

Investigating the Pragmatic Awareness of EFL Learners: Thai Air Force Cadets

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Abstract

This paper reports on a study of the pragmatic awareness of EFL learners (n=20) who were first year cadets at Navaminda Kasatriyadhiraj Royal Air Force Academy (NKRAFA). The instrument used to assess the awareness of the cadets was the Multiple-choice Discourse Completion Test (MDCT) which consists of two parts (a multiple choice part and an explanation part). The MDCT is composed of five speech acts (requesting, complimenting, compliment responding, apologizing and suggesting). It was used to assess pragmatic awareness in six situations involving the variables of familiarity and social status in each speech act (30 situations in total). The results obtained were analyzed and presented in the form of the mean number of the participants who selected the correct answer in each situation. The awareness of participants of each speech act (in order) was: suggesting (mean score=15.67); requesting and complimenting responding (14.67); complimenting (14.50); and apologizing (13.00). The data in the explanation section of MDCT revealed that the factors of familiarity and social status affected the participants' word selection while delivering speech acts.

Key Words: 1. Pragmatic 2. Pragmatic Awareness 3. Speech acts

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ผู้ช่วยศาสตราจารย์ ดร. ประจำภาควิชาภาษาอังกฤษ คณะศิลปศาสตร์ และวิทยาศาสตร์ มหาวิทยาลัยเกษตรศาสตร์ (วิทยาเขตกำแพงแสน)

Introduction

The ultimate goal in learning English language in both ESL and EFL contexts is for effective communication. In the past, understanding grammar was emphasized as one of the key factors in learning English, but the present trend is to learn English for effective communication. English is no longer identified with any one country but is regarded as a language used in many parts of the world (Jenkins, 2003; McKay, 2002, 2003); that is, as a tool in communication.

English is difficult for many people to learn. The difficulty in learning English is not just the language rules, but also how to use language appropriately, accurately and politely with interlocutors in diverse contexts and environments. So it is worth considering the language usage rather than just the accurate language rules (Lai, 2014; Kondo, 2004) when learning the language. Teaching and learning English now focus on learning English for communicative purposes; that is, as a tool for communication in authentic contexts. Consequently, pragmatics - which relates to the study of how to communicate in English appropriately - is now considered to be a crucial part in teaching and learning the language.

In EFL contexts, English is taught only in arranged settings. It is always taught in the classroom which can inhibit learners' communicative competence. Pragmatics is rarely invoked by the teachers (Prakash, 2016; Kimura, Nakata and Okumura, 2001). The traditional communicative English teaching with routine patterns of conversation is still used in many EFL classrooms. However, now the cultural aspect of learning and using language is assumed to be the fifth language skill (Mitchell & Myles, 2004), equally important with listening, speaking, reading and writing (Lai, 2014).

Furthermore, in the EFL context, the learners often lack motivation to learn English. They use English only in the classroom and study English only to pass the examination (Igawa, 2015). This can result in them being functionally incompetent in English and lead them to face communicative breakdowns in authentic situations. They often learn how to speak English by remembering and reciting dialogues which may be awkward and inappropriate when implemented in different authentic situations. On the other hand, in authentic language events, there are many language features which can make the communication effective such as cultural aspects, manners, directness, politeness and appropriateness. So, to encourage the learners' awareness of pragmatics is an engaging way to enhance their ability to use language suitably and appropriately. Then pragmatic content and activities are very important to implement in classrooms, especially in EFL classroom contexts.

Many scholars have confirmed EFL learner's lack of pragmatic awareness despite its importance in communication. Lee (2009) studied how Taiwanese university students perceive their pragmatic awareness in English as foreign language (EFL) environments. The results revealed that participants perceived grammatical errors as more serious than pragmatic errors. EFL learners are often more concerned with grammar and devote less attention to awareness in pragmatics which is very important in communication across cultures. Furthermore, Rafieyan et al (2014) confirmed that pragmatic awareness in EFL learners can guarantee their success in producing appropriate target language and increasing target language comprehension. On the other hand, teaching pragmatics is very challenging in EFL contexts. Ekin and Damar (2013) also found that teachers in EFL contexts lack pragmatic teaching practice. As a result, they are less confident when teaching pragmatics which leads to incomplete pragmatics teaching in many EFL contexts. However, in the context of EFL learners, the classroom may be the only available opportunity to address the issue of pragmatic awareness. According to a study done by Tanaka and Oki (2015), Japanese EFL learners' pragmatic awareness as well as their perception of usefulness of learning pragmatics increased through explicit teaching significantly. This study demonstrates that in EFL contexts, the learners' pragmatic awareness can be strengthened by effective pragmatic teaching in the classroom.

Objectives

The objectives of this research were;

- 1) To investigate the extent of EFL learners pragmatic awareness.
- 2) To explore the EFL learners concern about the factors affecting speech acts delivery.

Methodology

Subjects

The subjects were 20 first year cadets of NKRAFA. They were all males, 18-20 years old. According to the particular characteristics of the academy, the cadets were required to complete military activities and academic subjects. They did not have a flexible timetable so the cadets were purposively selected to take part in the study as they were the researcher's advisees. This made it convenient for the researcher to make appointments with them because the instruction and testing was conducted in an extra class in the cadets' compulsory schedule.

Instruments

The instruments used in this research were the Multiple-choice Discourse Completion Test (MDCT) (Apologizing, Requesting, Suggesting, Compliment and Compliment Responding). The MDCT was selected as the instrument because the research was conducted in an EFL environment where the learners had limited English language proficiency. This instrument can be used as a practical tool to assess pragmatic competence, including both the learners' speech act production and pragmatic awareness (Aufa, 2013). It was adopted because of various speech act theories from many scholars. For example, the suggesting speech act was initiated from the coding scheme for suggestion strategies of Martínez-Flor (2005) and Jiang's (2006) suggesting forms. The requesting speech act was created from the requesting strategies from the work of Blum-Kulka et al., (1989) and adapted from Johnston, Kasper, and Ross's (1998) work. The complimenting speech act was developed according to compliment formulas by Manes and Wolfson (1981). The compliment responding speech act was constructed based on Compliment Response Formulas by Billmyer (1990), and the apologizing speech act was developed from Olshtain and Cohen's (1983) categorization of apology strategies. The first step in constructing the MDCT was to study each speech act theory and review the literature which related to the chosen speech acts and then adapt it for EFL learners and their environments. The second step was to develop the situations and choices for each situation based on the two variables of familiarity and social status. The third step was to check the validity and reliability of the test. To check the reliability, the pilot MDCT was conducted with 30 similar cadets. The reliability was analyzed by the formula called Cronbach's alpha as used by Chotedelok, et al (2007). The results provided evidence for the reliability of the test ($\alpha=0.726$). For the validity measurement, three qualified lecturers were invited to check validity. The fourth step was to rewrite the test. The final step was to employ the test with real participants.

According to the documentation supplied, the MDCT was designed to enable the participants to choose a suitable answer from two choices for each situation, so the correct answer from MDCT was recorded. The MDCT provided only two choices because pragmatic learning and teaching are new in this context and because of the cadets' limited language competence. It is not extensive in the EFL context (Sharif, et al, 2017). They are familiar with traditional learning and teaching language rules, so they may be fatigued from reading choices and distracted when completing the test. Additionally, the test was designed to measure the participants pragmatic awareness according to two variables i.e. familiarity and social status. A

MDCT with two choices with different factors in each situation is discreet. Furthermore, in addition to the two choices, the MDCT includes an open response section that asks participants to explain their reasoning behind their choice. This part also helps the researcher gain in-depth information about pragmatic awareness of the participants. Hence the MDCT with two choices and a section for explanation is a reasonable assessment of pragmatic awareness and reflects the objectives of the research.

Additionally, as mentioned earlier, the MDCT was based on the factors of familiarity and social status. There were six situations for each speech act. Each situation was composed of the following factors— Familiar/Higher (FH), Familiar/Equal (FE), Familiar/Lower (FL), Familiar/Lower (FL), Unfamiliar/Lower (UL), Unfamiliar/Equal (UE), and Unfamiliar/Higher (UH). The mean score of the participants who choose the correct answer in each situation were analyzed. In the explanation part of the MDCT, the results were investigated by carefully reading and grouping the descriptions provided by the cadets.

Results

The results obtained from using the MDCT instrument are presented for each of the speech acts. As mentioned earlier, there were five speech acts namely, requesting, complimenting and compliment responding, suggesting apologizing, and an explanation part in this instrument. So there were six situations for each speech act (total = 30) which were created according to two factors—social status and familiarity between interlocutors. There were two choices presented and participants had to choose the most suitable alternative in each situation. After choosing the suitable choice, the participants were required to explain their reasons for the choice they made.

The following tables present the results for each of the speech act. The number and percentages of participants who choose the correct answer are shown as well as the explanations given by cadets for the choices they made in each situation.

Table 1 Requesting speech act

| Items/ Factors | Number of participants | Items/ Factors | Number of participants |
|------------------------------------|------------------------|-------------------------------------|------------------------|
| Requesting 1 (Familiar/Higher) | 4 (20%) | Requesting 2 (Familiar/Equal) | 17 (85%) |
| Requesting 3 (Familiar/Lower) | 16 (80%) | Requesting 4 (Unfamiliar/Lower) | 19 (95%) |
| Requesting 5 (Unfamiliar/Equal) | 19 (95%) | Requesting 6 (Unfamiliar/Higher) | 13 (65%) |
| Mean | 14.67 | Std. Deviation | 5.68 |

For the requesting speech act, the cadets choose the correct answers in almost every situation (mean score=14.67). They preferred a conventional indirect strategy to a direct strategy in requesting. They were concerned about familiarity and social status. They also thought that to request someone to do something, supporting reasons were necessary. In terms of social status, they explained that it was necessary to be polite and respectful when talking to the senior in order to make them sympathize with you. Some cadets also agreed that the tone of the request should be soft and not offensive. However, in some situations, the cadets considered the seriousness in the event, so a direct strategy was adopted to use with unfamiliar listeners.

However, in the first situation, there were only four cadets who chose the right answer. The cadets were not competent in requesting with familiars with lower social status. In these situations, a speaker was familiar with a listener, but the speaker was superior. So the direct strategy (choice A: Give me a piece of paper.) was more appropriate than choice B (Do you mind giving me a piece of paper?). The results showed that most of the cadets (n=16) chose B (conventional indirect strategy) which did not fit the situation. In this situation, the speaker knows the listener quite well. So the speech act which is a direct strategy like choice A is more suitable. However, there were many cadets (n=16) who said that if you want someone to do something for you, you should be as polite as you can. They agreed that even though you are superior to the others, you should not use your authority over other people. From the results in the table above, it is clear that the cadets were not proficient in delivering speech acts with familiars and interlocutors with a lower social status. It appears that the cadets are not concerned about seniority when making a request. The speakers believe they must be as

polite as possible if they want something from their listener or if they want their listener to do something for them.

Interestingly, the sixth requesting situation (Unfamiliar/Higher) happened between a speaker and a listener who were not familiar with each other and the listener held a lower social status. There were 13 (from 20) cadets who chose choice B (direct strategy) which was the correct answer. They explained that when students do something inappropriately during the studying hour, it is not necessary for a teacher to make a polite request ('As a teacher, it is not necessary to be polite in that situation'). Furthermore, some cadets added that to stop bad behavior by students, an order or direct command should be given. Some also suggested that, as a teacher is superior to students, using direct commands to urge students to desist is suitable. However, there were 7 cadets (35%) who confirmed that a polite request (conventional indirect strategy) should be given by a teacher even with inferiors (students).

The next session is the results from complimenting speech act.

Table 2 Complimenting speech act

| Items/ Factors | Number of participants | Items/ Factors | Number of participants |
|---------------------------------------|------------------------|--|------------------------|
| Complimenting 1 (Unfamiliar/Equal) | 15 (75%) | Complimenting 2 (Unfamiliar/Lower) | 20(100%) |
| Complimenting 3 (Familiar/ Higher) | 16 (80%) | Complimenting 4 (Unfamiliar/Higher) | 16(80%) |
| Complimenting 5 (Familiar/Equal) | 9(45%) | Complimenting 6 (Familiar/Lower) | 9(45%) |
| Mean 14.50 | Std. Deviation 3.937 | | |

In the complimenting speech act, the total mean score was 14.50. The cadets were not skillful in making compliments with familiars with both equal and higher social status than them. The cadets commented that, for the unfamiliar interlocutors, the complimenting should not be too direct. Also, to make a compliment to a senior (lower social status), it should be more courteous and polite. To compliment familiar interlocutors, one cadet suggested that 'It was not necessary to use a long sentence with ponderous words to a familiar interlocutor'. Another cadet said that 'An exaggerated statement can show insincerity'. So in some situations

they thought that going directly to the point was more appropriate. Moreover in the situation with unfamiliar interlocutors, the complimenting statement should be formal.

From the results, we could assume that it is challenging for the cadets to compliment people with whom they are on familiar terms and have an equal social status. As military cadets (all men) who study in a boarding school, they are very close and may feel shy and uncomfortable when having to give a compliment to a familiar friend.

Furthermore, in the sixth situation, the result demonstrated that the cadets are not comfortable using this speech act with familiar listeners who have a higher social status. This is possibly a reflection of a Thai cultural norm. In general, Thai people may feel too shy to give compliments, especially with familiars. Moreover, it is harder for a speaker to make a compliment with a person who has higher social status than him/her. The words have to be selected carefully to make a compliment appropriate and not too casual.

The next table shows the results of compliment responding speech act.

Table 3 Compliment responding speech act

| Items/ Factors | Number of participants | Items/ Factors | Number of participants |
|--|------------------------|---|------------------------|
| Compliment responding 1 (Unfamiliar/Lower) | 15(75%) | Compliment responding 2 (Unfamiliar/Higher) | 15(75%) |
| Compliment responding 3 (Familiar/Lower) | 19(95%) | Compliment responding 4 (Familiar/Higher) | 12(60%) |
| Compliment responding 5 (Familiar/Equal) | 12(60%) | Compliment responding 6 (Unfamiliar/Equal) | 15(75%) |
| Mean 14.67 | Std. Deviation 2.58 | | |

For the speech act of compliment responding, the total mean score was 14.67. The cadets considered that the social status between the interlocutors was important when responding to compliments. They decided that, to make a complimentary response to a younger person, the language should not be too formal and exaggerated. The level of language used with a younger person of lower social status should be not too formal. On the other hand, to respond to a higher social status person, the recipient should not refuse the compliment. Respondents added that 'When you are praised by a senior, it is impolite to refuse the compliment' and that 'To respond to the higher social status interlocutor, to accept with saying thank you is a must'. In this speech act, the cadets cared more about

sincerity in responding to the compliments. However, it seemed to be challenging for them to conduct this speech act properly. That is to say, this speech act could possibly be related to their specific situation with the military, where all the cadets are men and on intimate terms with each other and therefore less likely to respond to compliments. As a result, they may be less likely to know the appropriate response to a compliment.

Table 4 below illustrates the results of suggesting speech act.

Table 4 Suggesting speech act

| Items/ Factors | Number of participants | Items/ Factors | Number of participants |
|----------------------------------|------------------------|------------------------------------|------------------------|
| Suggesting 1 Familiar/Equal | 18 (90%) | Suggesting 2 Unfamiliar/Equal | 14(70%) |
| Suggesting 3 Familiar/Lower | 20(100%) | Suggesting 4 Familiar/Higher | 9 (45%) |
| Suggesting 5 Unfamiliar/Lower | 16 (80%) | Suggesting 6 Unfamiliar/ Higher | 17(85%) |
| Mean 15.67 | Std. Deviation 3.83 | | |

In the suggesting speech act, the total mean score was 15.67. This suggested that the cadets were keen on making suggestion with two variables. They thought that it was more courteous to make a suggestion with polite words. They also claimed that 'The speaker should keep the goodwill of the listener and be considerate while making a suggestion'. In some situations, they commented that 'Before suggesting to anyone, to cheer them up first may make a suggestion sound more acceptable'. They also explained that 'To suggest something, a speaker should be polite and choose words carefully to make a suggestion softer'. And to suggest to seniors, the language should be soft and indirect'. Some cadets clarified their choice by adding that when making a suggestion to the inferiors, the language should be direct, natural and simple. The cadets found that in the situations that the speakers are familiar with the listener and have higher social status, it is challenging to make a suggestion. This may result from Thai belief that it is not proper to suggest to seniors. However, the cadets were too polite in every suggestion situation and seemed to be unaware that they could be polite without using formal language. Finally, they accepted that when making a suggestion to a younger person, even if he/she is a stranger, the language can be informal and not too strict.

The last table presents apologizing speech act results.

Table 5 Apologizing speech act

| Items/ Factors | Number of participants | Items/ Factors | Number of participants |
|--------------------------------------|------------------------|-------------------------------------|------------------------|
| Apologizing 1 (Unfamiliar/Higher) | 15 (75%) | Apologizing 2 (Unfamiliar/Equal) | 9(45%) |
| Apologizing 3 (Familiar/Equal) | 19(95%) | Apologizing 4 (Familiar/Lower) | 13(65%) |
| Apologizing 5 (Familiar/Higher) | 5(25%) | Apologizing 6 (Unfamiliar/Lower) | 17(85%) |
| Mean 13 Std. Deviation 5.22 | | | |

The total mean score of the speech act of apologizing was 13. This indicated that the cadets were not as keen on this speech act as the previous four speech acts.

To make an apology, the cadets always said sorry in every situation. They accepted that 'It is easy and simple to say sorry when you hurt someone'. They also thought that 'Just saying sorry is enough'. Moreover, they perceived that to apologize is important. They mentioned that 'It is not polite to refuse the fault that you have made'. They also added that 'When you damaged the others' belonging, you should be more polite'. Some claimed that 'To accept the fault is showing responsibility', and 'When you damage the other's belonging, to say sorry as well as making a promise to buy it back can show responsible behavior. Moreover, they mentioned that when you are wrong, you should not blame other people for your error and 'It is disgusting to show that guilt came from other things'

However, in the fifth situation, the cadets' results resulted in a very low mean score. In this situation, the cadets were not concerned about social status and familiarity; for example, when the sufferer was younger and had lower social status than the speaker. They could apologize by just saying 'I'm sorry. It won't happen again' which was enough in that situation. On the other hand, most cadets chose 'I feel bad about forgetting our appointment. Please forgive me' which showed too much repent. They added the reasons that 'Making a strong apology can cure a sufferer's feeling', 'Making an apology with a promise is stronger' and 'It is more sincere than just saying sorry'. Then this seemed they were not aware of the social status and familiarity while they were making apology. They concerned more about their guilt. Moreover, they also mentioned that 'To apologize [to] the senior, in a formal situation, the formal pattern should be suitably used'

The result of this speech act showed that the cadets had difficulty in apologizing to familiar listeners who had lower social status than themselves. This could be a result of a Thai cultural norm. That is to say, in general, Thai people are considerate and willing to accept blame in order to avoid a confrontation especially if they believe they are in the wrong. So, with many factors to be considered, making an apology was complicated for them.

Furthermore, in relation to the overall mean of the number of participants who made the correct choice in each speech act, the highest mean was for suggesting (15.67), followed by requesting (14.67), complimenting responding (14.67), complementing (14.50) and apologizing (13.00). The results are shown in Table 6.

Table 6 Mean scores for each speech act on MDCT

| Speech acts | Mean | Std. Deviation |
|-----------------------------|-------|----------------|
| 1. Requesting | 14.67 | 5.68 |
| 2. Complimenting | 14.50 | 3.94 |
| 3. Complimenting Responding | 14.67 | 2.58 |
| 4. Suggesting | 15.67 | 3.83 |
| 5. Apologizing | 13.00 | 5.22 |
| Overall mean | 14.50 | 4.17 |

For the data from the second part of the MDCT, the explanations (in Thai) of each situation provided by the cadets were read and re-read to identify the various reasons provided for the choices made in the first part of the questionnaire. Some participants stated that they knew the correct response, but they could not give a reason for their decision. They recognized that there are various levels of language which can be used with different groups of people. For example, they knew how to give a compliment to a familiar younger cousin by saying something short like ‘I like your new hair style’ instead of a longer description ‘I am really impressed by your new hair style. How can you come up with this style?’), which is a response which was not necessary in this case. The cadets also explained that a short and precise compliment was more suitable for the familiar and younger person than a longer ponderous compliment. They also perceived that politeness, directness, indirectness and sincerity are crucial factors to consider when using each speech act, which is similar to the use of these speech acts in Thai.

While not all cadets provided reasons to support their choices, the data from the other participants was valuable. It showed that they were concerned with the factors of familiarity and social status while delivering speech acts. As Thais, they were careful, especially when they talked to people with higher social status or those who are senior to them. In some speech acts, like requesting, suggesting and apologizing, the social status of listeners was carefully considered. For example, the cadets seemed to be very careful when using an apologizing speech act. One cadet explained that 'To make an apologize [sic] to seniors, the language used is selective and formal'. Another cadet provided the reason that 'It should have reasons and compensation when you want to cure the listeners' feelings'. So it can be assumed that in the speech act of apologizing, which is an act where the speakers tried to save 'face' because of their past actions, a listener expects to receive compensation and an explanation from a speaker (Cohen & Olshtain, 1983). The cadets also considered that familiarity between participants was also a major concern in delivering speech acts. In situations where a speaker and a listener are at the same age but are not familiar with each other, formal words and fixed patterns need to be used while conducting this speech act. So it can be concluded that the factors of social status and familiarity affected the ways in which speech acts were chosen by the cadets. Like the Thai language, the cadets accepted that language is used in different ways. The speakers cannot use the same sentences, words or patterns with all people. This understanding of language usage was something that the cadets in this study recognized as important and were very concerned about when engaging in the various speech acts.

Discussion

The results of the study indicated that the cadets were nearly equally aware of requesting, complimenting and compliment responding speech acts. They showed the most awareness of appropriate behavior for the suggesting speech act and had the least awareness of using the apologizing speech act. This reflects the understanding that apologizing speech acts are more complicated because they comprise more than one component. As mentioned by Cohen and Olshtain (1981), apologizing consists of five strategies (i.e. IFID, an expression of responsibility, an explanation, an offer of repair, and a promise of forbearance). So, to make an apology to an interlocutor of a different background becomes even more challenging for the participants. Also, this speech act is an example of remedial action after an offense between the speaker and the hearer. So, this speech act is always used carefully according to the

degree of guilt and victims' culture and perception (Al-Sobh 2013). Moreover, in Thai culture, apologizing without first clarifying the reasons for guilt may be an admission of guilt for a situation in which the speaker is not prepared to accept the responsibility. So, the participants are less competent with this type of speech act. Suggesting speech acts, on the other hand, were easier for the participants because this kind of speech act always occurs in an educational environment (Ali, 2017) with which the participants are intimately familiar. Furthermore, as Martínez-Flor (2005) mention, suggesting speech acts are non-impositive directives which have the objective of giving a benefit to the listener, so the speaker is risking very little when making a suggesting speech act.

Conclusion

This research originated from the real problems that EFL learners are facing when they need to communicate with others, especially with people from diverse backgrounds or cultures. For these learners, enhancing their pragmatic awareness is considered to be one of the main ways in which their communication with people from other cultures can be facilitated.

Social status and familiarity were investigated in this study in relation to five speech acts (requesting, complimenting, compliment responding, suggesting and apologizing). Among the five speech acts, the cadets were more competent and comfortable when using the suggesting speech act and much less so when using the apologizing speech act. The cadets were also concerned about the factors of social status and familiarity when conducting the speech acts. They chose different words or patterns of sentences to use with people with different characteristics (age, status and familiarity). However, in some situations, the cadets were not able to differentiate the correct response, especially when the two choices (A and B) provided were not very different. Hence, it can be concluded that pragmatic awareness is an important component in delivering speech acts, and an essential factor in learning a second language especially for EFL learners.

Suggestions for Future Research

From this study, it is obvious that there are many speech acts that deserve further study, especially the responses to different speech acts (i.e. responding to three different speech acts of apologizing, suggesting and requesting speech acts). Moreover, further research could study the various factors affecting the speech act, for example, gender, age and ranks within a military context. This research would particularly benefit the air cadets because they frequently use language with different ranking officers. Furthermore, additional studies should use new instruments to collect data. Role playing activities and the Written Discourse Completion Test (WDCT) might be used to significant effect in additional research with participants who are proficient in English language.

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Appendix
The Multiple-choice Discourse Completion Test (MDCT)

Please tick (✓) in the box that most appropriately reflects your opinion.

R1) You are the manager of a company. You are in a meeting with the other members of your company. You need to write some notes, but you do not have any paper. You turn to the person sitting next to you. You know the person very well.

You: A: Give me a piece of paper. B: Do you mind giving me a piece of paper?

Which one is more appropriate? Please, explain.....

R2) There is something wrong with your computer, but you have to finish some homework which is due tomorrow. Your roommate has a computer, but he is writing a course paper on his computer. You want to ask him to stop his work and let you use his computer to finish your homework first.

You: A: I need to borrow your computer because I want to finish my homework.
 B: I know that you are working on your paper, but my homework is due tomorrow. Would you mind if I borrow your computer?

Which one is more appropriate? Please, explain.....

R3) You are writing your graduate thesis and need to interview the president of your university. The president was your teacher and you know him quite well. You know the president is very busy and has a very tight schedule. You want to ask the president to spare one or two hours for your interview.

You: A: I know your schedule is very tight but I want to finish my thesis as well. So do you have some time for my interview?
 B: Sir, I know that you are very busy these days. But could you possibly provide some time for an interview for my thesis, please?

Which one is more appropriate? Please, explain.....

R4) You haven't finished your term paper yet, but it will be due tomorrow. You want to ask your professor for an extension. What would you say?

You: A: I think I need some more time for my paper. It isn't finished yet. Would you mind if I bring it in a few days, please?

B: I cannot submit my paper on time. Is it a problem for you if I bring it another day?

Which one is more appropriate? Please, explain.

R5) You're studying for your exam tomorrow. It is 10 p.m. and you are hungry. You have a new neighbor next door who has just moved in. He is about your age. You know that he is still awake. You want ask for a piece of bread. How would you request it?

You: A: Give me a piece of bread. B: Can you give me a piece of bread?

Which one is more appropriate? Please, explain.

R6) You are a new teacher. In class, the mobile phone of one of your students rings. You ask your student to turn off his mobile phone.

You: A: Do you mind if I ask you to turn your mobile phone off?

B: Turn off your mobile phone, please.

Which one is more appropriate? Please, explain.

C1) On a train, you sit opposite a woman who is your age (suppose you are 30). She has a lovely baby in her arms.

You: A: Wow! Is she your baby? B: What a lovely baby!

Which one is more appropriate? Please, explain.

C2) You are a university student. By the assistance of a professor from other faculty, you have made satisfied remarks and comments throughout your research.

You: A: You have been so helpful. I wouldn't have been able to make it without your assistance.

B: You did a good job. Many thanks for you.

Which one is more appropriate? Please, explain.

C3) Your younger cousin has a new haircut. You are impressed.

You: A: I am really impressed by your new hair style. How can you come up with this style?

B: I like your new hair style.

Which one is more appropriate? Please, explain.

C4) You are a university lecturer. You are attending a proposal presentation of a graduate student. The presentation is very impressive.

You: A: You deserve a hug right now. B: You did a great job on that presentation.

Which one is more appropriate? Please, explain.

C5) Your friend was chosen as a university representative to compete in the national speech contest. He wins the first prize.

You: A: I am very proud of you.

B: You're even better than a unicorn, because you're real.

Which one is more appropriate? Please, explain.

C6) Your older brother has bought a brand new car. It is your dream car.

You: A: I'm really impressed with your new car. You have a good taste.

B: I really like your car.

Which one is more appropriate? Please, explain.

CR1) You have just returned a lost purse with some money and credit cards you found in a public park to a middle-aged stranger.

A woman: God bless you. You're such an honest kind-hearted fellow.

You: A: Fantastic ! B: Thank you, I appreciate the compliment.

Which one is more appropriate? Please, explain.

CR2) A small boy gets on the bus. All the seats are occupied. You volunteer to give your seat to this boy.

Boy: You are very kind.

You: A: Thanks. B: How kind of you to say so.

Which one is more appropriate? Please, explain.

CR3) Your advisor is impressed by you winning the First Place Award at the annual Writing Competition of your college.

Advisor: Your article is impressive. You have a promising future.

You: A: Really? But I don't think so.

B: Thank you, I appreciate the compliment.

Which one is more appropriate? Please, explain.

CR4) You are the superintendent of a division in a well-established company. Your secretary is impressed by the new suit you are wearing.

Secretary: You look so elegant today!

You: A: Really? It was very cheap. And you are also great in that suit.

B: How kind of you to say so.

Which one is more appropriate? Please, explain.

CR5) You have come across your close friend you haven't seen for the last two years. She is impressed by your fitness.

Your friend: Oh! You look great. You've become incredibly fit.

You: A: I am glad you like it.

B: Really? I have been spending at least three hours a day in a fitness class for two years.

Which one is more appropriate? Please, explain.

CR6) You invite your new friend to have lunch at your place. Your new friend sees a hanging painting which you painted yourself. He likes it.

Your friend: That painting is fantastic.

You: A: I am glad you enjoy it. B: Thanks. That means a lot to me.

Which one is more appropriate? Please, explain.

S1) Your classmate is delivering his presentation in class. You are interested in the topic and you have enjoyed the presentation very much. But you notice that there is a mistake in one of his PowerPoint slides. What would you say to him?

You: A: Your slides need correcting.
 B: You did a good presentation but it would be nice to check some errors in your slides.

Which one is more appropriate? Please, explain.

S2) You see one of your new classmates working in the library very late in the evening. This class mate is browsing the Web in order to find information about Digital Electronics. Your new classmate looks very tired. What would you say to this classmate?

You: A: You look tired. Get back a take a rest.
 B: I'm not sure, but I think a good idea would be that you go home and have a rest.

Which one is more appropriate? Please, explain.

S3) You and one of your professors meet in a computer bookshop. Your professor is considering buying an expensive book about Internet 2.0. However, you think that another computer shop may sell the book at a lower price. What would you say to your professor?

You: A: I think it would be better to check the price in other shops.
 B: If you check the price of that book, you won't buy it here.

Which one is more appropriate? Please, explain.

S4) Your younger sister needs your help to complete Chinese essay writing. But you are not keen on Chinese. So you suggest to her that she consults your Chinese friend. What would you say to your sister?

You: A: Do you mind asking my Chinese friend, please?
 B: Why don't you go and have a talk with my Chinese friend?

Which one is more appropriate? Please, explain.

S5) You are in a telephone shop. While you are looking for a gadget, a man who stand by you is going to buy a telephone which you know is not easy to use.

You: A: Get out and look for other brands.
 B: In my opinion, why don't you look for the other brand?

Which one is more appropriate? Please, explain.

S6) While you are in a supermarket, there is a boy who is about to buy a bottle of milk on which the ‘used by’ date has expired.

You: A: How about checking the expiry date first?

B: Is it possible for you to check the expiry date first?

Which one is more appropriate? Please, explain.

A1) As a dean of the Humanities Faculty, you are supposed to discuss some problems with an English lecture from another university at your office. Unfortunately you had been called to an unexpected meeting in another place, and you arrived at his office half an hour late.

You: A: I apologize to you for being late.

B: I'm sorry. You have every right to be angry with me.

Which one is more appropriate? Please, explain.

A2) You stepped slightly on the foot of a woman while you were trying to sit down, but it was impossible for you to avoid doing this as the woman had extended her legs too far towards the front seat. Still, you felt the need to apologize.

Woman: Ah! Be careful!

You: A: Sorry but you shouldn't have extended your legs so far.

B: I deeply regret having hurt you.

Which one is more appropriate? Please, explain.

A3) You and Pranon are friends, and you borrowed Pranon's computer. But while you were using the computer, you dropped it and damaged the screen. You are returning the computer to your friend.

Pranon: I hope you are OK! What happened?

You: A: I apologize for damaging your computer. Will you please forgive me?

B: Sorry! I know this hurts you. But it is not my fault.

Which one is more appropriate? Please, explain.

A4) You had to discuss some of your problems with your teacher but due to a traffic jam, you came 45 minutes late. What would you say to your supervisor when you see him/her?

Your teacher: You are 45 minutes late.

You: A: Sorry! I am late. The traffic was very heavy
 B: I realize that I was wrong, please forgive me. It won't happen again.

Which one is more appropriate? Please, explain.

A5) You have promised your younger brother to take him to the park on Sunday but on Sunday evening some of your friends came to meet you and you couldn't go with him. You also forgot to do so. What would you say to him?

Your brother: I've been waiting for you for 3 hours.

You: A: I'm sorry. It won't happen again.
 B: I feel bad about forgetting our appointment. Please forgive me.

Which one is more appropriate? Please, explain.

A6) You are a university representative attending the meeting with professors from many universities. Your car broke down so you are late by 45 minutes.

You: A: Sorry! I am late. B: Please, accept my apology for being late.

Which one is more appropriate? Please, explain.