

Exploring Copula Choice in Spanish: A Look at Gender

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1. Introduction

In this paper we examine the role of gender in copula choice with adjectives in Spanish. Researchers in sociolinguistics have shown that gender and age (see Eckert 1997 for a review of research on age and Wodak & Benke 1997 for gender) amongst other social variables (e.g., social class, style, network and so on) can play an important role in the process of language change and language variation, not only in relation to phonological variables (e.g., use of *t* as apposed to *th*), but also grammatical variables (omission of third person *-s* and multiple negation, for instance). This research began in the early sixties with the innovative studies carried out by Labov (1966) on the realization of the phoneme /r/, as in 'cart' or 'barn', in New York City, which has two variants [r] and [Ø] (i.e., presence or absence), and was formerly thought to be a case of free variation. Labov's research was based on speech samples collected from a random sample of men and women representative of different social class backgrounds, ethnicities, and age. Labov's initial findings showed, among other findings, that females seem to use fewer non-standard forms than their male counterparts. From this early research, several lessons can be learned: linguistic variables (and variants) can be identified and quantified; values for linguistic variables can be correlated with non-linguistics ones (for instance, age, sex, social class, and so on); a change in progress can be shown through the study of variation; patterns of social stratification can be identified; and most importantly, we can explain language change based on the role of these non-linguistic variables. One of the most immediate consequences of Labov's early work has been to show that linguistic change can be observed in progress. He distinguishes between, on the one hand, change from above (that is, at the level of social awareness), typically introduced from outside a speech community by the most dominant/upper social class (overtly prestigious one), such as the shift away from the omission of [r] in New York City speech, and, on the other hand, change from below (namely, below the level of conscious awareness) that may result from working out the internal linguistic processes and that may be introduced by any social class (covertly prestigious), but mainly originates at the lower end of the social hierarchy.

In the same vein as Labov's works, Trudgill (1972; 1983) conducted two studies focusing on the Norwich English, and in particular on the variables age and gender. He analyses the variable (e), as in *help* and *belt*, which has two variants: [e] and [ʌ]. In the 1972 study, it was found that the variant [ʌ] is most frequent in the casual speech of younger speakers (mainly teenagers), given that this type of pronunciation is stigmatized. In the follow-up study in 1983, it was found that the frequency of use of the variant [ʌ] was considerably greater in the reading and word list styles (i.e., more formal styles) of young speakers in comparison to 1972, but not in the casual speech; and its pronunciation was no longer stigmatized. In addition to the age differences, both studies from Trudgill show striking evidence for differences according to gender: women seem to lead changes that move in the direction of the prestige norm; whereas men move in the direction of the lower class norms. Concretely, Trudgill (1972, 1983) claimed that non-standard language variants function as solidarity markers for men (a way of highlighting their 'masculinity').

In both Labov's works on New York city and Trudgill's study on Norwich English it was hypothesised that differential access to economic power made women more sensitive to overt prestige,

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since women could only use symbolic markers of status (i.e., prestige forms), whereas men could gain status through other means (namely, professional occupation and income). In other communities dominated by working class people, where there is a clear gender differentiation depending on the occupation of the speaker, such as in the domains of mining and heavy industry, such settings promote the use of an anti-prestige set of variants amongst males as a sign of solidarity. Research on sociolinguistic variation, therefore, has gathered tremendous evidence showing that “linguistic forms used by women and men contrast - to different degrees – in all speech communities” (Holmes, 2001: 150). Labov summarizes in the following way: “women conform more closely than men to sociolinguistic norms that are overtly prescribed but conform less than men when they are not” (2001: 293). Labov’s principles have been tested in different language scenarios in order to explore the key factors for understanding the dynamics and/or variation of a particular speech community. Women and men are expected to carry out different roles and in some cases this may correlate with male and female language, as among the Gros Ventre Indians of North America (Trudgill, 2000).

Despite this general agreement, there are some exceptions to these generalizations. In cases of stable variation, women do not tend to use more vernacular or prestige variant forms than a comparable group of men. In addition, there also is evidence showing that women with less economic power (e.g., women who stay at home) do not use more symbolic markers than those in paid employment. Moreover, some studies have shown that gender was actually not the influencing factor; rather, it was the strength of the social networks that created apparent gender differences. One such example is found in the work conducted by Milroy (1980) and Milroy and Milroy (1985). Those studies considered the use of certain vernacular features in Clonard (a Catholic area of West Belfast) and Ballymacarrett (a Protestant area of East Belfast). In order to explain the types of sound change observed in these communities, network strength scores were derived for each speaker based on the density of the social network (i.e., whether or not all speakers know all other speakers) and the multiplexity of the network (i.e., in how many capacities do the speakers interact?). In Clonard, because the traditional linen industry was in clear decline, and lack of employment was very high, young women were forced to find employment in city centre shops where they had frequent contact with customers of both religious groups. This employment situation led to very low network strength scores for these younger women which correlate significantly with the higher use of certain vernacular variants (e.g., of (a) as in *bad* vs. *bawd*; *grass* vs. *graws*), generally associated with males, particularly protestant males. Thus, dense social networks and close ties lead to conservative patterns and adherence to the traditional norm, whereas loose social networks and loose ties lead to patterns of innovation and change (in a divergence from the traditional norm), regardless of gender. If for whatever reason the employment situations change and women are forced out to work, their ties become looser. So then, it is not gender (or sex), but rather the social network that counts.

As with the exceptions cited above, Pooley (2000) points out two cases where the sociolinguistic gender patterns in French (spoken in France) differ from what is traditionally expected. Pooley found cases of *relic variants*, that is, cases where older women are the major users of features more or less abandoned by other members of the same community. In the textile towns of northern France (e.g., Roubaix), older women born prior to World War II employed certain vernacular variants more than their male contemporaries (e.g., word-final consonant devoicing). Secondly, he posits cases of *supra-local variants*, namely, cases where sub-national and non-local forms are adopted by women.

In summary, it is clear that the role of gender in language change and variation is not clear-cut. This disparity in findings has to be explained in terms of other additional factors such as access to power (employment vs. unemployment, age) and the roles assigned to either women or men in a particular community. The present investigation aims to further explore the issue of gender as it influences social variation and to connect our findings with the research that precedes it. In order to do so, the following section of the present paper reviews previous research on the copula contrast with a special focus on those findings related to gender and variation. The current study is the focus of the third section, with reference to the methodology employed to investigate the issue of gender. Section four addresses the implications of the main findings and connects the current study to previous findings on gender variation.

2. Variation in copula choice in Spanish and the role of gender

The current study focuses on the syntactic constructions in which either *ser* or *estar* are paired

with an adjective. These [copular verb + adjective] constructions are of particular interest because of the variation they permit. As many as eighty percent of all adjectives allow both copulas and the selection between the two is determined by a speaker's desire to highlight a given feature of the discourse context (Falk, 1979; Geeslin, 2005). Some of the meanings that a speaker may choose to highlight are features of the referent (e.g., animacy), characteristics of the sentence (e.g., whether the characteristics ascribed to the referent are likely to change) and characteristics of the discourse itself (e.g., whether or not the referent is compared to itself at another point in time) (see Geeslin, 2005 for a detailed account). This pattern has changed over several centuries such that the number of adjectives that allow *estar* and the number of contexts in which it is permitted have increased over time (Vañó-Cerdá, 1982; 2002). An example of a context in which both *ser* and *estar* are permissible is included in (1) below. The selection of the copula in this case is not a function of the adjective itself, but rather, the speaker's choice to highlight other aspects of the context, such as whether or not the child is generally attractive (*ser*) or is particularly attractive on this given day (*estar*).

- (1) La niña es / está guapa
 The (fem.sg.) child (fem.) is (ser/estar) attractive (fem.)
 'The child is attractive'

Since the 1980's a wealth of research has been conducted on the variation of copular verbs in Spanish, but many questions still remain. Even though there is a general consensus as to which linguistic variables (e.g., frame of reference, susceptibility to change, experience with the referent, predicate type, adjective class, copulas allowed, and animacy of the referent) best describe variation in copulas in Spanish, there is no such agreement when it comes to the social variables (e.g., age, gender and generation). This may be partly the result of the heterogeneity of the methodology employed in such studies and the homogeneity of the populations studied in several of the studies where social stratification is not present. This previous research will be examined in greater depth, with a particular focus on gender differences, prior to the formulation of the research questions that guided the current study.¹

The first study to address this issue among Mexican-American bilinguals in Los Angeles, Silva-Corvalán (1986, 1994), gives evidence of the extension of *estar* to contexts that traditionally corresponded to *ser* based on an analysis of tape-recorded interviews with 33 bilinguals from three different generations (according to birthplace and place of residence). Her results demonstrate a change in progress, spreading across three generations of bilinguals. Furthermore, it was found that women use *estar* more than men and that this difference increases across generations. In a related study, Gutiérrez (2003) sought to investigate the opposition between *ser* and *estar* with adjectives in the Spanish spoken by the Mexican-American community in Houston and Los Angeles. A comparison group of monolingual speakers from Mexico was also included in the study. Gutiérrez found evidence of innovation in the bilingual communities, and, like Silva-Corvalán (1994), suggested that contact with other languages fosters the extension of *estar* into contexts that traditionally correspond to *ser* but does not cause the change. Regarding gender, Gutiérrez also found that women are more innovative than men.

In addition to the research conducted on Mexican and Mexican-American Spanish, Malaver (2000) carried out an investigation of expressions of age with *ser* and *estar*, based on two corpora collected in 1977 and 10 years later, in 1987, in Venezuela (Caracas). Malaver found that frame of reference and a distinction between foregrounding and backgrounding were important in describing the use of *estar*. In addition, she also found that older speakers, men and those of the lower class showed a higher use of *estar* in the earlier corpus but that the gender differences disappeared in the later corpus and the upper middle class showed a use of *estar* comparable to that of the lower class in the later corpus. This result was later confirmed for all [copula + adjective] contexts in the 1987 corpus, where gender was not found to be a significant predictor of copula selection (Díaz-Campos & Geeslin, 2004).

In exploring copula selection on the Iberian Peninsula, we have elicited data using a contextualized preference task (see section 3.2 for additional details on this instrument), and shown

¹ For those interested readers, please see Geeslin and Guijarro-Fuentes (2006a) and Guijarro-Fuentes and Geeslin (2006a) for a full review of the sociolinguistic research on *ser* vs. *estar*.

that the role of gender varies from one setting to another (Geeslin and Guijarro-Fuentes, 2006a, b; Guijarro-Fuentes and Geeslin, 2006a, b). In Guijarro-Fuentes and Geeslin (2006a) we studied a group of Galician-Spanish bilinguals (N=37) and a group of monolinguals (N=19) from areas where no other regional language was spoken. Results indicated that the Galician bilinguals selected *estar* more often (48.7%) than the monolingual group (44.9%) and, likewise, selected *ser* less often than the monolingual speakers (48.6% vs. 50%). These differences were statistically significant. Despite the significant differences in frequency of copula choice, a regression analysis showed that the linguistic predictors of that choice (i.e., predicate type, susceptibility to change, adjective class and copulas allowed), were the same for both groups, even though the degree of significance of each of these factors differed. In an examination of social predictors of copula choice, no effect was found for gender.

Because our participant sample in Guijarro-Fuentes and Geeslin (2006a) was largely limited to educated speakers with few social differences, we expanded our original participant group to include a less homogeneous population of 155 speakers. The participants included a group of monolingual Spanish speakers (N=82) residing outside the Galician region to whom our bilingual participants were compared, and a group of Spanish speakers who were residing in Galicia (N=73). Participants in the latter group varied in degree of bilingualism, language learning histories, and language use profiles. Data in that study were elicited using the same written contextualized preference task as that employed in Guijarro-Fuentes and Geeslin (2006a). In support of the findings from our first study, the results from this second study demonstrated significant differences in the frequency of selection of each copula and similarities in the linguistic factors that predicted copula selection. Moreover, we found significant effects on the prediction of the use of *estar* for the variables gender, occupation, the first language of the participant's mother, and the language normally used by the participants. The gender differences found in that study for the Galician bilinguals were due to the higher use of *estar* by men than by women. In contrast, the monolingual population (those living outside Galicia) showed that women used *estar* more than men. Thus, the monolingual population seems to pattern with the Mexican-American speakers (Gutiérrez, 1992; Silva-Corvalán, 1986, 1994) and the bilinguals in Galicia pattern with the monolinguals in Venezuela in the 1977 corpus (but not with more recent data that show no such gender differences). From this study alone, we see that differences between male and female patterns of use are not simply a reflection of the characteristics of bilingual vs. monolingual communities.

To further explore this issue, we conducted a similar study with a group of Catalan bilingual speakers (Guijarro-Fuentes and Geeslin, 2006b). Although the purpose of that study was also to describe the process of copula selection for this population, particular emphasis was placed on social factors that might contribute to this process, since findings for social variables in previous studies were inconclusive. We analyzed data elicited using the same written preference instrument from a large group of bilingual participants who were speakers of Catalan (N=141) and compared them with the same group of 82 monolinguals (previously described in other studies) employing the same methodology. According to the results, there was a significant difference among the participants from inside and outside Catalonia in their preference of copular verbs. Bilingual speakers selected *estar* in 43.8 percent of the contexts provided, whereas monolingual speakers opted for its use 44.9 percent of the time. Conversely, bilingual speakers used *ser* more frequently than the monolingual ones (52.5% vs. 50%). Overall, these differences in frequency among the two groups were statistically significant. This trend is the opposite of what was found for the Galician bilinguals, who selected *estar* more frequently than their monolingual counterparts. We also reported that, although the degree of significance of each of linguistic factors differed, both populations of speakers showed similar linguistic predictors of *estar* (The only difference being that animacy was not found to be a significant predictor). Finally, for the bilingual group, only four of the social factors examined were shown to be significant predictors of *estar*: gender, occupation, the father's first language and the language normally used in social contexts. In relation to gender, we found that males selected *estar* 44.6 percent of the time, whereas females selected *estar* 48.1 percent of the time. Surprisingly, this result was similar to the results from the monolingual population, where males selected *estar* 47.1 percent of the time and females selected *estar* 51.1 percent of the time. That is, the direction of the effect of this variable is the same for the two groups: men use *estar* less than women. Unlike Galician bilingual speakers, we claimed that the Catalan bilingual population was in some ways more conservative than their monolingual counterparts raising questions regarding the previously held assumption that

bilingualism accelerates the extension of *estar*.

In a related study, Geeslin and Guijarro-Fuentes (2006b) carried out an analysis of the linguistic and social predictors of *estar* for bilinguals in two additional regions of Spain: the Basque Country and Valencia. The primary focus of this study was to determine whether or not bilingualism could be associated with a higher or lower use of *estar* given the conflicting results found in earlier studies, and to unify the results across studies regarding the degree of convergence with the monolingual norm that exists across these bilingual groups. The participants were 17 bilinguals from the Basque Country (7 males and 10 females) and 66 bilinguals from Valencia (33 males and 33 females), Spain, each of whom completed the same written preference task as the earlier participants. Results demonstrate that both populations showed significantly different frequencies of selection of the copulas from the monolingual comparison group. The Valencian group showed a similar rate of selection of *estar* to that of the monolingual group (44.5% vs. 44.9%) but a higher rate of selection of *ser* (52.8% vs. 50%) (opting to select the ‘both’ option on the written instrument less often than the monolinguals). In contrast, the Basque group showed similar rates of selection of *ser* to that of the monolingual group (51.1% vs. 50%), but much higher rates of selection of *estar* (47.3% vs. 44.9%) (also opting to select the ‘both’ option less than the monolinguals). There were also slight differences in the linguistic predictors of copula choice. For the Basque group, only three of the six factors that predict copula choice for the monolinguals were found to be significant predictors of copula choice and for the Valencian group one factor, dependence on experience, was excluded from the predictive model. Because gender was not found to be a significant predictor of copula choice in the regression model for either of these groups no additional results for this variable were provided. The purpose of the current study is to further explore the role of gender in predicting copula choice for these two groups and to compare the effect of gender across each of the aforementioned populations in Spain.

To summarize, the effect of the social variable gender on copula selection remains unclear. Not only do men and women show different tendencies in different speech communities, no clear relationship between bilingualism with another language and the effects of gender on copula choice exists. The results of these studies are summarized in Table 1.

Table 1. Summary of Research Findings on the Use of *Estar* with Adjectives

Author (s)	Context	Gender differences
Silva-Corvalán (1986, 1994)	US, Mexican descent, Los Angeles	Women use <i>estar</i> more, this increases across generations
Gutiérrez (1992, 1994a,b, 2003)	US, Mexican descent, Houston and Los Angeles	Women use <i>estar</i> more, women are more innovative
Malaver (2000)	Venezuela, Caracas	Men use <i>estar</i> more in 1977, by 1987 gender differences disappear
Díaz-Campos & Geeslin (2004)	Venezuela, Caracas	No gender differences (same corpus as Malaver)
Geeslin and Guijarro-Fuentes and (2006a)	Spain, (not bilingual regions)	Women use <i>estar</i> more than men
Geeslin and Guijarro-Fuentes and (2006a)	Galicia	Men use <i>estar</i> more than women
Guijarro-Fuentes and Geeslin (2006b)	Catalonia	Women use <i>estar</i> more than men
Geeslin and Guijarro-Fuentes (2006b)	Valencia	No significant effects reported
Geeslin and Guijarro-Fuentes (2006b)	Basque Country	No significant effects reported

Based on these conflicting findings, the current study seeks to explore the role of gender across several bilingual populations on the Iberian Peninsula. Although each of the five groups explored in the current study has been described in previous research, no information has been provided regarding gender differences for two of these groups: the Basque bilinguals and the Valencian bilinguals. Moreover, no body of work exists in which an exclusive focus on gender differences has been addressed in the effort to generalize across populations. In response to our findings on Galician, we had hypothesized that while women may tend to lead innovation in general (i.e., in monolingual

populations) (Labov, 2001; Holmes, 2001) in bilingual populations that same variant may be seen as an identity marker and this, in turn, may lead to greater use by men (Romaine, 1998). Clearly, this early hypothesis is an oversimplification of the actual role of gender in copula selection and this issue warrants much closer examination.

3. Study

The main purpose of the current study is to further explore the role of gender in copula selection in the Basque Country and in Valencia and to compare these findings across five different populations: monolinguals in regions of Spain where Spanish is not in contact with a regional language, and bilinguals in Galicia, Catalonia, the Basque Country and Valencia. The research questions that guided this study are:

1. What is the role of gender in the selection of *estar* in the Basque Country and in Valencia? Does one gender demonstrate higher rate of selection of this variant? Are the apparent differences between genders significant?
2. How do the findings for these two populations compare to previously reported results for other speech communities?

In answering our research question, we will first analyze the effects of gender in the data from the Valencian and the Basque groups. Although we know from earlier descriptions of this data set (Geeslin and Guijarro-Fuentes, 2006b) that gender was not a significant predictor of copulas choice when considered in conjunction with other social and linguistic variables, we do not know how copula selection breaks down across genders nor do we know whether or not this factor is significant in isolation. Following this analysis, we will also attempt to find a more generalizable pattern for gender differences across bilingual populations. Our research might help us to identify whether or not Galician bilinguals or Catalan bilinguals are different from other bilinguals on the Iberian Peninsula, or whether each bilingual situation is unique for reasons unrelated to both gender and bilingualism. The implications for the findings of the current research will be discussed in the context of the conflicting results from previous studies.

3.1 Participants

Each of the five Spanish-speaking populations to be compared here has been described in other publications. Nevertheless, a brief overview is provided of each group prior to analysis. The monolingual population included 82 speakers, 60 female and 22 male, living in regions of Spain that are not associated with bilingualism, such as Andalusia and Madrid. All speakers had completed secondary education and 47 of them had additional higher education. These participants ranged in age from 18 to 62 and had knowledge of additional languages such as Catalan, English, French, German and Portuguese. Nevertheless, these speakers were not native speakers of those additional languages.

The Galician bilingual group (N=73), 33 of whom were from the city of Vigo, was made of different subgroups: a group of Galician-Spanish bilinguals who favour Galician (N=11), a group of Spanish-Galician bilinguals who favour Spanish (N=24), a group of native speakers of Spanish who learned Galician as an L2 (N=6), a group of native speakers of Galician who learned Spanish as an L2 (N=17), and two groups who did not consider themselves bilingual: monolingual Spanish speakers (N=12) and monolingual Galician speakers (N=3). All 73 participants had pursued higher education. The group included 54 females and 19 males, ranging in age from 19-51. The group included speakers who favour Spanish, Galician or equal use of both in each of the different settings considered (home, work, daily language and social settings). All but 40 participants were university students and all but 2 reported having knowledge of some additional languages: Catalan (2), English (68), French (24), German (3), Italian (2), and Portuguese (2).

The Catalan bilingual group was comprised of 141 Catalan-Spanish bilinguals, mainly from Barcelona (N=131), subdivided as follows: 48 who favour Catalan, 90 Spanish-Catalan bilinguals who favour Spanish, 2 native speakers of Catalan who learned Spanish as an L2, and one participant considered to be trilingual in Spanish, Catalan and Galician. The group included speakers who favour

Spanish, Catalan or equal use of both in each of the settings examined (home, work, daily language and social settings). Mostly of them had pursued higher education (N=99), 119 were females and 22 males, and participants ranged in age from 15-65. All participants reported having knowledge of some additional languages: English (129), French (84), German (13), Italian (6), and Russian (1). All but 29 participants were university students.

The Basque bilingual group (N=17), mainly from the city of Bilbao (N=11), was comprised of different sub-groups: a group of Spanish-Basque bilinguals who favour Spanish (N=14), a group of Basque-Spanish bilinguals who favour Basque (N=2), and one participant considered to be trilingual in Spanish, Basque and Portuguese. The group includes speakers who favour Spanish and others who favour Basque in each of the settings examined (home, work, daily language and social settings). This group is comprised of 10 females and 7 males, ranging in age from 15 to 28. Seven of the participants in this group have also studied English and the other 10 have studied both English and French. All 17 participants were university students.

Finally, the Valencian bilingual group (N=66) was sub-divided into a group of Valencian-Spanish bilinguals who favour Valencian (N=25), a group of Spanish/Valencian bilinguals who favour Spanish (20), a group of native speakers of Spanish who learned Valencian as an L2 (11), and a group of native speakers of Valencian who learned Spanish as an L2 (10). These speakers varied in their preference for Spanish or Valencian in each of the settings examined. The group consisted of 33 women and 33 men, ranging in age from 22 to 79. One speaker had only primary education, 18 others had completed secondary education and 47 others also had higher education. Participants reported additional knowledge of English (N=32), French (N=35), German (N=1) and Portuguese (N=1). Thirteen participants had no knowledge of additional languages. All participants in this group were residing in Valencia City.

3.2 Methodology

The data used to compile the preceding descriptions were collected using a background profile questionnaire. The linguistic data were elicited using a contextualized preference task that provided a paragraph-length context and then asked participants to select either *ser*, *estar* or to indicate that both were good answers according to the discourse context provided. This instrument contained 28 items, each preceded by a paragraph-length context (a similar instrument with the same format is published in its entirety in Geeslin, 2005). Each discourse context controls for each of the linguistic variables shown to contribute to copula choice. Participants were instructed verbally and in writing that their answers should reflect their own use of *ser* and *estar*, and that they should go on ‘feel’ for what sounds right rather than on rule knowledge.

3.3 Analysis

In order to determine how copula selection is distributed across genders for these two populations, the data for the Basque and the Valencian group were reanalyzed separately. First, the social variable gender was cross-tabulated with the dependent variable (copula choice) and secondly, this variable was submitted to a chi-square (X^2) test in order to determine whether or not any apparent relationship between the dependent variable (copula choice) and the independent variable (gender) was significant. In order to examine the role of gender in copula selection across populations, the data from the analysis presented in the current study were juxtaposed with the results for gender reported in previous studies on the Iberian Peninsula.

3.4 Results

We begin here with a reminder that previous analyses of these data have already demonstrated that for both of the bilingual populations considered in the current study, significant differences in the frequency with which copulas are selected between the bilingual population and a monolingual comparison group have been found. While the Basque bilinguals selected *ser* 51 percent of the time, *estar* 47.3 percent of the time and the both response 1.7 percent of the time, the Valencian monolinguals selected *ser* 52.8 percent of the time, *estar* 44.5 percent of the time and the both response 2.8 percent of the time. Both groups are significantly different from the monolingual group,

which selected *ser* 50 percent of the time, *estar* 44.9 percent of the time and the both response 5.1 percent of the time. Not only was the frequency of selection of each copula for these groups significantly different, both bilingual groups differ from the monolingual group in their selection of the ‘both’ option. Another interesting result is that while the Basque bilinguals select *estar* more frequently than the monolingual group (like the Galician group), the Valencian bilinguals select *estar* with similar frequency and *ser* with greater frequency than the monolingual group (like the Catalan group). For a complete discussion of these differences, the reader is invited to see Geeslin and Guijarro-Fuentes (2006b).

In order to meet the goals of the current study, the data from the Basques and from the Valencians were each analyzed according to the distribution of the dependent variable across the categories of the independent variable gender. The results of this analysis are summarized in Table 2, with the results for the X^2 test included below the table. It should be noted that the number of tokens included in each test is equal to the total number of participants multiplied by 28 (the total number of items on the written preference task).

Table 2. Distribution of copula choice for Basques and Valencians across genders

Groups	<i>Ser</i>		<i>Estar</i>	
	Female	Male	Female	Male
Basque bilinguals	51.8	50	48.2	50
Valencian bilinguals	51.4	54.1	48.6	45.9

Note. For Basques (N=1848): $X^2=1.356$, $df=1$, Cramer’s $V=0.027$, $p=.244$. For Valencians (N=476): $X^2=.147$, $df=1$, Cramer’s $V=.018$, $p=.701$.

Table 2 shows that neither of the bilingual groups demonstrates a significantly different rate of selection of copulas across genders. This result was not necessarily anticipated because it is often common for variables that are not selected as significant predictors of the dependent variable in a regression analysis (like that reported in Geeslin and Guijarro-Fuentes, 2006b) to be significant when considered in isolation. The result does mean, however, that we cannot talk about significant differences between genders. Nevertheless, there are tendencies across genders that warrant further discussion. Among the Basque bilinguals, women show a lower rate of selection of *estar* as compared to *ser*. In contrast, while females in the Valencian group select *ser* and *estar* with almost identical frequencies to that of the Basque group, the men in the Valencian group select *ser* more often and *estar* less often than either the Valencian females or the males or females in the Basque group. In comparing just these two groups, it appears that the Valencian men are the ones that have the most unique patterns of copula selection.

It will be recalled that the second research question guiding the current investigation asked how the distribution of copula selection across genders compared to the other bilingual and monolingual groups that had been studied on the Iberian Peninsula. To facilitate this comparison, we juxtapose the findings from previous studies with those reported in the current study. The distribution of copula selection across genders for the four bilingual groups and for the monolingual group is summarized in Table 3. Because rates of selection of *estar* are expected to increase across time as language change progresses, and because a higher rate of selection of *estar* is indicative of greater use of the non-prestige (or ‘innovative’) variant, the results for each group are ordered according to the rates of selection exhibited among males.

Table 3. Compilation of results for gender across bilingual and monolingual groups

Groups	<i>Ser</i>		<i>Estar</i>	
	Female	Male	Female	Male
Galician bilinguals	49.8	45.1	50.2	54.9
Basque bilinguals	51.8	50	48	50
Monolinguals	48.9	52.9	51.1	47.1
Valencian bilinguals	51.4	54.1	48.6	45.9
Catalan bilinguals	51.9	55.4	48.1	44.6

There are several observations that can be made about gender differences across these groups. It is

possible to compare the differences within groups across genders as well as the differences across groups for each gender. Given the many dimensions of this comparison, these results are summarized in Table 4, prior to discussing them.

Table 4. Summary of comparisons across and between groups

Group	Do men select <i>estar</i> more than women?	Do the bilingual women select <i>estar</i> more than monolingual women?	Do the bilingual men select <i>estar</i> more than monolingual men?
Galician	Yes	No	Yes
Basque	Yes	No	Yes
Valencian	No	No	No
Catalan	No	No	No

Table 4 provides the reader with three important summaries. First, the Galician and the Basque groups show a tendency among men to select *estar* at higher rates than women in the same group, whereas the Valencian and Catalan groups show a similar trend to that of monolinguals whereby women select *estar* at higher rates than men. Secondly, there is no group in which the rate of selection of *estar* is higher for bilingual women than for the monolingual group. In contrast, in those regions where men select *estar* at higher rates than women, men also select *estar* at higher rates than the monolingual men. Thus, while monolingual women show the highest rates of selection of *estar* across groups, it is not the case that monolingual men show the lowest rates of selection of *estar* across groups. This means, of course, that the differences between genders are greater in some groups than in others. Namely, the following hierarchy describes the size of the difference between genders across groups: Galicians (4.7) > monolinguals (4) > Catalans (3.7) > Valencians (2.7) > Basques (2).

The implications of these results will be discussed in greater detail in the next section. We can summarize this section by reporting that, as with our previous studies, the current study finds differences between these bilingual populations not only in their rates of selection of *estar*, but also in the role that gender plays in the distribution of the copulas.

4. Discussion

It will be recalled that the goals of the current study were twofold. First we sought to provide greater detail of analysis of the role of gender in copula selection for the bilingual populations in the Basque Country and in Valencia. Although these populations had been studied previously, no results for gender were provided because this factor was not found to be a significant predictor of the use of *estar* in conjunction with the other linguistic and social variables originally considered (Geeslin and Guijarro-Fuentes, 2006b). The current study also failed to find significant differences between genders in these populations, but it did uncover trends for each population. Specifically, while men in the Basque Country selected *estar* with higher frequency than women, women in Valencia showed a higher rate of selection of *estar*.

The second goal of our study was to situate these findings within the context of the conflicting results for gender that had been found previously. Beginning with research conducted using the same elicitation instrument for other populations on the Iberian Peninsula, we found several interesting comparisons. First, while some bilingual populations show higher rates of selection of *estar* among men than among women (i.e., Galicians and Basques), other bilingual populations, as well as the monolinguals in Spain, show the opposite trend (i.e., Catalonians and Valencians) whereby women select *estar* more frequently than men. In connecting these studies to the larger body of research on copula choice, it appears that speakers of Mexican and Mexican-American Spanish pattern with the monolinguals and the Catalonians whereas the speakers in the earlier Venezuelan corpus (1977) pattern with the Galicians. Given the smaller differences between men and women among the Valencians and the Basques, it is most likely that these two groups actually pattern with the Venezuelans in the later corpus (1987) where gender differences are actually insignificant.

Clearly, bilingualism (in contrast with monolingualism) is not the key to explaining the differences across groups since monolinguals in Spain pattern with bilinguals in the United States and bilinguals in Spain pattern with monolinguals in Venezuela. Moreover, like the results reported in the

studies by Milroy and Milroy (1985), we demonstrate that it is not the case that women always lead in the process of change from above nor that men always lead in the process of change from below. While *estar* can clearly be considered the ‘innovative’ or non-prestige form based on the historical facts of this change, men and women select this variant with differing frequency depending on the speech community. In fact, in some contexts women appear to be leading this change, whereas in others men are leading the extension of *estar*. In still other contexts, the change appears to be relatively stable and, thus, no gender differences are seen (Cameron, 2005). This finding coincides with the research by de Jong (1993), also conducted on expressions of age with the Venezuela corpus of 1977, which claims that the extension of *estar* may take place in a staircase-like fashion, such that between periods of linguistic change there are also periods in which the change plateaus. This explains how it is that *estar* has continued to be extended over the past 500 (or more) years but that certain populations show little stratification across different genders, ages or social classes. Thus, not only do men and women appear to select *estar* differently in different communities, sometimes leading the change and sometimes following the opposite gender, the rate at which *estar* is changing also appears to differ from one community to another.

It has been suggested that access to a written standard or to formal education in a language might play an important role in explaining differences across speech communities. In Silva-Corvalán’s work (1986, 1994) it was hypothesized that the extension of *estar* was accelerated by lack of access to the written standard. Gutiérrez’s (1994) study, in which he shows that when social class is controlled, the same process of extension is taking place in monolingual Mexican Spanish, seemed to corroborate this finding. In our own work, we hypothesized that higher use of *estar* was associated with higher use of Galician, a language sometimes associated with a rural less-educated population. Thus, if access to a written standard were the explanation for these gender differences, it would be the case that these two groups should pattern in the same way, but they do not. Likewise, the speakers in the Venezuelan corpus who did have access to formal education in Spanish would be expected to pattern in the same way that the monolingual Spanish group does, and this is also not the case. In sum, access to formal education in the Spanish language, or an association of Spanish with social power, also fails to explain these differences. In fact, in most cases, the bilinguals in the populations we examined enjoy relatively equal access to social power and education and traditional accounts of gender differences would lead us to expect men and women to be fairly similar in these contexts.

Although traditional accounts of gender differences fail to provide an explanation for these results, there are factors that could be examined in the future to further explore this issue. We do not, for example, have data regarding the social networks in which our participants participated. Given the results of previous research on gender differences, a social network analysis would be important to apply to the study of copula choice in Spanish (Milroy & Milroy, 1985; Pooley, 2000; Trudgill, 2000). Traditionally in Spain more women than men had dense networks: women used to have less contact with the outside world than men. However, since the introduction of the new democracy this has changed: networks are more diffuse and mobile, and the traditional Spanish family as a basic unit is changing. Given that the gap between men and women in society is closing, an assessment of the social networks of each could provide new information and help to explain both the differences between genders where they exist and the differences between the groups examined in the current study.

5. Concluding remarks

The current study has demonstrated that for copula contrast in Spanish, there is no single pattern regarding gender differences. Simply put, it is not the case that men in general are more or less likely to use *estar* than women. Overall, we claim that copula choice needs to be seen in light of multiple roles which are available to men and women, and the many additional social factors that may contribute to such differences. Thus, the primary contribution of this work is that it demonstrates that gender differences are not one-dimensional. Moreover, the addition of another binary variable [+/-bilingual] does not rectify the explanation of such differences. Instead, we advocate a multivariate approach to this question that takes into account the various social factors (including the socio-political changes that have taken place in Spain over the past century) that may contribute to variation in rates of selection of the Spanish copulas. Future research should include a more fine-grained analysis of the communities described in the current study as well as the addition of data from communities with

additional social characteristics, such as rural communities or less educated speakers, which are not sufficiently represented in our own work. Additional studies might also pursue data that elicits style-shifting from one context to another, which would provide further data about the type of language change taking place. A study that examines time-depth would also provide important information about the rate at which *estar* is being extended in Spanish and identify points at which the change has reached a temporary plateau. Finally, a study that examined the effect of migration from one region to another in Spain would be of great interest in addressing issues related to gender and social networks. In sum, our results demonstrate that gender differences together with other social variables are worthy of further attention. It is our hope that in pursuing a research agenda geared toward further explaining these gender differences, copula choice in Spanish will also make a contribution to the body of research on gender differences in general.

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