

Lesson 6

Requesting specific actions

Teacher's booklet

Phase 1: Guided noticing (approx. 30 min)

Exercise 1. Warm-up and predicting

Note: The terminology should be removed in the student's version of the booklet.

Instructions: Can you think of some real-life situations in which people may say something like this:

Note: Here teachers can provide more than 3 examples (any examples from the shortlist).

- I really need you to ____ + [do something] as soon as you can

Possible situation (s): _____

- If you have a minute, could you please ____ + [call for action]?

Possible situation (s): _____

- I don't want to rush you, but ____ + [call for action]

Possible situation (s): _____

Exercise 2. Exploration through written contextualized input

Background: 8 native speakers of English were asked to respond to the following scenario:

You work as a supervisor in a company. One of your employees has not submitted his/her report on time. You need to talk to your employee and ask him to submit the report to you as soon as possible. What would you say to him/her?

Read their responses below and try to notice and underline any expressions/word combinations that were similar to those we discussed at the beginning of today's lesson (e.g., *If you have a minute, could you please ___*). The first response has been done for you.

1. Hey [name], ***can you get that report to me right away?*** Thanks.
2. Hi, [name], do you have a moment? I just wanted to check if you had that report ready. No? Okay, if you could get it to me by the end of that day that would be great.
3. Hey! I really need you to get that report in as soon as you can. It's top priority. Thanks.
4. Hi James. How is that report coming along? Do you need any additional support from the team?
5. I don't want to rush you, but it really needs to be done this afternoon. Can you drop everything else and just focus on finishing it?
6. If you have a minute, could you please send over your report that was due last week? And if you could please remember to do this sooner next time so we can stay on top of everything, that would be great.
7. Hi, [name]. I'm still waiting on that report. Do you have it ready?

8. Hi ____, can we speak for a minute? I wanted to check in about that report – is everything ok? What’s been holding you back from getting to it?

Phase 2: Deep cognitive engagement and stimulating retention (approx. 60 min)

Exercise 1. Form-comparison and explicit metapragmatic explanation

Instructions: Now compare the expressions you’ve underlined in Exercise 1 with the list provided in your handout. Were you able to notice most of them?

Teacher’s script:

Such expressions are also called ‘*pragmatic formulas*’. These are fixed or semi-fixed multi-word combinations *frequently used* by the native/highly proficient speakers of the language for *specific communicative purposes*. Such expressions can be very beneficial for developing *fluency* and *accuracy* in a second language. The knowledge of these expressions can also help you improve your *pragmatic competence* (ability to use your second language in a contextually appropriate way in order to be properly understood by the native/highly proficient speakers of the language). Such expressions can help you *sound more natural* in your second language, and, as a result, you are more likely to be accepted into the ‘*inner social circle*’ of the second language community.

Now let’s move on to Exercises 2 and 3. These exercises were designed to help you better memorize these formulas and understand how they are used in context (in this lesson, *Requesting specific actions*).

Target pragmatic formulas:

1. *Can you get* ____ + [noun-report] *to me right away?*
2. *If you could get* ____ + [pronoun-it] *to me* ____ + [time period],
that would be great
3. *I really need you to* ____ + [do something] *as soon as you can*
4. *How is* ____ + [noun/pronoun] *coming along?*
5. I don't want to rush you, but ____ + [call for action]
6. If you have a minute, could you please ____ + [call for action]?
7. Do you have it ready?
8. I wanted to check in about ____ + [any meaningful completion
of the phrase]

OPTIONAL: *At this point in the lesson, teachers may also want to discuss the following questions with the group to enhance cross-cultural linguistic awareness:*

Awareness-raising discussion questions:

1. Are the responses provided by the native English speakers different from/similar to your your native language?
2. Are these responses different from/similar to your own responses in English?

3. What are the main similarities (if any) between your own responses and those provided by the native speakers?
4. What are the main differences (if any)?

Exercise 2. Understanding the implied meaning of the target formulas and explicit metapragmatic explanation

Review 1. Match the pragmatic formulas with their best paraphrased versions. Pay careful attention to the hints provided for you.

1. How is ____ + [noun/pronoun] coming along?

Hint: the phrasal verb 'come along' doesn't mean 'physically go somewhere' in this context

2. I wanted to check in about ____ + [any meaningful completion of the phrase]

Hint: the phrasal verb 'check in' is used to informally ask/inquire about the status of something (e.g., report) in this context

3. Can you get it to me right away?

Hint: the verb 'get' is used to informally request something (e.g., report) in this context

4. If you have a minute, could you please ____ + [call for action]?

Hint: the phrase 'if you have a minute' is used to prepare the listener for the upcoming request in this context

5. I don't want to rush you, but ____ + [call for action]

Hint: the phrase 'I don't want to rush you' is used to prepare the listener for the upcoming request in this context

- a. I just wanted to ask you about the status of your report
- b. Please submit your report as soon as possible
- c. I know you are very busy, but I really need you to submit your report
- d. I know you are very busy, but I would appreciate if you submit your report once you have more time
- e. I just wanted to know if you've made any progress on your report

Note: Note that these paraphrased versions are the interpretations of the author; teachers may want to create their own paraphrases.

Answer key: 1-e; 2-a; 3-b; 4-d; 5-c.

Review 2. Review each pragmatic formula again and decide whether each pragmatic formula is a direct or an indirect speech act.

In other words, how direct was the speaker when he/she requested the report to be submitted? Circle or underline the chosen answer.

Very direct Somewhat direct Somewhat indirect Very indirect

Hint: Direct speech acts is when the speaker says exactly what he/she means. Indirect speech acts is when the speaker means more than he/she says in reality. Indirect speech acts are generally considered more polite in English.

1. I really need you to ____ + [do sth] as soon as you can

How direct was the speaker when he/she requested the report to be submitted?

Very direct Somewhat direct Somewhat indirect Very indirect

2. If you could ___ + [do sth] ___ + [time period], that would be great

How direct was the speaker when he/she requested the report to be submitted?

Very direct Somewhat direct Somewhat indirect Very indirect

3. How is ___ + [noun/pronoun] coming along?

How direct was the speaker when he/she requested the report to be submitted?

Very direct Somewhat direct Somewhat indirect Very indirect

4. Do you have it ready?

How direct was the speaker when he/she requested the report to be submitted?

Very direct Somewhat direct Somewhat indirect Very indirect

5. I wanted to check in about ___ + [any meaningful completion of the phrase]

How direct was the speaker when he/she requested the report to be submitted?

Very direct Somewhat direct Somewhat indirect Very indirect

6. If you have a minute, could you please ____ + [call for action]?

How direct was the speaker when he/she requested the report to be submitted?

Very direct Somewhat direct Somewhat indirect Very indirect

7. Can you get ____ + [noun/pronoun] to me right away?

How direct was the speaker when he/she requested the report to be submitted?

Very direct Somewhat direct Somewhat indirect Very indirect

8. I don't want to rush you, but _____ + [call for action]

How direct was the speaker when he/she requested the report to be submitted?

Very direct Somewhat direct Somewhat indirect Very indirect

OPTIONAL: At this point in the lesson, teachers may also want to provide some explicit explanation as to 3 key socio-pragmatic factors speakers have to keep in mind when engaging in a conversation to enhance L2 pragmatic competence development:

Teacher's script: *When you engage in a conversation with 2 or more people, there are 3 key factors you need to keep in mind:*

1. ***Social distance*** (how well do the speakers know each other; age & gender)

Note: As the level of social distance increases (goes up), the level of politeness increases (goes up), *which affects the language choices*

2. ***Power*** (does the speaker have any power/authority over the hearer or vice versa; what are their roles)

Note: As the level of power (goes up), the level of politeness increases (goes up), *which affects the language choices*

3. ***Imposition*** (the type of obligation the speaker is forcing the hearer to do- e.g., borrow money vs to borrow a pen- is this a high stakes context? What are potential risks?)

Note: As the level of imposition (obligation/responsibility) increases, so does the level of politeness, *which affects the language choices*

Exercise 3: Speech act analysis

Instructions: Read each response and divide it into meaningful components (parts). Next, find a phrase that matches speaker's communicative strategy, as shown in the example. Check your answers with the rest of the class.

Example: Hey [name], can you get that report to me right away? Thanks.

Part 1

Hey [name], can you get that report to me right away?

Speaker's strategy

Greeting + request →

Thanking →

Part 2

Thanks

Phrase

Hey [name], can you get that report to me right away?

Thanks

1. Hi, [name], do you have a moment? I just wanted to check if you had that report ready. No? Okay, if you could get it to me by the end of that day that would be great.

Greeting + opening question → _____

Stating the reason of request → _____

Request → _____

2. Hey! I really need you to get that report in as soon as you can. It's top priority. Thanks.

Greeting + request → _____

Explanation → _____

Thanking → _____

3. Hi James. How is that report coming along? Do you need any additional support from the team?

Greeting → _____

Request (in a form of a question) → _____

Follow-up question → _____

4. I don't want to rush you, but it really needs to be done this afternoon. Can you drop everything else and just focus on finishing it?

Softener + request → _____

Follow-up request → _____

5. If you have a minute, could you please send over your report that was due last week? And if you could please remember to do this sooner next time so we can stay on top of everything, that would be great.

Softener + request → _____

Follow-up request → _____

6. Hi, [name]. I'm still waiting on that report. Do you have it ready?

Greeting → _____

Stating the reason of request → _____

Request (in a form of a question) → _____

7. Hi ____, can we speak for a minute? I wanted to check in about that report – is everything ok? What's been holding you back from getting to it?

Greeting + opening question → _____

Asking about the status of the report → _____

Follow-up question → _____

Phase 3: Practice (approx. 30 min)

Instructions: Students role-play the following scenario in pairs (making sure to practice performing both roles):

You work as a supervisor in a company. One of your employees has not submitted his/her report on time. You need to talk to your employee and ask him to submit the report to you as soon as possible. What would you say to him/her?

Instructions for the ‘supervisors’:

1. Start talking to your employees and first ask why they still haven’t submitted their reports. To do this, use the following pragmatic

formulas:

How is ____ + [your report] coming along?

Do you have it ready?

I wanted to check in about ____ + [your report]

2. Once you listen to your ‘employees’ explanation/excuse, discuss possible timeframe of when you would like them to submit the report you. To do this, use the following pragmatic formulas:

Can you get ____ + [your report] to me right away?

If you could get ____ + [your report] to me ____ + [time period], that would be great

I really need you to ____ + [submit your report] as soon as you can

I don’t want to rush you, but ____ + [call for action]

If you have a minute, could you please ____ + [call for action]?

Instructions for the ‘employees’:

Follow your handouts and use the scripts prepared for you to help you navigate through the role-play.

Scripts for ‘employees’:

Employee 1:

Turn 1 (Excuse/Explanation): Oh, I am so sorry. I’ve completely forgotten about the deadline.

Listen to your supervisor’s response.

Turn 2 (Promise of future action): Of course! I’ll get it to you as soon as I can. My apologies for the delay.

Employee 2:

Turn 1 (Excuse/Explanation): Oh, I am so sorry. I’ve been extremely overworked this week.

Listen to your supervisor’s response.

Turn 2 (Promise of future action): Of course! I’ll get it to you as soon as I can. My apologies for the delay.

Employee 3:

Turn 1 (Excuse/Explanation): Oh, I am so sorry. I got stuck on Section 3 of the report for some reason. I meant to send you an e-mail asking for an extension.

Listen to your supervisor’s response.

Turn 2 (Promise of future action): Of course! I’ll get it to you as soon as I can. My apologies for the delay.