many manuals, Spanish learners acquire a vague knowledge of the correct uses of *ser* and *estar* preventing them from a full comprehension. For that reason, the aim of this paper is to shed some light on this convoluted issue.

Ser and *estar* are two copulative verbs whose functions widely differ between them. While *ser* is used to represent temporal and inherent individual properties, *estar* expresses temporal events. Nonetheless, things are not as easy as they seem to be, since there are many contexts in which both copulas are likely to get mixed by English students of Spanish, due to the fact that their mother tongue lacks this type of distinction. Additionally, and due to their capricious character, they do not always appear in complementary distribution. For these reasons, I will deeply analyse the occurrence of these two predicates and their restrictions with regards to the acceptability of one verb or the other following the account based on the distinction of individual and stage level predicates. Finally, I will expose a didactic proposal for practising the uses of both verbs in different learning levels.

Key words: *ser*, *estar*, *to be*, individual level predicate, stage level predicate, Spanish as a foreign language, copulative, predicative

Index

Abstract	
1. Introduction	1
2. <i>Ser</i> and <i>estar</i> as copulative verbs: individual and stage level predicates	2
2.1. Copulative <i>ser</i> : <i>characterizational</i> and <i>identificational</i> copulatives.....	3
2.2. Copulative <i>estar</i>	4
3. <i>Ser</i> and <i>estar</i> as predicative verbs	5
3.1. Predicative <i>ser</i>	5
3.2. Predicative <i>estar</i>	6
4. Overlapping contexts of <i>ser</i> and <i>estar</i>	7
4.1. <i>Ser</i> and <i>estar</i> with nominal predicates.....	7
4.2. <i>Ser</i> and <i>estar</i> with adjectival and verbal passives.....	11
4.3. <i>Ser</i> and <i>estar</i> with adjectival predicates.....	13
4.4. <i>Ser</i> and <i>estar</i> with prepositional predicates.....	16
5. Mandatory use of <i>estar</i> corresponding to English <i>be</i>: the gerund	19
6. Didactic proposal	21
6.1. Beginners (A1/A2).....	22
6.2. Intermediates (B1/B2).....	26
6.3. Advanced (C1/C2).....	29
7. Conclusion and questions for future research	32
References	34

1. Introduction

The interest for learning Spanish as a second or foreign language has increased abruptly during the last years, especially in English-speaking countries, where it is regarded as the most important foreign language. According to the latest research accomplished by Instituto Cervantes in 2014, approximately 548 million people speak or learn that language worldwide. This figure itemises in three groups: a) those who fully master Spanish (around 470 million), b) those who speak it with certain difficulty (more than 58 million) and c) those who still are in their learning process (close to 20 million). Hence, as a result of this data, it is not surprising to find Spanish among the five most spoken languages in the world. Furthermore, everything points to the promising future of Spanish as a language in expansion. In fact, Instituto Cervantes itself, which has 86 centres in 42 countries, claims that the number of students and Spanish lectures is rising constantly year by year. As a result, it is important for future Spanish teachers to know the difficulties that English speakers may find when learning the language, so that the instruction methodology results to be more adequate and effective, and therefore, obtain better results in students (Instituto Cervantes, 2017).

Among the different aspects of Spanish grammar, the distinction between *ser* and *estar* is a great source of uncertainty for English learners of Spanish. The reason for that, is that both verbs merge into the verb *be* in English. In addition to this, as this feature is one of the most difficult to classify and understand within the study of Spanish grammar, pinpointing all the contexts in which *ser* and *estar* can occur without complicating the comprehension constitutes a great challenge even for Spanish native speakers.

Taking all this into account, the aim of this paper is, therefore, to provide a clearer explanation of the contexts in which *ser* and *estar* can be used in order to instruct English learners of Spanish as a second or foreign language. Along the same lines, a didactic proposal will be presented in order to facilitate the learning process and the subsequent automation of the uses of both verbs.

The paper is organized as follows: in section 2 I will address the opposition between *ser* and *estar* by distinguishing two types of predicates: individual level

predicates¹ (realised by the temporal permanent feature of *ser*) and stage level predicates (represented by the transitory feature of *estar*). By following this distinction, I will present as well the copulative function of *ser* and *estar*. Section 3 will be devoted to predicative constructions occurring with *ser* and *estar*. Section 4 is larger than the previous ones. It will deal with the contexts in which both verbs can appear, thus, two main titles will head this part: the overlapping contexts of *ser* and *estar* (nominal and adjectival predicates, adjectival and verbal passives and prepositional phrases) and the mandatory use of *estar* corresponding to English *be*: the gerund. Thereupon, I will present a didactic proposal divided into three different levels (Beginners, Intermediates and Advanced) with two types of exercise in each, in which students are expected to put into practice their knowledge about *ser* and *estar*. The design of the exercises has been created on my own, even though I have taken some ideas from Delgado Panal's (2018) BA thesis *Problems, theory and practice of verb To be and its Spanish counterparts: Teaching Spanish ser/estar to English speakers through advertisements*. Finally, I will conclude this paper with some questions for future research.

2. *Ser* and *estar* as copulative verbs: individual and stage level predicates

Both *ser* and *estar* function as copulative verbs, but they differ both syntactically and semantically, as we will see. In copulative constructions, the subject is linked to the attribute by a verb sensitive to time and which lacks semantic aspect, that is, it loses its original meaning appearing consequently grammaticalised. This is the case of *ser* and *estar* in copulative or attributive constructions (Montalvan, 1999:15). In this copulative context of *ser* and *estar*, Fernández Leborans (1999) makes a distinction between individual-level predicates (IL) and stage-level predicates (SL). Individual-level properties describe inherent or permanent characteristics, whereas stage-level predicates denote temporal ones. The basis of the distinction is aspectual, in the sense that *ser* (IL) is aspectually and temporarily inert, since it expresses timeless properties. Hence, *ser* is the ideal verb for building predicates that refer to 'properties' rather than 'states' ('stage')

¹ Along the paper, the abbreviation IL (individual level) and SL (stage level) will be used so as to comply with space constraints.

(see 1) Alternatively, the verb *estar* (SL) implies a time-space limitation since it has a temporal-aspectual structure. Moreover, with *estar* we usually express a specific event, whereas *ser* does not express any kind of event (see 2) (Fernández Leborans, 1999: 2366).

(1) María es feliz
“María is (IL) happy”

(2) María está feliz
“María is (SL) happy”

2.1. *Ser* as a *characterizational* and *identificational* copulative

The sentences composed with copulative *ser* are classified in two subgroups distinguished by the semantic function of the attribute with regard to the subject. These are *characterizational* copulatives and *identificational* copulatives. Thus, *characterizational* copulatives refer to those expressions in which the subject is attributed a specific characteristic in order to be distinguished from the rest of individuals. The assigned attribute is diverse; it can signal from physical (3a) and psychic (3b) characteristics to origin (4a), possession (4b), or membership status (4c) (Fernández Leborans, 1999: 2368). Furthermore, as it is illustrated below, the grammatical categories that can function as attributes in *characterizational* sentences are adjectival phrases, nominal phrases and prepositional phrases. The reason why these phrases occur solely with *ser* (and not with *estar*) is because they denote properties inherent to the entity they refer to, and they are, in turn, only compatible with individual level predicates (Fernández Leborans, 1999: 2369).

(3) a. Ana es alta
“Anna is tall”
b. Antonio es inteligente
“Antonio is intelligent” (Fernández Leborans 1999: 2369)

(4) a. Jon es de Madrid
“John is from Madrid”
b. La casa es de mis padres
“The house is of my parents” (Fernández Leborans 1999: 2369)

- c. Alicia es médico
- Alice is doctor
- “Alice is a doctor”

In contrast, in the *identificational* copulative sentences there exists a relation between both elements linked by *ser*. The most accurate way to differentiate *identificational* from *characterizational* sentences is based on the fact that in *characterizational* sentences the postverbal element cannot be referential whereas in *identificational* sentences both elements connected by *ser* are referential. Nevertheless, this statement may be problematic since in *identificational* sentences just one of the elements linked by *ser* is purely referential while the other one possesses a descriptive feature (attributive expression). In addition, the element developing the referential property can be in preverbal position as in (5a) and (5b) or in postverbal position as in (6a) and (6b) as opposed to what we find in copulative *estar*, where only the postverbal position is allowed (7a) and (7b) (Fernández Leborans, 1999: 2369):

- (5) a. Elizabeth II es la Reina de Inglaterra
- “Elizabeth II is the Queen of England
- b. Ese chico es el hermano de Marco
- “That boy is Marco’s brother”

- (6) a. La Reina de Inglaterra es Elizabeth II
- “The Queen of England is Elisabeth II”
- b. El hermano de Marco es ese chico
- “Marco’s brother is that boy”

- (7) a. *Sensible está Alberto
- *”Sensitive is (SL) Alberto”
- b. Alberto está sensible
- “Alberto is (SL) sensitive”

2.2 *Estar* as a copulative verb

Next we will discuss the use of *estar* as a copula. The distinction between predicative and copulative *estar* is established from a lexico-semantic differentiation. On

this regard, copulative or attributive *estar* is characterized as an empty, copulative verb which links certain predicates (conceived as ‘states’ or temporal properties) with their corresponding subjects (Fernández Leborans, 1999:2421). Therefore, the type of predicate that can appear with copulative *estar* are adjectival phrases and they can describe the final result of a process (8a), express an state (8b) and the marital stauts (8c). Due to this functions, copulative *estar* conveys a stage-level interpretations (Regueiro Rodríguez, 2008: 10):

(8) a. Está vacío

“It is empty” (Regueiro Rodríguez, 2008: 10)

b. Pedro está contento

“Pedro is happy”

c. Tu hermana está casada

“Your sister is married” (Regueiro Rodríguez, 2008: 10)

As opposed to copulative *ser*, the attributive element in copulative *estar* can only appear in postverbal position:

(9) a. *Vacío está

*“Empty it is”

b. *Pedro está contento

*“Happy is Pedro”

c. *Esta casada tu hermana

*“Is married your sister”

3. *Ser* and *estar* as predicative verbs

In what follows we will discuss the second use that both *estar* and *ser* have in Spanish as predicative verbs. We will see that some of these predicative uses may also result problematic for English learners of Spanish.

3.1. *Ser* as a predicative verb

Ser as a predicative verb has a wide variety of uses: the location of events in time (10a) and space (10b), to tell and ask for the time (10c), to express quantity (10d) and

prices (10e), to specify the addressee, destination and purpose (10f), and to indicate the way of an event (10g) (Regueiro Rodríguez, 2008: 10).

- (10) a. La fiesta es el doce de marzo
“The party is the 12th of March” (Regueiro Rodríguez, 2008: 10)
- b. La conferencia es en el tercer piso
“The conference is on the third floor” (Regueiro Rodríguez, 2008:10)
- c. ¿Qué hora es? Son las doce
“What time is it? It’s twelve o’clock” (Regueiro Rodríguez, 2008: 10)
- d. Somos cinco personas
“We are five people” (Regueiro Rodríguez, 2008: 10)
- e. ¿Cuánto es? Son cinco euros
“How much is it? It’s five euros” (Regueiro Rodríguez 2008: 10)
- f. Estas flores son para mi madre
“These flowers are for my mom” (Regueiro Rodríguez 2008: 10)
- g. La caída fue/ocurrió/sucedió sin querer
“The fall was/ occurred/ happened accidentally” (Regueiro Rodríguez, 2008:10)

3.2. *Estar* as a predicative verb

In contrast with copulative *estar*, predicative *estar* is considered a full, intransitive verb which receives the meaning of ‘location’ or ‘local presence’. Therefore, predicative *estar* can only be followed by locative complements either in time (11a) and (11b) or space (11c-e) (Fernández Leborans, 1999: 2421). Nonetheless, we find that both predicative *ser* and *estar* fulfill the locative feature. Consequently, determining which type of locative sentences can appear with *ser* and *estar* can be a great dilemma for Spanish learners in the sense that sentences like (11a) and (11b) can be expressed by both *ser* and *estar* under certain rules, whereas (11c) (11d) and (11e) can only occur with *estar*.

- (11) a. Estamos en Enero
“We are in January”
- b. Estamos en primavera
“We are in Springtime” (Fernández Leborans, 1999: 2421)
- c. Pedro está aquí

“Pedro is here” (Fernández Leborans, 1999: 2421)

d. Mi casa está cerca de la universidad

“My house is near the University” (Fernández Leborans, 1999: 2421)

e. María ha estado en Londres

“Maria has been in London recently” (Fernández Leborans, 1999: 2421)

4. Overlapping contexts of *ser* and *estar*

This section will be devoted to those predicational contexts that may puzzle learners of Spanish, due to the fact that they are compatible with both *ser* and *estar*. However, as will see, it is not the case that both verbs are possible in all contexts; the grammaticality or ungrammaticality of each verb in a certain context will depend on specific circumstances that will be reasoned in detail.

4.1. *Ser* and *estar* with nominal predicates

Even though nominal predicates can appear with both verbs, there is a clear restriction on the occurrence of *estar* with nominal predicates, in the sense that they rarely occur in these contexts. On the contrary, *ser* can appear with both NPs and DPs as predicates as it can be seen in (12). This is because nouns act as individual predicates as they define specific classes, so that they have temporal stability. Thus, both *ser* and *estar* are in complementary distribution with *characterizational* (12a) and *identificational* (12b) predicates. By contrast, the only nominal predicates that can appear with *estar* are those which denote positions within a scale (13). In fact, it is precisely in this environment that both verbs can occur with DPs (Fernández Leborans, 1999: 2428).

(12) a. Juan es/*está médico

Juan is(IL)/*is(SL) doctor

“Juan is/*is a doctor

b. Juan es/*está mi amigo

“Juan is (IL)/*is (SL) my friend” (Fernández Leborans, 1999: 2428)

(13) El Manchester está/es el último en la liga

“Manchester is (SL)/is (IL) the last in the league”

The distinction between nominal predicates without determination (i.e. bare NPs) and determiner phrases is visible not only syntactically but also semantically, as we will discuss in what follows. As you will notice, Spanish and English express indeterminacy differently. In Spanish, it is overtly expressed by a bare NP, whereas in English it is indicated by an indefinite article (i.e. *a/an*).

In the first place, bare nouns have the following functions, illustrated below (Regueiro Rodríguez, 2008: 13):

- Bare nouns serve to characterise or distinguish the subject within a certain class:

(14) Juan es/*está profesor

Juan is (IL)/*is (SL) professor

“Juan is/*is a teacher” (Regueiro Rodríguez, 2008: 13)

- Adjunction to a social category:

(15) Juan es/*está socialista

Juan is (IL)/*is (SL) socialist

“Juan is/*is a socialist” (Regueiro Rodríguez, 2008: 13)

- They admit time-space references:

(16) Pedro es/*está traductor en sus horas libres

Pedro is (IL)/*está (SL) translator in his free time

“Pedro is/*is a translator in his free time” (Regueiro Rodríguez, 2008: 13)

- The absence of a determiner before the noun is only possible with human beings, but not with animals or things:

(17) a. *Este pájaro es/*está ruiseñor

*“This bird is (IL)/*is (SL) nightingale”

b. Este pájaro es/*está un ruiseñor

“This bird is (IL)/*is (SL) a nightingale”

(Regueiro Rodríguez, 2008: 13)

As you may have noticed in the examples above, the presence of an indefinite article *a* in English in contrast with the absence of a determiner in Spanish does not

convey a difference in meaning since in both cases they are indefinite, they do not refer to a specific entity. For this reason, bare NPs are disallowed with *identificational* nominal predicates of the sort **Juan es profesor* *‘‘Juan is a professor’’ with the meaning that Juan is the professor we were talking about, as we discussed in section 2.1. And precisely for the same reason, bare NPs (in Spanish not in English) accomplish the function of *characterizational* copulatives of the sort: *Juan es doctor* ‘‘Juan is a doctor’’ whose meaning makes reference to the specific properties that distinguish the entity from the rest of individuals, as we discussed in section 2.1 above.

In the second place, as for those cases where nominal predicates are preceded by indefinite articles in Spanish, as I understand it, the presence of an indefinite article forces nominal predicates to be more complex syntactically; meaning that they must appear modified by adjectives, or prepositional phrases, among others:

(18) a. **Juan es*/**está* un director

‘‘Juan is (IL)/*is (SL) a director’’

b. *Juan es*/**está* un director muy famoso

‘‘Juan is (IL)/ *is (SL) a very famous director’’

On the other hand, it is worth mentioning that indefinite articles are not a mandatory requisite for nominal predicates to be followed by modifiers, as the latter may appear with bare nouns:

(19) a. *Antonio es*/**está* un escritor de novelas policíacas

‘‘Antonio Is (IL)/*is (SL) a writer of detective novels’’

b. *Antonio es*/**está* escritor de novelas policíacas

‘‘Antonio is (IL)/*is (SL) writer of detective novels’’

(Fernández Leborans, 1999: 2385)

Thirdly, determinated noun phrases with a definite article or possessive determiners are interpreted as attributes, only when they contain a descriptive or superlative adjective as in (20a). In this sense, the attributive interpretation is not possible if the nominal predicate containing the descriptive or superlative adjective is indefinite or

indeterminate (20b). Conversely, the nominal predicates in which no descriptive or superlative adjective is present receive the *identificational* interpretation, as in (21) (Regueiro Rodríguez, 2008:13)

(20) a. Ana es/*está la sobrina favorita de Antonio

Ana is (IL)/*is (SL) the favourite niece of Antonio

“Ana is Antonio’s favourite niece” (Regueiro Rodríguez, 2008:13)

b.*Ana es/*está (una) sobrina favorita de Antonio

*”Ana is (IL)/*is (SL) a favourite niece of Antonio”

(21) Ana es la hermana de Pedro

Ana is the sister of Pedro

“Anna is Pedro’s sister”

On the other hand, certain nominal phrases, specially those referring to a profession, position, etc., appear solely with *estar* when they are preceded by the preposition *de*, as the example below illustrates (22) (Fernández Leborans, 1999: 2429):

(22) Antonio está /*es de camarero en un bar

“Antonio is (SL)/*is (IL) working as a waiter” (temporarily)

(Fernández Leborans, 1999: 2429)

Thus, we could say, following Fernández Leborans (1999), that the preposition *de* allows the individual-level predicate to function as a stage-level predicate since the preposition itself establishes that a particular action has a limitation.

Thus, one could conclude that this phenomenon doesn’t hold for predicates other than NPs. Perhaps, it is related to the fact that adjectives do not always denote individual properties, as nouns do, so that they do not demand a particle to convey a temporal meaning.

In consequence, we can assert that nominal predicates, except those denoting a position within a scale, cannot be combined with *estar* without the presence of a specific

particle (such as prepositions) since nouns always denote individual properties and thus they are not compatible with stage-level predicates (Gumiel Molina, 2008: 7).

4.2. *Ser* and *estar* with adjectival and verbal passives

Establishing the distribution of *ser* and *estar* is more complicated in the case of past participles, since these can appear with both *ser* and *estar* (Gumiel Molina, 2008:7). However, in this section we will only deal with verbal and adjectival passive sentences operating with participles. Those participles functioning as verbal adjectives will be analyzed in section 4.3

Before going into detail, it is necessary to make a clear distinction between the use of the verb *be* in a passive sentence and its use in a copula construction, that is to say, *ser* does not only function as the copula shown in individual level predicates but also as the auxiliary in passive sentences. Within these types of sentences, we distinguish between verbal and adjectival passives. The properties of verbal and adjectival passives are explained by Bruhn de Garavito (2009) in the following terms. On the one hand, in verbal passives (see 23a), the object presumably cannot receive case from the verbal participle, so this element needs to be moved to subject position. On the other hand, in adjectival passives (see 23b) the participle becomes an adjective.

(23) a. El pollo fue cocinado en un horno a carbón

The chicken was (*ser*-preterite) cooked in a coal stove

“The chicken was cooked in a coal stove” (Bruhn de Garavito, 2009: 27)

b. El pollo estaba bien cocinado

The chicken was (*estar*-imperfect) well cooked

“The chicken was well cooked” (Bruhn de Garavito, 2009: 27)

As illustrated in (23a) with *ser*, the predicate is interpreted as an event (process, accomplishment) whereas with *estar* (23b) it is interpreted as a state. For this reason, the distinction between state and event is addressed as stative versus eventive passives. Nevertheless, there are many theories that aim to explain the aspects in which *estar* and *ser* differ. In this sense, many researchers point out to the aspectual differences between both copulas, while others defend that the basis of the distinction is based on the types of predicates they appear with. “Lujan (1981), Bosque (1990) and Varela (1992) [apud

Bruhn de Garavito, 2009:28] argue that the predicate, either participle or adjective, carries a feature for perfectivity” (Bruhn de Garavito, 2009: 28). On the other hand, Schmitt (1992) [apud de Bruhn Garavito 2009: 28] claims that *estar* as opposed to *ser*, represents the result of a state of an accomplishment verb, that is, it fulfils the perfective aspect. Following this last interpretation, it can be concluded then, that *estar* can only appear with those participles and adjectives that accomplish their perfectivity feature (Bruhn de Garavito, 2009: 28).

As the examples below show, only eventive passives can occur with an agent that appears with the form of a *by-phrase*. In contrast, the resultative nature of the state expressed by *estar* as in (24b) cannot carry a *by-phrase* since the verb *estar* indicates the outcome of the action that has been carried out, whereas *ser* describes the development of the event (serving) itself (see 24a). (Bruhn de Garavito, 2009: 28)

(24) a. El té siempre es servido a las 4 (por un mesero inglés)

“Tea is always served at 4 (by an English waiter)” (Bruhn Garavito, 2009: 28)

b. El té está servido en el comedor principal (*por el mesero inglés)

“Tea is served in the main dining room (*by an English waiter)”

(Bruhn de Garavito, 2009: 28)

Furthermore, since the verbal passive denotes an event, the appropriate verbal tense in the past with which it can appear is the preterite or the present perfect as in (25a). Passive sentences expressing the resultant state of an action, however, will occur with the imperfect (25b). The opposition between the preterite and the imperfect gives rise to two different interpretations illustrated in the sentences below: while (25a) expresses that the preparation of the chicken took place after I got home, in (25b) the chicken was already prepared at the time of arriving home. (Bruhn de Garavito, 2009: 28)

(25) a. El pollo fue (*era) preparado por Carmen cuando llegué a casa

“The chicken was-preterite (*was-imperfect) prepared by Carmen when I got home” (Bruhn de Garavito, 2009: 28).

b. El pollo estaba (*estuvo) preparado cuando llegué a casa

“The chicken was-imperfect (*was-preterite) prepared when I got home” (Bruhn de Garavito, 2009: 28)

4.3. *Ser* and *estar* with adjectival predicates

Within the category of *characterizational* adjectives (lexical adjectives and participle adjectives) appearing with *ser*, traditional grammar distinguishes among the most frequent subgroups: adjectives expressing physical characteristics (*rubia* “blonde”, *alto* “tall”, *grande* “big”, *guapo* “pretty”, *calvo* “bald”,...); psychic (*inteligente* “intelligent”, *tímido* “shy”, *tenaz* “tenacious”,...); moral -- regarding valuation adjectives (*bueno* “nice”, *egoista* “selfish”, *insolente* “insolent”,...)--; adjectives denoting a sensorial perception (*amargo* “bitter”, *dulce* “sweet”, *salado* “salty”,...) ÷ and adjectives which refer to properties relating certain rule or standard (social: *soltero* “bachelor”, *pobre* “poor”...; temporal: *antiguo* “ancient”, *viejo* “old”; analogue: *diferente* “different”, *similar* “similar”...). However, it is worth mentioning that a great deal of these adjectives are compatible with constructions with *estar*, so that they would no longer be permanent attributes but transient ones (Fernández Leborans, 1999: 2370).

Another wide set of adjectives are those called classifying adjectives, which denote the class the subject belongs to. These types of adjectives can express nationality, (*francés* “French”, *español* “Spanish”...), birthplace (*londinense* “Londoner”, *neoyorquino* “New Yorker”...), religion (*cristiano* “Christian”, *musulmán* “Muslim”...), social class (*aristócrata* “aristocrat”, *burgués* “bourgeois”), political party (*socialista* “socialist”, *monárquico* “monarchical”...), artistic, literary, scientific institution (*neoclásico* “neoclassical”, *Renacimiento* “Renaissance”...) and they appear with *ser* exclusively (Fernández Leborans, 1999: 2370).

Nevertheless, the existence of certain adjectives and predicates that function as adjectives which can appear with both *ser* and *estar* constitutes undoubtedly a subject of trouble for those learners of Spanish. Hence, various kinds of research on copulative sentences propose the following distinction based on the possibility of using one verb or the other. They distinguish three different types of adjectives in term of ‘perfectiveness’ gathered in three different groups:

- a) those adjectives which contain a [+perfective] feature such as *contento* “happy”, *descalzo* “barefoot”, *harto* “annoyed”, *lleno* “full”, etc.,
- b) those which contain a [-perfective] feature such as *capaz* “capable/able”, *mortal* “mortal”, *idóneo* “appropriate”, *válido* “valid”, etc.,

c) those adjectives which contain a [\pm perfective] feature such as *gordo* “fat”, amable “kind”, *alto* “tall”, etc.

The adjectives from the first group can only appear with *estar*; those from the second group only accept *ser* in their constructions. The last group, on the contrary, give rise to a source of problems, since it allows constructions with both *ser* and *estar*. This ambivalence is distinguished through the relation of implication, that is, *ser* + adjective implies *estar*+ adjective, but not the other way around; in this sense, *ser gordo* “being (IL) fat” implies that at some point the predicate *estar gordo* “being (SL) fat” is true; as *ser alegre* “being (IL) happy” implies that at some point *estar alegre* “being (SL) happy” is true. Nonetheless, the implication in the opposite direction is not possible, as it is false that *estar gordo* “being (SL) fat” implies *ser gordo* “being (IL) fat”, as well as, *estar alegre* “being (SL) happy” does not entail *ser alegre* “being (IL) happy”. (Fernández Leborans, 1999:2429). In addition, adjectives with a [\pm perfective] feature allow gradability both with *ser* and *estar* (26a), whereas the superlative imposes a restriction with *estar* (26b).

(26) a. Él es/está (muy/más) amable

“He is (IL)/is (SL) (very/more friendly)”

b. Él es/*está el más amable

“He is (IL)/*is (SL) the friendliest”

As it has been demonstrated before, those adjectives operating with *estar* are called perfective, in the sense that those predicates compatible with *estar* have the so-called ‘perfectivity’ feature. The verbal adjectives, which derive from their corresponding participle verbs such as *lleno* “full”, *tenso* “taut”, *limpio* “clean”, *sucio* “dirty”, *maduro* “mature”, *despierto* “awake”, etc., are considered perfective adjectives since they denote the result of certain actions. These types of verbs are also known as accomplishments, which are characterised for its ‘durative’ and ‘telic’ features, and achievements, which are ‘non-durative’ and ‘telic’.

Nonetheless, within the latter group we find some ambiguous perfective adjectives and participles, in the sense that they can appear with both *ser* and *estar*. Although it would not be ambiguous for Spanish native speakers, examples such as (27) would be

comprehensibly dubious for learners of Spanish as a foreign language (Fernández Leborans, 1999: 2430).

- (27) a. Pedro está despierto
“Pedro is (SL) awake”
b. Pedro es despierto
“Pedro is (IL) (sharp) awake” (Fernández Leborans, 1999: 2430)

The reason why (27) would be problematic for non-native speakers of Spanish is because *despierto* “awake” as many perfective adjectives and participles are regarded as bisemic (Fernández Leborans, 1999). According to this idea, bisemic perfective adjectives or participles have two different entries in the lexicon, specified for the [\pm perfective] feature. In this sense, those perfective adjectives and participles compatible with *estar* are typified by the ‘perfective’ aspectual feature (27a) whereas those compatible with *ser* accomplish a figurative, stable and not perfective sense (in this case as a feature of personality) (27b) (Fernández Leborans, 1999:2430).

Furthermore, the semantic differences that arise from those predicates combined with *ser* or *estar* are diverse: compare, for instance, *ser bueno* “be good” (as an intrinsic feature of personality) to *estar bueno* (‘healthy’, ‘tasty’, related with foodstuff, etc.) (Regueiro Rodríguez, 2008:9). As a consequence, *ser* in (28a) functions as an individual-stage level predicate since it describes an atemporal characteristic, whereas, *estar* in (28b) conveys a stage-level interpretation because it refers to the exact moment in which the speaker tastes the wine.

- (28) a. Este vino es excelente
“This wine is excellent”
b. Este vino está excelente
“This wine is excellent”

Finally, we should comment on some data that challenges the notion that *estar* occurs with stage-level predicates and *ser* with individual-level predicates. This problematic evidence comes from adjectives such as *muerto* “death”, *vivo* “alive” and

loco “crazy”, which can only happen with *estar*, but they are difficult to classify within the stage-level predicates as seen in (29a) and (29b) (Camacho 2012:7):

(29) a. Napoleón está/*es muerto

“Napoleon is (ST)/*is (IL) death”

b. Su hermano está/*es loco

“Her brother is (SL)/*is (IL) crazy” (Camacho 2012:7)

4.4. *Ser* and *estar* with prepositional predicates

As well as with adjectives, prepositional phrases can be divided into two groups depending on the semantic nature of the predicate. These can express timeless states (individual-level predicates) which occur with *ser* as illustrated in (30). As it can be observed, those prepositional phrases compatible with *ser* describe properties inherent to the entity they refer to.

(30) a. Content: Esta cerveza es sin alcohol

“This beer is without alcohol”

b. Material: El anillo es de oro

“The ring is (made) of gold”

c. Origin: Juan es de Madrid (IL/SL)

“Juan is from Madrid”

d. Sense of belonging: La casa es de mis padres

The house is of my parents

“It’s my parents’ house”

e. Measure: La temperatura de la tierra es de 16°C

“The temperature on Earth is 16°C” (Regueiro Rodríguez, 2008: 14)

At the same time, those predicates expressing temporally bounded states (stage-level predicates) appear with *estar* as in (31) (Gumiel Molina, 2008: 8).

- (31) a. El piso está a oscuras
 “The flat is in the dark” (Gumiel Molina, 2008: 8)
- b. El preso está entre rejas
 “The prisoner is behind bars” (Gumiel Molina, 2008: 8)
- c. El baño está fuera de servicio
 “The toilet is out of order” (Gumiel Molina, 2008: 8)
- d. Todos los pasajeros estaban en silencio
 “All the passengers were in silence” (Gumiel Molina, 2008: 8)

Apart from these contexts, predicative *estar* can occur with locative complements either in time (32) or space (33) (Fernández Leborans, 1999: 2421)

- (32) a. Hoy estamos a jueves
 “Today we are on Thursday” (Fernández Leborans, 1999: 2421)
- b. Estamos en verano
 “We are on summer”

- (33) Su familia está en Asturias
 “Her/His family is in Asturias” (Fernández Leborans, 1999: 2421)

Interestingly, time locatives can be expressed with the verb *ser* maintaining the same predicative sense as with the verb *estar* (see 34), but in this case the locative is expressed by an NP. Thus, the dichotomy between sentences like (32) and (34) is at first sight the presence of a preposition in constructions with *estar* and the absence thereof in construction with *ser*. The reason for placing a preposition in the sentence with *estar* is because, as it has been mentioned before, predicative *estar* possesses a locative nature. In contrast, constructions with *ser* are the only alternative when we want to specify hours (35) (Fernández Leborans, 1999:2423). Notice however, that these sentences with *ser* cannot be interpreted as *characterizational*, since this property is only possible with copulative constructions, and, in the instances below, *ser* receives a predicative sense whose various uses have already been explained in section 3.1.

- (34) a. Hoy es lunes
 “Today is Monday”

b. Es verano

“It’s summer”

(35) a. Son/*están las cinco

“It’s five o’ clock”

b. La cita es/*está a las diez de la mañana

“The appointment is at ten in the morning”

Paradoxically, those space locatives in which the subject refers to a motionless inanimate individual can appear with the copula *ser* or *estar* (36), whereas those subjects denoting movable entities can only occur with *estar* (37) (Camacho, 2012: 3).

(36) El baño está/es ahí

“The bathroom is (SL)/is (IL) there”

(37) a. Mi hermano está/*es en Buenos Aires

“My brother is(SL)/*is (IL) in Buenos Aires

b. Los libros están/*son en el estante

“The books are (SL)/*are (IL) on the shelf” (Camacho, 2012: 3-4)

Notice, however, the difference in meaning of these two sentences when these appear with *ser* and *estar* in (38) and (39). The construction with *ser* makes reference to the fact that the lecture will take place in a specific room whereas in the sentence with *estar* “the class” alludes to the group of students that make up the class (Montalván, 1995: 28).

(38) La clase es en el aula 350K

“The class is in room 350K”

(39) La clase está en el aula 350K

“The class is in room 350K” (Montalván, 1995: 28)

Nonetheless, as it occurs with adjectives, we find some geographical locative predicates that can only occur with the verb *estar* and which cannot be understood in terms of stage-level predicates as in (40) and (41), since it is not conceivable the idea that

the location of Mexico and San Sebastian is temporal in their existence (Camacho, 2012: 8):

(40) México está al sur de los Estados Unidos

“Mexico is south of the United States” (Camacho, 2012: 8)

(41) San Sebastián está al este de Santander

“San Sebastian is to the East of Santander” (Camacho, 2012: 8)

Moreover, *estar* as a predicative verb imposes a restriction with regard to the subject it can follow, that is, the subject cannot be a noun describing an event or occurrence. For this reason, expressions describing location in time or space of a specific event can only be followed by predicative *ser* as in (42) (Fernández Leborans, 1999: 2422).

(42) El baile/la conferencia/la fiesta/la clase es/*está a las siete en punto

“The ball/the conference/the party/ the class is (IL)/*is (SL) at seven o’ clock”

(Fernández Leborans, 1999: 2422)

Concurrently, there is another restriction within prepositional phrases relative to locative adverbs such as *encima de* “on, above”, *detrás de* “behind”, *dentro de* “in/inside/within”, *al lado de* “next to”, etc. This restraint is based on the fact that these locative adverbs can only occur with *estar*, independently of whether the subject is a motionless or a movable entity, as (43) illustrates (Fernández Leborans, 1999: 2432):

(43) El libro está/*es encima de la mesa

“The book is (SL)/*is (IL) on the table”

5. Mandatory use of *estar* corresponding to English *be*: the gerund

Gerund constructions are the only type of predicate in which there is no clash between both *ser* and *estar*, since only a single verb is allowed: *estar*

Traditionally, the sentences formed by the verb *estar* followed by a verb in the gerund form are not considered a copulative construction but a periphrastic one. These

sentences, also known as progressive forms, are compatible with *estar* due to its durative nature (44). (Fernández Leborans, 1999: 2433).

(44) ÉL está/*es estudiando ingeniería

“He is (SL)/*is (IL) studying engineering”

In fact, this restriction seems to be supported by the feature of dynamicity. In this regard, gerunds express dynamic situations, whereas copulative constructions with adjectives or participles express non-dynamic situations (45a). Having said that, it should be argued that the fact of being dynamic cannot be considered incompatible with the sense of ‘state’, since an action under way can describe a certain state of the subject. It is for this reason that the gerund can also appear with stative verbs such as *querer* ‘want’ in (45b) (Fernández 1999:2433):

(45) a. Antonio está/*es durmiendo/corriendo

“Antonio is (SL)/*is (IL) sleeping/ running” (Fernández Leborans, 1999: 2433)

b. Mario está/*es queriendo su juguete

“Mario is (SL)/*is (IL) loving his toy”

In any case, this possibility is disallowed for *estar*; as a matter of fact, *estar* cannot appear in the gerundive form whenever the auxiliary verb is *estar* as is illustrated in (46a). Instead, *ser* must be used (see 46b) (Camacho, 2012: 2).

(46) a. *Blanca está estando cansada

“Blanca is being tired” (Camacho, 2012: 2)

b. Chuck está siendo sarcástico

“Chuck is being sarcastic” (Camacho, 2012: 2)

After we have presented the types of predicates that occur with *ser* or *estar* and analyzed the reasons for which each context is compatible with one or the other, or with both, in the following section I will suggest a didactic proposal which seeks to assess whether students have acquired a good competence on the matter.

6. Didactic proposal

Hence, this didactic proposal is formed by a series of exercises which aim to put into practice what students have already learned about the correct use of *ser* and *estar*. Nonetheless, as it has been pointed out previously, not all of the contexts in which *ser* or *estar* arise seem to have the same level of difficulty for English learners of Spanish. In this sense, the predicates in which we find an overlap between both verbs seem to generate a perennial confusion for students rather than those in which solely one verb is possible, as is the case of *estar* + *gerund*. On this assumption, the proposal consists on a series of exercises, more specifically, six distinct exercises organized by different levels. These levels will correspond to the ones registered in the CEFER (Common European Framework of Reference for Languages); these are Beginners: (A1-A2); Intermediates: (B1-B2); and Advanced: (C1-C2) (Common European Framework for Languages, 2001) In this sense, each section will comprise two types of exercises proportional to the pertinent level.

Before starting with the organisation of exercises in each level, it has to be mentioned that the whole didactic proposal has been designed by me. Nevertheless, I have taken some ideas from Delgado Panal's (2018) BA thesis *Problems, theory and practice of verb to be and its Spanish counterparts: Teaching Spanish ser/estar to English speakers through advertisements*. Having said this, I will introduce the types of exercises that shape each level. Section 6.1. (Beginners), will cover exercises for practising the easiest part of the grammar; hence, in the first exercise students will deal with the construction *estar* + *gerund* with different tenses. Similarly, in the second activity they will practise nominal, adjectival and prepositional predicates by describing six pictures. Moving onto section 6.2. (Intermediates), the required level being higher, exercise one will be focused on nominal and adjectival contexts that entail more difficulties than the ones proposed for beginners. Likewise, the second activity will deal with adjectives and participles with adjective value, which require a specific preposition after them. As the level of difficulty increases, students are presented with more complex exercises which will require them to develop tasks other than just answering if certain predicate goes with *ser* or *estar*. Finally, in section 6.3. (Advanced), the first exercise is designed in order that students face some adjectives and participles, in their vast majority bisemic, and which are more problematic for deciding if they appear with *ser* and *estar*. The second exercise of this last section will be dedicated to the most common Spanish idiomatic expressions expressed with both verbs.

Overall, as it can be seen, this didactic proposal is less focused on developing oral competence in learners. In this sense, as oral skills constitute a fundamental part for learning and mastering a language, it would be interesting that teachers complement this didactic proposal with speaking-oriented tasks. Alternatively, as the exercises proposed do not deal with all the predicates addressed in this paper, it would be necessary to include activities focused on passive sentences since, as it has been pointed out throughout the paper, they also constitute a trouble spot.

6.1. Beginners (A1-A2)

Exercise 1:

Aim:

- a) To practice *estar* with gerund constructions.
- b) To be able to put the auxiliary verb (*estar*) in the correct tense and in accordance with the subject of the verb.

Material/Space: Sheets, pencils, rubbers/**Space:** Classroom

Description of the exercise: The teacher will hand out a sheet of paper with seven different sentences. All of these sentences need to be fulfilled with the correct tense of the auxiliary verb followed by the main verb in the gerund form. None of the seven sentences allow more than one single option as the only possible verbal tense can be deduced by the tense of the rest of the verbs in the sentence. In addition to this, the subject of the gerund form cannot be other than the one that appears within the sentence or specified at the end of some of them. Finally, for the last part of the exercise students will have to specify the verbal tense and mode used for the auxiliary verb (i.e. Pretérito imperfecto de indicativo, presente de indicativo, etc...).

The expected academic competences acquired: Through this activity, students will manage to automatize the use of *estar* with gerund constructions so that they will be able to use them in any context without great effort.

Type of activity: The activity is thought to be realised in small groups of three students, who will have to argue with their colleagues in Spanish about what is the correct answer and why.

Exercise 1: Lee las siguientes oraciones y escoge la forma correcta del verbo auxiliar. Deberás escribir tanto el auxiliar en el tiempo correcto como el verbo principal en gerundio. El tiempo correcto de los verbos se puede intuir a través del tiempo del resto de los verbos en la oración.

1. Mientras yo estaba dando un paseo por el pueblo, mis abuelos_____TRABAJAR en el campo.
2. Cuando llegué a casa mi madre me preguntó enfurecida: ¿Qué _____HACER hasta ahora? (tú)
3. Tu hermano_____ SER bastante egocéntrico hablando todo el tiempo sobre sus vacaciones.
4. Deberías venir al parque,_____ PASEAR al perro. (nosotros)
5. Mis hermanas y yo_____ ESCUCHAR un nuevo disco.
6. Siéndote sincera, _____SENTIR una pena inmensa pensando en que no te voy a volver a ver. (yo)
7. Cuando nos llamaste_____COMIENDO en un restaurante en primera línea de playa. (nosotros)

Exercise 2

Aims:

- a) To distinguish between *ser* and *estar* and learn how to use both verbs when they appear followed by adjectival, nominal and prepositional phrases.
- b) To widen the knowledge level about Spanish culture

Material/ Space: Computer, photos, /**Space:** Classroom

Description of the exercise: The teacher will show six different images on the screen for which she/he will ask the students to describe them using *ser* and *estar* followed by nouns and adjectives. As it can be seen, the images illustrate different pictures of Spanish art, culture, traditions, etc. Hence, the purpose of this exercise is to put into practice the use of *ser* and *estar* with adjectives, nouns and prepositional phrases in different verbal tenses as required by the topic in each image. Furthermore, apart from physically describing the images, students are asked to comment on the historical background that illustrate some of the images in the Spanish history.

The expected academic competences acquired: The proposed activity is expected to offer students a wide range of vocabulary at the time they make contact with the Spanish culture. In this sense, students will acquire enough knowledge for making these types of descriptions, especially orally.

Type of activity: The activity is designed to be done out loud by students. The teacher will take part by correcting students whenever they utter incorrect sentences or make a mistake using *ser* and *estar*.

Exercise 2: Observa las siguientes imágenes y trata de describirlas usando *ser* y *estar* con predicados nominales, adjetivales y preposicionales. Deberás hablar de todo lo que sepas en torno a cada foto.



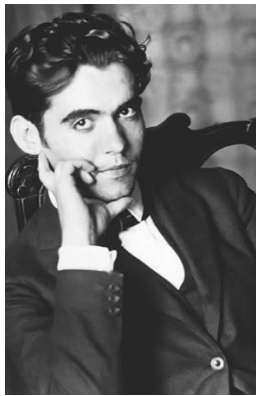
Picture 1. Source: Horhe, (2017). Penelope Cruz at Goya Cinema Awards Madrid. *CelebZZ: Daily Celebrities Pictures*. Available at: <http://www.celebzz.com/penelope-cruz-goya-cinema-awards-madrid/>



Picture 2. Source: Cultura10.org (2018). Cultura Española: Una joya histórica de múltiples tradiciones. *Cultura10.org*. Available at: <https://www.cultura10.org/espanola/>



Picture 3. Source: The 2017 Tenerife Carnival: The Canary Islands with a Caribbean spirit. *Pin and Travel: the travel magazine for pinning*. Available at: <https://www.barcelo.com/pinandtravel/en/the-2017-tenerife-carnival-the-canary-islands-with-a-caribbean-spirit/>



Picture 4. Source: La izquierda y el toreo. *Rick's magazine: Revista politico-cultural*. Available at: <https://ricksmagazine.com/2014/03/27/el-olvido-de-la-izquierda-hacia-el-toreo/>



Picture 5. Source: Las cifras récord de la Semana Santa: desplazamientos, turistas y empleos. *Libre Mercado*. Available at: <https://www.libremercado.com/2017-04-12/las-cifras-record-de-la-semana-santa-desplazamientos-turistas-y-empleos-1276596867/>



Picture 6. Source: Descripción de imágenes (DELE). *Lenguaje y otras luces*. Available at: <https://lenguajeyotrasluces.com/2016/03/09/descripcion-de-imagenes-dele-b1-b2/>

6.2. Intermediate (B1-B2)

Exercise 1:

Aims:

- a) To learn how to use both copulas with noun phrases and adjectives.
- b) To be able to use one verb or the other in situations or contexts similar to the ones presented in the exercise.

Material/Space: Sheets, pencils, rubbers/ **Space:** Classroom

Description of the exercises: The teacher will distribute a sheet of paper to each student. This sheet will contain a short text of eleven lines in which *ser* and *estar* are being used in sentences with predicates of adjectival and nominal type. Along the text, there can be found correct and incorrect uses of the verbs as well as contexts in which both copulas are possible and grammatical. Furthermore, students are asked to explain the reasons for the grammaticality or ungrammaticality of each specific instance in which *ser* and *estar* appear. For this explanation, students should include the type of predicate that follows the copulas, that is to say, the syntactic function the postverbal elements represent and whether they convey individual (permanent) or stage (temporal) types of predicates. Finally, and after choosing the correct answer(s), students should have to comment on the role the copulas fulfil (copulative or predicative). Due to the fact that this exercise is directed to learners of Spanish as second or foreign language, they are expected to answer in Spanish in order to show their writing and speaking skills.

The correct answer of the exercise should look like the following: (i) *Está una chica inglesa de 25 años*: Este predicado nominal actúa como predicado de individuo, ya que

describe una característica intrínseca y permanente del individuo del que se realiza dicha descripción, en este caso ‘Está una chica inglesa’. Siguiendo esta explicación, se puede concluir que el verbo ‘estar’ no es posible en este contexto ya que éste señala propiedades temporales. Así pues, el verbo correcto es *ser*, el cual desempeña una función copulativa con respecto al predicado que precede.

The expected knowledge acquired: As a result of this exercise, students should be able to produce sentences like the ones illustrated throughout the text, both orally and in written texts. Students are expected to distinguish clearly between *ser* and *estar* at least when these are followed by adjectival and nominal predicates.

Type of activity: The realization of the activity will be conducted individually and the correction of the exercise will be carried out orally by the students, who will need to argue their answers, and also by the teacher, who will ease some guidelines if necessary.

Exercise 1: Lee el siguiente texto y determina si los verbos *ser* y *estar* están siendo utilizados correctamente en cada contexto. Para ello, deberás explicar la función sintáctica del predicado y si este predicado es de tipo individual o de estado. Finalmente, indica cuál de los dos verbos es posible en cada caso (en algunos casos ambos son correctos) y la función que el verbo desempeña en cada oración (predicativa, copulativa).

Texto

Ayer conocí a mi nueva vecina. Está una chica inglesa de 25 años, que domina a la perfección el español, puesto que ha vivido en España varios años. Está rubia y le gusta mucho viajar. Está inquieta, el último año estuvo en 20 países diferentes. Estudió periodismo a la vez que era de camarera en un bar para pagarse el alquiler. Dice que lo que más le gusta de España está la gastronomía mediterránea, el clima y la cultura. El sitio que más le gusta de España está Santa Cruz de Tenerife, ya que muy cerca de ahí es una de las playas más exóticas de nuestro país; la playa de las Teresitas. También le gusta mucho el ambiente que se crea en los bares y en las calles porque al contrario que en Inglaterra, en España los locales son siempre llenos de gente. También destaca lo baratas que son las cosas aquí. Te encantaría conocerla, ya que desde el primer día era muy cercana conmigo, algo que me sorprendió puesto que los ingleses suelen estar más fríos en un primer contacto.

Exercise 2:

Aim:

- a) To recognise the prepositions that occur with certain adjectives and participles constructed with *ser* and *estar*.
- b) To practice the conjugation of both copula verbs and become familiar with these types of construction, as they are widely used in Spanish.

Material/Space: Sheets, pencils, rubbers/**Space:** Classroom

Description of the exercise: In Spanish some constructions built with the verbs *ser* or *estar* followed by an adjective or a participle require the presence of a preposition in the complement of the predicate. This is the case of structures such as *estar pendiente de*, *ser perjudicial para...etc.* Assuming that learners tend to find great difficulty in this aspect of Spanish grammar, an exercise in which they can practice this types of constructions is required. Hence, through the exercise proposed, students will have to choose the appropriate copula verb and preposition for the adjective or participle in each sentence.

The expected knowledge acquired: Learners are expected to be able to use these types of constructions correctly in different language skills.

Type of activity: The exercise is aimed to be fulfilled individually.

Exercise 2: Lee las siguientes oraciones y escribe la forma correcta del verbo y la preposición que corresponda en cada caso.

1. Luisa es tan competitiva que___dispuesta___todo con tal de conseguir un ascenso.
2. No es de extrañar que Jorge_____interesado___la papiroflexia; tiene su casa llena de figuritas.
3. He leído en el periódico que andar veinte minutos al día___beneficioso___ la salud.
4. Todavía no hemos decidido el destino vacacional para estas navidades; _____llenos___ dudas.
5. _____convencida___que no me he dejado las llaves en casa.
6. James Cameron___ famoso___ sus películas de ciencia ficción.
7. Aunque parezca una persona muy segura de sí misma, _____muy influenciado___ la opinión de los demás.

8. Los ejercicios de yoga_____buenos tanto_____ la salud mental como física.

6.3. Advanced (C1-C2)

Exercise 1:

Aim:

- a) To be able to differentiate those adjectives compatible with *ser* or *estar*, or with both
- b) To be able to offer an argumentation valid and complete of the reasons for the ungrammatically or grammatically of each choice.

Material/Space: Sheets, pencils, rubbers/**Space:** Classroom

Description of the exercise: The teacher will distribute a sheet of paper with a table with eighteen different adjectives in which students will have to decide if the adjective in question can occur with just one copula verb or with both of them. In addition, they will have to complete their answer with a short but complete justification of their election. In this justification, there should appear some terminology such as: individual level predicate, stage level predicate, inherent feature, temporal property, and so on. Moreover, if one adjective is compatible with both verbs (bisemic) but the meaning changes, the meaning with both copulas should be instantiated.

The expected knowledge acquired: Students should distinguish between both copula verbs when these are followed by adjectives. Besides, they are supposed to know the difference in meaning that certain adjectives can convey when followed by *ser* or *estar*. Additionally, they should have increased their different skills, by being able to use the different adjectives presented in the exercise in different contexts.

Type of exercise: The activity will be completed in pairs.

Exercise 1: En la siguiente tabla se pueden observar dieciocho adjetivos diferentes. Indica si cada adjetivo es compatible con *ser* o con *estar* o con ambos y justifica tu elección. En los casos en los que algún adjetivo sea compatible con ambos verbos, pero cambie su significado (i.e adjetivos bisémicos), deberás indicar el significado adquirido en ambos casos.

	SER	ESTAR	JUSTIFICACIÓN
Listo			
Atento			
Dormido			
Lleno			
Limpio			
Maduro			
Vivo			
Despierto			
Rico			
Irónico			
Verde			
Muerto			
Blanco			
Delicado			
Satisfecho			
Sentado			
Enfermo			

Exercise 2:

Aim:

- a) Get students familiar with the most frequent Spanish idiomatic expressions that occur with *ser* and *estar*.
- b) To be able to include at least the most popular ones in their oral production

Material/Space: Sheets, pencils, rubbers/ **Space:** Classroom

Description of the exercise: Before starting doing the exercise, the students will be presented with a list of various idiomatic expressions that are combined either with *ser* or *estar*. Subsequently, the teacher will explain the meaning of each expression and the communicational contexts in which they can arise. Once the students have had a first contact with these phrases, they will have to choose the one that suits best in each sentence

among the different expressions gathered in the chart. In addition to this, they will have to conjugate the copula verbs as it is required in each case.

The expected knowledge acquired: By means of this activity students should recognise and distinguish the use of *ser* and *estar* with the most common Spanish idiomatic expressions. Furthermore, students should be able to communicate using the most common Spanish idiomatic expressions orally as well as in writing.

Type of exercise: The exercise is designed in two parts: the first part will be devoted to answer the exercise individually; the second section, for its part, will be accomplished in small groups of three students, for which they will have to share, compare and evaluate their corresponding answers so as to arrive at the correct answer all together.

Exercise 2: A continuación, encontraréis dos grupos de expresiones idiomáticas compatibles bien con *ser* o bien con *estar*. Para la realización del ejercicio, disponeis de una cuadro en el que aparecen una serie de expresiones idiomáticas. Tendréis que escoger la expresión idiomática que mejor encaje en cada oración e indicar y conjugar correctamente el verbo que le acompañe (*ser* o *estar*) en cada caso.

Ser: Ser de verdad, ser un decir, no ser para menos, a costa de lo que sea, ¡eso es!, no vaya a ser que, o lo que sea, ser todo oídos, por si fuera poco, un sí es no es, esto es para mandarle a paseo, no ser cosa del otro jueves/mundo, a poder ser, sea como sea, sea cual sea, ser muy suyo, ser un caso, es más, es decir, no ser quien para... , somos o no somos, ser de lo que no hay, ser uña y carne, ser coser y cantar, ser culo de mal asiento, ser el pan nuestro de cada día, ser el cuento de nunca acabar, etc” (Carballera Cotillas & Sastre Ruano, 1991:312).

Estar: Estar al teléfono, dejar estar, estar al acecho, estar a la que salta, estar que trina, estar de moda, estar en boga, estar al corriente de, estarle a uno bien empleado, no estar para nada/nadie, estar de vuelta, estar en todo, estar en guardia, estar de buen/mal humor, estar por los suelos, estar patas arriba, estar al pie del cañón, estar a dos velas, estar como (para parar) un tren, estar como pez en el agua [Marsá, 1987: 142 & Domínguez Gonzalez; Morera Pérez; Ortega Ojeda, 1988] [apud Carballera Cotillas & Sastre Ruano, 1991:312].

___ como ___	___ en todo	___ de mal humor
Dejar ___	___ muy suyo	___ a dos velas
___ un decir	___ por los suelos	___ el pan nuestro de cada día
___ al acecho	___ de lo que no hay	___ como pez en el agua

1. No me sorprende que hayas llegado tarde a la reunión; tu impuntualidad_____.
2. Se nota que Laura disfruta organizando excursiones para los niños; _____.
3. Jamás conseguirás conocer del todo a Juan porque_____.
4. Menos mal que María nos recordó que trajésemos la linterna, es una persona que_____.
5. Te recomiendo que no intentes cambiar a Pedro; él_____.
6. La dependienta_____ toda la mañana porque un cliente le cantólas cuarenta.
7. Por haberse comportado de manera despreocupada con su dinero, ahora_____.
8. Mi padre_____ desde que le echaron de la empresa en la que trabajaba.
9. En período de caza, los depredadores nunca bajan la guardia, es decir, siempre_____.
10. Darle vueltas al mismo problema constantemente no te servirá de nada. Te recomiendo que lo_____.
11. La expresión “está hecho unos zorros” _____ que se usa para indicar que una persona está desaliñada.
12. No entiendo cómo puedes andar tan despistado por la vida. Desde luego, _____.

7. Conclusion and questions for future research

In this paper I tried to give a little global vision of the status of the issue I dealt with, that is to say, the reasons why the uses of *ser* and *estar* with different predicates produce great uncertainty among English learners of Spanish. For this purpose, I addressed the topic explaining first, the different functions conveyed by *ser* and *estar* as

copulative and attributive verbs. Later on, I presented the distinction between individual-level and stage-level predicates, which tries to explain the different uses of both verbs.

Sections 4 and 5, which constitute the nub of the issue, are focused on examining the types of predicates that can occur either with one or with both *ser* and *estar*. Each of these instances contained a detailed explanation of the limitations and exceptions of both verbs together with their compatibility with certain predicates.

All this has allowed us to obtain a more concrete perception of how students may learn the use of *ser* and *estar* and how difficult it is to explain all the contexts without creating more confusion.

Bearing this in mind, I decided to create my own didactic proposal in order to facilitate students the learning process of this subject at the time they enjoy practising what they have previously studied. To this effect, I organised this didactic unit in three different levels (Beginners, Intermediates, Advanced) with two types of activities each. As students reach a higher level, they will find more complete activities which require much more knowledge about the topic. Besides, this proposal will not only benefit non-native Spanish speakers to dominate the uses of *ser* and *estar* but also help the teacher to know if learners have understood the explanation correctly.

Finally, regarding future research about this topic, I would like to suggest some lines that have remained open in this project. It would be interesting to investigate why *ser* admits adjectives in superlative terms (*Es el más amable* “He is (IL) the friendliest one”) whereas *estar* is totally incompatible with them (*Está el más amable* “He is (SL) the friendliest one”, despite the fact that *estar* is compatible with DPs denoting positions within a scale (see 4.1 and 4.3). As a last resort, it would be recommendable to widen the didactic proposal by including exercises regarding passive sentences and combine it with activities focus on improving students’ oral skills.

References

- Bosque, I. (1990). Sobre el aspecto en los adjetivos y en los participios. In I. Bosque (Ed.), *Tiempo y aspecto en español* (pp. 177-211). Madrid, Ediciones Cátedra.
- Bruhn de Garavito, Joyce (2009). Eventive and stative passives: the role of transfer in the acquisition of *ser* and *estar* by german and english L1 speakers. In Joseph Collentine *et al.* (eds.) *Selected Proceedings of the 11th Hispanic Linguistics Symposium*. Somerville: Cascadilla Proceedings Project, 27-38. Available at: <http://citeseerx.ist.psu.edu/viewdoc/download?doi=10.1.1.521.1893&rep=rep1&type=pdf> [Accessed on March 2019]
- Council of Europe (2001), *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, teaching, assesment*. Trad. Esp., *Marco de referencia europeo para el aprendizaje, la enseñanza y la evaluación de las lenguas*, Council for Cultural Co-operation, Education committee, Strasbourg
- Camacho, J. (2012). ‘Ser’ and ‘Estar’: Individual/Stage level predicates or aspect? In Hualde JI, Olarrea A, O’Rourke E, editors, *The handbook of hispanic linguistics*, 453-476. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Carballera Cotillas, Y., & Sastre Ruano, M. (1991). Usos de *ser* y *estar*. Revisión de la gramática constatación de la realidad lingüística en Montesa Peydró, Salvador & Garrido Moraga, Antonio (eds.). *Actas del tercer congreso nacional de asele; el español como lengua extranjera; de la teoría al aula*, 299-313. Málaga: ASELE. Available at: http://cvc.cervantes.es/ensenanza/biblioteca_ele/asele/pdf/03/03_0297.pdf [Accessed on April]
- Delgado Panal, A. M. (2018). Problems, theory and practice of verb *to be* and its Spanish counterparts: Teaching Spanish *ser/estar* to English speakers through advertisements, 2-48. Available at:

<https://rodin.uca.es/xmlui/bitstream/handle/10498/20786/TFG%20EE.II.%20Ana%20María%20Delgado%20Panal.pdf?sequence=1> [Accessed on March]

Domínguez González, P.; Morera Pérez, M.; Ortega Ojeda, G. (1988): *El español idiomático: frases y modismos del español*. Barcelona: Ariel.

Fernández Leborans, M. J. (1999). La predicación: las oraciones copulativas. In *Gramática descriptiva de la lengua española*, 2357-2460. Madrid: Espasa Calpe.

Gumiel Molina, S.(2008). Sobre las diferencias entre *ser* y *estar*. El tipo de predicado y el tipo de sujeto. *redELE: Revista Electrónica de Didáctica ELE*, (13), 2, 1-19. Available at:

<http://www.educacionyfp.gob.es/dam/jcr:093c582d-3fdf-4af3-bb7b-500c98aa21d0/2008-redele-13-02gumiel-pdf.pdf> [Accessed on February]

Instituto Cervantes (2017). El español: una lengua viva. Informe 2017. *Centro virtual cervantes*. Available at:

https://cvc.cervantes.es/lengua/anuario/anuario_17/informes/p01.htm [Accessed on May]

Luján, M. (1981). The Spanish copulas as aspectual indicators. *Lingua*, 54, 165-210.

Marsá, F., 1987, *Nuevos modelos para ejercicio lingüístico*, Barcelona, Ariel. (4a ed.).

Martínez Rubio, M. (2018). Lingüística aplicada a la enseñanza del español como lengua extranjera: dificultades de la adquisición de los verbos *ser* y *estar*, 2-36. Available at:

http://tauja.ujaen.es/bitstream/10953.1/8246/1/Martnez_Rubio_Mara_Trinidad_TFG_Filologa_hispnica.pdf [Accessed on March]

Montalván, N. D. (2006). Consideraciones pragmáticas sobre atribución y predicación de *ser* y *estar*+ adjetivos en español (Doctoral dissertation, University of Georgia), 1-87. Available at:

https://getd.libs.uga.edu/pdfs/montalvan_norma_d_200608_ma.pdf [Accessed on April]

Regueiro Rodríguez, M. (2008). Algunas reflexiones sobre *ser* y *estar* copulativos en la gramática española. *Revista Nebrija de lingüística aplicada a la enseñanza de lenguas*, (3), 56-75. Available at: https://www.nebrija.com/revista-linguistica/files/articulosPDF/articulo_531f362074814.pdf [Accessed on February]

Schmitt, C. (1992). Ser and *estar*: a matter of aspect. *Proceedings of NELS*, 22, 411-425.

Varela, S. (1992). Verbal and adjectival participles in Spanish. In C. Laeufer and T. A. Morgan (eds.), *Theoretical Analyses in Romance Linguistics* (pp. 219-234). Amsterdam, John Benjamin

Pictures references

Picture 1. Source: Horhe, (2017). Penelope Cruz at Goya Cinema Awards Madrid. *CelebZZ: Daily Celebrities Pictures*. Available at: <http://www.celebzz.com/penelope-cruz-goya-cinema-awards-madrid/> [Accessed April 2019]

Picture 2. Source: Cultura10.org (2018). Cultura Española: Una joya histórica de múltiples tradiciones. *Cultura10.org*. Available at: <https://www.cultura10.org/espanola/> [Accessed on April]

Picture 3. Source: The 2017 Tenerife Carnival: The Canary Islands with a Caribbean spirit. *Pin and Travel: the travel magazine for pinning*. Available at: <https://www.barcelo.com/pinandtravel/en/the-2017-tenerife-carnival-the-canary-islands-with-a-caribbean-spirit/> [Accessed on April]

Picture 4. Source: La izquierda y el toreo. *Rick's magazine: Revista politico-cultural*. Available at: <https://ricksmagazine.com/2014/03/27/el-olvido-de-la-izquierda-hacia-el-toreo/> [Accessed on April]

Picture 5. Source: Las cifras récord de la Semana Santa: desplazamientos, turistas y empleos. *Libre Mercado*. Available at: <https://www.libremercado.com/2017-04-12/la->

[cifras-record-de-la-semana-santa-desplazamientos-turistas-y-empleos-1276596867/](https://lenguajeyotrasluces.com/2016/03/09/descripcion-de-imagenes-dele-b1-b2/)

[Accessed on April]

Picture 6. Source: Descripción de imágenes (DELE). *Lenguaje y otras luces*. Available at: <https://lenguajeyotrasluces.com/2016/03/09/descripcion-de-imagenes-dele-b1-b2/>

[Accessed on April]