COERCION AND THE STAGE/INDIVIDUAL DISTINCTION

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1. INTRODUCTION

As is well known, Carlson’s (1977) aspecual distinction between individual-level predicates (ILPs) and stage-level predicates (SLPs) has proven to be relevant to the analysis of a number of grammatical phenomena, such as the interpretation of bare and indefinite noun phrases, the licensing of secondary predicates and absolute clauses, and the distinction between the two copulae ser and estar in Spanish, among others.¹ There are, however, some syntactic environments in which an ILP appears where an SLP should be expected, and yet the sentence does not result in ungrammaticality; rather, the ILP is forced to be interpreted as an SLP, thus rendering the sequence fully acceptable.

The aim of this paper is to provide an account of this phenomenon, usually considered as a case of coercion. In particular, we will address the following questions:

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¹ It is commonly assumed that ser appears with ILPs and estar appears with SLPs.
2. The Nature of the ILP/SLP Distinction

There is an extensive body of literature on the ILP/SLP distinction. In English the effects of the distinction have been much studied in existential there-constructions and in sentences with bare plural subjects. In the first case, only SLPs are admitted as codas, whereas in the second case the presence of an SLP or an ILP crucially determines the interpretation of bare plurals, as shown in the examples in (1) and (2):

(1) a. There are students sick.
   b. *There are students intelligent.

(2) a. Sharks are visible. [Generic or existential reading for the subject]
   b. Sharks are dangerous. [Only generic reading]

We assume that the ILP/SLP distinction is a matter of semantics, and follow Kratzer's (1988/1995) proposal, according to which SLPs need to be associated with a spatio-temporal variable while ILPs do not. Thus, the anchoring of the predication in space and time is a necessary requirement for SLPs only, and this is why they denote stages. ILPs, on the other hand, do not trigger the search for spatio-temporal locations, and denote properties of individuals.

Given this characterisation, it would seem natural to think that ILPs represent essential, temporarily stable or permanent properties, while SLPs represent transitory or temporally delimited states. Though this view is adequate for a number of cases, it does not yield the right results for properties, since they are not essentially incompatible with temporal limits.

We will start by assuming that ILPs do not denote permanent properties, but classificatory properties. We use the term classificatory to refer to those properties that are used to categorise individuals as belonging to a specific class. From this ascription, a structured picture of the world is obtained, which makes it possible to draw other significant consequences. Considering the following sentence:

(3) Brutus is a rottweiler.

Uttering (3) immediately gives access to the label of a classificatory concept (rottweiler) to which we associate a number of related properties — some of which can prove crucial. The nature of the concepts we conceive of as classificatory is such that the ascription of an individual to a class tends to produce a lasting result — which explains its cognitive benefits —, but it is not necessarily applied once and for all: we need to allow for some degree of variation. Thus, we probably do not want to say that man or woman are no longer classificatory properties because there are sex changing operations; we would rather say that the individual has changed category. The same holds, of course, for other more usual changes such as those resulting from dying one's hair, changing job or changing one's political ideas. Think, for example, of nouns of role or professional activity, as plumber in (4).

(4) Felipe is a plumber.

In the above sentence we classify Felipe as belonging to the class of plumbers; however, we would be prepared to change this ascription if we came to know that he is now a lawyer. Some adjectives behave in the same way. Consider, for instance, young. We conceive it as denoting a classificatory property. Unfortunately, youth is not a category to which one will belong forever. But the fact that after a certain age one will be removed from this category does not imply that young is not a predicate denoting a classificatory property. Thus, the difference between (5a) and (5b) reflects that the subject has undergone a change of category, not a change of stage.

(5) a. She is young.
   b. She is no longer young.

A piece of evidence supporting the idea that properties are not necessarily incompatible with category changes is the fact that natural languages often make use of different verbs to express changes of category and changes of stage. In English become requires ILPs, while get requires SLPs, as shown in (6).

(6) a. He became *intolerant / *angry / *frightened.
   b. He got *intolerant / angry / frightened.
   c. He {became / got} a vampire.

Then, if our view is correct, the distinction ILP/SLP has to be stated in terms of classificatory properties vs episodic stages. The permanent/transitory distinction, therefore, should not be

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taken as the root of their basic semantic content, but rather as a pragmatic, inferential effect (an implicature), as stated in McNally (1994) and (1998). 3

3. THE PROBLEM: ILPS IN SLP CONTEXTS

It is commonly assumed that, in Spanish, SLPs are required in contexts such as copulative sentences with estar (Lema, 1996; Fernández Leborans, 1999); absolute constructions (Bosque, 1990; de Miguel, 1992; Fernández Leborans, 1995; Marín, 1996; Hernanz, 1991; Hernanz and Suñer, 1999); adjunct secondary predicates (Demonte, 1991; Demonte and Masullo, 1999); small clause captions and headlines (Hernanz and Suñer, 1999); and small clauses introduced by con ('with') (Fernández Leborans, 1995; Hernanz and Suñer, 1999). Therefore, one should expect that in these environments ILPs, which refer to properties, would give rise to ungrammaticality in a systematic way. However, the occurrence of an ILP in an SLP context does not necessarily result in an anomaly, as the following contrasts show:

(7) a. Estar borracho
   To-be*estra drunk

   b. 'Estar inteligente (Cf. *Ser inteligente)
   To-be*esta intelligent

(8) a. Seca la ropa, …
   Dried the clothes, …

   b. *Cara la ropa, …
   Expensive the clothes

(9) a. Caminar descalzo
   To-walk barefoot

   b. 'Caminar timido
   To-walk shy

(10) a. María en la playa
   [as a caption]
   María at the beach

   b. *María experta en arte renacentista
   [as a caption]
   María an expert in Renaissance art

(11) a. Con el coche estropeado,…
   With the car damaged,…

   b. *Con el coche japonés,…
   With the car Japanese,…

The (a) examples containing SLPs are all grammatical. But notice that not all the (b) sequences with ILPs have the same status: (7b) and (9b) are acceptable, if adequately contextualised, whereas (8b), (10b) and (11b) are not. The sequence (7b) estar inteligente is interpreted as 'to behave in an intelligent way in a certain situation', and (9b) caminar timido is understood as 'to walk in a shy manner'. Intuitively, what renders these examples acceptable is a reinterpretation process that seems to turn ILPs denoting properties into SLPs denoting stages, in order to "repair" the well-formedness of the construction. This option is available for some environments, but not for others, as the ungrammaticality of (8b), (10b), and (11b) shows.

Given that ILPs can also occur in typical SLP environments, one could be tempted to claim that the ILP/SLP distinction is not relevant at all, since it does not seem to give rise to solid and safe grammatical predictions. Pragmatic explanations based on extralinguistic factors, such as encyclopaedic knowledge or degree of plausibility, could do the job of explaining the remaining contrasts. But if this step is taken, a number of significant generalisations will be missed. A pragmatic approach, if not built on the ILP/SLP distinction in lexical semantics, would fail to account for the distributional data illustrated in (7)-(11), and would not be able to explain why certain aspectual features, when not occurring overtly, have to be inferentially added in certain environments but not in others. In a few words, pragmatics could not deal with the part of the job that corresponds to syntax and semantics.

If the possibility of a purely pragmatic explanation is excluded, we have to resort to an account that makes it possible both to maintain the ILP/SLP distinction and to understand the differences in acceptability shown above. Two questions come to mind: How can an ILP appear in a context that requires an SLP? And under what conditions can this happen?

4. COERCION

A suitable answer to these questions can be formulated in terms of coercion. 4 Coercion is a reinterpretation process set up to eliminate the conflicts between the semantic content of a constituent and the requirements of other elements in the same construction. According to Pustejovsky (1995:111), coercion is one of the generative mechanisms operating at the lexical level: "Type coercion is a semantic operation that converts an argument to the type which is expected by a function where it would otherwise result in a type error." Thus, it produces some sort of conceptual adjustment in order to make sense of the utterance and restore its acceptability.

The existence of coercion phenomena is not a surprising fact if coercion is seen as a consequence of the compositional nature of meaning. From a theoretical point of view, we can

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3 For this view of the distinction, see Fernández Leborans 1999: 2366-2367

resort to this notion to account for some apparent anomalies in the distribution of linguistic elements without being compelled to abandon independently justified classifications. As Fernald (1999:1-2) puts it, "in general, linguists appeal to coercion when there is reason for believing in a fundamental semantic classification of some sort, but where some wiggle room is possible. Placing a constituent of one class in the syntactic or semantic environment best suited to a member of another class may result in an altered interpretation for the constituent—one that is more like the interpretation typical for a member of the other class—rather than outright ungrammaticality."

The notion of coercion has proven, in fact, to be a useful tool for solving certain aspectual puzzles. For example, De Swart (1998) invokes it to account for phenomena such as (12):

12a. Suddenly, I knew the answer.
12b. John played the sonata for eight hours.

In (12a) the incompatibility between the stative nature of the predicate know the answer and the adverbial suddenly is solved by coercing the state into an event, which gives the sentence an inchoative reading. Similarly, when an event predicate such as play the sonata is combined with a temporal for-adverbial, it can only be interpreted as receiving an obligatory iterative reading, being thus coerced into a non-delimited situation.

The effects of coercion are also visible in another domain clearly related to aspect as well: the reinterpretation of mass nouns as count nouns, and vice versa, such as in (13) and (14). In (13b) the presence of many imposes a count reading on the mass noun beer, while in (14b) it is the quantifier much that imposes a mass reading on the count noun apple.

13a. There was much beer on the table.
13b. There were many beers on the table.
14a. There are many apples in the salad.
14b. There is much apple in the salad.

Coercion is obviously a very powerful mechanism, so it has to be adequately constrained to avoid unrestricted application; otherwise, it would hinder any prediction of acceptability and possible and impossible readings. An appropriate use of this notion has to specify the conditions under which coercion processes take place and the roles of semantics and pragmatics in the overall reinterpretation.

Our proposal is that coercion is not merely a pragmatic reinterpretation process, but one that is crucially induced by a syntactic trigger. Now, the first question that has to be answered is what counts as an adequate trigger for coercion. Our proposal is that the trigger has to meet two conditions:

- First, it has to contain a requirement for a constituent of a specific kind. Generally speaking, the requirement can be of a semantic or of a categorial nature: for instance, a head can select a phrase with the feature [telic], or a VP (Pustejovsky, 1995).
- Second, the trigger must have scope over the other element. This condition is met either by heads with respect to their complements or by adjuncts with respect to their adjunction domain. The progressive and its VP complement illustrate the first possibility; temporal adverbials and their corresponding VPs illustrate the second one.

This approach has several welcome results. On the one hand, it restricts the coercion mechanism to syntactic constructions with an overt trigger; on the other hand, it ensures that the search for a coerced interpretation will only take place if certain grammatical requirements are met. The hallmark of coercion is, therefore, the occurrence of an adequate inductor.

5. Coercing ILPs

Coercion has been defined as a type changing operation: from a mass noun into a count noun and vice versa, from a state into an event, etc. Coercion of an ILP into an SLP is just another instance of type shifting. When the occurrence of an ILP in a context that requires SLPs does not result in ungrammaticality and the ILP receives a stage reading, the ILP has been coerced into an SLP (see Fernald, 1999 for details). And this is what happens, we claim, at least in (7b).

As mentioned above, we assume that SLPs are necessarily linked to a spatio-temporal variable, but ILPs are not. The effect of coercion is that of forcing an interpretation in which the ILP is conceived of as denoting a temporally delimited stage, i.e., the predication it represents is relativised with respect to a certain spatio-temporal variable. Thus, though an ILP does not itself require the consideration of this sort of variable to receive an interpretation, the resolution of the aspectual mismatch between the ILP and the requirements of the context obligatorily "adds" such a variable.

Once the ILP predicate becomes temporally anchored, the property denoted by it is no longer valid as a criterion for classification. Rather, the coerced predicate is systematically understood as conveying "that the subject is behaving, in some situation, in a manner consistent with having the property denoted by the ILP", as Fernald (1999) puts it. In his description of the readings of ILPs in sentences with adverbs of quantification such as Nancy is rarely clever or Sam is sometimes a bore, Fernald calls "Evidential Coercion" this change in interpretation because "it involves the subject giving behavioural evidence for having the property named by the ILP."

When coercion is conceived this way, the existence of coerced readings is no longer a problem for the ILP/SLP distinction. On the contrary, the coercion mechanism itself relies on this distinction and therefore represents a way of maintaining its role in grammar. In other words, speaking about coercion would make no sense unless we assume that there are well-
established distinctions and classifications. In what follows, we will concentrate on the possibility of using coercion as an explanatory notion for the data in (7)-(11).

5.1. Predications with estar

Following Bosque (1990), Mejías-Bikandi (1993), Lema (1996), Fernández Leborans (1999), among many others, we assume that the distribution of the two copular verbs ser and estar in Spanish reflects the basic ILP/SLP distinction, and that ser and estar are verbal heads that select a small clause, an IL small clause for ser, and an aspectually marked SL small clause for estar.

Given this, the occurrence of IL adjectives with estar, as illustrated in (7b), should be a striking phenomenon; and yet it is neither odd nor unusual. The reason is that estar easily forces the interpretation of a property as a stage. In fact, estar meets the necessary conditions to act like a trigger for coercion: it is a head with aspectual selection properties, and it has scope over the ILP. Thus, ILPs such as rojo ('red'), simpático ('nice'), inteligente ('intelligent'), difícil ('difficult'), or democrático ('democratic') when constructed with estar, are coerced into a reading in which the property is understood as temporally limited with respect to a certain situation or as the result of someone’s perception of the situation.

(15)

a. estar rojo (cf. Ser rojo)
   to-be rojo red
   “to look red or reddish, to turn red”

b. estar simpático (cf. Ser simpático)
   to-be simpático nice
   “to behave in a nice way, to be perceived as nice”

c. estar inteligente (cf. Ser inteligente)
   to-be inteligente intelligent
   “to behave in an intelligent way”

d. estar difícil (cf. Ser difícil)
   to-be difícil difficult
   “to look difficult”

e. estar democrático (cf. Ser democrático)
   to be democrático democratic
   “to behave in a democratic way, to be perceived by others as a democratic person”

All these examples can mean slightly different things depending on the subject of predication and the context: el sol está rojo can be translated as ‘the sun looks reddish’, Juan está rojo is interpreted like ‘John turns red (by shame or anger)’ or ‘John is acting like a communist’. Along similar lines, María es simpática/inteligente/difícil characterises the subject as a member of the class of nice/intelligent/difficult persons, while María está simpática/ inteligente/ difícil indicates a temporary ascription to that class, typically on the basis of the subject’s behaviour in a given situation. The same goes for democrático, although it produces a stylistically marked construction, one that involves a register shift and a search for poetic, witty or funny effects.

No matter what the type of the adjectival predicate is, the coercion process applies systematically. Once the spatio-temporal variable is added by the presence of estar, the ILP has to be interpreted as an SLP. As stages are dependent on some spatio-temporal anchoring, it can be easily inferred that a state-of-affairs that is being presented as a stage is one that is being presented as depending on someone’s, usually the speaker’s, perception of the situation (i.e. it is relativised in that sense). This is the reason why estar is widely used to express judgements on taste and personal evaluation: Esto está buenísimo (‘This tastes really good’), Tu trabajo está bastante flojo (‘Your work is really poor’), John Goodman está genial en esa película (‘John Goodman is great in that movie’).

An IL predication with estar is therefore situation-dependent. The interpretation of such dependency can be resolved by using two variants of the same strategy: the property is relativised as expressing either personal evaluations and perceptions, or certain behaviour, not an essential feature, of the subject — this second option being, obviously, only available for animate subjects. In any case, the basic strategy for interpreting coerced ILPs is systematically one and the same, and we believe it fits Fernald’s notion of Evidential Coercion nicely.

Even sequences with relational adjectives that could seem quite odd at first sight receive their interpretation along the lines that we have just established. Consider, for instance, internacional (international). If a host offers a dinner consisting of food from different countries, a guest can comment on this variety by saying:

(16) ¡Estas internacional hoy!
You are international today!

In (16) the need to create a situational dependency for the ILP induces an interpretation that involves the subject’s behaviour and its consequences.

As Ignacio Bosque has pointed out to us, some IL adjectives (necesario, ‘necessary’; falso, ‘false’; evidente, ‘evident’) are not coercible by estar. We claim that this fact does not invalidate the systematic nature of the coercion process. In our view, the anomaly of sequences such as *estar necesario and *estar falso is due to the fact that those adjectives always take a propositional argument as their subject, and propositional entities do not seem to be conceivable as the object of perception — a necessary step in the resolution of coercion induced by estar. True, an individual can also appear as their subject argument; but when it does, it must be itself coerced into a propositional reading: thus, Juan es necesario is interpreted as ‘it is necessary that
John is present/helps. Intuitively, the limitations on the coercion process induced by *estar* are to be related to the conceptual cost of the operation involved, but not to any lexical idiosyncrasy or to any syntactic constraint.

Coercion occurs only with adjectives. It is excluded for PPs, even when they are equivalent to adjectives in meaning. Thus, only (17a), but not (17b), is possible. Imagine a situation in which Juan approaches wearing a bowler hat and with a walking cane in his hand:

(17) a. ¡Vaya! ¡Estar muy británico!
   Wow! You are *estar* very British!
   "Wow! You look/are acting British!"

b. ¡Estar muy de Gran Bretaña!
   Wow! You are *estar* very from Great Britain!

Following a suggestion by Brenda Laca, we can assume that the non-coercible nature of PPs with *estar* is related to the fact that their interpretation is equivalent to that of relational adjectives. When a relational IL adjective gets an SL reading it does it by losing its relational value and becoming purely qualitative — often with the help of a degree quantifier, as in (17a) —; as PPs lack the possibility of being reinterpreted in the same way, they cannot be coerced. As for NPs and DPs, they are syntactically incompatible with *estar* (cf. *Juan está un gran músico, ‘John is *estar* a great musician’).* Hence, it is not surprising that they cannot undergo coercion (but see section 6 below).

*Estar*-sentences exhibit, thus, the prototypical features of coercion. They present an explicit syntactic trigger: it is, in fact, the presence of the copular verb *estar* that, when followed by an IL adjective phrase, activates a reinterpretation mechanism that is systematic.

5.2. Absolute Constructions

Absolute constructions with explicit subjects illustrate the opposite case.6 They reject ILPs, being unable to force a stage reading for them. However, this should not be considered as an unexpected result. Actually, the constraints imposed by the construction on the predicate are so strong that even some SLPs give rise to odd sequences. In an absolute construction the predicate has to be a particular type of SLP, one that specifies the resulting end-point of a process. This generalization accounts for contrasts like the following, where only *inmovilizado* (immobilised) denotes a final point:

(18) a. *Inmovilizado Juan, ...
   Immobilised Juan,
   "Inmóvil Juan, ...
   Still Juan,

The immediate prediction is that, when inserted in an absolute construction, a predicate that is ambiguous between a simple stage reading and an end-of-process reading will only have the last one. This prediction is in fact borne out, as shown in (19):

(19) a. *Abierta la puerta, ...
   Opened the door,...
   b. *Sentados los participantes,
   Seated the participants,

In Spanish, *abierta* can mean both ‘open’ and ‘opened’, but in (19a) only the second reading is available. The same goes for (19b), where *sentados* means ‘seated’, not ‘sitting’.*

All this implies that in absolute constructions the aspectual condition that the predicate has to satisfy is more restrictive than in other typical SLP environments. Therefore, one could think that this fact offers a straightforward explanation for the absence of stage-readings for ILPs. Even if not every SLP is able to fulfil the requirements imposed by absolute constructions, one should not expect that ILPs would, since to reach an end-of-process reading would be more difficult for them. However, according to our proposal, the explanation for the impossibility of coerced readings for ILPs in absolute constructions can be stated in more specific terms: they are excluded because the formal requirements of coercion simply are not met. In fact, an absolute construction is never selected, so there is no explicit trigger that could impose its reading on the predicate. If this condition is not satisfied, then the reinterpretation cannot be allowed. Thus, the impossibility of coercion in unselected environments follows from our proposal in a natural way.

However, there is actually a case of coercion in absolute constructions that involves SLPs. This is the case when an SLP that does not meet the requirements of the construction is under the scope of a constituent that requires a culminating predicate. The standard case is one in which an adverbial modifies the small clause. Then, the prediction is that the mismatch between the aspectual features of the adverbial and the SLP in the small clause would be resolved with the adverbial coercing the predicate. And in fact this prediction seems to be born out. Thus, sequences like the ones in (20) easily receive a coerced interpretation.

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5 The only DPs compatible with *estar* are those which indicate a position in a scale, such as *el primero, ‘the first one’; el segundo, ‘the second one’; el último, ‘the last one’.


7 Our judgements on absolute constructions are quite restrictive, and a number of native speakers may disagree with them (see Fernández Leborans, 1995 for a different view). In our dialect, a perfective predicate is required in the construction; in other variants of Spanish, other SLPs could also do the job.
(20) a. Una vez furioso el profesor,
     Once angry the professor
b. Una vez podrías las patatas,
     Once rotten the potatoes

The coerced interpretation indicates the resulting endpoint of a process where someone tried to exasperate the professor or to deteriorate the potatoes. So, as soon as we introduce an adverbial such as una vez ('once') in the construction, an explicit trigger appears that coerces the interpretation of the predicate — this time from state to end-of-process. Of course, the overall acceptability of such readings will be heavily dependent on pragmatic considerations. But the plausibility of the resulting reading is a matter not of semantics, but of our knowledge of the world.

5.3. Secondary Predicates

It is usually assumed that predicative adjuncts are SLPs and yet, at the same time, it is quite easy to find examples of secondary predication in which an ILP is interpreted as a stage. It has to be underlined, however, that the results of introducing an ILP as a secondary predicate are perceived as belonging to a more formal register or even to a literary style:

(21) a. Avanzó tímido.
     He-approached shy.
b. Saludaba respetuosamente.
     She-greeted respectful.
c. Concedió generoso el permiso.
     He-granted generous the permission.

The adjectives in (21) seem to receive an adverbial interpretation that can be paraphrased as Avanzó tímido ('He approached (walking) in a shy manner'), Saludaba respetuosamente ('She greeted in a respectful manner') or Concedió generosamente el permiso ('He granted the permission in a generous manner'). These readings are all of the stage-type.

However, things are not as simple as the existence of this sort of examples would suggest. The possibility of reinterpretation is far from being clear and systematic, basically because one can also find examples where ILPs appear as adjunct secondary predicates and yet they are interpreted as indicating properties, and not stages. In (22) and (23) we reproduce some of these examples in Spanish and English (the English ones are taken from McNally (1994:564-565)):

(22) a. Volvió a su casa millonario.
     He-returned home (a) millionaire.
b. Empezó futbolista y se jubila ministro.
     He-began (as a) football-player and he-retires (as a) minister.

(23) a. They left the Army fervent non-interventionists.
     b. Poe died a pauper.

Nominal predicates such as millonario, futbolista, ministro, fervent non-interventionists, a pauper, are always ILPs. One could think that a reinterpretation of properties as stages is taking place again, since the predicates tend to be understood as temporally limited. Notice, however, that positing such a modification of predicate type will have to face a number of objections:

a) NPs or DPs cannot be converted into SLPs, as demonstrated by their incompatibility with estar in Spanish and with existential constructions in English.

(24) *Estaba futbolista (cf. *ser futbolista)
     to be football-player
(25) *There were people republican.

b) The examples admit a paraphrase with ser in Spanish, which means that the predicates still behave as ILPs:

(26) a. Volvió siendo millonario.
     b. Empezó siendo futbolista y se jubila siendo ministro.
     c. Dejaron el ejército siendo antiintervencionistas.
     d. Poe murió siendo pobre.

c) As said in section 2, temporal delimitation is not necessarily incompatible with ILP status. In the above examples, all predicative NPs denote classificatory properties, independently of the fact that they can hold before a significant change or after such a change. In fact, most of the cases under discussion involve a special class of nouns, namely those denoting post, professional activity and ideological ascription. Thus, terms such as minister, football-player or non-interventionist are used to classify individuals according to their position in society, and, in this sense, they are ILPs. Nevertheless, as pointed out before, it is perfectly conceivable that an individual could change job or ideals during his/her lifetime, so post or role nouns share some properties with SLPs. In fact, they exhibit a peculiar behaviour in copulative sentences and small
clauses—an issue we cannot discuss here.8 Even assuming that these nouns are still ILPs, it should not be surprising if they can be used as adjunct secondary predicates. To sum up, the examples in (22) and (23) show that ILPs can occur as predicative adjuncts without being reinterpreted as SLPs.9 This fact seems to suggest that, as McNally (1994) has argued, coercion is not involved in the interpretation of this particular class of secondary predicates. In addition, the possibility illustrated in (22) and (23) is limited to verbs that denote the beginning or the end of a situation (to go / to return, to begin / to finish, to be born / to die).

We can return now to the examples in (21), where ILPs receive a stage interpretation. Our claim is that in those cases there is not a coercion process either, at least in the sense of coercion we have been using, since the basic formal conditions are not met. In fact, there is no trigger that can impose its requirements on the ILP adjunct. According to McNally (1994:570-573), the stage reading is obtained as an effect of a simultaneity condition on the state-of-affairs described by the V and the adjunct. For the condition to be non-trivially met, the adjunct has to be an SLP; otherwise the construction would be infelicitous and uninformative, as happens in McNally’s example *Fleisher played the piano intelligent*. The impossibility of IL readings in adjunct secondary predicates has therefore a pragmatic motivation. The stage reading of the adjuncts in (21) is obtained by a process that resembles coercion in that it produces a conceptual readjustment in the semantics of the secondary predicate. But such a process is not triggered by any grammatical element, so it cannot be defined as coercion in our terms.

5.4. Small Clauses in Headlines and Captions

As indicated by the ungrammaticality of (10b), ILPs cannot be coerced in small clauses in headlines and captions. If we accept the approach to coercion proposed before, this is a totally predictable fact. Small clauses in captions are much like absolute constructions in that they are not selected, so there is no constituent that could be held responsible for triggering the coerced interpretation. Thus, only SLPs are allowed in these constructions.

(27) a. *Hemingway republicano* (Cf. *Hemingway era republicano.*)
Hemingway (a) republican (cf. Hemingway was_a republic an.)

b. *Hemingway inteligente* (Cf. *Hemingway era inteligente.*)
Hemingway intelligent (cf. Hemingway was_intelligent.)

(28) a. *Hemingway borracho* (Cf. *Hemingway estaba borracho.*)
Hemingway drunk (cf. Hemingway was_drunk.)

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9 Some additional evidence for this conclusion comes from the analysis of depictive PPs of the kind illustrated in El bocadillo, se lo tomó de jamón, ’(As for) the sandwich, (he) ate it (made) of ham’.

b. *Hemingway exultante* (Cf. *Hemingway estaba exultante.*)
Hemingway exultant (cf. Hemingway was_exultant.)

The main argument for considering that the need for an SLP in captions is a formal requirement, not merely a matter of pragmatic plausibility, is the following. There are pairs of adjectives (or equivalent PPs) that have the same conceptual content, except for the fact that one is an ILP while the other is an SLP. As expected, only the sequence with the SLP is grammatical in a caption, as the following contrasts show:

(29) a. *Hemingway enfadado* (Cf. *Hemingway estaba enfadado.*)
Hemingway angry

b. *Hemingway irascible* (Cf. *Hemingway era irascible.*)
Hemingway irascible

(30) a. *Hemingway con barba*
Hemingway with beard

b. *Hemingway barbudo*
Hemingway bearded

5.5. Small Clauses Introduced by con

Small clauses introduced by con (‘with’) constitute a challenging issue for our proposal. In fact, they contain a preposition that selects an SL small clause, which could be a suitable candidate for a trigger; but at the same time they do not show the typical coercion effects, as noted above (ex. (11b)). ILPs give rise to ungrammatical strings when inserted in this environment, except for the usual post or role nouns (cf. *Con Mariano embajador en Managua...*,”’‘With Mariano ambassador in Managua...’’) though the stage version with de (‘of’) + noun is strongly preferred, cf. *Con Mariano de embajador en Managua...*).

Then, the immediate question that arises is why the preposition cannot act as a coercer. After all, as already mentioned, it selects an SL small clause and has scope over the predicate. A tentative answer can be suggested along the following lines: being a [–V] head, con lacks temporal and aspectual features, and this is possibly the reason why it cannot coerce an adjectival predicate. In some sense, con (as well as sin ‘without’) is too weak to count as an inducer for a semantic readjustment.
6. AN EXTENSION: ILP COERCION INSIDE THE NOMINAL DOMAIN

If this proposal is correct, one would expect that coercion of an ILP into an SLP should be possible also in other syntactic environments. And in fact an instance of coercion can be found in the nominal domain which confirms the guidelines of our analysis. It is a coercion phenomenon induced by the combination of the indefinite article *un* and a proper name. Let's consider the examples in (31):

(31) a. Rivaldo recibió el pase de gol de un generoso Kluivert.
   "Rivaldo received the goal shot from a generous Kluivert."

b. Un irascible Jack Nicholson agredió a los fotógrafos.
   "An irascible Jack Nicholson punched the paparazzi."

The phrases *un generoso Kluivert* and *un irascible Jack Nicholson* do not refer to the individuals Kluivert and Jack Nicholson but to particular stages they are going through. In (31a), we speak about the generous behaviour of Kluivert in a certain situation, and in (31b) we mention an episode in which Jack Nicholson behaves in an irritable way. The central issue is that *generoso* and *irascible* are ILPs, but in (31) they are clearly coerced into a stage reading, thus not introducing properties of individuals. We think that here we have another case of what Fernald (1999) calls Evidential Coercion.

In this case, the process is activated by the need to make the proper name compatible with the indefinite article. It is the article that imposes the count reading on the name, as in other phrases like *a delicious wine* (where the mass noun is given a subclass interpretation), and *a Kennedy* (where the proper noun is treated as a common, count noun). One of the ways of obtaining a count reading out of a name is by shifting its reference from individuals to stages; once this is accomplished, the adjectival modifier of the name must obligatorily receive a stage interpretation too. What we obtain is a case of indirect coercion, triggered by the indefinite article on the adjective via the name. The final result is comparable to what we find in cases like (32a,b), where the adjectives *inspiradísimo* (‘very inspired’) and *eufórico* (‘euphoric’) are by nature SLPs:

   "A very inspired Pavarotti delighted the audience."

b. *Un Benigni eufórico se convirtió en el protagonista de la ceremonia.*
   "An euphoric Benigni became the star of the ceremony."

A significant property of the constructions in (31) and (32) is the obligatory presence of the adjectival predicate. Without the adjectives, these DPs cannot be interpreted as referring to stages, and are assigned alternative readings. For instance, *un Pavarotti* does not mean ‘a stage, or a certain behaviour, of Pavarotti’, but something like ‘a certain Pavarotti’ or ‘an imitator of Pavarotti’, or even ‘a record by Pavarotti’. This is a puzzling fact, because on the one hand the adjective is the coerced element, but on the other hand its presence is necessary if the stage reading of the DP is to be obtained. Such an apparent paradox could be accommodated if we take the adjective both as the coerced element, under the scope of the indefinite, and as the cue that orients the whole reinterpretation process towards a stage-reading, discarding other alternative readings. In fact, it must be assumed that the trigger in this case activates coercion, but it does not specify the precise nature of the resulting interpretation, which depends on the availability of contextual information.

A confirmation of this analysis comes from the contrast in (33). Only with the indefinite article is the stage reading made possible, not with a definite determiner.

   "The irascible Jack Nicholson punched the paparazzi."

b. *Un irascible Jack Nicholson agredió a los fotógrafos.*
   "An irascible Jack Nicholson punched the paparazzi."

In (33a) *irascible* maintains its basic property value. This is due to the fact that the definite article does not alter the referential properties of names, and therefore it does not induce their stage interpretation. As the name still refers to an individual, the adjectival modifier is not coerced. The indefinite article is thus shown to be responsible for the contextual readjustment of the adjective’s reading. Hence, this construction exhibits all the central features of coercion.

7. CONCLUSION

In the preceding sections we have provided an account of the possibility of reinterpretation of ILPs as SLPs in terms of coercion. We have considered a number of syntactic constructions in which an ILP occurs when an SLP should be expected, giving rise to different degrees of anomaly.\(^{10}\)

Coercion is a very powerful mechanism, so it has to be defined in a way that prevents its unrestricted application. We have argued that coercion is allowed only if certain structural requirements are met. There must be an explicit trigger for the operation and it must have scope over the elements on which it imposes its semantic conditions. In this way, the distribution of coerced readings can be predicted in a motivated way. Thus, in constructions where a head

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\(^{10}\) There are a number of constructions that we did not mention, such as perceptual reports and resultative constructions.
selects a predicate coercion is systematic: it is the case of estar and its small clause complement. In unselected environments, coercion is, in principle, not allowed, unless an adjunct is added that supplies the relevant features that trigger coercion.

These are the requirements of the coerces. The coerced has to be of a certain kind as well. When the ILP/SLP distinction is involved not just any predicate can be coerced, only adjectives can. Such a restriction is syntactic, not a pragmatic one, since quasi-synonyms from different categories are not interchangeable. Thus, nouns, DPs and PPs simply cannot be coerced, as shown in (5).

The above approach has several consequences for semantics, pragmatics and the grammar/pragmatics interface. On the one hand, it is based on the idea that conceptual meaning is of a flexible nature, so as to allow for adjustments issuing from compositionality. The cases of coercion we have discussed arise as a result of the mismatch between the requirements of two elements, one demanding the identification of a spatio-temporal variable, and one lacking this requirement. The element that has scope over the other imposes its conditions, and the conflict is resolved by introducing the variable in the semantic representation. Up to this point, coercion is a semantic operation derived from compositionality.

However, the addition of a spatio-temporal variable is not the end of the story. Obtaining the ultimate import of the utterance also involves inferential processes that further specify both the content of the predicate and the value of the added variable. Two facts must be underlined at this point. On the one hand, it is important to realise that such processes are not of a semantic, but of a pragmatic nature: they have to take into account extralinguistic information in order to deduce what is the state of affairs that is being referred to. On the other hand, it should be noticed that such inferential processes have to be completed before a full proposition is obtained. In other words, inference plays the main role in the processes leading from the logical form to the full propositional form. The explicit content communicated by a sentence — the explicature, in relevance-theoretic terms (Sperber and Wilson 1986/1995) — is obtained as a result of an inferential (hence, pragmatic) development of an abstract, underspecified logical form.

Thus, coercion is a transversal operation that affects both the logical form of a sequence (a matter of grammar) and the derivation of explicatures (a matter of pragmatics). For all these reasons coercion phenomena fit quite well with the overall picture of semantics and pragmatics developed in Relevance Theory, where enrichment and loosening processes (Carston 1998, 1999) are claimed to apply to conceptual content in deriving explicatures.

Furthermore, the analysis of coercion reveals a significant difference between conceptual and procedural information. We claim that coercion affects conceptual information only (though, as already noted, not just any kind of conceptual information). Only conceptual content can be enriched, elaborated on and manipulated in different ways under the influence of some linguistic element. Basic procedural content seems to be more rigid and robust, in the sense that it certainly triggers pragmatic inferences, but it cannot itself be elaborated on to satisfy external requirements. As for the elements that are responsible for the coercion effect, they can be both procedural (for instance, tense) and conceptual (for instance, adverbials or lexical verbs).

A general question still remains. Why do coercion phenomena exist? After all, producing a sequence with conflicting elements does not seem a safe means of communication, as Fernald (1999) points out. A suitable answer can be formulated in relevance-theoretic terms. The Second Principle of Relevance(11) states that when a speaker asks for the attention of another individual s/he is communicating that his/her message will produce a reasonable balance between effects and effort. In other words, s/he communicates that no extra processing effort will be imposed on the hearer that is not rewarded with extra effects. Thus, coercion succeeds because, as predicted by the Second Principle of Relevance, a hearer will not only try to make sense of any utterance, but also will try to figure out the reason why the speaker chose to produce it the way s/he did. Confronted to a clash between non-matching elements, s/he will do her/his best to recover a relevant interpretation, even though s/he has to resort to conceptual readjustments. The extra effort involved in the resolution of the clash is balanced by additional effects. These are perceived as register or style changes intentionally controlled by the speaker, and appear in all the different kinds of coercion phenomena. Coercion always produces marked utterances; the acceptability degree varies from the most conventionalised cases to the most innovative combinations, obviously the ones that require the greatest processing effort. In this way, we have a pragmatic explanation of the interpretive task.

However, as we have seen before, the construction of coerced readings is not merely a matter of linguistic performance, so we should expect to have an adequate answer also from the grammatical side. And indeed we have one. Mismatches would be simply ruled out as ungrammatical if coercion were not a legitimate mechanism in grammar. In fact, it is a part of our knowledge that meaning can be coerced. We do know, as native speakers of our language, under what structural conditions coercion is possible and what kind of readjustments of meaning have to be produced. For instance, any native speaker of Spanish intuitively knows that any adjectival predicate following estar must be interpreted as an SLP, no matter what its aspectual class is. In this way, we are able not only to infer what an utterance refers to or what is its force in a given set of circumstances, but also to calculate how a string of different elements will be compositionally interpreted. coercion is thus a mechanism that contributes to the economy of language by allowing a controlled multiplication of senses.

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(11) The role of adjoints is clear in examples such as those considered by Fernald (1999):

Nancy is rarely clever
Laura is often pedestrian
Sam is sometimes a bore

(12) See Wilson and Sperber (1993) for the distinction between conceptual and procedural content.

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11 "Every act of ostensive communication communicates the presumption of its own optimal relevance." (Sperber and Wilson 1986/1995: 260)
REFINEMENTS


