



Foundational Speech Acts

Language has the power to bring the abstract into existence. Through language, we learn how things are, share interpretations, describe how to do things, commit to action, and utter new possibilities. Using the six key “speech acts” effectively can produce coordinated and meaningful action.



1. Assertion

An assertion speaks *factually* about the past or present. It is true and verifiable by two or more people. They are used to establish a basis for reality. A financial statement, heart rate, and dimension of a space are examples of assertions.



2. Assessment

An assessment expresses our *interpretation*. They are run through our filters of understanding and can create the frame for new futures. They are most effective when spoken associated with commitments or declarations.



3. Declaration

A declaration generates a new future and *creates new possibility*. When these commitments are spoken with authority, they can compel people into action and initiate change.



4. Request

Requests are an effort to *generate action in others*. We use them to specify what is needed or wanted and how someone could fulfill that need/want. “Please prepare an updated report by Friday” is an example of a request.



5. Offer

An offer is putting our self forward to *perform or deliver for others*. They frame action in our self or team. The potential performer initiates the action, such as, “Let my team and me help you with the additional analysis.”



6. Promise

A promise is a special type of Declaration that is a *mutual commitment to insure an outcome*. It a binding combination of a declarations, assertions, assessments, and request/offers to produce results. One of the other speech acts may build toward a promise, or, a leader may start with a promise and work from there.