

NORMS OF SPEECH ACTS

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Abstract

This paper offers a systematic classification and characterization of speech acts and their norms. Recently, the normative approach has been applied to various speech acts, most notably to constatives. I start by showing how the work on the norms of assertion has influenced various approaches to the norms of other speech acts. I focus on the fact that various norms of assertion have different extensions, i.e., they denote different clusters of illocutions as belonging to an assertion. I argue that this has consequences for theorising about norms of other speech acts and generates certain arbitrary divisions. In the central part, I analyse two groups of speech acts. Firstly, ordinary speech acts, like predictions or retractions. Secondly, I indicate how the normative view can be extended to so-called ancillary speech acts, like presuppositions or implicatures. I end with a discussion of possible extensions of the normative approach, focusing on the debate on lying.

Keywords

Speech acts, assertion, knowledge norm, lying, normative account, speech act norms

1. Introduction: the normative approach to assertion

Although various approaches to speech acts have been proposed, in the last two decades the dominant one is the normative account. According to this account, speech acts are social practices defined by norms (Austin 1962; Searle 1969; Alston 2000; cf. Sbisà 2018). This view has been revived and gained popularity thanks to Williamson's (1996) normative approach to assertion. His starting point is an analogy with games, i.e., just like games, assertions and other speech acts are governed by certain norms constitutive for their performance.

Focusing on assertions, at least two questions arise—“What is the norm (or norms) of assertion?” and “What does it mean that such a norm (or norms) is constitutive?” Let us start with the former. Williamson (2000, 241) proposes the following general schema:

C Rule One must: assert p only if p has C.¹

It is widely assumed that assertions are governed by just *one* constitutive norm.² The prevailing view states that knowledge is the norm of assertion:³

KNA One must: assert p only if one knows p .

As for the latter question, many ways of elucidating the constitutivity of speech acts have been offered. In their discussion of Williamson’s view, Simion and Kelp (2020) say that the constitutive norm for an assertion is *essential* (i.e., an assertion is essentially governed by KNA), *unique* (i.e., KNA is the only constitutive norm that governs assertion), and *individuating* (i.e., an assertion is the only speech act governed by KNA). Thus, thanks to KNA, we can say that a particular illocution is an assertion and not, say, a conjecture.

¹ As is often done, I use *norms* and *rules* interchangeably.

² There are additional rules that contribute to a full characterisation of a speech act, like sincerity or preparatory conditions in Searle’s (1969) view. The assumption that there is just one constitutive norm of assertion is widely accepted (see footnotes 3 and 8 for a list of norms of assertion that have been proposed in the literature), but for arguments against it, see e.g. DeRose (2002); Brown (2008); Carter and Gordon (2011); Gerken (2014); McKenna (2015); Carter (2017); Greenberg (2020); for a general discussion of the plurality of norms, see e.g. Sbisà (2018); Marsili (forthcoming). Additionally, those authors who accept context-sensitive norms (i.e., arguing that the standards of assertability change with contexts) do not subscribe to the view that there is just one norm of assertion (see e.g. Brown (2010); Greenough (2011); DeRose (2002); Stone (2007); Levin (2008); Gerken (2012, 2014, 2017); Goldberg (2015); McKinnon (2015)).

³ See e.g. Unger (1975); Slote (1979); Williamson (1996, 2000, ch. 11); DeRose (2002); Reynolds (2002); Hawthorne (2003); Stanley (2005); Engel (2008); Schaffer (2008); Turri (2010a, 2016); for an overview, see e.g. Benton (forthcoming). For a general overview of various approaches to speech acts, see e.g. Harris et al. (2018).

Crucially, as Williamson observes, “Constitutive rules do not lay down necessary conditions for performing the constituted act. When one breaks a rule of a game, one does not thereby cease to be playing that game” (2000, 240). Thus, a violation of the norm amounts to an Austinian abuse, not a misfire (Austin 1962, 167-8). Just as it is possible to cheat while playing a game without ceasing to play this game, one’s utterance that breaks KNA (say, by making a false assertion) still counts as an assertion. At the same time, Williamson (2000, 240) acknowledges that some sensitivity to the difference between following the norms and breaking them is a necessary condition of performing a speech act. Finally, the constitutive norm is defeasible since it can be overridden by, say, moral or prudential norms. For instance, if I can save someone’s life by making a false assertion, KNA is overridden by a moral norm.⁴

KNA has been motivated on independent grounds. It has been argued that for a speech act to be considered an assertion it must pass certain tests or criteria of assertion. Here are the three classical ones.⁵ Firstly, assertions can be *challenged* by the

⁴ The nature of Williamson’s constitutive norm is a subject of discussion. The main critique comes from a theoretical assumption of Searle’s (1969) constitutive vs. regulative distinction, where constitutive norms cannot be violated (see e.g. Marsili (2019) who, following this distinction, argues that Williamsonian norms are regulative). However, Williamson does not accept this distinction. Moreover, some argue that the constitutive norm of assertion delivers wrong predictions concerning the question of when it can be violated, see Maitra (2011); Johnson (2018); Kelp and Simion (2020); see Bräuer (2021) for a response to these arguments. Some flagrant violations can result in no longer playing the game of assertion, see Kaluziński (2019) for a discussion of rules that have “game-termination potential.” For a general discussion of the constitutive norms, see e.g. Pagin and Marsili (2021, Section 5.1). For a defence of Williamsonian understanding of constitutivity, see e.g. García-Carpintero (2019b, 2022).

In the present paper, I focus on Williamson’s approach; however, nowadays, there are also other normative approaches to speech acts. Brandom (1994) and MacFarlane (2011) defend an account of assertion in terms of entitlements and commitments. Kukla and Lance (2009) and Lance and Kukla (2013) extend this approach to non-assertoric speech acts. McGowan (2009, 2019), focusing on exercitives, shows that a wide range of speech acts have additional conversational—often harmful for the addressees—effects. The latter authors focus on various forms of linguistic injustices.

⁵ See e.g. Unger (1975); Slote (1979); Williamson (2000); DeRose (2002); Hawthorne (2003). However, it has been argued that also other norms of assertion can pass these tests, the most discussed are various forms of the justification norm, see e.g. Douven (2006); Lackey (2007).

“How do you know?” question. If knowledge is the norm of assertion, then asking for one’s knowledge is appropriate. Secondly, assertions in the form of *Moorean conjunctions*, i.e., “*p*, but I don’t know that *p*,” are considered infelicitous. Thirdly, assertions based on merely *probabilistic* grounds are inappropriate. Saying “Your lottery ticket did not win” without knowing the result of the lottery is inappropriate. In the last few years, many other linguistic observations were added to this list.⁶

The aim of this paper is to offer a comprehensive classification and characterization of speech acts and their norms, focusing particularly on the recent extensions of the normative approach beyond assertion. Even though the normative account has been widely applied, there is no systematic discussion of these applications. This paper aims to bridge this gap. Here is the plan. In Section 2, I discuss three topics that emerge from the recent discussion on the norms of assertion. Each one has consequences for the applications of the normative approach to other speech acts. Section 3 addresses the norms of ordinary speech acts, while Section 4 addresses the norms of ancillary speech acts. In Section 5, I discuss how the normative approach can be extended beyond an application to the norms of speech acts, focusing on the debate on lying. I conclude in Section 6.

2. Assertion: its norms and place among speech acts

The first topic, that arises from the present work on the norms of assertion, concerns the relation between assertion and KNA. In the discussions on assertion and other speech acts, there seems to be a vast agreement regarding the following two features:⁷

Assertion and knowledge assumption (AKA)

⁶ These include: arguments from prompting assertions (Turri 2010b); the way we use verbs in parenthetical position (Benton 2011; Blaauw 2012; cf. van Elswyk 2021); retracting assertions (McFarlane 2011, 2014); hedged assertions (Benton and van Elswyk 2020). For a general discussion of the tests of assertion, see Montminy (2020); Gaszczyk (2022).

⁷ Cf. McGlynn (2014, 82) who notices that “Speech act theory was born out of the worry that many philosophers had fetishized the speech act of assertion, and ignored all the rest.” He argues that the recent focus on the speech act of assertion and KNA threatens to repeat this mistake.

AKA1 An assertion is a central speech act and many other speech acts are derived from or dependent on assertions.

AKA2 Knowledge is the norm of assertion (KNA).

One general consequence of AKA is that, until recently, the discussion was almost exclusively fixed on assertions, leaving all other speech acts behind. Nowadays we can observe an emerging discussion of other speech act types. However, as I will show in the next section, they have been looked at through the lens of AKA, i.e., other speech acts are seen in analogy to assertion and KNA.

The second topic concerns the variety of norms of speech acts. The discussion has been focused on the *content* of the norm, i.e., on answering the question “What is the norm of assertion?”, to which a plethora of norms have been proposed.⁸ However, a question which is at least as important concerns the *nature* of the norm, i.e., whether it should focus on the speaker, the hearer, or both. A norm is speaker-centred when its sole focus is on the speaker. In other words, it does not impose any conditions on the audience. In the case of the audience-centred norms, what licences proper assertion is the epistemic position of the audience, not the speaker.

Consider the following classification of the norms of assertion taking under consideration knowledge-based norms, i.e., norms having knowledge as its content:⁹

Speaker-centred norms: knowledge (Williamson 1996); knowledge expression (Turri 2011); being in a position to know (Willard-Kyle 2020)

⁸ An incomplete list includes a justification norm of assertion (Douven 2006; Lackey 2007; Kvanvig 2011); a belief norm (Hindriks 2007; Bach 2008); the truth norm (Weiner 2005; Whiting 2013; MacFarlane 2014); a certainty norm (Stanley 2008); context-sensitive norms (for references, see footnote 2); for an overview see e.g. Pagin and Marsili (2021).

⁹ More categories can be distinguished. See e.g. Willard-Kyle (2021) for audience-accommodating norms, i.e., norms whose satisfaction depends on the speaker but that take under consideration the epistemic position of the hearer.

Audience-centred norms: one's audience comes thereby to be in a position to know (García-Carpintero 2004);¹⁰ provide testimonial warrant (Hinchman 2013); fit to give a hearer knowledge (Pelling 2013)¹¹

KNA is a speaker-centred norm because it specifies only a specific requirement the speaker must satisfy in order to perform an assertion, namely, the speaker must be subject to the following norm: assert that p only if one knows that p . On the other hand, Pelling's (2013, 294) knowledge provision norm of assertion is audience-centred:

KPNA One's assertion that p is proper only if it is fit to give a hearer knowledge that p .

Even though every listed norm is a knowledge-based norm, these norms differ significantly from each other. Firstly, they provide different appropriateness conditions for what it means to make an assertion.¹² For instance, following KNA a proper assertion is such that the speaker believes in what she says; however, KPNA makes space for disbelieved assertions—what matters is whether the assertion is fit to give a hearer knowledge. The final topic I will discuss in this section shows that the difference between the norms of assertion goes even deeper, i.e., different norms deliver different answers to the question “What illocutions count as assertions?”

¹⁰ Consider García-Carpintero's (2004) norm:

TKNA One must: assert p only if one's audience comes thereby to be in a position to know p .

It can be seen as a mixed account since, as García-Carpintero (2004, 134) explicates it, KNA is an illocutionary consequence of TKNA. As a result, an assertion is subject to both TKNA and KNA.

¹¹ The knowledge-based account that escapes this classification is functionalist account (Kelp 2018; Kelp and Simion 2021), according to which, the function of assertion is generating knowledge in the audience. Kelp and Simion maintain that assertion is still governed by KNA but their understanding of constitutivity is weaker than Williamsonian; they argue that KNA is derivative from the function of assertion.

¹² In principle, the analogical speaker- and audience-centred norms can be not knowledge-based but, say, justification-based.

It may seem that the answer to the above question should be the same for every norm of assertion. After all, one of the main aims of the norm of assertion is to single out assertions from other speech acts. Thus, it would seem that we should start with a pre-theoretical notion of assertion and try to propose a norm that captures such a notion. The challenge is that there is vast disagreement regarding what illocutions *should* count as assertions.¹³ A natural procedure would be to address this problem when proposing a norm of assertion; for instance, by an empirical investigation. However, this is not how it is standardly done.¹⁴ We can observe that it is often the other way around—which illocutions are counted as assertions depends on the preferred norm of assertion. The problem with the varying extension of the norm of assertion can be formulated as follows:

EXTENSION Various norms of assertion denote different clusters of illocutions as belonging to assertions.¹⁵

A constitutive norm of assertion is supposed to separate assertions from other speech acts. However, EXTENSION shows that this is more problematic than it may seem. The biggest challenge comes from the fact that very rarely any arguments are given to support the preferred extension of the norm of assertion. Compare KNA and the truth norm. Williamson (2000, 258) claims that “the default use of declarative sentences is to make assertions.” In making his case for KNA, he rejects the truth rule as too broad; for instance, apart from assertions it also wrongly captures conjectures or predictions. Juxtaposed to other norms, KNA defines assertion as having a rather narrow extension. On the other hand, Weiner (2005, 239) claims that “assertion is the

¹³ Consider this sample of disagreements: some argue that predictions are assertions (Weiner 2005; Besson and Hattiangadi 2020), others disagree (Montminy 2020); some propose to count reminders as assertions (Weiner 2005), others disagree (García-Carpintero 2004); some propose that there is no point in individuating guesses as a separate speech acts (McKinnon 2015), but most accounts disagree (Williamson 1996).

¹⁴ An exception are experimental studies concerning the knowledge norm of assertion, see e.g. Turri (2016, 2021), which received a lot of criticism, see e.g. Kneer (2018); Reuter and Brössel (2019); Marsili and Wiegmann (2021), which points in the direction of a non-factive norm of assertion.

¹⁵ See Gaszczyk (2022) for a discussion of EXTENSION in relation to constative speech acts.

genus of speech act typically performed by utterance of a declarative sentence, which includes reports, predictions, retrodictions, arguments, reminders, and so forth.” Weiner aims at proposing the norm that governs this whole genus of speech acts. He argues that such a conception of assertion is “the most obvious one” and that arbitrarily restricting the extension of assertion risks trivialising the significance of this notion. However, apart from saying that assertion *should* be treated as a genus of speech act with such extension, Weiner does not provide any argument either. Because he wants to have a norm of assertions that captures such speech acts as predictions, choosing the truth norm makes sense—both by asserting and predicting we want to say something true. This, however, significantly broadens the extension of assertions compared to the extension of KNA.

To see this problem even clearer, consider a context-sensitive norm of assertion. In general, such norms have a broad extension because they maintain that the epistemic standards for proper assertions shift with changes in context. Consider McKinnon’s (2015) norm, according to which one’s assertion that *p* is appropriate only if one has supportive reasons for *p*.¹⁶ Such a norm extends the assertoric speech into all assertives (from as weak as guessing to as strong as guaranteeing).¹⁷ Even though there is a substantial difference between assertives in the strength of the speaker’s commitment, McKinnon maintains that “I don’t think there’s particularly good reason to break [assertives] up into different speech acts” (2015, 162).

The variations in EXTENSION may be taken as a substantial problem for the normative account. After all, if an answer to the question “What is an assertion?” depends on the preferred norm of assertion, it can trivialise the whole pursuit for the proper norm of assertion. A similar situation concerns the definition of lying. There are certain widely shared intuitions concerning which utterances count as lies and which are merely misleading. The consensus states that a proper definition of lying should differentiate lies from misleading statements. However, there are cases of

¹⁶ This is a simplified version of the norm but sufficient for the present purpose.

¹⁷ I understand assertives as a class of speech acts where the speaker commits to the truth of the expressed claim; they differ from each other in the degree of commitment. I further distinguish constatives that are a broader category that encompasses all speech acts made in a declarative mood which include committal (e.g. assertions) and non-committal speech acts (e.g. suppositions), for more see e.g. Searle (1969); Bach and Harnish (1979); for an overview see e.g. Sbisà (2020).

which the status is debated. As a result, just like in the case of norms of assertion, various definitions of lying propose different extensions for the notion of lying.¹⁸

EXTENSION points at certain assumptions behind particular norms of assertion that we should be aware of.¹⁹ It can, as I will show, create a certain confusion that stems from the fact that one is arguing against a particular norm from a position of a different norm with a different extension. Thus, it is crucial to be explicit on the extension of the norm in question. Furthermore, choosing a particular norm may depend on what we see as a primary aim of assertion. Consider two extreme positions. Context-sensitive norms in general impose weaker conditions on a norm of assertion, and thus have a broader extension. Such norms aim at capturing a variety of linguistic practices that are made by means of a declarative mood, and supporters of context-sensitive norms are not necessarily interested in distinguishing between particular speech acts, especially assertives. On the other hand, knowledge-based norms of assertion are more restrictive. They try to delineate what is central only for a default use of declarative statements and, thus, emphasise the differences between assertions and other assertives.

There are three general lessons that this section teaches us about the norms of speech acts. Firstly, because an assertion is seen as the central speech act, widely accepted to be governed by KNA, the interest in other speech acts has been limited. As I will show in the next section, most of the work on norms of speech acts has been done in analogy to assertion and KNA. For this reason, the majority of analysed speech acts belong to constatives. Secondly, the discussion on norms concerns not only their content but also their nature. This challenge must be addressed when proposing a norm for any other speech act. Finally, we can see that which illocutions are counted as an assertion depends on the preferred norm of assertion. Most norms of assertion commit to a narrow extension, and so are focused on individuating an assertion from other assertives. Such an approach makes space for extending the normative approach to other speech acts, which is the subject of the rest of the paper.

¹⁸ I will come back to the relation between lying and the normative approach in Section 5.

¹⁹ EXTENSION arises also in the case of other accounts of assertion. For instance, Marsili (2020), arguing for the commitment view, proposes a broad notion of assertion, but makes space for a narrower one.

3. Norms of ordinary speech acts

This section discusses the norms of ordinary speech acts, i.e., speech acts that are standardly taken as full-fledged illocutionary acts, like assertions, predictions, and retractions. I review several norms of speech acts discussed in the literature, but I draw particular attention to the relation between particular norms and EXTENSION. This discussion shows that many disagreements regarding particular norms of speech acts stem directly from an assumption of a norm with a different extension.

A consequence of AKA is that many normative accounts of speech acts are closely connected to KNA. To show this, I divide the available accounts into two categories—derived from KNA and independent from it.

3.1 KNA-based proposals

The norm of telling is knowledge²⁰

Is my telling you that it's raining different from asserting it? Some speech acts are so close to assertions that it seems that they are governed by the same norm. Fricker (2006) argues that tellings are a subset of assertions because only tellings need an intended audience.²¹ Because of that, only tellings essentially aim at spreading knowledge to the audience. Pelling (2014) goes further and claims that telling and assertion have distinct norms because they are characteristically associated with different types of communicative intentions. He gives two arguments. Firstly, only tellings are stake-sensitive (we can always assert what we know, but conditions for tellings can change with the stake). Secondly, only tellings are directed towards the

²⁰ For clarity of discussion, in the headlines, I provide simplified versions of the norms. I also classify some views into groups.

²¹ Fricker makes a similar point about the speech act of testifying. The case of testimony, however, is more complicated. According to one position, testimonies are simply assertions, see e.g. Ball (2013); cf. Hinchman (2020). Another position holds that any declarative type of content can be seen as an act of testifying; for hedged declaratives, see van Elswyk (2022); for non-at-issue content, see Langton (2021). Graham (2015, 2022) argues that the verb *to testify* is polysemous and it can be used in broad and narrow senses.

intended audience (intuitively, we can assert something in our secret diary, but we do not tell it because we do not address it to anyone).

On the other hand, we can think about tellings as assertions *tout court*. Simion (2021, ch. 9) opposes differentiating tellings from assertions and argues that the difference between them is only apparent. Assertions are essentially communicative acts that aim at spreading knowledge. Pace Pelling, Simion argues that we can assert something also when the stakes change. In such contexts, the constitutive norms are overridden by other, often non-epistemic reasons.

Note that the disagreement between Simion and Pelling is a dispute over the extension of the norm of assertion. Simion argues for a more inclusive notion of assertion that incorporates tellings, while Pelling prefers to separate these two—for him only telling is essentially a communicative act.²²

The norm of proffering is existential knowledge

Milić (2015, 2017), responding to arguments against KNA, proposes to distinguish two new speech act types. The first challenge to KNA comes from so-called existentially known assertions (Pelling 2013), i.e., assertions that one knows are true (e.g., because their source is reliable), but one does not know what they mean.²³ Imagine a highly technical assertion that you received from a trusted source; you can repeat it without knowing what it means. If such assertions are correct then one can assert something that one does not know, so KNA is false. (Although consider that in such cases one cannot fulfil the duties standardly associated with assertions, such as defending the asserted claim.) A safeguard strategy for KNA is the suggestion that such utterances are not assertions but are a distinct type of speech act. Milić (2015) labels them as the speech acts of proffering. Just as knowledge is the norm of

²² In a similar vein to the discussion about the speech act of telling, Simion (2017) proposes an account of the speech act performed by a journalist reporting the news. She argues that reporting is an informative speech act and as such it aims to inform the audience. Reporting is a special case of assertion such that it must satisfy not only the constitutive norm of assertion but also must have an intended audience.

²³ Cf. Deigan (2022, 2) for an account of a phenomenon of stupefying, i.e., accepting an assertion without understanding it.

assertion, existential knowledge (i.e., knowledge that the proposition in question is true without knowing what the proposition means) is the norm of proffering.

The norm of presenting is knowing that p is true according to the given source

The second challenge to KNA comes from so-called selfless assertions (Lackey 2007). A selfless assertion is made by someone who does not believe in what one says for non-epistemic reasons but says it because it is supported by all the available evidence. Consider the case of a creationist teacher—even though she does not believe in the theory of evolution, she is aware of all the scientific evidence in favour of it, and because of that, she explains it to her pupils. Again, such an assertion goes against KNA because it seems to show that one can assert something that one does not believe. Milić (2017), proposing a similar strategy as above, argues that such cases should be analysed as distinct kinds of speech acts, that he calls presentations. Just as in the case of assertions one commits to knowing p , in the case of presentations one commits to knowing that p is true according to the given source.

There are two things worth observing. Firstly, both proffering and presenting are speech acts generally performed, just as assertions or tellings, by flat-out declarative statements, i.e., they are not hedged in any way. What is distinct, Milić maintains, is their illocutionary force. Notice that these speech acts are performed in contexts different from standard assertions. Presentations are made when we refer to particular data (what teachers do at school), not when we are talking with friends. However, what matters to the normative view is not the context in which a speech act is made, but the difference between norms that govern these speech acts. Of course, Milić's strategy raises the question of how many new speech acts are there, especially if they can be individuated not linguistically, but only on the basis of the proposed norms.

Secondly, existentially known assertions and selfless assertions pose a challenge only to some norms of assertion, like KNA, i.e., norms that require the speaker's knowledge. However, they do not constitute any problem for norms that either require less than knowledge from the speaker (like justification) or focus on the audience, like KPNA. Because Milić is committed to KNA, his proposals are consistent with it. If we follow Milić's reasoning, we can see that even though both

KNA and KPNA are knowledge-based norms, KNA has a narrower extension than KPNA since the latter counts existentially known assertions and selfless assertions as assertions.

The norm of guaranteeing is second-order knowledge

In his (2016) book, Turri proposes, what he calls, *extensions* of KNA into other speech acts. Consider two examples. By asserting “It’s raining” one represents oneself as knowing that it’s raining, and by explicitly stating “I know that it’s raining” one’s commitment is much stronger, i.e., one represents oneself as knowing that one knows that it’s raining. This is an example of the speech act of guaranteeing. Because an assertion is governed by KNA, and guaranteeing requires a stronger norm than an assertion, Turri (2013, 2016) concludes that the norm of guaranteeing is second-order knowledge—one may guarantee p only if one knows that one knows p .

There is, however, an alternative explanation for utterances in the form of “I know that p .” Lawlor (2013, 2015) suggests that they indicate the speech act of assuring (cf. Turri 2015a). Lawlor’s proposal is based on Austinian reflections on what we do when we explicitly say that we know something. Thus, both Turri and Lawlor agree that such utterances single out different speech acts than assertions, but they disagree on what kind of speech act it is.

The norm of explanation is understanding

The speech act of explanation is another example of a KNA extension proposed by Turri (2015b, 2016). When I explain something (say, the decline of the Roman Empire), I perform the speech act of explanation. Turri makes the following two observations. Firstly, an explanation usually consists of not one but many assertions. Secondly, to explain something to someone, I first need to understand it. Just as KNA, Turri assumes the speaker-centred norm of explanation. What follows is the two-fold conclusion. Because explanations consist of assertions, they are a special form of assertions. Further, since I need to understand what I explain, understanding is the norm of explanation. Turri notes that one way of elucidating the notion of understanding is to treat it as a form of knowledge. In this sense, Turri’s account of explanation is a special form of the knowledge account of assertion.

Just as in the case of the knowledge-based norms of assertion, here too there are more options for explicating understanding as the norm of explanation. According to an alternative view (Gaszczyk 2023), Turri's account is too demanding and does not reflect the everyday practice of explanation and the attribution of understanding. Turri's account, because it assumes factivity of understanding, wrongly excludes many felicitous explanations that are short of knowledge, like explanations used in science or education. Instead, Gaszczyk (2023) advances the non-factive attitude of understanding as sufficient for making a felicitous explanation. Crucially, in this account explanations are governed by an audience-centred norm, according to which an explanation is a communicative act in which one puts the audience in a position to understand the explained phenomenon.²⁴

The norm of moral assertion is moral understanding

Consider moral assertions, like "Eating meat is bad." Are they ordinary assertions, a special class of assertions, or distinct speech acts whatsoever? It seems that the most common option is to treat moral assertions as a special class of assertions.²⁵ The disagreement is about the strength of the norm. Simion (2018) proposes that to perform a correct moral assertion one must know that p and be able to explain why p . Lewis (2019) suggests a weaker norm in which he replaces the explanation condition by understanding. Kelp's (2020b) proposal, on the other hand, is more radical. For him, moral assertions are a distinct type of speech acts from non-moral assertions. The latter are governed by KNA, and their function is to generate knowledge, while the former are governed by the norm of understanding and their function is to generate moral understanding.²⁶

²⁴ Cf. Achinstein (1983), who also proposes a speech-act-theoretic analysis of explanation.

²⁵ An analogical case has been made for aesthetic assertions, see Collins (2020).

²⁶ Understanding can be the norm of more than one speech act. This is also the case for knowledge—first-order knowledge is the norm of assertion, while second-order knowledge is the norm of guaranteeing, for instance. Gordon (forthcoming) proposes that assertions made in political discourse require more from the speaker than standard assertions, i.e., both knowledge and understanding. For arguments that some assertions require understanding as its norm, see e.g. Carter and Gordon (2011). Understanding treated as a norm of a speech act must be distinguished from

The norm of constatives is knowledge

Classes of speech acts, just as particular speech acts, are governed by norms. The focus has been on constative speech acts, which, following Bach and Harnish's (1979) taxonomy, consist of such classes as assertives, predictives, suggestives, informatives, and more. The classical approach is to treat these classes as species of constatives. In this tradition, Kelp (2011) argues that the class of informatives, i.e., speech acts such as telling, disclosing, or revealing, are governed by the knowledge norm. His main reason for that comes from the observation that informatives pass the tests of assertion (which, in turn, seems to require knowledge from the speaker). For instance, if I reveal something I can be challenged with the "How do you know?" question. Kelp observes that this is not the case for speech acts like predictions. Thus, predictions are not governed by the knowledge norm.

Simion (2021, ch. 7), on the other hand, proposes a radical departure from the classical view and argues that constatives are a species of assertion, not the other way around. Her reasoning, in a nutshell, is the following: if (i) all constatives are species of assertion, and (ii) knowledge is the norm of assertion, then (iii) knowledge is the norm of all constatives. To individuate particular classes of constatives, Simion adds special conditions to each class. Extending the assertoric domain to some constatives may seem uncontroversial. Consider informatives: Kelp already shows that they are governed by the knowledge norm. However, Simion's thesis extends also to such classes as predictives and suggestives. Thus, predictives (e.g., predictions) are supposed to be treated as assertions about the future and suggestives (e.g., conjectures) as assertions that there is reason, but not sufficient reason, to believe that p . If predictions and conjectures are assertions, they are governed by the knowledge norm. As a result, Simion (2021, 92-93) proposes that "one's predictive with content p is epistemically permissible only if one knows that it will be the case that p ," and "one's suggestive with content p is epistemically

linguistic understanding (see e.g. Grodniewicz 2021) or understanding of a communicated thought, characterised by Carter et al. (2021) as generated jointly by linguistic understanding and understanding of a proposition.

permissible only if one knows that there is reason, but not sufficient reason, to believe that *p*.²⁷

Gaszczyk (2022) defends the classical treatment of constatives and argues that Simion's conclusion is untenable. Firstly, no taxonomy of speech acts can accommodate such a view. Secondly, we can test whether a particular speech act is an assertion or not. Notice that, on this basis, Kelp (2011) excludes predictions from speech acts governed by the knowledge norm. Gaszczyk (2022) proposes five tests of assertion, the passing of which is a necessary condition for being an assertion. Apart from classical tests, introduced in Section 1, Gaszczyk discusses two further tests—the test of lying (assertions are lie-prone) and the test of retracting (assertions that turn out to be false are expected to be retracted). For instance, predictions and conjectures fail to pass the test of lying since we do not use these speech acts to lie. When I conjecture that Trump's Twitter account will be reinstated, even if I do not believe it will be, I am not lying—the commitment undertaken in a conjecture is too weak to be counted as a lie. (I discuss this in more detail in Section 5). Since some constative speech acts fail the tests of assertion, constatives cannot be regarded as a species of assertion.

The norm of asking questions is not-knowing

All cases discussed so far fall within the constative family of speech acts. The speech act of asking—which is called inquiring—is an example of a non-constative speech act that fits naturally to knowledge-based proposals. Inquiries can be seen as a reverse of assertions. Just as assertions are a default way of using a declarative mood, inquiries are a default way of using an interrogative mood. Further, just as assertions are essentially informative speech acts, inquiries are information-seeking speech acts.²⁸ Finally, just as it is improper to assert information that is already commonly known, it is also improper to inquire when one already knows the answer. From these considerations comes a widespread agreement that the norm of

²⁷ Simion (2021, ch. 8) devotes the whole chapter to defend her norm of conjecture.

²⁸ See e.g. Searle (1969); Stalnaker (1974, 1978); García-Carpintero (2004, 2020); Pagin (2011).

inquiry is a reverse of the norm assertion, i.e., if knowing that p is the norm of assertion, then not knowing whether p is the norm of inquiry.²⁹

Even though there is no morphosyntactic differentiation between various speech act types that can be performed by interrogative sentences, it is widely recognized that inquiring is just one kind of asking questions.³⁰ Crucially, the normative account has resources to account for the variety of interrogative speech acts. Consider the so-called exam questions. Crucially, in this case, can felicitously ask whether p while knowing the answer to p . Such questions can be used in a variety of situations when one wants to verify the audience's knowledge. According to Gaszczyk's (manuscript-a) proposal, one performs an exam question p only if (i) one has access to the answer to p , and (ii) one does not officially know whether the hearer knows the answer to p . One of the arguments for distinguishing between inquiries and exam questions comes from distinct conversational patterns of these speech acts. For instance, contrary to conversational patterns of inquiries, it is common knowledge that one who asks an exam question has access to the answer.³¹

3.2 KNA-independent proposals

All the norms discussed so far were somehow related to the knowledge norm of assertion. Here instead, the group is much more diverse.

²⁹ See e.g. Whitcomb (2010, 2017); Friedman (2017); van Elswyk and Sapiro (2021) argue for a similar proposal in non-normative terms.

³⁰ A pluralistic understanding of interrogatives is a traditional treatment of questions in speech act theory, see e.g. Searle (1969); Searle and Vanderveken (1985); cf. Farkas (2022).

³¹ Another example of an interrogative speech act could be delivered by the recently discussed cases of double-checking. They are supposed to show that we can inquire whether p when we already know that p . However, if cases of double-checking are correct inquiries, lack of knowledge is not the norm of inquiries. Researchers who discuss such cases are divided into two camps. They say either that one who double-checks that p does not know that p and so the norm of inquiry is correct (Friedman 2019; van Elswyk and Sapiro 2021) or that in those cases one knows that p and so the norm of inquiry is wrong (Archer 2018; Falbo 2021; Millson 2021; Woodard (forthcoming)). Both camps treat cases of double-checking as inquiries. However, there is also an alternative hypothesis, i.e., treating those cases as distinct speech act types. If indeed we sometimes can ask a felicitous question while knowing the answer to it (say, to acquire other epistemic or non-epistemic goods), we can make a case that double-checking is a distinct type of speech act.

The norm of retraction is truth

We can retract any kind of speech act. In philosophical theorising, however, the focus has been on retracting assertions. If I assert that it's raining but it is not the case, I can retract my assertion by saying "I take that back" or "I retract that." Just as by asserting one undertakes a specific sort of commitment (say, to defend the asserted claim), by retracting one disavows this commitment. In other words, a retraction is a way of cancelling the illocutionary effects of one's assertion. MacFarlane (2014) proposes the truth norm for retraction—one is obliged to take back one's assertion if it turns out to be false. However, he allows for retracting assertions whose content one still believes is true; for instance, in a case when one does not want to defend it. A disagreement with MacFarlane's proposal concerns the strength of the norm and whether the requirement of retraction concerns all kinds of assertions.³²

Apart from retractions, there are more ways to "undo things with words." Caponetto (2020) discusses three classes of such speech acts, i.e., standard retractions, amendments, and annulments. While retracting a speech act cancels the undertaken commitment, amending adjusts the degree of strength of the incurred commitment (one can adjust, for instance, an assertion to a conjecture). Annulment has a different function—a speech act that can be annulled is incorrectly taken to be a valid one. One who annuls a speech act recognises it as null (this would be the case if, for instance, it turned out that marriage was not given by an authorised minister).

The norm of prediction is expectation

Traditionally, predictions are characterised as speech acts having future-directed content (Searle 1975, 349). Recent proposals, however, suggest that such a condition is too strong. Benton and Turri (2014) argue that the content of prediction is not future directed (to properly predict that p it is sufficient to expect that p) and Cariani

³² A specific feature of MacFarlane's view is that the norm of retraction is a part of his norm of assertion, but a retraction can also be understood as a separate kind of speech act. Further, the discussion on retraction is focused on assertions in some specific domains (like deontic modals, future contingents, or judgements of taste). For arguments against MacFarlane's proposal, see e.g. Marques (2018); for more on pragmatics of retractions, see Kukla and Steinberg (2021).

(2020) suggests that what is in the future in predictions is the time of discovery. Thus, both views allow for making predictions about the past.

The above proposals focus on explicit predictions (e.g., “I predict that it will rain”), but many predictions can be made by means of flat-out future-tensed assertions (e.g., “It will rain”). Because the latter ones have similar conversational patterns to assertions, they are sometimes classified as assertions (e.g., Weiner 2005; cf. Benton 2012). The motivation stems from the preferred norm of assertion. For Weiner (2005), predictions should be classified as assertions because, just as assertions, they are governed by the truth norm. Advocates of KNA, as I already said, argue that truth cannot be the norm of assertion because it does not individuate assertions from predictions. Thus, this disagreement again concerns the extension of assertion.

The norms of speech acts made in science and philosophy

There is a growing discussion concerning the speech acts made in science and philosophy, i.e., utterances made in seminars, or in publications.³³ Such statements are not easily classified. On the one hand, they look like assertions and are often treated as such. On the other hand, they are made in specific contexts and some of them do not satisfy the basic components of any norm of assertion. Plakias (2019) argues that, in cases of publishing, the speaker’s belief is not required. Dang and Bright (2021) go further and show that in some cases of publishing, especially in science, neither belief nor truth nor justification is required.

The situation resembles already discussed cases of speech acts made by flat-out declarative statements, like tellings or presentations. Here too we have two camps—some argue that speech acts made in science and philosophy are assertions, others that they are a separate kind of speech acts. Supporters of the first camp argue that such utterances are always subject to the norm of assertion. Thus, following KNA, if one publishes something that one does not know, one’s assertion is improper (Williamson 2000, 258). Some argue that in such contexts this impropriety is excusable (DeRose 2017, appendix C). However, even for many advocates of the

³³ Some analyse these illocutions separately, however, for the purpose of this overview, I group them together.

first camp, belief is too strong a requirement for assertions made in philosophy or science. Thus, some propose to relax conditions of appropriateness of assertions in these contexts. For instance, Goldberg (2015, ch. 11), arguing for his context-sensitive norm of assertion, proposes that the attitude in the context of doing philosophy is *regarding-as-defensible* (in a similar vein, Fleisher (2021) proposes the attitude of *endorsement*, and Barnett (2019) *disagreement-insulated inclination*). The second camp proposes that these illocutions are distinct speech act types. Shields (2020) proposes to treat them as stipulations, while Montminy and Skolits (2014) characterise them as weak assertives that require some evidence from the speaker (cf., Montminy (2020) on contentions).

The norm of fiction-making is invitation of the audience to imagine

The normative account has not been applied to many non-constative speech acts. One available case is fiction-making. García-Carpintero (2013, 2019a) proposes to analyse fiction-making as directive speech acts (just as assertions are the paradigmatic constatives, commands are the paradigmatic directives). In this proposal, fictions are directive speech acts that give reasons (to the intended audience) to imagine the fictional content.³⁴

3.3 General observations

Here are two observations from accounts of standard speech acts. Firstly, some of the analysed speech acts are dependent on others. Consider two ways of such dependencies. On the one hand, we can distinguish—what Caponetto (2020) calls—*second-order illocutions*. In order to perform these speech acts, one must first make another speech act. To retract an assertion, for instance, one must first make an

³⁴ To complement the views presented here, there have been proposed accounts of other speech acts in non-normative terms. For the most recent instances, see e.g. insulting (Milić 2018), consenting (Cappelen and Dever 2019, ch. 11), praising and disapproving (Karczewska 2019, ch. 4), presuming (Witek 2019), denying (Ripley 2020), guessing (Dorst and Mandelkern 2021; Holguín 2022), conclusions of practical argument (Lewiński 2021a), threatening (Schiller 2021), irony (Witek 2022). There is also a growing interest in speech acts made online and on online communication in general, see e.g. anonymous assertions (Goldberg 2015, ch. 8), sharing (or retweeting) (Arielli 2018; Marsili 2020b), liking (McDonald 2021), trolling (Morgan 2022).

assertion. On the other hand, we have speech acts that can be labelled *subspecies illocutions*. These are subspecies of other speech acts and are performed by means of those other speech acts. Cases in point are Fricker's account of telling, Turri's account of explanation, or Simion's account of moral assertion. According to these authors, tellings, explanations, and moral assertions are special sorts of assertions, and as such are governed by the norm of assertion, and some additional conditions specific to each subspecies. It is also possible, however, to characterise these cases differently, namely, as distinct from assertions speech act types. Thus, the status of illocutions characterised as subspecies of a particular speech act can be debated. Consider explanations. While Turri (2015b) argues that they are special cases of assertions, Gaszczyk (2023) maintains that they are distinct speech act types, governed by a unique norm. A feature of the latter account is that both speech acts can be performed at the same time—this is the case because one utterance can satisfy both the norm of assertion and the norm of explanation. Such a proposal is coherent with so-called illocutionary pluralism—the idea that we can perform a plurality of speech acts through one utterance (Lewiński 2021b, cf. Clark and Carlson 1982). Nevertheless, both speech acts can be performed independently from each other. The idea of illocutionary pluralism is not restricted to any particular account of speech acts. The fact that particular speech acts, like explanations, can be classified in different ways is also not unusual for other speech act theories.³⁵ A difference in the taxonomy of explanations, or any other speech acts, is not a drawback for the normative account. Rather, it shows its flexibility and points at a general feature of any speech act theory.

The second observation concerns EXTENSION. As I was trying to show, the answer to the question of whether a particular utterance should be classified as a distinct speech act type or as an assertion is often predetermined by the favoured norm of assertion. Although norms of assertion greatly differ in their extensions, the preferred extension is rarely explicitly motivated. A good example comes from the discussion on predictions that are pushed either into or outside an assertoric domain, depending on the chosen norm. Consider Simion's (2021) view that all

³⁵ For classical examples, see Austin (1962); Searle (1969); Bach and Harnish (1979); Searle and Vanderveken (1985).

constatives, including predictions, are a species of assertion. I proposed that we can test whether a particular illocution is an assertion or not by appealing to certain theory-independent tests of assertion. Since predictions (as many other constatives) fail these tests, they should be treated as distinct speech act types. The tests of assertion do not deliver an unequivocal answer to whether a particular illocution is an assertion or not, but they are a useful tool for rejecting many equivocal cases.

We can also observe the following pattern. When a challenging case for a favoured norm of assertion appears, the strategy is to postulate that such a case is an instance of a distinct speech act type. Some advocates of KNA employed this strategy. Take presentations. The motivation for postulating this kind of speech act are selfless assertions, i.e., seemingly felicitous assertions that fail to satisfy KNA. There can indeed be a speech act such as presenting but proposing a novel kind of speech act should be made on grounds independent from any norm of assertion. Whichever speech act a selfless asserter performs; one is saying something one believes to be false. By basically any standard of insincerity, this is sufficient to count selfless assertions as insincere. Selfless assertions are not an isolated phenomenon, a similar case can be made for speech acts made in science and philosophy—in these contexts, one is often arguing for something one does not believe to be true. In the classical speech act theories, such speech acts were judged as insincere and thus improper (for instance, in Searle's (1969) view, sincerity is one of the rules that contribute to a full characterisation of a speech act). Many followers of the normative account, however, resist such a conclusion and argue that selfless assertions are proper. This is possible because the norm of assertion can either concern the speaker's epistemic position but not their doxastic state (like in the case of justification norms) or be entirely directed towards the audience (like most of the audience-centred norms) (see Section 2). Following such norms of assertion, we can classify selfless assertions as proper. However, there still remains the widely shared intuition that such cases are instances of insincere speech. It is important to remember that the norms of assertion do not deliver a full-fledged analysis of the speech act of assertion, but provide one—even though crucial—aspect of it. What is relevant for the present discussion is that the constitutive norms are sufficient to distinguish between the speech act types.

4. Ancillary speech acts

Certain linguistic expressions conventionally indicate performing a particular speech act type. Most of the cases discussed above have such a linguistic indicator. Standardly, assertions are made in a declarative mood, questions in an interrogative mood, predictions by using an explicit prefix like “I predict that p ,” etc. On similar grounds, Searle (1969) distinguishes the speech act of reference. We can think about reference as a speech act because there are certain referential expressions (such as proper names, indexicals and demonstratives) that conventionally indicate its use. However, reference is an *ancillary* speech act since it can only occur within another speech act, like an assertion or a question. As García-Carpintero puts it, “it is an auxiliary for the performance of another speech act” (2020, 1). I will use the label *ancillary speech acts* as a generic category for a small group of speech acts that can only be carried by ordinary speech acts. I discuss three cases.

The norm of presupposition is common knowledge

A presupposition is a piece of information that is taken for granted and commonly accepted.³⁶ What are the reasons for counting presuppositions as speech acts? Firstly, just as for many ordinary speech acts, there are conventional indicators of making presuppositions, so-called presupposition triggers. For instance, the verb *quit* in “Sam quit smoking” triggers the presupposition that Sam used to smoke. Secondly, presuppositions have unique conversational patterns, which can specifically be seen by the way in which they are challenged. One of the most important arguments for KNA is that we standardly challenge assertions by asking “How do you know?” Similarly, presuppositions have their own unique challenges, i.e., the so-called ““Hey, wait a minute!” test (von Stechow 2004). If you assert “Sam quit smoking” and I challenge your assertion by asking “How do you know?”, my objection concerns the assertion that Sam is no longer smoking. However, if I say something like “Hey, wait a minute! I didn’t know that Sam used to smoke!” I directly oppose the

³⁶ I am focusing on semantic presuppositions. I leave informative presuppositions aside; for an account of informative presuppositions as indirect speech acts, see García-Carpintero (2020). For more on presuppositions and implicatures that are discussed below, see e.g. Potts (2015).

presupposition that Sam used to smoke. Thus, we can conversationally track, target, and challenge presuppositional content.

García-Carpintero (2020) proposes a full-fledged account of the speech act of presupposition. He argues that common knowledge is the norm of presupposition, i.e., one felicitously presupposes p only if p is commonly known. Just as in the case of other speech acts, the norm could be different; Macagno (2016) leaves it open whether it is common knowledge or acceptance.

The discussion on the ancillary speech acts bears importance to EXTENSION. García-Carpintero observes that “when it is correct to presuppose p , it is incorrect to assert it” (2020, 22). If a piece of information is already commonly known, I should not assert it—I can only presuppose it. Since assertions are distinct speech acts from presuppositions, García-Carpintero argues that the norm of assertion should track only assertoric content. However, KNA has a broader extension, i.e., it also captures presuppositions. KNA cannot govern both assertions and presuppositions, thus it cannot be the constitutive norm of assertion. For this reason, García-Carpintero opts for an audience-centred norm that aims at transferring knowledge.³⁷

Conventional implicature is governed by the norm of assertion on the non-at-issue level

Conventional implicatures, together with presuppositions, are grouped under the umbrella of projective content. Just as presuppositions, conventional implicatures are backgrounded or not-at-issue, i.e., they are not contributing to the main point of the utterance. Just like presuppositions, conventional implicatures have their own specific linguistic indicators. One group of such expressions consists of the so-called supplements, such as appositives and parentheticals. I conventionally implicate that Sam is a nice fella when I say “Sam, a nice fella, quit smoking.” Finally, both conventional implicatures and presuppositions project out of the scope of logical operators. Consider negation. I conventionally implicate that Sam is a nice fella either when I say “Sam, a nice fella, quit smoking” or “Sam, a nice fella, didn’t quit smoking.” However, conventional implicatures differ from presuppositions because they, just as assertions, add new information to the context. In the above examples,

³⁷ Cf. footnote 10.

the fact that Sam is a nice fella is a new piece of information. Some already proposed to treat conventional implicatures as secondary assertions, i.e., as assertions that are carried by other speech acts (Potts 2005, 24).³⁸ Thus, when I say “Sam, a nice fella, quit smoking,” I make two assertions, namely, the primary one that is at-issue and so is the main point of the utterance (i.e., “Sam quit smoking.”), and the secondary assertion (conventional implicature) that is not-at-issue and that provides some additional information regarding the primary content (i.e., “Sam is a nice fella.”).

In Gaszczyk (2021), I proposed the norm of conventional implicature. If conventional implicatures are (secondary) assertions, they must satisfy the norm of assertion. The norm should exclude presuppositions from its domain. Because of that, I follow the audience-centred norm of García-Carpintero (2004). However, to distinguish between primary and secondary assertions, the norm of conventional implicature should accommodate the requirement of being not-at-issue, where at-issueness can be defined as addressing the current question under discussion (QUD).³⁹ Operating under the assumption of the knowledge-based norms, we arrive at the following norm:

TKNCI One must: make a secondary assertion that p only if (i) one’s audience comes thereby to be in a position to know p , and (ii) p is not-at-issue.

Thus, the conventional implicature in “Sam, a nice fella, quit smoking” is correct only if the audience comes to be in a position to know that Sam is a nice fella, and this information is not-at-issue.

Conversational implicature is governed by the norm of assertion

The meaning of conversational implicatures depends on features of the context. Thus, their performance is not indicated by any conventional means. Consider the

³⁸ Potts is not the only one. Grice (1989, 120-122) already notes that conventional implicatures are connected to “non-central” speech acts. Sbisà (2020) suggests that they can be treated as species of assertions.

³⁹ There are various ways of defining at-issue and non-at-issue content; QUD is one of them, see e.g. Roberts (2012).

famous example of Grice. A professor in a recommendation letter says, “Student X has excellent handwriting.” By saying this, the professor asserts one thing (that X has excellent handwriting) and implicates something else (that X is a bad student).⁴⁰

For the present discussion, two questions are important, i.e., “Are conversational implicatures speech acts?” and “Are they governed by a constitutive norm?” Little attention has been paid to the former question. According to one view, they can be treated as indirect speech acts performed by direct (ordinary) speech acts (Bach and Harnish 1979; Graham 2015; García-Carpintero 2018). Much more focus has been devoted to the latter question, lately in the context of epistemic norms. Here we have a variety of views. Some postulate that the norm of conversational implicatures is significantly weaker than the norm of assertion (Fricker 2012). The main reason is that implicatures can be denied and so we cannot hold the speaker responsible for what is implicated. However, at least some implicatures are hardly deniable and so their speakers are responsible for what is implicated.⁴¹ On the other side of the spectrum, there are views that treat the norm of conversational implicatures as the same as the norm of assertion (Gerken 2017; Haziza forthcoming). Green (2017) presents an interesting view that situates both speech acts on a common continuum; assertions more often than conversational implicatures demand higher epistemic standards (like knowledge), but some conversational implicatures can also be judged by these higher standards (especially those that cannot be denied). Finally, some authors propose that the sameness of the norm of assertion and conversational implicature is reserved for some special

⁴⁰ The exact content of conversational implicatures is often hard to determine. Moreover, they are not reducible to declarative content. A non-declarative implicature in this case can be a recommendation that X should not be hired. In this paper, I focus on declarative implicatures.

⁴¹ See e.g. Peet (2015); García-Carpintero (2018); Pepp (2020). Consider the following example (Sternau et al. 2016, 718):

A: Can you introduce me to Shirley? I find her quite attractive.

B: I saw her with a new guy last week.

B implicates that Shirley has a boyfriend and it will be very difficult for him to deny this. Moreover, as Sternau et al. (2016, 718) observe, B’s response pragmatically functions as an answer to A’s request. Two important caveats. First, deniability is gradable, so some cases will involve stronger and some weaker implicatures. Second, deniability must be distinguished from cancellability; they do not yield the same results.

domains. Simion (2017) argues that the institutional context of the speech act of reporting allows for assuming such sameness in the contexts of news reports.

One could wonder what is common between the three ancillary speech acts I have proposed here. This deserves a separate discussion, but I would like to propose a preliminary answer—all of these ancillary speech acts have a declarative type of content. Consequently, like every declarative speech act, they represent the speaker's beliefs (Searle 1969; Bach and Harnish 1979). Consider a slightly changed example from above. When a professor says “X, who is my student, has excellent handwriting” she not only asserts that X has excellent handwriting, but performs a variety of ancillary speech acts: she presupposes the existence of X, conventionally implicates that X is her student, and conversationally implicates that X is a bad student. Crucially for the main discussion, the speaker is subject to all the norms outlined above.⁴²

5. Possible extensions of the normative approach and its limits

The normative account is particularly focused on individuating speech act types and capturing what is essential for them. Moreover, looking at auxiliary speech acts, it can also be applied to linguistic acts that usually are not treated as speech acts. Recently, many other concepts have received a *normative treatment*. Here, too, the knowledge norm plays a crucial role.⁴³ In this final section, I want to address one of the applications of the framework, focusing on its general utility.

Consider how the normative approach has been put to work in the debate on lying. The underlying assumption of this debate states that only assertions are lie-prone.⁴⁴ Thus, without separating assertions from other speech acts, we cannot

⁴² There are arguably more ancillary speech acts, see Hanks (2015, 2019) for proposals of reference and predication.

⁴³ Consider the vast debate on the norms of assertion, belief and action, for an overview see Benton (2022). See also norms of blaming (Coates 2016; Kelp 2020a; Milić 2020), and showing (Buckwalter and Turri 2014). Moreover, there are cases of speech acts that are performed on *top* of ordinary speech acts. For instance, back-door speech acts aim to produce additional effects and presuppositions, often harmful to the addressee. We can respond to back-door speech acts by performing counter speech acts, like blocking, see Langton (2018).

⁴⁴ See e.g. Dummett (1981); Stainton (2016); Jary (2018).

have a definition of lying. Some advocates of KNA argue that the normative account of assertion can be naturally extended to the definition of lying. The idea is that lying is a particular kind of violation of the norm of assertion, i.e., an Austinian abuse. They propose the knowledge account of lying, according to which one lies only if one asserts something that one knows to be false.⁴⁵ Such a view, however, is generally taken as being too strong. There is a broad agreement that lying does not require saying something false; believing that *p* is false is sufficient.⁴⁶ Most of the recent definitions of lying define it as insincerely asserting.⁴⁷ Thus, even if the knowledge account of lying is too strong, lying can be defined as a violation of the sincerity condition of assertion.

There are more challenges if one wants to define lying. Nowadays, there is a growing case for lying with other speech acts than assertions. Thus, the assertion-based definitions of lying turn out to be too restrictive. Consider two possible extensions of the concept of lying. Firstly, lying is not restricted to assertions in a narrow sense—we can lie with some hedged assertions and other declarative speech acts.⁴⁸ Arguably, we can lie with speech acts that are “... barely distinguishable from direct assertions—warning, admitting, insisting, agreeing, denying, guaranteeing, assuring” (Marsili 2020a, 6). There are norms for assertions that take such illocutions as assertions, like the truth norm or context-sensitive norms. However, these norms are too broad. To illustrate this, consider two norms, with a narrow and a broad extension. KNA has a narrow extension—knowledge individuates assertions from warnings or guaranteeing; stronger norms govern the latter speech acts. Thus, if KNA is the norm of assertion and lying is restricted to assertions, lying is not possible with warnings or guaranteeing. On the other hand, if we choose a norm with a broad extension, like McKinnon’s context-sensitive norm, we would need to make sense of lying with highly counterintuitive cases, such as guessing or conjecturing. Both cases are unsatisfactory.

⁴⁵ See e.g. Turri and Turri (2015); Benton (2018); Holguín (2021).

⁴⁶ See e.g. Wiegmann et al. (2016); Wiegmann and Viebahn (2021); Marsili (2021).

⁴⁷ See e.g. Carson (2006); Sorensen (2007); Fallis (2009); Saul (2012); Stokke (2018); Marsili (2020a); for an overview see Mahon (2016).

⁴⁸ See e.g. Marsili (2014, 2020a); Betz-Richman (2022). There is also a case for lying with promises which I put aside, but see Marsili (2016).

The second extension of the concept of lying concerns ancillary speech acts. Until recently, it was generally assumed that lying requires *saying* something. The content of presuppositions and implicatures is not said, thus one cannot lie with such content. However, the case for lying with projective content has been made.⁴⁹ If I ask you “Did you know that John owns a Mercedes?” knowing that John does not own a car, intuitively I lie by presupposing something I believe to be false. Similarly, if I assert “John, who owns a Mercedes, is very handsome” I lie by conventionally implicating that John owns a Mercedes.

Can the normative account help in finding the appropriate definition of lying? If lying were restricted to assertions, the task would be to find an appropriate norm of assertion. However, we can see that lying is not restricted to assertions. The definitions of lying that try to accommodate the above cases explicate it in terms of commitment, which in turn can be understood in many ways.⁵⁰ The question is, what is the minimal condition for each speech act to be considered a lie. One suggestion is Marsili’s (2020a) proposal that we can lie with every speech act that entails the illocutionary force of assertion. For instance, we can lie by guaranteeing because its norm is stronger than asserting. Individuating norms of particular speech acts allows us to compare how strong the norms of these speech acts are. As a result, we can delineate which of them bears a sufficient—for lying—level of commitment. Consider ancillary speech acts. The proposed norms of presuppositions and conventional implicatures strongly resemble KNA, i.e., each of them requires the speaker’s knowledge. This indicates that the speaker’s commitment is similar in these cases. Of course, more work needs to be done to propose a satisfactory account of lying—in light of these observations. What is important is that the normative approach can be not only applied to a variety of speech acts, but also that these accounts can play important explanatory roles.

6. Conclusions

⁴⁹ See e.g. Meibauer (2014); Viebahn (2020, 2021); Viebahn et al. (2021); Reins and Wiegmann (2021); García-Carpintero (2021); Gaszczyk (manuscript-b); cf. Stokke (2017).

⁵⁰ See e.g. Marsili (2020a); Viebahn (2020, 2021); Reins and Wiegmann (2021); cf. García-Carpintero (2021).

To conclude, the goal of this paper was to provide a comprehensive classification and characterisation of the available norms of speech acts. Firstly, I presented the basic tenets of the normative account. I showed that the discussion is concentrated on the speech act of assertion with knowledge treated as its constitutive norm. I put a special emphasis on EXTENSION, i.e., on the fact that different norms of assertion count different classes of illocutions as assertions. I argued that this has consequences not only for theorising about norms of assertion but also for norms of other speech acts. I showed that even the knowledge-based norms of assertion differ in their extensions. This issue is rarely explicitly discussed in the literature. The central part of the article was the discussion of the norms of speech act. I started with the overview of norms of ordinary speech acts and argued that most of the proposed norms have been done in some relation to the knowledge norm of assertion. Moreover, many theoretical divisions between speech acts are motivated solely on the basis of the preferred norm of assertion. Nevertheless, a plethora of recent applications of the normative account shows that it can be fruitfully applied to a variety of speech act types. I also discussed a new and promising frontier—the extension of the normative account to ancillary speech acts. The main thread in my discussion was an examination of the extension of particular speech act norms. I ended with addressing how the normative account can be applied in the discussion concerning establishing which speech acts are lie-prone.

I want to close with an observation concerning speech acts having knowledge as their norm. If the aforementioned proposals are on the right track, there is a significant group of speech acts governed by some type of knowledge norm. Here assertions serve as a useful reference point. While they are governed by the knowledge norm, inquiries are governed by the lack-of-knowledge norm. Furthermore, while the norm of assertion is first-order knowledge, guarantees are individuated by second-order knowledge. In general, speech acts that entail the illocutionary force of assertions are governed by a norm at least as strong as the norm of assertion. Some classes of constative speech acts, like informatives, are knowledge-governed illocutions too. Moreover, both presuppositions and conventional implicatures are governed by variations of the knowledge norm. Especially the latter group shows that the simple, Williamsonian, knowledge norm

does not perform its main function, i.e., it does not individuate assertions from other speech acts. This strongly points in favour of the audience-centred norms of assertion since they are capable of distinguishing between these speech acts.

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