

REQUEST AND PERMISSION: MAKING POLITE REQUESTS, ASKING, RESPONDING, AND REFUSING

Teacher of Fergana State University

Karimjonova Shahloxon Ravshanjonovna

Fergana State University,

Faculty of foreign language,

1st year student

Rahmonova Dilnoza Ortiq qizi

Email: rahmonovadilnoza859@gmail.com

ORCID ID: 0009-0009-9778-6794

Annotation: This article investigates the linguistic and pragmatic aspects of making polite requests and asking for permission in English. It explores how speech act theory and politeness strategies contribute to effective communication. The paper also analyzes various forms of asking, responding, and refusing, with emphasis on cross-cultural aspects and their implications for language learners and educators.

Keywords: polite requests, asking permission, refusal, pragmatics, speech acts, cross-cultural communication, politeness theory, ESL

In modern communication, especially in the context of English as a second language (ESL), making polite requests and asking for permission are crucial skills. These forms of interaction not only convey meaning but also reflect social norms, cultural expectations, and interpersonal sensitivity. The importance of using appropriate expressions when making requests lies in maintaining harmony, showing respect, and achieving communicative goals effectively. This article aims to analyze the structure, strategies, and pedagogy of polite requests and permission expressions in English.

Theoretical background speech act theory, introduced by J.L. Austin and developed by John Searle, provides the foundation for understanding how language performs actions. Requests and permissions are classified as directive speech acts,

intended to get the listener to do something. In addition, politeness theory by Brown and Levinson (1987) offers valuable insights into how speakers mitigate face-threatening acts (FTAs) through indirectness, hedging, and modal verbs. These theories underline the significance of linguistic choices in social interaction.

Linguistic features of requests and permissions polite requests and permissions often involve modal verbs (can, could, may, would), conditional forms, and softening devices (please, just, possibly). The level of politeness varies depending on social distance, status, and the situation's formality. Examples include: Direct: "Close the window." Polite: "Could you close the window, please?" Indirect: "I was wondering if you could close the window." The choice of structure reflects the speaker's intent to minimize imposition and maintain positive social relationships. Politeness also involves paralinguistic features such as tone of voice, intonation, and body language, which further enhance the listener's perception of the speaker's respect and sensitivity.

Types of Polite Requests and Permission Forms There are several ways to form polite requests and seek permission: Interrogative form: "Can you help me with this task?" Conditional form: "Would you mind helping me?" Subjunctive/indirect form: "I was hoping you could help me". "For asking permission: "May I leave early today?" "Do you mind if I sit here?" "Would it be alright if I used your computer?" These expressions can be modified with adverbs and polite additions such as "please," "if you don't mind," or "possibly" to further soften the request. The flexibility of English syntax allows speakers to rephrase their intentions according to the context, making politeness a dynamic aspect of the language.

Responding and Refusing: Politeness Strategies Responses to requests or permission may be affirmative or negative. Politeness strategies help soften refusals: Accepting: "Sure, go ahead." / "No problem at all." Refusing politely: "I'm sorry, but I can't help right now." / "I'd love to, but I have other commitments". In addition to verbal responses, non-verbal cues such as smiling, nodding, or maintaining eye contact can also express politeness and willingness. When refusing, it is important to offer

alternatives or express regret to maintain the relationship. For example, "I can't do it now, but I'll help you later" is a refusal that still preserves cooperation.

Cross-cultural Aspects and Learner Challenges Cultural norms greatly influence how requests and refusals are made. English tends to favor indirectness, while other languages may allow more directness. This can lead to pragmatic failure among ESL learners who transfer their native speech habits. For example, in Uzbek, a direct request like "Give me your book" may be acceptable, but in English, it may appear rude. Therefore, awareness of cultural expectations is key to pragmatic competence. Another challenge is that politeness is not universal in form—what is polite in one culture may not be in another. Learners must be taught not only expressions but the intentions and social meanings behind them. Instruction should include authentic materials and real-life scenarios to raise students' intercultural sensitivity.

Pedagogical Implications for Teaching English Language educators should integrate pragmatic instruction into ESL teaching. Activities such as role-plays, dialogue analysis, and video-based observation can help students recognize and practice polite forms. Teachers can present contrasting dialogues—one polite and one impolite—to highlight differences in tone and structure. Feedback and correction should focus on appropriateness rather than only grammar. Moreover, teaching politeness should be context-based. Students should learn how to adapt their language based on the situation—formal or informal, superior or peer, urgent or optional. Including discussions about cultural values, respect, and face-saving strategies will equip learners with the tools to navigate real communication effectively.

Polite requests and permission expressions are essential components of effective and respectful communication in English. Mastering them requires not only grammatical knowledge but also an understanding of pragmatics and culture. Through informed instruction and meaningful practice, learners can enhance their communicative competence and interact more appropriately in diverse settings.

References:

1. Austin J. L. How to Do Things with Words. – Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1962.
2. Searle J. R. Speech Acts Theory. – Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1969.
3. Brown P., & Levinson, S. C. Politeness: Some Universals in Language Usage. – Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987.
4. Thomas J. Meaning in Interaction: An Introduction to Pragmatics. – London: Longman, 1995.