

## CHAPTER NINE

### MOOD: WHAT'S THE ILLOCUTIONARY POINT?

ROBERT M. HARNISH,  
UNIVERSITY OF ARIZONA, TUCSON

#### 1. Introduction

A theory of mood for a language must specify what features sentences of the same mood share that make them the same mood, and what features sentences from different moods have that makes them have different moods. We take those features to be form (syntactic and intonational) plus illocutionary force potential. Each mood is a specific conventional pairing of form, condition of satisfaction and illocutionary force potential.<sup>1</sup> There are a number of theories of each of these components of mood. Here we will focus on the illocutionary act or force component. We will be concerned mainly with the views of Searle (1975) and Searle and Vanderveken (1985), which we call “illocutionary point” theory. We locate this theory at the edge of the broadly “Austinian” tradition in speech act theory emphasizing rules and conventions, in opposition to the broadly “Gricean” tradition which emphasizes intentional states and inference.<sup>2</sup> We first briefly investigate their conception of the nature and classification of illocutionary acts. We then turn to the problem of how to apply the theory to the moods of English, something the authors never explicitly attempted to do, and for which they cannot be held responsible. Finally, we actually apply the theory to the major moods of English (declarative, imperative, and interrogative). In many cases we see that the theory offers insights, but it has some gaps as well. We conclude that more work is required before it can be definitively evaluated as a contender for a theory of mood.

---

<sup>1</sup> See Harnish (1983, 1994, 2005ab) for one development of these ideas.

<sup>2</sup> See Harnish (2005c), where these traditions are discussed with a bit more subtlety, and in more detail.

## 2. Force and mood

First let's distinguish four "grades of involvement" of force in mood, starting with the strongest.

1. *Specific Force Theory* claims that each mood is associated with a specific force. In some versions this force is given by an unpronounced performative clause of the form "I (hereby) VERBperf VP." In "interpretative semantic" versions this clause comes in through the semantic interpretation of traditional deep structure.<sup>3</sup> In "generative semantic" versions this is the highest clause in abstract syntactic (or sometimes semantic or logical) structure.<sup>4</sup> One important limitation of this view, besides evidence for the existence of this level of linguistic representation, is finding and justifying the one force that is specific and common to each mood. If, on the other hand, there is more than one specific force for each mood, the problem is how to keep the theory from postulating counter-intuitive sentence level ambiguities.<sup>5</sup>

2. *Default (Specific) Force Theory*<sup>6</sup> claims that the moods each have a specific force, but only as a "default" value. Sometimes the notion of default is undefined, sometimes it is characterized in terms of what the force would be in the absence of any information beyond the sentence.<sup>7</sup> One limitation of this view is the same as the specific force theory, i.e. finding, and justifying, the one force that is specific and common to each mood. Another limitation is saying what it is to have a "default" interpretation, an interpretation in the "null context," and what it is to "override" that interpretation.<sup>8</sup>

3. *Force-Potential Theory* claims that an illocutionary force potential is assigned to each mood and that contextual information combines with speech act potential to determine that actual force of a particular utterance.<sup>9</sup> One limitation of this view is specifying the illocutionary force potential of each mood, and another is saying how exactly it interacts with contextual information to determine a specific force.<sup>10</sup>

---

<sup>3</sup> See Katz and Postal (1964).

<sup>4</sup> See Ross (1970).

<sup>5</sup> For instance, since "I'll be there" can be (literally and directly) used at least to predict, express an intention, promise or threaten, it would become four-ways force ambiguous.

<sup>6</sup> There is another possibility, though the point of it would need to be developed, and that is a default generic force theory. On this theory, the default would be the generic force.

<sup>7</sup> See Katz (1977), Williamson (2000), Garcia-Carpintero (2004).

<sup>8</sup> See Bach and Harnish (1982).

<sup>9</sup> See references in note 1.

<sup>10</sup> Garcia-Carpintero (2004: 159) suggests that another limitation on this theory, one not shared by the default theory, is its inability to accord with "the way language is taught and acquired." He does not say why this might be so. It might also be suggested that the theory

4. *No-Force Theory* claims that sentences only linguistically encode satisfaction conditions,<sup>11</sup> and that any force associated with mood is determined derivatively from them.<sup>12</sup> One limitation of this view is getting the “indirectness” just right, otherwise it might either not be as derivative as hoped, or if it is, it is too derivative to capture semantic-pragmatic intuitions about the force (or force-potential) of sentences in the various moods.

Given that none of these classes of theory are without limitations, which should we choose as a framework of illocutionary point theory of mood? The ball is in the court of the specific force theory; there is no obvious way of overcoming its liabilities. We will end up elaborating the generic force theory, so here let's say a few more things about the main competitors: the no-force theory, and the default theory.

## 2.1. No-Force Theory

Lepore and Ludwig (2001) and Ludwig (2003) can be seen as providing a version of an illocutionary point theory of mood. Ludwig takes Searle (1975) as his version of illocutionary point theory of illocutionary acts, and he formulates his theory of mood in terms of a truth theory of a natural language. In fact, it is a Tarski-type truth definition with no interpretation of the primitives (words, idioms etc.), which is still claimed to:<sup>13</sup>

“enable its possessor to interpret any assertoric sentence of the object language on the basis of his knowledge of the theory.” (2003: 136)

However, it is not a theory of speaker-hearer competence, but:<sup>14</sup>

“aims to capture the structure of the practical ability speakers have to speak and understand their language.” (2003: 136)

---

cannot handle the moods of complex sentences. This is not an “in principle” objection, it is an “incompleteness” objection; the theory has not been developed that far. It would only be an in principle objection if one conflated constituent clauses, which have no mood (in the sense of form with a force), with constituent sentences, which might.

<sup>11</sup> E.g. truth conditions, compliance conditions, answerhood conditions.

<sup>12</sup> See Ludwig (2003).

<sup>13</sup> It is hard to imagine that the theory as such is sufficient for understanding. You have to know some words.

<sup>14</sup> No reason is given for supposing such an ability has one (“the”) structure, or this one in particular.

Each category of illocutionary act has an illocutionary point, and these points are associated with specific (and different) “fulfillment” conditions,<sup>15</sup> just as sentences in the various moods do:

“the connection between mood and force seems rather to be that sentences in different moods admit of different bivalent evaluations, just as speech acts admit of different bivalent evaluations ... But this is not to say that sentential moods have as their semantic function to indicate that a speech act of that sort is being performed. Rather, the differences between the moods is a difference in their fulfillment conditions of the sort we find between certain categories of speech acts. It is this that explains the natural fit between the different sentential moods and the different kinds of speech act which can be performed using sentences.” (2003: 140)

Sentences are to be assigned to a mood based on “syntactic” criteria alone.<sup>16</sup> Each sentence in each mood is assigned its “fulfillment” condition according to the principle:

(F) X is fulfilled in English iff.<sup>17</sup>

- a. If X is assertoric, X is true
- b. If X is imperative, X is obeyed
- c. If X is interrogative, X is answered<sup>18</sup>

As an example of fulfillment conditions for an imperative we have:

(O)

“‘Put on your hat’ is obeyed[s,t] in English iff the person addressed by s at t makes it the case that he puts on his hat at some t’>t with the intention of obeying the directive issued by s at t in using ‘Put on your hat.’” (Ludwig 2003: 156)

---

<sup>15</sup> Katz (1977) called these “converted” conditions, Searle (1978), Harnish (1983) called them both “conditions of fit” and “conditions of satisfaction,” Harnish (1994) called them “satisfaction” conditions.

<sup>16</sup> Ludwig (2003) does not say what these might be, he just assumes it can be done. But unless prosody is a part of “syntax” it is unlikely this can be accomplished. Ludwig does not deal with the issue of mood-ambiguity. See Harnish (1983, 1994) regarding these issues.

<sup>17</sup> The original is relativized to language, speaker and time.

<sup>18</sup> Although the first are “truth conditions” and the second are “obedience conditions,” the last are “response conditions,” not “answerhood” conditions, as in Katz (1977) and Harnish (1983, 1994).

As can be seen from this example,<sup>19</sup> obedience conditions of imperatives utilize the notion of making something the case, making something true. This reflects the desire:

“... to exhibit obedience conditions ... as recursively specifiable in terms of truth conditions.” (2003: 155)

So although (F) looks like we will get a theory of “fulfillment conditions” by simultaneous recursion on (a-c), that is not what we get. We actually get a truth “based” theory.<sup>20</sup> Is this a “no-force, illocutionary point” theory of mood? It certainly does not assign a force directly to each sentence. But it does assign (a range of force?) forces indirectly to each sentence via the fulfillment condition. If the speaker utters the sentence with the intention of its being (literally and directly) “fulfilled,” then the speaker uttered it (literally and directly) with the intention of issuing a directive speech act. This assigns a class of illocutionary acts, (or directive illocutionary act potential) to the sentence. And it is not clear what exactly the difference between this and a “direct” assignment of (directive) force potential is supposed to amount to.

## 2.2. Default (Specific) Force Theory

Garcia-Carpintero (2004) offers a specific default theory of mood. He explicitly contrasts it with the force-potential theory (which he calls the “underspecific” account). On Garcia-Carpintero’s account, derived from Williamson (2000):

“We would provide a specification of a given force as the *default* for utterances in the relevant mood. In a minimal context (a context without more information than

---

<sup>19</sup> This is clearer in the form for obedience conditions in general (2003: 156).

<sup>20</sup> The apparent justification for this is that “we do not wish to reduplicate the work already done by the truth theory, and we want to exhibit the truth theory as the central component of our compositional meaning theory.” (2003: 155) In reply one might note that standard truth-definitions are replete with “duplication” in this sense. Further, why isn’t it just a philosophical prejudice to see truth as basic to meaning in all the moods -- why not see answerhood (or obedience) conditions in truth conditions? One answer, inspired by Dummett (see Demopolous 1997, section III) is that truth is required for an account of valid inference, and underwriting such inferences is within the domain of semantics. In reply it should be noted that non-declaratives can stand in analogues of valid inferential relations (see Katz 1977 and Harnish 2006). The “truth is basic” attitude in semantics is reminiscent of “declaratives are basic” in early transformational grammar (see Chomsky 1957), where interrogatives and imperatives were derived transformationally from them. That changed in the early 1960’s (see Katz and Postal 1964, and Chomsky 1965) when all the moods were base-generated independently.

that derived from the presumption that the participants know the language), that force would be unconditionally signified, all things considered; but the default assumption could be overridden in other contexts by an open-ended list of conditions: that the alleged assertion has been made after 'once upon a time,' or after 'let me remind you of the following,' or 'therefore,' or in an exam, or includes parentheticals like 'I surmise.'" (2004: 155-6)

A number of things are worth noticing. First, being "open-ended" suggests that we can never have a complete theory of mood because we cannot say when a use is default or not -- there might always be another condition that turns a putative default use into a non-default use. Secondly, we need to know more about what being a "default" force amounts to, and this involves knowing at least two things: (i) what is the connection between the form and the force when the form has that force "by default," and (ii) what counts as, and what is the mechanism that implements, changing to a non-default force? Standard notions of "default" value assignment occur in knowledge bases (such as frames) for reasoning. The "default" value is the value assigned by the system when no information overrides it. But in the theory of mood we are dealing not with the issue of what inference the hearer is making, but what force the sentence has *in the language*, independent of specific hearers.<sup>21</sup> It is not clear how the technical sense transfers over to language structure, as opposed to language use. Third, the sentence:

"I'll be there"

can be used to assert (that I will be there), but it can also be (literally and directly) used to express an intention, promise or threaten. Is the sentence governed by default speech act values for these other acts? If so, given that defaults are a part of semantics, what stops the theory from postulating as many meanings as forces? Finally, it is not at all clear how a default principle, if semantic, combines with other semantic facts about a particular declarative sentence to compositionally determine the semantics of the whole sentence. This can be brought out by considering compound moods such as:<sup>22</sup>

"If you leave now, don't ever come back"

"If the universe is expanding, then Einstein was right"

---

<sup>21</sup> After an excellent discussion of Davidson's dissenting view, G-C comments that "some illocutionary forces are linguistically encoded in natural languages, as expected on our conception of what they are, and moods appear to be conventionally designed for this purpose." (2004: 153)

<sup>22</sup> See Harnish (2001, 2006), Ludwig (2003) and references therein, for more discussion of compound moods.

In these cases the occurrence of a form (which, standing alone, would be a sentence) inside a conditional changes its force in a way not obviously captured by simply saying it's a non-default use. The resulting force (and content) should be at least partially the result of syntactic and semantic processes in the language.

### 3. Illocutionary Point Theory

There is no canonical text for what I am calling “illocutionary point” theory of illocutionary acts. It is, rather, what you would get if you optimally integrated Searle (1969, 1975, 1983, 1995), Searle and Vanderveken (1985), and Vanderveken (1990).<sup>23</sup> I will make no attempt to do that here.<sup>24</sup> But to approach my main target, mood in English, with something like a theory, we will have to make certain assumptions and take sides on certain debates. There are a plethora of candidates here for “official” illocutionary point theory of illocutionary acts. For ease of reference we will adopt the Searle and Vanderveken (1985) theory of the *nature* of illocutionary acts as “official” and the Searle (1975) *taxonomy* as “official.”<sup>25</sup> We will just assume, for the time being, that these are consistent and that the taxonomy does taxonomize acts whose nature is revealed in the theory. Here then is a snapshot of a theory in motion.

#### 3.1. The nature of illocutionary acts

Searle (1965, 1969) suggested that what individuates illocutionary acts is certain conditions and constitutive rules for their performance, though he did not say exactly what being an illocutionary act consists of. Searle's original formulations have been critically discussed in the literature (e.g. Bach and Harnish 1979, Alston 1991, 2000), and generally only pieces of the conditions survive in later works.<sup>26</sup> To get at the later “illocutionary point” conception of an illocutionary act we will focus on Searle and Vanderveken (1985), with a bit of Vanderveken (1994).<sup>27</sup>

Searle and Vanderveken (1985) (S&V): This work refines Searle (1975), and concentrates mainly on developing a “logic” of illocutionary acts in terms of

---

<sup>23</sup> “Optimally” because on the surface at least, these works do not all fit together (see below).

<sup>24</sup> For some critical discussion of Illocutionary Point Theory, as I am calling it, see Alston (1991) and Siebel (2002).

<sup>25</sup> Searle and Vanderveken do not offer an explicit taxonomy of illocutionary acts, though the last chapter offers a “semantical analysis of English illocutionary verbs.”

<sup>26</sup> Though Searle (1995: 43-51) and (2000: 56-57) does allude to “constitutive rules” for linguistic and social facts.

<sup>27</sup> See also Vanderveken (1990).

(illocutionary) success, and (propositional) satisfaction, conditions.<sup>28</sup> According to S&V, there are seven “components” of illocutionary force, some of which explicitly relate to the 1969 four-part analysis of illocutionary acts, and some of which explicitly relate to the 1975 taxonomy. To specify an illocutionary force is to specify a value for each component, and it is illocutionary point that is the main component for characterizing illocutionary acts.

1. *Illocutionary point* (1975). Each type of illocution has a point or purpose which is internal to its being an act of that type. Relevant question: how do we know which points are “internal” -- intuition? S&V (:14) say that it would not be an act of that type if it did not achieve that purpose. But acts do not achieve purposes, people do, so the idea must be that each illocutionary act has a point such that for anyone to perform that act, they must have that point in doing so.

2. *Degree of strength of the illocutionary point* (1975). Different illocutionary acts often achieve the same point, but with different degrees of strength (insist > request). Relevant question: how are the “degrees” determined, measured, assigned? Is there a scale, or is it just a relative ordering?

3. *Characteristic mode of achievement (of illocutionary point)* (1975). Often there are special ways, or conditions under which, the illocutionary point must be achieved (command vs request: invoke position of authority). Relevant question: do we just intuit modes of achievement or is there some guide or test? Are there characteristic kinds of modes of achievement?

4. *Propositional Content Condition* (1969, 1975). In many cases, F will impose certain conditions on what can be in the propositional content (assert vs predict).

5. *Preparatory conditions* (1969, 1975). In the performance of a speech act the speaker presupposes the satisfaction of all the preparatory conditions. They are certain sorts of states of affairs that have to obtain in order that the act be successful and nondefective. The propositional content can also have presuppositions. Relevant question: how do we know when a condition is a preparatory condition vs say, a propositional content condition? If one answers: when it is presupposed, how do we know when it is that?

6. *Sincerity conditions* (1969, 1975). Whenever one performs an illocutionary act with a propositional content one expresses a certain psychological state with that same content. One does not have to have the state to express it. When one does not have the state expressed, the act is insincerely performed. Relevant question: what is it to “express” a psychological state, even if one does not have it?<sup>29</sup>

---

<sup>28</sup> This idea and terminology seems to have first been proposed by Shwayder (1965: 119-120).

<sup>29</sup> See Harnish (1976) for an attempt to analyze this notion of Searle's in Gricean terms. See Bach and Harnish (1979) for a different proposal.

7. *Characteristic degree of strength of sincerity conditions* (1975). The same psychological state can be expressed in different degrees of strength (implore > request). Relevant question: how are the “degrees” determined, measured, assigned? Is there a scale, or is it just a relative ordering? In reviewing the S&V theory, Vanderveken comments that:

“There are five primitive universal illocutionary forces which are the simplest possible forces with one basic illocutionary point: they have the basic degree of strength and no special mode of achievement, propositional content, preparatory or sincerity condition which is not determined by their point.” (2002: 145)

This suggests some default value for degree of strength (“basic”), but it is not clear what this amounts to, nor what that degree is for each case.

Given this framework, for the analysis of illocutionary acts (force), S&V give some important characterization of notions relevant to the theory of mood. First, S&V say:

“Part of the meaning of an elementary sentence is that its literal utterance in a given context constitutes the performance or attempted performance of an illocutionary act of a particular illocutionary force.” (1985: 7)

But it can’t really be that literally performing an illocutionary act is “part of the meaning of the sentence.” That is, *that the speaker is literally asserting that snow is white* is not part of the meaning of (W):

(W) “Snow is white.”

What if the speaker is hypothesizing or guessing? S&V should say “that the speaker is literally asserting that snow is white” is a consequence of at least three things: (i) the meaning of (W), (ii) the definition of speaking literally, (iii) the definition of assertion.

S&V also claim that:

“A materially adequate semantics of a natural language must recursively assign illocutionary acts (elementary or complex) to each sentence for each possible context of utterance.” (1985: 7)

This raises a version of the same point as above: “Snow is white” will not get any *specific* illocutionary act assigned to it -- at best it will get a disjunction of forces, or a *category* of illocutionary acts, or a force *potential*.

Second, S&V say that:

“Our discussion ... allows us to define the notion of illocutionary force as follows: An illocutionary force is uniquely determined once its [1] illocutionary point, [2] its preparatory conditions, [3] the mode of achievement of its illocutionary point, [4] the degree of strength of its illocutionary point, [5] its propositional content conditions, [6] its sincerity conditions and [7] the degree of strength of its sincerity conditions are specified.” (1985: 20, numbers added)

But this is not strictly a *definition* of illocutionary force; it is a *theory dependent* recipe for the *specification* of illocutionary force. Here is an (imperfect) analogy: to define the notion of “being a member of the US Social Security System” by saying: being a US Social Security System member is uniquely determined by having a social security number. Although this will specify the members, we still don't know what it is to be a member of the system. Maybe we can convert this “definition” into a more explicit one:

*Existence of Force (EF)* An utterance act U is the performance of an illocutionary act with the force F iff in performing U, the speaker performs an act which has [1] an illocutionary point, [2] preparatory conditions, [3] a mode of achievement, etc. ... [7].  
*Specification of Force (SF)* An utterance act U is the performance of an illocutionary act with the force F iff in performing U, the speaker performs an act with: {here one fills in specific values for [1] - [7]}.

A problem with (EF) will still arise if there are forces that do not have all conditions [1]-[7], and for (SF) if they don't all have values of [1]-[7]. These are consequences of having a theory dependent characterization of these notions. Next, S&V say:

“an illocutionary act of the form F(P) is successfully and nondefectively performed in a context of utterance iff:

- (1) The speaker succeeds in achieving in that context the illocutionary point of F on the proposition P [1] with the required characteristic mode of achievement [2] and degree of strength of illocutionary point F [3].
- (2) He expresses the proposition P, and that proposition satisfies the propositional content conditions imposed by F [4].
- (3) The preparatory conditions of the illocution and the propositional presuppositions obtain in the world of the utterance [5], and the speaker presupposes that they obtain.
- (4) He expresses and possesses the psychological state determined by F [6] with the characteristic degree of strength of the sincerity conditions of F [7].” (:21-2, numbers added)

According to S&V:

“There are only two ways that an act can be successfully performed though still be defective. First, some of the preparatory conditions might not obtain ... this

possibility holds only for some, but not all, preparatory conditions. Second, the sincerity conditions might not obtain ...” (1985: 23)

But this does not tell us what a successful, but defective, illocutionary act is *in general* -- it is tantamount to saying: the act is successful and nondefective unless it isn't. It is a recipe which says: go through the illocutionary forces, one by one, and mark those preparatory conditions that are necessary for success; if they are satisfied, but the rest are not, then the act might be successful but defective.

Finally, according to S&V:

“A speaker performs *literally* an illocutionary act F(P) in a context of utterance when he performs F(P) in that context by uttering a sentence which expresses literally that force and content in that context.” (1985: 25)

However, this characterization is circular -- it uses the notion “literally” to define “literally.”

### 3.2. Taxonomy of illocutionary acts

It is infrequently noted that Searle's (1975) taxonomy of illocutionary acts is an elaboration of remarks in his (1969) speech acts book:

“The notions of illocutionary force and different illocutionary acts involve really several quite different principles of distinction. First, and most important, there is the point of purpose of the act ... second, the relative positions of S and H ... third, the degree of commitment undertaken ... fourth, the difference in propositional content ... fifth, the way the proposition relates to the interests of S and H ... sixth, the different possible expressed psychological states, seventh, the way the utterance relates to the rest of the conversation.” (1969: 70)

Searle (1975) criticized Austin's (1962) taxonomy of illocutionary acts for being unprincipled and failing to distinguish illocutionary acts from illocutionary verbs, and went on to offer his own alternative taxonomy of illocutionary acts, which he then related to some syntactic features of English.<sup>30</sup> We will focus on the proposed taxonomy, which is based on twelve “dimensions of difference” between illocutionary acts.

---

<sup>30</sup> See Hamish (1984) for an assessment of these and related claims.

### 3.2.1. Illocutionary dimensions<sup>31</sup>

Searle (1975) proposes twelve “dimensions of difference” between illocutionary acts:

- \*#D1. Differences in the point (or purpose) of the (type of) act. (no examples) [1969 Essential Condition/Rule]
- \*D2. Differences in the direction of fit between words and the world. (state, order)
- \*#D3. Differences in the expressed psychological state. (no examples) [1969 Sincerity Condition/Rule]
- #D4. Differences in the force or strength with which the illocutionary point is expressed. (suggest vs insist)
- #D5. Differences in the status or position of the speaker and the hearer as these bear on the illocutionary force of the utterance. (request vs order) [1969 Preparatory Condition/Rule]
- #D6. Differences in the way the utterance relates to the interests of the speaker and hearer. (boast, lament) [1969 Preparatory Condition/Rule]
- D7. Differences in the relation to the rest of the discourse. (state vs answer)
- \*#D8. Differences in propositional content that are determined by illocutionary force indicating devices. (report vs predict) [1969 Propositional Content Condition/Rule]
- D9. Differences between those acts that must always be speech acts, and those that can, but need not be performed as speech acts. (state vs estimate)
- D10. Differences between those acts that require extra-linguistic institutions for their performance and those that do not. (christen vs question)
- D11. Differences between those acts where the corresponding illocutionary verb has a performative use and those where it does not. (state vs boast)
- D12. Differences in the style of performance of the illocutionary act. (announce vs confide)

### 3.2.2. Illocutionary categories

Searle (1975) uses dimensions D1-D3, D8 to construct his taxonomy of illocutionary acts (see below). According to Searle (1975), illocutionary point is the central dimension for the taxonomy; direction of fit and expressed psychological state are “corollaries” of it. It is natural to want a taxonomy of kinds of things to reflect the important properties of those things, and Searle sees the dimensions in the taxonomy as correlating with the types of conditions/rules used in the illocutionary analysis. He also sees the taxonomy as having correlates in the syntax of sentences typically used to perform acts from each category.

---

<sup>31</sup> “#” indicates that the “dimension” of the Searle taxonomy is related to a “component” of Searle and Vanderveken. “\*” indicates one of the four dimensions used in the taxonomy. Presumably the other eight would serve to subcategorize these major categories.

Some of this changes with Searle (1990). He begins by rehearsing the four “dimensions” invoked to define the categories:

“The basic ideas that underlie the taxonomy, the ideas of illocutionary point, direction of fit of propositional content, and psychological state, are all independently motivated; so the taxonomy is based on an apparatus that we need anyway and that we can justify on grounds that have nothing to do with the taxonomy.” (1990: 411)

But he goes on to say “it cannot just happen that these are the five types of illocutionary points.” (1990: 412) He then presents what he calls “the transcendental deduction of the categories”:

“The basic types of direction of fit are uphill, downhill, null, and both ways. In communication between speaker and hearer, the uphill direction of fit admits of two basic variants, one hearer directed, and the other speaker directed. The hearer directed variant is characteristic of directives, the speaker directed variant is characteristic of commissives. So, we get five basic types, one for each direction of fit, with the exception of the world-to-utterance direction of fit that yields two.” (1990: 412)

But something odd has happened; originally it looked like illocutionary point was the main dimension driving the taxonomy, with direction of fit, psychological state, and propositional content as “corollaries.” But this “deduction” makes it look like direction of fit is the main taxonomic principle, but it isn’t. How then can Searle justifiably use this corollary to derive the taxonomy? It may be true that there are only four possible directions of fit (without iteration), but how does that motivate the whole taxonomy? Recall, there is no “transcendental deduction” of the illocutionary points, or expressed psychological states -- these just have to be listed. Furthermore, what is the “transcendental” justification for there being two categories under “world-to-utterance direction of fit”? After all, speaker and hearer can be involved in the remaining four categories too, but there are no special speaker/hearer oriented subcategories associated with them.

### 3.2.3. Relating the taxonomy to the components

How do the seven components of S&V relate to Searle’s earlier twelve dimensions? Here is a pairing by components of S&V:<sup>32</sup>

---

<sup>32</sup> “?” indicates that it is not clear what dimension goes with the component. For instance, although D5 and D6 correspond, according to Searle (1975), to preparatory conditions (in the original 1969 analyses), and hence to C5, their content, and the examples Searle uses to illustrate them, align them with C3. So the pairing can be based either on category labels or

- C1 Illocutionary point = D1 (point or purpose of the act)
- C2 Degree of strength of IP = D4 (degree of strength of IP)
- C3 Mode of achievement ?= D5 (status of S/H), D6 (interests of S/H)
- C4 Propositional content conditions = D8 (Propositional content)
- C5 Preparatory conditions = ?D5, ?D6
- C6 Sincerity conditions = D3 (Sincerity condition)
- C7 Strength of sincerity condition ?= D12 (Style of performance)

The following dimensions of the taxonomy do not appear in S&V as components:

- D2 (direction of fit)
- D7 (relation to discourse)
- D9 (need/need not, be speech acts)
- D10 (require/not require, extralinguistic institutions)
- D11 (style of performance)

The omission of D2 is puzzling, given its role in the taxonomy, and in retrospect Searle's "transcendental deduction of the categories" using direction of fit.

The definition of a successful and nondefective (elementary) illocutionary act given earlier stipulates a format for the analysis of such acts in terms of the above seven components. So given that each specification of an IA involves C1-C7, and each category in the taxonomy involves three of these: D1 (=C1), D8 (=C4), D3 (=C6), we should be able to fit each IA given its S&V analysis into a category of Searle's taxonomy by looking at the C1, C4 and C6 components. But note that there is no *guarantee* that the act given by such an analysis will appear in Searle's taxonomy, because the taxonomy is not *logically exhaustive*. That is, we have *lists* of (five) illocutionary points, and (three) expressed attitudes (and four directions of fit), but no argument that these are all there are or could be (except of direction of fit, but it does not appear in S&V). For example, consider S&V's cases of "illocutionary denegation," cases such as "permit," "refuse," "disclaim" which have the structure: Not(F(P)). For example, "to permit," which might be analyzed as: to deny that one is forbidden (Searle 1990).

---

on content and examples. Likewise, C7 has no obvious dimension associated with it by label, yet the examples used to illustrate C7 (suggest vs assert) are similar in contrast to those used to illustrate D12 (announce vs confide). But since they are also a bit different, it is hard to be confident here.

## 4. Illocutionary Point Theory and mood

### 4.1. Illocutionary Point Theory and the specification of force

We now want to see what a theory of mood would look like using such a speech act theory (SSV)<sup>33</sup> as the basis for the force-component, keeping in mind that the authors never explicitly intended for it to be used this way. We want to see what forces the theory might assign to these sentences, and how plausible those assignments are. Recall that for SSV, forces are uniquely determined by components 1-7. We can take this as a format for the specification of illocutionary force for sentences, since characteristically the “utterance” above would be the utterance of a sentence. However, since acts can be performed nonliterally and indirectly, we need a restriction on the condition. Consider, then, the following modification:<sup>34</sup>

An illocutionary act of the form F(P) is *successfully, nondefectively, literally and directly* (SNLD) performed in the utterance of sentence T iff:

1. The speaker succeeds in achieving in that utterance of T the illocutionary point of F on the proposition P with the required characteristic mode of achievement and degree of strength of illocutionary point F.
2. He expresses the proposition P, and that proposition satisfies the propositional content conditions imposed by F.
3. The preparatory conditions of the illocution and the propositional presuppositions obtain in the world of the utterance, and the speaker presupposes that they obtain.
4. He expresses and possesses the psychological state determined by F with the characteristic degree of strength of the sincerity conditions of F.

How might we use this to specify the illocutionary force potentials characteristic of moods? By rewording we can get closer: in the utterance of T, S performed (SNLD) the illocutionary act F(P) iff [1.-4]. This gives us:

(SNLD Force)

T can be uttered by S to perform (SNLD) the illocutionary act F(P) iff [1.-4 above].

The idea is that instances of (SNLD Force) would pair specific sentences with specific configurations of components, perhaps using something like the following schema. T can be uttered by S to perform (SNLD) the illocutionary act F(P) iff:

1. The speaker succeeds in achieving in that utterance of T the illocutionary point F:

---

<sup>33</sup> For convenience we can call it the Searle, Searle and Vanderveken (SSV) theory, even though it is not clear exactly how the two discussions fit together.

<sup>34</sup> Notice that we have collapsed S&V’s seven components into four.

(IP) [specified here]  
 on the proposition P, with the required characteristic mode of achievement:  
 (MoA) [specified here]  
 and degree of strength of illocutionary point F:  
 (DoS) [specified here]

2. S expresses the proposition P, and that proposition satisfies the propositional content conditions imposed by F:  
 (PCC) [specified here]

3. The preparatory conditions of the illocution:  
 (PC) [specified here]  
 and the propositional presuppositions:  
 (PP) [specified here]  
 obtain in the world of the utterance, and S presupposes that they obtain.

4. S expresses and possesses the psychological state determined by F:  
 (PS) [specified here]  
 with the characteristic degree of strength of the sincerity conditions of F:  
 (SSC) [specified here]

Furthermore, each configuration of components would characterize (possible) illocutionary forces and so the illocutionary force potential of the utterance of the sentence. Finally, each (possible) illocutionary force would ideally have a location in the taxonomy of illocutionary acts. This would be the beginning of a substantive theory of mood for a language. We turn now to the major moods.

## 4.2. Mood

The conception of mood we will be working with derives from Jespersen (1924). On this conception,<sup>35</sup> a mood is a conventional pairing (a pairing in the language) of form (syntax and intonation), illocutionary force potential and condition of fit or satisfaction. Furthermore all sentences with a mood can be analyzed in terms of an indicator of force and an indicator of content (usually “propositional”). The indicator of content determines the content of the condition of fit or satisfaction. The indicator of force determines the illocutionary force potential of the utterance of the sentence, the “direction of fit” of the sentence with respect to content, and the nature of the satisfaction condition: truth condition, compliance condition, and answerhood condition. We divide the moods of English into two categories (which may in fact form the endpoints of a spectrum), the

---

<sup>35</sup> See references in note 1. For related discussions see Sadock and Zwicky (1985), Ludwig (2003), and Garcia-Carpintero (2004).

“major” moods and the “minor” moods. These can be distinguished along four dimensions: (i) communicative centrality, (ii) productivity, (iii) frequency, and (iv) (cross-linguistic) universality.

## 5. Major moods

Major moods of English, such as declarative, imperative and interrogative, score high on the above four dimensions, so it is those we will investigate here. The actual formal description of a mood is both complicated and controversial -- which framework does one present the analysis in? Since our interest is on the force side of mood, we will adopt a generic method for the description of form in terms of Subject (S), Verb (V) and Object (O). This does not so much individuate moods as differentiate them from one another, and that is sufficient for our present purposes.<sup>36</sup>

### 5.1. Declarative

*Form:* S+V(+O): “I’ll be there,” “The meeting is adjourned”

*Force:* Intuitively, the first sentence can be used literally and directly to perform acts from at least three taxonomic categories: assertive, commissive and expressive. And intuitively the second sentence can be used to literally and directly perform acts from the declaration(al), assertive, and expressive categories:

(ACE) “I’ll be there”: assertive, commissive, expressive

(DAE) “The meeting is adjourned”: declaration(al), assertive, expressive

We start with a specific sentence, then move to forms of sentences. *Sentence* “I’ll be there” (= T) can be uttered by S to perform (SNLD) an illocutionary act of the assertive category (=F) on the proposition that S will be there (= P) iff

1. The speaker succeeds in achieving in that utterance of T the illocutionary point F of:
  - (IP) committing S to it being the case
  - on the proposition P, with the required characteristic mode of achievement:
  - (MoA) (none?)
  - and degree of strength of illocutionary point F:
  - (DoS) Medium (?)
2. S expresses the proposition P, and that proposition satisfies the propositional content conditions imposed by F:

---

<sup>36</sup> See Hamish (1983) for a more detailed discussion of form.

(PCC) None (?)

3. The preparatory conditions of the illocution:

(PC) None (?)

and the propositional presuppositions:

(PP) The speaker and the location referred to exist (?)

obtain in the world of the utterance, and S presupposes that they obtain.

4. S expresses and possesses the psychological state determined by F:

(PS) Belief that S will be there

with the characteristic degree of strength of the sincerity conditions of F:

(SSC) Medium (?)

Notice how difficult it has been to fill in our schema for a specific sentence. SSV theory gives us almost no guidance at all on how to analyze a particular illocutionary act, or a particular sentential force. Moving to forms just aggravates the situation. I.e. any sentence T of the form S+V+(O) can be used to perform (SNLD) an act of the assertive category iff ... what? The utterance of T satisfies the definition for performing an assertive illocutionary act? We know that. Moreover, since sentences of that form can also be used to perform commissive, expressive and declaration(al) acts, we would have to repeat this for each case. Clearly something has gone wrong, and that something seems to be a lack of commitment by SSV theory to any particular information or form of information being assigned to the sentence (or form of sentence) as part of the language. It is a theory of act types and categories of act types divorced from the particularities of the linguistic devices used to perform them.

We have been given no reason to expect anything better for non-declaratives, but it may be worth looking at what has to be done to get a theory in these domains as well. We will only look at particular sentences as samples of how the theory, in the form of (L&DFS), might apply.

## 5.2. Imperative

*Form:* (S+)V+O: “(Everybody/Nobody/You) Move!”

*Force:* “(You) Move!” (= T) can be uttered by S to perform (SNLD) the illocutionary act of ordering (= F) H to move (= P) iff

1. The speaker succeeds in achieving in that utterance of T the illocutionary point F:

(IP) Attempting to get H to move

on the proposition P, with the required characteristic mode of achievement:

(MoA) By means of S's authority over H

and degree of strength of illocutionary point F:

(DoS) Medium (?)

2. S expresses the proposition P, and that proposition satisfies the propositional content conditions imposed by F:

(PCC) A future act (of moving) predicated of H.

3. The preparatory conditions of the illocution:

(PC) S has the relevant authority over H, H is able to move and the propositional presuppositions:

(PP) H exists (?)

obtain in the world of the utterance, and S presupposes that they obtain.

4. S expresses and possesses the psychological state determined by F:

(PS) S wants H to move

with the characteristic degree of strength of the sincerity conditions of F:

(SSC) Medium (?)

Although this is an improvement in specificity over assertion, it still leaves parameters underdetermined.

### 5.3. Interrogative

*Forms:*

(Y/N)V+S+O: "Do you like eggplant?"

(Wh)V+S+O: "What time is it?"

*Force:* SSV theory does not explicitly analyze questions (questioning) as a separate illocutionary act. However, Searle has previously (1969: 66) suggested that they are members of the directive class of illocutionary acts, and he offers the following four-part analysis:<sup>37</sup>

*Propositional Content:* Any proposition or propositional function.

*Preparatory:* 1. S does not know "the answer" i.e. does not know if the proposition is true, or, in the case of the propositional function, does not know the information needed to complete the proposition truly. 2. It is not obvious to both S and H that H will provide the information at that time without being asked.

*Sincerity Rule:* S wants this information.

*Essential Rule:* Counts as an attempt to elicit this information from H.

---

<sup>37</sup> Searle rolls together both Y/N and Wh questions, so his analysis will not distinguish questions from requests for information.

### 5.3.1. Y/N Interrogatives

Using this as a basis, and SSV theory as a guide, we might now analyze (Y/N) questions as follows:

“Do you like eggplant?” can be uttered by S to perform (SNLD) the illocutionary act of questioning (= F) whether or not H likes eggplant (= P) iff

1. The speaker succeeds in achieving in that utterance of T the illocutionary point F of:

(IP) Attempting to elicit information from H

on the proposition P, with the required characteristic mode of achievement:

(MoA) (??)

and degree of strength of illocutionary point F:

(DoS) Medium (?)

2. S expresses the proposition P, and that proposition satisfies the propositional content conditions imposed by F:

(PCC) None (?)

3. The preparatory conditions of the illocution:

(PC) H has the information S is attempting to elicit

and the propositional presuppositions:

(PP) One of H likes eggplant or H does not like eggplant, is true

obtain in the world of the utterance, and S presupposes that they obtain.

4. S expresses and possesses the psychological state determined by F:

(PS) S wants the information S is trying to elicit

with the characteristic degree of strength of the sincerity conditions of F:

(SSC) Medium (?)

### 5.3.2. Wh-Interrogatives

“What time is it?” (= T) can be uttered by S to perform (SNLD) the illocutionary act of questioning (= F) what time it is (= Px) iff

1. The speaker succeeds in achieving in that utterance of T the illocutionary point F of:

(IP) Attempting to elicit information regarding the present time from H

on the propositional function Px, with the required characteristic mode of achievement:

(MoA) (??)

and degree of strength of illocutionary point F:

(DoS) Medium (?)

2. S expresses the propositional function  $Px$ , and that propositional function satisfies the propositional content conditions imposed by F:

(PCC) (??)

3. The preparatory conditions of the illocution:

(PC) H has the information S is attempting to elicit and is able to give it and the propositional presuppositions:

(PP) (??)

obtain in the world of the utterance, and S presupposes that they obtain.

4. S expresses and possesses the psychological state determined by F:

(PS) S wants the information S is trying to elicit

with the characteristic degree of strength of the sincerity conditions of F:

(SSC) Medium (?)

As before, there are many uncertainties in these analyses and many parameters are left open. Most of these would be fixed in a particular context of utterance, such as the relations between S and H, how much S wants the information etc. But these are not features of the sentence, so not recorded in a theory of mood.

## 6. Conclusions

We began by surveying options for how illocutionary force might be related to the mood of sentences in a language, and we tentatively settled on the idea that mood is related to the generic force, or illocutionary force potential of a sentence. We then constructed a version of what we called “Illocutionary Point” theory from the work of Searle and Vanderveken, and used it as the illocutionary force component in a theory of mood for English. We briefly surveyed only the major moods. We found that the theory gave some promising analyses, but was generally difficult to apply due to its lack of commitments to the force potential of the utterance of specific sentences. It should be emphasized that it was not the purpose of Searle or Vanderveken to construct a theory of mood. Our effort should be seen as a (sympathetic) exercise in theory building, to uncover what resources their work might offer for insight into the mood structure of English.

## References

- Alston, William. “Searle on Illocutionary Acts.” In *John Searle and his Critics*, edited by Ernest Lepore & Robert van Gulick, 57-80. Malden, MA: Blackwell, 1991.
- Bach, Kent and Robert M. Harnish. “Katz as Katz can.” *Journal of Philosophy* (1982): 168-171.

- Chomsky, Noam. *Syntactic Structures*. The Hague: Mouton, 1957.
- . *Aspects of the Theory of Syntax*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1965.
- Demopolous, William. "The centrality of truth to the theory of meaning." In *The Maribor Papers in Naturalized Semantics*, edited by Dunja Jutronic, 86-101. Maribor: Pedagoska Fakulteta, 1997.
- Garcia-Carpintero, Manuel. "Assertion and the semantics of force-markers." In *The Semantics/Pragmatics Distinction*, edited by Claudia Bianchi, 18-46. Stanford: CSLI, 2004.
- Katz, Jerrold. *Propositional Structure and Illocutionary Force*. NY: Crowell, 1977.
- Katz, Jerrold and Paul Postal. *An Integrated Theory of Linguistic Descriptions*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1964.
- Ludwig, Kirk. "The truth about moods." In *Concepts of Meaning*, edited by Gerhard Preyer & Maria Ulkan, 164-180. Dordrecht: Kluwer, 2003.
- Lepore, Ernest and Kirk Ludwig. "What is Logical Form?" In *Interpreting Davidson*, edited by Petr Kotatko et al., 16-46. Stanford: CSLI, 2001.
- Ross, John. "On declarative sentences." In *Readings in English Transformational Grammar*, edited by Roderick Jacobs & Peter Rosenbaum, 78-102. Boston: Ginn, 1970.
- Harnish, Robert M. "Pragmatic derivations." *Synthese* 54 (1983): 325-373.
- . "Some implications of illocutions." *Lingua* 62 (1984): 121-144.
- . "Mood, meaning and speech acts." In *Foundations of Speech Act Theory*, edited by Savas Tsohatzidis, 190-226. London: Routledge, 1994.
- . "Frege on mood and force." In *Perspectives on Semantics, Pragmatics, and Discourse*, edited by Istvan Kenesei & Robert M. Harnish, 142-171. Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 2001.
- . "Communicating with the moods of English." *Research in Language* 3 (2005a): 6-32.
- . "A normative theory of mood for English: prospects and problems." *Lodz Papers in Pragmatics* 1 (2005b): 59-89.
- . "Commitments and speech acts." *Philosophica* 75 (2005c): 11-41.
- . "Mood and inference." *Research in Language* 4 (2006): 45-68.
- Sadock, Jerrold and Arnold Zwicky. "Speech act distinctions in syntax." In *Language Typology and Syntactic Description*, edited by Timothy Shopen, 155-196. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985.
- Searle, John. *Speech Acts*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1969.
- . *Expression and Meaning*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975/1979.
- . "Epilogue to the taxonomy of illocutionary acts." In *Cultural Communication and Intercultural Contact*, edited by Donald Carbaugh, 349-372. London: Lawrence Erlbaum, 1990.
- . *The Construction of Social Reality*. New York: Free Press, 1995.
- . *Rationality in Action*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2001.

- Searle, John and Daniel Vanderveken. *Foundations of Illocutionary Logic*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985.
- Shwayder, David. *The Stratification of Behavior*. New York: Humanities Press, 1965.
- Siebel, Mark. "What is the Illocutionary Point?" In *Speech Acts, Mind and Social Reality*, edited by Guenther Grewendorf & Georg Meggle, 212-235. Dordrecht: Kluwer, 2002.
- Williamson, Timothy. *Knowledge and Its Limits*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000.