Hi my dear students. The first lecture in the second course will be about speech acts.

**What is a Speech Act?**

A speech act is an utterance that serves a function in communication. We perform speech acts when we offer an apology, greeting, request, complaint, invitation, compliment, or refusal. A speech act might contain just one word, as in "Sorry!" to perform an apology, or several words or sentences: "I’m sorry I forgot your birthday. I just let it slip my mind." Speech acts include real-life interactions and require not only knowledge of the language but also appropriate use of that language within a given culture.

Here are some examples of speech acts we use or hear every day:

Greeting: "Hi, Eric. How are things going?"

Request: "Could you pass me the mashed potatoes, please?"

Complaint: "I’ve already been waiting three weeks for the computer, and I was told it would be delivered within a week."

Invitation: "We’re having some people over Saturday evening and wanted to know if you’d like to join us."

Compliment: "Hey, I really like your tie!"

Refusal: "Oh, I’d love to see that movie with you but this Friday just isn’t going to work."

Types of Speech Acts

There are various kinds of speech acts, yet the following, classified by John Sealer, have received particular attention:

Representatives commit a speaker to the truth of an expressed proposition.

Paradigm cases: asserting, stating, concluding, boasting, describing, suggesting.

I am a great singer.

Bill was an accountant.

Commissives commit a speaker to some future action.

Paradigm cases: promising, pledging, threatening, vowing, offering.

I am going to leave you.

I'll call you tonight.

Directives are used by a speaker who attempts to get the addressee to carry out an action.

Paradigm cases: requesting, advising, commanding, challenging, inviting, daring, entreating.

You'd better tidy up that mess.

Sit down.

Declarations affect an immediate change of affairs.

Paradigm cases: declaring, baptizing, resigning, firing from employment, hiring, arresting.

We find the defendant guilty.

I resign.

Expressives express some sort of psychological state.

Paradigm cases: greeting, thanking, apologizing, complaining, congratulating.

This beer is disgusting.

I'm sorry to hear that.‏