

# “Je serais très merçiabile”: Formulaic vs. Creatively Produced Speech in Learners’ Request-Closings

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This paper reports the findings of a study on intermediate classroom learners’ ability to perform appropriate formulaic sequences (FSs) for closing high-imposition requests. Based on a corpus of 1,200 requests it was found that FSs constitute a substantial part of French and Austrian native speakers’ request-closing behaviour. Classroom learners of French, on the other hand, are shown to use FSs significantly less frequently than native speakers. Moreover, the data provide convincing evidence that employing complex, situation-specific request-closings is a strategy learners draw upon to compensate for their lack of appropriate FSs. For instance, native speakers “offer a reward” by saying in very general terms *Je te rendrai ça*. Learners, by contrast, “offer a reward” in exactly the same situation by saying *En contrepartie, je t’aiderai avec l’interrogation en maths*. Furthermore, it was found that if learners do use formulaic language, the FSs they use are not necessarily the same as those used by native speakers. Therefore, the results of this study clearly suggest that the use of FSs differs considerably between native speakers and classroom learners not only at a quantitative but also at a qualitative level.

Dans cet article, nous proposons de faire le point sur l’usage de formules de clôture de requêtes impositives chez les locuteurs natifs du français langue étrangère ainsi que chez les natifs locuteurs français et autrichiens.

À partir d’un corpus de plus de 1,200 requêtes, il apparaît qu’il existe d’importantes différences entre les apprenants et les locuteurs natifs, tant au niveau quantitatif que qualitatif : tandis que les locuteurs natifs terminent fréquemment une requête en utilisant une formule, les apprenants ont tendance à utiliser considérablement moins de formules et à les remplacer souvent par des stratégies individuelles et adaptées à la situation. Par exemple, quand les locuteurs natifs mettent fin à une requête en disant très généralement *Je te rendrai ça*, les apprenants, eux, disent dans la même situation *En contrepartie, je t’aiderai avec l’interrogation en maths*. À cela s’ajoute que, même si les apprenants ont recours à des formules, ils n’emploient pas les mêmes que les locuteurs natifs.

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## Introduction

A review of the literature shows that formulaic sequences (FSs) are a common phenomenon in the language of native adult speakers (e.g. Altenberg, 1998; Coulmas, 1981; Kecskes, 2003; Peters, 1983; Weinert, 1995; Wray, 2002). Despite this fact, formulaic language has been somewhat overlooked in second language acquisition (SLA) research over the last few decades. Studies have focused on models that centre around the creative, rule-governed aspect of language instead. Only in recent years has there been increased interest in formulaic speech in SLA. A growing body of research suggests that FSs play a major role in language acquisition and production (De Cock, Granger, Leech and McEnery, 1998; Foster, 2001; Kecskes, 2003; Myles, Hooper and Mitchell, 1998; Myles, Mitchell and Hooper, 1999; Weinert, 1995; Wray, 2000, 2002). On closer inspection, however, we see that *data-based* studies focusing on formulaic language in naturalistic and instructed second language (L2) acquisition are rare. Attempting to fill this gap, the present paper investigates the relationship between formulaic language and instructed L2 acquisition through a corpus-based study. In particular, it reports the results of a study on intermediate classroom learners' ability to perform appropriate FSs for closing high-imposition requests.

### *A basic characterization of formulaic language*

In the literature, formulaic language has been discussed under labels such as *routines*, *formulae*, *routine formulae*, *formulaic sequences*, *prefabricated* or *ready-made linguistic expressions*, *chunks* and *situation bound utterances*. A more comprehensive list of terms used to describe aspects of formulaicity in the literature can be found in Wray (2000, p. 465; 2002, p. 9). Given that these terms are used interchangeably in some contexts but not in others (Wray, 2002, p. 8), I will follow Wray (2000, 2002) and use the rather common and inclusive label *formulaic sequence* for:

a sequence, continuous or discontinuous, of words or other elements, which is, or appears to be, prefabricated: that is, stored and retrieved whole from memory at the time of use, rather than being subject to generation or analysis by the language grammar. (Wray, 2002, p. 9)

The following sequences (1) to (5) are taken from the corpus of this study and constitute examples of FSs.

- (1) Ce serait sympa.  
'That would be great.'
- (2) Je te rendrai ça.  
'I will make it up to you.'

- (3) Das wäre echt nett.  
‘That would be truly kind of you.’
- (4) Ich würde dafür ...  
‘In return, I would ...’
- (5) Ich werde mich revanchieren.  
‘I’ll do you a favour in return.’

Not only labels and definitions of FSs, but also the functions associated with their use are a highly debated issue in the research on formulaic language. The discussion centres primarily on the question of why speakers use an FS instead of a creatively produced utterance. In the literature, two major functions of FSs have been identified, a sociolinguistic and a psycholinguistic one. Wray (2000, pp. 473–479) uses the terms “achieving interactional functions” and “saving effort in processing” for these. As for the first, the sociolinguistic/interactional function, Coulmas (1981) argues that FSs perform a social function because they are “tools which individuals employ in order to relate to others in an accepted way” (1981, p. 2). Formulaic language, therefore, in a sense promotes people’s feelings of belonging to a socio-cultural group. The second function proposed in the literature is psycholinguistic in nature and relates to processing efforts. It is argued that from a psycholinguistic perspective, FSs ensure “a smooth flow of interaction” (Coulmas, 1981, p. 12). Speakers need time to plan their consecutive conversational moves. Using formulaic instead of creative speech allows speakers to greatly accelerate this process as FSs “can be drawn from the memory without much effort” (Coulmas, 1981, pp. 9–10; see Girard and Sionis [2004] for the functions of FSs in the L2 class).

For the reasons mentioned above, a substantial part of what is said in day-to-day interaction is not realized by individually and creatively produced utterances but rather by a rather large set of commonly accepted FSs (e.g. Coulmas, 1981; Kecskes, 2003; Wray, 2002). Corpus-based studies have claimed that the proportion of FSs in native adult language is high. In her study based on a corpus of spontaneous Canadian English speech, Sorhus (1977), for example, found that 20% of the words uttered in daily conversational exchanges were realized through fixed expressions. Altenberg (1998) even estimates that as much as 80% of our language production is formulaic. No matter whether these percentages are correct—Coulmas (1981, p. 9) underlines the necessity of “a careful evaluation of this [Sorhus’] material”—there is no doubt that a great deal of native adult communicative activity consists of prepatterned speech. Furthermore, research has shown that there is also an important role for routinized expressions in child discourse (Ervin-Tripp, 1977; Miller and Weinert, 1998; Peters, 1983; Wray, 2002)

### *Formulaic language in second language acquisition*

FSs have proved to be an integral part of the speech of adult native speakers and children. In this section, we will investigate whether formulaic language plays a similar role in the speech of L2 learners. We will first consider very briefly the work on learners acquiring the language naturally and then move on to learners in the L2 classroom.

#### *Formulaic language in naturalistic acquisition*

In this paper, a clear distinction between *naturalistic* and *instructed/classroom* L2 acquisition will be made. If the L2 is learned in a target language environment mainly through direct communication (but also through instruction), the term *naturalistic* L2 acquisition will be used. If, however, the L2 is learned in an L1 environment mainly through instruction, the term *instructed/classroom* L2 acquisition will be used.

Studies on FSs in naturalistic L2 acquisition do not always arrive at the same conclusions: while it has been observed in most studies that formulaic language is a significant factor in the speech of naturalistic L2 learners, some studies have found that their subjects make very little use of FSs (cf. Wray, 2002). Wray (2002) attributes these conflicting results to either individual differences between the learners or to the degree of willingness for social integration in the L2-speaking community. As far as the initial stages of L2 acquisition are concerned, the research findings are more consistent. It has been observed that FSs play an important role in the speech of beginning L2 learners (e.g. Schmidt, 1983; Ellis, 1992). This early and frequent use of formulaic speech in beginners' interlanguage has been associated with the goal of achieving a basic level of communication (Myles, Hooper and Mitchell, 1998, for example).

#### *Formulaic language in instructed acquisition*

Studies on formulaicity in the L2 classroom context have shown that classroom learners — just like naturally acquiring learners — seem to pick up and use FSs in the early stages of classroom instruction with ease (see Wray, 2002 for a literature review on the early stages of learning). One of the main concerns of these studies involving beginning learners is the question of whether FSs contribute to the mastery of rule-based individual stretches of speech or not (for an overview, see Wray, 2000).

While FSs play a significant part in the early stages of classroom learning, they seem to occur only rarely in the speech of classroom learners at intermediate and advanced levels. For instance, Biskup (1992) and Farghal and Obiedat (1995) found that their intermediate and advanced subjects' knowledge of collocations<sup>1</sup> was rather poor. From a methodological point of view, it is, however, important to point to the fact that the studies mentioned did not

test the classroom learners on their *use* but on their *knowledge* of FSs. That is, the subjects had to translate common FSs from their L1; they were not tested on the question of whether in a given situation they would use either FSs or individually created utterances. On the basis of these studies, it is therefore not possible to assess the overall role of FSs in natural or elicited speech of classroom L2 learners.

There are, however, a few studies investigating the number of FSs in more or less natural language. Yet, most of them focus on corpora of *written* essays and compositions (e.g. Granger, 1998; Howarth, 1998a, 1998b; Yorio, 1989). Only Bolander (1989), De Cock *et al.* (1998), Foster (2001), and Myles, Hooper and Mitchell (1998) used *oral* data for their studies. Whereas Bolander (1989), Myles, Hooper and Mitchell (1998), and Myles, Mitchell and Hooper (1999) did not collect data from a native-speaker control group, De Cock *et al.* (1998) and Foster (2001) compared the learners' use of FSs to their native-speaker counterparts' use of the same structures. De Cock *et al.* (1998) found that their advanced learners in some cases employed more and in other cases fewer FSs than the native speakers. They also discovered that learners and native speakers did not necessarily use the same FSs and that the range of FSs that learners used was smaller than that which native speakers drew upon. Foster (2001) examined one native speaker and one non-native-speaker corpus and found that learners underuse FSs as compared to native speakers.

Another issue which has been investigated with classroom learners is the role of transfer from L1 with respect to FSs. Quantitative and qualitative differences in the use of FSs between learners and native speakers have in some cases been attributed to transfer from the L1 (Biskup, 1992; Granger, 1998; Irujo, 1993; Jaworski, 1990). Irujo (1993), for instance, found that her highly proficient adult learner subjects, if not familiar with the appropriate FS, either produced a novel utterance or translated the idiom from their L1. Similarly, Biskup (1992) reported that her Polish learners used collocations in English that clearly showed interference from their L1. Her German learners of English seemed to be less reluctant to take risks and to paraphrase the collocations on the basis of their L2 knowledge. However, in many cases, they also relied on their L1 when producing collocations.

Irujo's (1993) and Biskup's (1992) studies suggest that L2 learners tend to compensate for their lack of knowledge of FSs either by paraphrasing or by using word-for-word translations from the L1. This suggests that learners' knowledge and use of FSs can only be investigated comprehensively if native-speaker data are also available. Unfortunately, in numerous studies this is not the case.

The overall findings of the studies on classroom learners indicate that beginning learners use a relatively large but functionally limited range of FSs (basic speech acts such as greetings, requests, classroom management tasks)

in order to meet basic interactional needs (Wray, 2002). Classroom learners at a more advanced level have been found to rely less on FSs. However, there are three reasons why it is difficult to draw firm conclusions from the existing studies. First, there have been relatively few *data-based* studies on FSs. Moreover, in most of the existing studies, the language classes took place in the L2 environment. As a consequence, the learners in these studies were not only “classroom learners” but also “naturally acquiring learners”. It is therefore difficult — if not impossible — to distinguish the influences of the classroom from the influences of the L2 environment. Finally, most of the existing studies have collected only L2 learner data. Comparable data from the learners’ L1 and L2 are normally not available. This makes it impossible to investigate aspects such as transfer from the L1.

As a result, the present study concentrates on the use of FSs in the speech of intermediate French L2 classroom learners living in an L1 German environment. The approach adopted here is contrastive: the analysis will be based on a comparison of a corpus of L2 French learner, French native-speaker and Austrian native-speaker request-closings. In particular, I will first isolate the FSs from the three corpora on the basis of my definitional criteria (see Data Analysis). I will then investigate whether classroom learners use FSs in the same situations and if so whether these sequences correspond to those of French native speakers. Where the learners fail to produce the native-like FS, I will consider the strategies learners employ to make up for this shortcoming. In order to do this properly, data were collected not only from L2 learners but also from native speakers of the learners’ L1 and L2.

## **Method**

### ***Subjects***

Three groups of students took part in the study: one group of Austrian learners of French as a second language at an intermediate level ( $n = 84$ ), one group of French native speakers ( $n = 45$ ),<sup>2</sup> and one group of native speakers of Austrian German ( $n = 20$ ).<sup>3</sup> All subjects were high school students aged between 15 and 18 years. Learners had studied French for either four ( $n=27$ ), five ( $n=27$ ) or six years ( $n=30$ ) through formal education in Austria (three to four hours a week). Except for one, none of them had been in French-speaking countries for more than one month. The textbooks Austrian learners of French are exposed to are based on the French language spoken and written in France. Also, at the university, future teachers are taught the French of France. The Austrian subjects (native speakers and learners) were trilingual (German-English-French), the French subjects bilingual (French-German).

**Materials**

In order to elicit requests from learners and native speakers, a discourse completion test (DCT) and a closed role play were used. The DCT was chosen as the main elicitation device because, when carefully designed, it is a highly effective tool for studying the stereotypical semantic formulas and strategies of speech acts. Moreover, DCTs are useful for obtaining information on speakers’ sociopragmatic knowledge, allowing researchers to keep the speech act constant while social variables such as social distance, social dominance and the degree of imposition are varied. It has been shown that data elicited by a DCT reflect the content of oral data despite its written form. Nevertheless, the oral role play method was added because, as Kasper (2000, p. 340) points out, a multi-method approach “increase[s] the validity/credibility of a study”. In spite of the many advantages which the DCT and the closed role play offer, there are also a number of drawbacks that need to be borne in mind: firstly, neither the DCT nor the role play elicits authentic data. In both cases, the subjects write or say what they *believe* they would say in an authentic situation. Furthermore, features related to the dynamics of a conversation, such as turn-taking and sequencing of action cannot be investigated. All paralinguistic and non-verbal elements are also excluded from investigation (cf. Kasper, 2000). However, despite these disadvantages, the DCT and the closed role play have been found to be very suitable data-gathering instruments when it comes to investigating speech acts from a cross-cultural and/or interlanguage pragmatics perspective (see Beebe and Cummings, 1996, for a review of the strengths and weaknesses of DCTs).

Items in the discourse completion test and in the closed role play included a situational description. The context given in the description was designed to elicit the communicative act of requesting. To find out what type of requests students at this age usually make, a pilot study was conducted. The situational descriptions used in the present study are based on the results of the pilot study. Below the description there was some space left for students to write down their requests (see the Appendix for an entire discourse completion test):

Dans les jours qui viennent, tu dois faire un grand exposé en anglais. Tu as de grandes difficultés avec la préparation. Tout à coup tu te souviens d’une élève de terminale (tu ne la connais pas bien) qui est bilingue. Tu voudrais qu’elle t’aide à préparer ce travail. Cela durerait une après-midi ou deux. Tu sais que cette fille n’a pas beaucoup de temps parce qu’elle doit préparer le bac. Le lendemain tu vas la voir dans la salle de classe et tu dis:

[In the next few days you have to give a presentation in English. You have great difficulties with the preparation. Suddenly, you remember a student (you do not know her well) who is bilingual. You would like her to help

you with the preparation of your presentation. That would last one or two afternoons. You know that this girl does not have much time because she has to prepare for her final high-school examinations. The next day you go to see her in her classroom and you say:]

The situations were controlled for three major situational variables: social dominance varied depending on whether interactions were with peers or teachers; social distance was equalized across all situations as speaker and addressee knew each other; the degree of imposition was high in all scenarios. All situations were carefully designed to facilitate participants' identification with the roles they had to play. Female participants had only female interlocutors and male participants only male interlocutors in order to exclude the possible influence of cross-gender effects.

For the data collection procedure, all 149 subjects filled in the written DCT. Then, 50% of the subjects responded to the oral closed role play. Before the subjects started to fill in their requests, the following instructions (in the subjects' L1) were given, in both written and spoken form:

Please read the situational description before writing what you would say in the described situation in a natural conversation. Try to write down the exact words you would use in an authentic situation. If you would not say anything, please write down your reasons. The situations are set in France and the language to be used is therefore French.

In order to make sure that all subjects had understood the task, the answer to one item was worked out by the whole group as an example. For the oral role play, the instructions were the same. For the DCT, each student had to respond to six situational descriptions in written form. All students in each class took the DCT at the same time. For the oral closed role play each student was tape-recorded individually. In order to make the situation more authentic, a technique developed by researchers at OISE (the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education) (Harley, Cummins, Swain and Allen, 1990) was used: students taking the oral test were shown photographs of people in four different situations while the investigator described a specific context and asked students to respond as if they were actually addressing the person pictured in the photograph (cf. Lyster, 1996).

In total, the questionnaires elicited 1182 requests (660 learner requests; 346 French native-speaker requests; 176 Austrian native-speaker requests).<sup>4</sup> Accordingly, the learner corpus consists of 27,100 words, the French native-speaker corpus of 10,400 words and the Austrian native-speaker corpus of 9,300 words.

### *Data Analysis*

Based on an adapted version of the CCSARP coding scheme in Blum-Kulka, House and Kasper (1989, pp. 273–294) and the coding scheme in Held (1995, pp. 473–486), the closing strategies were isolated from the requests. It was decided to focus on request-closings because closing a request constitutes a speech situation we are often confronted with in conversations; it can therefore be regarded as a standardized speech situation. Given that recurrent speech situations are normally managed by means of FSs rather than by newly created utterances (Coulmas, 1981), it can be expected that in the present study competent language users will rely on a set of highly conventionalized FSs when performing a request-closing. My data show that requests can be closed either by expressing gratitude, which I will refer to as “gratification” (*Ce serait gentil*, ‘That would be kind of you’), by offering a reward (*Je te rendrai ça un jour*, ‘One day, I will make it up to you’), by the possibility of retreating (*Si tu ne peux pas, c’est pas grave*, ‘No problem if you cannot help me’) or by resorting to iteration (repetition of what was said in the Head Act).<sup>5</sup> However, due to space restrictions, only gratifications and rewards will be discussed in this paper.

Let us now turn to the question of how FSs can be identified in a text. When looking at previous research, a fundamental lack of coherent criteria for regarding a sequence as an FS or not can be observed (e.g. Bolander, 1989; De Cock *et al.* 1998; Foster, 2001). Useful insights into identification come from Weinert (1995), whose criteria are largely based on Peters (1983), and more recently from Wray (2002). While Wray (2002, pp. 19–39) cites four criteria applicable to FSs in general (intuition and “shared knowledge”, frequency, structure, phonological form), Weinert (1995, pp. 182–183) cites seven criteria commonly used in relation to FSs (phonological coherence, greater length and complexity of sequence compared with other learner output, non-productive use of rules underlying a sequence, community-wide use of a sequence, idiosyncratic/inappropriate uses of sequences, situational dependence, frequency and invariance in form). Even though these criteria are “not without problems” (p. 183), some of them are broadly adequate for identifying FSs in request-closings. The higher number of criteria in Weinert is at least partially due to the fact that Weinert adds criteria which are used in relation to language acquisition, such as “greater length and complexity of sequence compared with other learner output” (p. 182).

Consequently, the following procedural criteria for regarding a sequence as an FS were identified for the present study: the sequence consists of three to six words<sup>6</sup> and occurs frequently, that is in at least 15% of all gratifications/rewards in one data set. Other studies (e.g. De Cock *et al.*, 1998) used raw frequencies. However, raw frequencies could not be used in the present study because the instances of gratifications and rewards differ considerably

among the three data sets. This somewhat arbitrary frequency threshold (15%) gives at least some guarantee that the selected sequence of words is frequent in the respective corpus. Another important criterion is the multisituational character of a sequence, that is the question of whether a sequence of words can be used unchanged or with only slight modifications for other situations. Furthermore, it was decided not to restrict the analysis to continuous FSs: “semi-fixed sequences, which contain slots for a variety of compulsory and optional material to be inserted” (Wray 2002, p. 34) are also considered. It is important to note that due to the frequency criterion it can happen that one and the same sequence of words is considered as formulaic in only one or two of the three corpora. For instance, *Das wäre super* (‘That would be great’) is an FS in the Austrian native-speaker corpus because it is frequent (23.08% of all gratifications in the Austrian native-speaker corpus are realized by this sequence of words), because it consists of three words, and because it has a multisituational character. However, in the learner corpus, the same sequence of words is not considered as formulaic because it does not occur frequently enough (5.17%). This may seem somewhat odd, but it reflects the fact that what is an FS for one group may not be an FS for another group.

The present analysis involves both quantitative and qualitative aspects. For the quantitative analysis, descriptive statistics are employed in the presentation of results and, where possible and appropriate, also chi-square tests which point to significant or insignificant differences between datasets. However, it was not always possible to submit the data to rigorous quantitative comparisons as the study includes a number of rather close detailed analyses. This is due to the fact that if a study — as the present one — focuses on one aspect of requests, namely request-closings, and if this study analyses in detail different closing strategies, the instances of one type of strategy in one group may be rather small and do not always permit statistical analyses. Therefore, the findings presented should be viewed as exploratory (cf. House, 1996).

## Results

In the description of the results of this study, I will concentrate on the differences in request-closings between native speakers and learners with regard to formulaic vs. individual speech. In doing so, I will first consider gratifications, then rewards.

### *Gratification*

Expressing anticipatory gratitude for the potential fulfillment of the request is a means by which the requester tries to increase the probability of the hearer’s compliance with the request. A gratification uttered by the speaker in the preliminary stages of the request makes it difficult for the hearer to reject the

**Table 1:** Frequency of gratification strategies in French.

Gratification		NS-F	LN
<i>merci</i>	n	<b>34</b>	<b>10</b>
	%	<b>64.15%</b>	<b>17.24%</b>
<i>ce serait sympa</i>	n	<b>8</b>	0
	%	<b>15.09%</b>	0.00%
<i>ce serait gentil</i>	n	2	<b>18</b>
	%	3.77%	<b>31.03%</b>
<i>ce serait super</i>	n	0	3
	%	0.00%	5.17%
Individual strategy with <i>aidelaider</i>	n	0	11
	%	0.00%	18.97%
Other individual strategies	n	9	16
	%	16.98%	27.59%
Total	n	53	58
	%	100.00%	100.00%

**Note:** NS-F refers to French native speakers, LN to learners. The English translations of the strategies can be found in the text. FSs are in boldface.

request. It can be seen from Tables 1 and 2 that the ways gratifications are expressed differ considerably between native speakers and learners. Table 1 lists all gratification strategies French native speakers and L2 learners used in this study. The raw frequencies and percentages of strategies fulfilling the criteria for FSs are in boldface.

In the French native-speaker corpus, all 53 instances of gratification are realized by short and rather general utterances. Table 1 shows that, according to the above-defined criteria, 79.25% of these gratifications can be considered as FSs. Furthermore, it can be seen that French native speakers use two different types of FSs, a simple *merci* (64.15%) and *Ce serait sympa* (‘That would be great’) (15.09%). Gratifications such as *Ce serait cool* (‘That would be cool’), *Ce serait gentil* (‘That would be kind of you’) and *Je vous serais très reconnaissante* (‘I would be very grateful’) occur only rarely and are therefore not considered as FSs.

Surprisingly, as can be seen from the examples below and from Table 1, learners use a much wider range of gratification strategies (cf. the high frequency of the category “other individual strategies”). Contrary to the French native speakers, only 48.28% of their gratifications are realized by FSs. These FSs are *Merci* (‘Thanks’) (18.97%) and *Ce serait gentil* (‘That would be kind of you’) (31.03%). Please note in the following that all examples are presented as they appeared on the questionnaires, and that the English glosses were not

presented. No orthographical, morphological, syntactical or other errors were corrected for either the native-speaker or learner data.

- (6) a. Ce serait très gentil de [sic] toi.  
 ‘That would be very kind of you.’  
 b. Ça serait vraiment super gentil si vous pourrait [sic] peut-être m’aider.  
 ‘That would be truly super kind if you could maybe help me.’  
 c. Merci.  
 ‘Thanks.’

The remaining 51.72% of gratifications are realized by a wide spectrum of non-formulaic sequences:

- (7) a. Tu serais une grande aide parce que tu es bilingue.  
 ‘You would help me a lot because you are bilingual.’  
 b. Et tu m’aiderais beaucoup.  
 ‘And you would help me a lot.’  
 c. Mais c’était [sic] vraiment super.  
 ‘But that would be truly great.’  
 d. J’aurais [sic] très heureuse si c’était possible  
 ‘I would be very glad if it were possible.’  
 e. Je serais très reconnaissant [sic].  
 ‘I would be very grateful.’

It can be seen from these examples that even the non-formulaic gratifications are realized by rather short and general utterances. For instance, Table 1 shows that strategies containing the elements *aide/aider* (‘help’) are frequent among learners. However, due to the fact that these sequences are structurally too variable—the only fixed item they contain is *aide/aider*—they do not fulfill the criteria for being considered as an FS. However, the fact that the non-formulaic gratifications are also realized by short and general utterances and that many of them contain *aide/aider* could indicate that learners are aware of the formulaic nature of request-closings but are not familiar with the corresponding FS.

Overall, the difference between the French native-speaker and learner gratifications lies in the fact that the former use significantly more FSs than the latter ( $\chi^2 = 4.21$ ,  $df = 1$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ). Moreover, the learner strategies are also qualitatively different from those native speakers apply: for instance, the learners never used *Ce serait sympa* (‘That would be great’), one of the two native-speaker FSs. Accordingly, the most frequent learner FSs (*Ce serait gentil*, ‘That would be kind of you’ 31.03%) occurs only rarely in the French native-speaker corpus. Only *Merci* (‘Thanks’) (18.97%) is also frequent in the

**Table 2:** Frequency of gratification strategies in German and French.

Gratification		NS-G	LN
<i>merci</i>	n	<b>3</b>	<b>10</b>
	%	<b>23.08%</b>	<b>17.24%</b>
<i>ce serait sympa</i>	n	0	0
	%	0.00%	0.00%
<i>ce serait gentil</i>	n	<b>5</b>	<b>18</b>
	%	<b>38.46%</b>	<b>31.03%</b>
<i>ce serait super</i>	n	<b>3</b>	3
	%	<b>23.08%</b>	5.17%
Individual strategy with <i>aide/aider</i>	n	1	11
	%	7.69%	18.97%
Other individual strategies	n	1	16
	%	7.69%	27.59%
Total	n	13	58
	%	100.00%	100.00%

**Note:** NS-G refers to German native speakers, LN to learners. The English translations of the strategies can be found in the text. FSs are in boldface.

native-speaker data. These results suggest that learners do not only use significantly fewer FSs but also that the learner and native-speaker repertoires of FSs for gratification overlap only to some extent. Table 2 shows that the learners’ tendency to use gratifications containing the elements *Ce serait gentil* (‘That would be kind of you’) and *aide/aider* (‘help’) is reflected in the data from Austrian German native speakers.

Transfer from L1 German may thus account for these strategy types. The most frequent realization in Austrian German is *Das wäre echt nett/super* (‘That would be really great’). Gratifications such as *Du würdest mir echt helfen* (‘You’d really help me out’), *Ich wäre dir dankbar* (‘I would be grateful’) and *Du würdest mir einen großen Gefallen tun* (‘You would do me a great favour’) are less frequent. However, it is important to note that the rather low frequency of FSs in the learner corpus is not due to transfer from L1 German. This is because the proportion of FSs is significantly larger in the Austrian native-speaker data (84.62%) as compared to learners (50%) ( $\chi^2 = 9.04$ ,  $df = 1$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ). As a result, transfer can only partly explain the differences in request-closings between learners and French native speakers.

**Reward**

Employing a reward strategy means that the requester promises a reward which is due on fulfillment of the request (Blum-Kulka, House and Kasper, 1989).

Reward strategies thus serve an important interpersonal function, showing that requesting is not just a matter of taking but also of giving. They, of course, also have the function of increasing the likelihood of the hearer's compliance with the request. Given that rewards are absent in student–teacher contexts (see Table 3), the analysis of reward strategies includes only equal status contexts (student–student).

**Table 3:** Frequency of reward strategies in French.

Reward		NS-F	LN
<i>Je te rendrai/revaudrai</i>	n	<b>8</b>	0
	%	<b>50.00%</b>	0.00%
<i>Je vais/peux aider/faire</i>	n	0	<b>11</b>
	%	0.00%	<b>18.33%</b>
Individual strategy with <i>argent/payer</i>	n	0	20
	%	0.00%	33.33%
Individual strategy with <i>maths</i>	n	3	28
	%	18.75%	46.67%
Other individual strategies	n	5	1
	%	31.25%	1.67%
Total	n	16	60
	%	100.00%	100.00%

Table 3 shows that 50% of all reward strategies French native speakers produce are realized by two formulaic routines: *Je te rendrai* (25%) and *je te revaudrai* (25%).

- (8) a. *Je te rendrai un service.*  
 ‘I will do you a favour.’
- b. *Mais je te le rendrai, quoi.*  
 ‘But I will make it up to you.’
- c. *Je te rendrai ça un jour.*  
 ‘One day, I will make it up to you.’
- d. *Je te revaudrai ça.*  
 ‘I will make it up to you.’
- e. *Si tu acceptes, je te revaudrai ça.*  
 ‘If you accept, I will make it up to you.’

Contrary to the gratifications the remaining 50% of rewards are realized by individual utterances that are rather complex and apply to only one specific situation, such as *Pour l'interrogation en maths, on révisera ensemble, si tu veux* (‘For the math test, we will study together, if you want’) or *Et euh*

*au prochain exposé, c’est moi qui ferai la plus grande partie* (‘For the next presentation, I will do most of the work’).

However, while the native-speaker reward repertoire consists of at least 50% FSs, the learner repertoire contains a considerably lower number of short, general and prefabricated utterances. Only 18.33% of all learner rewards can be considered formulaic.<sup>7</sup> Almost 82% of the rewards are realized as much longer and more complex structures produced for the present situation, such as in (9).

- (9) a. Je vais t’aider avec ton travail aussi.  
 ‘I will help you with your work too.’  
 b. Et je vais faire l’exposé dernière [sic].  
 ‘And I will give the last presentation.’  
 c. Après, je vais faire quelque chose pour toi.  
 ‘Next time, I will do something for you.’  
 d. Je voudrais te payer [sic] un ticket de cinéma si tu échangerais [sic] avec moi.  
 ‘I would pay for the movie ticket for you if you switched with me.’  
 e. Je voudrais te donner [sic] aussi d’argent [sic] si tu voulais.  
 ‘I would give you some money if you wanted to.’  
 f. Je payerais un peu si tu veux.  
 ‘I would pay a bit if you want to.’

In addition to the fact that the proportion of FSs is by far larger in the native-speaker data than in the learner data, it can also be seen from the examples above that there are further important differences between native-speaker and learner realizations. The most common structures in French — *je te rendrai* and *je te rendrai* (‘I will make . . . up to you’) — are, for instance, completely absent from the learner data. Conversely, none of the learner structures occurs in the French native-speaker corpus. Among the FSs, the most frequent learner structures are *je vais/peux aider/faire* (‘I will/can help/do’), as in (10).

- (10) a. Je te va [sic] aider aussi quand tu as une [sic] problème.  
 ‘I will also help you if you have a problem.’  
 b. Au contraire, je vais faire quelque chose pour toi.  
 ‘In return, I will do something for you.’  
 c. Je peux t’aider, si tu m’aide [sic].  
 ‘I can help you if you help me.’  
 d. Et si je peut [sic] faire quelque chose pour toi, dit-le [sic]!  
 ‘And if I can do something for you, tell me!’

This analysis reveals that learners try to compensate for their lack of knowledge of the appropriate FS (*je rendrai, je revaudrai*) either with a construction containing *aider* or *faire* or with a situation-specific utterance. In this context, it is interesting to note that the learners' situation-specific utterances deal predominantly with two issues: helping the requestee in mathematics:

- (11) a. En contrepartie, je t'aiderai avec l'interrogation en maths.  
'In return, I will help you with your math test.'
- b. Je promis [sic] de t'aider en maths dans deux jours et aujourd'hui.  
'I promise to help you with math in two days' time and today.'

and offering the requestee money for his/her help:

- (12) a. Tu vas recevoir de l'argent aussi.  
'You will get some money, too.'
- b. Je pourrais te donner aussi un peu de l'argent [sic].  
'I could also give you some money.'

While the former issue can be found in the French native-speaker data, too, the latter issue does not occur at all. In other words, the learners not only use different FSs from native speakers, they also offer their requestees different rewards from those offered by the French native speakers. On the one hand, the reason for this could be a cultural one: offering money as reward is probably more "taboo" in French than in Austrian culture. On the other hand, this could be a result of the data elicitation method. In a real-life situation, the same students would probably not offer money as a reward. Given that the German L1 subjects did not offer money in their responses as often as the learners did, the offers of money by the L2 learners were likely compensatory strategies due to a lack of an appropriate FS.

As to strategy types, learners' tendency towards more individual longer and more complex utterances cannot be explained by transfer from L1 German. Table 4 shows that Austrian native speakers use FSs in the same way as the French native speakers: the proportion of FSs as opposed to situation-bound utterances amounts to 60.87% in the Austrian native-speaker data. This proportion is significantly larger than the learner proportion (18.33%) ( $\chi^2 = 7.92$ ,  $df = 1$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ). The most frequent reward realizations in Austrian German are *Ich würde dafür ...* ('In return, I would ...') and *Ich werde mich revanchieren* ('I'll do you a favour in return'). Less frequent realizations are *Ich mach' es wieder gut* ('I'll make up for it') and *Hast was gut bei mir* ('I owe you something').

## Discussion

The research question guiding this study has been whether and how Austrian classroom learners of French at an intermediate level use FSs for recurrent

**Table 4:** Frequency of reward strategies in German and French.

Reward		NS-G	LN
<i>Je te rendrai/revaudrai</i>	n	<b>8</b>	0
	%	<b>34.78%</b>	0.00%
<i>Je vais/peux aider/faire</i>	n	<b>6</b>	<b>11</b>
	%	<b>26.09%</b>	<b>18.33%</b>
Individual strategy with <i>argent/payer</i>	n	1	20
	%	4.35%	33.33%
Individual strategy with <i>maths</i>	n	0	28
	%	0.00%	46.67%
Other individual strategies	n	8	1
	%	34.78%	1.67%
Total	n	23	60
	%	100.00%	100.00%

situations such as request-closings, and how this compares to French native speakers. The results suggest that FSs used by learners differ both quantitatively and qualitatively from those used by French native speakers.

At the quantitative level, it has been found that native speakers — French and Austrian — master recurrent situations such as request-closings mainly by FSs. Learners, on the other hand, use FSs significantly less frequently than native speakers of both languages.

One interesting result of this study is the fact that the proportion of formulaic language varies according to the request-closing type (gratification or reward) not only among native speakers but also among learners: while the percentage of FSs is around 80% for gratifications among native speakers (50% among learners), it is only around 50% for rewards (18% among learners). This shows that one has to be careful when talking about overall percentages of formulaic language in natural speech. The variation of the proportion of formulaic language according to the speech act (gratification, reward) found in this study suggests that not only the definitional criteria for FSs but also the speech acts found in the corpus studied have a considerable influence on the proportion of FSs. This may be one of the reasons why different studies arrive at different proportions of formulaic language (cf. Sorhus, 1977 and Altenberg, 1998). It has been shown further that at the qualitative level, the FSs which learners use are not necessarily the same as those native speakers use. Quite the contrary: except for *merci*, the learner FSs do not correspond to the native-speaker FSs.

Taken together, these observations suggest that native speakers are very efficient language users. They do not search for a tailor-made closing to every situation. For recurrent social scenarios, they rather choose FSs that can

be used across different types of situations. This is an efficient approach as it leaves them with enough cognitive resources to plan the performance of creative stretches of speech. This helps them to construct and execute production plans for those stretches of speech which can not be realized through formulaic language. Learners, on the other hand, appear to be less efficient language users. Unlike native speakers, they often employ strategies that are tailored to a specific situation, even if the utterance refers to a recurrent situation, such as a request-closing. As a consequence, learners require more processing resources when uttering such creatively constructed closings. This in turn also makes learners' closings more error-prone. As noted above, the tendency to use creative instead of prepatterned speech can not be attributed to transfer from L1 German, as Austrian native speakers use closing structures that are as formulaic in nature as those of French native speakers.

However, it has to be borne in mind that the comments on how native speakers and learners use cognitive resources are based on data deriving from a role-play situation. In authentic communication, there is a much higher burden on cognitive resources; therefore, one has to be careful when extrapolating from a role-play situation to an actual conversation.

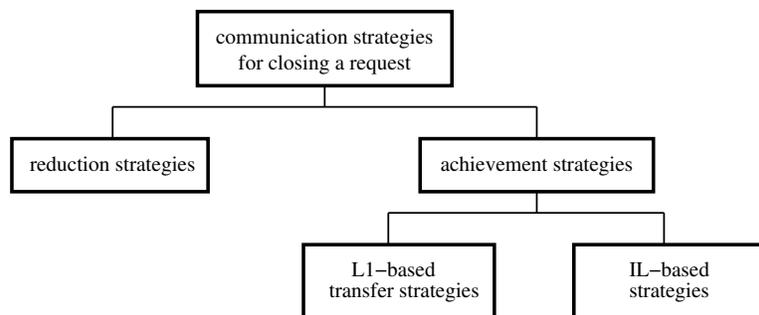
### *Typology*

On the whole, it has been found that learners do not use FSs in situations where native speakers predominantly do use formulaic language. Moreover, my data provide convincing evidence of the fact that employing complex, situation-specific request-closings is a strategy learners draw upon to compensate for their lack of a repertoire of adequate FSs. However, using situation-specific utterances is only one way of coping with speech situations where the appropriate FS is not available to the learner. My data further suggest that learners make use of two other strategies when confronted with the above-mentioned communication problem. Fig. 1 presents a typology of communication strategies that are used when learners lack the appropriate FS.

The first major categorization in this typology, which has been developed on the basis of Faerch and Kasper (1984), reflects the difference between strategies aimed at achieving the communication goal (*achievement strategies*) and strategies aimed at avoiding the original goal when faced with a communication problem (*reduction strategies*).

*Reduction strategies* means that learners avoid performing certain communicative functions such as closing a request. If learners do not, for instance, know how to realize an appropriate closing, they may decide not to perform the closing at all. Example (13) constitutes an avoidance strategy.

- (13) J'ai lu les compositions de mes camarades et je trouve que ma note est injuste.  
Est-ce que vous pouvez relire ma composition?



**Figure 1:** Typology of communication strategies in interlanguage (IL) production for closing a request when the appropriate formulaic sequence is unknown.

‘I have read some of my classmates’ essays and I think that my mark is unfair. Can you read my essay again?’

The learner in (13) initiates his request by giving reasons for it (*J’ai lu les compositions de mes camarades et je trouve que ma note est injuste*). He then produces the Head Act, the core of the request sequence (*Est-ce que vous pouvez relire ma composition?*). What may be missing here, as compared to other requests, is a closing structure, for example *Ce serait très gentil* (‘That would be kind of you’). Requests without closings may be perfectly appropriate. In certain contexts, however, avoiding the closing can be “dangerous” because requests that are not appropriately closed may appear less polite or even rude to the requestee and may, as a result, be refused.

According to Brown and Levinson’s politeness theory, the speech act of request is a face-threatening act: the speaker who makes a request threatens the hearer’s negative face (his/her want to be unimpeded by others) because “the speaker (S) does not intend to avoid impeding H’s [the hearer’s] freedom of action” (Brown and Levinson, 1987 [1978], p. 65). However, the requester also runs the risk of losing face him/herself, as the requestee may choose to refuse to comply with his/her wishes. Therefore, in order to make the requestee comply with the request, the speaker may use various strategic devices to present his/her request as politely as possible. One of these strategic devices may be an appropriate closing to a request.

Unlike reduction strategies, achievement strategies serve to preserve the speaker’s original communicative goal. Achievement strategies can be further subclassed into L1-based transfer strategies and interlanguage-based strategies.

In the case of L1-based transfer strategies, learners solve communication problems by transferring knowledge from the L1 to the L2. In the present study, for instance, some learners who lacked an appropriate closing sequence in the

L2 translated one from their L1, thus transferring it from the L1 to the L2. In order to express gratitude, Austrian German native speakers, for instance, used *Ich wäre sehr dankbar* ('I would be very grateful'). Intending to use the same strategy, some learners transferred this FS literally to French, producing the creative but inappropriate utterance *Je serais très merçiable* [sic] ('I would be very grateful'). Although pragmatic transfer is often positive, learners' tacit assumption that there are parallel form-function mappings in the L1 and the L2 does not always apply (Kasper, 1997). Literal translation of L1 FSs thus frequently does not work in the L2.

Interlanguage-based strategies imply the use of already existing interlanguage knowledge for reaching a solution to the communication problem. An interlanguage-based strategy employed in the present study is the use of individual, situation-specific utterances. In other words, learners replace FSs that are unavailable to them by describing the specific situation (e.g. *Je pourrais t'aider à apprendre le [sic] maths avant que j'aille à la boum*. 'I could help you with maths before I go to the party.'; *Et euh au prochain exposé, c'est moi qui ferai la plus grande partie*. 'For the next presentation, I will do most of the work'). As outlined earlier, this has been by far the most frequent strategy for solving the problem of not knowing the appropriate closing sequence in the present study.

The typology presented above suggests that learners employ several communication strategies when trying to close their requests appropriately. How can we interpret these results? Why do learners avoid closing structures? Why do they transfer literally from their L1? Why do they use situation-specific creative language when native speakers use formulaic speech? In sum, why is it that classroom learners even at an intermediate proficiency level are not familiar with FSs? In the following, possible reasons for the learners' inability to come up with correct and appropriate FSs will be discussed.

A first explanation of the differences between native speakers and learners concerning request-closings could be that classroom learners cannot help but apply the analytic techniques learned in class also to holistically acquired FSs. This assumption is supported by the occurrence of errors in what should be a holistically learned FS (e.g. Kasper, 1981; Wildner-Bassett, 1984; Wray, 2002).

- (14) a. Il [sic] serait très gentil de vous [sic].  
 b. Correct: Ce serait très gentil de votre part/à vous.  
 'That would be very kind of you.'
- (15) a. Ce sera [sic] très gentile [sic].  
 b. Correct: Ce serait très gentil.  
 'That would be very kind of you.'

The errors in the examples (14a) and (15a) above clearly indicate that the learners in this study analysed at least a part of the FS in order to access the lexical

constituents which are then stored separately. Wray (2002) points out that this process of analysis is reinforced by teaching.

A second explanation of the differences between learners and native speakers as shown in this study relates to the functions of formulaic language. It was pointed out earlier (in the section A basic characterization of formulaic language) that in normal adult language, FSs perform two main functions, namely (1) “achieving interactional functions”, such as asserting one’s individual and/or group identity, and (2) “saving effort in processing” and enhancing fluency (Wray, 2000, pp. 473–479). If formulaic language does indeed promote the achievement of interactional goals and the saving of effort in processing, why do the classroom learners in this study use FSs so rarely? Let us first consider Wray’s contribution to this issue: Wray suggests that the various functions that have been identified in the literature are nothing more than “a linguistic solution to a non-linguistic problem” (p. 100), namely the promotion of the speakers’ interests. The interests of native speakers and classroom learners are very different and so are their linguistic solutions. While native speakers promote their own interests in that they “aim to communicate a genuine message with a beneficial outcome to their physical, intellectual or emotional state” (p. 205), classroom learners very often put the focus on the form, not on the meaning of their utterances. Consequently, the former use FSs frequently while the latter use them only rarely.

Taken together, these two aspects, that is, the analytic approach of classroom learners and the different communicative needs of learners and native speakers, offer a plausible explanation of the lack of FSs in the speech of the classroom learners investigated in this study. While the first explanation of the differences between learners and native speakers accounts better for the data, the second relates to the functions of formulaic language and makes a more theoretical contribution to the issue.

## **Conclusion**

The research question guiding the study presented in this article was whether and how intermediate classroom learners of L2 French use FSs and how they compare to French native speakers. The results clearly indicate that at an intermediate level classroom learners use significantly fewer FSs than their native-speaker counterparts. It has been shown that learners resort to communication strategies such as transfer from their L1 and situation-specific utterances in many situations where native speakers use FSs. Moreover, it has been found that the FSs used by learners are not necessarily the same as those used by native speakers. Two possible explanations for the underuse of FSs among learners have been proposed: the analytic approach of classroom learners and their specific communicative needs.

As long as classroom learners remain in their L1 environment, the lack of FSs is certainly not a cause for concern. However, as soon as these learners find themselves in an L2 environment, their communicative needs change radically. Accordingly, the learners might get into trouble because they do not have at their disposal the linguistic solutions, that is, the FSs which enable them to promote their own interests.

As a consequence, thinking about strategies of how to teach FSs in the classroom may help classroom learners to better “survive” in the naturalistic environment of their L2. However, the issue of promoting the teaching of formulaic language is not straightforward. According to Pawley and Syder (1983), producing correct FSs and using them appropriately in natural speech is among the most difficult tasks for language learners. Wray (2002) attributes this difficulty to the complex restrictions on the appropriate use of FSs (Yorio, 1980) and on the fact that the whole (i.e. the FS) is not a literal reflection of its parts (i.e. the words). The complex restrictions on their use make it difficult to teach and learn formulaic language in the classroom. It is therefore probably unrealistic to expect classroom learners to attain high levels of achievement only through classroom instruction. Nonetheless, activities in the language classroom should be adapted in such a way that learners have ample opportunities to use formulaic speech. Finally, teaching materials for French as a second language that represent FSs accurately are urgently needed.

## Notes

An earlier version of the paper was presented at the *B.A.A.L./C.U.P. Seminar: Linguistic Development in French* in Southampton, UK in July 2002.

- <sup>1</sup> Biskup (1992) and Farghal and Obiedat (1995) were researching collocations, not FSs in general.
- <sup>2</sup> The French native speakers are from Cannes (n = 24) and from Rennes (n = 21).
- <sup>3</sup> The decision to investigate intermediate and not beginning learners made it necessary to conduct the study at a high school focusing on languages (“Neusprachliches Gymnasium”). Due to the fact that in Austria this type of high school is mainly attended by female students, 108 out of the 149 subjects in this study are female. According to studies in cross-cultural and interlanguage pragmatics (e.g. Held, 1995; House, 1989), the influence of gender appears not to play a major role in the realization of the speech act of requests and the gender effect was therefore not investigated in the present study.
- <sup>4</sup> Please note that instances where individual students chose not to react verbally (“opting out”) are also included in these frequencies.
- <sup>5</sup> For a detailed description of the coding strategies see Warga (2004, pp. 264–269).
- <sup>6</sup> Due to its high frequency in both native-speaker and learner data, *merci* will also be considered as an FS although it consists of only one word.
- <sup>7</sup> The chi-square test cannot be used here because the sample is too small: there are too many cells with expected frequencies less than 5.

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**Appendix:****Written discourse completion task****(Please note that this is the French version administered to female subjects)**

Nom: Âge:  
 Sexe: Nationalité:  
 Langue maternelle: Classe:  
 Autres langues:

Lis les descriptions suivantes des situations. Écris ensuite (dans l'espace libre) ce que tu dirais dans cette situation dans une conversation normale. Essaie d'écrire les mots exacts que tu utiliserais. Si tu penses que tu choisirais de ne pas parler, dis-le et donne tes raisons. Les scènes se déroulent en France et il faut donc y répondre en français.

Exemple:

Cela fait des semaines qu'une camarade t'a prêté un livre de physique. Elle t'a demandé de le lui rendre aujourd'hui parce qu'elle en a absolument besoin pour une interrogation de physique. Le matin, quand tu arrives à l'école, tu te rends compte que tu l'as oublié. Tu vas tout de suite voir ta camarade dans la salle de classe et tu lui dis:

Dans ce questionnaire il s'agit seulement de ton évaluation personnelle. N'aie pas peur, tu ne peux pas faire de fautes. Toute réponse est juste. Merci de ton aide,

Muriel Warga

1. Tu as été malade pendant les deux dernières semaines. Comme ta composition de maths va avoir lieu dans peu de temps, tu dois rattraper le plus vite possible. Tu voudrais demander à ta prof de maths si elle peut t'aider pendant quelques heures (4–5). Tu ne veux pas payer pour cela et tu sais que ta prof a énormément de travail en ce moment. Quand ta prof entre dans la salle de classe, tu vas la voir et tu lui dis:
2. Cela fait déjà quelques semaines que tu as promis d'aider à organiser la fête du lycée. Cela doit durer toute la soirée de demain. Tout à coup tu apprends qu'une boum aura lieu chez tes amis. Tu aimerais bien y aller et demandes donc à une camarade (tu n'es pas amie avec elle) de se charger de ton travail. Tu sais que cette camarade n'a pas beaucoup de temps parce qu'elle doit travailler pour une interrogation en maths. Quand tu rencontres ta camarade dans le couloir, tu dis:
3. Ta copine anglaise part en vacances en Espagne pour une semaine avec sa famille et elle t'invite à l'accompagner. Malheureusement tu as cours pendant cette semaine. Pourtant tu veux absolument partir avec ta copine (tes parents te l'ont permis) et tu demandes donc à ta prof de te donner des vacances pendant cette semaine. Quand elle a une heure de libre, tu vas la voir dans la salle des profs et tu dis:

4. La prof te rend la composition d'anglais et ta note est plus mauvaise que tu pensais. Après avoir comparé ta composition avec celles de tes camarades, tu as de plus en plus l'impression que ta note est injuste. Tu crois mériter une meilleure note. Tu veux donc que la prof relise ta composition. Tu sais cependant que ta prof n'aime pas cela. Quand elle entre dans la classe, tu vas la voir et tu dis:
5. Dans deux jours tu vas avoir un examen de physique décisif pour ta moyenne. Ton passage dans la classe supérieure dépend de ton résultat. Tu n'as pas travaillé jusqu'à présent. Tu veux donc échanger la date d'examen avec une camarade (tu n'es pas amie avec elle) qui doit passer son examen seulement dans deux semaines. Le problème, c'est que cette camarade est aussi très faible en physique et qu'elle ne s'est pas encore préparée. Quand elle entre dans la salle de classe, tu vas la voir et tu dis:
6. Dans les jours qui viennent, tu dois faire un grand exposé en anglais. Tu as de grandes difficultés avec la préparation. Tout à coup tu te souviens d'une élève de terminale (tu ne la connais pas bien) qui est bilingue. Tu voudrais qu'elle t'aide à préparer ce travail. Cela durerait une après-midi ou deux. Tu sais que cette fille n'a pas beaucoup de temps parce qu'elle doit préparer le bac. Le lendemain tu vas la voir dans la salle de classe et tu dis: