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7 The ‘In’ and ‘According to’ operators

This chapter is a rewritten version of ‘The ‘In’ and ‘According to’ operators’ in *Proceedings of the ESSLLI & WeSLLI Student Session 2020*. The most substantial differences between this chapter and the proceedings paper include: First, a removal of the discussion on the Lewisian analysis of “In s, ϕ ”. Second, the addition of a further research section 7.4.2 which includes a brief discussion of how the proposed analysis of “According to s, ϕ ” relates to the previous discussion of fictive closure and bald-faced lies.

7.1 Introduction

In chapter 3 I analysed parafictional discourse (i.e., discourse about the content of some fiction) as being covertly or overtly of the form ‘In/According to s, ϕ ’. In other words, parafictional statements contain either an ‘In s ’ operator (henceforth abbreviated as **In**) or an ‘According to s ’ operator (henceforth abbreviated as **Acc**):

- (118) a. In *The Hobbit*, Bilbo travels to the Lonely Mountain.
b. According to *The Hobbit*, Bilbo travels to the Lonely Mountain.

Following common practice, I have so far largely ignored any semantic difference between the operators **In** and **Acc**. However, the astute reader may have noticed that the Lewisian analysis of parafictional discourse that I adopt has been formulated (following Lewis) for statements of the form ‘In s, ϕ ’ rather than ‘In/According to s, ϕ ’ (see section 4.2.2). The reason for this is that in the current chapter I suggest, contra common practice, that there is in fact a relevant semantic difference between **In** and **Acc** and suggest that **In** is the primary fiction operator.

In providing analyses of parafictional discourse almost¹ all philosophers (e.g., Zucchi (forthcoming); Recanati (2018); Zalta (1983)) and semanticists (e.g., von

I would like to thank Natasha Korotkova and four anonymous ESSLLI/WeSLLI Student Session reviewers for valuable comments and discussions. Also, many thanks to Sofia Bimpikou for a fruitful collaboration on experiments concerning parafictional tense.

¹Notable exceptions are Sainsbury (2014) and Voltolini (2019) who argue that **In** involves a more ‘distanced’ stance towards the fiction than **Acc**. However, the authors do not

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Fintel and Heim (2011)) treat **In** and **Acc** on a par, i.e., (118a) and (118b) receive the same truth conditions. One of the main objectives of this chapter is to establish that there are in fact interesting semantic differences between **In** and **Acc**. These differences have probably remained largely unrecognized or glossed over because semanticists of fiction traditionally focus on providing analyses for reports on the content of *fictional* media (i.e., parafictional statements) only; since **In** and **Acc** both seem acceptable in such statements (e.g., in (118a) and (118b)), a uniform semantic analysis seems justified. To tease apart **In** and **Acc** I adopt a broader perspective in this chapter and consider reports on the content of media whether fictional or non-fictional, i.e., so-called 'contensive' (Ross, 2012) or 'paratextual' (Zucchi, 2001) statements. For instance, apart from parafictional statements (118a) and (118b), the following report on the content of Monk's biography *Ludwig Wittgenstein: The Duty of Genius* is also a contensive statement:

- (119) According to *Ludwig Wittgenstein: The Duty of Genius*, Wittgenstein worked as a hospital porter during WWII and advised patients not to take the drugs they were prescribed.

Moreover, the observations and analyses concerning the use of **In** and **Acc** in contensive statements that are discussed in this chapter apply not only to contensive statements about written or spoken narratives (e.g., *The Lord of the Rings* and *Ludwig Wittgenstein: The Duty of Genius*) but also to contensive statements about non-verbal media such as movies and pictures. The current discussion thus extends to for instance statements about the content of the *Star Wars* saga:

- (120) a. In the *Star Wars* saga, Darth Vader is a Sith Lord.
b. According to the *Star Wars* saga, Darth Vader is a Sith Lord.

Hence this chapter also adopts a broader perspective compared to the rest of the dissertation (where I focus on verbal narratives) in this respect.

connect their semantic accounts of the operators to existing linguistic work on **Acc** as is done in this chapter. Nor do they discuss the linguistic observations concerning the diverging behaviour of **In** and **Acc** introduced in this chapter. Rather, part of their debate is on whether the following minimal pair illustrates the semantic difference between **In** and **Acc**:

- (v) In *War and Peace*, there are both fictional and real characters.
(vi) According to *War and Peace*, there are both fictional and real characters. (Sainsbury, 2014, p.278)

Whereas Sainsbury takes (v) to be true and (vi) false, Voltolini takes both to be false. I do not further discuss these types of statements in this chapter since my focus lies on the use of **In** and **Acc** in parafictional statements and both (v) and (vi) seem to have a distinct metafictional flavour, i.e., talk about fictional entities *as fictional entities*. See chapter 6 for a more elaborate discussion of metafictional discourse.

7.2 Semantic analysis of the ‘According to *s*’-operator

As discussed in chapter 4, I assume the widely adopted Lewisian (1978) possible world analysis for **In**. Roughly: “**In** *s*, ϕ ” is true iff in worlds compatible with *s*, ϕ . In what follows I will first discuss the proposed analysis of **Acc** (section 7.2). In line with Krawczyk’s (2012) analysis of ‘According to *s*’, contensive statements with **Acc** are analysed as indirect speech reports. Roughly: “**Acc** *s*, ϕ ” is true iff *s* asserts that ϕ . Second, I will explore three clusters of novel observations concerning the divergent linguistic behaviour of **In** and **Acc** that a uniform treatment of the operators *cannot* but that the proposed semantic analyses *can* explain. These observations add to existing observations in recent linguistic literature that show that there is a crucial difference between **Acc** and other intensional operators (e.g., Krawczyk (2012); Kaufmann and Kaufmann (2020); Bary and Maier (2020)). The novel observations relate to the fictionality of the medium that is reported on (section 7.3.1), reporting explicit and implicit content (section 7.3.2) and tense use in contensive statements (section 7.3.3).

7.2 Semantic analysis of the ‘According to *s*’-operator

Contensive statements that feature the operator **Acc** are analysed as a type of indirect speech report, i.e., reports on what a medium asserts or asserted (but not on what it ‘will assert’²):

“According to *s*, ϕ ” is true iff *s* asserts/asserted that ϕ

This analysis of contensive statements with **Acc** is in line with Krawczyk’s (2012) and Kaufmann and Kaufmann’s (2020) analysis of the general (i.e., also outside of contensive statements) use of the phrase ‘According to *s*’. These semanticists treat **Acc** not as a simple intensional operator (cf. von Stechow and Heim (2011)) but rather treat statements with this phrase as indirect speech reports. Indeed, such an analysis fits the use that **Acc**, unlike **In**, has outside of contensive statements; **Acc**

²Although the speech verb in speech reports can be future tensed when reporting on (or predicting) future speech events, it seems that **Acc** only has interpretations where it is used to report on either past or ongoing speech events. If I know Joe doesn’t like seagulls (because he always angrily throws stones at them) and I know that he is going to assert that seagulls are the worst (because he raised his hand at a ‘seagull-lovers’-seminar) but I have never actually heard John *assert* that seagulls are the worst, I can felicitously say (ix) but not (x):

- (ix) Joe will assert that seagulls are the worst.
- (x) # According to Joe, seagulls are the worst.

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can be used to report not only on the content of a medium but also on what some *person* asserted:

- (121) a. According to Joe, seagulls are the worst.
b. # In Joe, seagulls are the worst.

As Anand and Korotkova (2019) note, such reports behave like regular indirect speech reports. For instance, whereas belief reports can be followed by a denial of the embedded content having been said, speech reports cannot:

- (122) a. Joe thinks that seagulls are the worst. He never said that, though.
b. # Joe asserted that seagulls are the worst. He never said that, though.

Likewise, it seems that (121a) cannot be followed by a denial of the embedded content having been said:

- (123) ? According to Joe, seagulls are the worst. He never said that, though.

Reports with **Acc** behave like *indirect* speech reports in that the report does not have to repeat the exact phrasing of the reported speech. Suppose Joe's exact words were: "I hate seagulls! There is no animal that is worse". As in indirect speech report report (124b) (and unlike in direct speech report (124a)), we can report on this speech act by combining **Acc** with the paraphrase "seagulls are the worst":

- (124) a. # Joe said: "Seagulls are the worst".
b. Joe said that seagulls are the worst.
c. According to Joe, seagulls are the worst.

Anand and Korotkova (2019) argue that this analysis of **Acc** can not only apply to reports on what some speaker has said but also to reports on what some inanimate object has 'said' as long as the object is a repository of propositional information (or 'ROI subject', see Anand and Hacquard (2014)) such as books, theories, films or lecture notes. In other words, we can report on the content of a medium by talking about the medium as the 'agent' of a communicative act. For instance, we can talk about what a book 'tells us'.³ Hence **Acc** can feature in contentive statements which as a result are interpreted as reports on what some medium (e.g., *The Lord of the Rings* or a news report) asserts – rather than reports on what the author of the medium asserts.⁴

³I assume that nonverbal media (e.g., the *Star Wars* saga) are also ROI subjects and hence we also report on those as 'telling us' things. In case the reader thinks nonverbal media don't assert in this way, they may read 'the *Star Wars* saga' as 'the script of the *Star Wars* saga'.

⁴This semantic analysis is akin to Zalta's (1987) analysis of parafictional statements in general (with **In** or **Acc**) as reporting on what a fictional narrative asserts. Such analyses raise some questions concerning the notion of 'assertion' at play here. For instance, a

7.2 Semantic analysis of the ‘According to *s*’-operator

Before moving on, it is instructive to highlight two features of the speech act of assertion that will be relevant later. First, since assertions are non-fictional statements, when *a* asserts ϕ this means that *a* states that ϕ is true in the *actual world*, i.e., *a* communicates that the actual world is in the set of ϕ worlds. Likewise, when some medium is reported on as making an assertion, this means that it is treated as stating something about the actual world. In other words, it is reported on as if it is non-fiction.⁵ It is possible to formulate the semantic analysis of **Acc** with speech verbs that are similar in meaning such as “say” or “express”. I use “assert” because, as will become clear later (section 7.3.1), I want to restrict the analysis to reports on speech acts that are clearly commitment inducing. Possibly, “say” or “express” are too generic (e.g., fictional or presuppositional contents may be *said* or *expressed* but are not *asserted*).

Second, unlike simple intensional operators, indirect speech reports are generally not closed under logical entailment (see e.g., von Stechow and Zimmermann (2005); Sæbø (2013); Maier (2019)). Consider the following belief report:

(125) Anne believes that Chrissy is cool.

Under a simple modal analysis of belief (Cf. Hintikka (1962)), (125) is true iff Chrissy is cool in all possible worlds that are compatible with Anne’s beliefs. Given that Chrissy being cool implies (amongst other things) that there is at least one cool person, it is also true in all possible worlds that are compatible with Anne’s beliefs that there is at least one cool person. Hence, it follows from (125) that Anne also believes that there is at least one cool person. Moreover, logical truths (e.g., that bachelors are unmarried men) are necessary, i.e., they are true in all possible worlds. Hence it is also true in all worlds compatible with Anne’s beliefs that bachelors are unmarried men; Anne also believes this. In short, under an intensional analysis of belief, any agent that forms beliefs is logically omniscient, i.e., believes all logical truths and all logical consequences of their beliefs.

Although such an intensional analysis may be fine when we offer a description of an idealized rational agent’s beliefs, it cannot straightforwardly be applied to speech reporting. Consider the following variants of speech reports:

(126) Anne asserts/says/claims/yells/mutters/whispers that Chrissy is cool.

On a simple intensional analysis of asserts/says/claims/yells/mutters/whispers, (126) is true iff Chrissy is in fact cool in all possible worlds that are compatible with what Anne asserts/says/claims/yells/mutters/whispers. Like the intensional analysis of belief above, the intensional analysis here thus implies that (126) entails that

book cannot have any beliefs and hence a book’s assertion cannot be construed as a proposal to update the common ground between speaker and hearer if it is construed as common belief or common acceptance. I will ignore these issues for now.

⁵Cf. Murday (2010) who argues that use of fiction operators such as **Acc** in parafictional statements relates the content of the fictional narrative to the actual world.

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Anne also asserts/says/claims/yells/mutters/whispers all logical consequences of Chrissy being cool (e.g., that there is at least one cool person) *and* all logical truths (e.g., that bachelors are unmarried men). But does it follow from (126) that Anne asserts/says/claims/yells/mutters/whispers that there is at least one cool person? Maier (2019) argues that for many so-called 'descriptive communication verbs' (e.g., yells/mutters/whispers) the entailment is definitely off and hence the intensional analysis cannot work. For less descriptive verbs (e.g., say/assert/claim) the entailment will sometimes seem acceptable. For the latter type of verbs we can follow von Stechow and Zimmerman's (2005) suggestion to analyse indirect speech reports with 'say' as ambiguous between a strict reading – where they are *not* closed under entailment – and a non-strict reading – where they *are* closed under entailment.

However, even on a non-strict reading of speech verbs such as 'say', 'assert' and 'claim', a simple intensional analysis will still not suffice: Although we may accept that we can derive from (126) that Anne asserted that there is at least one cool person, in any case it still does not follow that Anne asserted that bachelors are unmarried men. Moreover, even on a non-strict reading, speech reports are only closed under entailment *to a certain extent*, i.e., not *all* logical entailments of what was stated are reportable with indirect discourse. For instance, it does not follow from (126) that Anne asserted that Chrissy is cool or a murderous clown (even though Chrissy being cool or a murderous clown *does* strictly speaking follow from Chrissy being cool). In other words, even on a non-strict reading of 'say', 'assert' and 'claim', only a subset of the entailments of what was explicitly stated are also actually 'said', 'asserted' and 'claimed'.⁶

In the above semantic analysis of **Acc** "asserts" is to be read non-strictly, i.e., *s* asserts that ϕ iff *s* explicitly states ϕ or ϕ is properly entailed by what *s* explicitly states.

7.3 The diverging behaviour of 'In' and 'According to'

Now that I have presented my semantic analyses of **In** and **Acc**, I turn to three linguistic observations concerning the diverging linguistic behaviour of **In** and **Acc** (and some qualifications to them). Current analyses of contensive statements do not distinguish **In** from **Acc** and therefore do not explain these observations. I will argue that the Lewisian analysis of **In** and the above analysis of **Acc** can account for them.

⁶See e.g., Brasoveanu and Farkas (2007); Sæbø (2013); Bary and Maier (2020); Abreu Zavaleta (2019) for some further discussion on this topic.

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7.3.1 Fiction/non-fiction

Observations

A central observation concerning **In** and **Acc** is that whereas contentive statements about fiction can be formulated with both **In** and **Acc**, contentive statements about non-fiction with **In** rather than **Acc** are typically unacceptable. Consider the following minimal pairs of statements:

- (120) a. In the *Star Wars* saga, Darth Vader is a Sith Lord.
b. ? According to the *Star Wars* saga, Darth Vader is a Sith Lord.
- (127) a. # In *Ludwig Wittgenstein: The Duty of Genius*, Wittgenstein worked as a hospital porter during WWII and advised patients not to take the drugs they were prescribed.
b. According to *Ludwig Wittgenstein: The Duty of Genius*, Wittgenstein worked as a hospital porter during WWII and advised patients not to take the drugs they were prescribed.

Whereas use of **Acc** seems appropriate to report on the content of fictional and non-fictional media, use of **In** seems restricted to reports on the content of fictional media. Even stronger, this fiction/non-fiction preference is also mirrored in our use of **Acc**. As noted before, **Acc** can be (and is) used to report on the content of fictional media. I therefore generally do not mark such uses of **Acc** as infelicitous. However, use of **In** does typically sound more appropriate in parafictional statements than use of **Acc**, e.g., (120a) and (120b) are both acceptable but (120a) is a more natural way of talking about the content of the *Star Wars* films. Thus the general picture that is sketched is that the canonical use of the operators links **In** to fiction and **Acc** to non-fiction.

The observation made above can be qualified in several ways. First, use of **Acc** in contentive statements about fiction is not always unnatural and sometimes is even more appropriate than use of **In**. Contentive statements that report on the content of a fictional medium that is viable for ‘export’⁷ (i.e., content that we may take to be not only true in the fiction but also true about the actual world) display such preferences. Such exported content can consist of empirical facts that were explicitly stated in a medium. For instance, I may read the following in Fleming’s novel *Thunderball*: “New Providence, the island containing Nassau, the capital of the Bahamas, is a drab sandy slab of land fringed with some of the most beautiful beaches in the world”, and learn from this that (actually) Nassau is the capital of the Bahamas. Alternatively, we can export general truths that follow from what was explicitly stated or shown in a fiction. For instance, I may learn that (actually) it is never too late to redeem yourself from watching the *Star Wars* saga even though

⁷See section 4.6.2 for a more elaborate discussion of export of fictional truth.

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this is never stated explicitly in the medium. Especially in contensive statements that report on general fictional truths that are viable for export we can observe an increased acceptability of **Acc**. For instance, consider the following:

- (128) a. In the *Star Wars* saga, it is never too late to redeem yourself.
b. According to the *Star Wars* saga, it is never too late to redeem yourself.

Use of **Acc** is decidedly more natural in (128b) than in contensive statements that report on fictional content that is *not* viable for export such as (120b). Arguably there is even a small preference for use of **Acc** as in (128b) over use of **In** as in (128a). This latter intuition become even stronger when we consider 'fictions' whose point is clearly to teach us something about the actual world. Consider the following contensive statements about Searle's Chinese room thought experiment:

- (129) a. According to the Chinese room thought experiment, something that manipulates symbols based on syntax alone, does not truly understand a language.
b. ? In the Chinese room thought experiment, something that manipulates symbols based on syntax alone, does not truly understand a language.

Here use of **Acc** to report on the fictional content that is viable for export in (129a) is appropriate whereas use of **In** in (129b) is unnatural.

Second, use of **In** is not in fact unequivocally wrong for contensive statements about non-fictional media. Zucchi provides the following example of a contensive statement featuring **In** about Woodward's biography *Shadow*:

- (130) a. In *Shadow*, Clinton only cares about sex and golf. (Zucchi, 2001, p.350)
b. According to *Shadow*, Clinton only cares about sex and golf.

Not only use of **Acc** but also use of **In** is acceptable in this non-fiction contensive statement. However, note that such use of **In** is restricted to reports on subjective viewpoints or portrayals that are expressed by some medium rather than objective facts. Use of **In** here seems to signal distancing from the reported content. Likewise, a contensive statement with **In** that reports on an objective fact expressed by *Shadow* sounds as odd as (127a):

- (131) a. # In *Shadow*, Clinton was born in Arkansas.
b. According to *Shadow*, Clinton was born in Arkansas.

Analysis

The provided analyses account for the above observations. First, when we report on the content of some non-fictional source *s* (e.g., a biography, news report or encyclopedia entry), we will report on the medium as telling us (or asserting) something about the actual world – not as some story that is compatible with some

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set of worlds that may or may not include the actual world. Hence we have a strong preference for **Acc** in contensive statements about non-fiction. By contrast, when talking about the content of a fictional medium *s* it is appropriate to consider what is true in the set of *s* worlds without reporting on *s* as asserting anything about the actual world. Hence **In** is appropriate whereas use of **Acc** (i.e., reporting on the content of a fiction story as if it relates to the actual world) is less natural. Thus there is a general preference to use **In** for reports on fiction and to use **Acc** for reports on non-fiction.

As I have shown, however, although there may be a preference for **In**, **Acc** is in fact generally acceptable for contensive statements about fiction (e.g., (118b), (120b)). The semantic analysis of **Acc** suggests that this is because it is considered generally admissible to report on the content of a fictional medium by talking about it as something that asserts something about the actual world.⁸ Usually, such use of **Acc** will sound unnatural because fictional media are standardly not considered to be appropriate authorities or sources for claims about the actual world. Hence a statement such as (120b), which means something like “The *Star Wars* saga asserts that Darth Vader is a Sith Lord”, sounds awkward. In fact, it is strictly speaking not even true!⁹ The *Star Wars* saga, being a work of fiction, does not really assert anything about the history of the galaxy. We merely pretend that it does when engaging with the fiction. Similarly, the analysis suggests that use of **Acc** in parafictional discourse such as (118b) is proper when we report on the content of fictions by engaging in an extension of this original pretence, i.e., talking about the fictional medium as non-fictional (cf. Evans (1982); Recanati (2018)). On the current analysis, parafictional statements with **Acc** such as (118b) are thus an interesting hybrid type of discourse: They are parafictional because they are reports on the content of a fictional medium *s*, but also constitute an unofficial extension of the original fictional discourse of *s* (which makes them strictly speaking false).

⁸Hence the analysis provided seems to be in line with Friend’s (2017) claim that *all* fictional narratives are essentially to be interpreted as being about the actual world, even when the described events take place in an outlandish magical realm where for instance Earth does not even exist.

⁹In case the reader finds this counterintuitive, we can opt for a semantic analysis of **Acc** in terms of “expressing”:

“According to *s*, ϕ ” is true iff *s* expresses/expressed that ϕ

Such an analysis would deem contensive statements such as (120b) true (cf. Voltolini (2019); Murday (2010)); fictional media may not ‘assert’ (all) their content but they do ‘express’ it. However, the above analysis is unable to account for any of the observations described in the current section concerning preferences for **In** and **Acc** to report on fictional and non-fictional media. Hence I opt for an analysis of **Acc** that can account for all three observations described in this chapter at the cost of making statements such as (120b) strictly speaking false.

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Parafictional statements with **In** such as (120a), however, involve no such pretence and can be really true.

The analysis also explains why contentive statements that report on content viable for export constitute exceptions to the general awkwardness of the use of **Acc** for fiction. Independently from what analysis we adopt of export¹⁰, it is generally assumed that content viable for export is somehow licensed by the author to be taken as *actually* true (in addition to fictionally true). We *do* in fact take the medium to tell us something about the actual world. Hence the proposed analysis of **Acc** predicts a higher acceptability rate for **Acc** when reporting on fictional content that is viable for export. For instance, although the *Star Wars* saga does not tell us anything about the history of the galaxy, we could take it to be a proper source of (non-fictional) moral truths. Hence, although we take (120b) to be strictly speaking false, we take (128b) to be true (i.e., that the *Star Wars* saga asserts that it is never too late to redeem yourself). This higher acceptability may even trump the acceptability of **In** when it obviously is the point of the fiction to tell us something about the actual world (as is the case of thought experiments such as Searle's *Chinese room*).

The analyses also account for the fact that sometimes **In** may be appropriate for contentive statements about non-fiction as in (130a). According to our semantic analysis of **In**, (130a) roughly means that in the worlds compatible with *Shadow*, Clinton only cares about sex and golf. In other words, the medium is not presented as telling us something about the actual world. Rather, because we are reporting on subjective content it is acceptable to report on what the worlds compatible with the medium are like (i.e., report on *Shadow* as if it is fiction). The perceived distancing from the reported content by the speaker of the contentive statement seems to be the result of pragmatic implication (i.e., given that the relevant medium is non-fictional, why doesn't the speaker report on its content as asserting something about the actual world?)

7.3.2 Explicit/implicit content

Observations

The second observation about the difference between **In** and **Acc** relates to whether the reported content is explicit or implicit in the medium. Semanticists of fiction often assume some version of Lewis' (1978) Reality Principle: we assume the fictional worlds to be as much like the actual world as the story permits. In other words, we can distinguish two types of fictional truths: 'Explicit fictional truth', i.e., propositions that are explicitly stated in a story (or follow directly from what was explicitly stated) and 'implicit fictional truth', i.e., propositions that are assumed to be fictionally true because we consider them to be actually true and the story has

¹⁰See section 4.6.2.

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not forced us to revoke them. For instance, it is explicitly fictionally true in *The Lord of the Rings* that Frodo inherits Bag End because this follows directly from some of the statements in the novels. On the other hand, it is implicitly fictionally true in *The Lord of the Rings* that water is H₂O because we believe this to be actually true and nothing in the novels contradicts this information.

Semanticists of fiction generally allow for both implicit and explicit fictional truths to feature in parafictional statements. This type of approach ignores important differences in linguistic behaviour between **In** and **Acc**. **In** is appropriately used to report on both implicit and explicit fictional truth. Consider the following statements:

(132) In *The Lord of the Rings*, Frodo inherits Bag End.

(133) In *The Lord of the Rings*, water is H₂O.

Acc displays different behaviour. To the extent that use of **Acc** to report on fictional content is acceptable at all, **Acc** can only appropriately be used to report on explicit fictional truth. Consider the following statements:

(134) According to *The Lord of the Rings*, Frodo inherited Bag End.

(135) # According to *The Lord of the Rings*, water is H₂O.

Use of **Acc** is thus restricted to parafictional statements that report content that is explicitly stated in the medium or follows directly from what was stated.

This observation generalizes to contensive statements about non-fiction. Consider the following contensive statements about a news report that reports on a drought (but does not state anything about the molecular structure of water):

(136) According to this news report, there was a terrible drought.

(137) # According to this news report, water is H₂O.

Although the fact that water is H₂O may be assumed to be true (by speaker and hearer alike) when engaging with this news report, such 'implicit truths' cannot feature in contensive statements with **Acc**. Again, **Acc** is only appropriate to report on what was explicitly stated in the medium or what follows directly from this.

Analysis

The proposed analyses can account for the above observations concerning implicit and explicit content. First, the Lewisian analysis of **In** was formulated so as to include implicit fictional truths. The worlds compatible with *s* are the worlds where *s* is told as known fact that are *as similar as possible* to our conception of the actual world. In other words, everything that we believe to be actually true will be true in the worlds compatible with *s* unless *s* contradicts it. So even though the fact that water is H₂O is never stated explicitly (nor follows from anything that was

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stated) in *The Lord of the Rings*, still it is true in the worlds compatible with *The Lord of the Rings* because the worlds where *The Lord of the Rings* is told as known fact that are *closest* to our conception of the actual world are worlds in which water is H₂O. Thus **In** can appropriately be used to report on such implicit content.

Second, the analysis of contensive statements with **Acc** as indirect speech reports excludes reports on implicit content. Remember that under the non-strict reading that we adopt of "asserts" in the semantic analysis of **Acc**, *s* asserts only those things that are explicitly stated by *s* and some of the entailments of what *s* explicitly stated. Information that is merely assumed by *s* but that is neither said nor even entailed by what was said cannot feature in indirect speech reports (e.g., from the fact that Anne asserts that Chrissy is cool we cannot derive that Anne asserts that Chrissy plays basketball even though it may be common ground that she does). Likewise, it is not appropriate to report on 'content' that was not stated explicitly (or follows from what was stated) in some medium (e.g., *The Lord of the Rings* or a news report on a drought) with **Acc** even though this information may arguably be part of what is assumed to be true by the medium.¹¹

7.3.3 Tense use

Observations

The third and last observation concerning **In** and **Acc** that I will discuss relates to tense use preferences in contensive statements. As has been observed by Zucchi (2001), parafictional statements with **In** display a preference for present tense use while past tense, although often acceptable, sounds awkward and future tense simply sounds wrong.¹² Parafictional statements with **In** trigger this preference for present tense independently from whether the embedded content includes an eventive or stative verb. Consider for example the following contensive statements about the Harry Potter novels:

(138) In the Harry Potter novels, there **are/?were/#will be** wizards in England.

(139) In the Harry Potter novels, Snape **kills/?killed/#will kill** Dumbledore.

Whereas (138) includes a stative verb and (139) contains an eventive verb, both contensive statements trigger a preference for present tense.

¹¹This semantic difference between **In** and **Acc** suggests that the proper parafictional test case sentences (i.e., appropriate to check our intuitions against about fictional truth) should be formulated with **In** rather than **Acc**.

¹²The prohibition against past and future tense in parafictional statements is not absolute. Consider: "In Patrick O'Brian's first novel, Jack Aubrey was a post captain, in his new novel, he is a commodore, in the next novel he will be an admiral." (Zucchi, 2001, p.334).

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Moreover, parafictional statements with **In** display a preference for present tense independently from when the events described in the fiction supposedly take place. Consider for example the following contensive statements about the Harry Potter novels, the *Star Wars* saga and the *Star Trek* series for which the time of the relevant fictional events and states described respectively overlap, precede and succeed the fictional counterpart of the utterance time of the contensive statement:

- (138) In the Harry Potter novels, there **are/?were/#will be** wizards in England.
- (140) In the *Star Wars* saga, Luke **destroys/?destroyed/#will destroy** the Death Star.
- (141) In the *Star Trek* series, Earth **colonizes/?colonized/#will colonize** Mars in the year 2103.

This preference for present tense does not generalize to parafictional statements with **Acc**. Rather, to the extent that **Acc** is at all acceptable to report on fictional content, preferences for tense use within these statements seems to depend on the time of the events described in the narrative relative to the utterance time of the contensive statement, i.e., whether, at the time of utterance, the relevant fictional events took, take or will take place:

- (142) According to the Harry Potter novels, there **are/#were/#will be** wizards in England. (*stative/overlap*)
- (143) According to the *Star Wars* saga, Luke **#destroys/destroyed/#will destroy** the Death Star. (*eventive/precede*)
- (144) According to the *Star Trek* series, Earth **#colonizes/#colonized/will colonize** Mars in the year 2103. (*eventive/succeed*)

In fact, this is true for contensive statements with **Acc** in general, i.e., tense use in contensive statements with **Acc** about non-fictional media also seems to depend on the time of the events described in the medium relative to the utterance time of the contensive statement. Consider tense use in the following statements about the content of news reports that report on respectively protests going on at this moment, a robbery last night and tomorrow's weather:

- (145) According to this news report, there **are/#were/#will be** protests in Amsterdam.
- (146) According to this news report, masked men **#rob/robbed/#will rob** the Regio Bank in Erp.
- (147) According to this weather forecast, it **#is/#was/will be** extremely dry.

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Analysis

The proposed semantic analyses of **In** and **Acc** can account for these observations. First, the analysis of **In** predicts a preference for present tense in contensive statements. To see why, let's first consider tense use under other intensional operators such as *believe*:

(148) Adeela believes that Sara was nervous.

Because this propositional attitude report is a report of a current belief (i.e., the attitude verb is in present tense), the tense use in the embedded clause tells us whether Adeela believes Sara to be nervous before, during or after the time of utterance of (148).¹³ In the above example: if (148) is uttered at t_1 then (148) is true iff in worlds compatible with what Adeela believes at t_1 , Sara *was* nervous at t_1 (i.e., *is* nervous at some t where $t < t_1$).

In, although also an intensional operator, functions somewhat differently. Whereas someone's beliefs may change over time (e.g., Adeela might change her mind about whether Sara is in fact nervous), the content of a story or medium (e.g., the Harry Potter novels) consists in an abstract set of statements or system of axioms that is timeless. The Harry Potter story today is not going to differ from the Harry Potter story tomorrow; it is eternally the same abstract object. Hence, although we report on what some agent's beliefs are at a certain point in time in (148), in contensive statements we do not report on what the Harry Potter novels are like at a certain point in time. Reconsider the present tense version of (138):

(138) In the Harry Potter novels, there are wizards in England.

Even though (138) is uttered at a specific point in time t_1 , (138) does not mean that in worlds compatible with the Harry Potter novels at t_1 , wizards are in England at t_1 . Rather, (138) uttered at t_1 is true iff in worlds compatible with the Harry Potter novels (simpliciter), there are wizards in England (at some t). Hence, because it is true that there are wizards in England at a specific point on the fictional timeline of the Harry Potter novels, (138) is true. Indeed, given this fact, the past and future tense versions of (138) (although they sound odd or infelicitous) are also strictly speaking true on this analysis. It is true on some point in the timeline of the Harry Potter worlds that there *were* wizards in England and similarly there is such a point where there *will be* wizards in England. In other words, the Lewisian analysis of **In** (since it does not designate a specific time of evaluation) strictly speaking permits present, past and future tense use in contensive statements:¹⁴

¹³Reports with past or future tense attitude verbs (e.g., 'Adeela believed/will believe that Sara is nervous') pose additional complications since tense in these reports can be bound rather than indexical (see [Abusch \(1997\)](#); [Toshyuki and Sharvit \(2012\)](#)).

¹⁴In fact, [Lewis \(1978\)](#), uses both past tense and present tense in his examples of parafictional truths.

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(149) In the Harry Potter novels, there ?were/#will be wizards in England.

I suggest that this fact licenses a gnomic or generic use of the present tense (see e.g., [Carlson \(1982\)](#)) that is similar to that in scientific statements that express timeless truths (e.g., the fact that whales are, were and will be mammals is most naturally expressed as “Whales *are* mammals”). We thus get a preference for present tense in parafictional statements with **In**.¹⁵ The same reasoning applies to contensive statements with **In** that report on fictions about past or future events (e.g., it is true at some point on the fictional timeline of *Star Wars* that Luke destroys the Death Star) and hence these will also display a preference for present tense.¹⁶

Second, the proposed analysis of **Acc** accounts for tense use in contensive statements with this operator. Contensive statements with **Acc** are analysed as indirect speech reports (i.e., reports on what a medium ‘asserts’). Hence tense use in such contensive statements mirrors that of indirect speech reports. If an indirect speech report reports on a ‘current’ speech event (i.e., the speech verb is in present tense), then the tense use in the embedded clause mirrors that of the reported speech act. The reported speaker’s tense use in turn depends on whether the time of the events described coincides, precedes or succeeds the utterance time of her statement, i.e., whether she is telling us what things *are*, *were* or *will be* like. Hence, tense use in indirect speech reports on current speech events shifts depending on whether the time of the described events coincides, precedes or succeeds the utterance time of the contensive statement. For instance, if Adeela says “Sara will be nervous” at t_1 , a speech report at t_1 will mirror her tense use:

(150) Adeela asserts that Sara will be nervous.

Sentence (150) uttered at t_1 is true iff Adeela asserts at t_1 that Sara is nervous at some t such that $t > t_1$.¹⁷

¹⁵See [Zucchi \(2001\)](#) for an alternative possible world analysis of **In** that accounts for this present tense preference by switching the time of evaluation to the time of the described events.

¹⁶In fact, the same reasoning also applies to contensive statements with **In** that report on non-fiction (e.g., 130) which thus also display a preference for present tense (cf. [Zucchi \(2001\)](#)):

(xi) In *Shadow*, Clinton only cares/? cared/# will care about sex and golf.

¹⁷I assume a simple analysis of “will” as a tense marker (see e.g., [Prior’s \(1967\)](#) ‘Ockhamist semantics’ or [Kissine \(2008\)](#); [Salkie \(2010\)](#)). Under a modal analysis (e.g., [Condoravdi \(2002\)](#); [Enç \(1996\)](#)) “will” still has a temporal dimension and hence a modal analysis can also be incorporated into my analysis.

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A contensive statements with **Acc** is analysed as a report on what a medium *asserts*. Hence it is a report on a current speech event.¹⁸ In other words, unlike contensive statements with **In**, contensive statements with **Acc** are essentially time bound; they report on what the medium asserts *now*.¹⁹ Likewise, tense use in contensive statements with **Acc** shifts depending on whether the events described by the medium overlap, precede or succeed the utterance time of the contensive statement. For example, since the *Star Wars* saga is about events that supposedly took place a long time ago (in a galaxy far, far away), we use past tense when we report on its content using **Acc**. For example, on either an 'extended pretence' (i.e., where we pretend that *Star Wars* is a non-fictional report) or 'export' reading (which are both hard to get here), we report that *Star Wars* asserts that Luke *destroyed* the Death Star. Hence, to the extent that (143) is acceptable, it displays a preference for past tense:

(143) According to the *Star Wars* saga, Luke destroyed the Death Star.

Sentence (143) uttered at t_1 is true iff *Star Wars* asserts at t_1 that Luke *destroyed* the Death Star at t_1 (i.e., *destroys* the Death Star at some t such that $t < t_1$). Likewise, since a medium like the news report on protests in Amsterdam in (145) reports on events that are currently taking place and the *Star Trek* series is (amongst other things) about events that supposedly will take place in the future, we report on the content of these media using present and future tense respectively.

7.4 Outlook

7.4.1 Conclusions

In this chapter I have argued that the **In** and **Acc** operators require separate semantic analyses to account for three linguistic observations. These concern preferences for using **In** for contensive statements about fiction and **Acc** for non-fiction; the

¹⁸A complication for this comparison to indirect speech reports is that whereas the speech report about Adeela's assertion mirrors her tense use, tense use in contensive statements does not necessarily mirror the tense use in the medium itself. For instance, although a science fiction novel may be written from the point of view of the year 4020 and include the past tense statement "Mars was inhabited in 3020", it currently (in 2021) asserts that Mars *will be* inhabited in 3020.

¹⁹Maybe some assertions made by media can (like a person's assertions) also be past events, i.e., maybe s can sometimes also be reported on as having *asserted* that p . For instance, is it admissible on Wednesday to report on Monday's weather forecast about Tuesday with "According to Monday's weather forecast, Tuesday was going to be a great day for skiing" or should we say "According to Monday's weather forecast, Tuesday was a great day for skiing"? I leave this question to future research.

unacceptability of using **Acc** to report on implicit content (whereas **In** is fine for implicit and explicit content); and preferences for present tense in contensive statements with **In** and tense use in contensive statements with **Acc** depending on whether the events described by the medium overlap, precede or succeed the utterance time of the contensive statement.

I have proposed to adopt the Lewisian possible world analysis of parafictional statements for contensive statements with **In**: “**In** s , ϕ ” is true iff in the worlds compatible with s , ϕ . I have proposed to analyse contensive statements with **Acc** as indirect speech reports: “**Acc** s , ϕ ” is true iff s asserts/asserted that ϕ . Lastly, I have explained how the proposed analyses account for the three described linguistic observations.

7.4.2 Future research

‘According to’ and fictive closure

In the rest of this dissertation I have treated parafictional statements with **In** and **Acc** on a par. An obvious direction for further research is to explore whether and how we could incorporate the semantic analyses of **In** and **Acc** that have been proposed in the current chapter into the workspace account. This subsection gives a brief sketch of a proposal.

First of all, to model how information of the form ‘**Acc** s , ϕ ’ enters the common ground we would have to incorporate a mechanism that tags explicit content (i.e., all newly incoming information or what follows directly from that) as ‘said by the source’ in the workspace. In other words, apart from a workspace update with the asserted content p , we also represent the non-essential update ‘ s said p ’ (see [Stalnaker \(2002\)](#)) at every utterance. Given our analysis of **Acc** as an indirect speech report, this amounts to an update with information of the form ‘**Acc** s , ϕ ’. Assertive and fictive closure will thus result in the following updates: After reading a newspaper article it will be common ground that ‘It is raining’ and that ‘According to the newspaper article, it is raining’. After reading the Harry Potter books, it will be common ground that ‘In the Harry Potter books, there are wizards in England’ and that ‘In the Harry Potter books, according to the Harry Potter books, there are wizards in England’. This fits the proposed analysis according to which most contensive statements about fiction that are formulated with **Acc** are strictly speaking false (see section [7.3.1](#)). As has been discussed above, there do seem to be some contensive statements about fiction formulated with **Acc** that we deem true, i.e., those that report on content viable for export. In section [4.6.2](#) I suggested that export is based on analogical reasoning with parafictional information. For instance, from ‘In the Harry Potter books, love conquers all’ we may derive that ‘Love conquers all’. Here I suggest that such inferences, paired with the information

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that 'Love conquers all' follows from what was explicitly stated in the Harry Potter books, would license an additional inference to 'According to the Harry Potter books, love conquers all'.

Secondly, one place where the proposed semantic analyses of **In** and **Acc** may complicate the discussion is in the analysis of bald-faced lies (see chapter 5). I leave detailed exploration of this to further research but will sketch some of the issues that may arise. In chapter 5, I argued that bald-faced lies are (as a speech act) more akin to fictional statements than to lies. However, contentious statements that report on bald-faced lies in institutionalized, rule-bound settings are most naturally formulated with **Acc** rather than with **In**:

- (151) a. ? In the courtroom proceedings/records, Pentangeli knew no Godfather
b. According to the courtroom proceedings/records, Pentangeli knew no Godfather

The worry is that such reports thus mirror the preference for **Acc** that reports on non-fictional media display. However, the inappropriateness of **In** does not generalize to all bald-faced lie scenarios. For instance, we can report on the bald-faced lie in Meibauer's (2014) cheating husband scenario with **In**:

- (152) In this game that they have been playing for a few years now, he is faithful to her.

Moreover, as has been discussed, the preference for **In** in reports on fiction is not absolute, i.e., content licensed for export is fit to be reported on with **Acc**. Given that there is a truth-tracking requirement on court conversations (see section 5.4.5), the embedded content in (151b) seems apt for export.

A second, related, worry might be that updates with information of the form '**Acc** *s*, *φ*' take place for fiction and non-fiction alike. I argued that bald-faced lies are like fictional statements in part because they seem to involve a parafictional update as part of their essential updates; a successful bald-faced lie has to go 'on the record' and hence, like a successful fictional statement, has to make a modalized statement of the form '**In/Acc** *s*, *φ*' common ground. However, as noted above, for bald-faced lies in institutional settings (where the modalized update is really the point of the bald-faced lie), these updates are most naturally formulated with **Acc**, rather than with **In**. In light of the semantic analyses proposed in the current chapter, we may take this to suggest that 'going on the record' is something different from the Lewisian parafictional update involved in fictive closure. Rather, what is required is the (non-essential) update with information of the form '**Acc** *s*, *φ*' which may take place in the case of fictional and non-fictional discourse. In other words, whether you make an assertion or a fictional statement, you are always successful at 'going on the record' in this sense. However, this still would not prove that bald-faced lies in institutional settings could just as well be modelled as lies. This is because the definition of assertion still incorporates an update of the common ground with the

expressed content as essential update, i.e., a successful assertion of p updates the common ground with p . The definition of fictional statements on the other hand, does not incorporate such an update (it merely requires that the expressed content does not ‘evaporate’, i.e., a common ground update with ‘**In** s , p ’). Similarly, the success of a bald-faced lie does not depend on whether the common ground is updated with the content that it expresses, e.g., Pentangeli’s bald-faced lie was successful even though he did *not* update the stable common ground with the information that he did not know the Godfather (cf. section 5.4.1).

Pilot experiment on tense use

Another obvious direction of future research is to subject the proposed semantic analyses of **In** and **Acc** to empirical scrutiny. More specifically, the general picture of the use of **In** and **Acc** in contensive statements that has been presented in this chapter naturally invites experimental conformation. It would be interesting to see whether the three clusters of linguistic observations concerning preferences for fiction/non-fiction, implicit/explicit content and tense use in contensive statements with **In** and **Acc** can be experimentally verified.

To this end I have collaborated with Bimpikou on a pilot experiment that investigated tense use in parafictional statements with **In** (see [Semeijn and Bimpikou \(2019\)](#)). We empirically tested three variants of the Lewisian analysis of **In** that (unlike the original Lewisian analysis) specify a time of evaluation and thus make predictions about tense use. The time of evaluation in the three different analyses were respectively [1] the time of the described events (cf. [Zucchi \(2001\)](#)), [2] the time of fictional narration and [3] the utterance time of the contensive statement (cf. this chapter’s analysis of **Acc**). To tease apart the three analyses we distinguished between individual-level predicates (e.g., ‘be a detective’, ‘be a hobbit’) and stage-level predicates (e.g., ‘light a pipe’, ‘climb Mount Doom’). Second, we distinguished ‘homodiegetic’ narratives about past events in which the time of narration roughly coincides with the time of the events described in the novel (e.g., the Holmes stories, which supposedly are narrated by Holmes’ friend Watson) from ‘heterodiegetic’ narratives about past events in which the time of narration is obviously long after the time of the described events (e.g., *The Lord of the Rings*, which supposedly are records of events in a distant past). Intuitively, at Watson’s time of narration, Holmes *is* a detective and *lit* his pipe but at the time of narration of the narrator of *The Lord of the Rings*, Frodo *was* a hobbit and *climbed* Mount Doom. By contrast, at the time of the described events, Holmes *is* a detective and *lights* his pipe and Frodo *is* a hobbit and *climbs* Mount Doom. Lastly, at the utterance time of the contensive statement – assuming a uniform cross-world timeline – Holmes *was* a detective and *lit* his pipe and Frodo *was* a hobbit and *climbed* Mount Doom.

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We conducted a questionnaire on Amazon Mechanical Turk. We used a 2×2 experimental design with 'type of narrative' (heterodiegetic/homodiegetic) and 'type of predicate' (individual-level/stage-level) as factors. 32 participants were shown 16 short stories (4 for every condition) each followed by 2 pairs of parafictional sentences with **In** (2 targets, 2 controls) in simple present and simple past versions. Below is an example item consisting of a homodiegetic narrative followed by target sentences with individual-level predicates:

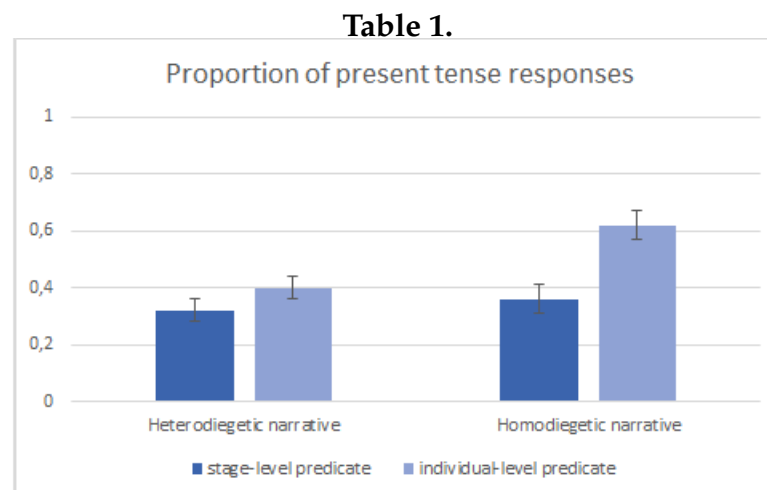
Subha Datta

My dear friend Subha Datta is a woodcutter and every day he goes to the forest near his home to get supplies of wood. Sometimes he takes his three boys with him, and now and then, as a special treat, his two little girls are allowed to trot along beside him. Subha has told his sons that as soon as they are old enough he will give each of them a little axe of his own. The girls, he has said, must be content with breaking off small twigs from the branches he cuts down.

One day, Subha told his children that none of them could come with him, for he meant to go a very long way into the forest, to see if he could find better wood there than nearer home. Vainly the boys entreated him to take them with him. "Not today," he said, "you would be too tired to go all the way. You must help your mother today and play with your sisters."

- In the fairy tale, Subha Datta encourages his daughters to chop wood.
- In the fairy tale, Subha Datta encouraged his daughters to chop wood.
- In the fairy tale, Subha Datta made a living by cutting wood.
- In the fairy tale, Subha Datta makes a living by cutting wood.

The questionnaire consisted in a four-alternative forced-choice task. Participants were given the instruction to "choose the sentence that best describes (part of) the content of the passage". Participants responses are summarized in table 1:



Overall results show that participants chose mainly past tense, except in the homodiegetic/individual-level condition, where they preferred present tense. This tentatively supports analysis [2] (i.e., the time of evaluation is the time of the fictional narration) and speaks against Zucchi's (2001) observation of a general preference for present tense in parafictional statements with **In**. However, since the participants answered questions about stories that were on a screen in front of them, they may have been inclined to simply copy the (narrator's) tense use rather than report their own preferences. In future experiments it would be interesting to check tense use preferences in parafictional statements about well-known narratives without showing them to the participants.

Other languages

Another potentially fruitful direction for future research is to explore to what extent the presented observations generalize to other languages. Although I focus on English language use in this dissertation, on the face of it, the **In** and **Acc** contrast also exist in other languages such as Dutch, Spanish and French:

(153) Dutch

In De Hobbit reist Bilbo naar de Eenzame Berg.

In *The Hobbit* travels Bilbo to the Lonely Mountain.

'In *The Hobbit*, Bilbo travels to the Lonely Mountain.'

(154) Dutch

? *Volgens De Hobbit reist Bilbo naar de Eenzame Berg.*

According-to *The Hobbit*, travels Bilbo to the Lonely Mountain.

'According to *The Hobbit*, Bilbo travels to the Lonely Mountain.'

(155) Spanish

En El Hobbit, Bilbo viaja a la Montaña Solitaria.

In *The Hobbit*, Bilbo travels to the Mountain Lonely.

'In *The Hobbit*, Bilbo travels to the Lonely Mountain.'

(156) Spanish

? *Según El Hobbit, Bilbo viaja a la Montaña Solitaria.*

According-to *The Hobbit*, Bilbo travels to the Mountain Lonely.

'According to *The Hobbit*, Bilbo travels to the Lonely Mountain.'

(157) French

Dans Le Hobbit, Bilbo voyage vers la Montagne Solitaire.

In *The Hobbit*, Bilbo travels to the Mountain Lonely.

'In *The Hobbit*, Bilbo travels to the Lonely Mountain.'

(158) French

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? *Selon* *Le Hobbit, Bilbo voyage vers la Montagne Solitaire.*

According-to *The Hobbit*, Bilbo travels to the Mountain Lonely.

'According to *The Hobbit*, Bilbo travels to the Lonely Mountain.'

Dutch 'in' and 'volgens', Spanish 'en' and 'según' and French 'dans' and 'selon' seem to display similar behaviour to **In** and **Acc** in English (e.g., preferences for 'in', 'en' and 'dans' over respectively 'volgens', 'según' and 'selon' for contentive statements about fiction). This suggests that there is indeed an important contrast here that is not just a peculiarity of English grammar. It would be interesting to see whether the **In/Acc** contrast generalizes to languages that are not Indo-European.