

# Classroom activities to improve the students' pragmatic ability to make appropriate complaint in English.

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**Activity 1.** Students' analysis of the language use, politeness, directness, formality and complain strategies.

**Duration:** 30 minutes.

**Material:** Task sheet.

**Proficiency level of the students:** Intermediate

**Objective:**

1. The students will enhance their knowledge of making appropriate complaints analyzing the given discourse.
2. The students will be aware of appropriate language use according to contextual factors and consider level of politeness, directness and formality while making complaints

**Teacher's instruction:**

1. Teacher provides the students with some dialogues of English speakers who makes complaints on some issues.
2. Teacher asks the students to read the dialogues and analyze them in the term of politeness, directness, formality.
3. Then the teacher asks the students to justify their answers.

**Students' instruction:**

1. The students read the given examples of complaints and analyze them.
2. The students tick the suggested points based on the given instructions of making request.
3. The students justify their answers writing the words or phrases as evidence.

1

Teacher: Dave you are always speaking while I am explaining the lesson.

Dave: Sorry Sir. But...

T: Your behavior is disturbing our lesson and interrupting others.

D: I don't mean to do like that, sorry...

T: Behave yourself and concentrate your mind on the lesson please.

2

Mum: Chris , do you think you are doing the right thing?

Chris: What do you mean Mum?

Mum: You are staying late in the evening and getting up late in the morning.

Chris: I have so many things to do.

Mum: Manage your time and do everything on time.

RECEPTIONIST Oh, hello, Mrs Gibson. What's the problem?  
 G I'm sorry, but I think there's something wrong with the TV. Would you mind sending someone to look at it, please?  
 R Of course. I'll send someone up straight away. It's room 12, isn't it?  
 G Yes. Thank you very much.  
 R Not at all.  
 G Oh, and er we're leaving today, of course.  
 R Yes, that's fine. Check-out is at 12 o'clock.

3.

RECEPTIONIST Hello. Reception.  
 MR LINTON This is John Linton, room 28.  
 I'm sorry, but I've got a bit of a problem. My breakfast hasn't arrived and I ordered it for 7 o'clock. I wonder if you could check for me.  
 R Oh, I'm terribly sorry about that, Mr Linton. I'll call the kitchen immediately.  
 L Oh, and I wonder if I could have some more towels, please. I dropped mine in the bath last night.  
 R Right, I'll send some up.  
 L Thank you very much.  
 R You're welcome.

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Chris Redstone & Gillie Cunningham. 2005. Face2face. Pre-intermediate. Students' book.

**Assessment rubric for activity 1.**

Sample complaint dialogues	Complaint features	Very appropriate	Appropriate	Less appropriate	Inappropriate	Evidence
Dialogue 1	Politeness					
	Directness					
	Formality					
	Grammar structure					
	Speech act sets					
	Complaint strategy (Initiation and explanation, complaint, justification, request)					
Dialogue 2	Politeness					
	Directness					
	Formality					
	Grammar structure					
	Speech act sets					
	Complaint strategy (Initiation and explanation, complaint, justification, request)					

Dialogue 3	Politeness					
	Directness					
	Formality					
	Grammar structure					
	Speech act sets					
	Complaint strategy(Initiation and explanation, complaint, justification, request)					
Dialogue 4	Politeness					
	Directness					
	Formality					
	Grammar structure					
	Speech act sets					
	Complaint strategy(Initiation and explanation, complaint, justification, request)					

### **Activity 2. Multiple choice activity.**

**Duration:** 20 minutes.

**Material:** Task sheet.

**Proficiency level of the students:** Intermediate

#### **Objectives:**

1. The students will be able to improve their awareness of language use: grammar structures and speech act set while making complaints.
2. The students will improve their production skills to make complaints

#### **Teacher's instruction:**

1. Teacher asks the students to choose the most appropriate answer to the given situation.
2. When the students have finished the teacher asks the students to write their answers to the given situation.
3. The teacher tells the students to exchange their answers with peers, read aloud count similar answers and make discussion.

**Students' instruction:**

1. The students read the given situations and choose the most appropriate answer they think.
2. The students write their own answers to the given situations.
3. The students exchange their answers with the peers and make discussion about the mostly given answers.

Situation 1. You want to tell your friend a very urgent message so you are making a phone call. Even you are calling several times your friend hasn't received. After half an hour's attempt your friend receives the call but you have already got annoyed. Make a complaint.

- a) I am sorry to say this but you are irresponsible to use a telephone because I have been trying to connect with you for half an hour to tell you something urgent.
  - b) I am sorry to bother you but there is a bit problem to get connected with you even I have been making phone calls for half an hour. Please be a bit responsible to use a telephone.
  - c) I am afraid I have a bit problem with connection to you and spent half an hour phoning you. Were you busy doing something?
  - d) You are so irresponsible to use a telephone that took half an hour of mine to call you.
- Your answer \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

You are unsatisfied with the service at the restaurant (the meal has not been delivered on time, you waited a bit longer). Make a complaint to the manager of the restaurant.

- a) Look, there is something I want to talk to you that I have been waiting the meal so long that waste my time.
- b) Excuse me there seems to appear a problem with the meal I have ordered that I have had to wait the meal a bit longer so could you please do something for me?
- c) I am sorry to say you this that the service is taking too much time of mine. Will you make it faster please?

Your answer \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Your salary seems to be wrong that you think it is less than the usual amount. Make a complaint about the issue to the book keeper.

- a) I wish to inform you that there is something wrong with my salary. It seems to be less than I expected.
- b) I am afraid I have some problem with my salary that is not as much as my previous ones. I hope you will solve the problem.
- c) I wonder if I could speak to you about the problem that my salary seems a bit less than the usual amount. Could you please be kind to check what is wrong with it?

Your answer \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Assessment rubric: (the teacher uses the rubric to assess the students' answers)**

	Excellent-3	Good -1	Need to be improved-1
Awareness of linguistic variations in context(status, distance, intensity)			
Awareness of language use			
Awareness of speech act sets			
Students own production			

**Rationale**

Making complaint is sometimes accepted as face threatening act if the speaker is unaware of strategies and language use and makes a complaint based on their own cultural norms in the target culture. So the activities given serve to facilitate the students with enough experience that can be implemented while making complaints.

The first activity provides the students with sample complaints made in different situations and between different people in terms of their social status, distance and intensity of the issue that makes the students to analyze the complaint speech acts in the dialogues accordingly. The reason why I choose the activity to assess the students is that by the way the students reflect their knowledge of making complaints in different angles that means to what extent the speaker should be polite, direct and formal considering the social status, distance of the listener and intensity of the issue, whether the complaints in the given dialogues follow the strategies of making complaints or not, whether appropriate grammar structure and speech act sets are used or not all of which are considered to be crucial elements of complaint. Moreover the activity makes the students think and analyze more rather engage them to write that improves their awareness of all elements of complaints through analyzing. The students write some words or phrases in the last column why they think the politeness or other complaint features are appropriate, somehow, appropriate or inappropriate which are considered to be evidence to what extent they comprehend the topic and why they have chosen the option.

The multiple choice activity is helpful to identify the students' pragmatic awareness and appropriateness of their production given as a response to the situations. By the activity the students first choose the appropriate option to the situation and then they are given a chance to express their response on the basis of gained knowledge throughout the lesson. While choosing an option the students have to compare different answers given to the same situation by which they discover appropriate way of making complaints using the most appropriate grammar structures and speech act sets considering the contextual factors. The production part improves their communicative skill as well and they try to find out another appropriate way out of their

chosen answer. The rubric is so simple for the teacher to assess the students that the teacher decides whether excellent, good or need to be improved on the account of the students' answers and production.

**Justification:**

The first activity aims to assess the students' receptive pragmatic ability and comprehension holistically and the scoring takes into account the following elements:

- Choice and use of strategies for realizing speech act
- Appropriateness of the level of formality, directness, politeness (Andrew Cohen, 2010. p.276.).
- Appropriateness of the linguistic aspects (Noriko Ishihara, 2010. pp.292-293).

Multiple choice is a way of assessment of oral production indirectly and easy for the teacher to assess (Andrew Cohen, 2010. p.277). However in the activity I decided to combine the multiple choice format with open-ended comment in case the students may have different response to the given situation (Andrew Cohen, 2010. p.268) which shows their pragmatic ability of production.

Multiple choice is a limited tool to define why their answers are right or not so I designed a rubric for the student to be obvious why their answers are excellent or need to be improved.

## **Reference**

Noriko Ishihara & Andrew Cohen. 2010. Teaching and learning pragmatics.

Chris Redstone & Gillie Cunningham. 2005. Face2face. Pre-intermediate. Students' book. Cambridge University Press.