

On the Quotative Readings of Spanish *Imperfecto* *

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1. Introduction

The fact that tenses can be exploited by speakers as a way to attribute (a part of) an utterance to others is well known —Chafe and Nichols (eds.) (1986); Dendale and Tasmowski (eds.) (2001); Squartini (2001)—, although it has not received much attention in Spanish grammars¹. In this paper we will focus on what we will call *quotative readings* of the Spanish *Imperfecto de indicativo* (hereinafter, IMPF), such as the ones in (1)-(2):

- (1) A: —¿Qué sabes de Juan?
What about Juan?
B:—*Llegaba* el martes.
He was arriving Tuesday.
- (2) Ya telefoneé a Ernesto. *Terminaba* un capítulo, *compraba* unas cervezas y *venía* para acá.
I phoned Ernesto. *He was going to finish* a chapter, *get* some beer and *come round*.

The reason why these readings can be called *quotative* is that a natural way to paraphrase them involves inserting a communication verb to indicate that the source of the information being transmitted is hearsay, as in (3):

- (3) a. {Someone/Juan} told me that he was arriving on Tuesday.
b. He said that he was going to finish a chapter, get some beer and come round.

Thus, in (1) and (2) the speaker gives a piece of information while dissociating himself from the responsibility of the truth of the information he is putting across — hence these examples align with other instances of evidential readings.

What can be surprising about (1) and (2) is that the quotative interpretation is not just a possible reading, but the most salient one, even in the absence of other contextual data. Our purpose is to explain how this sort of quotative readings arise and what the restrictions operating on them are. The main questions we would like to address are the following: a) if the IMPF can be used as an evidentiality marker, is it due to its inherent evidential nature, or rather evidential readings appear as a derived effect in certain circumstances?; b) in any case, what are the conditions under which the quotative readings of the IMPF arise? To answer such questions we will rely on the notions of *procedural content* (Wilson & Sperber, 1993) and *coercion* (de Swart, 1998; Escandell-Vidal & Leonetti, 2002) as basic explanatory tools. From our discussion we will draw some theoretical consequences on the semantics and the interpretation of tenses.

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¹ Nevertheless, a few references can be found on some values of tenses like conditionals, imperfects and futures, which in some sense are used to reproduce the words of another individual. See for instance Carrasco (1999: 3070). These values are explicitly related to evidentiality in Reyes (1990) and (1994).

2. The primacy of quotative readings

At first sight, the fact that some tenses receive a quotative interpretation could seem totally foreseeable, since any tense can, in principle, occur in an utterance that reproduces the words or the opinions of another speaker. As Sperber and Wilson put it,

“Any representation with a propositional form, and in particular any utterance, can represent some state of affairs in virtue of its propositional form being true of that state of affairs; in this case we will say that the representation is a *description*, or that it is used *descriptively*. Or it can represent some other representation which also has a propositional form -- a thought, for instance — in virtue of a resemblance between the two propositional forms; in this case we will say that the first representation is an *interpretation* of the second one, or that it is used *interpretively*.” (Sperber and Wilson, 1986/1995: 228-229)

Thus, B’s answer in (4) can be interpreted as a description of a state of affairs endorsed by the speaker or as a quote of someone else’s words; the choice of either interpretation will largely depend on contextual assumptions:

- (4) A: — ¿Qué sabes de ella?
Any news about her?
B: — Estaba embarazada
She was pregnant

As Sthioul (1998: 200) and (2000b: 63) has noted, introducing “subjects of consciousness” (*sujets de conscience*) different from the speaker in the discourse is not an intrinsic property of the IMPF, but a possibility that can arise during the inferential process that yields the explicatures of the utterance with any verbal tense.

If so, analysing the quotative readings could seem a task void of any interest. However, there is a good reason to pay attention to them: in (1) and (2) the quotative reading is not merely an available option; it is by far the most natural interpretation— or perhaps even the only acceptable one. Thus, whereas in (4) the interpretive reading is merely one possibility, in (1) and (2) it is crucial for the understanding of the utterance. Therefore, one should ask why this is so.

Interestingly, the special salience of the quotative reading in (1) and (2) does not obtain with other (past) tenses. The utterances in (5), with the *Pretérito indefinido* and *Pretérito perfecto* (roughly equivalent to English *simple past* and *present perfect*, respectively), do not yield the same effects:

- (5) a. Juan {*llegó/ha llegado*} el martes
Juan arrived / has arrived on Tuesday
b. *Terminó* un capítulo, *compró* unas cervezas y *vino* para acá /
Ha terminado un capítulo, *ha comprado* unas cervezas y *ha venido* para acá
He finished a chapter, bought some beer and came round
He has finished a chapter, bought some beer and come round

In the examples in (5) the default reading is a *narrative* one, in which the speaker asserts that a certain event or situation has taken place in the past, and, other things being equal, he is responsible for the information he communicates².

Our purpose is to explain why some utterances consistently receive a straightforward interpretation that involves embedding the content under a communication predicate indicating

² As in the example in (4), the hearer can still access an interpretive reading (in the sense of Sperber and Wilson mentioned before), but he will do it on contextual grounds only.

an (un)specified source. For convenience, we will use the term *quotative* to refer to this kind of salient interpretations, putting aside the possibility of getting an interpretive reading based on contextual information only.

3. The IMPF: Basic assumptions

The IMPF has concentrated most of the debate on the semantics of tenses in Romance languages. For this reason, before presenting our proposal, it is necessary that we make explicit our basic assumptions about the properties of the IMPF.

First of all, we assume that the semantics of tense is *procedural*, in the sense of Wilson and Sperber (1993). Linguistic expressions can contribute to the process of utterance interpretation in two different ways: they can contribute *concepts*, i.e., representations with both logical and truth-conditional properties, and in this case they have *conceptual* content; or they can provide *instructions* about how to combine conceptual representations and relate them to contextual information, and in this case they have *procedural* content. Procedural elements (such as tense, definite determiners, discourse markers and intonation, among others) constrain the inferential phase of interpretation by restricting the range of possible interpretations for a sequence. Being both procedural and referential expressions, tenses operate on the inferential processes that develop the output of grammar into the explicatures of the utterance³. As argued in more detail in Escandell and Leonetti (2000) and (2002), what syntacticians call *functional heads* all have procedural meaning. Given that tense has sentential scope, the interaction between tense, grammatical aspect and lexical aspect can be represented as in the configuration in (6), taken from de Swart (1998: 348):

(6) [Tense [Aspect [Eventuality Description]]]

One of the main consequences of adopting the *conceptual/procedural* distinction has to do with the way in which both kinds of meaning interact with each other: while conceptual content is subject to processes of enrichment, widening or narrowing during semantic composition (Carston, 2000), procedural content is rigid and robust, has to be obligatorily satisfied, always prevails over conceptual content, and cannot be modified by concepts, nor by other contextual considerations⁴.

As for the basic semantics of the IMPF, we will adhere to the widely held view that the IMPF is an imperfective past (for different versions of this proposal, see de Swart, 1998; Jayez, 1998; García Fernández, 1998; Cipria and Roberts, 2000; Veters and de Mulder, 2000; Sthioul, 2000a, 2000b; Leonetti 2002). As an imperfective tense, it focalises the inner part of a situation while blurring its limits, and therefore combines with atelic situations in a natural way. As de Swart (1998:369) suggests for French,

“...the *Imparfait* is felicitous only if it applies to a non-quantized, homogeneous description (a state or a process)...”

Thus, more precisely, one can say that the IMPF imposes aspectual restrictions on the event description under its scope by selecting atelic situations. We will see later how the cases where this condition is not met can be treated.

³ For a procedural analysis of tenses, see Wilson and Sperber (1993), Moeschler (1998a), Veters and de Mulder (2000), Sthioul (2000b), among others.

⁴ Though we will not consider it here in detail, we will assume that procedural elements always prevail both over conceptual units and contextual information. See Moeschler (1998b) for a different view.

In addition, the imperfective nature of the IMPF makes it a non-autonomous, relative tense, i.e., its temporal reference has to be determined with respect to an adequate temporal frame (the Reference Point, or the antecedent in anaphoric approaches, such as Berthonneau and Kleiber, 1993). Being a non-autonomous tense, the identification of the temporal frame is a necessary step in constructing the interpretation of the IMPF. This task is usually accomplished by searching in the linguistic or extralinguistic context, as with nominal and pronominal anaphors; if no antecedent is immediately accessible, the search should resort to considering the speech situation as a starting point from which an adequate past antecedent or frame is to be inferred.

The procedural semantics of the IMPF can, therefore, be characterised as imposing two basic requirements:

- the selection of atelic situations
- the identification of a past temporal frame

Both conditions must be obligatorily satisfied in interpreting the IMPF, as a consequence of its procedural nature. They underlie every possible reading of this tense and have to be observed at any cost, even by inserting *ad hoc* contextual assumptions when the linguistic or situational context do not provide the required input to the interpretation process. This will turn out to be crucial in our account of quotative readings, as will become clear later.

4. Coercion as the Source of Quotative Readings

4.1. The role of Aktionsart

Going back to the quotative readings in (1) and (2), we want to argue that their special prominence is not just by chance, nor is it dependent on the context or on the external situation; on the contrary, it is determined by the syntactic construction itself and is derived from the compositional nature of sentential meaning. In other words, there are specific restrictions that compel the hearer to construct a quotative reading.

The examples in (7) and (8) provide the crucial contrast for our argumentation. Imagine again the situation in (1), in which someone attempts to obtain some information about María by asking *¿Qué sabes de María?* (What have you heard about María/ Any news about María?). These are possible answers:

- (7)
- a. Se examinaba del carnet de conducir uno de estos días.
She was doing her driving test one of these days.
 - b. Esta noche la daban de alta.
She was going to be discharged from hospital tonight.
 - c. Salía de cuentas la semana pasada...
The baby was due last week...
- (8)
- a. Estudiaba derecho...
She was studying law...
 - b. Era una persona muy tímida.
She was a very shy person.
 - c. Salía con un chico italiano de la facultad...
She was going out with an Italian boy from college...

The answers in (7) have to be obligatorily interpreted as quotative, no matter whether the event has taken place before the time of utterance or whether it is supposed to take place later. In (8),

on the contrary, nothing imposes a quotative reading: like in example (4), the content of the utterance can reproduce someone else's words, but this reading is not prominent⁵.

It is not difficult to see that the contrast between (7) and (8) is to be related to *Aktionsart*. In fact, the prominence of quotative readings in (7) systematically correlates with the occurrence of telic predicates (more precisely, accomplishments and achievements in Vendler's terms), while the lack of any prominent quotative reading in (8) is associated with the occurrence of atelic predicates (states and activities). The correlation between lexical aspect and quotative readings could seem totally unexpected; there is, however, a way to connect these two notions and derive the saliency of quotative readings from the telicity of the predicate.

4.2. Coercion and coerced readings

As stated before, the IMPF imposes aspectual restrictions on the predicate under its scope, selecting atelic predicates. Now, when the predicate is atelic, the selectional requirements of the tense are met, and a perfect match between the meaning of the IMPF and the aspectual nature of the predicate obtains. But when the predicate is telic, it fails to satisfy the condition of atelicity imposed by the IMPF, and therefore a semantic mismatch occurs. However, this mismatch does not result in ungrammaticality, as the examples in (7) show; rather, a process of reinterpretation is triggered to readjust the meanings of the conflicting items and accommodate the interpretation of the predicate to the semantic requirements of tense. This process is a particular instance of a more general one, *coercion* — a mechanism independently motivated and extensively used in the current literature to account for the effects of semantic conflicts (Pustejovsky, 1995; de Swart, 1998, 2000; Escandell and Leonetti, 2002). *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.” (Pustejovsky 1995:111).

Thus, when a conflict arises, the IMPF coerces the *Aktionsart* of a telic predicate into an atelic reading, by shifting / adapting its basic conceptual content in order to make it fit the required conditions:

“If the aspectual requirements of (...) the Imparfait are not satisfied by the eventuality description, the tense operator cannot apply. (...) ...the combination of an event description with the Imparfait triggers the introduction of a coercion operator C_h , which reinterprets the event as a state or a process. As before, it is the linguistic and extralinguistic context which tells us how to interpret a coercion operator.” (de Swart, 1998:369)

The reason why it is the tense that imposes its conditions on the lexical aspect of the predicate, and not the other way round, is both the structural asymmetry between them (as established in (6)), and the different nature of their semantic content. As we have argued in Escandell and Leonetti (2002), procedural content is rigid and can coerce the readings of the constituents under its scope, without being coercible itself; conceptual content, on the other hand, can be easily modified during semantic composition and coerced to satisfy the conditions imposed by a higher procedural category, but can never impose its conditions on procedural elements.

The combination of IMPF with telic predicates gives rise to a number of different coerced readings. Consider the examples in (9):

⁵ As Veters (1994:181-183) notices, the same thing occurs in the case of free indirect style: it is often difficult to decide whether a sequence is to be attributed to the author, to the narrator or to one of the characters in a story. Some of the factors we will mention are frequently discussed in the literature on free indirect style.

- (9) a. Las manadas cruzaban el río en verano.
The herds (used to cross / crossed) the river in the summer.
b. En ese momento, escribía su carta de dimisión.
Just then she was writing her letter of resignation.

Both *cruzar el río* and *escribir su carta de dimisión* are telic predicates (an achievement and an accomplishment, respectively), so they are coerced by the IMPF into denoting atelic situations. These sentences exemplify two different ways of turning a telic event into an atelic situation. When the sentence contains generic operators the *iterative* interpretation arises, in which the telic event is reinterpreted as a non-delimited series of repeated events, as in (9)a. In other cases, the interpretation can erase the final phase of the event, and therefore the *progressive* reading is obtained, as in (9)b. Notice that such a reading is dependent on the presence of a punctual temporal frame (like *en ese momento* “just then”), just the opposite of what we need to obtain an iterative reading. Iterative and progressive readings of telic predicates arise precisely as two different ways of adjusting the eventuality to the semantic conditions of an imperfective tense.

We are now in a position to give a principled explanation to the contrast between (7) and (8). If we are on the right track, the fact that quotative readings occur only with telic predicates suggests that they are a further instance of coerced readings, that is, readings arising as the result of a process set up to solve the mismatch between the meaning of the IMPF tense and the kind of event denoted by the predicate. The immediate question is in what sense quotative readings represent a suitable solution for the semantic mismatch. Are they a particular case of iterative or progressive readings, or a class of their own?

A closer examination of the relevant examples shows that the situation denoted is not repeated or habitual, and it is not perceived as an event lacking its final phase: neither the iterative nor the progressive interpretation seem to be available. What the utterances in (7) have in common is rather that they lack the implication that the event has actually taken place: the event is, in some sense, suspended. Thus, in (7) María is expected to take the driving test, or be discharged from hospital, and so on; however, the speaker does not assert that the event has actually taken place, but merely that it was supposed to take place at a certain time, indicated by the adverbial.

Since the event is not asserted, these examples seem to resort to a different kind of interpretation, which we will call *prospective*⁶. A *prospective* interpretation is one that locates an event somewhere in the future with respect to a certain reference point. Thus, what a *prospective IMPF* will do is locate the event in the future with respect to a contextual past reference point. Consider the examples in (10):

- (10) a. El partido empezaba a las 8:45h.
The match was starting at 8:45.
b. El tren salía una hora después.
The train was leaving an hour later.

In (10)a, the match will begin at a time which is subsequent to the time taken as an (implicit) reference point; and in (10)b, the train will leave an hour after an implicitly fixed reference point. In this respect, the IMPF behaves like the Present, in the sense that both tenses allow prospective readings (cf. *El partido empieza a las 8:45*; *El tren sale dentro de una hora*). The prospective Present carries the implication that the event has not taken place yet. The IMPF, in turn, does not convey any implication of this sort: the fact that the event is located in a future relative to a past reference time allows the whole range of possibilities. Thus, the event should

⁶ This reading corresponds to the *intention-in-the-past* interpretation in Cipria and Roberts (2000). In our view, intention in the past is a particular sub-class of prospective readings. See section 7 for further details. There are other different uses of the term *prospective* in the literature that should not be confused with the one we are considering here.

have already taken place at the utterance time in sentence (7)c, but not in (7)b, while apparently it does not matter for (7)a.

Now, one could wonder in what sense making reference to a future situation is an adequate way to turn a telic predicate into an atelic one in order to solve the mismatch between the semantics of the IMPF and the predicate. As argued in Leonetti (2002), the prospective IMPF introduces a situation that presents a programmed event; when conceived of as something that will take place under certain circumstances, the situation is understood as a property of another situation (the temporal frame required by the IMPF). For instance, in (8a) the beginning of the match at 8:45 is taken as a property of the reference point in the past, as something that characterises that situation. Thus reinterpreting the event as a state/property used to characterise the reference point is a strategy to resolve the mismatch between the IMPF and the telic predicate — a further example of the IMPF coercing the interpretation of a telic predicate into an atelic one.

We can now offer an answer to the question raised in the Introduction with regard to whether the IMPF is inherently evidential, or rather evidential values come up as inferential effects. Obviously, what has been said so far strongly suggests that the second option must be largely preferred: quotative interpretations obtain from a non-evidential meaning and are the result of a coercion process. Thus, quotative readings of the IMPF arise as a particular effect of aspectual coercion: they occur when the IMPF coerces a telic predicate under its scope into an atelic one by producing a prospective reading. Now, since quotative readings are not the only available possibility when a mismatch occurs, we can address the second question raised in the Introduction: what are the conditions under which quotative readings arise? i.e., when is the mismatch solved by producing a quotative reading? Are there any further grammatical restrictions, or is it all a pragmatic matter?

As shown above, prospective readings seem to be incompatible with iterative and progressive interpretations, which suggests that they all originate as alternative ways to solve the semantic mismatch. In addition, it must be kept in mind that the different readings do not depend only on the coercion process triggered by the semantic mismatch, but also on the conditions posed by other grammatical and pragmatic factors.

5. The Role of Temporal Adjuncts

The first factor one should consider is the nature of the rest of the constituents of the sentence, especially temporal adjuncts. Temporal adjuncts seem to play a major role in iterative and progressive readings, since they can bias the interpretation in either sense: for instance, in (9)a the temporal modifier *en verano* (in the summer) favours the iterative or habitual reading, whereas in (9)b the modifier *en ese momento* (just then) hinders it. Do adjuncts have a similar role in quotative readings?

5.1. The reference of temporal adjuncts

The presence of various sorts of temporal and aspectual adjuncts is indeed a determining factor in the interpretation of any tense. Quotative readings of IMPF are no exception. As we will try to show, both the kind of adjuncts and their position in the sentence are relevant to obtaining quotative readings. Even though the overt occurrence of temporal adjuncts is not a necessary condition for a quotative reading to arise — consider again the example in (2) —, the fact that some temporal adjunct appears is always crucial to the final interpretation.

Let's begin by considering the examples in (11):

- (11) a. Juan volvía mañana.
 Juan was coming back tomorrow.
 b. La daban de alta esta noche.
 She was being discharged from hospital tonight.
 c. Salían para Roma la semana próxima.
 They were going to Rome next week.

The striking fact about (11) is the co-occurrence of the IMPF (a past tense) and a deictic temporal expression with future reference. Such examples, one might think, should be non-sensical and uninterpretable; but in fact they are not, and they get a straightforward interpretation, namely the quotative one, reproduced in (12):

- (12) a. {Dijo/dijeron} que volvía mañana.
 He/They said he was coming back tomorrow.
 b. {Dijo/dijeron} que la daban de alta esta noche.
 S/he/They said she was going to be discharged from hospital tonight.
 c. {Dijo/dijeron} que salían para Roma la semana próxima.
 S/he/They said they were going to Rome next week.

Indeed, this interpretation is immediately accessed by any native speaker, as the only way to understand the utterances in (11). Why is it so? As said before, quotative readings of IMPF belong to the class of prospective readings. Therefore, the fact that a tense allowing a prospective interpretation can appear with future-referring temporal adjuncts should not be unexpected. Thus, the temporal adjuncts in (11) are totally compatible with a prospective reading and in fact favour it, while blocking other possibilities, like habitual or narrative readings.

However, the occurrence of temporal adjuncts with future reference is neither a necessary nor a sufficient condition. Consider now the contrast between (11) and (13):

- (13) a. Juan volvía al día siguiente.
 Juan was coming back the following day.
 b. La daban de alta aquella noche.
 She was being discharged from hospital that night.
 c. Salían para Roma la semana siguiente.
 They were leaving for Rome the following week.

The examples in (13) contain temporal adjuncts that locate the event in a time in the future with respect to the reference point. However, only in the examples in (11) can we get a quotative reading. The examples in (13), on the other hand, exclude it, and can only have a *narrative* interpretation, which is usually rendered with *Preterito indefinido* ('simple past'):

- (14) a. Juan volvió al día siguiente.
 Juan came back the following day.
 b. La dieron de alta aquella noche.
 She was discharged from hospital that night.
 c. Salieron para Roma la semana siguiente.
 They left for Rome the following week.

On the other hand, temporal adjuncts referring to the past still allow quotative readings, as shown in (15):

- (15) a. Juan volvía ayer.
 Juan was coming back yesterday.
 b. La daban de alta hace dos días.

- She was discharged from hospital two days ago.
 c. Salían para Roma la semana pasada.
 They were leaving for Rome last week.

Thus, both future- and past-oriented temporal adjuncts are compatible with quotative readings. The source of this contrast in (11) and (13), then, has to be found in a different feature of the semantics of adjuncts: only deictic expressions (i.e., those requiring to be calculated from the utterance time), such as *mañana* ('tomorrow'), *esta noche* ('tonight'), *la semana próxima* ('next week'), *ayer* ('yesterday'), *hace dos días* ('two days ago') and *la semana pasada* ('last week') favour the quotative interpretation. Non-deictic adjuncts, such as *al día siguiente* ('the next day'), *aquella noche* ('that night') and *la semana siguiente* ('the following week'), behave like anaphoric expressions in that they obtain their temporal reference by locating an antecedent, and exclude a quotative interpretation. To capture this behaviour, the following generalisation can be suggested, which is reminiscent of some previous observations on the linguistic characterisation of free indirect style (Vetters, 1994):

- (16) *The Deictic Adjunct Condition*
 Only deictically interpreted temporal adjuncts can give rise to salient quotative readings of the IMPF.

As shown in the above examples, deictic reference does not impose any condition on the direction of search: it can be made forwards (to the future) or backwards (to the past) with respect to utterance time.

There are some temporal adjuncts that are neither deictic nor anaphoric in an intrinsic way, such as *on Monday*, *in September* and *at five o'clock*: their temporal reference can be obtained by taking as reference point either the utterance time (deictic use) or a different antecedent time (anaphoric use). Thus, the examples in (17) can have both the deictic interpretation in (18) and the anaphoric one in (19):

- (17) a. Volvía el lunes
 S/he was coming back Monday
 b. En Septiembre la daban de alta.
 She was being discharged from hospital in September.
 c. Salían para Roma a las cinco.
 They were leaving for Rome at five
- (18) a. Volvía el lunes (= este lunes: {el pasado; el que viene})
 S/he was coming back Monday (=this/last/next Monday)
 b. En Septiembre (= este Septiembre) la daban de alta.
 She was being discharged in September (=this September).
 c. Salían para Roma a las cinco (= de hoy).
 They were leaving for Rome at five (=today).
- (19) a. Volvía el lunes (= aquel lunes)
 S/he was coming back Monday (=that Monday)
 b. En Septiembre (= aquel Septiembre) la daban de alta.
 She was being discharged in September (=that September)
 c. Salían para Roma a las cinco (= de aquel día).
 They were leaving for Rome at five (=that day).

Now, the condition in (16) predicts that only when these adjuncts receive a deictic interpretation will the salient quotative reading arise; if they behave as anaphoric expressions, it will be excluded, the narrative being the only available interpretation. This is exactly what happens, so

the paraphrases for the examples in (18) are similar to those in (12), whereas those for (19) are similar to those in (14).

Interestingly, this restriction shows up in the contrast in (20) as well:

- (20) a. Michel Camilo tocaba en el “Blue Note” el martes.
Michel Camilo was playing at the Blue Note on Tuesday.
b. Michel Camilo tocaba en el “Blue Note” los martes.
Michel Camilo played at the Blue Note on Tuesdays.

In (20)a, when the temporal adjunct is *el martes*, both the quotative (*Dijeron que Michel Camilo tocaba en el “Blue Note” el martes*) (They said Michel Camilo was playing at the Blue Note on Tuesday) and the iterative reading (*Michel Camilo siempre tocaba en el “Blue Note” el martes*) (Michel Camilo always plays at the Blue Note on Tuesdays) are possible; also the narrative reading can be marginally accepted (*Michel Camilo tocó en el “Blue Note” aquel martes*) (Michel Camilo played at the Blue Note that Tuesday). What is important here is that the quotative reading appears only if *el martes* has a specific reference (i.e. is interpreted as denoting a particular single day) and its reference is fixed with respect to the speech time; if *el martes* is taken to have a distributive interpretation (\approx every Tuesday), this blocks the quotative reading and makes only the iterative interpretation available, due to the multiplication of referents and the fact that the speech time is no longer relevant to determine their reference. On the contrary, when the temporal adjunct is *los martes* (i.e., a non-deictic expression) as in (20)b, the quotative reading is directly cancelled and only the iterative reading arises.

The condition that temporal adjuncts should be deictic is not the only factor determining the availability of quotative readings; the position they occupy in the structure of the clause is also relevant, as we will try to show.

5.2. The position of temporal adjuncts

One of the most striking properties of IMPF is its sensitivity to information structure, namely to the occurrence of overt sentence topics, as pointed out in Ducrot (1979) and Leonetti (2002). The phenomenon we would like to examine is exemplified in (21):

- (21) a. A las ocho en punto, el tren salía.
At eight o'clock on the dot, the train left.
b. El tren salía a las ocho en punto.
The train left at eight o'clock on the dot.

What is surprising about (21) is that only (21)b can receive a prospective/quotative interpretation, one that can be paraphrased as *Estaba previsto que el tren saliera a las ocho en punto* (The train was expected to leave at eight), whereas for (21)a this reading is impossible and only a narrative interpretation can be easily obtained. The factor responsible for this asymmetry is the position of the adjunct: *a las ocho en punto* ('at eight o'clock') is a sentence topic in (21)a, but a part of the focus in (21)b. For the moment, the following generalisation can be suggested:

- (22) *The Focal Adjunct Condition*
Only temporal adjuncts inside the focus (but not topic adjuncts) can license quotative readings.

There are, however, some examples that are perfectly acceptable, though apparently breaking the condition in (22), since they contain fronted temporal adjuncts:

- (23) a. Esta noche la daban de alta.

- Tonight she was going to be discharged from hospital.
- b. El domingo inauguraban el local.
On Sunday they were inaugurating the premises.
- c. A las siete de la tarde se casaban en la catedral.
At seven in the evening they were getting married in the cathedral.

We must point out that a fronted adjunct is not necessarily a topic — and in fact it is not so in (23). The intonation pattern of the sentences in (23) does not indicate a partition of the sequences in two different units (topic and focus), and this supports the idea that they are instances ofthetic constructions from an informational point of view. Thus, unlike (21)a (a categorical structure), they do not contain an explicit topic; they do have one, but it is implicit and can be made “visible” when the sequences in (23) are used as answers to a question like *¿Qué sabes de ellos?* (*What have you heard about them?*). Notice that we are not claiming that those examples should be incompatible with a categorical construction, but rather that they will only receive a quotative reading when they appear asthetic structures. Thus, when the adverbial is a topic, the quotative reading disappears, so the examples in (24) are interpreted as in (25):

- (24) a. El domingo, inauguraban el local.
On Sunday, they were inaugurating the premises.
- b. A las siete de la tarde, se casaban en la catedral.
At seven in the evening, they were getting married in...
- (25) a. El domingo, inauguraron el local.
On Sunday, they inaugurated the premises.
- b. A las siete de la tarde, se casaron en la catedral.
At seven in the evening, they got married in the cathedral.

This confirms the validity of the condition in (22), but again it poses a new question: why are there information structure restrictions on quotative readings?

6. The Role of Pragmatic Considerations

Grammatical factors, such as temporal adjuncts, are not the only factors that contribute to favouring an interpretation; pragmatic considerations seem to play a significant role as well. Consider the examples in (26) and (27):

- (26) a. Leía la tesis ayer
She was defending her thesis yesterday
- b. Leía la noticia ayer
She was reading the news yesterday
- (27) a. Hacía el examen la semana pasada
She was taking the exam last week
- b. Aprobaba el examen la semana pasada
She was passing the exam last week

All the predicates in these examples are telic, and hence they all give rise to a semantic mismatch that results in a coercion process. In addition, they all contain deictic and focal temporal adjuncts. However, a remarkable difference between the members of each pair can be observed: only the a) examples are quotative. In the absence of other contextual factors, the b) examples can only receive a narrative interpretation, given that both iterative and progressive readings are blocked by the co-occurring temporal adjuncts. Thus, the question is why these b) examples, unlike their a) counterparts, do not accept a quotative reading.

A closer examination of the facts makes it clear that in the a) examples the predicates refer to events that have been previously planned, i.e., to events scheduled to take place at a given moment: both the public defence of a PhD thesis and the setting of an examination are programmed events. On the contrary, neither reading a piece of news nor passing an exam are usually subject to a previous agenda. So the possibility of constructing a quotative reading seems to be dependent on the fact that the situation can be interpreted as one that can be planned in advance⁷.

The necessary condition to obtain quotative readings in examples such (26)a and (27)a seems to be the following:

(28) *The Planned-event Condition*

Only events that can be interpreted as planned in advance can give rise to quotative readings.

This is clearly a pragmatic condition, which depends on our world knowledge, not on grammatical features. The condition is obviously in effect with the usual interpretation frames, as shown in the contrasts in (29) and (30), where only the a) examples, which denote planned events, can be assigned a natural quotative reading:

- (29) a. Salía para Roma hoy.
S/he was leaving for Rome today.
b. Salía de casa hoy.
S/he was going out today.
- (30) a. Se casaban el próximo martes.
They were getting married next Tuesday.
b. Se asustaban el próximo martes.
They were getting frightened next Tuesday.

Even in marked situations the condition is in force. Thus, (31), for instance, can be quotative if the external context makes clear that a previous arrangement has been made (for instance, the teacher has received a bribe) to the effect that a certain student pass the exam:

- (31) Aprobaba el examen el martes.
S/he was passing the exam on Tuesday.

An easy way to show that the event must be interpretable as something planned in advance is the fact that adverbials like *por casualidad* ('by chance'), *sin previo aviso* ('without (prior) warning') or *de manera imprevista* ('unexpectedly') block the quotative reading:

- (32) a. Ernesto llegaba ahora de manera imprevista.
Ernesto was arriving today unexpectedly.
b. El avión despegaba a las 10:15 sin previo aviso.
The airplane was taking off at 10:15 without warning.

There is still a further pragmatic condition that has to do with the person features of the utterances. It is not just a coincidence that all the examples we have considered so far include only third person subjects. In fact quotative readings seem to be incompatible with first and second person subjects, as shown in the examples in (33):

⁷ We are aware that in (26) the predicate *leer* has two different meanings depending on the direct object, as the English glosses show. However, this does not affect the argumentation, since the contrast systematically reproduces in other pairs and is independent from the contextual reinterpretation of lexical items.

- (33) a. Yo volvía mañana
I was coming back tomorrow
- b. Salíamos para Roma la semana próxima
We were leaving for Rome next week
- c. Te examinabas la semana pasada
You were taking the exam last week
- d. El domingo inaugurabais el local
On Sunday you were inaugurating the premises

The natural interpretation for (33) is the non-quotative prospective reading, as an intention in the past, for (33)a-b (because they include future temporal adjuncts) and marginally to (33)c-d. The reason why only third person subjects favour quotative readings has to do with pragmatic factors, namely with the source of the information and more generally with evidentiality. Quotative readings present information on a situation for which the speaker has not direct evidence, i.e., he only knows it from a different source: this situation only can arise with third person subjects. In the other cases the source of the information and the grammatical subjects match up, given that the most reliable source about the actions of the speaker and the hearer would be themselves. Therefore, it would make little sense to try to construct a quotative interpretation. Of course, this restriction is clearly more general than the previous ones, because it is not a specific condition on the use of the IMPF, but a basic requirement on evidentiality.

7. The Nature of Quotative Readings

Up to now we have identified various classes of restrictions on the availability of quotative readings of the IMPF:

1. The predicate must be telic to trigger a process of aspectual coercion that should be resolved with a prospective reading
2. Temporal adjuncts must be both deictic and focal
3. The situation described has to be conceivable as a planned, scheduled one.

Now it is time to provide an explanation: Why should it be so? Why are these constraints necessary to obtain a prominent quotative reading?

Some languages have specialised evidential particles or constructions that make it possible to switch from descriptive uses to interpretive/quotative readings by grammatical means; languages lacking evidential markers resort to different strategies to convey evidentiality: among them, tenses are one of the most widespread devices used to this end. Quotative readings involve attributing the content of the utterance to some source of information different from the speaker and located in the past. Thus, they crucially establish a relation between three temporal points: one in the past, in which a source makes available some pieces of information about an event that will take place; another one in which the event takes place; and finally, the speech time, in which the information provided by the source is communicated by an intermediary (i.e., a speaker different from the original source) to an addressee. Then, to obtain such a temporal relation a tense is needed that can connect these three points.

The IMPF, as a past relative tense, is the ideal candidate to establish this connection: it locates an event by anchoring it to some temporal frame in the past. Constructing a quotative reading of the IMPF involves two different tasks:

1. referring to an event without asserting that it has taken place

2. equating the temporal frame (the reference point) with the original information source⁸ in a situation in which the linguistic context does not provide any other suitable antecedent

Both are in fact required for the derivation of the quotative reading: the hearer needs, first, to access a non-factual reading, and more specifically a prospective one, and second, to find himself unable to identify the temporal frame by means of a linguistic antecedent and, as a consequence, to be compelled to insert a new assumption in the context: that the temporal frame is a previous event of communication in which the speaker obtained a piece of information from a different person.

Making reference to an event without asserting that it has taken place is not part of the intrinsic meaning of the IMPF; however, this sort of interpretation can be obtained as a derived effect, namely as a way to escape the semantic incompatibility between the IMPF and a telic predicate. Thus, coercion is the driving force that sets the whole process of interpretation in motion. The prospective reading of IMPF fulfils the requirement of presenting an event without asserting that it has taken place: it does not carry the implication that the event has taken place in a moment in the past, but merely presents a situation that is expected to take place and that has to be linked to a past temporal frame. What would happen if the event were presented as something that in fact took place in the past? In that case, there would not be any way to make the quotative reading salient.

The prospective interpretation is, thus, the first step towards quotative uses of the IMPF, but other conditions must also be obeyed, given that there are cases of prospective IMPF that are not quotative, such as the examples in (10). For a prominent quotative reading to arise from a prospective IMPF other factors must converge. The first one is that the situation has to be conceivable as a planned one. The relation between prospective readings and scheduled events is not surprising, since they both involve referring to future events. The question now is why we feel compelled to understand certain uses of prospective IMPF with an evidential value, i.e., as conveying a piece of information obtained from a different speaker. One of the main differences between Future tense, on the one hand, and prospective uses of other tenses, such as IMPF or Present, on the other, is that in the second case the speaker cannot be merely hazarding a guess, but must have some consistent basis for what he says. Then, only programmed events can be reported by using a prospective IMPF or Present: there must be some reliable source of information from which the content has been obtained. What counts as a reliable source? When the future event has to do with the plans of the speaker, he himself is the source, and we get the so-called *intention in the past* interpretation. When the event has to do with the behaviour of others, apart from the *intention in the past* interpretation, we can get an evidential reading, either by reproducing a (public) schedule, or by quoting someone else's (private) words. Person features, therefore, are relevant to distinguish between *intention in the past* and *quotative*: only third person subjects can give rise to salient quotative readings.

Once the need for a prospective interpretation and the relation between prospective and quotative readings has been established, there are still other constraints that we identified in the previous sections, such as the two conditions on temporal adjuncts: the Deictic Adjunct Condition, and the Focal Adjunct Condition. Why should they be relevant for the salience of quotative readings? What we want to suggest is that they are related to the second task we mentioned — that of equating the temporal frame with the original information source. As stated above, the semantics of IMPF requires anchoring the event to a frame, so finding a reference frame is essential to satisfy this requirement. In order to make it possible to equate the temporal frame with an information source different from the speaker, there must be no alternative way to get a suitable frame. If the temporal frame required by the IMPF were

⁸ This solution is similar to the one suggested in Sthioul (1998) and (2000a) to account for the “effects of subjectivisation” in French.

identified with an accessible discourse antecedent, the instruction encoded by the tense would be satisfied that way, and there would be no reason to orientate the search for a frame towards an information source different from the speaker. Thus, a crucial requirement for the quotative reading to arise is that the IMPF should not be able to access any temporal frame among discourse-activated entities or assumptions. As we already mentioned, the insertion of an alternative information source in the interpretive process is a last resort pragmatic inference. Here is precisely where the conditions on temporal adjuncts we have identified enter the picture.

Let's consider the Deictic Adjunct Condition first. Only deictic temporal adjuncts, i.e., those requiring that their reference be calculated from the speech time, prevent the search for a frame to direct to an accessible frame in the past. Non-deictic temporal adjuncts, on the contrary, are necessarily linked to a temporal frame in the past and this makes a descriptive (non-quotative) reading salient. The Deictic Adjunct Condition contributes to blocking the access to a discourse antecedent and to the corresponding descriptive interpretation, thus creating the adequate context for the fulfilment of the second task. In addition, when deictic temporal adjuncts occur, they must occupy a focal position. Should they appear as topics, they would become a prominent antecedent themselves, thus barring the inferential path leading to the quotative reading. Topics, in fact, establish accessible temporal reference frames that satisfy the basic requirement of the procedural meaning of the IMPF (i.e., accessing a temporal frame). Focal adjuncts, on the other hand, do not provide any temporal frame to which the temporal reference of the IMPF can be anchored. This allows the search for non accessible frames, such as the alternative information source — a crucial factor for the derivation of quotative readings. This is captured under the Focal Adjunct Condition.

Incidentally, the conversational nature of our data must be related to the need for an *ad hoc* inferred frame; inside a narrative text, on the other hand, it would be much more difficult to infer this kind of frame, given that the narration itself establishes its own accessible frames.

It is not difficult to see that the required conditions are satisfied in examples such as (1), (2) and (7). Let's consider the example in (1) again:

- (1) A: —¿Qué sabes de Juan?
What about Juan?
B:—*Llegaba* el martes.
He was arriving Tuesday.

The sentential environment rules out both the iterative and the progressive interpretation, while making possible the prospective reading. The event can be understood as planned or scheduled. The temporal adjunct *el martes* can receive a deictic interpretation ('el próximo martes') and occupies a focal position. Thus, all the relevant conditions are met. Now, the question is: why has the utterance in (1) to receive a quotative reading? The answer seems straightforward: the confluence of all the crucial restrictions blocks the interpretation in which the content is attributed to the speaker. The IMPF *llegaba* requires locating a temporal frame, but the discourse does not provide any. The instruction encoded by the IMPF must be satisfied if the utterance is to receive an interpretation. Given the accumulation of restrictions on the possible readings, the only inferential way out involves inserting a temporal frame in which a source of information, different from the speaker, has provided the content that the speaker is transmitting. The quotative reading is, thus, a last resort solution.

8. Conclusions

There are a number of related issues that we have not addressed in this paper. One of them has to do with interlinguistic comparison. The role of inference has shown to be decisive; yet, the prominence of quotative readings cannot be fully accounted for in inferential terms only. In fact

if obtaining a quotative reading were just a matter of inference, one would expect that other languages with an IMPF similar to the Spanish one, such as Italian or French, would exhibit the same range of interpretations. However, the data show that things are not that simple. Bertinetto (1991: 78) offers an example of IMPF with a salient quotative reading in Italian, but points out that its use is very limited:

- (34) Teresa veniva domani, a quel che mi è stato detto: Ne sai qualcosa?
Teresa was coming tomorrow, as far as I have been told: Do you know anything about it?

Notice that the quotative interpretation is partly due to the presence of an explicit indication that words by a different speaker are quoted (*a quel che mi è stato detto*), whereas in Spanish the presence of the IMPF is enough to trigger the quotative reading. The judgements of native speakers confirm that the Italian equivalent of utterances like the ones in (1), (2) or (7) are quite unusual and would not easily receive a quotative reading. As for French, though there are quotative readings of the IMPF as well, as noted in Sthioul (1998), most of the sequences that are possible in Spanish are totally rejected in French. These data may suggest that there is more to Spanish quotative readings than pure inference: maybe a process of conventionalisation of the inferences is in motion as a first step towards grammaticalisation. The fact that quotative readings are the most marked and most restricted ones could probably explain why they are not always accepted in languages with imperfective past tenses.

We have not considered here the occurrence of salient quotative readings in interrogatives either. Examples such as the ones in (35)-(37) show that they are perfectly possible⁹, though they are not subject to the same conditions that explain the behaviour of declaratives:

- (35) [El profesor a un alumno, en los primeros días de clase]
Perdona, ¿cómo te llamabas?
[Teacher to student on one of the first days of class]
Sorry, what *was* your name (again)?
- (36) ¿Para cuándo teníamos las entradas?
When did we have the tickets for?
- (37) A: Pues me voy a llevar el nuevo equipo de buceo.
Well I'm going to take my new diving equipment with me.
B: Pero ¿no pesaba mucho?
But wasn't it very heavy?

Though we cannot develop it here, we have reasons to believe that the existence of quotative readings in interrogatives stems from a different set of conditions that nevertheless converge in the same result: such conditions have to do with the nature of interrogative constructions and also with the ways in which the procedural requirements of the IMPF can be satisfied. Far from being a counterexample to our proposal, the fact that there can be other different ways to produce salient quotative readings can reinforce two of the basic ideas we have defended: first, the claim that the label *quotative* actually refers to a bundle of different conditions, operating on different levels; and second, the idea that the IMPF has a basic procedural semantics that has to be satisfied in any occurrence.

Another issue that we have not pursued here is the question of the nature and the conditions under which quotative readings of other tenses occur, such as the Conditional or the Future. It

⁹ Interestingly enough, utterances of this sort are again anomalous in French, as Tasmowski-De Ryck (1985:69) points out with respect to **Quand Jean épousait-il Marie?*

has to be determined whether they come from the same set of restrictions or rather a different mechanism is responsible for them. This is a more general question on the relation between tenses and evidentiality that deserves further research.

However, if what has been said till now is on the right track, some theoretical implications can be drawn both for the semantics of tenses (and particularly for the semantics of the IMPF) and for the semantics/pragmatics interface.

The analysis of quotative readings has revealed as a privileged testing ground for our hypotheses on the linguistic semantics of tenses and on the hierarchical relations among the different readings of a tense. As for the semantics of IMPF, some new pieces of evidence have been obtained for the aspectual hypothesis, i.e., the idea that the IMPF is an imperfective past tense. The notion of aspectual coercion has proved decisive for our approach: only if we start from the assumption that imperfectivity is the relevant feature, can we resort to coercion as an explanatory tool. As for the hierarchy of readings, our analysis leads to the conclusion that there is an essential asymmetry between prospective and quotative readings. Iterative, progressive and prospective interpretations are the basic ways to solve the coercion process triggered by the mismatch between the selectional requirements of the IMPF and the telicity of the predicate; quotative readings, which arise from prospective readings, belong to a secondary level, and arise only if other additional conditions are met. In a sense, they are a last resort solution to satisfy the instruction encoded by the IMPF when the context excludes every other alternative. Thus, our approach provides some arguments for the idea that quotative readings are not intrinsic semantic values of the IMPF in any sense, but interpretive effects arising from the convergence of various factors, the semantics of the IMPF being one of these factors.

In addition, our analysis shows that the distinction between *descriptive* and *interpretive use* can be sometimes controlled by grammatical factors: there are particular constructions that happen to act as grammatical markers of interpretive use, as suggested in Escandell-Vidal (1998, 2002) for some interrogative structures. In the present case, even if we cannot speak of grammaticalisation of interpretive use proper, the accumulation of grammatical factors inexorably leads to infer that the utterance is being used interpretively.

Finally, we would like to state that the main theoretical consequence to be drawn from our analysis is that the notion of coercion has proved (again) an invaluable tool to reconcile the need for a steady linguistic semantics and the overwhelming presence of contextual variability.

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