

Lesson Plan

Instructor: Umme Habiba

Topic: Navigating Everyday Conversations in the U.S. (Politeness, Requests & Small Talk)

Level: Intermediate (CEFR B1–B2)

Age Group: 20–25

Class: REAL 200 – Intermediate Level

Skill Focus: Speaking (pragmatic competence, fluency, vocabulary, tone)

Duration: 45 minutes

Materials: Whiteboard, markers, projector, presentation slides, embedded dialogue prompts in slides

Objectives (10 points)

By the end of this lesson, students will be able to:

1. **Use polite expressions when making requests in both casual and formal settings** –
This will be checked through a paired role-play where students ask for help in two different scenarios: one social and one workplace-related. Their performance will be observed using a short checklist that notes correct expressions and politeness markers.
2. **Hold short conversations using culturally appropriate small talk** – Students will take part in a “speed conversation” activity, rotating partners every minute. They will be evaluated on how well they choose appropriate topics, maintain fluency, and take turns naturally.

3. **Match tone and vocabulary to the level of formality in a conversation** – Students will listen to prompts with varying levels of formality and respond accordingly. Their answers will be reviewed with a simple rubric that focuses on vocabulary choice and tone.
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Activities (10 points)

1. Warm-Up (5 min)

"What is something polite someone said to you recently?"

Students share in pairs. Teacher gathers examples and notes formal/informal tones on board.

2. Vocabulary & Expression Modeling (7 min)

Teacher introduces useful phrases via slides:

- Polite requests: "Would you mind...", "Could you please...", "Do you think you could..."
- Small talk starters: "How was your weekend?", "Did you watch...?", "Nice weather today, isn't it?" Students repeat, identify tone differences.

3. Mini Role-Play Practice (5 min)

Slide presents a few sample situations (e.g., asking a classmate to borrow notes; small talk with a cashier).

Pairs choose one to act out using modeled expressions.

4. Listening Model & Discussion (5 min)

Teacher will play short video clip of two conversations (one formal, one casual).

Students answer:

- What makes one formal?
- Which phrases/tone stand out? Group feedback.

5. Main Task: Role-Play Activity (15 min)

Scenarios displayed on screen (one at a time):

- Asking a professor for deadline extension
 - Greeting a new neighbor
 - Small talk with a co-worker at lunch
- Each pair chooses a scenario, prepares for 3 minutes, then performs. Teacher takes notes on tone, expression, clarity.

6. Reflection & Feedback (5 min) Whole-class

debrief:

- What was easiest?
- What was awkward?
- Which phrase will you try this week?
- Teacher gives quick oral feedback to 2–3 pairs.

7. Wrap-Up (3 min)

Students turn to a partner and say one polite phrase they will try this week.

Assessment (10 points)

Formative Assessment Rubric: Role-play &

Conversation Activities

Category	Exceeds Expectations	Meets Expectations	Needs Improvement
Tone & Politeness	Consistently uses a tone that fits the situation (formal or casual) and maintains	Tone is generally appropriate with only minor lapses; politeness	Tone is sometimes inappropriate for the

Category	Exceeds Expectations	Meets Expectations	Needs Improvement
Vocabulary Use	politeness throughout; shows cultural awareness in responses.	markers used in most interactions.	situation; politeness is inconsistent or missing.
	Uses a wide range of polite expressions accurately and naturally; selects vocabulary that clearly matches the formality level.	Uses polite expressions correctly most of the time; vocabulary choice is mostly appropriate to the situation.	Uses limited or incorrect polite expressions; vocabulary does not match the formality of the situation.
	Speaks smoothly and confidently with minimal hesitation; ideas flow naturally.	Some hesitation or pauses, but meaning is still clear; flow is mostly maintained.	Frequent pauses, long gaps, or repetition disrupts the flow; difficult to follow.
	Fully completes all parts of the role-play, adapting tone and vocabulary appropriately to each scenario; addresses all prompts.	Completes most parts of the role-play; some adaptation to tone and vocabulary.	Misses key parts of the role-play; little or no adaptation to tone and vocabulary.
Task Completion			

Homework (5 points)

Ask a professor, classmate, or store employee a polite question or engage in small talk. Write a short (3–5 sentence) journal entry reflecting on the experience.

Rationale (5 points)

This lesson focuses on the pragmatic aspects of language acquisition, helping students navigate social interactions beyond grammar and vocabulary. Teaching requests and conversational skills is essential for building confidence and integrating into everyday American society. According to Gumperz (1982), tone and pragmatic misalignment often cause misunderstandings more than grammar itself. By intentionally practicing politeness and tone, students strengthen their sociolinguistic competence, fostering rapport and cultural awareness. Using authentic interaction activities in real-life scenarios aligns with the Communicative Language Teaching approach (Larsen-Freeman, 2000), which treats language as a social tool for interaction. Peer modeling, reflection, and scaffolded practice ensure that all learners participate at their own pace while still being challenged within their Zone of Proximal Development (Vygotsky, 1978). For students who struggle with fluency or need extra language support, targeted scaffolding such as sentence frames, language ladders, and guided vocabulary lists will be provided to help them structure their responses and gradually increase independence in speaking.

References

Gumperz, J. J. (1982). *Discourse strategies*. Cambridge University Press.

Larsen-Freeman, D. (2000). *Techniques and principles in language teaching* (2nd ed.). Oxford University Press.

Vygotsky, L. S. (1978). *Mind in society: The development of higher psychological processes*. Harvard University Press.