

Strategies for Choosing Between Direct and Indirect Requests, Considering Rank of Imposition in Everyday Requests, (multiple days)

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This activity is intended for middle-to-high school students in a Spanish immersion class who are anywhere between a Novice-High to Intermediate-High proficiency on the [ACTFL](#) scale. Even though there are many concepts related to pragmatics in requests, this lesson will include direct and indirect strategies, rank of imposition, the imperative tense, and the conditional tense. By this time in the course, learners should have been exposed to the imperative and conditional tenses. They might have also studied speaker/hearer orientation (if not, it would be important to do so soon after this activity). Concepts like power, age, and social distance will not be included in this lesson. It would be important to review this lesson in future years of study, during which time those additional concepts could be added in.

LEARNING OUTCOMES. Learners will be able to:

Knowledge:

- Identify and make a grammatically direct request using command form, and an indirect request using indicative and conditional forms.

Analysis:

- Explain when to use direct vs indirect requests, based on rank of imposition.

Subjectivity:

- Explain their request-making choice, based on the context, even if and when the choice doesn't align with expected norms.

Awareness:

- Demonstrate that they realize the effect of their request on a listener and make any repairs, if needed.

MODE(S): Interpretive, Interpersonal, Presentational

MATERIALS: [Video Explaining Requests](#), Projector, Teacher's Laptop/Computer, [Activity Slides](#), [Scenarios Extension Activity](#)

PROCEDURE

Before the lesson (10 minutes):

1. For homework to be done before class, learners watch the [video explaining requests](#). They must note down at least three types of requests they would like to try out in class.
2. Teacher: print out Scenarios Extension Activity - enough for 1 handout per learner.

DAY 1

Observe (20 minutes):

1. (Slide 2) Play the first short clip to the class.
 - a. As a class, fill out the four sections on the slide: The request phrase heard in the video; the grammatical structure of that phrase; the level of importance of the request, and whether or not an explanation was given with the request.
2. (Slide 3): Briefly introduce direct and indirect strategies. Explain how they are connected with grammatical forms.
 - a. Also introduce Rank of Imposition and connect it with severities of importance.

3. (Slide 4) Repeat the same process as with Slide 2. This time, use terms like “direct, indirect, and imposition”.
4. In pairs or small groups, learners repeat the same process with Slides 5-7.
5. Once finished, fill in the slides by asking groups of learners to share their answers.
 - a. Use informal assessment by observing learners to determine if additional explanation is needed. If it is, use a whiteboard or another method for incidental learning.

Analyze (20 minutes):

1. (10 minutes - Slide 8): In pairs or small groups, learners discuss the questions and statements from the slide to try to come up with guiding principles for making requests in Spanish. Learners also write down one question they have about the topic.
 - a. Which is more common: direct or indirect?
 - b. What sounds more polite: indicative or conditional?
 - c. T/F: In English, we use “Can I?” and “Could I” more often, but not in Spanish.
 - d. Rank of Imposition = inconvenience = how big the request is
 - i. Low
 - ii. Mid - add brief explanation
 - iii. High - add more explanation
 - e. When is more explanation required about why we are requesting something?
 - f. What would happen if I used a request strategy that is not usually used in that context?
 - g. Write down one question you still have about the topic.
2. (10 minutes) As a class, pairs/groups of learners discuss their findings and try to answer each other’s questions.
 - a. The teacher acts as a guide to the whole-class discussion and makes any corrections as needed.

Extend:

1. (10 minutes) Model to the class how to come up to three different learners and ask one for an item (such as a paper), a favor (such as to open/close the blinds), or some information (such as the time).
 - a. Using the three phrases they wrote down for homework or studied in class, everyone stands up and finds three people (including the teacher) to ask them for an item, a favor, and some information.
 - b. Learners then get into small groups to share what they asked for and how successful they were.
 - c. Teacher walks around the glass observing and participating in the reactions.
2. For homework, learners are presented with [written scenarios](#). They must write what they would say for each scenario, based on what they learned in class.
 - a. A word bank of helpful words/phrases learners can choose from to construct their responses is included.
 - b. Learners turn the assignment in for credit and written feedback from the teacher.

DAY 2

1. After receiving their assignment back, learners work in pairs. Each learner chooses three scenarios to read to their partner.
 - c. Their partner answers in Spanish, either what they wrote or something else, based on the feedback from the teacher.
 - d. The first partner then reads their own response as well.
 - e. Learners decide if there is another way they could form a request for each of those scenarios, or if they are satisfied with their responses.

Note: If there are heritage learners in the class, ask them to be the “experts” by providing additional examples or (if they are comfortable with it) answering any questions other learners might have.

Another option of differentiating the lesson for heritage speakers is to ask them how they would react to certain requests in certain scenarios. The teacher provides the scenario and gives a request that is not pragmatically normative. For example: “I forgot my Spanish textbook at home and I ask you if I can borrow your book for the day. I say: ¿Puedo tener tu libro?” The heritage learner would explain their reaction or give a better request.