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Investigating Second Language Request Strategies by a Chinese Undergraduate Student Majoring in Business English

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***Abstract*—Making requests is one of the most commonplace pragmatic behaviors in daily interactions. This present paper attempts to specifically examine the use of second language (L2) request strategies by a single English major in China. By providing four different role-play scenarios in which relative power (+/–P) and social distance (+/–D) were deliberately designed as the contextual constraints, while low ranking of imposition (–R) was kept constant, this case study elicited and audio-recorded the participant's conversational data via WeChat. Drawing upon the coding scheme developed by Blum-Kulka and Olshtain (1984), the study showcased that the participant was inclined to chiefly employ conventionally indirect requests and more external modification devices than internal ones in all the role-plays. In addition, the participant's inappropriate adoption of direct requests in the first and third role-plays and written responses to the follow-up survey questions suggested that he was not conscious of the contextual variables at all when performing requests. In conclusion, some pedagogical recommendations are proposed to enhance L2 learners' pragmatic competence by integrating pragmatic instruction into English language classes.**

***Index Terms*—request strategies, an English major in China, role-play, WeChat, case study**

I. Introduction

In the field of second language (L2) pragmatics, pragmatic competence has gained more and more attention from researchers, teachers, and material developers, especially with the growing development of L2 speech act theory in recent years. One of the commonest ways of assessing L2 learners' pragmatic competence depends, to a large extent, on if they can adopt effective strategies to realize a speech act in varying situational contexts.

Request is the most widely investigated speech act in literature (Ren, 2022), which may be defined as "attempts on the part of a speaker to get a hearer to perform or to stop performing some kind of action" (Ellis, 2008, p. 172), and falls under a type of directives based on Searle's (1976) classification of speech acts. To put it tersely, making a request is asking the hearer to do something for the speaker. In nature, request is a face-threatening act. As such, the requester needs to employ polite strategies to minimize imposition on the hearer. According to Brown et al. (1987), speech act strategies are constrained by three contextual variables: relative power (P), social distance (D), and ranking of imposition (R). It should be noted that L2 requesting strategies are also influenced by cultural contexts. For instance, Chinese culture attaches much importance to face, particularly positive face to boost community solidarity (Lee-Wong, 1994), whereas British culture has its unique request strategies to save an individual's face. Therefore, it is of necessity to study how an English request is made by Chinese students in different situational contexts.

Inspired by Blum-Kulka and Olshtain's (1984) seminal project of *A Cross-cultural Study of Speech Act Realization Patterns* (CCSARP), in which they developed an analytic framework of realizing requests and apologies in terms of directness level and modification devices, a large body of request research has been conducted on how non-native speakers converge on or diverge from native speakers in producing English requests as regards specific modification strategies, the comparisons among different data elicitation methods, and so forth. However, few studies have shed an in-depth insight into the pragmatic competence of a specific learner of English. Accordingly, by dint of open role-plays in conjunction with survey questions, the present empirical study intends to explore how a Chinese undergraduate student majoring in Business English performed requests in English-as-a-foreign-language (EFL) contexts.

II. Literature Review

A. Previous Studies on EFL Requests

Even though English is used extensively worldwide, cross-cultural miscommunication still exists, which used to be attributed to learners' insufficient linguistic knowledge. But speakers' pragmatic failure can possibly lead to miscommunication either due to pragmalinguistic or sociopragmatic factors (LoCastro, 2011). In order to compare the differences of request and apology realization strategies between Hebrew native speakers and non-native speakers, Blum-Kulka and Olshtain (1984) launched a cross-cultural project to investigate speech act realization patterns. Using a

discourse completion test (DCT), they established influential patterns of speech act strategies with respect to directness level, speaker- or hearer-oriented perspectives, and modifications.

Subsequently, their project spurred a boom in comparative studies regarding how differently English native speakers and non-native speakers make requests in EFL contexts. For instance, Yang (2009) compared request realization strategies between 21 Chinese and 55 American graduate students through a modified DCT with 14 situations. A chi-square test found that these participants differed significantly at the level of directness use and scenarios with great imposition, but no significant differences were identified in scenarios with relative power. In like manner, using a written DCT consisting of scenarios with unequal social status, Woodfield and Economidou-Kogetsidis (2010) scrutinized the way 89 advanced learners of English and 87 English native speakers performed requests. Results of chi-square analysis indicated significant differences between the two groups with reference to perspectives, external, and internal modifications. The follow-up interview and verbal report also corroborated these findings. Wang (2011) compared 32 high-proficient Chinese learners of English, 41 intermediate Chinese EFL learners in a business program, and 32 Australian students in ten request situations. The DCT data revealed that both learner groups differed significantly from native speakers only in the use of non-conventionally and conventionally indirect requests. Furthermore, learner groups made use of more address terms and external modifications, as well as limited internal modifications caused by syntactic and lexical incompetence.

Some researchers dealt focally with specific mitigating devices. For example, Economidou-Kogetsidis (2009) canvassed Greek EFL university students' lexical downgrades and external supportive motives to mitigate requests. In comparison with native speakers of English, she found that Greek students underused lexical downgrades like *please*, *possible* and overused such external modification strategies as *really need*, *could*, *was/were wondering if*. These findings also substantiated Wang's (2011) research outcomes. Lin (2009) probed into the preparatory modals under the conventionally indirect requests by 180 college students, including Chinese learners of English, English native speakers, and Chinese native speakers. It was found that EFL learners and native speakers displayed the same preference order of three modal verbs: *can/could*, *will/would*, *may*, indicating that Chinese EFL learners acquired the target-like requesting in preparatory modals.

To recapitulate, these aforementioned comparative studies dominated by quantitative methods aim at exploring to what extent non-native speakers approximate or diverge from native speakers and improve target-like use of English by focusing primarily on the linguistic and cultural norms of L2, but neglecting L1 norms. In this sense, it can be interpreted as linguistic imperialism. On the other hand, there are fewer opportunities for learners to communicate with native speakers in EFL contexts. However they are taught in class and compared with native speakers, significant differences in request strategies can be more to less detected. Comparative studies on speech acts do generally offer the degree to which learners have acquired native-like pragmatic competence, but fail to tell us exactly the language choices and pragmatic behaviors of a learner when performing English requests.

B. Data Elicitation Methods of Requests

To collect data about making requests, there is a wide range of elicitation methods, including DCTs, role-plays, naturally occurring speech, and verbal reports, to name just a few (Ishihara & Cohen, 2021). But different data elicitation measures would generate different responses. As an example, Sasaki (1998) compared two groups of data gathered from open role-plays and questionnaires (namely, traditional DCTs), respectively. According to the results, role-plays induced longer responses with more informative strategies. On the other hand, the written responses to scenarios in the questionnaires were not naturally occurring, so they just represented respondents' pragmatic knowledge rather than performance. On the contrary, particularly open role-plays "provide more space for participants to interact with each other and talk more freely" (Lee, 2018, p. 22), although it is time-consuming to transcribe spoken data.

Most early studies adopted cross-sectional DCTs as the main research instrument. Economidou-Kogetsidis (2013) argues that compared to natural occurring speech, written DCT has the advantages of controlling situational variables of power, distance, and ranking of imposition, thus eliciting a great amount of information within a short time, but it is often criticized for "inability to capture the features of spoken language and natural interaction" (p. 22). Instead, the inability of DCT can be offset by role-plays and verbal reports to enhance the reliability and validity of data elicitation methods (Bella, 2012).

III. Rationale of This Study

Unlike prior works that mostly compare the request realization strategies by large samples of non-native speakers and English native speakers, this present study, using a qualitative data analysis, addresses.

How a single learner of English makes requests with the help of role-plays, as a case study "offers rich and in-depth insights that no other method can yield" (Dörnyei, 2007, p. 155). Two-fold rationales underlie the study: (a) to examine whether the learner realizes the situational variations embedded in the role-play scenarios before making requests and (b) to provide English teachers with some pedagogical implications, particularly to raise their awareness of pragmatic instruction in classroom teaching. Toward this end, a research question is proposed as follows:

What kinds of strategies does an English major in China adopt to realize the speech act of requesting in different situations?

IV. Methodology

A. The Participant

A Cantonese native speaker (male, 20 years old) was selected as the case participant. At present, he is a freshman majoring in Business English at a university located in South China, who scored full marks of 5 in oral performance when taking Level 2 of Public English Test System (PETS-2, equivalent to that of students entering university in China). So far, he has learned English as a foreign language for about 10 years. Although he has no experience of studying and living abroad, the open-minded participant is keen on chatting and making friends with international people online and offline. Prior to taking part in the role-plays, he signed an informed consent form to confirm his voluntary participation in this study.

B. Data Collection Instruments

In order to elicit the participant's data about making requests, four open role-plays were employed as the primary research instrumentation coupled with three survey questions.

(a). Role-Play Scenarios

The four role-play scenarios were carefully adapted from previously published studies with relative power (+/–P) and social distance (+/–D) as the contextual constraints. Ranking of imposition (R) was not discussed in the study, but low ranking of imposition (–R) in all the scenarios was kept constant inasmuch as low-imposition requests rendered the topics insensitive and facilitated the participant to carry out the oral tasks. By doing so, conversational data could be gathered as many as possible. The purpose of the four situationally different role-plays was to examine if the participant could be cognizant of the contextual constraints and plan appropriate mitigation strategies before producing requests.

Closely germane to college student life, the four scenarios included borrowing a book from a professor (adapted from Pan, 2012), borrowing a computer from a familiar roommate (adapted from Byon, 2004), asking for leave from a boss (adapted from Morkus, 2014), and asking for permission to join in a study group from a strange student (adapted from Najafabadi & Paramasivam, 2012). The participant had no difficulty in understanding the situations, because he was quite familiar with such situations in his real life as either a students or a part-time waiter. Moreover, both speakers' responsibilities and obligations were clearly explained in the situations. In order to ensure that he strictly followed the instructions to perform the speech act, an extra situation was presented to the participant in a pilot study, i.e., borrowing money from an intimate friend (adapted from Bella, 2012). Table 1 briefly summarizes the five scenarios used in this current study. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the role-plays were conducted via WeChat, which can automatically audio-record the whole real-time conversations. Specific instructions, descriptions, and transcripts of the role-plays have been provided in Appendix.

Table 1
Variable Distribution in the Role-Play Scenarios

Situation	Power	Distance	Imposition	Topic
Situation for a pilot study	–	–	+	borrowing money
Situation 1	+	+	–	borrowing a book
Situation 2	–	–	–	borrowing a computer
Situation 3	+	–	–	asking for leave
Situation 4	–	+	–	asking for joining in a study group

Note: +: high; –: low.

(b). Survey Questions

In order to further confirm if the participant noticed the contextual differences in the role-play scenarios, three survey questions concerning metacognition were modified from Ericsson and Simon (1993; as cited in Woodfield, 2010):

1. What differences did you notice in the four situations?
2. What were you paying attention to before speaking?
3. How did you feel about your performance?

C. Research Procedure

With the participant's consent, the researcher firstly explained the instructions and told him that the role-plays were not oral tests but casual conversations in English, so there were no right or wrong answers. To check the participant's understanding of the tasks, a pilot study was conducted prior to the actual role-plays. Next, the role-play scenarios were sent to the participant through WeChat one by one. Meanwhile, he was reminded of his roles and goals in each scenario and given three minutes to prepare for each role-play. If there were any new words, he was allowed to ask for

clarification. Immediately after the four role-plays were finished, the closed-ended survey questions were sent to the participant on WeChat. Finally, the written responses were sent back to the researcher.

D. Data Coding and Analysis

In this study, the coding scheme of the CCSARP project by Blum-Kulka and Olshtain (1984) was adopted as the main analytical framework. In accordance with the project, a typical semantic sequence of request was analyzed by address term(s), head act, external, and internal modifications.

To be more specific, head act is the primary sequential part which serves to independently realize the speech act. It is mainly evaluated by the direct/indirect continuum, ranging from "the most direct, explicit level" (e.g., imperative, performative, and want statement), "the conventionally indirect level" (suggestory and preparatory), to "the non-conventionally indirect level" (i.e., hints) (Blum-Kulka & Olshtain, 1984, p. 201).

External modification or supportive motive embedded in the context is used to modify the speaker's illocutionary power indirectly. It covers the following categories: checking on availability, getting commitment, grounder, disarmer, sweetener, and cost minimizer.

Internal modification consists of downgraders and upgraders. The former means mitigating requests by syntactic downgraders (interrogative, negation, past tense, and embedded *if* clause) and lexical downgrades (consultative devices, understaters, hedges, and downtoner). The latter aims to aggravate requests by means of intensifiers and expletives.

V. Results

After the 25-minute audio-recorded conversations were transcribed (see Appendix), the written data produced by the participant were analyzed drawing on the analytical framework of Blum-Kulka and Olshtain's (1984) request realization strategies. This section presents the analyses of the participant's request strategies in each role-play and his responses to the three survey questions.

A. An Analysis of Role-Play 1 (+P, +D, –R)

What the participant said:

- Address term: (01) "Professor" (showing respect)
- First head act: (01) "... can I borrow your book?"
  - ➢ Directness level: conventionally indirect request
  - ➢ Semantic formula: query preparatory (asking for feasibility)
- Second head act: (03) "I need it badly, ..."
  - ➢ Semantic formula: want statement (directly expressing his need)
- Modifications:
  - ➢ External:
    - ● Checking on availability: (01) "Is it available?" (appearing after the head act)
    - ● Grounder: (03) "... there is no copy on (at) the library" (appearing after the head act); (07) "... that book is very important for me, because I'm writing an essay." (explaining the reasons)
    - ● Cost minimizer: (11) "... I'll be there *soon*." (decreasing Professor's waiting time)
    - ● Thanking: (09) "Thanks. I'll appreciate that."
  - ➢ Internal:
    - ● Interrogative: (01) "... can I borrow you book?"
    - ● Intensifier: (03) "badly"; (07) "very important"; (11) "very urgent"

This role-play was an asymmetrical talk between a student and his professor. In order to realize the speech act of requesting a book from his professor, the participant first used conventionally indirect strategy "can I ...?" followed by checking on availability "Is it available?". Here he asked two consecutive questions, which seemed somewhat offensive and rude before Professor responded. Then the participant turned to direct strategy of want statement with an intensifier "badly". After the professor declined his request precipitously, the participant gave a grounder "... that book is very important for me, because I'm writing an essay." with an intensifier "very" to explain why he was in urgent need of the book.

B. An Analysis of Role-Play 2 (–P, –D, –R)

What the participant said:

- Address term: (12) "dude" (showing intimacy)
- First head act: (12) "Can I have it?"
  - ➢ Directness level: conventionally indirect request
  - ➢ Semantic formula: query preparatory (asking for feasibility)
- Second head act: (15) "... could you lend it to me?"
  - ➢ Directness level: conventionally indirect request
  - ➢ Semantic formula: query preparatory (asking for feasibility)
- Modifications:
  - ➢ External:

- Checking on availability: (12) "Where is your laptop?" (appearing before the head act)
- Grounder: (14) "It's out of order because of the goddam virus, and I need to have a paper due tomorrow."; (17) "The work is important." (explaining the reasons)
- Cost minimizer: (19) "*Four hour*(s) is OK." (reducing the time of keeping the computer)
- Disarmer: (21) "I will keep my eyes on it." (promising to protect the computer)

➢ Internal:
- Interrogative: (12) "Can I have it?"; (15) "... could you lend it to me? "
- Past tense: (15) "... could you ...?"

The second role-play transpired between two close roommates, which can be clearly perceived from the address term "dude" for solidarity. The participant repeated conventionally indirect requests, i.e., preparatory modals. Interestingly, he first used "Can I have it?" to indicate a bit politeness, but the verb "have" suggests that he might often use his roommate's computer as if he were the computer owner. Afterward, when his roommate impatiently hinted to him "Why not use your own computer?", he changed from speaker-oriented to hearer-oriented perspective and used past tense "... could you..." to mitigate the request. Aside from explaining the reasons to his roommate, the participant promised to return the computer quickly and keep an eye on it to alleviate his dude's worry. Obviously, he had realized that he would cause some inconvenience to the computer owner. At the end of this role-play, the participant even did not express gratitude to his roommate in virtue of their intimate friendship.

C. An Analysis of Role-Play 3 (+P, –D, –R)

What the participant said:

- Address term: (22) "boss" (recognizing employer-employee relationship)
- First head act: (22) "..., could I?" (tag question showing tentativeness)
  - ➢ Directness level: conventionally indirect request
  - ➢ Semantic formula: query preparatory (asking for feasibility)
- Second head act: (22) "I want to ask (for) a day off, ..."
  - ➢ Directness level: direct request
  - ➢ Semantic formula: want statement (directly expressing his need)
- Third head act: (28) "... so you'd better have a day off for me, please."
  - ➢ Directness level: direct request
  - ➢ Semantic formula: statement of obligation (directly expressing his need)
- Modifications:
  - ➢ External:
    - Checking on availability: (22) "Are you busy right now?" ("right now" indicating an important matter)
    - Grounder: (24) "... I'm exhausted of this"; (27) "Look, I'm nearly going crazy." (explaining the reasons)
    - Disarmer: (24) "I know that, boss." (acknowledging the current busy situation)
    - Cost minimizer: (22) "I want to ask (for) *a day* off, ..."; (28) "... have *a day* off for me, please"
    - Thanking: (34) "Thanks, boss. I'll appreciate that."
  - ➢ Internal:
    - Interrogative: (22) "... could I?" (tag question showing tentativeness)
    - Hedge: (25) "... I need to have *some time* to rest ..."
    - Intensifier: (27) "Look, I'm nearly going *crazy*." (intensifying the fatigue)
    - Politeness marker: (28) "... please"

The third role-play involved a student doing a part-time job and his familiar boss. Basically, he made direct requests to ask for leave during the Spring Festival due to job tiredness. At the outset, he employed a tag question "I want to ask (for) a day off, could I?" to show tentativeness. Then he offered grounders, disarmer as well as hedges to acknowledge the inconvenience caused to the restaurant. After negotiating for a while, he aggravated his fatigue with "crazy" to urge his boss. Overall, the participant as a part-time waiter succeeded in persuading his boss to approve leave request by shifting from indirectness to directness in strategy choices. But when he articulated the phrase "... you'd better ...", it was inappropriate for an inferior to say that to his superior notwithstanding their familiarity with each other.

D. An Analysis of Role-Play 4 (–P, +D, –R)

What the participant said:

- Head act: (39) "Can I join in?"
  - ➢ Directness level: conventionally indirect request
  - ➢ Semantic formula: query preparatory (asking for feasibility)
- Modifications:
  - ➢ External:
    - Checking on availability: (37) "Is there any study group which is prepared for the midterm examination?" (inquiring about the availability)

- Grounder: (41) "I have some problems on (with) these things." (explaining the need to join in the study group of math)
- Thanking: (47) "... thanks."; "I'll appreciate that."

➢ Internal:

- Interrogative: (39) "Can I join in?"
- Hedge: (41) "I have *some* problems on (with) these things."

In the last role-play, the participant palpably leveraged much fewer modification strategies. Perhaps it was concerned with two strange students. First, he did not use any address terms instead of asking "What is your name?" to initiate the conversation. Then after confirming the availability of the study group focused on math, he politely made a conventional indirect request of joining in the group. In addition, when stating his need to improve math, he utilized a hedge "some problems" to soften his weakness at math. Finally, he expressed gratitude for help.

E. The Survey Results

About 15 minutes after the four role-plays, the participant sent back his written responses originally in English to the following closed-ended survey questions:

1. What differences did you notice in the four situations?
   Those questions are all about make (making) *a request.*
2. What were you paying attention to before speaking?
   Well, I was planning to greeting (greet) *first. Then, I will tell them my problems and I need help, so that I can achieve my purposes.*
3. How did you feel about your performance?
   I *think it's not good all, cuz I was nervous. Maybe next time I would try to be relax*(ed) *and go on.*

VI. Discussion and Conclusion

In light of strategy use patterns of requesting, the participant tended to start the conversations with address terms like "Professor", "dude", and "boss", except in the fourth role-play where he asked the stranger's name, instead. This finding closely aligns with Chinese culture, not least because Chinese people highlight the family and social hierarchy, and the proper use of honorifics plays an important role in showing politeness (Lee-Wong, 1994). Then he proceeded to check on availability of requests, explained the reasons for making requests, capitalized on some mitigating or intensifying devices to accomplish his purposes, and concluded by expressing gratitude to the requestees. In a nutshell, the procedures also echo the participant's response to the second survey question about planning prior to speaking.

As regards directness level, the participant exhibited a restricted repertoire of request strategies, because conventionally indirect requests (preparatory modals) were employed in all the role-plays and direct requests (want statement) in the first and third ones. It is noteworthy that non-conventionally indirect requests were not found in this study. In English language and culture, "directness is often equated to impoliteness because it shows a lack of consideration for face" (Nguyen & Ho, 2013, p. 686). In the first and third role-plays, however, the participant misused direct requests (including "need it badly" and "you'd better") to the hearers (i.e., professor and boss) with higher social power, which posed a potential threat to their negative face.

Similar to the request research done by Bella (2012) and Wang (2011), external modifications were used more frequently in this study, such as grounder, disarmer, and cost minimizer, contributing to longer and more informative utterances. On the other hand, internal modifications were limited to interrogative, intensifier, and hedge. Perhaps these strategies can be attributed to the participant's insufficient linguistic knowledge, in that internal modifications are more closely related to lexical and syntactic knowledge.

As to whether or not the participant was sensitive to the contextual variables of power, distance, and imposition ranking, the written responses to survey questions implied that he failed to notice them, even though he knew that the role-plays were about making requests. Furthermore, the answer to the third question suggested that he was unsatisfied with his own performance due to nervousness. Obviously, he made requests by relying on intuition.

As discussed above, this qualitative study, by means of role-plays and survey questions, has found that the participant: (a) used address terms to express good manners under influence of the positive transfer of Chinese cultural norms; (b) preferred conventionally indirect requests out of politeness, but his unvaried repertoire of external and internal modifications to realize requests needs to be broadened; and (c) failed to notice the contextual variables about social power and distance prior to making requests, which could account for his misuse of two direct requests in the first and third role-plays.

Taken together, it is concluded that notwithstanding he manifested good linguistic competence with few grammatical mistakes in his speech, the participant's pragmatic competence necessitates further enhancement. More importantly, this case study has provided English teachers with some pedagogical implications and recommendations. In particular, China is a typical EFL context where learners have limited exposure to the target language, but nowadays cross-cultural communication increasingly occurs in the era of globalization. In order to avoid miscommunication and improve learners' speech act perceptions and performances, pragmatic competence needs to be viewed as important as linguistic competence in EFL courses and curriculum. Hence, English teachers should incorporate formal pragmatic instruction

into classroom teaching by placing an emphasis on raising students' awareness of the power, distance, and imposition ranking between speakers and hearers, guiding students to notice the differences between Chinese and English language forms as well as cultural norms when producing speech acts. In addition, students' repertoire of speech acts realization strategies needs to be broadened through metapragmatic instruction especially at the tertiary level. Another approach to refine teachers' pedagogical interventions is to develop teaching materials with abundant pragmatic input and output activities.

Nevertheless, this case study is not without limitations. First, the participant was well acquainted with the researcher. As a result, it was inevitable for him to use direct requests intentionally or unintentionally when chatting with the latter on WeChat. Moreover, as he admitted in the response to the third survey question, he was nervous in the performance, which would, to some degree, affect data elicitation. Last but not the least, this study only touches on the speech act of request with power and distance as the contextual variables, resulting in limited generalizations to other situations and populations. For these reasons, the focus should be extended to other speech acts (e.g., refusal, apology, and complaint) by engaging larger samples in role-plays with varied contextual factors including P, D, and R in future studies.

APPENDIX. ROLE-PLAY SCENARIOS AND TRANSCRIPTS

Instructions: Please read carefully the following four different situations one at a time. In each situation, you will be required to initiate a conversation with the interlocutor as you do in actual life. Meanwhile, you will be given three minutes to prepare and figure out how to perform the tasks successfully. The conversations will be audio-recorded via WeChat.

A. Situation for a Pilot Study (–P, –D, +R): Borrowing Money

You are out to lunch with a close friend of yours. You have already ordered when you discover that you have left your wallet at home. You ask your friend to pay for your meal. You already borrowed money from him once. What would you say to borrow his money? (Adapted from Bella, 2012)

B. Situation 1 (+P, +D, –R): Borrowing a Book

You are writing an essay and in great need of a particular reference book. However, there is not a copy of it in the library. You know your professor has one. You are not sure if he may be using it but you come up with an idea of borrowing it from your professor. What would you say to ask for your professor's help? (Adapted from Pan, 2012)

Transcript 1:

P (Participant: a student) borrows a book from I (Interlocutor: a professor)

(01) P: Hello, Professor, can I borrow (#) your book? Is it available?
(02) I: What is the name of the book? (2.2) Do you mean (#), do you mean the book *Pragmatics*?
(03) P: Ah, yes, it is. I need it *badly*, because there is, um, there is no copy on (at) the library. I hear there is one on (in) your hand.
(04) I: That's true. And I would like to lend it to you, but now I am reading this book.
(05) P: When will you finish reading it?
(06) I: In two days. But why do you, um, want this book so badly?
(07) P: Oh, that book is very important for me, because I'm writing an *essay*.
(08) I: No problem. In two days, I will go to Beijing. So I can lend this book to you.
(09) P: OK. Thanks. I'll appreciate that.
(10) I: Can you come to my office the day after tomorrow? That day I can give the book to you.
(11) P: Oh, yes, of course. Um, because it is very (#) urgent, and I'll be there soon.

C. Situation 2 (–P, –D, –R): Borrowing a Computer

Your roommate is your best friend's younger brother, who is your high school junior. Your computer is out of order because of a virus, but you have a paper due tomorrow. You decide to ask your roommate if you can borrow his computer tonight. What would you say to get your roommate to do this favour for you? (Adapted from Byon, 2004)

Transcript 2:

P (Participant: a student) borrows a computer from I (Interlocutor: a familiar roommate)

(12) P: Hey, dude. Where is your laptop? Can I have it?
(13) I: Why? You have your own computer.
(14) P: Well, here is the bad news. It's out of *order* because of the goddam virus, and I need to have a paper due tomorrow.
(15) So could you, um, could you lend it to me?
(16) I: But can't you see I'm watching NBA? The game is so exciting.
(17) P: I am f*reaking out* about the game, man. The work is *important*. Um, you can see the *repeat* tomorrow. Don't worry about it.
(18) I: Then how long will you keep my computer?
(19) P: Four hour(s) is OK, man. I'll return it to you. Don't worry.
(20) I: All right. I will go to the gym to watch NBA. Now use it.

(21) P: No problem. I will keep my eyes on it. Don't worry.

D. Situation 3 (+P, –D, –R): Asking for Leave

You have been working part-time at a restaurant recently, and you have a good relationship with your 45-year-old boss who is pleased with your work. Your work shift is Monday through Friday from 2:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m. This week is a very busy one for the restaurant because of the Spring Festival. But you want to have a break in that week and cannot work extra hours. What would you say if you asked for leave? (Adapted from Morkus, 2014)

Transcript 3:

P (Participant: a student working part-time) asks for leave from I (Interlocutor: a close boss)

(22) P: Hey, boss. Are you busy right now? I want to ask (for) a day off, could I?
(23) I: Look, Evans! Our business is very busy now, because it's on the Spring Festival. And it's a good chance for us to make money.
(24) P: I know that, boss. But look, I'm *exhausted* of this.
(25) I need to have, I need to have some time to rest, then I could do a *better* job.
(26) I: Um, I know you work very hard. Can you have a, have a (#) rest after the holiday?
(27) P: Not really, boss. Look, I'm nearly going *crazy*.
(28) Uh-huh, so you'd better (#) have a day off for me, please.
(29) I: No problem. Can you ask another guy to replace you?
(30) P: Oh, look. Jamie, Jamie would like to do this. OK?
(31) I: OK then, Evans. If you fill in these leave forms today, I will sign them so we can get them in.
(32) P: OK, no problem. I'll, sir.
(33) I: Have a good day!
(34) P: Thanks, boss. I'll appreciate that.

E. Situation 4 (–P, +D, –R): Asking for Joining in a Study Group

You are having trouble understanding your (Mathematics) course. You hear that some of the course students have formed a study group to prepare for the midterm exam. You have never spoken with those students before, but you decide to talk to them about joining in the study group. What would you say to the strange students? (Adapted from Najafabadi & Paramasivam, 2012)

Transcript 4:

P (Participant: a student) asks for joining in a study group from I (Interlocutor: a strange student)

(35) P: Hello. What's your name?
(36) I: Hi! Good morning. My name is Lister. What can I do for you?
(37) P: OK, Lister. Is there any study group which is prepared for the midterm (#) examination?
(38) I: Yes. We have formed a study group about mathematics.
(39) P: Oh, cool. Can I join in?
(40) I: By the way, how is your math?
(41) P: Oh, man. You got the point. I have some problems (#) on (with) these things.
(42) I: If so, the group, the study group is very good for you. But if you want to join in the group, you have to show me your student card.
(43) P: Oh, I see. Here you are.
(44) I: Thank you. You know, there will be a class this afternoon at Room 313. (#) Will you come?
(45) P: Of course. Room 313, right?
(46) I: Yes. Room 313 at two o'clock.
(47) P: OK, thanks. I will be there. (#) I'll appreciate that.

Transcription conventions

- (#): a brief pause
- (2.2): a timed pause lasting for about 2.2 seconds
- *word*: italic word indicating high pitch
- (word): the correct word within parentheses replacing the ungrammatical one

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