

Making Requests in English, (50 minutes)

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This activity is meant for intermediate learners of English in college in a foreign language context. It focuses on the observation, analysis, and extension of requests in English. The lesson covers exposure to English requests and the pragmatic components behind making requests appropriately to account for severity of requests. It utilizes digital discourse spaces and a digital game to allow learners to acquire skills for making requests. Learners will watch a video, have a discussion, work in small groups, present their findings, practice pronunciation, and choose an extension activity.

LEARNING OUTCOMES. Learners will be able to:

Knowledge:

- Recognize words and/or phrases for making requests.
- State ways to respond to declined requests.
- Pronounce, with high comprehensibility, a list of requests.

Analysis:

- Appropriately choose which request is best based on the severity of the request.

Subjectivity:

- Explain why they chose the request strategy they did and whether it was against the norm or not.

Awareness:

- Recognize the perlocutionary effects of different levels of directness in requests, and whether they got the information they wanted or not.
- Recognize when requests were too (in)direct for the severity of the request.

MODE(S): Interpretive, Interpersonal, Presentational

MATERIALS: Pens/pencils, paper, YouTube video: [Conversational English - How to make polite requests](#), American English Corpus: [Brown Corpus](#), [VRChat Handout](#)

PROCEDURE

Observe (20 minutes):

1. Introduce the topic. Play video (0:30-4:00): [Conversational English - How to make polite requests](#)
2. Lead class discussion (encourage learners to think of the contexts and severities of requests):
 - a. What kinds of requests were used?
 - b. Did you see any patterns?
3. As a class, use [concordance corpora](#) to look up common request phrases/words and view the contexts in which they are used.
 - a. Ask learners to notice the contexts of specific phrases. Which phrases had more examples of use?

Analyze (30 minutes):

1. Learners work in small groups (3-4 people). Assign each group a request phrase to look up in the [corpora](#).
2. Groups find examples of their assigned request and analyze the severity of the request.
3. Learners create a table with three columns:

(-) low severity	(=) neutral severity	(+) high severity
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4. Learners put examples from the corpora into one of the columns based on whether they group found the request to be low, neutral, or high severity
5. Class discussion: groups share their findings and explain:
 - a. What level of severity was common of the request you looked at?
 - b. Why did you think the request was severe or not?
6. As a class, decide what contexts are most appropriate for each of the requests.
 - a. For high severity requests, which request would you use? What about for low severity requests?
7. Brief lecture on how to respond to declined requests. Review formulaic responses:
 - a. “No worries”
 - b. “No problem, I understand”
 - c. “It’s OK, thanks anyways”
 - d. “OK, sorry to bother you”
8. Lesson debrief: Review both formulaic requests and formulaic responses.
 - a. Ask learners what they think is best for high severity/low severity requests.
 - b. Lead some pronunciation drills for practice.

Extend (outside of class time):

1. For homework, give learners the options to do one of the following:
 - a. Complete the [VRChat handout](#)
 - b. Make 3 requests to English speakers in a digital space and answer the following questions:
 - i. How did you make the request? What expression did you use?
 - ii. What did you request and how would you rate the severity of the request?
 - iii. What happened after you made the request? Was it fulfilled, declined, partially completed?
 - iv. Why do you think the request caused what it did?