The normative significance of the distinction between informative and uninformative speech acts

There are many ways in which we can convey information. For instance, we can inform our audience that it is raining by being soaking wet when entering an apartment, our accent may inform our audience where we are from, the tone of our voice may inform the audience that we are irritated or angry, etc. However, such ways of conveying and extracting information may be imprecise and may lead to wrong conclusions. For instance, I may be wet because I was sloppy when watering plants in the garden, I may use a Cockney accent to mislead you into thinking that I am originally from London, you may misread the tone of my voice and wrongly assume that I am angry, etc. The most reliable and the main source of information about the world comes from the content of our speech acts. Thus, when I say that it is raining, that I am from Prague, or that I am tired, I directly express certain information. This project focuses on the informativeness and uninformativeness of speech acts on the level of their content.

Assertions are considered central speech acts for our communication and are often characterised as essentially delivering new information. Moreover, being cooperative creatures, we do not want to be redundant. Thus, saying something that is already commonly known is generally considered improper. Nevertheless, we often engage in communication that can be characterised as somehow uninformative—for instance, we remind or assure our audience about something that was already said. The project's main objective is to propose a comprehensive analysis of speech acts focusing on their informative and uninformative character.

The first stage of the research will be devoted to the defence of the strong informativeness hypothesis, which posits that assertions are speech acts that essentially deliver new information. Thus, the aim will be to answer the following research question: "What are the grounds for and benefits of treating assertions as essentially informative?" The project will employ the normative account to speech acts, according to which speech acts are governed by constitutive norms. The second part of the research will be offering an analysis of uninformative speech acts, which has not been done before. It will aim to answer the following research question: "What are the distinguishing features of uninformative speech acts and how do norms governing them differ from those governing informative speech acts?" The final part of the research will be an application of the findings to topics concerning the nature of testimony and lying.

The results will be presented and discussed with leading scholars during the internship in the USA, research visits in Europe, and conferences. The final product of the project will be published in a series of articles in top philosophy journals.