

Motivation as a Mitigating Factor in Interlanguage Pragmatic Performance and Ability

Mark DONNELLAN and Kym JOLLEY

This paper investigates how motivation can be a mitigating factor in obtaining higher levels of accuracy and appropriateness for L2 language users living in their native L1 environment. Two L2 English language users with similar formal L2 English language education living in their native L1 country of Japan were interviewed and then asked to perform a range of requests with varying degrees of distance and imposition between the speakers. The interviews were analysed for levels of motivation, and the requests were analysed for levels of appropriateness and accuracy. Despite similar backgrounds and formal language education the findings show that the more motivated L2 English speaker was able to perform more appropriately and accurately. Furthermore, it was also found that experiences actively sought out by the more motivated speaker, such as seeking out English speaking friends, and watching English speaking movies, have enabled him to overcome some of the obstacles faced by the L2 speaker in the non-immersive EFL environment, such as limited chances for interaction, and input and output to a greater extent than the non-motivated L2 speaker.

INTRODUCTION

Learning a language is more than simply acquiring new vocabulary and prescribed grammar rules. Language performs actions such as requests and apologies, and whilst this performance may come naturally to a NS (native speaker), for the NNS (non-native speaker) learning how to verbalize these actions, otherwise known as speech acts (Searle, 1969), in both a socially and linguistically appropriate manner can be a challenging task.

Pragmalinguistically, learners need to acquire the language skills in which to express the speech acts, and sociolinguistically they need to understand which linguistic form is appropriate for the situation in which they are operating. As these skills require a lot of practice and experience, it is often argued that learners in an EFL environment are disadvantaged due to fewer opportunities for input and practice (Taguchi, 2008). However, it has been shown that individual factors, such as motivation, can enable a language learner in overcoming such obstacles (Ortega, 2009).

BACKGROUND

Speech acts and interlanguage pragmatics

To perform and respond to a speech act correctly and competently requires not only language skill, but also pragmatic knowledge. Language choices affecting directness level, register and politeness must all be made dependent on differentials such as the social distance and power relationship between the interlocutors, and the degree of imposition the speech act is trying to realize, and indeed, even if the speaker chooses to perform the act (Taguchi, 2007). For the NS, this of course all comes naturally, however it means that NNS's must not only acquire the linguistic knowledge suitable for a range of situations (pragmalinguistics) in their L2, but also the knowledge required to adjust said language so that it meets native speaker norms for the situation (sociolinguistic knowledge).

Unfortunately for the NNS, knowledge gains in both areas do not necessarily run concurrently. Yuh-Fang (2011), for example, explains that a range of studies have reported little variation in the use of request strategies with a variety of addressees, despite learners having reportedly acquired them.

Therefore, despite a learner's developing ability he/she may still lack the sociopragmatic or pragmalinguistic skills required to perform language in socially appropriate ways in the learners L2 community.

The request speech act

Like all speech acts, requests are a challenge for the NNS as they are potentially face-threatening for both the recipient and the requester (Brown & Levinson, 1987). As Blum-Kulka, House and Kasper (1989) explain:

...by making a request, the speaker infringes on the recipient's freedom from imposition. The recipient may feel that the request is an intrusion on his/her freedom of action or even a power play. As for the requester, s/he may hesitate to make requests for fear of exposing a need or out of fear of possibly making the recipient lose face.' (p. 11)

Therefore, the situation, interlocutors and need to minimize the imposition all need to be considered when performing a request (Blum-Kulka & Olshtain, 1984). Furthermore, in an effort to minimize its force, speakers may also utilize internal and external features in an effort to signal an upcoming request (Taleghani-Nikazm & Huth, 2010).

This all poses a challenge for the L2 speaker, who needs not only pragmalinguistic resources to verbalize the request and accompanying minimizers, but also the sociopragmatic knowledge about which kind of request is appropriate for the situation, along with the fact that supportive moves may be required in an effort to avoid causing offense or appearing too direct (Taguchi, 2007).

However, despite the complex knowledge required to perform requests appropriately, researchers have identified universal common elements used in the performance of requests by NS's (Blum-Kulka & Olshtain, 1984). Requests are realized through three levels of directness (Blum-Kulka & Olshtain, 1984):

- i. Direct – usually imperatives, with or without please (Rinnert, 1999) (e.g. Clean up this mess).
- ii. Conventionally indirect - usually ‘culturally agreed upon semantic formulas such as ‘ability’ (could you lend me a pen?) and ‘willingness’ (would you mind lending me a pen?)’ (Rinnert, 1999, p. 164).
- iii. Non-conventionally indirect - in essence an implicit or explicit hint, which requires the recipient to interpret the utterance as a request (Blum-Kulka & Olshtain, 1984) e.g. ‘It’s difficult to move in here!’, could be used as a way of requesting someone clean up a very messy room.

In many situations, however, requests are usually performed within a sequence of utterances. Blum-Kulka & Olshtain (1984) list these potential elements as:

1. Address term/s e.g. Danny, Excuse me etc.
2. Head act e.g. Could you....etc.
3. Adjunct(s) to Head act e.g. I’ve run into problems....

Therefore, whilst choosing the appropriate directness level and illocutionary force for the head act of a request is of vital importance, other elements, in particular adjuncts to head acts utilized either before or after the head act, can be seen as supportive moves that help put the request in context and adjust the illocutionary force to the appropriate level for the recipient and situation (Blum-Kulka & Olshtain, 1984). Adjuncts are realized in many forms, such as; checking availability e.g. Are you going into town?; getting a precommitment e.g. Can you do me a favor?; giving a reason for the request e.g. I was sick yesterday so I missed class (Blum-Kulka & Olshtain, 1984).

NNSs of course are able to automatically draw on their pragmatic knowledge to choose the appropriate directness level and sequence to suit the request situation, however this can be quite challenging for a NNS depending on their interlanguage level and pragmatic knowledge. As Taguchi (2007) states in regards to English:

in a situation where the speech act involves a high degree of imposition, is addressed to a person who has more power, and is in a more distant relationship (e.g. asking a teacher for a recommendation letter), a greater degree of politeness is required to allow the interlocutor to save face. In contrast, when the speech act involves a low degree of imposition and is produced for a person in an equal relationship (e.g. asking a friend for a pen), a lesser degree of politeness is required. Thus, the social factors of power, distance, and imposition are thought to make speech acts more demanding to perform in certain situations than in others (p. 116).

Unfortunately, for the L2 speaker, it is not as simple as transferring ones L1 pragmatic norms to the L2, as directness levels required for given situations may

vary across different cultures. For instance, it has been found that Germans employ more direct request strategies than other languages like Japanese (Blum-Kulka & Olshtain, 1984).

Therefore, NNSs have a lot to overcome when trying to perform a request appropriately in their L2, and whilst Blum-Kulka & Olshtain (1984) identify these strategies as universal, the way in which they should be appropriately realized across cultures and situations varies. Therefore, as the evidence presented in this section illustrates real world experience and knowledge is especially important when it comes to acquiring a new language.

Appropriating L2 pragmatic norms

For an L2 speaker to acquire the necessary sociopragmatic and pragmalinguistic skills to perform speech acts, such as requests, competently they require input, which must then be noticed. After noticing, cognitive representations about the L2 pragmatic system must be made and then practiced in effort to automatize it (Ortega, 2009).

Consequently, as learners are exposed to target language input inside and outside of the classroom, it is often argued that a study-abroad or ESL experience is more beneficial to interlanguage pragmatic development (Taguchi, 2008). However, Taguchi (2008) cites recent studies that have shown this is not always true, as learners do not necessarily spend more time using the L2 in the target language environment. This may be caused by such factors as language competence, where a learner's L2 level may not yet be at an appropriate level for him/her to communicate in the L2, or it could be affected by such individual differences such as being more motivated to seek out L2 opportunities or more willing to integrate into the L2 community (Taguchi, 2008).

Indeed it has been shown that high motivation and a favourable integrative attitude towards the L2 culture can be facilitative in improving L2 knowledge and performance (Ortega, 2009). Therefore, an ESL environment is not necessary for the highly motivated learner to reach high levels of performance. Indeed, highly motivated learners may seek out opportunities such as befriending expatriate communities and watching and listening to movies and music in the L2 that are conducive and complementary to improving their L2, both grammatically and pragmatically, in an EFL environment (Dornyei, 2001).

Therefore, though EFL learners are seen to be at a disadvantage when it comes to access to real L2 input and improving their interlanguage grammatically and pragmatically, and consequently realizing speech acts such as requests in appropriate and natural ways, there are individual factors, such as learner motivation that may be conducive to overcoming these obstacles.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

For this study it is hypothesized that the individual difference of motivation is facilitative in obtaining higher levels of sociopragmatic and pragmalinguistic skills in the L2 of English in an EFL environment. The hypothesis is two fold:

1. Motivation will be a mitigating factor in the achieved grammatical and pragmatical levels of two learners with similar formal L2 learning experiences.
2. The highly motivated learner will display greater pragmalinguistic knowledge and sociopragmatic appropriacy in the performance of requests.

METHODOLOGY

The participants

Yuki, male, 30 and Sayuri, female, 29 are native Japanese speakers who have lived their whole lives in Japan. Both have traveled to English speaking countries, or countries where English is used as a common language, but trips have either been sporadic, in the case of Sayuri, or no longer than 1 week, in the case of Yuki.

Both participants also use English occasionally at work, and daily with friends. The only formal study Yuki and Sayuri have ever undertaken was six years of compulsory English in junior high school and high school in Japan. Both report the classes to have been prescriptive grammar based with little opportunity for real use of the language. Neither recall having a negative attitude towards these classes, however it was in high school 2nd grade (approximately 16 years of age), that Yuki reports becoming highly interested and motivated in regards to learning English after hearing reports from friends about studying abroad. Despite this interest, he has never undertaken any further formal English training, but practices daily by watching English language movies and TV programs. He has also sought out and acquired a large group of English NS friends in Japan that he communicates with and socializes with daily.

In contrast, though Sayuri has had enjoyable experiences using English, this has not led to a change in her motivation levels. Sayuri communicates daily in English with her housemate and sometimes at work, however she reports that she does not undertake any kind of formal or informal study and any attention or discussion paid to form or accuracy in English is incidental and occurs naturally throughout her daily life. She has a small group of English NS friends, however she still heavily identifies with her L1 community, and does not seek out other opportunities to use or experience English, such as watching English speaking movies or meeting more English speaking friends.

The tasks and analysis method

Six role-play tasks were designed with varying levels of social distance and power between the interlocutors to assess both pragmagrammatical and sociopragmatic skills, and as opting out of performing a request is a real life choice and therefore displays pragmatic knowledge (Bonikowska, 1988), participants were also given this option.

Participants were first given a brief interview (see Appendix 1) regarding their English learning history and experiences up until the present day. Participants were given a copy of the question sheet, however the questions were asked verbally

and recorded by hand by the interviewer. Immediately following the interview the participants were given a copy of the six role-play situations (see Appendix 2). The interviewer also explained each situation verbally before each role-play was performed. Participants were instructed to perform the requests as they would in real life. Role-plays were then conducted in order with the participant taking the role of requester and the interviewer the recipient of each request. All role-plays were recorded and then transcribed (see Appendix 3 & 4). Following transcription each request sequence was identified and marked from surrounding talk unrelated to the request sequence (see Appendix 3 & 4).

The participants' performances were then analyzed for grammatical accuracy and pragmatic appropriateness. Requests were analyzed as sequences, including any address forms and adjuncts along with the head act, as these can all affect the illocutionary force of the request. Quantitatively each request sequence was analyzed for grammatical errors. Then by checking the level of directness of the head act and any surrounding address forms or adjuncts the request sequence was assessed for appropriateness in regards to the situational variables, such as social distance, power differentials and level of imposition. Combining the number of grammatical errors with the level of appropriateness, a score was allocated using Taguchi's (2007) table for rating pragmatic speaking task appropriateness (see Table 1).

TABLE 1

Taguchi's (2007) table for rating pragmatic speaking task appropriateness

Ratings	Descriptions
5 – Excellent	Expressions are fully appropriate. No or almost no grammatical and discourse errors.
4 – Good	Expressions are mostly appropriate. Very few grammatical and discourse errors.
3 – Fair	Expressions are only somewhat appropriate. Grammatical and discourse errors are noticeable, but do not interfere with appropriateness.
2 – Poor	Due to the interference from grammatical and discourse errors, appropriateness is difficult to determine.
1 – Very poor	Expressions are very difficult or too little to understand. There is no evidence that the intended speech acts are performed
0	No performance.

Note: Taguchi (2007, p. 121)\

Furthermore, the request form used for of each head act was identified to analyze the depth of each participant's pragmatogrammatical skills.

DISCUSSION AND RESULTS

Whilst both learners were able to perform each request, it was Yuki who displayed greater grammatical and pragmatical skill and knowledge. In regards to grammatical errors, only one was identified in Yuki's performance, compared with 18 made by Sayuri (see Table 2).

TABLE 2
Grammatical errors during request performance

Yuki		Sayuri	
Role Play	Errors	Role Play	Errors
1	0	1	1
2	1	2	0
3	0	3	2
4	Opted out	4	3
5	0	5	3
6	0	6	9

Furthermore, pragmatically Yuki also displayed greater competency when assessed using Taniguchi's (2007) appropriacy ratings (see Table 3).

TABLE 3
Pragmatic competency

Yuki		Sayuri	
Role Play	Appropriacy Score	Role Play	Appropriacy Score
1	5	1	5
2	5	2	3
3	5	3	4
4	Opted out	4	3
5	5	5	4
6	4	6	3

Although Sayuri was able to perform all requests in a comprehensible way, with average to excellent appropriateness, it was Yuki's superior grammatical accuracy and use of address forms and adjuncts to adjust the level of the request sequence to suit the situational variables that saw him achieve a higher degree of appropriateness. Samples 1 and 2 illustrate the higher degree of appropriateness that Yuki displayed:

Sample 1 – Sayuri (Role play 3)

42. S: Umm, can I use this chair? If your friends, umm, if you're alone, you don't use this chair, can I use this?

43 I: Oh, yeah, sure. Go ahead.

Sample 2 – Yuki (Role play 3)

24. Y: Ahhhhh (pause), ah excuse me.
25. I: Yeah, yep.
26. Y: I'm sorry to interrupt.
27. I: That's ok.
28. Y: Is this chair taken?
29. I: No, no, no. Not at all.
30. Y: Um, well, so, my friend is coming over,
31. I: Mhmm.
32. Y: and I need an extra chair. Can I use it?
33. I: Yeah, of course. Yeah, please take it.
34. Y: Thank you very much.

It was assessed that as this role play involved a low imposition request between interlocutors of equal power, but great social distance Yuki's use of the address form and adjuncts prior to the request to help lower the face threat to the recipient helped make this request more appropriate than Sayuri's, where no address form was utilized at all.

Indeed, as Taguchi (2007) pointed out variables such as distance, power and level of imposition can make the performance of requests more difficult. This is further evidenced by fact that Sayuri's highest rate of errors and lowest appropriateness scores occurred with the role-play incorporating the greatest power difference in role-play 6 (see Table 2).

A qualitative analysis of the directness levels and pragmalinguistic forms utilized by the participants when performing the head acts of the request (see Table 4) shows that Yuki used conventionally indirect requests in all of his performances and 4 different pragmalinguistic forms. Sayuri also favored conventionally indirect requests, however all were realized in the same pragmalinguistic form. She did, however, utilize one non-conventional indirect request in role-play 1. This was however a strong and direct hint that was appropriate for the close social relationship between the interlocutors in the situation.

TABLE 4

Directness levels & pragmalinguistic forms used in head acts of requests

Yuki			Sayuri		
Role Play	Directness Strategy	Pragmalinguistic Form	Role Play	Directness Strategy	Pragmalinguistic Form
1	CI	Can I....	1	NCI	Strong hint (I don't have any money)
2	CI	May I....	2	CI	Can I....
3	CI	Can I....	3	CI	Can I ...
4	Opted out		4	CI	Can you...
5	CI	Could you..	5	CI	Can I...
6	CI	Is it possible...	6	CI	Can I...

Key – CI conventional indirect request; NCI non-conventional indirect request

CONCLUSION

As illustrated in the discussion and results above the superior variety of pragmalinguistic skills coupled with his higher appropriateness scores illustrates the benefits Yuki has received through his highly motivated attitude and desire to realize his Ideal L2 Self (Dornyei, Csizer and Nemeth, 2006) despite living daily in his L1 environment. Through his daily efforts and communications Yuki has been able to surround himself with as much input as possible and thereby appropriate a higher level of grammatical and pragmatical L2 skill and appropriateness than a non-motivated L2 speaker.

Sayuri on the other hand, who through her interview did not display the same motivated attitude towards her L2, displayed a noticeable difference in her performance level when compared with Yuki. However, it should be noted that despite any formal study for more than a decade or effort on behalf of Sayuri, all her requests were still comprehensible and average to excellent in their level of appropriateness according the Taniguchi scale. Furthermore, she also displayed pragmatical awareness in her attempts to use adjuncts to soften her requests. However, as was hypothesized, Yuki, the more motivated participant achieved higher levels of skill, accuracy and appropriateness in the performance of request sequences, both grammatically and pragmatically. Therefore, as Sayuri and Yuki have both encountered very similar experiences in regards to their L2 training and ESL experiences as well as their work and travel situations it is argued that motivation is the mitigating factor in the different levels both have achieved in their L2 interlanguage.

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APPENDIX 1: Background Interview

1. Age
2. Age started learning English
3. Learning history? Where? How? Feelings towards study? Native English speaking teachers or not?
4. If stopped and then resumed study, why? Are your feelings towards English different now than before? How do you study now? (Where? How many hours/ days a week?) Are you happy to study or is it something you avoid?
5. How often do you need to use your English? Why? In what situations?
6. Have you ever travelled to or lived in an English speaking country? If yes, which one/s? How long were you there for? Did you use English? How did you feel about using your English?
7. How do you feel about your English? Are you happy with your level of English? Do you have further goals? If so what level would you be happy with? Why?

APPENDIX 2: Role Plays

Please make the conversation as natural as possible. Speak as you would in real life, using your own words. You may also choose not to do any of the examples if you feel you would not do it in real life.

1. You are at the convenience store with your boyfriend/ girlfriend. You want to buy a sandwich for lunch but you notice that you forgot your wallet. You don't have any money. How would you ask him/ her in real life to help you in this situation?
2. You are at home and cooking dinner. You notice you forgot to buy salt. You are friendly with your neighbor, but not close friends. He/ she is about the same age as you and seems friendly. How would you ask your neighbor for some salt in this situation?
3. You are in a café waiting for some friends. You notice you need one more chair for your table. The café is full, but there is a spare chair at the table next to you. The person is about your age and reading a book. How would you ask if you could use the spare chair?
4. You get on a train with your elderly grandmother. All the seats are taken. You notice some young children are sitting in the seats reserved for the elderly. How would you ask them to move?
5. You are going away for the weekend. You have a pet cat. Your best friend lives next door. How would you ask him/ her to look after your cat for 2 days?
6. You want to leave work early one day so you can attend a concert. You need to ask your supervisor if this is possible. How would you ask your supervisor if you can leave early for this event?

APPENDIX 3: Transcript 1 – Sayuri

I – Interviewer S – Sayuri

(Please note: ‘...’ indicates a pause, ‘...’ indicates a long pause, ‘@’ indicates laughter)

Role-play 1

1. I: Ok, so the first one,
2. S: Hai
3. I: You are at the convenience store, yah, with your boyfriend, ok.
4. S: Yah.
5. I: And you want to buy a sandwich for lunch, but oh, you forgot your wallet. And you have no money.
6. S: But my boyfriend has wallet?
7. I: But your boyfriend has money, so how would you ask in English if he, if he can help you?
8. S: He is not Japanese?
9. I: He is not Japanese.
10. S: I am Japanese?
11. I: You are Japanese, but you are speaking, you need to speak English.
12. S: Oooooh...can you buy this sandwich?
13. I: Oh sure. You don't have money today?
14. S: Yes, but you know, I know if I wanna to ask something,
15. I: Yep,
16. S: I, I should use would yooooou lend me money?
17. I: No, I want you to assk, don't don't think like, so how would you ask, for example before you wanted Paul to make coffee.
18. S: I forgot wallet, please.
19. I: Yes, so ok we are in the convenience store, you go to the counter,
20. S: Yah, yah, yah. I forgot my wallet.
21. I: Oh you did.
22. S: I don't have money.
23. I: Oh yeah sure. Do you want me to pay for you?
24. S: Yes, ah, can you?
25. I: Yes, sure, no problem.
26. S: Un

Role-play 2

27. I: Ok, this time you are home and you are cooking dinner,
28. S: Yes.
29. I: ok, umm, but you have no salt.
30. S: Yes.
31. I: But you have already started cooking, and your neighbour,
32. S: Hai, hai, hai,
33. I: You are friendly, but not so close, umm, but she, he or she is the same age,
34. S: Yah,

35. I: But he or she seems friendly, so you think, maybe I can ask to borrow some salt. So how would you ask your neighbor?

36. S: Ahhh, can I borrow your salt? If you don't mind. I'm sorry.

37. I: Oh sure, sure. No problem.

38. S: Thank you.

39. I: You're welcome.

40. S: Yeah.

Role-play 3

41. I: Ok, so um, so you're in the café and you're waiting for friends and you need one more chair, and the person next to you has a spare chair. The person is about your age. So how would you ask that person?

42. S: Umm, can I use this chair? if your friends, umm, if you're alone, you don't use this chair, can I use this?

43. I: Oh, yeah, sure. Go ahead.

44. S: Thank you.

45. I: You're welcome...**(Role-play 4)** Ok, next one. You get on the train, and you are with your grandmother.

46. S: Yes.

47. I: And let's imagine that your grandmother is kind of old and she needs to sit down.

48. S: Yah.

49. I: But the train's very busy and there are no spare seats, but in the elderly, the special seats, there are some children, some young children. Some children sitting down,

50. S: Young children is better, young people you know,

51. I: @@@ umm so lets imagine they are children, say 10 or 12 or something.

52. S: Yah.

53. I: Ok, so how, but they don't, they don't move. So how do you ask them?

54. S: Ummmm, you guys, I'm sorry but look this person...almost die...guys can stand up? Ahhh, please give her your chair. Please.

55. I: Ok sure. Sorry.

56. S: Thank you.

Role-play 5

57. I: Ok, so next one. You are going away for the weekend. So, just for Saturday, Sunday or something. You have a pet cat, umm, but your pet cat needs food and drink for the weekend. Umm and your best friend, or good, good friend lives next door. So, how would you ask him or her to look after your cat for two days?

58. S: Un, un, un. Oooh, I wanna go, I will go to trip, but I have a no person to take care of myyyyy cat.

59. I: oooooh, so,

60. S: So, If you have time, ummm, can you take care of my cat? and just giving food,

61. I: Sure, sure, no problem.

62. S: Thank you.

63. I: Yeah, no problem...**(Role-play 6)** Ok, so you are at work and you want to leave early, ah next week,
64. S: Mmm, mm, mm
65. I: You have an event, like a concert or something, and, so you need to ask your kind of, ah, like boss, I guess, yep, if you could leave a little early so you can go to the event.
66. S: Yeah.
67. I: How would you ask your supervisor or boss?
68. S: We should lie to them.
69. I: Ok, you can do that. No, problem.
70. S: Ummm...Yeah, I would think long time more what reason in goood. Ummmm, ok, so weekend, ok, so, ummm. Sorry boss my friends be married, I ah thought, I will not go because I have job.
71. I: Ok.
72. S: But my friends last night call me and please come to wedding, but I know I have, I have to work.
73. I: Right.
74. S: It is busy, so, but I, so I will work day, but ah, I want to go to second party*, so can I go back, ah finish work, ah early time?
75. I: Ah, ok, how early do you need to finish?
76. S: Ah so, 4pm.
77. I: Ok, ok, can you do some extra time next week?
78. S: Aaaah, yep! Yeah, I will. Thank you.
79. I: Ok, that will be fine.

*In Japan it common to have a formal ceremony for very close friends and family first, after which a second party is held at a different location where the bride and groom's wider circle of friends attend

APPENDIX 4: Transcript 2 – Yuki

I – Interviewer Y- Yuki

(Please note: ‘...’ indicates a pause, ‘...’ indicates a long pause, ‘@’ indicates laughter)

Role-play 1

1. I: Ok, so, first situation, you’re in a convenience store with your boyfriend or girlfriend, or someone you are really close with, right? And you want to buy a sandwich for lunch but you notice you have forgotten your wallet. So you have no money,

2. Y: Hmmm

3. I: right, so how would you ask him or her in real life to help you in this situation?

4. Y: Ummm. Hey, sorry, ah I forgot my wallet,

5. I: Right,

6. Y: can I borrow some money?

7. I: Sure, no problem.

8. Y: Oh, thank you.

Role-play 2

9. I: Ok, next one. Umm, you’re at home at you’re cooking dinner, you notice that you’ve forgotten to buy some salt. Ah, you’re friendly with your neighbor, but you’re not close.

10. Y: Ah uhm.

11. I: Yah, so you say good morning, good afternoon. They seem friendly, they’re about the same age as you. Umm, so how would you ask your neighbor for salt in this situation?

12. Y: Umm, ah, ping pong*

13. I: Hi.

14. Y: Hi. Ah, I live next door,

15. I: Yes, yes.

16. Y: ah, umm, @@@...could you do me a favour?

17. I: Um yeah, sure. What’s wrong?

18. Y: Ah, I um just run out of salt.

19. I: Mmm

20. Y: Ah, may I need, may I, may I use your salt, salt?

21. I: Yah, sure, sure. No, problem. Here you go.

22. Y: Thank you.

23. I: You’re welcome...**(Role-play 3)** Ok, next one, you are in a café, waiting for some friends, and you notice that you need one more chair for your table. The café is full, but there’s a spare chair at the table next to you. The person is about your age and reading a book. How would you ask if you could use their chair?

24. Y: Ahhhhh..ah excuse me.

25. I: Yeah, yep.

26. Y: I’m sorry to interrupt.

27. I: That's ok.
28. Y: Is this chair taken?
29. I: No, no, no. Not at all.
30. Y: Um, well, so, my friend is coming over,
31. I: Mmhmm.
32. Y: and I need an extra chair. Can I use it?
33. I: Yeah, of course. Yeah, please take it.
34. Y: Thank you very much.

Role-play 4

35. I: Next one, you get on the train with your elderly grandmother. Umm all the seats are taken, and you notice some young children are sitting in the seats that are reserved for the elderly or disabled.
36. Y: Mmhmm.
27. I: So, how would you ask them to move?
28. Y: Oh, um @@, well I would never ask, but, mmm, ok,
29. I: So, you think you would probably not ask them to move?
30. Y: Yeah.
31. I: So, if you really wouldn't say anything, then I prefer you to say you really wouldn't say anything in that situation.
32. Y: Yeah, I don't say anything.
33. I: Yeah, ok, sure. That's fine. **(Role-play 5)** Ok, umm, number 5. You're going away for the weekend. You have a pet cat. Ok? Umm, luckily your best friend lives next door. How would you ask him or her to look after your cat for a few days?
34. Y: Um, ok, ping pong*.
35. I: Oh, hi Yuki!
36. Y: Hi, how are you?
37. I: I'm fine thanks.
38. Y: Umm, are you busy for the next two days?
39. I: No, not really.
40. Y: Ah, umm, ah, I'll be away from home for two days,
41. I: Oh great!
42. Y: Ahhhh
43. I: Lucky you!
44. Y: Thank you, but no umm, it would be really helpful if you could help me,
45. I: Sure! What do you need?
46. Y: could you take care of my cat?
47. I: Yeah, what do you, what should I do?
48. Y: Ummm, just let him stay.
49. I: Does it need some food or water?
50. Y: Yeah, it will all be prepared.
51. I: Sure, no problem.
52. Y: Thank you.

53. I: You're welcome... **(Role-play 6)** Ok, so imagine you want to leave work early next week so you can attend an event, like a concert or something.
54. Y: Mmm, mm.
55. I: So you want to ask your supervisor or boss if it's possible to leave a little earlier. So, how would you ask your supervisor or boss if you can leave early?
56. Y: Ah, ok, ah..Hi,
57. I: Hi Yuki.
58. Y: Can I talk to you?
59. I: Ah, yes, sure. I have a minute.
60. Y: Um, could I ask you something?
61. I: Sure, yeah.
62. Y: I have a private plan next week,
63. I: Right.
64. Y: Ah, (pause) and ah is it possible to leave one or two hours early?
65. I: Ah, sure, yeah, can you make the time up at another time?
66. Y: Yeah, I'll do extra work before the day. So,
67. I: Ok, that sounds fine.
68. Y: Thank you.
69. I: You're welcome.

* “ping pong” is the common sound made for a doorbell in Japan.