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Optionality in Truth-Conditional Pragmatics¹

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RESUMEN

En este artículo cuestionamos el Criterio de Opcionalidad que acompaña a la posición filosófica de Recanati (2010) denominada ‘Pragmática de las condiciones de verdad’ (PCV). Según ese criterio, cualquier proceso pragmático primario de interpretación distinto a la saturación de expresiones contexto-sensibles es intrínsecamente opcional. Este sentido de ‘opcional’ se contrapone a una noción de *obligatorio* demasiado estricta en tanto a la saturación, el único proceso que se considera obligatorio, no siempre permite conseguir proposiciones mínimas. Esto nos lleva a reconsiderar la noción de *obligatorio* y a reformular la tesis central de la PCV del siguiente modo: hay procesos pragmáticos primarios de modulación que pueden tener una demanda opcional pero esto no evita que otras veces los mismos procesos puedan demandarse obligatoriamente.

PALABRAS CLAVE: *Recanati, pragmática de las condiciones de verdad, Criterio de Opcionalidad, procesos pragmáticos primarios, demanda obligatoria/opcional de la modulación.*

ABSTRACT

In this paper we challenge the Optionality Criterion that goes with Recanati (2010)’s philosophical position called ‘Truth-Conditional Pragmatics’ (TCP). According to this criterion, any primary pragmatic process of interpretation other than saturation of context-sensitive expressions is intrinsically optional. This sense of ‘optional’ opposes a notion of *mandatory* which is too strict in so far as saturation, the only process considered as obligatory, does not always provide us with minimal propositions. This leads us to reconsider the notion of *mandatory* and to reformulate the core tenet of TCP in the following way: some primary pragmatic processes of modulation may have an optional demand but this does not avoid that on other occasions the same processes may be mandatorily demanded.

KEYWORDS: *Recanati, Truth-conditional Pragmatics, Optionality Criterion, Primary Pragmatic Processes, Mandatory/Optional Demand of Modulation.*

I. INTRODUCTION

The recognition that the linguistic meaning of expressions does not fully determine what the speaker says has led authors such as Recanati to maintain that obtaining what is said requires what he calls ‘primary pragmatic processes’ of interpretation. A process is ‘pragmatic’ when it taps extralinguistic information and appeals to non-linguistic abilities like the ability to decipher intentions and the ability to make sense of actions. In addition, a process is ‘primary’ when it is a ‘pre-propositional’ process at work in the determination of what is said. Among primary pragmatic processes, saturation is obligatory and the rest are optional. In this paper we argue that it is not adequate to characterize every primary pragmatic process of interpretation different from saturation as intrinsically optional; saturation is not the only primary pragmatic process which may be mandatorily triggered. This amendment affects the core tenet of Truth-Conditional Pragmatics (TCP from now on), that there are optional primary pragmatic processes; a tenet which allows TCP to solve the conflict with Minimalism in its favour.

Only one form of minimalism, nonstipulative minimalism, conflicts with TCP and hereafter we will focus on it alone. In both positions, what is said corresponds to the intuitive truth-conditions of the utterance and depends on the ‘availability’ criterion, “according to which what is said is the proposition determined by the truth-conditional intuitions of the participants in the talk-exchange themselves.” [Recanati (2010), p. 14]. In both proposals, the minimal propositional content fixes determinate truth-conditions and is reached in virtue of the standing meaning of words and the context. It may only be affected by the obligatory application of the primary pragmatic process of saturation, or without the help of any ‘top-down’ or optional pragmatic process. The minimal proposition expressed by an utterance would be the complete proposition reached by saturating the variables that appear in the logical form associated with the sentence uttered.

The debate between minimalists and truth-conditional pragmatists is to know whether what is said by means of any utterance coincides with the minimal proposition or not. For minimalists, the minimal proposition serves to fix the truth-conditional content of the utterance, while for the truth-conditional pragmatist it does not. For the latter, the propositions that the speaker communicates directly do not have to coincide with the minimal propositions, with the literal truth-conditional contents, and when this happens, the minimal proposition has no real cognitive role in the derivation of speaker’s meaning. The intuitive truth-conditional content may be affected by optional or free primary pragmatic processes. Then, if there are intrinsically optional primary pragmatic processes involved in the derivation of what is said, the conflict between minimalists and truth-conditional pragmatists is solved in favour of the latter.

The problem with this conditional is, as we will argue, that the antecedent is inadequate. If some pragmatic processes other than saturation are not applied, the problem is not just that one does not get the *intuitive* truth-conditional content of an utterance but that one does not even get its minimal truth-conditional content. Minimalists and truth-conditional pragmatists are misguided in this respect. In our opinion, a logical form without free variables does not guarantee a complete proposition. Recanati's notion of *mandatory* should be reconsidered to add a truth-conditional facet so that minimal propositions can always be obtained. A mandatory demand may be truth-conditional and arise in the sentence (the demand is also linguistic in this case) or may just arise in some utterances of the sentence. In addition, the linguistic demand may arise not only lexically or constructionally, as Recanati argues, but also compositionally. If, as we propose, there are linguistically mandatory demands that are compositional and others that are just truth-conditional, not all processes different from saturation are intrinsically optional. This modification does not rule us out as truth-conditional pragmatists. To be one of them, it is enough to argue that sometimes there are optional demands of primary pragmatic processes. In turn, this does not avoid there being mandatory demands of primary pragmatic processes different from saturation.

These proposals will be developed in the following order. In the next section, we expound the core tenets of TCP, following Recanati's latest book on the subject, [Recanati (2010)], and show that they involve a truth-conditional notion of *mandatory* that Recanati thinks is delineated with his linguistic criterion of mandatoriness as outlined by the Optionality Criterion (OC from now on). In section three, we develop a distinction among several mandatory demands of contextual information and remark that, among the linguistic demands, only lexical and constructional demands correspond with Recanati's notion of *mandatory*. We also reconsider the notion of *truth-conditionally mandatory* by taking into account the difference between expression-driven or utterance-driven demands. In section four, we propose the notion of *optionality* that is derived from the multifaceted notion of *mandatory*. Finally, in the conclusion, we summarize our modification of the TCP thesis that there are free primary pragmatic processes.

II. SOME TENETS OF TRUTH-CONDITIONAL PRAGMATICS

According to Recanati (2010)'s *Truth-Conditional Pragmatics*, the propositional contribution of many non-context-sensitive expressions to what is directly said is a meaning that undergoes pragmatic adjustment and thus differs from any of the literal contents that the expression might fix. These pragmatic adjustments (or 'modulations' as Recanati calls them) are part of what is said or the *lekton*, that is, the relative truth-conditional content of the ut-

terance and the articulated aspect of the Austinian proposition. The Austinian proposition is the full content which is, for example, the possible content of an assertion and which is capable of being true or false.² On this view, what is said, the articulated truth-conditional content to evaluate the utterance, is not always what is literally said. We [Romero and Soria (2007), p. 145] agree with these two tenets of TCP, but this is not enough to argue for TCP.

In opposition to TCP, many minimalists argue for a notion of *what is literally said*. They maintain that saturation is enough to get the minimal proposition, to get what is said by an utterance of a sentence or the literal truth-conditional content that allows the evaluation of the utterance. This gives us a particular characterization of *mandatory*:

Mandatory_T

If a process or its result is needed for a content to be evaluable, it is, from a truth-conditional point of view, mandatory.

This characterization of a mandatory process, nevertheless, opens the door to proposals such as Josef Stern (2006, 2011)'s when he argues that metaphorical interpretation depends on a mandatory process of saturation of a deictic operator since metaphorical utterances cannot determine compositionally a literal proposition from the conventional meanings of the individual words. The process of non-literal interpretation is required in order to obtain a minimal propositional content.

In Recanati's TCP, metaphorical meaning is also part of what is said but the pragmatic process to obtain modulated meaning is optional. Recanati maintains that modulations are part of what is said and that they are not pragmatic adjustments demanded to get a minimal proposition, under the assumption that the intentional direct propositional content expressed by an utterance is not always its literal minimal proposition. Interpretive processes are not only triggered as something indispensable for the expression of a propositional content, as minimalists argue, but as something dispensable for a propositional content to be evaluable. In this way, the distinction between being indispensable or dispensable for a minimal proposition becomes relevant to understand the contention between minimalists and truth-conditional pragmatists: only when dispensable (optional) processes are considered to take part of what is said, can the proposal be classified as truth-conditional pragmatic. Thus, what without any doubt characterizes TCP is that there are optional primary pragmatic processes of modulation [Recanati (2010), p. 166], taking into account that a process is 'optional' if its result may not be present in the propositional content expressed and yet it is evaluable. It is a process whose demand cannot be traced to a linguistic constituent or construction.

As the recent version of OC manifests,

Being a top down, context-driven process, modulation takes place in some contexts and not others, while saturation, being linguistically mandated in virtue of lexical properties of the expression type, is bound to take place in all felicitous uses of the expression. Modulation is optional, saturation is mandatory [Recanati (2010), pp. 57-8],

saturation is a primary pragmatic process of contextual value-assignment to context-sensitive expressions and covert variables that is triggered (and made mandatory) by some linguistic constituent or construction in the sentence itself. Thus, saturation is a bottom-up process, that is, a signal-driven and not a context-driven process. This gives us another characterization of *mandatory*:

Mandatory_L

If a process or its result is needed in virtue of lexical properties of the expression type, it is, from a linguistic point of view, mandatory.

Saturation is not the only pragmatic process that is primary or that affects what is said, according to TCP. There are primary pragmatic processes that, unlike saturation, are contextually triggered in response to conversational needs. They are top-down primary processes and are optional. Several optional primary pragmatic processes such as transfer, loosening (broadening) and free enrichment (strengthening) may be sorted out as modulation processes since they adjust the meaning of words and phrases to get contextual senses distinct from their literal or conventional meanings to determine an admissible content for the speaker's utterance. By means of them, an expression may contribute an indefinite number of senses which are different from its conventional sense and which result from modulation operations applied to the proprietary sense [Recanati (2010), p. 19]. What processes of modulation have in common, according to Recanati, is that they are not linguistically triggered in virtue of lexical properties. They are optional primary pragmatic processes that take place locally in some contexts and not others.³

The problem is that, as we will argue, this notion of *optional* depends on a notion of *mandatory_L* that does not allow a minimal proposition in every case, and thus it is not coextensive with the notion of *mandatory_T*. In this sense, Recanati (2004)'s formulation of OC

Whenever a contextual ingredient of content is provided through a pragmatic process of the optional variety, we can imagine another possible context of utterance in which no such ingredient is provided yet the utterance expresses a complete proposition [Recanati (2004), p.101].

seems to us more appropriate since it allows us to see that 'optional', applied to a process or its result, is related to the proposal that if the extralinguistic context changes, the utterance expresses a full proposition without this prag-

matic process or its result being necessarily involved. What makes a primary pragmatic process ‘mandatory’ in this formulation of OC is the truth-conditional demand. Nevertheless, in Recanati (2010)’s account of OC what makes a primary pragmatic process ‘mandatory’ is the linguistic demand. This would not be, in principle, a problem since, for Recanati, the mandatory_T demand of a process is always mandatory_L. Still, as we will show in the next section, Recanati’s mandatory_L demands cannot guarantee a full proposition.

III. MANDATORY DEMANDS

In this section, we first defend that if the linguistically mandatory demand of a process has to guarantee a complete proposition [see Recanati (2010), p. 20], we have to add at least one type of linguistic demand. Secondly, we consider that not every linguistic demand has to be truth-conditional. Finally, we claim that sometimes without an utterance-driven process no proposition can be obtained.⁴

III.1 *Linguistic and Truth-conditional Demands*

Recanati’s linguistic criterion of mandatoriness intends to include the truth-conditional criterion since if a linguistic meaning requires certain contextual information and this is not considered, then, there would not be a complete propositional content. The linguistic demands are also truth-conditional, they are mandatory_{LT}. For example, in a normal utterance of (1)

(1) He is rich

the demand of contextual information is mandatory_L since the linguistic meaning of the pronoun ‘he’ sets up a variable to be pragmatically filled. This type of demand is bottom-up in the sense that there is a context-sensitive expression that demands pragmatic information by its lexical properties. It is also mandatory_T because, without the saturation process, what is said by the utterance does not fix relative truth-conditions that allow its evaluation since it is neither true nor false of the situation the utterance concerns. In this sense, when reference assignment is involved for variables, the demand to reach explicit contents is mandatory_{LT}.

For Recanati, in addition, there are other cases of mandatory_{LT} demand of saturation. The examples that involve a noun-noun construction can be used to show that no utterance of them express a complete proposition if the relation between the nouns is not established. No utterance of a sentence such as (2)

(2) The burglar nightmare was now over

expresses a complete proposition if the relation between burglar and nightmare is not established; there is a mandatory_T demand of the saturation of the relation. This is an example of what Recanati [(2010), p. 37 n4] calls ‘constructional context-sensitivity’ which is different from the lexical one in the sense that there is no articulated expression that stands for the relation that should be saturated in a bottom-up manner. In order to get the meaning of (2), we need to assign a value to the relation that nightmare bears to burglar. In every case of noun-noun compounds we will need a relation whose saturation is mandatory_L. It is linguistically mandated by the attempt of combining two simple expressions to get a complex one. Other cases of mandatory_{LT} demand of saturation are examples such as (3).

(3) John is coming

(3) can be used to show that no utterance of it expresses a complete proposition if the place John is coming to or from is not established. Every utterance of (3) demands truth-conditionally the place to which John is coming and this is so because, according to Recanati, there is a mandatory_L demand; the locative is here an argument.

In both types of examples, according to Recanati, there is no complete propositional content due to the use of a linguistic form indicating that a bottom-up pragmatic process is needed.⁵ The linguistic demand may be signal-driven by the lexical properties of the expression type or constructionally-driven by the combinatorial properties of a complex expression.

This leads us to wonder if once we have saturated context-sensitive expressions (either lexical or constructional), the content is capable of being true or false in relation to the situation the utterance concerns. If this is so, the content is a possible articulated content of an assertion. Otherwise, it is merely a succession of propositional constituents that has not admitted compositionality. This possibility implies that an obligatory combinatorial demand may trigger another type of interpretation process. Sometimes a primary pragmatic process is triggered linguistically by lack of semantic coordination in a sentence or phrase whose parts are syntactically coordinate.

Complex expressions of any level of complexity that are syntactically coordinate but have lack of semantic coordination affecting the arguments of the sentence will demand pragmatic resolution on pain of semantic underdetermination. Without pragmatic resolution, their utterances (whatever the context) fix logical forms without free variables that, nevertheless, do not determine an evaluable truth-conditional content. Let’s consider an utterance of (4)

(4) The city is asleep

that Recanati (2010), p. 41, himself uses to illustrate a case of semantic flexibility. This example will be useful for us to explain what we mean by lack of semantic coordination. (4) shows lack of semantic coordination between its semantic parts, between the meaning of the NP, 'the city', and the meaning of the predicate, 'is asleep'. This predicate cannot make its semantic contribution to the clause since its meaning typically needs an animate entity to fill in the semantic role of its subject but there is no element in (4) with the feature [ANIMATE] to take such a role. The composition of the meanings of the NP and the predicate is not possible as no resulting meaning is available to obtain an acceptable proposition with both of them as constituents. Thus, for every utterance of (4) no literal minimal proposition is expressed or no determinate truth-conditions are obtained until a pragmatic process of meaning adjustment takes place. That is, the demand of contextual information is not only mandatory_L and arises compositionally due to lack of semantic coordination, it is also mandatory_T.⁶

But if this is so, the problem is not that the proposition literally expressed by an utterance of (4) need not be computed in the process of interpreting a nonliteral utterance but that there is no such thing. This problem is similar to the one Recanati attributes to the Pragmatic Composition view, according to which the modulation of a word becomes mandatory but only with respect to the complex expression. The contextual provision of the missing element is a strong pragmatic effect that "is often mandatory — without it, there would be some form of semantic mismatch." But he adds:

The problem is with the 'often'. 'Often' is not 'always'. If there are cases, however rare, in which the sentence expresses a proposition simply in virtue of the standing meaning of words and the context (but without contextual modulation), then the notion of a minimal proposition is not incoherent after all. So the Pragmatic Composition view does not succeed in establishing the conclusion that strong pragmatic effects are ineliminable [Recanati (2010), p. 21].

Nevertheless, Recanati does not provide any example of semantic mismatch in which the sentence expresses a proposition simply in virtue of the standing meaning of words and the context (but without contextual modulation). The reason is simply that there are no such examples, and then, the notion of a *minimal proposition* is incoherent for cases of semantic mismatch after all. In cases showing lack of semantic coordination, what the speaker means cannot be inferred from the fact that she is saying the minimal proposition, not because, as TCP claims, the minimal proposition has no real cognitive role in the derivation of speaker's meaning but because, as we have just argued, there is no literal minimal proposition. We do not know what the world would have to be like for the meaning expressed by an utterance of (4) to obtain simply in virtue of the standing meaning of words and the context (but without contextual modulation).

The lack of semantic coordination of 'is asleep' with the subject is just an indicator that the semantic components in the sentence need pragmatic adjustment of any sort to make their contribution to a proposition. It demands compositionally a pragmatic process even if the type of process and the content cannot be specified without the context in which (4) is uttered. In an utterance of (4) either the NP has to be metonymically interpreted by means of a pragmatic operation of transfer or the VP has to be metaphorically interpreted by means of a pragmatic resolution of loosening, and thus different pragmatic processes may be demanded to express a complete proposition. One of these pragmatic processes has then a linguistically mandatory demand to get determinate truth-conditions in the interpretation of an utterance of (4).⁷ The linguistically mandatory demand due to lack of semantic coordination frees the conception of *mandatory* from the necessary condition that the mandatory demand can only be made by context-sensitive expressions in a bottom-up manner.

However, Recanati does not accept as obligatory the demand of contextual information required for interpreting (4) because, he would say, the semantic flexibility cannot be accounted for in terms of some kind of context-sensitivity, but in terms of modulation and modulation is, according to Recanati (2010)'s proposal of OC, always optional [Recanati (2010), pp. 41-2]. Nevertheless, his words

Because of the apparent category violation (a city is not the sort of thing that sleeps) either 'asleep' **must** be interpreted in a metaphorical or extended sense as meaning QUIET AND SHOWING LITTLE ACTIVITY or 'the city' **has to** be interpreted metonymically as referring to the inhabitants of the city [Recanati (2010), p. 41, our emphasis].

contrast with the idea that modulation has to be always optional. Recanati [(2010), p. 166] also says that a process is mandatory when a value *must* be contextually provided and optional when a value *may* be contextually provided. Thus 'optional' opposes 'mandatory' by the *must/may* contrast.

Bearing this in mind, why does Recanati reiterate that metaphor and metonymy involve optional pragmatic processes? Two aspects of mandatory/optional are at stake:

- (i) the *must/may* contrast with respect to a demand of pragmatic process of any kind;
- (ii) the selection of the type of pragmatic process (loosening or transfer) involved in the interpretation.

The former would support a mandatory demand while the latter would tell us that neither metaphor nor metonymy is intrinsically involved in the interpretation of the uttered sentence since it can be interpreted either metonymically or

metaphorically. Thus, it could be argued that a particular pragmatic operation (say transfer) is not mandatory for the interpretation of the sentence. And we do indeed agree with that. What we defend is that the demand for a pragmatic adjustment (of any kind) is mandatory in sense (i). The demand for a pragmatic process is mandatory to get determinate truth-conditions whatever the selection of the specific type of process.⁸

When there is a semantic mismatch, a pragmatic adjustment is ineliminable. Modulation processes often have a linguistically mandatory demand and more ‘often’ than not this is the case of metaphor and metonymy. It is true that not all the metaphorical or metonymical utterances include a sentence that shows lack of semantic coordination, but most cases do. Occasionally, there is no lack of semantic coordination in the sentence included in the metaphorical or metonymical utterances. In these cases, the metaphorical or metonymical processes may be necessary for propositionality (section III.3), or not (section IV). Thus, we will have to reconsider the issue of optionality taking into account that these cases prove that these processes are not intrinsically mandatory or optional. It would be a fallacy to argue that because some of the cases are mandatory all of them have to be so. By the same token, to say that lack of semantic coordination is not a necessary condition of certain pragmatic processes does not mean that the demand of the pragmatic adjustment needed for propositionality is always optional. Our previous explanation clearly shows that, without a pragmatic adjustment, no proposition is obtained in examples such as (4). Thus this pragmatic adjustment is ineliminable both linguistically and truth-conditionally; its demand is not just pragmatically constrained.

In sum, the linguistic demand may arise lexically or constructionally or compositionally. In the following figure, Figure 1, we provide all the possibilities of mandatory_L we have explored taking into account examples of each type that are also mandatory_T. The demand is truth-conditionally driven by an expression (complex or not) and thus it is also linguistic.

Mandatory _L			Examples
Lexical	Constructional	Compositional	
+	-	-	He is rich
-	+	-	Burglar nightmare
-	-	+	The city is asleep

FIGURE 1

III.2 Linguistic and Non-truth-conditional Demands

Nevertheless, not all examples whose demand is mandatory_L are also examples of mandatory_T. The two characterizations of *mandatory* are not co-extensive, they do not determine the same kind of phenomena. If the context-sensitive expression demands contextual information truth-conditionally, the

process has to be primary, while if the demand is just linguistic, the process may not be primary.

Let's consider an example that Recanati himself uses to illustrate conventional implicatures and which will be useful for us to show that the interpretation process may be mandatory_L but not mandatory_T. The meaning of 'but' sets up a slot to be saturated by the complex metalinguistic proposition that there is a conclusion supported by the first conjunct that the second refutes. When the propositional variable is saturated (the demand is mandatory_L), it is not part of the propositional content of the utterance (the demand is non-mandatory_T). Thus, the difference between the utterances of (5) and (6)

(5) He is rich but stupid

(6) He is rich and stupid

is not truth-conditional. As Recanati (2010), p. 243, would say both utterances express the proposition that the person in question is both rich and stupid although they do not have the same linguistic meaning. In virtue of the conventional conditions of use of 'but', (5) linguistically conveys the further indication that his being intelligent given his richness is refuted by his unexpected stupidity. "Though conventional, this meaning is not part of the (the compositionally articulated) propositional content of the utterance" [Ibid. (2010), p. 245]. Although saturation of context-sensitive expressions is a pragmatic process always mandatorily demanded from a linguistic point of view, it is not always primary since its result may not be part of what is said. (See figure 2, below.)

Other examples that have a linguistic but not a truth-conditional demand of contextual information are what Bach [(1999), p. 269] calls 'utterance modifiers'. They are also typical examples of lack of semantic coordination between parts of the sentence that are syntactically coordinate. However, utterance modifiers do not trigger a primary pragmatic process to interpret the uncoordinated elements. (7), that includes in italics an utterance modifier,

(7) *Frankly*, the road had a very poor surface.

shows lack of coordination between its semantic parts, between the meaning of the adverbial 'frankly' and the meaning of the clause 'the road had a very poor surface'. 'Frankly' cannot make its semantic contribution to the clause in which it is embedded since the meaning of 'frankly' typically selects a verbal action such as saying or telling and no such type of action appears in the clause. The composition of the meanings of the adverbial and the clause is not possible as no resulting meaning is available to obtain an acceptable proposition with both of them as constituents. This lack of semantic coordination causes a semantic orphanage of the manner adverbial which cannot be included in the semantic

structure of the sentence. Although the semantic mismatch does not prevent us from getting determinate truth-conditions for the clause, it triggers, from a compositional point of view, a mandatory_L demand of a pragmatic process according to which FRANKLY operates, so to speak, at one level up as a modifier of the speech act of assertion. The difference with the metonymic utterance, for example, of (4) is that in (4) the level up is at phrasal rather than sentential level, and a minimal proposition is not available.

Mandatory _L			Mandatory _T		Examples
Lexical	Constructional	Compositional	Sentence	Utterance	
+	-	-	+	+	He is rich
			-	-	He is rich but stupid
-	+	-	+	+	Burglar nightmare
-	-	+	+	+	The city is asleep
			-	-	Frankly, the road had a very poor surface

FIGURE 2

III.3 *Non-linguistic and Truth-conditional Demands*

The linguistic demand by means of context-sensitive or of semantic underdetermination exposed in III.1, however, cannot guarantee a full proposition for each utterance. Thus, we argue that there are mandatory_T demands that are non-linguistic.

When the mandatory demand of a pragmatic process is just truth-conditional, the type of examples that we have to consider must be some utterances of sentences that are fully well-formed syntactically and semantically but fail to express a complete proposition if modulation is not involved. The expression failure of the proposition is produced because the linguistic meaning of the sentence triggered a semantic presupposition that failed in the context of the utterance of that sentence; there will be a presupposition failure if there is no pragmatic accommodation [Glanzberg (2005), p. 367].

Cases such as “the lion’s sword”, the example that Recanati [(1995), p. 228; (2004), pp. 63-64] himself uses to argue that the modulation involved in the metonymic interpretation must be primary because it takes place before saturation, will be useful for us to go a bit further and show that modulation

is obligatorily demanded by a particular utterance of the sentence due to the attempt to avoid a semantic presupposition failure related with saturation. The unusual and metaphorical utterance of (8)

(8) My cat is on the mat

will serve to show what we mean. A metaphorical utterance of (8) would be for example when Ann, who has no pet, is at home. Her only daughter, who is a two-year-old girl, is playing with a woollen ball on the mat. Sophia, a good friend of Ann, enters the room, asks Ann where her daughter is, and she makes use of (8). In this type of metaphorical utterances, there is no lack of semantic coordination that triggers a mandatory_{LT} process of metaphorical interpretation as in metaphorical utterances of (4). Nevertheless, in cases such as this utterance of (8), to obtain an evaluable propositional content, a metaphorical interpretation process is needed. When Ann utters 'my cat', the context of the utterance of (8) has to assign one of the salient relations to the possessive construction in order to know what object Ann is talking about, we must saturate a variable corresponding to the relation between the speaker and a cat. Saturation has a mandatory_{LT} demand. It is needed to determine Ann's intended referent that will be involved in the intended proposition expressed by the utterance of (8). But in this context, if 'cat' is literally interpreted, there is no salient relation between a cat and Ann which corresponds to what the speaker actually means and thus it cannot be given a particular value to the variable expressed by the possessive construction.⁹ In this way, one of the semantic presuppositions associated with the possessive construction fails and thus the predicate encoded by 'cat of the speaker' fails to express a propositional constituent of the content conveyed by the utterance of (8), it fails to denote a cat. By uttering (8) in the indicated context, Ann does not express any literal propositional content that fixes truth-conditions that permits its evaluation.

Only if we recognize that 'cat' in 'my cat' is being used metaphorically, will we be able to saturate the variable in this context. In order to know what the speaker refers to by means of 'my cat', we have to construct the metaphorical meaning of 'cat', which then makes it possible to saturate the relation between a metaphorical cat and the speaker. The value of the variable expressed by the possessive is related to the non-literal interpretation of 'cat' and it will be one of the salient relations between an infant and Ann: parenthood.

If we intended to give that value to the variable taking into account the literal interpretation of 'cat', the result would be unintelligible, *THE CAT WHO ANN IS A PARENT OF*, and could not be a propositional constituent of the content conveyed by the utterance of (8). The context fails to determine a literal referent for 'my cat' because the speaker has deliberately made manifest that saturation with one of the salient relations in the context produces an unintel-

ligible result, a result that shows lack of semantic coordination. Ann has ensured that the semantic presupposition associated with the possessive construction cannot be met. If this presupposition failed, the propositional form expressed by the uttered sentence would not be a proposition, and the demand of a pragmatic adjustment to allow saturation of the relation expressed by the genitive would be truth-conditionally mandated. The truth-conditions are not determinate if the modulation of the conceptual material is not brought about because without this pragmatic adjustment the presupposition failure of the genitive construction will prevent the expression of a full proposition. The metaphorical process in this particular utterance of (8) is previous to the one of saturation, and the latter is a process that is necessary to obtain what is said. Thus, although (8) does not demand linguistically an adjustment of the meaning of 'cat', its metaphorical utterance demands truth-conditionally and not merely pragmatically this adjustment.

If we take into account what we claimed in III.1, what is metaphorically said is achieved by a subpropositional pragmatic process which, in spite of not being always linguistically mandated, is sometimes not optional from the truth-conditional point of view. Its mandatory character is due to the fact that in cases such as the metaphorical utterance of (8) literal interpretation is blocked, the route to the literal propositional content is not available.

IV. THE OPTIONAL DEMAND OF PRIMARY PRAGMATIC PROCESSES

From the previous explanation of how a demand can be mandatory, we point out that, even if many demands are mandatory_{LT}, not all mandatory_L demands are also mandatory_T. There are non-linguistically mandatory_T demands. Without these clarifications, we would be overgeneralizing the identification of optional demands and considering as 'optional' processes of modulation whose demand may be not fully pragmatic. This may have the undesired consequence that either a minimal proposition is not reached just by means of saturation or, that modulated contents should be characterized as resulting from saturation in the intent to reach a minimal proposition, in Stern's vein about metaphor.

Instead, the multifaceted notion of *mandatory* provides us with a minimal proposition for each utterance and this leads us to reconsider the debate between minimalists and truth-conditional pragmatists: Are these minimal propositions always speaker meant? If the answer is negative, it is because there are primary processes that at least sometimes have an optional demand, that is, a demand that is not obligatory in any of the senses of 'mandatory' expounded in section III.

A demand is optional when it is pragmatic through and through. There are optional demands of primary pragmatic processes when the utterance's minimal proposition lacks relevant specificity [Romero and Soria (forthcom-

ing)]. This, for example, occurs when pragmatic resolution contributes to the truth-conditions with a transfer that affects the meaning that is an ingredient of the minimal proposition not intended by the speaker. Nevertheless, in a different context the minimal proposition could even be the proposition intended by the speaker. This is the reason why pragmatic resolution is really optional, that is, fully pragmatic. To show that there is optionally demanded modulation in what is said, we have to check if the *lekton* has optional elements with respect to the minimalist *lekton*. With a non-literal utterance of (9), “the sort of example which motivates Truth-Conditional Pragmatics” [Recanati (2010), p. 5],

(9) There is a lion in the middle of the piazza

the speaker does not mean the minimal proposition that there is a real lion in the middle of the piazza. When this case is explained as local modulation, the meaning of ‘lion’ is changed to mean ‘statue of a lion’. This reading of ‘lion’ is not demanded linguistically or truth-conditionally, it is optional. The proposition intended by the speaker includes contextual information that restores the lack of relevant specificity of the minimal proposition. Non-literal cases like the non-literal utterance of (9) make us truth-conditional pragmatists because they show that there are demands of primary processes that are pragmatic through and through, as we can see in Figure 3.

Mandatory _L			Mandatory _T		Optional	Examples
Lex.	Const.	Comp.	Sentence	Utterance		
+	-	-	+	+	-	He is rich
			-	-	-	He is rich but stupid
-	+	-	+	+	-	Burglar nightmare
-	-	+	+	+	-	The city is asleep
			-	-	-	Frankly, the road had a very poor surface
-	-	-	-	+	-	‘cat’ in a metaphorical utterance of ‘My cat is on the mat’
-	-	-	-	-	+	‘lion’ in a metonymical utterance of ‘There is a lion in the middle of the piazza’

FIGURE 3

V. CONCLUSION

In this paper we admit that what is said is an aspect of speaker's meaning and that what is said by the speaker is not always literally said. However, this does not mean that we have to follow the TCP's core proposal according to which any pragmatic process of modulation has to be intrinsically optional. Our analysis of some examples has served to show that some processes of modulation can be demanded obligatorily. As we showed in section III.1, we defend that strong pragmatic effects can be constrained in virtue of linguistic considerations such as lack of semantic coordination and even, as we have seen in section III.3, in virtue of purely truth-conditional considerations. These results have taken us to see that the mistake that both minimalists and truth-conditional pragmatists alike make is to consider that the contextual information required to obtain minimal propositions is merely guided by context-sensitive expressions. For us, in opposition to both, the minimal proposition includes anything demanded truth-conditionally (linguistic or not); the mandatory demand is not restricted to context-sensitive expressions. Other examples show, as we have argued in section IV, that some processes of modulation can sometimes be demanded optionally.

If our analysis of the examples is right, the core tenet of TCP cannot be characterized as the position according to which optional pragmatic processes intervene in what is said since the assumption that any process is obligatory or optional in an exclusive way has to be rejected. What a truth-conditional pragmatist may argue is that the intuitive truth-conditions of an utterance are affected by pragmatic processes that sometimes are triggered optionally, their demands are pragmatic through and through. As a result, we only differ from Recanati's TCP position in the sense that we think that much more pragmatic information is triggered in a mandatory way. TCP is attenuated since the demand of contextual information may be mandatory without it being lexical or constructional. In sum, we agree with TCP in arguing that there are optional pragmatic effects on truth-conditions but the effect of context on what is expressed is, in our opinion, more constrained from a semantic point of view than what Recanati would accept.

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NOTES

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² If what is said is the relative truth-conditional content of the utterance, it need not be a complete proposition for TCP while it should be complete for the minimalist. This entails that, when the articulated part of the Austinian proposition is not a complete proposition, the elements of the situation needed to evaluate the *lekton* should form a part of the minimal proposition or of what is said in the minimalist account. For example, in implicit *de se* thoughts, the self, according to Recanati [(2007), p. 260], is not articulated but the minimal proposition should include it in order to be complete. As in this paper we avoid speaking of unarticulated constituents of the Austinian proposition, this complication is irrelevant for the arguments provided below. Thus, as far as possible, we will ignore the idea that in TCP what is said is a relative propositional content.

³ As Recanati himself recognizes [Recanati (2010), p. 58 n4], however, applying OC is not easy. Absolute readings of the domain of quantification may be considered either as cases in which no pragmatic process takes place or as cases in which the entire domain is assigned to a variable. If a domain restriction is needed, in the first possibility the process is optional while in the second it is mandatory.

⁴ For more details about the different senses in which the truth-conditional demand may arise, see Romero and Soria (forthcoming).

⁵ Examples such as (2) and (3) are cases of what Kent Bach calls respectively 'underdeterminate phrases' [Bach (1994), p. 150 n19] and 'underdeterminate sentences' [Bach (1994), p. 133]. For him, these expressions do not linguistically trigger a variable to saturate. They truth-conditionally trigger a pragmatic process of supplementation, they are cases of completion. In this way, Bach admits that a non-linguistic truth-conditional demand may arise in a phrase or in the sentence, something that Recanati would not admit.

⁶ The mandatory demand, nevertheless, does not depend on a free variable as Stern (2006) would argue. Lack of coordination is not a signal of a covert variable whose saturation allows the combination of the two argument roles. Not all obligatory demands of pragmatic information have to follow the pragmatic operation of assignment of a value to a variable. In the same way as there can be different pragmatic strategies within the set of processes optionally demanded, there can be different pragmatic strategies within mandatory ones: not only saturation but also many cases of transfer and supplementation. In this respect we disagree both with minimalists and truth-conditional pragmatists because they both believe that extralinguistic context can affect the minimal proposition only if the demand of its contribution can be traced to a constituent in the expression uttered.

⁷ As we have argued in previous works, we disagree with Recanati's defence of the kind of pragmatic process involved in metaphor and metonymy. This disagreement does not affect the discrepancy we are showing now in relation to his idea that the pragmatic processes involved in the interpretation of metonymy (be it transfer, as Recanati argues, or supplementation as we (2005) defend) or metaphor (be it loosening, as Recanati says, or transfer as we (2007) argue) are always dispensable to get their minimal propositions.

⁸ The selection of the specific pragmatic process needs more specific triggering conditions [Romero and Soria (2007)].

⁹ Another example of presupposition failure for saturation would be the utterance, pointing to a woman, of the sentence: ‘he is waiting for the check’. In this case, the standing object does not fulfil the linguistic requirement of being male. There is a presupposition failure. Saturation previously demands that ‘he’ be interpreted, for example, metaphorically.

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Reply to Romero and Soria

François Recanati

In ‘Optionality in Truth-Conditional Pragmatics’, Romero and Soria discuss various senses in which a pragmatic process may be said to be mandatory (vs optional), and they offer a detailed and most useful taxonomy. The issue is important because I use optionality as a criterion to distinguish, among the primary pragmatic processes (those which contribute to what is said), two main types: saturation processes, which are mandatory, and modulation processes, which are optional. R&S object that this distinction is not fine-grained enough. Modulation is sometimes mandatory: it is mandatory when, because of a semantic mismatch at the level of linguistic meaning, the sentence cannot express a determinate proposition unless the meaning of one of the constituent expressions is modulated so as to match the meaning of the other constituents.

I agree that there is a sense in which modulation is mandatory in such cases. R&S use my example of semantic mismatch: ‘The city is asleep’ [Recanati (2004), pp. 34-36]. There are several modulation options. ‘Asleep’ may be understood, via loosening, as contributing the property of being silent and displaying a low level of activity. Or, via semantic transfer, it can contribute another property predicated of the city, namely the property of being such that its inhabitants are asleep. It is also possible that some metonymic process operates in such a way that ‘the city’ itself is tantamount to ‘the inhabitants of the city’. (This is truth-conditionally equivalent to the previous interpretation.) There are many options, and it may be that what is communicated is vague and somewhat indeterminate. But if no modulation takes place, the interpretation crashes (as formal linguists like to say). So modulation is semantically mandatory, in such cases. R&S say it is *compositionally* mandatory.

I think this is a useful category indeed. When discussion of Minimalism started [Carston (1988), Recanati (1989)], various senses of ‘mandatory’ were already distinguished. In one sense, what is mandatory is what is linguistically triggered. Mandatoriness is a conventional property. In another sense, ‘mandatory’ means ‘necessary for a complete proposition to be expressed’.¹ Perry argued that, because there are ‘unarticulated constituents’, it

is possible for some pragmatic process to be mandatory in one sense but not the other [Perry (1986)]. Kent Bach also thought of ‘completion’ as a process that is mandatory in only one of the two senses [Bach (1987)]. I do not think we need unarticulated constituents, because everything can be done with modulation [Recanati (2010), pp. 22-24]; and I think completion reduces to (a variety of) saturation. But compositionally mandatory modulation shows that we do need the distinction R&S make between ‘mandatory_L’ and ‘mandatory_T’. We also need it, as they point out, because a pragmatic process which is linguistically triggered may be such that it does not contribute to truth-conditional content. Words like ‘but’ display a *non-truth-conditional* form of indexicality and require saturation at another level than that of truth-conditional content [Recanati (1993), p. 240].

I agree with most of R&S’s observations, but not with their criticism of my view, which is based on a presupposition I do not share (though I am open to reconsideration). The presupposition has to do with the status of compositional modulation. Some people [e.g. Pustejovsky (1995), Asher (2011)] take compositional modulation to be part of semantics; others take it to be a nonlinguistic, pragmatic phenomenon. For Hagit Borer (2005), a sentence like ‘The city is asleep’ does not display any *linguistic* anomaly; it is a perfectly fine, grammatical — and therefore meaningful — sentence of the language. Making sense of what an utterance of the sentence says is a different story: a story for pragmatics to tell. In some cases (e.g. ‘Colorless green ideas sleep furiously’) it is hard to imagine a context in which the sentence might be used to say something, but that is never *impossible*. Again: a sentence that is fully grammatical automatically has the minimum degree of meaningfulness which makes it fit for expressing a proposition, provided, of course, the context is appropriate. Making sense of what an utterance says is a matter of pragmatics, on this view, so we have to distinguish between pragmatic meaningfulness and the minimal meaningfulness which comes with grammaticality. Putative semantic mismatches make pragmatic meaningfulness harder to attain, perhaps, but they do not affect the grammaticality of the sentence and its minimal meaningfulness.²

On the Pustejovsky-Asher view, compositional modulation is mandatory_L. On Borer’s view, it is mandatory_T but not mandatory_L. It is mandatory in order to make sense of what the speaker is saying, but not mandatory from a narrow linguistic point of view. I side with Borer in this debate, but R&S take the other position: they treat semantic mismatch as a linguistic property of the sentence, and argue that compositional modulation is mandatory_L. They put compositional modulation on a par with lexical and constructional context-sensitivity: in the three types of case, a primary pragmatic process has a properly linguistic basis.

R&S think that semantic mismatches and compositional modulation object to my claim that modulation is always optional. But the distinction between

optional_T and *optional_L* is all I need to dispose of the objection: I say that modulation is *optional_L*, and that is compatible with claiming that in cases of compositional modulation it is *mandatory_T*. The reason why R&S think they have a counterexample to my claim is because they assume that compositional modulation is *mandatory_L*. But that is an assumption I do not make, so I do not think my claim has been refuted.

A related issue concerns Radical Contextualism, a view I find congenial and close to that I ascribed to Borer. It is also, arguably, a view held by Chomsky, under the influence of ordinary language philosophers (the early advocates of Radical Contextualism). Radical Contextualism is the view that sentences express a determinate content only in the context of a speech act. Now, in cases of semantic mismatch, it can be argued that the sentence does not express a determinate content, indeed. What has content is the speech act performed by using that sentence (and involving sub-acts of modulation). Radical Contextualism generalizes this view to *all* sentences. Sentences in general do not, by themselves, express a determinate content. The pragmatics of communication always contributes something to the content that is expressed, and that means that without a speech act no determinate content is expressed.

The fact that there is compositionally mandatory modulation in *some* sentences (those involving semantic mismatch) is insufficient to establish Radical Contextualism. To establish Radical Contextualism, one needs to posit a gap between linguistic meaning and semantic content, such that a piece of linguistic meaning cannot directly contribute to semantic content without help from pragmatics. We have to construe linguistic meanings as either very thin or very thick, but in any case, as having the ‘wrong format’ to directly occupy a position in conceptual structure and be a thought constituent [Recanati (2004), pp. 140 ff]. But if we take this position, then, arguably, there no longer is any ‘semantic mismatch’ at the purely linguistic level. Match or mismatch is match or mismatch between conceptual ingredients. On the Wrong Format view, linguistic meanings are not conceptual ingredients. Pragmatics is required to map linguistic meanings to conceptual ingredients, and it is only when that is done that matches or mismatches can be observed.

NOTES

¹ In *Direct Reference* (1993), pp 240ff, following the earlier discussion in Carston (1988) and Recanati (1989), I distinguish three versions of the ‘minimalist’ principle, in terms of whether the notion they involve is (to use R&S’s classification) *mandatory_L*, *mandatory_T* or *mandatory_{LT}*.

² I am indebted to Vincent Richard’s dissertation here (*La signification linguistique entre effets de structure et effets de contexte*, University of Paris 1-Sorbonne, 2013).

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