

Stage-Level non-verbal predication with and without *estar*: a Romance perspective

Goal and main claims. This paper deals with the Individual/Stage-Level aspectual distinction in the domain of non-verbal predication in Romance languages. Particular attention is given to the way the IL/SL contrast is encoded in non-verbal predicates and the way IL and SL-copular structures (CopPs) are derived across languages. Following on a recent study on Spanish (Silvagni, 2017) and Zeijlsta's (2004, 2008, 2012, 2014) theory on formal features, we argue that a single aspectual formal feature drives the derivation of SL-CopPs, and it is thus implicated in the IL/SL distinction across Romance languages. More precisely, we put forward the proposal that SL-ness is encoded as an uninterpretable instance of a [Stage] feature in non-verbal SLPs and that SL-CopPs are derived by virtue of a concord phenomenon between the predicate and an Asp head that functions as the locus of interpretation of SL-ness, which is realized as *estar* in languages such as Catalan, Portuguese and Spanish. We conclude that the inventory of aspectual elements is the same across Romance languages, which thus differ only with respect to the presence of a SL-copula (namely, *estar*).

The problem and some data. As it is well known, Catalan, Portuguese and Spanish alternate between two copulas (*ser/estar*), and this phenomenon has commonly been related to the Individual-Level/Stage-Level aspectual distinction (Arche, 2006, 2012; Brucart, 2012; Cunha, 2011; Fábregas, 2012; Fernández Leborans, 1999; Leonetti, 1994; RAE & ASALE, 2009; Raposo, 2013; Silvagni, 2015, 2017; a.o.). Oppositely, very little attention has been paid to the IL/SL contrast in mono-copular languages, such as French and Italian.

We can observe that in these languages the lack of a specific SL-copula does not prevent the IL/SL distinction. In fact, some *être*Ps (French) and *essere*Ps (Italian) exhibit the typical SL-grammatical effects: for example, they allow event-related locatives (1) and quantifiers (2). Moreover, some predicates, as typical SLPs, can function as secondary depictive predicates (3) and they can be exclusively postnominal (i.e., merged via a reduced relative clause, Cinque 2010) (4).

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| (1) | a. Anne est {seule / *intelligente} dans sa chambre. | (French) |
| | b. Anna è {sola / *intelligente} in camera sua. 'Ana is alone / intelligent in her room' | (Italian) |
| (2) | a. À chaque fois qu'Anne est {malade / *étudiante}, elle se plaint. | (French) |
| | b. Ogni volta che Anna è {ammalata / *studentessa}, si lamenta. 'Every time Ana is sick / a student she complains' | (Italian) |
| (3) | a. Anne prépare du riz {fatiguée / *intelligente}. | (French) |
| | b. Anna cucina il risotto {stanca / *intelligente}. | (Italian) |
| | 'Ana cooks some rice tired / intelligent' | |
| (4) | a. l' (*malade) enfant (malade). | (French) |
| | b. la (*ammalata) bambina (ammalata). | (Italian) |
| | 'The sick child' | |

Proposal. We build our proposal on recent studies on Spanish, which suggest that SL-structures (*estar*Ps) are distinguished from IL-structures (*ser*Ps) by virtue of an AspP (Camacho, 2012; Fábregas, 2012; Silvagni, 2015, 2017). In Silvagni (2017) a doubling phenomenon with respect to SL-ness is observed in Spanish copular clauses (5a), and thus *estar*Ps are analysed as an instance of syntactic agreement between an uninterpretable [Stage] feature, located on the SLP, and its interpretable counterpart on the Asp head, which is overtly realized as *estar* (5b). Therefore, the inventory of aspectual elements in Spanish is argued to be as in (6).

- (5) a. Ana *(está) sola.
 [Stage] [Stage]
 b. [AspP [Asp estar_[iS]] [AP ... [A sola_[uS]]]]
- (6) Asp (*estar*) [iS]
 SLPs [uS]

As it has been argued for Spanish, we analyse Italian and French data such as the above-mentioned grammatical effects (1-4) as evidence for the presence of an AspP in SL-structures and a formal requirement of SLPs to stand in a proper syntactic relation with an Asp operator. Therefore, we propose that the same formal feature [i/uS] is involved in the derivation of SL-CopPs in French and Italian: although an overt doubling phenomenon is not observed in these structures (due to the lack of an *estar*-copula), we argue that SLPs exhibit a concord with a covert Asp head (7). Oppositely, IL-structures, as *ser*Ps, would simply lack that feature (8). In conclusion, the inventory of aspectual elements in languages such as French and Italian would be coincident with that of *ser/estar* languages, the only difference being the lack of a SL-copula (9).

- (7) [AspP [Asp_[iS]] [VP [V être/essere] [AP ... [A seul/solo_[uS]]]]]
- (8) [VP [V être/essere/ser] [AP ... [A intelligente]]]
- (9) Asp [iS]
 SLP [uS]

The idea that the same formal feature drives the derivation of SL-CopPs across languages (and it is thus responsible for the IL/SL distinction) has relevant implications also for feature theory. Mainly, the analysis points out that Romance languages show an “aspectual concord” phenomenon that is completely independent from the expression of resultativity (Arsenijević 2011) or telicity (MacDonald 2008) and, instead, it looks like negative and modal concord phenomena (Zeijlstra 2004, 2008; Biberauer & Zeijlstra 2012; Dekker & Zeijlstra 2012). Moreover, this approach can serve as additional empirical evidence in favour of upward agreement (Zeijlstra 2012, 2014).

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