Speech Act Theory (cf. Handout 2 Lexikální a textová rovina)

Key words: *language is used to perform actions *the expressibility principle *conditions for illocutionary acts *taxonomies of speech acts *multiple functions and indirect acts *sample analysis

Basic assumption: language is used to perform actions

Main concepts:
- Locutionary, illocutionary, perlocutionary act
- Constatives vs. performatives
- Expressibility principle
- Taxonomies of speech acts

The Expressibility Principle
Searle: "speech act is the basic unit of communication"
"it is possible (in theory) for a speaker to come to be able to say exactly what she means either by increasing her knowledge of the language or by enriching the language".

Multiple Functions and Indirect Acts
Sometimes we do more than one thing with the same speech act; sometimes we use a speech act (form) to carry another act's illocutionary force.

Practical task
Data description

The conversation S.1.4 (pp. 105-106) was excerpted from *A Corpus of English Conversation*, edited by J. Svartvik and R. Quirk, published in 1980 in Stockholm.

Information about speakers:
- The corpus intends to provide some data on "spontaneous conversation among educated British speakers (educated to university level).... The recordings were made without prior knowledge of the main participants." (Svartvik 1980: 26).
- S.1.4 is a dialogue between two speakers, both male academics aged 48. The participants are referred to as A and B.
- Setting – no information provided (probably A's office or a common room in an institution for people to make coffee. It would have been useful to know for this way we do not know whether the meeting was planned (at least by one of the participants or completely accidental))
- Tone units 1-26

<u>Data</u> (Conversation S.1.4 transcribed for analysis)
Transcription conventions:

speakers	A, B	note 1
speaker's identity	A>	speaker continues where he left off
tone units	^{12}	each tone unit numbered by superscript
overlap	☼, +	note 2
nuclear tone	↓,↑	
pause	·	
phonetic transcription	[]	
uncertain hearing, incomprehensibility	<<… syll>>	
tone unit continued	&	

Note 1: In participants' identification ':' is not used because the identification was explicit enough.

Note 2: overlaps are signalled by ☼…☼, or +… + . If there are many overlaps occurring within short distance ☼☼…☼☼ or ++…++ are also used.

A^1 Richard <<↓HALLO>>

A^2 I've just ☼[s]☼   set out +<<syll SYLL+ ^{4}make some>>&
B^3 ☼thank ↓you☼
B^5 +<<↓THANKS>>+

>A^4 &I've just boiled some ↓water ^{6} ☼for having ↓coffee☼
B^8 ☼<<3 to 4 sylls>>☼

>A^7 cos I haven't ↓had time for ↑tea

A^9 ☼would☼ you ↑like some
B^{10} ☼↓yes☼

B^{11} ↓yes

A^{12} ↓thanks for your ↑invitation you <<[h∂u] throwing a ☼↓party☼>>
B^{13} ☼↓yes☼

B^{14} <<4 to 5 sylls as ↓well>>

A^{15} ☼ that's ↓good☼
>B^{16} ☼I don't ↓know☼
>B^{17} I <<don't know whether I'll>> drink coffee at this time of ↑day
>B^{18} ☼if☼ there ↓were any ↑tea ·
A^{19} ☼<<↓yeah>>☼

A^{20}<<↓no>> · ^{21} oh [δiii] ↓tea · ^{22} ↓tea or coffee
B^{23} ↓right

B^{24} I think he [h∂] I think he probably ↓heard
B^{25} he said is he ↑gone
A^{26} ↓yes ·