

Responding to E-mail Requests Handout

Loretta’s E-mail to Tour Company:

Hi,
 My name is Loretta Johnson and I read about the tours that you offer on your website. My husband and I are going to Costa Rica on the 18th of May and we are interested in using your company! We are interested in going on the 3 day, 2 night tour to Monteverde. I read on the website’s description that we will stay in a hotel. What is the hotel like? Will there be internet? It’s essential that there is internet, because I need to contact my son each night. Will there be hot showers? If the hotel has both internet and hot showers, we will register for your tour. Please get back to me as soon as possible because the trip is right around the corner!
 Kindly,
 Loretta

Responses to Loretta from Tour Company:

1) *Hello. Thank you for choosing us. We will like to work with you too. Sorry. The showers will maybe have hot water, we don’t know yet. Please, I will ask and get back to you soon. Please forgive if there is no internet. If there is no internet, we take you to a coffee shop where there internet, please. We look forward to work with you. If you have questions, please call. 541048492732 Thank you. Dante*

Circle one: **EXCELLENT** **GOOD** **POOR** **TERRIBLE**
Why?

2) *Hi Loretta,*

*Thank you for contacting Guanacaste Tour Company. I am thrilled to hear that you are interested in joining us on a tour! We will be staying at La Finca Hotel during the tour. Unfortunately, we cannot guarantee that there will be hot water at the hotel. The water is usually hot; however, it is very hot in Costa Rica right now, so you will probably enjoy a cooler shower. As for internet, there is no internet at the La Finca Hotel. We apologize for this, but the tour company will gladly drive you to an internet café whenever you need.
 Please let us know if you have any other concerns.
 Thank you and pura vida,
 Dante*



Circle one: **EXCELLENT** **GOOD** **POOR** **TERRIBLE**
Why?

3) *Loretta,*
I am so sorry, but La Finca hotel does not have hot water all the time. Please understand that Costa Rica does not always have the luxuries like America. La Finca Hotel has internet sometimes, but we don't know. Please forgive us. Sorry for any inconvenience. We still want to work with you.
Thank you,
Dante

Circle one: **EXCELLENT** **GOOD** **POOR** **TERRIBLE**
Why?

4) *Hey Loretta,*
Pura Vida! Thanks so much for inquiring about our tours at Guanacaste Tour Company! It's such a pleasure to work with you! Although I'd really like to confirm that there will be hot showers, the showers are not always hot. I'm so sorry for this. However, you probably won't want a hot shower, because it's REALLY hot here!!!! Also, there is no internet at the hotel, although we can ALWAYS take you to the internet café to talk to your son. We will make sure you feel at home here!!!!
Pura Vida, mai.
Dante

Circle one: **EXCELLENT** **GOOD** **POOR** **TERRIBLE**
Why?



**Rubric for activity:
Pragmatic awareness of responses to e-mail requests**

Student name: _____

CATEGORY	3	2	1
Awareness and Identification	Through partner and class discussion, student is able to communicate his/her awareness of appropriate and inappropriate pragmatic responses to requests and is able to identify which responses are different than L1.	Through partner and class discussions, student is somewhat able to communicate his/her awareness of appropriate and inappropriate responses to requests. Student is not able to identify what is different from L1.	Through partner and class discussions, student is not able to express his/her awareness of pragmatic appropriacy/inappropriacy and is not able to identify what responses differ from L1.
E-mail Revision	Student makes at least five revisions to his/her original e-mail response and can explain why.	Student makes three revisions to his/her original e-mail response and can explain why.	Student does not make any revisions to his/her original e-mail response and cannot explain why.
Participation	Student actively participates in partner and class discussions.	Student somewhat participates in partner and class discussions.	Student does not participate in partner and class discussions.



Background and references

Discussion of context, students, and content:

This activity is created for an ESP course for tourism professionals in Costa Rica. The focus of the course is to enhance learners' awareness of American English pragmatics and improve learners' overall L2 pragmatic ability, while simultaneously advancing English language skills and improving professional development for the tourism industry. By acquiring a more advanced American English pragmatic knowledge, students will be able to effectively and appropriately use their already advanced English language skills to better interact with American tourists. This activity is specifically focused on responding to email requests from clients.

Empirical rationale:

Ishihara and Cohen (2010) found that inductive instruction may be longer lasting and more accessible in real time than pragmatic knowledge acquired through deductive instruction. For that reason, this activity is intentionally designed to help students discover pragmatic norms without explicit, deductive instruction from the teacher.

Iragui's study (1996) showed that native Spanish-speaking subjects often used L1 strategies in request interactions while speaking English. She reported that directness and politeness markers varied between native Spanish speakers and native English speakers when speaking English. This activity helps EFL/ESL students become aware of L1 and L2 request strategies and that there may be consequences if L2 strategies are not used in customer service interactions.

In their study, Bitner, Booms, and Tetreault (1990) found that employees who violated cultural norms in service encounters caused a sense of dissatisfaction for the customer. To support their findings, this activity is designed to increase students' awareness of the consequences of violating cultural norms in service encounters through e-mails.

Although ESL environments generally provide more pragmatic input, Niezgodna and Rover (2001) discovered that students in an EFL context can still develop L2 pragmatic awareness and ability. In this particular EFL context, workers in the tourism industry acquire substantial L2 pragmatic input through interaction with American tourists (in both face-to-face interactions and distant communication). After students participate in this pragmatic awareness-raising activity, students will be able to practice newly-learned L2 pragmatic skills by interacting with American tourists.

Unit content:

This activity serves as an introductory activity to the unit on handling e-mails. Its inductive approach to pragmatic instruction allows the learners to analyze examples and self-discover L2 pragmatic norms.

At the end of this activity, learners will be provided with explicit instruction about pragmatic norms when responding to written e-mail requests. Though deductive instruction, the teacher will then provide guidelines on how to write a professional e-mail. Students will observe the correct format of professional e-mails and study common phrases and grammar forms used in professional e-mails. The teacher will also explain the expectation of formal/informal



language-use in e-mails. After the explicit instruction on writing professional e-mails, students will once again revise their original e-mail response from the first activity. This e-mail will serve as a template for constant revision throughout the lesson on handling e-mails. At the end of the lesson, students will have a revised, professionally-written, and pragmatically correct e-mail response.

Throughout the deductive instruction, the teacher may refer to this first activity to point out common errors, such as the over-use of 'please/sorry' and lack of providing alternative options.

References:

Bitner M., Booms H., & Tetreault, M. (1990). The service encounter: Diagnosing favorable and unfavorable incidents. *Journal of Marketing*. Vol. 54, pp. 71-84.

Iragui J., (1996). Requests and apologies: A comparison between native and non-native speakers of English. *Atlantis*. Vol. 18, No. 1/2, pp. 53-61.

Ishihara, N., & Cohen, A. (2010). *Teaching and learning pragmatics: Where language and culture meet*. Harlow, England: Pearson Longman.

Niezgoda K. & Rover C., (2001). Pragmatic and grammatical awareness: A function of the learning environment. *Pragmatics in Language Teaching*. No. 4, pp. 63-79

