John Benjamins Publishing Company

The rhetorical relations approach to indirect speech acts

Problems and prospects

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Asher and Lascarides (2003) maintain that speech act types, the sorts of linguistic actions described and categorized, most influentially, by Austin (1962) and Searle (1969, 1979) are *rhetorical relations*. This relational account of speech acts is problematic for two reasons: Despite Asher and Lascarides (2001) ingenious appeal to dot type speech acts, the relational account is incompatible with the widespread phenomenon of indirect speech; only some speech acts are plausibly identified with rhetorical relations. These problems can be solved if a distinction between two kinds of speech act is recognized: *Discourse-structuring speech acts* are performed upon utterances and thus are plausibly identified with rhetorical relations, while *non-discourse-structuring speech acts* are performed upon conversational participants and thus are not plausibly identified with such relations. The typologies for these two kinds of speech acts cut across one another, and this suggests a promising approach to the phenomenon of indirect speech acts.

Keywords: discourse, dynamic semantics, indirect speech, pragmatics, rhetorical relation, speech act

1. Introduction

In a number of papers and a comprehensive book Asher and Lascarides (1993, 1998a, 1998b, 2001, 2003, 2007) develop a sophisticated version of dynamic semantics they call "Segmented Discourse Representation Theory" (SDRT). A key element of SDRT is the proposal that in a well-formed discourse every (non-initial) utterance must stand in a *rhetorical relation* to a previous utterance. According to Asher and Lascarides, comprehension of the semantic content of a discourse requires an interpreter to determine, for each new utterance of a discourse, (i) to which previous utterance (or utterances) the new utterance is rhetorically related, and (ii) how, via which *rhetorical relation*, the new utterance is so related.[1] Asher

and Lascarides (2001, 2003) maintain that these rhetorical relations are *speech act types*, the sorts of linguistic actions described and categorized, most influentially, by Austin (1962) and Searle (1969, 1975a). Thus Asher and Lascarides (2003) maintain that the taxonomy and ontology of rhetorical relations can, *at least partially*, replace Searle's Austin-inspired theory of speech acts, which categorizes speech acts *non-relationally*. They state that "the typology of rhetorical relations includes the typology of those speech acts whose illocutionary point has to do with connecting information in a discourse together" (2003: 306). They also, however, add the following caveat: "There may be other speech acts that have received attention in the literature, but these too can be added to SDRT" (Ibid.). The caveat is well motivated, for *most* of the linguistic actions discussed by Austin and Searle — e.g., *promising*, *warning*, *apologizing* — do not function to connect utterances in a discourse together, and thus are not plausibly construed as rhetorical relations.[2]

I argue that it is a mistake to offer the typology of rhetorical relations as a *replacement* for the non-relational typology endorsed by Austin and Searle, because the non-relational speech acts that are the focus of Austin and Searle's work are a different sort of entity, and function on a different level, than do the speech acts that Asher and Lascarides analyze as rhetorical relations. The speech acts focused on by Austin and Searle do not serve to impose structure on discourse, but are instead concerned with actions and interactions that lie beyond the formation of a coherent discourse. For example, when one performs the *non-discourse-structuring act* (NDSA) of *promising*, one performs a certain sort of action directed at one's listener, one makes a promise *to a person*, and this act, *qua promise*, does not serve to structure discourse. In contrast, the speech acts analyzed by Asher and Lascarides as rhetorical relations are *discourse-structuring acts* (DSAs), and these actions are directed at, and thereby serve to impose structure upon, the *utterances* in a discourse.[3] For example, when one performs the speech act of *elaborating*, one elaborates *on a previous utterance* and thus elaborating does serve to structure discourse. Since rhetorical relations, i.e., DSAs, and non-relational speech acts, i.e., NDSAs, are different *kinds* of actions, their respective typologies will cut across one another, and as a result there is nothing problematic about one utterance instantiating one kind of *discourse-structuring* speech act and at the same time instantiating another kind of *non-discourse structuring* speech act. To present a trivial example, the following conversation segment illustrates that one utterance can be an *answer* at the level of DSA, and a *promise* at the "higher level" of NDSA:

> A: Will you take me to the dance?
> B: I promise I will.

By uttering 'I promise I will' A simultaneously provides an answer *to the previously uttered question*, and makes a promise *to B*. This bifurcation of kinds of speech acts

thus suggests a novel approach to Searle's (1975a) so-called "problem of indirect speech acts" (ISAs). According to the approach I will advance here, when a speaker, for example, makes a *request* by *asking a question*, he is not speaking non-literally (as is claimed by Searle 1975a and Bach and Harnish 1979). Nor is he performing some sort of hybrid *requesting·asking* speech act (as is claimed by Asher and Lascarides 2001). Rather, he is performing two *kinds* of actions simultaneously: He is providing the conversation with a particular structure by *asking* (a DSA) and he is performing an action upon his conversational partner by *requesting* (an NDSA).

The paper proceeds as follows: In Sections 2 and 3 I review Searle's classic formulation of, and proposed solution to, the problem of ISAs, and I argue that Searle's proposal runs afoul of *the alignment problem*. In Section 4 I introduce Asher and Lascarides' account of speech acts in terms of rhetorical relations, illustrating why this account of speech acts is much better placed with regard to the alignment problem. I then argue in Section 5, however, that Asher and Lascarides' relational account of speech acts faces two problems: The first problem, *the preclusion problem* is that Asher and Lascarides' relational account of speech acts seems to preclude the possibility of indirect speech. The second problem, *the incompleteness problem*, is that many kinds of speech acts, e.g., *promising*, are not plausibly analyzed as rhetorical relations. In Sections 6 and 7 I introduce and criticize Asher and Lascarides' (2001a) "dot type" account of ISAs. Though Asher and Lascarides do not present it as such, their dot type analysis can be viewed as a bold yet, as I will demonstrate, ultimately unsuccessful attempt to solve the preclusion problem. In Section 8 I propose that both the preclusion problem and the incompleteness problem can be solved within the framework of SDRT. The solution involves, first, recognizing the distinction, introduced above, between *utterance directed* DSAs and *person directed* NDSAs and, second, allowing these different kinds of actions to occur simultaneously at distinct levels. Finally, in Section 9 I apply this bi-level account of ISAs within an expanded conception of SDRT to Searle classic example of an utterance of 'Can you pass the salt?'.[4]

2.   The problem of indirect speech acts

According to Searle (1975a) "the problem posed by indirect speech acts is the problem of how it is possible for the speaker to say one thing and mean that but also to mean something else. And since meaning consists in part in the intention to produce understanding in the hearer, a large part of that problem is that of how it is possible for the hearer to understand the indirect speech act when the sentence he hears and understands means something else" (1979: 31). The classic example Searle gives of such an "indirect speech act" is an utterance of the *question*

'Can you pass the salt?' in order to perform the speech act of *requesting* that you pass the salt. In this case, what the speaker *says* is a question — the "illocutionary force indicators" of the sentence make it the case that the utterance has interrogative force. Thus Searle claims that *one* of the speech acts performed in uttering this sentence is *asking a question*, a question concerning the hearer's *ability* to perform the deed of passing the salt. Searle calls this the "secondary," or "literal," speech act. But in addition to this I also perform the act of *requesting* that you pass me the salt. Searle calls this act of *requesting* the "primary," "not literal," speech act. That *requesting* is a distinct speech act from *question asking* is evidenced by the fact that in other circumstances the two acts come apart: If you were recently injured, and I am curious as to the extent of your physical abilities, I might utter the same sentence and thereby *ask the question*, without at the same time *making the request*. The *problem* posed by such utterances is this: Given that the "literal" meaning of the uttered sentence makes it the case that I perform the act of *asking a question* about your abilities, how do I also manage at the same time to perform the act of *requesting that you do something*?[5]

3.   Searle's account of indirect speech acts and the alignment problem

Searle explains the essence of his response to the problem as follows: "the reason I can ask you to pass the salt by saying 'Can you pass the salt?' but not by saying 'Salt is made of sodium chloride' or 'Salt is mined in the Tatra mountains' is that your ability to pass the salt is a *preparatory condition* for requesting you to pass the salt in a way that the other sentences are not related to requesting you to pass the salt" (1979:47). Searle analyzes the speech act of *requesting* as follows: An utterance U by S to H is a felicitous *request* that H perform action A iff:

> Preparatory Condition: H is able to do A.
> Sincerity Condition: S wants H to do A
> Proposition Content Condition: S predicates a future act A of H
> Essential Condition: U counts as an attempt by S to get to do A

Searle proposes that I can request for you to pass me the salt by asking the question "Can you pass me the salt?" because this question asks whether or not the *preparatory condition* for the request is satisfied. Searle supports this contention by pointing out that the same request can be made by performing the secondary "literal" speech act of *stating*, using an indicative sentence, that the Sincerity Condition is satisfied: "I would appreciate your passing me the salt".

But how does the speaker S's *questioning* whether or not the Preparatory Condition for making a request is satisfied, or stating that the Sincerity Condition is

satisfied, enable the hearer H to discern that S is making a request? Searle's answer involves appeal to background knowledge shared by the speaker, S, and the hearer, H, the knowledge of the felicity conditions for *requesting* (also presumably shared by S and H), and Grice's Cooperative Principle of Conversation. Roughly, H reasons as follows: (and I am here paraphrasing Searle's (1979) account:

> S has uttered 'Can you pass the salt?'. This literal question is in apparent conflict with the assumption that S is being cooperative, but it pertains to the preparatory condition for a request that I pass S the salt. Moreover, such a request would be a natural thing to perform in this context. So, I infer that S's *primary* speech act is a request that I pass him the salt.

Searle summarizes his analysis as follows: "The two features that are crucial, or so I am suggesting, are, first, a strategy for establishing the existence of an ulterior illocutionary point beyond the illocutionary point contained in the meaning of the sentence, and second, a device for finding out what the ulterior illocutionary point is. The first is established by the principles of conversation operating on the information of the hearer and the speaker, and the second is derived from the theory of speech acts together with background information" (1979: 47–48).

Searle's response presupposes that underlying every *indirect* speech act there is a *direct*, or *literal*, speech act, where this direct or "literal" speech act is "contained in the meaning of the sentence" (1979: 47). Thus Searle's response seems to assume that for every grammatical sentence (type) there is one literal sort of speech act that an utterance of that type can be used to perform;[6] any other speech act type that an utterance of the sentence performs is an ISA, inferable from the direct speech act by Grice-style reasoning. The fundamental problem with Searle's account, which I call *the alignment problem*, is that there is no such neat alignment between grammatical sentences and such "literal" speech acts; many sentences do not "contain" a unique "illocutionary point". Since what I am calling the alignment problem has been discussed extensively in the literature, my presentation of the problem will be brief.[7]

Consider the speech act type of *warning*. If one wanted to perform the act of warning "directly," by uttering a sentence that "contained" *warning* in its meaning, what kind of sentence would one use? One can use sentences in the indicative mood to issue warnings:

(1)   a.   The stairs are slippery.

But one can also use the interrogative,

(1)   b.   Do you see that the stairs are slippery?

and also the imperative,

(1)   c.   Watch out for the slippery stairs!

Does the meaning of any of (1a–c) "contain as part of its meaning" the speech act of *warning*? Does uttering one of these sentences constitute issuing a warning "directly," while uttering the others would only be issuing a warning "indirectly"? The answer to these questions must be "no," because each of the sentences could be used, felicitously and literally, without a *warning* being issued. For instance, if we are investigating a crime scene and you clearly have no intention of walking on the stairs, my utterance of 'The stairs are slippery' will not constitute a *warning* at all, but rather my simply telling you about what might be an important clue.

The above remarks also hold, *mutatis mutandis*, for many other speech acts including, e.g., *threatening*, *suggesting*, *advising*. It seems that even *requesting*, the speech act Searle uses to introduce the idea of an "indirect speech act," is no more "directly" expressed by sentences in the imperative mood than it is by sentences in the indicative or interrogative mood. For example, suppose I am hanging a picture and I want you to hold it while I stand back and see whether or not it is level. Such a request can be made by uttering a sentence in any mood, and no one such sentence seems to "contain" the act of *requesting* any more or less than any of the others:

(2)   a.   Can you hold this picture?
　　　b.　　I'd appreciate it if you would hold this picture.
　　　c.　　Hold this picture.

No one of these sentences is more suitable for "directly" making a request than any of the others. Evidence in support of this is provided by the fact that all of them can be modified (in a number of ways) with 'please':

(2)   a.   *(Please) Can you (please) hold this picture (please)?
　　　b.　　*(Please) I'd appreciate it if you would (please) hold this picture (please).
　　　c.　　*(Please) Hold this picture (please).

The fact that sentences in all moods can be modified with 'please' strongly suggests that it is not the case that just one of the moods connotes, as a matter of conventional meaning, the speech act of requesting.[8]

The above considerations strongly suggest that Searle's proposal runs afoul of the alignment problem: It is not the case that for every sentence type S, there is a unique speech act type A such that A is the "literal" speech act "contained in the meaning" of S.[9] What is "contained in the meaning of the sentence" is the *mood* of the sentence. But the three main moods — indicative, interrogative, and imperative — do not serve as "illocutionary force indicators" determining whether or not a sentence can be "literally" or "directly" used to make specific sorts of speech acts. None of the three sentential moods corresponds to the speech act *requesting,* and

the same holds for *threatening*, *warning*, *promising* and every other specific sort of speech act.

    This is not to deny, however, that there is *some* correspondence between sentential moods and *generic kinds* of speech acts: All utterances of interrogative sentences of course are instances of a generic kind of *asking*. If one utters an interrogative, then among whatever other speech acts one performs (requesting, threatening, warning, insulting) one *generically asks* something. And similar remarks hold for the other sentential moods: Whatever specific speech act, or acts, one performs when one utters an indicative sentence, one *generically asserts* something; and whatever species of speech act one performs when one utters an imperative sentence, one *generically commands* something. These three generic kinds of speech acts — which I hereby dub *forces* — *are* "contained in the meaning of the sentence". Following Asher and Lascarides (2003: 455) I will use '**?**', '**|**' and '**!**' to denote the interrogative, assertive, and imperative forces, respectively. But forces are not themselves speech acts. The mood of a *sentence* S determines the *force displayed* by an utterance of the sentence, but clearly the typology of forces and the typology of speech acts cut across one-another: The force displayed by an utterance does not determine the speech act performed by the utterance; for example, two indicative utterances which thus both display the *same* force, viz. !, can nonetheless be performances of *different* speech acts. And conversely, the speech act performed by an utterance does not determine the force displayed by the uttered sentence; two utterances can both perform the *same* speech act of *threatening*, even though they are utterances of sentences that display *different* forces.

4.   Asher and Lascarides' rhetorical relation account of speech acts

Asher and Lascarides' rhetorical relation account of speech acts is tailor-made to solve, or rather to avoid, the alignment problem. They claim that the over-arching principle governing discourse interpretation is "Maximize Discourse Coherence" (MDC) (2003: 21). The details are complicated, but the general idea is that utterances are always interpreted so that there are as many *connections* as possible with what has already occurred in the discourse. The connections that can be made include resolutions of pronoun anaphora, presuppositions, and temporal relations between described events. In addition to these familiar sorts of inter-utterance connections, Asher and Lascarides claim that utterances in a coherent discourse stand in *rhetorical relations* to one-another. So, for example, in mini-discourse (3) the utterance of (3b) probably stands in the rhetorical relation of *explanation* to utterance (3a), whereas in (4) utterance (4b) probably stands in the rhetorical relation of *narration* to (4a):

(3)   (a) Max fell. (b) John pushed him.

(4)   (a) Max stood up. (b) John pushed him.

Asher and Lascarides maintain that such rhetorical relations provide a *minimal criterion* for discourse coherence: A discourse is *coherent* only if every non-initial utterance in the discourse stands in some *rhetorical relation* to some previous utterance. This minimal constraint on discourse coherence requires that in *addition* to resolving pronoun anaphora and presuppositions and temporal relations, an interpreter of an utterance β must determine (i) to which α, where α is a previous utterance, β is rhetorically related, and (ii) by which rhetorical relation β is related to α. Principle MDC dictates that the *correct* interpretation of utterance β is the interpretation that maximizes the coherence, where *coherence* is defined in terms of such inter-utterance connections, of the discourse.[10]

Asher and Lascarides' further claim that these "rhetorical relations … are *speech act types*" (2003: 306). Hence, a typical utterance of (3b) is an instance of the speech act of *explanation*, whereas a typical utterance of (4b) is an instance of *narration*. Now, why is Asher and Lascarides' rhetorical relations account of speech acts especially well-suited to avoid the alignment problem? First, as is illustrated by (3) and (4), they deny any sort of neat alignment between sentences and speech acts, because, obviously, in different discourses utterances of the same sentence can stand in different rhetorical relations to previous utterances. Asher and Lascarides explain that their relational account of speech acts "offers some advantages over traditional speech act theory" because it "yields a richer typology of speech acts, and hence it's better placed to encode the semantic and cognitive effects of successfully performing a particular speech act. For example, the speech act of asserting in traditional speech act theory gets divided into several different (sub)types of speech act …: explanations, narrations, backgrounds, elaborations, corrections, and so on" (2003: 306).

But if the speech act an utterance instantiates is not "contained in" the meaning of the uttered sentence, then how is it determined? For example, how does an interpreter discern that (3b) stands in the *explanation* relation to (3a)? The answer is complicated. It involves several sorts of information from several sources (lexical semantics, syntax, cognitive modeling) and non-monotonic inferences integrating this information. But the overarching principle is MDC: The "right" rhetorical relation is the one that — relative to all the other relevant information available to the interpreter — maximizes overall discourse coherence. This is merely a sketch of Asher and Lascarides' SDRT, but it suffices to illustrate that Asher and Lascarides' relational account of speech acts, unlike Searle's account of ISAs, does not run afoul of the alignment problem.[11]

5.   Two problems for the rhetorical relation account of speech acts

Though Asher and Lascarides' relational account of speech acts is well suited to avoid the alignment problem, it nonetheless faces two other significant problems: *The preclusion problem*, and *the incompleteness problem*.[12] The preclusion problem is that the account of speech acts seems to preclude the possibility of ISAs: According to Asher and Lascarides, interpreting an utterance will require the interpreter to identify a *unique* rhetorical relation.[13] For example, consider the following mini-discourse:

(5)   (a) Max became angry. (b) John pushed him.

To understand an utterance of (5b), we must discern whether *explanation* or *narration* (or some other rhetorical relation) obtains between it and (5a), *and it cannot be both*. Since the rhetorical relation has an impact on what is said by (5b), in particular on the temporal ordering of the relevant events, failure to identify a unique rhetorical relation will give rise to ambiguity. Let us call this the *uniqueness constraint*:

> For any pair of utterances <α,β> in a well-formed discourse there is *at most one* rhetorical relation holding between α and β.

(Note that this does not preclude *one utterance* from holding different rhetorical relations to *different* utterances.)

If one follows Asher and Lascarides in identifying speech acts with rhetorical relations, a consequence of the uniqueness constraint is that coherent discourses cannot admit ISAs. For an ISA is where the speaker performs one type of speech act "by way of" (Searle 1979:43) performing another type. That is, instances of ISAs are instances where *one* utterance is simultaneously the performance of *two* speech acts. But such over-lapping speech acts seems to be precisely what is ruled out by the uniqueness constraint.

Let me quickly set aside some tempting solutions to the preclusion problem. First, ISAs are not *under-determined* in the relevant way; we are not in the same position with regard to 'Can you pass the salt?' as we are with mini-discourse (5) where we do not know whether the relevant relation is *explanation* (Max is angry *because* John pushed him) or *narration* (Max became angry *and then* John pushed him). So ISAs cannot be analyzed as utterances where it is under-determined what the relevant rhetorical relation is. Second, it will not do to analyze ISAs as utterances which are linked via two different rhetorical relations to two different previous utterances. Asher and Lascarides allow for such utterances. For example, in

(6)   (a) John has been traveling all day. (b) He took a bus this morning. (c) And the entire afternoon was spent on a train.

(6c) stands in *elaboration* to (6a), and *narration* to (6b). But, first, (6c) is not like an utterance of 'Can you pass the salt?' — it is not an ISA. And, second, an utterance of 'Can you pass the salt?' *can be* an ISA, even if it is not related to two previous utterances by two different rhetorical relations. Indeed, though the speech act of *questioning* is readily construed in terms of rhetorical relations (According to Asher and Lascarides, one such relation is "QAP" for *question/answer pair*), it is far from clear that *requesting* is plausibly construed as a rhetorical relation (and much less a rhetorical relation in addition to questioning/answering).

So, Asher and Lascarides' account of speech acts in terms of rhetorical relations does not run afoul of the alignment problem; unlike Searle, they do not assume a neat alignment between sentence types and speech act types. Instead, Asher and Lascarides invoke a complicated process of pragmatic reasoning whereby interpreters derive the speech act performed by an utterance of a sentence. This pragmatic process is governed by the MDC principle: Roughly, an utterance U in a discourse D is a performance of speech act A iff interpreting U as being a performance of A maximizes the coherence of D; interpreting U as being of any other sort of speech act results in D being less coherent. But this principle implies the *uniqueness constraint*: Two different speech acts cannot *both* maximize discourse coherence, so one utterance cannot be an instance of two speech acts.[14] And this precludes the possibility of performing one speech act *by way of* performing another. In other words, Asher and Lascarides' solution to the alignment problem seems to preclude the possibility of ISAs. This is the preclusion problem.

The second problem with Asher and Lascarides' relational account of speech acts, *the incompleteness problem*, is that not all kinds of speech acts are plausibly construed as rhetorical relations. Asher and Lascarides' claim that some speech acts — *explaining*, *narrating*, *answering*, *elaborating* — are rhetorical relations, reveals a valuable insight into the nature of such acts. But not all kinds of speech acts can plausibly be construed as such rhetorical relations. Indeed, many of the speech acts discussed in detail by Austin and Searle are not plausibly construed as rhetorical relations: *Promising*, *apologizing*, *warning* and *threatening*, to name just a few, do not seem amenable to treatment as rhetorical relations between utterances. These remarks suggest that Asher and Lascarides' account of speech acts in terms of rhetorical relations is incomplete.[15]

6.   Asher and Lascarides' dot type analysis of indirect speech acts

Asher and Lascarides (2001a) propose a bold and complex analysis of ISAs, and this analysis can be viewed as a proposed solution to the *preclusion problem*. Asher and Lascarides summarize their proposal as follows:

> We will solve the "two speech acts in one" puzzle of ISAs by analyzing ISAs as a particular sort of complex semantic type that's formed from two incompatible types (2001: 185).

Though they do not put it in these terms, the "semantic types" Asher and Lascarides refer to in this passage are semantic correlates of the three forces — **?**, **|**, and **!** — introduced above. Recall that the three forces are *not* speech acts, and that the force of an utterance is determined by the *mood* of the sentence uttered. Asher and Lascarides maintain that each of the three forces corresponds to a *type* of semantic value (2001: 184): Utterances of *indicative* sentences denote propositions, and thus the force **|** corresponds with propositions; utterances of *interrogatives* denote "sets of propositions (i.e., … direct answers)" and thus the force **?** corresponds with sets of propositions; and finally, utterances of *imperatives* denote "relation[s] between worlds and actions" and thus the force **!** corresponds with such relations.[16] Since there is this tight correspondence between forces and their semantic types, it will simplify matters to invoke only one sort of entity and ignore the other. Hence, for expository purposes I will explain Asher and Lascarides' account in terms of *forces*, instead of *semantic types*.[17]

According to Asher and Lascarides, an ISA occurs when the utterance of *one* sentence is interpreted as displaying *two* forces. In terms of Searle´s example of "Can you pass the salt?" Asher and Lascarides maintain that an utterance of this interrogative in effect displays both **?** and **!**. Asher and Lascarides maintain that the three forces are *incompatible* with each other, and thus an utterance of "Can you pass you the salt?" in effect displays incompatible forces.

How does it come about that an utterance is interpreted as displaying two (incompatible) forces? Asher and Lascarides maintain that there are two ways this can happen, corresponding to two kinds of ISA: An utterance of a sentence S is a *conventional* ISA when it is part of the conventional, linguistic, meaning of S that it is to be interpreted as displaying two forces. Asher and Lascarides maintain, for instance, that ISAs performed by uttering 'Can you pass the salt?' are *conventional*, because it is (now) part of the conventional meaning of this sentence that it is typically used to display both **?** *and* **!**. An utterance of S is an *unconventional* ISA when the conventional meaning of S does *not* dictate that utterances of S are to be interpreted as displaying two forces, yet satisfaction of MDC requires that the utterance be so interpreted. Asher and Lascarides maintain that Grice's (1975a) classic example involving an utterance of the *indicative* "I am out of gas" in order to *request* assistance is an unconventional ISA. It is not part of the conventional meaning of the sentence that utterances of it display both **|** and **!**; rather, that it is to be so interpreted results from complex pragmatic reasoning, the goal of which is to satisfy MDC.

The central idea in Asher and Lascarides' account is that the "particular sort of complex semantic type," or equivalently the sort of complex force, manifested in an ISA is to be explained by appeal to *dot types*. The notion of a *dot type* originates in Pustejovsky's work in lexical semantics. Pustejovsky (1995) considers sentences such as

(7)   The book is 500 pages long and documents in detail the theories of Freud.

This sentence predicates of one semantic value, viz. that of 'the book', both that it has a certain physical property, viz. *being 500 pages long*, and that it has a certain informational property, viz. *documenting in detail the theories of Freud*. Thus (7) seems to require that the semantic value of 'the book' be of two incompatible semantic types: The semantic type *physical object*, and the incompatible type *abstract object of informational content*; thus the semantic value of ´the book´ seems simultaneously to be of two incompatible types. Pustejovsky proposes that this apparent conflict be resolved by positing lexical *dot types*, which are combinations of incompatible semantic types. Under this proposal 'the book' in (5) has a semantic value *v* that is of the complex dot type *phys_object • abs_object*. Each of the constituent types of this dot type are like *perspectives* on *v*, and predicates apply to *v* relative to one or the other constituent type. The upshot is that one utterance of 'the book' is allowed to in effect introduce *two* values of distinct types, and these objects are then available for subsequent predication.

Asher and Lascarides' bold proposal is to employ similar dot types to account for the phenomenon of ISAs. For example, they maintain that the "speech act type," or in my terminology the *force*, of an utterance of "Can you pass the salt?" is the complex dot type **?•!**. That is, such an utterance simultaneously displays interrogative force **?** (and thereby has a set of propositions as semantic value) *and* imperative force **!** (and thereby has a relation between worlds and actions as a semantic value).[18] Moreover, just as with Pustejovsky's lexical dot types, the complex dot type **?•!** makes available for constructing a coherent discourse two new entities, one of type **?** and the other of type **!**. So, if the force displayed by an utterance of "Can you pass the salt?" is the dot type **?•!**, then the utterance in effect introduces two utterances — one with force **?** and the other with force **!** — into the discourse, and both of these introduced utterances can stand then in rhetorical relations to previous and subsequent utterances.

And now it is apparent why Asher and Lascarides' dot type analysis can be viewed as a bold proposal for solving the preclusion problem. Recall the problem: Asher and Lascarides propose that speech acts *are* rhetorical relations between utterances, and MDC requires that each (non-initial) utterance β in a coherent discourse be related via a rhetorical relation to some previous utterance α. Moreover, the *uniqueness constraint* imposed by MDC requires that for any such pair <α,β>

there can be only *one* rhetorical relation obtaining between them. And thus, setting aside the irrelevant possibility that β is *also* rhetorically related to some previous utterance other than α, it follows that β cannot be an ISA, i.e., it cannot be an instance of performing one speech act "by way of performing another". But suppose now that β displays, say, the dot type **?•!**, and suppose that because β displays this dot type it in effect introduces two utterances $u_?$ and $u_!$ each of which can stand in distinct rhetorical relations R_1 and R_2 to the *same* previous utterance α, so that we can then have both $R_1 < \alpha, u_? >$ and $R_2 < \alpha, u_! >$. If this is possible, then the preclusion problem is solved. For the uniqueness constraint is respected because though each pair $< \alpha, u_? >$ and $< \alpha, u_! >$ is related by a *unique* rhetorical relation, there is nonetheless a way in which β is both an R_1-kind-of-speech-act *and simultaneously* an R_2-kind-of-speech-act, since it is utterance β that introduces the relata $u_?$ and $u_!$ that are related by different rhetorical relations to a previous utterance α.

　　Let us consider an example provided by Asher and Lascarides (2001:212).[19] The utterance of (b) in this mini-discourse is intuitively an ISA as it seems to *assert* that B can meet on the relevant Saturday by way of *asking* a question:

(8)　a.　A: Let's meet next weekend.
　　　b.　B: How about Saturday?

Asher and Lascarides maintain that B's utterance, hereafter 'β', is an *unconventional* ISA, because though β is interpreted as displaying the dot type **?•|**, it is not a part of the conventional meaning of sentence (b) that utterances of it display this dot type. So how does it come about that β is interpreted as displaying this dot type? The mood of sentence (b) determines that β conventionally displays force **?**, but if one interprets β as displaying only **?**, then MDC cannot be satisfied. For one aspect of MDC is the requirement that the Speech Act Related Goal (SARG) of each utterance in a coherent discourse be satisfied. For example, A's utterance, hereafter 'α', introduces into the discourse the SARG of A and B agreeing on a time to meet next weekend. Given this, the SARG of β must be, at least in part, to "transfer the belief" (2001:212) that *B can meet on Saturday* from B to A. But this goal of belief transfer, according to Asher and Lascarides, "is normally associated with assertion" (2001:212), i.e., with speech acts displaying the force **|**. Thus if the SARGs of α and β are to be satisfied, β must be interpreted as displaying not only **?** — which it does by convention — but also **|**.[20] Hence the combination of linguistic convention and reasoning with the goal of satisfying MDC require that β be interpreted as displaying dot type **?•|**. And this in effect makes available two utterances (or "labels") $u_?$ and $u_|$, both of which *can* be rhetorically related to previous and subsequent utterances (or labels) in the discourse. Asher and Lascarides maintain that in this example $u_?$ is related to α by the rhetorical relation *question elaboration*, because, roughly $u_?$ is a question that elaborates on the SARG of α (2003:468).

And though Asher and Lascaradis do not mention this in their discussion of the example, $u_|$ can *also* be related to α by the rhetorical relation *plan elaboration*, because, roughly $u_|$ is an assertion that elaborates on the SARG of α (2003: 468). And thus β relative to α in effect is the performance of two speech acts: β, relative to α, is simultaneously an instance of *question elaborating* and *plan elaborating*. But this "two actions in one" result does not conflict with the uniqueness constraint imposed by MDC since *only* question elaboration applies to $<α, u_|>$, and *only* plan elaboration applies to $<α, u_?>$.[21] And in this way Asher and Lascarides' dot type analysis proposes to solve the preclusion problem.

7.   Why the dot type analysis fails to solve the preclusion problem

My criticisms fall into two categories: First, there actually occur ISA phenomena that Asher and Lascarides' dot type analysis does not account for. That is, there actually exist phenomena which would not exist if Asher and Lascarides' account were correct. And second, Asher and Lascarides' account predicts ISA phenomena that do not actually occur. That is, there do not exist phenomena that would exist if Asher and Lascarides' account were correct. My first three objections belong in the first category, and my fourth belongs in the second.

On Asher and Lascarides' analysis, an utterance β can be an ISA *only if* β is interpreted as displaying a dot type **x•y**, either conventionally or unconventionally, where **x** and **y** are *incompatible* forces. Thus Asher and Lascarides' analysis applies only to instances of what I will call *dual-force* ISAs. So, for example, Asher and Lascarides' analysis applies to Searle's example of "Can you pass the salt?" because an utterance of this sentence is interpreted not merely as performing two different *speech acts*, but moreover as displaying two incompatible *forces*, viz. **?** and **!**. Such an utterance is thus not only an ISA, but is moreover a *dual-force* ISA. The fundamental reason that Asher and Lascarides' dot type analysis fails to solve the preclusion problem is that many ISAs are *non-dual-force*: They are simultaneously two different *speech acts* but these speech acts are not of incompatible *forces*. For example, an utterance of a sentence in the indicative mood that thereby displayed the force | could be an ISA even if in addition to | it displays neither **!** nor **?**. So, for instance, by uttering 'Yes, I will take you to the dance' I can simultaneously perform the speech act of *promising* something to you and the speech act of *answering* a question, but *promising* and *answering* do not belong to incompatible forces. Asher and Lascarides' dot type account simply does not apply to this non-dual-force ISA, because on their analysis dot types are introduced only when linguistic convention and/or preserving MDC requires one to interpret an utterance as being *dual-force*, i.e., as displaying two incompatible forces.

So, my first objection is that Asher and Lascarides' dot type analysis offers no explanation for non-dual-force ISAs. Asher and Lascarides cannot dismiss this objection on the grounds that such non-dual-force ISAs are beyond the scope of their theory. For, first, the existence of non-dual-force ISAs entails that Asher and Lascarides' dot type analysis fails as a solution to the preclusion problem: If the combination of the identification of speech acts with rhetorical relations together with the dot type analysis of ISAs was correct, then there would be no non-dual-force ISAs. But there are non-dual-force ISAs, so something is wrong with this combination. And second, non-dual-force ISAs do not constitute an obscure special case. Indeed, many, if not most, of the ISAs considered in Searle (1975a) are *non-dual-force* utterances. Here is a typical example of such from Searle's classic paper:

(1) Student X: *Let's go to the movies tonight.*

(2) Student Y: *I have to study for an exam.*

The utterance of (2) in the context just given would normally constitute a rejection of the proposal, but not in virtue of its meaning. In virtue of its meaning it is simply a statement about Y. (Searle 1979: 33)

Such non-dual-force ISAs resist explanation by Asher and Lascarides' dot type analysis.

My second objection is similar to my first objection, though it specifically concerns the phenomenon of ISA *blocking*. Searle noted that though the interrogative

(9) Can you pass the salt?

can be readily used to make a *request*, it is very difficult to make the same request by uttering a *different* yet *synonymous* sentence. For example, only in rather special contexts could one make the same request by uttering the following paraphrase of (9):

(10)   Do you have the ability to pass the salt?

Searle's (1975a) explanation of this fact is that (9) is *conventionalized* so that its linguistic meaning includes both the mood-encoded secondary act of questioning and the pragmatically derived primary act of requesting. And if the meaning of (9) is conventionalized so that the request can be made conventionally with (9), then the same request cannot readily be made with sentences that have not been conventionalized in this way, e.g., (10). The reason, according to Searle, is that *because* (9) is available to make the request conventionally (or as Searle says "idiomatically") interpreters must assume that utterances of (10) are not being

used to make the request. It is as if an interpreter of an utterance of (10) thinks to herself, "The speaker must not be making a request. Because if he wanted to make a request, then, since he is cooperative, he would have uttered (9) and thereby have made the request conventionally". In this way the availability of (9) to *conventionally* make the request *blocks* the use of (10) to *unconventionally* make the request; i.e., conventionalized (9) blocks its paraphrase (10).[22]

Asher and Lascarides' explanation of the phenomenon of ISA blocking is essentially a much more detailed working-out of Searle´s explanation. The general idea is that "conventialized ISAs block inferences from paraphrases" (2001:214). The problem is that on Asher and Lascarides' dot type analysis there are not enough "conventionalized ISAs" to account for all the instances of ISA blocking. On Asher and Lascarides' dot type analysis an utterance of S is a *conventional* ISA only if it is a matter of S's conventional meaning that utterances of it display a dot type **x•y**, where **x** and **y** are incompatible forces. So, on Asher and Lascarides' account, a conventionalized sentence S can *block* its paraphrase S* *only if* S is conventionally used to make *dual-force* speech acts. As a consequence Asher and Lascarides' can utilize Searle´s strategy to explain why conventionalized S blocks its paraphrase S* only in those cases where S has been conventionalized for making dual-force ISAs. Asher and Lascarides' explanation of ISA blocking simply does not apply to instances of this phenomenon wherein the blocking sentence has been conventionalized for making *non-dual-force* speech acts. And there are many such instances of ISA blocking.

Consider the following instance of blocking. Both

(11)   Look out for that bus!

(12)   Direct your vision over there and take note of that bus!

are in the imperative mood and thus display the force **!**; they are both *commands*. Moreover, they express the same content and thus (12) is a paraphrase of (11). But there is a significant difference between the sorts of speech acts that can readily be performed by (11) and (12). Almost any utterance of (11) would be interpreted as being a *warning* in addition to being a command; it is now part of the conventional meaning of such "Look out for …" sentences that they are used to *warn* interpreters of things. But only in special circumstances could the paraphrase (12) be used to make such a warning in addition to a command. Thus we have a paradigmatic instance of ISA blocking: *Because* (11) is conventionalized for *warning* in addition to *commanding*, its paraphrase (12) cannot be readily used for warning in addition to commanding. But Asher and Lascarides' cannot explain this instance of blocking, since (11) is not conventionalized for making *dual-force* speech acts. Unlike Searle's "Can you pass the salt?", (11) is not conventionalized so that utterances

of it display a force (viz. **!**) that is incompatible with the force determined by the sentence's mood (viz. **?**). Rather, (11) is conventionalized for making *warnings*, and there is no incompatibility between this *speech act* and the force determined by (11)'s mood (viz. **!**). As consequence, according to Asher and Lascarides' account of ISAs, utterances of (11) are *not* conventional ISAs, and consequently their explanation of ISA blocking simply does not apply to this case.[23] Thus Asher and Lascarides' analysis of ISA blocking neither explains nor predicts instances of blocking that involve non-dual-force ISAs, of which there are many.[24]

My third and fourth objections concern a phenomenon I will call *discourse-splitting*. This phenomenon occurs when a discourse contains an ISA, an utterance U which simultaneously performs two speech acts A_1 and A_2, and because of this the segment of discourse following U can be developed in two ways, depending upon which of A_1 or A_2 is related to the next utterance. Here's a paradigmatic example of discourse-splitting:

(13) a.   A: Can you tell me the time?
     b.   B: No, I can't. (I'm not wearing my watch.)
     b′.   B: Six o'clock.

Speaker A's utterance of (13) is an ISA: It is both a *question*, and a *request*. And thus interpreter B can either utter (b) in response, thereby treating A's utterance as a question, or utter (b′) in response, thereby treating A's utterance as a request. Asher and Lascarides rightly point out that their dot type analysis explains and predicts the existence of at least some instances of discourse-splitting. For according to Asher and Lascarides' dot type account, if an utterance β is an ISA, then β is in effect contributing to the discourse two utterances that display *incompatible* forces. And this should allow for a sort of potential splitting, depending upon which of the two utterances becomes rhetorically related to subsequent utterances in the discourse. Asher and Lascarides present the following splitting discourse: On one potential fork, in which utterance (c) immediately follows utterance (b), Carl treats Bob's *interrogative* utterance (in b) as displaying the force **?**, while on another potential fork, in which utterance (c′) immediately follows utterance (b), Alice treats Bob's interrogative utterance as displaying the incompatible force **|**:

(14) a.   A: Reagan was the best president of the 20th century.
     b.   B: (to C) Is he really such an idiot as to believe that?
     c.   C: Yes, he is.
     c′.   A: Well, maybe you're right. Maybe Reagan was mediocre.

Asher and Lascarides maintain that both forks, both continuations after utterance (b), satisfy MDC: Utterance (b) is a conventionalized ISA that displays the dot type **?•|**. Thus, according to Asher and Lascarides utterance (b) in effect makes

available two utterances, $b_?$ and $b_|$, both of which can be rhetorically related to subsequent utterances. In this case Asher and Lascarides maintain that the rhetorical relation *question–answer* holds of <$b_?$, c>, thus rendering (14a–b–c) coherent, and they can maintain that the rhetorical relation *correction-acceptance* holds of <$b_|$, c′>, thereby rendering (14a–b–c′) also coherent.[25] Thus, according to Asher and Lascarides both forks satisfy MDC.

The problem is that Asher and Lascarides dot type account explains only those instances of discourse-splitting that involve dual-force ISAs, yet the phenomenon of discourse-splitting is just as common in the case of non-dual-force ISAs. Consider some of the examples, which happen to be non-dual-force ISAs, provided by Searle (1975a):

(15) a. A: I am sorry I did it. (*an apology*)
      b. B: No you're not. You're proud of what you did.
      b′. B: Alright. But don't do it again.

(16) a. A: I am so glad you won. (*congratulations*)
      b. B: No you're not; you're jealous.
      b′. B: Thanks.

As is manifested by the possible continuations (b) and (b′), (15) and (16) exemplify the same sort of discourse-splitting that is exemplified in (13) and (14). But whereas Asher and Lascarides' dot type account predicts and explains this phenomenon in (13) and (14), this explanation does not apply in cases such as (15) and (16) because these latter cases do not involve dual-force ISAs. Again, Asher and Lascarides' analysis neither explains nor predicts the phenomenon of discourse-splitting involving non-dual-force ISAs, and, again, there is nothing extraordinary about this ISA phenomenon.

My fourth and final objection against Asher and Lascarides' dot type analysis also concerns the phenomenon of discourse-splitting, but it differs from the first three objections in the following way: Whereas my first three objections describe ISA phenomena — all of which involve non-dual-force ISAs — that Asher and Lascarides' dot type analysis neither predicts nor explains, my final objection is that the dot type analysis predicts certain ISA phenomena that do not in fact obtain. Consider again Asher and Lascarides' example of the splitting discourse in (14). I simply disagree with Asher and Lascarides that the discourse from (14a–b) to (14c′) is coherent. I am not claiming that such things as (14a–b–c′) are never uttered, nor am I claiming that speakers in such a discourse would be behaving irrationally. I am claiming that there is something strained in discourse (14a–b–c′) while there is nothing at all the matter with (14a–b–c). But on Asher and Lascarides' view (14a–b–c) and (14a–b–c′) should be on a par, since on their view $b_?$ is no more readily available than is $b_|$.[26]

And there are instances of discourse-splitting predicted by Asher and Lascarides' account that are even more strained. Consider the following mini-discourse provided by Asher and Lascarides (2001: 206):

(17) a.   A: I want to catch the 10:20 train to London.
       b.   B: Go to platform 1.

The utterance of (17a) is a dual-force ISA; it is an utterance of an *indicative* that is interpreted as a *request*. Thus according to Asher and Lascarides A's utterance displays the dot type $|\bullet!$, and thus it in effect introduces into the discourse two utterances that display distinct forces, $a_|$ and $a_!$. Asher and Lascarides maintain (2003: 407–414) that B's imperative utterance (17b) stands in the rhetorical relation *request-elaboration* to the indirect request $a_!$, but the availability of $a_|$ makes possible for B other sorts of responses. So, for example, instead of b speaker B could utter:

(17) b′.   B: No you don't — it's very slow.

and the rhetorical relation *correction* holds between (17b′) and $a_|$. But if the dot type analysis is correct, and A's utterance is a *request* for assistance to the same extent that it is an *assertion* of A's desire, then the following response *should* yield a coherent discourse:

(17) b″.   B: No.

If the "indirect command" $a_!$ is just as available as the "direct assertion" $a_|$, then utterance (17b″) should be available as a straightforward *refusal* of the command $a_!$, and the discourse (17a–b″) should be just as coherent as the following discourse:

(18) a.   A: Help me clean up!
       b.   B: No.

But (17b″) cannot be interpreted as an instance of the rhetorical relation *command/refusal* relative to (17a).[27] It seems that (17a–b″), if it can be interpreted as coherent at all, can be interpreted only as being similar to (17a–b); that is, (17b″) can be interpreted only as a *correction* of assertion $a_|$ and not as a *refusal* of command $a_!$. Granted, it is *difficult* to interpret (17b″) as a *correction* of assertion $a_|$. It is difficult because we typically do not have a reason to correct one another's reports of our own mental states — we typically respect one another's "first-person authority".[28] But *because* the norm of respecting first-person authority impedes our interpretation of (17b″) as a *correction* of $a_|$, *if* $a_!$ were just as available as $a_|$, then we would *readily* interpret (17b″) as a *refusal* of the command $a_!$. But (17b″) *cannot* be interpreted as a *refusal* of command $a_!$. So, contrary to what is predicted by the dot type analysis, $a_!$ is not just as available for rhetorical relations as is $a_|$.

Let us review. In their theory SDRT Asher and Lascarides propose that *speech acts* be identified with *rhetorical relations* between utterances. This proposal faces two problems: The *incompleteness problem* is that not all speech acts can be plausibly identified as such rhetorical relations, and the *preclusion problem* is that within the context of SDRT the identification of speech acts with rhetorical relations seems to preclude the possibility of ISAs. Asher and Lascarides' dot type analysis of ISAs is an ingenious attempt to solve the preclusion problem, but we have now seen that the dot type analysis is inadequate. Therefore Asher and Lascarides' proposal that *speech acts* be identified with *rhetorical relations* as propounded in SDRT *still* faces the preclusion problem *and* the incompleteness problem.

8. A bi-level conception of indirect speech acts

Both problems, however, point toward the same solution. The incompleteness problem suggests that not all of the actions which fall under the imprecise rubric 'speech act' are rhetorical relations. Some speech acts are *not* such that "illocutionary point has to do with connecting information in a discourse together" (Asher and Lascarides 2003: 306).[29] And the preclusion problem suggests that, of the *two* speech acts performed in an ISA, only *one* of them is governed by the *uniqueness constraint* imposed by MDC. Let us then distinguish between two general kinds of speech acts: First, there are *discourse-structuring* speech acts; these are speech acts whose "illocutionary point has to do with connecting information in a discourse together". Discourse-structuring speech acts (DSAs) — e.g., *explaining*, *answering*, *narrating*, *elaborating* — are plausibly construed as rhetorical relations *between utterances*, and thus they are subject to the uniqueness constraint imposed by MDC. Second, there are *non-discourse-structuring speech acts* (NDSAs), whose illocutionary point does not have to do with "connecting information in a discourse together". NDSAs — e.g., *promising*, *warning*, *threatening*, *advising*, *offering* — are not plausibly construed as rhetorical relations. In contrast to DSAs, NDSAs are deeds done *to interpreters* and they do *not* serve to connect information in a discourse together; since NDSAs do not serve to structure discourse, they are not subject to the uniqueness constraint imposed by MDC.[30]

And now the solutions to the problems are apparent: The solution to the incompleteness problem is to limit the identification of speech acts with rhetorical relations to only *DSAs*; NDSAs are not to be identified with rhetorical relations. And the solution to the preclusion problem is to analyze ISAs as utterances that simultaneously perform both *one* DSA and also (at least) one NDSA. I will call this conception of ISAs the *bi-level conception of ISAs*:

> An utterance β constitutes an *indirect speech act* iff (i) β stands in some rhetorical relation to some previous utterance α, and thus at the level of discourse structure β is an instance of some DSA, yet (ii) at the level of personal interaction β is also an instance of *at least one* NDSA.

The following examples will serve to illustrate the distinction between DSAs and NDSAs and the bi-level conception of ISAs. All of the examples utilize rhetorical relations, or DSAs, analyzed in Asher and Lascarides (2003):

(19)   DSA: *Elaboration* + NDSA: *Warning*
       (a) My house is old and rickety. (b) These stairs could collapse.

The content of utterance (19b) *elaborates* the previous utterance (19a). Thus (19b) is an instance of the DSA *elaboration*, which serves to relate utterances in a discourse and thereby impose structure. But the utterance of (19b) is also, and simultaneously so, an instance of *warning,* which is an NDSA. Construed as such an NDSA, the utterance of (19b) is directed at *the addressee*, and thus the utterance, *in virtue of being a warning to the addressee*, does not serve to structure the discourse.[31]

(20)   DSA: *Result* + NDSA: *Threatening*
       (a) I've been taking shooting lessons. (b) I could easily hit you from here.

The utterance of (20b) reports a *result* of the content of the utterance (20a), and thus (20b) is a DSA. But the utterance of (20b) is simultaneously an instance of *threatening*, which is a NDSA directed at the addressee.

(21)   DSA: *Narration (imperative)* + NDSA: *Advising*
       (a) Drink some warm milk and (b) go to bed.

Again, the *narration* rhetorical relation, or DSA, relates the utterance of (21b) to (21a), but by uttering (21b) the speaker simultaneously performs the NDSA of *advising* the addressee.

(22)   DSA: *QAP* + NDSA: *Promising*
       A: (a) Will you take me to the dance? B: (b) I promise I will.

Again, the rhetorical relation, the DSA, *question-answer pair* relates the utterances; (22b) is an instance of *answering*, where this DSA is directed at the utterance of (22a). And (22b) is simultaneously an instance of *promising*, where this NDSA is directed at the addressee — by uttering the second sentence, B makes a promise *to A*.

Some interesting and relevant issues are raised by (22a). What sort of speech act is performed by (22a)? That is, is the act of *questioning* performed by (22a) a DSA, or an NDSA? One might argue that it is an NDSA on the grounds that a

question cannot be directed at an utterance which serves as its *answer* since questions typically precede their answers in discourse. But classifying *questioning* as an NDSA for this reason would be a mistake. First, it must be noted that the utterance of (22a) appears in *discourse initial position*. This makes (22a) something of a special case, since many, probably most, instances of *questioning* do not appear in discourse initial position, and are directed at previous utterances in obvious ways. Typical instances of *questioning* are directives to elaborate on a previous utterance, or directives to supply background information, or they raise objections against a previous utterance, etc. (See, e.g., Asher and Lascarides' discussion of *Q-Elab*, 2003: 320). But what if an interrogative utterance does appear in discourse initial position, as appears to be the case in Searle's classic example of (9)? In this case also the act of *questioning* should be classified as a DSA though for slightly different reasons: When an utterance of an interrogative appears in discourse initial position, it is not a DSA in virtue of standing in some rhetorical relation (e.g., *Q-Elab*) to some *previous* utterance, but in virtue of being at least the potential first member of a question-answer pair (i.e., *QAP*). For the SARG introduced by an utterance of an interrogative, even in discourse initial position, is that an answer be provided. Thus, though an interrogative in discourse initial position is not at the time of utterance the first member of a question-answer pair, the utterance of such an interrogative introduces the goal of making it the first member of such a pair. For these reasons even the acts of *questioning* performed by utterances of interrogatives in discourse initial position are in this sense directed at other utterances, and thus such utterances serve to structure discourse. So, the speech act of *questioning* performed by the utterance of (22a), as well as by Searle's (9), is an instance of a DSA, and not an NDSA.

The above statement of the bi-level conception of ISAs allows for the possibility that an utterance instantiates more than one NDSA: *Threats* that are also *promises*, *warnings* that are *threats*, *advice* that also *insults*, etc., are commonplace. Moreover, while resolving the discourse-structuring rhetorical relations present in a discourse is essential to *linguistic understanding* of a discourse — this, because according to Asher and Lascarides "we should countenance R as a distinct discourse relation only if there is evidence that it affects the truth conditions of the elements it connects, and these effects can't be explained by other means" (2003: 145) — it seems that discerning what NDSAs are instantiated by an utterance is not essential to *linguistic* understanding, or at least not linguistic understanding at the same level. For example, if I am to understand your utterance of the mini-discourse

(3) *(a) Max fell. (b) I pushed him.

it seems that I must discern whether (3*b) stands in narration, or explanation, to (3*a); grasp of the communicated truth-conditions requires this. But it seems

that grasp of the communicated truth-conditions does not require me to discern what NDSA you are performing: Are you *confessing* your crime to me by uttering (3*b)? *Threatening* to push me? *Apologizing*? In order for me to discern the truth-conditional content of mini-discourse (3*a-b) it does seem necessary that I resolve whether or not (3*b) *explains*, or *narrates* (3*a); but it does not seem necessary that I discern which, if any, of these non-discourse-structuring speech acts you are performing. Indeed, it seems it can be indeterminate as to which, if any, of these NDSAs are being performed.[32]

9.   Passing the salt

I will conclude by sketching how the bi-level conception of ISAs applies to Searle's classic example of an occurrence of the following mini-discourse:

> (9)   A: (a) Can you pass the salt? B: (b) Yes.

MDC dictates that the utterances of (9a) and (9b) are related by the rhetorical relation *QAP* (*Question/Answer Pair*). That is, in virtue of the content of the utterances of (9a) and (9b), and other syntactic, lexical, and cognitive modeling facts, assigning this rhetorical relation to hold between the utterances maximizes discourse coherence. But by uttering (9a), questioner A requests that *interpreter B* pass the salt. How does A's utterance of this *question* give rise to this *request*? Here Searle's account, which is further developed by Asher and Lascarides, seems primarily correct: Sentence (9a) has been *conventionalized* for requesting, which is to say that the Gricean reasoning Searle describes has been codified as part of the conventional meaning of (9a). And thus, in Asher and Lascarides' terms, the SARGs (Speech Act Related Goals) introduced into the discourse by the utterance of (9a) include both the goal at the level of discourse structure that the question be answered, *and* the goal at the level of personal interaction that the salt be passed. But, given that A has uttered the *interrogative* (9a), MDC and the rules governing rhetorical relations severely constrain what B can coherently say to achieve the discourse-structuring SARG introduced by (9a). He can say, 'yes' or 'no' and thereby link his response via *QAP*, or he could, e.g., respond with an *elaborating question*, e.g., 'Do you mean this salt?' thereby linking his response via "Q-Elab". But his responding with an utterance that is rhetorically related to (9a) does nothing to satisfy the SARG at the level of personal interaction. His responding to the *question* is a wholly different activity than his satisfying, or not satisfying, the *request. His utterance* of (9b) answers the question, but this utterance does not satisfy the request; to satisfy the request B must perform an action wholly distinct from uttering (b), viz. B has to pass the salt. (It is noteworthy in this regard that Asher

and Lascarides do not include *requesting* in their "Glossary of Discourse Relations" 2003: 459–471. Even in their account of ISAs in 2001a, wherein they discuss Searle's example, *requesting* is not treated as a rhetorical relation.)

The bi-level conception of Searle's example of (9) maintains that *questioning* (a DSA) and *requesting* (an NDSA) occur at different levels, and this is obviously incompatible with the widespread view, shared by Searle,[33] that questions are a species of request, i.e., that questions are requests for answers. But analyzing questions as requests in this way rests upon a confusion between the speech act related goals (SARGs) of questions and the SARGs of requests. A question typically does introduce into the discourse of which it is a part the SARG of providing an answer to it. But it does not follow from the fact that questions introduce such SARGs that questions are requests that their SARGs be achieved. For if it did follow, then every speech act that introduces a SARG, and this includes almost all DSAs, would be analyzed as a request that the SARG it introduces be satisfied. So, for example, an *assertion* is a kind of veridical speech act, and thus assertions introduce the SARG of "belief transfer" (Asher and Lascarides 2003: 307); i.e., the goal introduced by an assertion is that the listener accept its content as true. So, if speech acts that introduce SARGs are analyzed as requests that their SARGs be satisfied, it would follow that assertions are also requests, requests for belief. But of course assertions are clearly not requests. Moreover, while many questions are simultaneously requests (though not requests *for an answer*), many questions do not behave like requests at the level of discourse structure. So, for example, if one's request has been satisfied, it is typically appropriate to utter an expressive such as 'thanks' to acknowledge this. So, if I ask "Can you pass the salt?" and thereby request that you pass the salt, and then you satisfy this request, it is appropriate for me to utter "thanks". But, as the following exchange makes clear, it is often inappropriate to utter "thanks" after one's question has been directly answered:

(23)   a.   A: What do you want to do tonight?
       b.   B: I want to go out to dinner.
       c.   A: Thanks. (?)

So, there are good reasons to reject the claim that questions are requests for answers, and thus the fact the bi-level conception is incompatible with this widespread view does not suggest a problem with the bi-level conception.[34]

In Searle's example of (9a–b) the distinction between the DSA *question/answer pair* and the NDSA *requesting* is relatively easy to appreciate, because the *answering* of the question is clearly distinct from the *satisfaction* of the request. But in many cases of ISAs wherein the NDSA is *requesting*, the distinction is not so easily drawn, because the action that is requested is itself a speech act. A perfect example of this is provided by the splitting discourse briefly discussed above:

(13) a. A: Can you tell me the time?
     b. B: No I can't. (I'm not wearing my watch.)
     b′. B: Six o'clock.

The utterance of (13a) performs the DSA of *questioning* and the NDSA of *requesting*. Thus (13a) introduces, at the level of discourse structure, the SARG of having the question answered, and, at the level of personal interaction, the SARG that B tell A the time. Response (13b) stands in the rhetorical relation *question/answer pair* to (13a), thus achieving the discourse structuring goal. But (13b′) does not stand in *any* rhetorical relation to (13a). At the level of discourse structure then, (13a–b′) is incoherent. The reason that we judge (13b′) to be a reasonable (though perhaps *impolite*[35]) response is that (13b′) does achieve the SARG introduced by (13a) at the level of personal interaction. So, B's utterance of (b′) does *not* stand in some sort of "request satisfaction" relation to (13a); rather, by performing the action of uttering (b′), B satisfies A's request. B's utterance of (13b′) in response to (13a) is thus not analogous to a response of "yes" in response to "Can you pass the salt?". Rather, B's utterance of (13b′) in response to (13a) is analogous to *passing the salt* in response to "Can you pass the salt?".

The proposed bifurcation of levels provides a complimentary account for why the following discourse is flawed:

(9) *A: (a) I'd appreciate it if you passed me the salt. B: (b) Yes, I agree.

The utterance of (9*a) is an instance of the DSA of *stating*, but because sentence (9*a) is conventionalized for the NDSA of *requesting*, it simultaneously requests *to B* that he pass the salt. The utterance of (9*a) thus introduces at the discourse-structuring level the SARG of belief transfer, and at the level of personal interaction the SARG of satisfying A's request. Now the utterance of (9*b) is a perfectly coherent response at the level of *discourse structure*; the utterances are connected by the rhetorical relation of *statement/acceptance*, and the discourse-structure level SARG is satisfied. But, merely uttering (9*b) in and of itself does nothing to achieve the personal-interaction level goal of passing the salt to A. Moreover, given that (9*a) is *conventionalized* for requesting, by ostensibly treating (9*a) as a "serious" statement interpreter B ignores what by linguistic convention must be the primary purpose of A's utterance, viz. the *request* made to B that he pass the salt.[36] Therefore (9*a–b) and (13a–b′) are flawed for complementary reasons: (13a–b′) is judged to be flawed (or *impolite*) because, though *the uttering* of (13b′) achieves the personal-interaction level SARG introduced by (13a), the utterance of (13b′) does not stand in a rhetorical relation to the utterance of (13a), and thus the discourse-structure level SARG introduced by (13a) is not achieved. Thus (13a–b) is *linguistically incoherent*, but *practically acceptable*. In contrast, though

the utterance of (9*b) is rhetorically related to the utterance of (9a) and therefore the discourse-structure level SARG introduced by (9*a) is achieved, the utterance of (9*b) — because it takes the statement performed by (9a) "seriously" — ignores the request made by (9a), and this suggests that the personal-interaction level SARG introduced by (9*a) will not be achieved. Thus (9*a-b) is *linguistically coherent*, but *practically flawed*.

The bi-level conception of ISAs affords a similar explanation to the unacceptable splitting discourse considered earlier:

(17) a. A: I want to catch the 10:20 train to London.
  b. B: Go to platform 1.
  b′. B: No you don't — it's very slow.
  b″. B: No.

Recall that under Asher and Lascarides' dot type analysis B's imperative utterance (17b) stands in the rhetorical relation *request-elaboration* to the indirect command $a_!$ introduced by the utterance of (17a), and this explains why (17a–b) is in some sense an acceptable dialogue. But if the command $a_!$ is available for rhetorical relations, then (17a–b″) *should be* a coherent discourse because the *command/refusal* rhetorical relation *should* relate (17b″) with the command $a_!$ that is allegedly introduced by (17a). In contrast, the bi-level conception of ISAs does *not* predict that discourse (17a–b″) is coherent, and it provides a different explanation of the intuitive acceptability of (17a–b). On the bi-level account the utterance of (17a) performs the NDSA of requesting *to the addressee*, but this NDSA does not structure the dialogue. So on the bi-level conception the *only* utterance to which the utterance (17b″) could be rhetorically related is the utterance of the *indicative* (17a), which thereby displays the force |. And though utterances of "no" can typically be related by *correction* to previous utterances that display |, in this case this is precluded by the norm of first-person authority.

But if the utterance of (17a) does not introduce the "indirect" command $a_!$, then why is (17a–b) an intuitively acceptable dialogue? On the bi-level conception, the utterance of (17a) is a *request made to B* at the level of personal interaction, and it is simultaneously an *assertion* at the discourse-structure level. But these speech acts are of different kinds, and it is only the DSA of assertion that can be rhetorically related to subsequent utterances. So, on the bi-level account the utterance of (17b) does not stand in the *request-elaboration* relation, nor does it stand in any other rhetorical relation, to the indirect request instantiated by the utterance of (17a). In uttering (17b), B is not providing a *linguistic response* to the indirect request introduced by (17a); rather, in uttering (17b) B *is thereby performing* the action requested by the NDSA — B's utterance of (17b) is analogous to *the passing*

of the salt in (9). Thus on the bi-level account (17a–b) is similar to (13a–b); it is *linguistically incoherent*, but *practically acceptable*.

10. Conclusion

The bi-level conception of ISAs I am proposing is an amalgam of Searle's Gricean account, and Asher and Lascarides' rhetorical relation account. These approaches seem to me to be complementary: Searle's definitions in terms of sincerity, preparatory, etc., conditions are compelling, as is the attendant sketch of Grice-inspired reasoning, *when they are applied to NDSAs*. But Searle's conception of "direct" speech acts runs afoul of the alignment problem. Asher and Lascarides' rhetorical relation account, on the other hand, avoids the alignment problem, but — despite the appeal to dot types — it seems to preclude the possibility of ISAs, and it is incomplete in that it is silent on the sorts of non-discourse-structuring speech acts that are typically cited as ISAs. The bi-level conception of ISAs sketched here is a way of preserving what is right about Asher and Lascarides' rhetorical relation account of speech acts, while jettisoning what is wrong with it. What I have presented here, however, is only a sketch, and it remains to be seen to what extent the bi-level account can be formally incorporated within the framework of SDRT.

Notes

1. Similar ideas are advanced in Hobbs (1985) and Mann and Thompson (1987).

2. Asher and Lascarides do not explain how these other speech acts that have received attention in the literature are to be added to SDRT. This paper takes some initial steps toward this addition, though, as will be seen, these steps require a fundamental revision of *ISAs* in SDRT.

3. The identification of DSAs, and not NDSAs, with *rhetorical relations* highlights an unfortunate connotation of the latter phrase. One might, and with reason, suppose that *rhetorical* relations in some way concern the *persuasive* effects of utterances *on addressees*. And this suggests that there is some tension in identifying DSAs, which are directed at *utterances*, with *rhetorical* relations. But the apparent tension here is a result of Asher and Lascarides', perhaps unfortunate, use of 'rhetorical relations' to refer to discourse-structuring relations between utterances: Most of what Asher and Lascarides' call *rhetorical relations* are not in any way concerned with the persuasive effects of an utterance. For an integration of pragmatics and classical rhetoric, see Dascal 2003, Chapter 28.

4. An anonymous referee pointed out to me that my thesis presupposes that *there are* ISAs, yet this assumption is questioned by several theorists, such as Holdcroft (1994) and Bertolet (1994). Two brief points in response: First, I use the phrase "indirect speech act" (ISA) to designate the sort of phenomenon with which, e.g., Searle (1975a), was concerned. That there is such a

phenomenon does not seem to be in dispute, and it will not undermine my view if on the final analysis the phrase "indirect speech act" is judged to be a misnomer. Second, though Holdcroft and Bertolet deny that there are ISAs, taken together their arguments support the bi-level approach endorsed here, because they deny the existence of ISAs for complementary reasons. Holdcroft denies that in a putative instance of an ISA the "secondary" act actually occurs (using Searle's terminology) whereas Bertolet denies that in such an instance the "primary" act actually occurs. I think both of their arguments have merit, and the apparent disagreement is a result of Bertolet and Holdcroft conceiving of speech acts on different levels: Holdcroft conceives of speech acts along the lines of NDSAs, whereas Bertolet conceives of speech acts along the lines of DSAs.

5. An obvious strategy of explanation is to posit some sort of ambiguity. A sophisticated version of the ambiguity response is defended by Sadock (1974). Bach and Harnish (1975a) present detailed, and successful, criticisms of Sadock's view.

6. This is what I refer to as *forward alignment*. *Reverse alignment* is the converse: For every speech act type A, there are sentences S such that A is the "literal" speech act "contained in the meaning" of sentences S. Searle seems to endorse alignment in both directions (See Searle 1969: 17–18). Though alignment fails in both directions, I here consider only forward alignment, as it is clearly required by Searle's account of ISAs.

7. A general summary of the alignment problem, in terms of reasons for rejecting what Levinson calls the "literal force hypothesis", is presented by Levinson (1983: 243–262). Also see Gazdar (1981). A more recent criticism specifically directed at Searle's (1969) contention that every sentence contains an "IFID" ("illocutionary force indicating device") is presented in Holdcroft (1994).

8. Matters are somewhat complicated here by the fact, noted by Searle and many others, that sentences of the general form 'Can you V?' seem to have a *conventionalized*, or *standardized*, request connotation. Hence, for example, I can request that you hold the picture by asking, 'Can you hold the picture?' but I cannot — unless circumstances are very special — make a similar request by asking, 'Are you physically able to hold this picture?' This connotation is reflected in the fact that the latter, unlike the former, cannot be (readily, anyway) modified by 'please':

? (1d) Are you physically able to hold this picture please?

Though the issue of *conventionalization* (Searle 1975a) or *standardization* (Bach and Harnish 1979) is complicated, it is for the most part independent of my concerns here. What matters for my purposes is that, regardless of what is conventionalized or standardized, uttering 'Can you please hold this picture?' is neither more, nor less, making a "direct" request than is uttering either 'Please hold this picture' or 'I'd appreciate it if you would please hold this picture'.

9. Alignment seems to hold for what Austin (1962) called "explicit performatives". So, e.g., "I hereby warn you that the stairs are slippery" pretty clearly has "contained in its meaning" the speech act of *warning*. So, if one could assimilate *all* sentences to the model of explicit performatives, alignment would hold. But the project of assimilating all sentences to such explicit performatives is fraught with problems. (See Levinson 1983: 243–263 for a summary of the difficulties.)

10. This is a rather coarse description of Asher and Lascarides' sophisticated approach to discourse interpretation. It ignores several impressive aspects of SDRT, including their definition of "discourse update," which models discourse interpretation as a process whereby an utterance moves an interpreter *from* an underspecified interpretation *to* a *less* underspecified interpretation.

11. An anonymous referee suggested to me another way in which Asher and Lascarides' SDRT based account of speech acts is superior to Searle's Grice-inspired approach. The problem concerns how ISAs relate to, and are distinguished from, other sorts of figurative speech, such as metaphor. According to Searle (1979: Chapter 4), for a speaker to speak *indirectly* is for her to mean *both* what the sentence she utters literally means, and something else as well; whereas to speak *figuratively* is for a speaker to *not* mean what the sentence she utters literally means, but to mean something else *instead*. So, Searle's Grice-inspired account precludes the possibility of simultaneously speaking indirectly and figuratively. But, as Tsohatzidis (1994) makes clear, it is possible to speak indirectly and figuratively simultaneously. Though I cannot pursue the issue here, Asher's (2001b) theory of metaphor together with Asher and Lascarides' (2001a) theory of ISAs do not seem to preclude indirect figurative speech. I will argue in the next section, however, that Asher and Lascarides' approach to ISAs must be rejected for other reasons.

12. Indeed, it could be said that the relational analysis of speech acts faces the preclusion problem *because* it does not run afoul of the alignment problem. This claim is justified at the end of Section 4.

13. An apparent exception to the uniqueness constraint is provided by what Asher and Lascarides (2003) call "Text Structuring Relations" — whose presence is typically signaled by connectives such as 'but' and 'however'. Asher and Lascarides allow that two utterances (a) and (b) of a maximally coherent discourse can be related by *both* a text structuring relation and another non-text structuring relation. For example Asher and Lascarides maintain that in a typical utterance of

a.   John loves sport.

b.   But he hates football.

utterances (a) and (b) are related by both the text structuring relation of *contrast* and the non-text structuring relation of *background* (Asher and Lascarides 2003:168, 465). But I believe that such examples are not genuine counterexamples to the uniqueness constraint because text structuring relations seem to require the co-presence of a *unique* non-text structuring relation. So, for example, (a) and (b) cannot be related by only *contrast*, nor can (a) and (b) be related by *contrast*, together with both *background* and *narration*. In short, though Asher and Lascarides refer to relations such as *contrast* as rhetorical relations, they are perhaps best thought of as sorts of ancillary conditions.

14. What if there is a *tie* between the coherence of (i) D wherein U is interpreted as a performance of speech act A, and (ii) D wherein U is interpreted as a performance of a different speech act A*? Could not Asher and Lascarides allow for ISAs by maintaining that U is an ISA if and only if U gives rise to such a tie? There are two problems with this account of ISAs: First, it does not capture the idea that in an ISA one performs one sort of speech act *by way of* performing another. Second, the account conflates *under-specification* of speech act and ISA: If there is a tie

for maximal coherence between interpreting an utterance β as an *explanation* of a previous utterance α, and interpreting β as an *narration* of α, we cannot say that β is both a narration and an explanation of α, for this will imply that β is ambiguous. Rather, if there is such a tie we must say that it is *under-determined* in the discourse whether β is a narration of α or an explanation of α. Moreover, Asher and Lascarides maintain that "A discourse is incoherent if the logical form contains underspecified rhetorical connections *after the whole discourse has been processed* " (2003: 237).

15. To be fair, Asher and Lascarides are careful to qualify their reduction of speech acts to rhetorical relations; they claim only that "the typology of rhetorical relations includes the typology of those speech acts whose illocutionary point has to do with connecting information in a discourse together" (2003: 306).

16. Asher and Lascarides credit Groenendijk and Stokhof (1991) for this conception of the semantic values of interrogatives, and Segerborg (1990) for this conception of the semantic values of imperatives.

17. I invoke forces to avoid what I think is confusing terminology. Asher and Lascarides seem to use 'semantic type' and 'speech act type' as equivalent. For example, they say "… an assertion is a distinct and incompatible speech act type from a question" (2001a: 212). This is confusing because a *token* speech act, say the utterance of an explanation, is *not* identical to its semantic value, a particular *token* proposition. So, how can the *type* of the speech act performed be identical to the *type* of semantic value denoted? How can type X and type Y be identical if they do not have the same tokens? I present Asher and Lascarides' theory in terms of forces in order to avoid such puzzles.

18. It is difficult to discern from Asher and Lascarides (2001 and 2003) precisely what sort of entities are the constituents of dot types. Sometimes they write as if the constituents are kinds of semantic values, e.g., the kind *set of propositions*. And sometimes they write as if the constituents are "speech acts types," which seem to be equivalent to what I call *forces*. (For example they write, "An utterance is a conventionalized ISA if (a) the grammar assigns it a complex speech act type of the form $s_1 \bullet s_2$ such that s_1 and s_2 are distinct (incompatible) types of semantic objects …." (2001: 195)). And yet other times they write as if the constituents are specific rhetorical relations, such as "IQAP" (2001: 195). These different ways of conceiving of dot types may or may not be compatible, but here, for the sake of simplicity, I ignore irrelevant complexities.

19. I am specifically concerned with Asher and Lascarides' response to the preclusion problem, and so my brief description here ignores much of the complexity in Asher and Lascarides' analysis.

20. Asher and Lascarides maintain that a sentence S becomes a "*conventional* ISA" when this sort of Gricean reasoning *from* the force encoded by the mood of S *to* an additional force is *conventionalized*: "conventionalization transfers Gricean reasoning into (complex) semantic type [i.e. force] assignments within *C*" (2001: 209), where '*C*' denotes "a set … of conventional information" (2001: 208).

21. I have taken pains to show how both of the relata $u_?$ and $u_!$ introduced by utterance β can be related via R_1 and R_2 to the same previous utterance α. To solve the preclusion problem it must at least be *possible* that there be *one* such previous utterance α. But we could classify β as

an ISA in a derivative sense even if only, say, $u_?$ is rhetorically related to α, and $u_|$ is related to a different previous utterance, or even if $u_|$ is rhetorically related to no previous utterance. For the mere *potential* of $u_|$ to be *also* rhetorically related to α will suffice to explain the intuition that in uttering β the speaker performs two speech acts at once.

22. Searle summarizes his explanation of this phenomenon of *ISA blocking* as follows:

Besides the maxims proposed by Grice, there seems to be an additional maxim of conversation that could be expressed as follows: "Speak idiomatically [i.e. conventionally] unless there is some special reason not to". For this reason, the normal conversational assumptions on which the possibility of indirect speech rests are in a large part suspended in the nonidiomatic [i.e., nonconventional] cases (1979: 50).

23. Asher and Lascarides' account of ISA *blocking* is expressed in the rule SAB (2001: 216). The problem is thus not that SAB delivers the wrong results, but rather that it applies only to these special cases in which a sentence has been conventionalized so that utterances of it are dual-force ISAs. Thus the problem is not so much with Asher and Lascarides' approach to *blocking* as it is developed in SAB, as it is with their approach to *ISAs*.

24. Above I argued that instances of non-dual-force ISAs are common. This suggests that instances of ISA blocking involving non-dual-force utterances will also be common.

25. Asher and Lascarides do not actually say what rhetorical relation holds between utterance (b) and utterance (c′), though they do say that utterance (b) stands in the *correction* relation to utterance (a). Given this, it is plausible to suppose that utterance (c′) is some sort of relation involving the *acceptance* of a correction.

26. In a footnote Asher and Lascarides concede that the utterance of (14b) "doesn't behave *linguistically* like a correction, since it cannot be felicitously preceded by *no*, in the way that correction s can; compare "*??No, is he such an idiot as to believe that?*" with "*No, Reagan was mediocre*" (2001: 224). It is not clear what it would be for the utterance of (14b) to be a correction, but fail to be a correction "linguistically". But I certainly agree that the utterance of (14b) structures the subsequent discourse as a *question* and not as an *assertion of disagreement*, and this is why subsequent utterances (14a–b–c′) are strained.

27. Asher and Lascarides do not specify any such rhetorical relation as *command/refusal*; nor do they specify the rhetorical relation *statement/acceptance*, which I invoke later. But, what they say about how "turn taking" in conversation can be incorporated into SDRT commits them to the existence of such a rhetorical relations (2003: 427). Asher and Lascarides are committed to the claim, which is quite plausible, that utterances in a conversation that constitute an "adjacency pair" must be related by a rhetorical relation. For an explanation of "adjacency pairs" and their role in structuring conversations, see Sacks, Schegloff, and Jefferson (1974) and Sachs (1992).

28. Utterances such as (15b′) are somewhat playful exceptions to this norm.

29. That not all actions that are intuitively "speech acts" have as their illocutionary point the connecting together of information in a discourse should not be surprising. In Searle's (1975b) classic taxonomy of speech acts one dimension along which they are differentiated concerns the fact that "some … serve to relate the utterance to the rest of the discourse" (1979: 6). Individuating speech acts along such a dimension presupposes that some speech acts do serve this purpose, while others do not.

30.   This distinction between kinds of speech acts is related to a distinction drawn by Dascal and Katriel between two sorts of "speaker involvement": *topical involvement* "refers to a speaker's cognitive orientation to a shared discourse topic", whereas *interactional involvement* "refers to the speaker's orientation to the speech situation and the participants in it" (Dascal 2003: 159). DSAs thus concern topical involvement, while NDSAs concern interactional involvement.

31.   Of course there is a sense in which even when construed as an instance of *elaboration* the utterance of (19b) is also directed at the addressee, for presumably the speaker is trying to *communicate* to the addressee by uttering (19b). But *what* the speaker is attempting to communicate by uttering (19b) is both that his utterance elaborates *the previous utterance* and warns *the addressee*. Thus the *elaboration* occurs at one level, the discourse-structure level, while the *warning* occurs at a different level, the personal-interaction level.

32.   The bi-level conception of ISAs suggests the empirical hypothesis that people who suffer from Asperger's Syndrom, or other types of "Autistic Spectrum Disorder," are able to interpret DSAs, but not NDSAs. I do not know if this hypothesis is supported by empirical data, but it is suggested by the symptoms of such disorders. (See Kutscher 2007 for descriptions of such symptoms.)

33.   Searle (1975b) claims that both *questions* and *requests* fall under the broader category of "directives". Searle maintains that questions and requests belong in the same category on the grounds that questions are "attempts by S to get H to answer" (1979: 14).

34.   A similar problem, pointed out by Lyons (1977), is that if questions are requests to provide answers, then a response of "no" to a yes/no question should be interpretable as a refusal to satisfy the request, but it is not interpretable in this way. (The same applies, *mutatis mutandis*, for responses of "yes" to yes/no questions.)

35.   Clark (1979, 1980) reports empirical data concerning this example, including the fact that people tend to judge (13b′) to be "impolite". The bi-level conception explains this data: (13b′) is judged to be impolite because it creates an incoherent discourse; the person who utters (13b′) is thus not being fully *cooperative*. Clark (1980) also reports that people judge "full" responses that *both* answer the question (at the discourse-structuring level) *and then* performed the requested action (at the personal-interaction level) to be more "polite" than responses that succeed at only one level. This result is also explained by the bi-level conception: A response that satisfies *all* the SARGs introduced by an utterance will be judged to be more polite than a response that satisfies only some of the SARGs.

36.   Clark (1979) presents data concerning the conditions under which interpreters do and do not take the DSA performed by an ISA "seriously". Clark provides some valuable insight as why speakers often do utter (13b′) in response to (13a), but his interpretation of the data is somewhat misguided because he fails to appreciate that *requesting* and *questioning* are different *kinds* of speech acts.

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