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Atypical *Estar*: Innovative Vs.
Conservative Uses of *Estar* in
Guadalajara, Mexico

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Introduction

The Spanish copula of *ser/estar* has not only been a heavily investigated topic in Hispanic linguistics throughout the past century (Crespo, 1946; De Mello, 1979; Franco & Steinmetz, 1983), but it has actually been receiving much attention for more than eight hundred years (Vañó-Cerdá, 1982). The *ser/estar* verb copula is equivalent to only one verb in many other languages, such as English, in which both *ser* and *estar* are translated as ‘to be.’ Whereas in English we explain and describe existence, location, and state with the use of the one simple verb, ‘to be,’ Spanish speakers face a decision between two verbs. If the differences in choosing between *ser* and *estar* were always clearly defined and simple, this copula would not be as confusing and problematic as it has been historically. The complication is rooted in the lack of uncovering and recognizing the full semantic values and differences between the two verbs. For example, “where is the entrance?” in Spanish can have two translations: *¿dónde es la entrada?* ‘where does the event of entering occur?’ and *¿dónde está la entrada?* ‘where is the physical entrance located?’ (De Mello, 1979). In English, we rely fully upon adverbs, modifiers, and additional words to differentiate such concepts of existence, due to the fact that we have only the one verb, ‘to be.’ Conversely, in Spanish, certain ideas can be inferred through the choice of *ser* or *estar*.

In Table 1 is a brief summary from Conexiones: Comunicación y Cultura (1999) of the formal, prescriptive, and historically prevalent uses of *ser* and *estar*:

Table 1 Prevalent uses of *ser* and *estar*. (Zayas-Bazán et al, 1999)

<u>SER</u>	<u>ESTAR</u>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • with nouns/pronoun that identify the subject • with adjectives/nouns that identify nationality, religious and political affiliations or occupation • with adjectives to express characteristics like size, color, shape • with a past participle adjective to express the passive voice • with location of events 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • with location of objects and people • with the progressive tenses • with adjectives to express a physical mental/emotional state or condition • with a past participle adjective to describe the resultant condition of a previous action • to express change from the norm

Fortunately, the inherent confusion of this copula has inspired the search for clarification that has now resulted in more distinct characterizations of these two verbs. The present focuses on capturing the intricate semantic detail of the verb *estar* (derived from Latin *stare*, ‘to stand’), and further differentiating it from the use of *ser*. The use of the Latin verb “stare” in different contexts has evolved from Classical Latin into Vulgar Latin and then into Romance languages such as Spanish, Portuguese, and French. Therefore, it is essential to understand that in Spanish, the use of the verb *estar* has been evolving and becoming more solid from its very onset (Crespo, 1946). Helpful to understanding this development has been the research on the uses of these two verbs, especially pedagogical studies that have contributed to clarifying the difference between *ser* and *estar* in order to present this copula in a comprehensible manner to language students with, for example, English as their first language (Crespo, 1946; De Mello, 1979).

A new issue in this dichotomy is the suggestion of a semantic extension of the verb *estar* in the context ‘copula + adjective’ that overlaps with the prescriptive rules of *ser*. The present study aims to examine this semantic extension while examining conclusions of data from previous studies, as well my own, and evaluate the existence of what has been labeled an “innovative use” of *estar* (Gutiérrez, 1992; Silva-Corvalán, 1986). My research questions are:

- 1) Do previous studies on the semantic extension of the Spanish verb *estar*, namely those of Silva-Corvalán (1986) and Gutiérrez (1992), accurately conclude that an innovation truly exists?
- 2) In the dialect of a Spanish-monolingual community in Guadalajara, Mexico, is there a linguistic change occurring in which the use of the verb *estar* has undergone a semantic innovation?

Innovative *Estar*

As previously mentioned, the Spanish verb *estar* has been evolving from the Latin verb *stare*. Naturally, it has been developing in such a way that its manifestation has gone from being applied only in strictly defined circumstances (for example with location, *la estatua está en el centro*, ‘the statue is downtown,’ and with present progressive, *estoy llorando*, ‘I am crying’) to its current, broader use that strongly reflects its underlying semantic value such as in *ella está hermosa hoy*, ‘she is beautiful today,’ in which case the use of *estar* in place of *ser* emphasizes that she is especially beautiful that day. As I plan to demonstrate, this is not to say that the meaning of *estar* has necessarily been altered, but rather that it has, by means of increased application, become more universally defined.

For the purposes of this paper, I have brought together the notions of the “innovative use of *estar*” as proposed by Silva-Corvalán and Gutiérrez in order to create an unambiguous method for determining the existence of an actual semantic transformation in the use of *estar* in any given Spanish-speaking community. To be classified as innovative, the use of *estar* must:

- a) Be in a ‘copula + adjective’ context that has historically implied the use of *ser* (Gutiérrez, 1992; Silva-Corvalán, 1986);

- b) Not be accounted for by any prescriptive uses (i.e. those uses already documented in grammar texts or in articles regarding the *ser/estar* copula) (Gutiérrez, 1992); and
- c) Be identical to the use of *ser* in the native-speaker's verbal discourse (Silva-Corvalán, 1986).

I formed the third classification from Silva-Corvalán's definition of "semantic transparency," the situation in which the semantic division between *ser* and *estar* has been lost and is, therefore, undistinguishable by the speaker. This is the case, for example, on page 593, sample 16 of her article seen in example (1):

- (1) ...pero yo estoy inteligente...
 ...but I am intelligent...

The speaker, here, extends the use of *estar* to the norm, *ser*, not differentiating the semantic division. Whereas Silva-Corvalán presents this lack of distinction as simply being "involved" in the process of innovation in the use of *estar*, I will suggest that it is, in fact, the loss of such semantic differentiation that must define the innovation.

Reactions to Related Studies

In order to make the case concerning the current use of *estar* in Guadalajara, Mexico, it is crucial to first look at the two studies that frameworks my research, those of Silva-Corvalán (1986) and Gutiérrez (1992). My intentions are to accurately present these previous investigations and evaluate what each researcher has concluded as being an innovation of the verb *estar*. Furthermore, in discussing each article, I will refer back to previous texts and articles in order to create a solid set of prescriptive rules for using *estar* that conserve its semantic value when used accordingly. Then, in conjunction with the aforementioned conditions of defining an

innovative use of *estar*, I will employ these conservative rules, as I have termed them, to evaluate the existence of an innovation.

The Extension of *Estar* in Los Angeles Spanish

In 1986, *Language: Journal of the Linguistic Society of America* published Carmen Silva-Corvalán's study, "Bilingualism and Language Change: The Extension of *Estar* in Los Angeles Spanish." In this article, she examines the extension and innovation of the use of *estar* in a bilingual Los Angeles community. Her research questions were: "(a) How does the extension of *estar* proceed? i.e., what linguistic and social contexts are more or less favorable to innovation?; (b) What meaning can be postulated for *estar* in order to account for its use in newer contexts, i.e. for changes in the meaning of the form?; and, (c) What effect does language contact [English] have on the actuation of the change?" (588).

Silva-Corvalán collected her data through 27 interviews with Mexican-Americans, diverse in age and sex and living in the eastern section of Los Angeles. More importantly, these participants were categorized according to the length of time that the speakers' families had been residing in the US. The resulting three groups were then defined as actual Mexican immigrants (Group I), by first generation Mexican-Americans (Group II), and finally by second generation Mexican-Americans (Group III). Participants also varied in language proficiency in both Spanish and English.

Analysis of the data included identifying not only all the innovative uses of *estar*, but also recognizing the stages through which the process of innovation eventually occurs. Silva-Corvalán presented three stages leading up to the linguistic change into an innovative use of *estar*:

At Stage I, the election of *estar* is constrained by: (a) discourse/pragmatic norms which require that, in certain contexts, the attribute be presented within an individual frame; and (b) the nature of the subject referent and of the attribute assigned to it, such that the latter must be susceptible to change, and/or must be circumstantial. At Stage II, the individual frame restriction has been lost, and the nature of the subject referent with respect to change and circumstantiality may or may not be relevant. At Stage III, the only constraint on the selection of *estar* is that it introduces an attribute (595).

She then gives various examples of innovative as well as conservative uses of the *ser/estar* copula in order to defend her hypothesis that the change that is occurring can be seen in these linguistic stages and is very closely related to the amount of contact with the English language. Out of 623 total uses of *estar* in her interviews, Silva-Corvalán classified 344 innovative uses (55%), and she did so “on the well-tested assumption that the speaker did not intend to convey any meaning difference by choosing *estar* rather than *ser*” (597).

This is where I would like to make my claim that the innovative use of *estar* is essentially, and therefore should actually be defined as, the loss of semantic value of *estar*; which thus occurs only when the speaker is using *ser* and *estar* identically and NOT choosing *estar* in order to convey one of its prescribed, underlying implications. This criterion is in agreement with, but not identical to Silva-Corvalán’s explanation of the semantic extension of *estar*. She states, “... the more recent development in the context of predicate adjectives involves the elimination of some selectional restrictions which apply to the choice of *estar* in this environment. As a result, a semantic distinction is lost . . .” (589). Take examples (2) and (3):

(2) Miguel está alto
Miguel is [*estar*] tall.

(3) Miguel es alto
Miguel is [*ser*] tall.

The use of *estar* in example (2) should be classified as innovative only if the speaker uses it no differently than in example (3) *Miguel es alto*, in which case the speaker is saying that the

adjective “tall” is an essential characteristic of “Miguel” and not a condition. Therefore, according to De Mello (1979), I have formulated conservative rule A:

- A) If the speaker implies that he/she personally perceives something, for instance in personal reference according to passage of time or in a way to express how that fact affects the speaker in some way, then that particular use of *estar* acceptably conserves its meaning.

Thus, if the speaker in (2) implies that he/she personally perceives the fact that Miguel is [*estar*] tall (for instance if he were not so tall before or if his tallness affects the speaker in some way) then that particular use of *estar* acceptably retains its meaning and, consequently, cannot be classified as innovative.

Another significant part of Silva-Corvalán’s data analysis incorporated the scrutiny of different types of adjectives, including categories such as size, evaluation, and sensory character adjectives, and the degree to which they favor the use of innovative *estar*. Not surprisingly, she found that the adjectives most susceptible to this innovation were those related to qualities that are often subject to change, such as size, physical appearance, and age. It logically follows that she found these types of adjectives to be more frequently used with innovative *estar*, because in the first two aforementioned stages of its linguistic transformation, the prescribed implication of temporality remains intact. In order to demonstrate Silva-Corvalán’s explanation of the course of the innovation of *estar*, let us take the hypothetical case of the Fernández family.

Juan Fernández grew up in Oaxaca, Mexico, where he attended school until the age of 17. After finishing the *preparatoria* (equivalent to high school), he decided to follow his dreams of opening a restaurant, and he moved to Los Angeles. Within just a few years, Juan became very successful and married a beautiful first generation Mexican-American woman. Ten years later,

they had become a happy family with precious little Juan Jr. Then, for Juan Jr.'s ninth birthday, they decided to take a trip to Oaxaca and visit Juan's family. Juan hadn't been home since he had left 10 years before. He was most excited to see his youngest sister, because he hadn't seen her since she was just a little girl. Upon arriving in Oaxaca, Juan saw his beautiful and grown sister and said, "Paulinita, ¡estás hermosa!" *'Paulinita, you are [estar] beautiful!'*

Everyone had a wonderful visit and reunion with the family in Oaxaca, but the week flew by and it was time for Juan and his new family to head back to Los Angeles. On the returning flight, Juan just could not stop talking about his little sister, Paulina. Juan Jr. was fascinated by his father's stories, and listened anxiously the whole way home when his father said:

"Tú tía era jovencita la última vez que la vi, y ahora ya está grande y hermosa. Su pelo está bien rubio y, pues, está muy alta."

Your aunt was [ser] so young the last time I saw her, and now she is [estar] mature and beautiful. Her hair is [estar] so blond and, well, she is [estar] very tall.

Juan Jr. absolutely loved learning about his family and his heritage, and therefore promised himself that he would raise his children to always appreciate their culture and maintain their language as well. Juan Jr. kept that promise, because 25 years later he proudly listens to his 13-year-old daughter, Juanita, telling her grandmother, in Spanish, about the boy she has a crush on at school.

"Pues, mire abuelita, se llama Billy y está muy guapo. Tiene pelo rubio y sus ojos están azules. No está muy alto, pero es guapísimo"

Well, you see grandma, his name is Billy and he is [estar] very handsome. He has blond hair and his eyes are [estar] blue. He is [estar] not very tall, but he is [ser] so handsome.

Both Juan Jr. and Juanita's grandmother are very pleased that she too appreciates her heritage and continues to speak the language of her culture. Therefore, they praise her for her use of Spanish and encourage her to continue speaking the language and to pass it on to her children as well.

This is how the innovation of *estar* has come to be. Let us take a closer look at what is happening linguistically in the Fernández family. Juan was educated on the prescriptive uses of *estar* in Mexico, not only formally, but also implicitly through constant and unopposed engagement in the Spanish language. However, upon his arrival in Los Angeles, he was exposed to not only a new dialect of Spanish, but also to contact with the English language, (a language with only the one verb "to be"). Regardless, when Juan spoke about his sister, he used *estar* conservatively, because he was describing her in reference to his personal experience (conservative rule A):

- (4) Tú tía era jovencita la última vez que la vi, y ahora ya está grande y hermosa. Su pelo está bien rubia y, pues está muy alta.

Your aunt was [ser] so young the last time I saw her, and now she is [estar] mature and beautiful. Her hair is [estar] so blond and, well, she is [estar] very tall.

However, when Juan Jr. was listening to his father, he did not quite pick up on the full, implicit semantic value of *estar* and its use in such circumstances. Therefore, Juan Jr. goes on to speak and model a much less restrictive use of *estar*, in which he often makes comments such as:

- (5) Cuando tu mamá estaba chiquita, como está tu hermanita, le encantaba dibujar.

When your mother was [estar] little, like your younger sister is [estar], she loved to draw.

In describing Juanita's mother's age, Juan Jr. is using *estar* in a way he has heard his father use it (with age, size, physical appearance, etc.), but he does not use it to implicate a certain personal reference as did Juan. Which in turn leads to Juanita's learning a semantically empty *estar* that is no different from the use of *ser* in the same circumstances. Take, for example, what she said in describing Billy:

- (6) Pues, mire abuelita, se llama Billy y está muy guapo. Tiene pelo rubio y sus ojos están azules. No está muy alto, pero es guapísimo.

Well, you see grandma, his name is Billy and he is [estar] very handsome. He has blond hair and his eyes are [estar] blue. He is [estar] not very tall, but he is [ser] so handsome.

Juanita uses both *ser* and *estar* in saying that Billy is handsome, and, moreover, does not make any distinctions between the two statements *está muy guapo*, 'he is [estar] very handsome,' and *es guapísimo*, 'he is [ser] so handsome.'

Therefore, as Silva-Corvalán demonstrates in her data analysis, there is a difference between a Group I (first-generation) speaker's use of *estar* and a Group III (second-generation) speaker's use of *estar*, and that difference explains the existence or absence of the semantic value of *estar*; it is the innovative use of *estar*. In other words, when a Spanish-speaker chooses to use *estar* in a context that has historically called for the use of *ser*, and they do so without implying any difference from the use of *ser* in that same situation (like in Juanita's case), it is an innovative use.

If there exists, however, the implication of a different "feeling" in choosing the use of *estar* over *ser*, then such uses can only be categorized throughout the aforementioned stages, but not yet labeled innovative. This is the case, for instance, in the following example (7) from my data from Guadalajara:

(7) Es todo lo que conocí de Mazatlán, está muy chico ...

That is [ser] all I saw of Mazatlán, it is [estar] very small ...

In this case, the speaker implies with the use of *estar*, that he perceives the smallness of Mazatlán as it compares with the size of other cities in his personal frame of reference. Consequently, according to conservative rule A, this use of *estar* cannot be considered an innovative use.

To wrap-up her results, Silva-Corvalán suggests that her numerous findings of innovative *estar* can be at least somewhat credited to the low-levels of proficiency in Spanish. It is clearly shown in her data that the innovative uses of *estar* increase as the aptitude in Spanish decreases. She concludes the study with a statement that has inspired other researchers, such as Gutiérrez and myself, to examine the possible existence of this linguistic innovation in a monolingual Spanish dialect. Silva-Corvalán concludes with the statement: “Finally, the external factors which accelerate innovation have been shown to be related to language loss at the individual level, as a consequence of a situation of language shift in which Spanish happens to be the less-favored language” (605).

The Extension of *Estar* in Morelia, Mexico

In reaction to studies such as Silva-Corvalán’s, Manuel Gutiérrez (1992) examined the situation of the verb *estar* in the more preserved variety of Spanish in Morelia, Mexico. He claims that, “Maintaining that the acceleration of a process of linguistic change is caused by contact with another language implies a preexistent change (at a lesser rate) in a monolingual environment.” In other words, Gutiérrez argues that previous conclusions, like Silva-Corvalán’s, entail the existence of a predetermined change in the language itself, independent of other

influences, such as language contact situations. In this study, Gutiérrez focuses on defending his proposition that the same linguistic change must be in process in a monolingual Spanish community. He does this by replicating Silva-Corvalán data collection process; only, Gutiérrez's study took place in the monolingual city of Morelia, Michoacán instead of the bilingual city of Los Angeles.

Whereas Silva-Corvalán presents strong samples, explanations, and validations for her examples of the innovative uses of *estar*, Gutiérrez is much quicker, perhaps too quick, at classifying any uncommon use of *estar* (in other words, a very commonly *ser* situation) as an innovation. For instance, the first example that he classifies as an innovative use of *estar*, is seen in example (8):

- (8) ¿Cómo crees tú que es los Estados Unidos? / pues dicen que hay, que hay muchos árboles frutales, que hay muchos vegetales allá y... no comen grasas, que están muy..., que están muy altos allá... (116)

What do you think of the U.S.? / it is said that there are, that there are a lot of fruit trees, that there are a lot of vegetables there and ... they do not eat fat, that they are very ..., that they are [estar] very tall there...

Revisiting the guidelines I presented earlier in regards to labeling a certain use of *estar* as innovative, we see that *están muy altos* 'they are very tall' fits the first condition of "a 'copula + adjective' context that has historically implied the use of *ser*," because the speaker used *estar*, where, as seen in the prescriptive chart in the introduction, such characteristics have traditionally been attributed to the subject by means of the verb *ser*. However, labeling this particular use of *estar* as innovative does not exceed this point, because it can be considered a prescriptive use according to Crespo (1946).

Translating Crespo's statement, "Se usa el verbo de estado [*estar*] por contraste: Para indicar estados permanentes y normales en contraste con el estado de otra cosa relacionada," I formulate conservative rule B:

- B) The verb *estar* is used to express contrast: to indicate permanent and normal states in contrast with the state of something related.

Returning to example (8), it is possible that the speaker was applying conservative rule B by implying that the tallness of the people in the U.S. is in contrast to that of the people in Mexico, or elsewhere in the world for that matter. Since the possibility exists that this use of *estar* can be attributed to the speaker employing its semantic value, it cannot be labeled as an innovation. Although example (8) may be an innovation, Gutiérrez failed to provide evidence that the speaker is NOT inferring a different meaning by choosing to use *estar* over *ser*.

In addition, Crespo emphasizes the idea of contrast by adding:

... se puede usar el verbo *estar* en todos los casos en que el sujeto admita concepto de estado y sea posible el contraste o comparación (53).

. . . *the verb estar can be used in all cases where the subject admits the concept of state and the contrast or comparison is possible.*

He then gives the following example:

- (9) El Océano Ártico está frío permanentemente (hay otros océanos que no están en este estado permanentemente).

The Arctic Ocean is [estar] permanently cold (there are other oceans that are [estar] not permanently in this state).

I disagree with the following innovative *estar* classification found in Gutiérrez's data, as is explained by conservative rule B:

- (10) ... como el camión era muy grande tenía asiento de sobra,... no,... como el carro de mi hijo también está muy grande,... tiene metro y medio más grande que todos...

... since the bus was [ser] very big it had lots of seats ..., like my son's car that is [estar] also very big, ... it's a meter and a half longer than others ...

Not only is it possible that the speaker in (10) chose *estar* in *está muy grande* 'it is [*estar*] very big' to emphasize the comparison in regards to the car's unusually large size, but it is also likely that indeed this is the case, because the speaker goes on to stress the actual size difference from other things (vehicles) of the same nature.

Gutiérrez (128) presents another improper classification, as seen in (11), in which the use of *estar* that can be accounted for by conservative rule B:

- (11) Eso es lo que me gusta a mí, que hablen bien, no porque hay uno que se van por otro lado, no, nunca me ha gustado la forma de, aquél tiene 29 años, él 29 y yo 22, me gana por 7 años..., 7 años dice mi mamá, ¡ay!, está muy grande de edad; pero yo de niña pensé casarme con una gente de edad grande...

That is what I like, that they speak well, because there are some that go in different directions, I have never liked the way of ..., that one is 29 years old, he is 29 and I am 22, he is 7 years older ..., 7 years my mom says, ay!, he is [estar] too old; but I always wanted to marry an older person ...

In this case, it is likely that the use of *estar* in *está muy grande* 'he is [*estar*] too old,' is stressing the fact that this man is not only older than the girl, but is also older than other men that she might date. Again, the simple possibility that she intends to differentiate this use of *estar* from the use of *ser* in its place is enough to suggest a conserved value of *estar*, as in conservative rule B, and therefore disapprove of its classification as an innovative use.

In further analysis of Gutiérrez's conclusions, it is important to refer again to Crespo (49):

. . . el verbo *estar* expresa también - y con más fuerza - conceptos normales o tenidos como tales, y los indica, ciertamente, con más énfasis y emoción que el verbo *ser*

which translates into conservative rule C:

- C) The verb *estar* also expresses – and with more strength – normal concepts, or the like, and certainly indicates them with more emphasis and emotion than the verb *ser*.

With this rule established, I further disagree with the main example that Gutiérrez uses to represent the 139 total cases that he classified as innovative uses of *estar*:

- (12) ... y había dos baños, uno que se construyó después y uno que ya estaba y había una pila grande y un lavadero también grande ... muy grande, ah ... sí muy grande, era como una [pila] como de 2 por 2, estaba bien bonita, a mí me gustaba mucho ... (121)

... It had two bathrooms, one that was built after and one that was already there which had a big sink and a big place for doing laundry too ... very big, ah ... yes, very big, it was like a 2 by 2 [sink], it was [estar] so beautiful, I liked it very much ...

It may be that the woman conservatively chose to use *estar* in *estaba bien bonita* ‘it was [*estar*] so beautiful,’ because she is noting that perhaps compared to other peoples’ opinions (maybe her husband thought it was ugly), she liked the sink very much, and she therefore emphasizes its beauty with the use of *estar*. It is obvious that, and to more directly translate what she says, the sink was very pleasing to her; in affect, it seems to have had a personal influence on her. In other words, if she had said *era bien bonita* (using *ser* instead of *estar*), she would have been saying that it is an objective, impersonal statement of fact, which anyone could produce; however, by choosing *estar*, she expresses her own reaction to the sink’s beauty (De Mello, 1979).

One of the most recognized functions of *estar* comes from its ability to express temporality, or simply the possibility of variation. As De Mello states, “*Estar*, in contrast to the semantically empty *ser*, indicates that the idea of change is present in the mind of the speaker, either because a change has taken place, or because a change could take place” (340). Accordingly, conservative rule D addresses temporality:

D) The verb *estar* is used to express the possibility of or occurrence of change.

Applying conservative rule D, the final example from Gutiérrez’s study that I argue is an inaccurately marked innovative use of *estar* is shown in example (13):

(13) ... este ..., muchas colonias no tenía, ahorita... tenía muchas colonias nuevas... estaba muy pequeño... y está ahorita muy grande ya... (123)

... well ..., it did not have a lot of suburbs, ... it used to have a lot of new suburbs ... it was [estar] very small ... and at the present it is [estar] already very big ...

The speaker is clearly observing the change that has occurred in the size of Morelia, noting that it has grown throughout a certain passage of time (*estaba muy pequeño ... y está ahorita muy grande*, ‘it was [*estar*] very small ... and at the present it is [*estar*] already very big’). Therefore, there are no grounds on which to base this categorization as an innovative use of *estar*. As a result, this is another case in which Gutiérrez was too quick to classify a prescriptive use as an innovation.

My intentions here are by no means to deny the possibility that Gutiérrez has in fact found innovative uses of *estar* in his data. In actuality, the aforementioned cases may be innovations; there is, however, too much uncertainty and too little evidence to define them as entirely innovative. Furthermore, assuming that Gutiérrez chose the best (most innovative) examples from his findings to put into the article as representations of his data, it is safe to say

that his further data analyses, results, and conclusions are also lacking in strength and effectiveness. The reason for which it is so important to note that Gutiérrez's results are far less convincing than Silva-Corvalán's is that he draws the conclusion that, "Although innovative *estar* is still disputing with *ser* in several areas, evidence from the Michoacán [Mexico] case points to a very significant movement in favor of innovation." The problem is that he created his research based on the previous studies of innovative *estar* in bilingual communities, where the essence of the innovation is an actual loss of the semantic value of *estar* and not simply a change in allocation of the copula. It is inaccurate to conclude that Gutiérrez's study is an indication that eventually in monolingual communities, just as well as in bilingual varieties of Spanish, the use of *estar* will become semantically transparent in relation to that of *ser*. It is more appropriate to state that the use of *estar* in contexts of 'copula + adjective,' where *ser* has been historically prevalent, is increasing and, therefore, possibly leaning towards an innovation.

In addition, Gutiérrez's conclusion that this increased use of *estar* evidences the natural evolution of the Spanish language is somewhat obvious and therefore redundant, because for centuries, the use of *estar* has already been evolving; it has been developing and becoming, as I mentioned earlier, more semantically defined through its increased applications. For example, the use of *estar* in a transitory context has always been part of its meaning, from its very basic application in the present progressive (what is happening in that exact moment), to its very context-specific use in phrases such as *ahí está la casa*, 'there is [*estar*] the house' (physical location is subject to change). The fact that a native Spanish-speaker produces statements like, *¡Está ahorita mucho más grande!* 'Now he is [*estar*] much bigger!' when she sees her 4-year-old nephew for the first time in 3 years, demonstrates that she is even more fully capturing and applying the semantic implications of the verb *estar*.

Before moving to my study of the case of Guadalajara, Mexico, I will first clarify the four aforementioned, conservative rules of the increasing use of *estar* by means of dissecting example (14):

(14) ¡Está ahorita mucho más grande!

Now he is [estar] much bigger!

According to conservative rule A, the speaker in (14) is retaining the meaning of *estar* that incorporates personal reference. The speaker has not seen her nephew in three years, and consequently perceives him to be much bigger in her individual frame of reference. In regards to conservative rule B, the speaker can appropriately use *estar* to express the relative contrast or comparison of the actual size of the boy. As for conservative rule C, the speaker is adding emphasis as well as an emotional element by choosing the use of *estar* rather than *ser*. Finally, the use of *estar* in example (14) allows the speaker to imply that a change has occurred, as described in conservative rule D. Now that I have sufficiently introduced the contentious issue of an innovative use of *estar* and its existence in both bilingual and monolingual varieties of Spanish, I will present my investigation of this semantic controversy in Guadalajara, Mexico.

The Use of *Estar* in Guadalajara, Mexico

In this section, I will present the study I conducted in Guadalajara, Jalisco. This investigation was modeled after Gutiérrez (1992), however, it has taken a different direction due to my aforementioned reaction to Gutiérrez's article. Instead of attempting to prove that *estar* is predetermined to lose its semantic value, I will simply look at what is occurring in regards to the atypical uses of *estar* (i.e. all those uses that appear to be innovative) by incorporating both the earlier-outlined criteria for labeling an innovative use and the conservative rules that

supplement those criteria. I begin by recapping the four conservative rules in their entirety, as seen in Table 2:

Table 2 Conservative rules of *Estar*

- A) If the speaker is in any way implying that he/she personally perceives something, for instance in personal reference according to passage of time or in a way to express how that fact affects the speaker in some way, then that particular use of *estar* acceptably conserves its meaning.
- B) The verb *estar* is used to express contrast: to indicate permanent and normal states in contrast with the state of something related.
- C) The verb *estar* also expresses – and with more strength – normal concepts, or the like, and certainly indicates them with more emphasis and emotion than the verb *ser*.
- D) The verb *estar* is used to express the possibility of or occurrence of change.

Methodology

The research was carried out in the monolingual community of Guadalajara, Jalisco. A total of 14 participants were informally interviewed for one session each and the researcher recorded all sessions. Interview sessions ranged from 20 to 40 minutes. The informal interviews took place at the convenience and comfort of the participants. Interviews included, but were not limited to, questions addressing educational and occupational issues as well as future endeavors and possible travel plans. The focus of all interviews was naturalistic language production and not content matter; thus, the interview questions were used only when needed to instigate conversation. After each interview, the participant filled out a grammaticality judgment worksheet on the uses of *ser* and *estar*. Variable factors, which were documented for each speaker on background information questionnaires, are summarized in the Table 3:

Table 3 Background information of participants

<u>Participant</u>	<u>Age</u>	<u>Level of Education</u>	<u>Sex</u>	<u>Cultural/Social Level</u>
1	20	University Student	M	Middle-High
2	19	University Student	M	Middle-High
3	18	University Student	F	Middle-High
4	18	University Student	M	Middle-High
5	19	University Student	M	Middle-High
6	21	Entering University	F	Low-Middle
*7	24	Trade-School Student	M	Middle
*8	20	University Student	F	Middle-High
*9	20	University Student	M	Middle-High
*10	20	University Student	M	Middle-High
11	20	University Student	M	Middle-High
*12	27	Bachelors/Engineering	M	Middle-High
*13	26	Bachelors/Engineering	M	Middle-High
*14	27	Bachelors/Engineering	M	Middle-High

** indicates interviews that were used in the final data analysis*

Data Analysis

Of the 14 interviews, only seven were available for analysis. The seven that will not be addressed in this analysis are accounted for either by lack of validity (interview 6 – Spanish was not the first language of the participant), incorrectly recorded tapes (interviews 1, 2, 3, and 11), or computer failure (interviews 4 and 5 – transcriptions were lost due to a computer crash). Nevertheless, the remaining seven interviews were transcribed and put together with the 14 *ser* and *estar* worksheets for analysis.

Data analysis consisted of identifying and calculating the frequency of the use *estar*, in both the transcribed interviews and the worksheets, and noting the atypical uses. Atypical uses were chosen based on the first condition mentioned earlier in the process of labeling an innovative use of *estar*, “Be in a ‘copula + adjective’ context that has historically implied the use

of *ser*.” Subsequently, these uses of *estar* were held to the second condition in defining an innovative use, according to which, the atypical use must “not be accounted for by any prescriptive uses (i.e. those uses already documented in grammar texts or in different articles regarding the *ser/estar* copula).” At this point, all recognized atypical uses of *estar* were validated by being matched with and supported by one of the four conservative rules. Therefore, none of the atypical productions of *estar* needed to be judged according to the third condition, “be identical to the use of *ser* in the native-speaker’s verbal discourse,” because they were already accounted for.

Results and Discussions

In the seven transcribed interviews, *estar* appeared a total of 151 times. Within those 151 instances of *estar*, there were a total of 14 atypical uses (1%), all of which can be accounted for by the conservative rules. Two participants (7 and 14) did not produce any atypical uses of *estar*, three participants (9, 12, and 13) used only one atypical application of *estar* each, and the other two participants (8 and 10) accounted for the remaining 11 atypical uses. These 14 instances of atypical uses of *estar* were further grouped according to which conservative rule accounts for their application in the relative circumstances.

Conforming to conservative rule A, there were three productions of atypical yet prescriptive uses of *estar*. An example of this production is seen in example (15):

- (15) ... somos del Fuerte, es un pueblito que está hermoso ...
(participant 12)

... we are from el Fuerte, it is a little town that is [estar]
beautiful...

In example (15), the speaker is telling the interviewer about his family and about the place where they are from. This is a topic of discourse that relies heavily upon personal reference, and, therefore, indicates the employment of conservative rule A in choosing the use of *estar*, in *está hermoso* ‘is [*estar*] beautiful.’ This is an atypical use of *estar*, but it is not an innovation.

Four more of the 14 atypical uses of *estar* can be accounted for by conservative rule B.

One example that represents these four instances is seen in (16):

- (16) Porque tienen muchos campos y están apoyadas [universidades públicas] por el gobierno, y o sea, pueden tener más facilidades que una universidad privada. (participant 10)

Because they have a lot of fields and they [public universities] are (estar) supported by the government, and so, they can have more facilities than a private university.

Revisiting the chart of prescriptive and historical uses of *ser* and *estar* presented in the introduction, it is seen that *ser* is used with a past participle adjective to convey the passive voice, and *estar* is used with a past participle adjective to describe the resultant condition of a previous action. In *están apoyadas por el gobierno*, ‘they are [*estar*] supported by the government,’ the speaker is implying the passive voice with the use of *por* ‘by’ and, therefore, using *estar* uncharacteristically. However, conservative rule B allows the speaker to use *estar* in this sentence because he is stressing the contrast between state universities and private universities.

Continuing with conservative rule C, there were five atypical productions of *estar* where the speaker likely applied the prescriptive use of expressing emotion or emphasis, as seen in example (17) when participant 10 asks the interviewer, I, a question and responds.

- (16) El calendario azteca, ¿lo viste? / I: Sí / Está muy padre.
(participant 10)

The Aztec calendar, did you see it? / I: Yes. / It is [estar] so neat.

In this case, *ser* would be the formally prescriptive verb choice to simply attribute *muy padre* ‘so neat’ to the Aztec calendar. The speaker, however, chose to use *estar* in order to add emphasis to the neatness of the calendar. Whereas *ser* is more historically prevalent in this context, *estar* better expresses the emotion and importance felt by the speaker.

Finally, there were two instances of *estar* that coincide with conservative rule D. Both of these were used to stress temporality, and in doing so, they overruled the formal and historically prescriptive uses of *ser*, as seen in (18):

- (18) Cuando es verano, o sea está tranquilo, pero cuando es por ejemplo otoño, se nota, los árboles cambian de color ... (participant 8)

When it's [ser] summer, like it's [estar] calm, but when it's [ser] for example fall, it shows, the trees change color ...

Tranquilo ‘calm’ is an adjective that can be used with both *ser* and *estar*, however, it takes on a different meaning with each. In the case of using *estar*, the adjective *tranquilo* means to be in a state of calmness (the receiver of the calm), and with *ser*, it means to be that which is calming (bringing about the calmness). Nonetheless, the speaker in (18) is implementing conservative rule D by conveying the changes that occur with the shift in seasons, and therefore, superseding the formal rule mentioned above. Regardless, this illustration cannot be labeled as innovative since it is accounted for by a prescriptive principle.

An occurrence of *estar* from one of the interviews that merits attention, yet is not worthy of atypical classification, is shown in the following example (19) when the interviewer, I, is interrupted by participant 10 (P10):

- (19) I: ... pero tienes que realmente / P10: Estar consciente de, no, tienes que ser muy consciente de que tienes obligaciones ... (participant 10)

I: ... but you have to really / P10: Be [estar] conscious of, no you have to be [ser] very conscientious that you have obligations ...

This incidence of *estar* is not considered atypical since the speaker changes verbs before completing the thought. However, it is an important issue to note because the adjective *consciente* ('conscious' or 'conscientious') changes ever so slightly when used with *estar* instead of *ser*. The semantic difference between the two uses is so slight that in some Spanish-speaking countries, when used with *ser*, the adjective *consciente* means the same as when used with *estar* (Dominicis et al, 1998). Therefore, it is reasonable to say that the copula choice with the adjective *consciente* is a difficult, gray area to label as an innovative use of *estar*.

This is furthermore important in evaluating the *ser* and *estar* grammaticality judgement worksheets from the data analysis since the adjective *consciente* is one of the uses that showed disputing responses. The following sentence appeared on the worksheet:

- (20) Un individuo que (es/está) consciente no maneja si (es/está) borracho.

An individual that is (ser/estar) conscious/conscientious does not drive if he is (ser/estar) drunk.

The participants were asked to circle the correct answer, which according to the prescriptive rule should be *es consciente* 'is conscientious' and *está borracho* 'is drunk.' Out of all 14 worksheets, every participant responded correctly to the second part of the sentence, but only 12 participants correctly chose *ser* for the first part. Rather than concluding that the two *estar* responses (14%) are innovative uses, it is more appropriate to attribute these incorrect responses to the aforementioned confusion, seeing as how there were only two.

Another example from the worksheets that must be highlighted is seen in (21):

- (21) *La fiesta (es/está) muy divertida, pero bailé tanto que ahora (soy/estoy) cansada.*

The party is (ser/estar) very fun, but I danced so much that now I am (ser/estar) tired.

For this sentence, all 14 participants responded correctly to the second part, *estoy cansada* ‘I am [estar] tired’ and incorrectly (according to prescriptive uses) to the first part by responding *está divertida* ‘is [estar] fun,’ in which *ser* is considered the appropriate verb choice. However, revisiting conservative rule D, regarding temporality, it can be seen that this response can be accounted for by the susceptibility to change. To be sure this was a possible explanation, one of the participants was asked later why he chose *la fiesta está divertida*. He explained it as such, “*Porque la fiesta está divertida en este momento, pero puede ser que en una hora ya no,*” ‘Because the party is [estar] fun at this moment, but it is possible that in an hour it won’t be anymore’. According to this reasoning, the 14 uses of *estar* in this case cannot be considered innovative, because they can be justified by conservative rule D.

Finally, the other discrepancy from the *ser* and *estar* worksheets was found in the following sentence:

- (22) *A veces (soy/estoy) aburrido en esa clase porque, aunque el profesor (es/está) bueno, (es/está) un poco aburrido.*

Sometimes I am (ser/estar) bored in that class because, although the professor is (ser/estar) good, he is (ser/estar) a little boring.

The copula use in question in (22) is in regards to the third verb choice. Prescriptively, *ser* + *aburrido* means ‘to be boring,’ whereas with *estar* it means ‘to be bored’ (another one of the adjectives that changes meaning between *ser* and *estar*). Hence, the fact that four out of 14

participants (29%) responded *está un poco aburrido*, 'he is [*estar*] a little bored,' can have a few possible explanations. Firstly, it is possible that the sentence is problematic due to its level of complexity (participants were required to choose a verb three times in this one sentence, compared to the rest of the sentences only requiring one or two responses each), and therefore the participants did not read the sentence attentively enough to capture the whole concept. Another possible explanation for the four atypical responses incorporates conservative rule D, in which case these participants may have been putting the emphasis on temporality. This is actually a worthy possibility since the first words of the sentence, *a veces* 'sometimes', imply an inclination to change which, especially when the sentence is read casually, leads to the use of *estar*. The final possibility in accounting for these instances is simply the potential existence of an innovation.

There exists a possibility that the aforementioned data from Guadalajara includes instances of innovative *estar*. It would be inaccurate to deny such a possibility since it is unknown to the researcher if the copula has become semantically transparent in the mind of the speaker. It is, however, also imprecise to label such atypical uses as innovative. In the 14 cases of atypical productions of *estar*, none were absolutely equivalent to the use of *ser* in the speaker's verbal discourse. Therefore, in the data from Guadalajara, there were no instances worthy of being labeled innovative. The most extreme classification that can be given to the atypical uses discovered in this study would be identifying them as somewhere within Silva-Corvalán's stages of linguistic change.

The distinction in this classification, though slight, is very significant. It is important not to label these uses as innovative since that would then equate them with the uses appearing in, for example, Los Angeles. Although these atypical uses may be in the same stages that led to the

innovation in Los Angeles, it is incorrect to assume that the same innovation is destined to occur in Guadalajara, or in any monolingual community, without proper evidence. Such a deduction cannot accurately be made since the conditions for learning and speaking the *ser/estar* copula are very different.

The main difference between the case of Los Angeles and that of Guadalajara is the English language. It is not simply the presence of English, however, that accounts for the innovation occurring in Los Angeles, but as Silva-Corvalán's data shows, it is closely related to the varying levels of proficiency in both languages. To recall, she states that, "the innovative uses of *estar* increase as the level of proficiency in Spanish decreases" (602). She also discusses at more length the affect that English proficiency levels have on innovativeness. The most important point to be made, for the purposes of this paper, in regards to that section of her data is the fact that lower levels of Spanish proficiency are correlated with innovation.

Due to this correlation, explanations for lower Spanish proficiency in speakers in Los Angeles can also be explanations for why there exists an innovation. A reason that detailed and complex Spanish grammar items are not acquired in an English-dominant community is that formal education not only takes place in English but also often leaves out teaching the Spanish language. Therefore, the Mexican-Americans in bilingual communities such as Los Angeles are properly learning the English language (with the one verb 'to be'), yet informally as well as deficiently learning the Spanish language (with the complex copula of *ser/estar*) (Silva-Corvalán, 1986). In the monolingual Spanish communities, structures such as this copula are learned formally in school and implicitly through constant and unopposed immersion in the language.

In the case of innovative *estar*, it is the semantic value that is in question, which is not accurately comparable between a native Mexican that has never been exposed to any other language and a bilingual Mexican-American that speaks English more than Spanish. In other words, the hypothetical occurrence that a participant from this Guadalajara study produced the same exact sentence as a participant innovatively did in Silva-Corvalán's study does not mean that the two speakers are using *estar* identically. For which reasons I argue that semantic transparency must define the innovation, and not simply be a part of it.

Here is where my reaction to Gutiérrez's study enters into discussion since he defined atypical uses of *estar* as innovative when there was an apparent possibility of conserved semantic value. As mentioned earlier, the atypical uses he found in Morelia should be classified as nothing more than instances occurring throughout the stages that lead to innovation, because they have not been proven to be semantically transparent. This allows for the prediction to be made of an inherent simplification of the verb *estar* in the Spanish language, but does not conclude that the monolingual varieties of Spanish will eventually lose the semantic value of *estar*, as is happening in bilingual communities such as Los Angeles.

The difference between making the aforementioned prediction and actually concluding that the same change is occurring is another important difference, especially when considering educational factors. For instance, Gutiérrez states that, "The general results of this investigation point clearly to a linguistic change that is taking place now in the speech community of Morelia, Mexico and is being led by women with incomplete secondary education." When this observation is considered along with Silva-Corvalán's discovery of the correlation between innovation and Spanish proficiency, it can be suggested that a lack of formal education of Spanish leads to the eventual innovation of *estar*. Furthermore, the data from Guadalajara

support this idea since the participants' education levels ranged from having a high school degree to a completed bachelors degree, and the percentage of atypical uses of *estar* was much smaller compared to in Morelia (considering Gutiérrez's "innovative uses" as simply atypical uses, based on the earlier evaluation of his data).

In any case, it is too early to conclude that the atypical uses of *estar* found in Guadalajara and those found in Morelia ("innovative uses" according to Gutiérrez) will eventually lead to the same innovation found in Los Angeles, not only due to the differences between bilingual and monolingual communities, but also because what seems to be happening in the more retained varieties of Spanish is actually the development of a more universally defined semantic value of *estar*. In combining the chart from the introduction of the formal and historically prevalent uses and the four conservative rules discussed throughout the paper, it is seen that rather than acquiring a list of prescriptive uses of each verb, Spanish speakers (in Guadalajara, and perhaps in Morelia) seem to be simply implementing an implicit set of rules in using the *ser/estar* copula. When these rules account for the observed atypical uses of *estar*, they are universal enough to actually override prescriptive uses of *ser*.

Consequently, and as has been observed, there is a change in allocation of the two verbs in this copula in which the use of *estar* is increasing. Perhaps it was this increased application of more universal rules in using *estar* that eventually led to the innovation in Los Angeles. Therefore, *estar* may be on the same path in Guadalajara and Morelia. Nonetheless, the possibility exists that these rules will continue to conserve the meaning of *estar* and not allow for an innovation across the Spanish language.

Conclusions and Suggestions for Future Research

In conclusion, the innovation of *estar*, defined as any use of *estar* in the context ‘copula + adjective’ that is functionally identical to the use of *ser*, was not found in the data from Guadalajara, Mexico. What was found, however, was a change in the *ser/estar* copula in which the use of *estar* has slightly increased, at the relative cost of the prescriptive use of *ser*, by means of a more universally applicable definition of *estar*. Furthermore, the data from Guadalajara, in conjunction with earlier studies of innovative *estar*, supports the hypothesis that a lack of formal instruction of Spanish has a significant affect on the level of innovativeness of any given Spanish speaker. What is still uncertain, however, is the direction in which the use of *estar* is headed in monolingual communities, such as Guadalajara, Mexico.

Therefore, the atypical uses of *estar* found in Guadalajara necessitate further investigation in regards to the future semantic manifestation of this verb in diverse varieties of Spanish. Moreover, it is important to continue exploring the possibility that there is a predetermined innovation inherent in the Spanish language that might eventually lead to simplification of the *ser/estar* copula in all degrees of spoken Spanish. However, it is also imperative to consider the likelihood that the strong correlation between innovativeness and level of education will grow stronger and merely lead to the identification of social class according to innovative use in colloquial speech. The data on innovative *estar* at this point allows for both the possible process of a natural evolution of this linguistic structure as well as for the chance that innovativeness may only become part a social stratification dynamic in all communities where Spanish is spoken.

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