

WRITTEN REQUESTS IN KENYAN ENGLISH: AN ILLUSTRATION OF L1 CULTURE ADAPTATION IN L2 ACQUISITION

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This paper seeks to illustrate the observation from studies on second language acquisition and use that culture-specific aspects of a given language can be adapted to the norms of the culture of the linguistic community that widely uses it as a second language. Specifically, the paper looks at how written requests are made in Kenyan English with reference to how they are in British English, its direct ancestor. It bases its discussion and conclusion on two types of data: a) judgment data in the form of preference choices in terms of which request formulas are most likely to be used by a sample of a hundred and eleven respondents; b) production data in the form of non-elicited requests actually made to the author by his students. In both cases, the subjects were University of Nairobi students. The frequency counts of which requests would most likely be used and of those which were actually used show the request structures used in Kenyan English to be shorter and more limited in number than those in British English.

1. Introduction

That ‘language is part of culture’ is commonly accepted by everyone irrespective of his or her understanding of the term ‘culture’. But an even more sweeping statement like ‘language is culture’ is quasi-axiomatic, heard from almost everybody, and hardly questioned by anybody. However, the language we talk about in such terms is usually the first language, L1 (which in most cases corresponds to the mother tongue), not the second or the foreign—both of which are commonly referred to as L2. Thus, for instance, the natural interpretation of a statement like ‘language simultaneously reflects culture, and is influenced and shaped by it’ (Jiang 2000: 328) would be that it describes the interaction between culture and first rather than second language.

Could we say, though, that ‘second language is part of culture’ as well? From a body of literature on L2 acquisition and use, the answer is ‘yes’, but

only if we are talking of a widely used L2, that is, a second language used as a medium of instruction at all levels of education and/or used as a lingua franca. But in such a case, a related question is, 'Whose culture is this L2 part of?' The answer is, 'that of learners of this L2, rather than that of its "original" native speakers'.

It has been observed in the literature that users of this L2 ultimately adapt its culture-specific aspects to their own cultural realities. The following quotations from three different authors illustrate the point: Davies (1995) notes that 'for the second language situation, our sociolinguistic expectations ... will conform to a different, typically local, model with which learners are likely to identify' (p. 148). Gupta (1999) emphasizes the point in the following extracts:

When we learn a foreign language, we expect some cultural baggage to come with the language. ...

[But] the situation is very different in places where English is widely used. There we find a focus on *local* culture. (p. 8)

...

It is inevitable that local standards develop wherever English is used for local culture. (p. 9)

...

It is clear in the traditional ESL [English as a Second Language] settings that the actual target for learners is a local one.... (p. 10)

Illustrating such an ESL situation with the case of India, Brown (2000) points out that 'learning English in India, for example, really does not involve taking on a new culture since one is acquiring *Indian* English in India' (p. 192).

The situation of English in India may not be identical to that of English in Kenya. Still, it is comparable, which would allow us to similarly talk of acquiring '*Kenyan* English in Kenya', a variety of English that has 'dropped' some cultural attributes of its direct ancestral variety, British English. One such attribute which this paper seeks to illustrate with is the way polite requests are made in written Kenyan English. The paper aims to provide evidence for how L1 culture can be adapted in L2 acquisition and use by

showing that Kenyan English not only has a smaller inventory of request formulas but also that those it frequently uses would hardly qualify as typical polite requests in its ancestor, British English.

2. Method

2.1 Subjects

The judgment data were collected, through a questionnaire, from a sample of 111 respondents taken from 243 students from the various classes (from 3rd to 5th year) in the Department of Linguistics at the University of Nairobi that the author taught from April 1998 to April 2003. On each occasion, the questionnaire was answered by volunteers, who numbered from a minimum of three to a maximum of eighteen depending on the size of the class.

In the case of the non-elicited data, the subjects were a 'self-constituted' sample, not one selected by the researcher: those were just people who made, in writing, non-elicited requests to him. It happens, though, that they were all his current or former students.

2.2 Data

Two types of data will form the basis of discussion in this study. The first type, called 'judgment data' above, consists of a frequency count of choices made by questionnaire respondents as to which formulas of request they are most likely to resort to spontaneously and which they are not. The second consists of non-elicited production data that were collected as real written requests made to the author by his students over five years. They consist of only twenty-eight specific request structures contained in seventeen request notes. See the Appendix.

Judgment data

They were collected using the list of items below, adapted from a longer list in Wilkins (1976: 51)—although items No. 1 (i.e. ‘Please, ...’) and No. 5 (i.e. Kindly...) are not suggested there.

Suppose you would like somebody to do you the favour of proofreading your draft. Below are some of the ways you could make your request to them. First, tick only the three that will spontaneously come to your mind. Second, put a cross before the two (if there are any) that will definitely not readily come to your mind.

1. () Please, proofread this draft for me.
2. () Will you be so kind as to proofread this draft for me?
3. () Can you proofread this draft for me?
4. () Do you mind proofreading this draft for me?
5. () Kindly proofread this draft for me.
6. () Would you mind proofreading this draft for me?
7. () Perhaps you’d like to proofread this draft for me.
8. () Could you proofread this draft for me?
9. () I wish you’d proofread this draft for me.
10. () Could you possibly proofread this draft for me?

Now, is there a way you usually use in similar circumstances but which I have not included in the list above? If there is one, could you write it here?

The answers to the questionnaire above are summarized in the table below. They are arranged in terms of which formulas are more likely to be used by the respondents.

Table 1: Likely frequency of occurrence of various request formulas (out of 111 answers)

		<i>‘Will spontaneously come to mind...’</i>	%	<i>‘Will definitely not come to mind...’</i>	%
1.	Please, proofread this draft for me.	73	65.7	2	1.8
2.	Would you mind proofreading...?	64	57.6	1	0.9
3.	Do you mind proofreading...?	56	50.4	1	0.9

4.	Kindly proofread this draft...	38	34.2	6	5.4
5.	Could you proofread...?	33	29.7	5	4.5
6.	Can you proofread...?	29	26	32	28.8
7.	Will you be so kind as to proofread...?	20	18	37	33.3
8.	Could you possibly proofread...?	17	15.3	15	13.5
9.	I wish you'd proofread...	3	2.7	45	40.5
10.	Perhaps you'd like to proofread...	1	0.9	78	70.2

Below are the request structures which the respondents have come up with in answer to the open question below the list in the questionnaire. To start with, note that only 20 of the 111 respondents (i.e. 18 %) added a new structure. (One of them added three.)

- (i) Could you please proofread this draft for me? (4 times)
- (ii) Would you please proofread ... (3 times)
- (iii) Please do me a favour, proofread ... (2 times)
- (iv) I hope I am not being a bother, please proofread ...
- (v) Please, would you do me a favour and proofread ...
- (vi) Please, can you proofread ...
- (vii) May you please proofread ...
- (viii) I'd be grateful if you would proofread ...
- (ix) Would you kindly proofread ...
- (x) If you don't mind me asking, would you proofread ...
- (xi) Excuse me please, I request that you proofread ...
- (xii) I kindly request you to proofread ...
- (xiii) Proofread this draft for me.
- (xiv) Suppose you proofread this draft for me.
- (xv) Please, just proofread this draft for me.
- (xvi) Proofread this draft for me if possible.

Non-elicited production data

Table 2 gives a summary of the non-elicited production data.

Table 2: Specific request structures extracted from student request notes to the author

	Type of structure	Actual structure used in the request notes (RN)	Frequency / 28	%
1.	Imperative verb alone	a) Cancelled. Mark this. (RN 3) b) Ask Mr O. to do that favour for me too. (RN 8) c) Sign all of them. (RN 9)	3	11
2.	Please + verb	a) Please leave my ... paper with Mr O. (See RN 1) b) Please mark ... this work ... this week (RN 2) c) Please make a choice... (RN 4) d) Please abide and consider my request. (RN 5) e) Please, write and send a ... letter... (RN 7) f) Please, sign ... these letters... (RN 9) g) Please write up something... (RN 13)	7	25
3.	Kindly + verb	a) Kindly leave it behind. (RN 1) b) Kindly let me know through Mr O. (RN 11) c) Kindly ... ask R. to collect her book... (RN 15)	3	11
4.	Please + kindly + verb	a) Please, kindly fill that form and send it...(RN 8) b) Please do kindly fill that ... form for me. (RN 5)	2	7
5.	The verb 'request' is explicitly used.	a) This is to request for permission... (RN 5) b) I herein request that you be my referee. (RN 7) c) I am ... requesting your services... (RN 8) d) I do request you to consider my request...(RN 16) e) I would ... like to request you to be... (RN 17)	5	18
6.	I would + verb + if you...	a) I would be grateful if you let me know my grade. (RN 12)	3	11

		b) I would highly appreciate it if you filled... (RN 15) c) I would greatly appreciate if you would... (RN 17)		
7.	I would like you to...	I would like you to be my referee... (RN 13)	1	3.5
8.	I would + please + like you to...	I would pliz [sic] like you to give me my papers to redo. (RN 10)	1	3.5
9.	Could you please + verb	Could you please ... prepare a ... paper... (RN 16)	1	3.5
10.	I don't know whether it could be possible ... to...	I don't know whether it could be possible for you to have me do the paper... (RN 16)	1	3.5
11.	An impersonal structure	A note in the students' pigeonhole will do. (RN 12)	1	3.5

3. Discussion

3.1 *The elicited responses vs. the non-elicited data*

Table 1 shows that only three (of the ten) request formulas stand out as those likely to come to the minds of the respondents: 'Please, proofread this draft for me', 'Would you mind proofreading...', and 'Do you mind proofreading...'. It also shows that the only one outstandingly reported as the least likely is 'Perhaps you'd like to proofread...'. Moreover, a comparison of the two columns of percentages reveals some inverse relationship between a given formula being most likely and least likely at the same time: the five structures with the highest percentage in the left-hand column are also the five with the lowest one in the right-hand column, even though the ranking order on both sides is not necessarily the same. Likewise, the five with the highest percentage in the right-hand column are also the five with the lowest one in the left-hand column, although again not necessarily in a symmetrical ranking. There thus seems to be reasonable internal consistency regarding which request structures the respondents reported to be the most likely ones to come to their minds and which are not.

But one might wonder whether the same respondents would have produced naturally occurring (i.e. non-elicited) requests that would correlate with their reported preferences. Specifically, would, for example, the structure ‘Would you mind proofreading...’ occur in their production as frequently as suggested by the 57.6 percentage of frequency of occurrence in the table? The answer to this question would be ‘No’, if we based it on the comparison of the frequency percentages reported in Table 1 and the real, non-elicited requests reported in Table 2 above: in the latter, not a single one of the twenty-eight requests is of the structure ‘Would you mind...’. This comparison would predict that only the sole case of ‘positive correlation’ between the two types of data concerns the structure ‘Please, proofread...’, as it is the most frequently used as well in the twenty-eight non-elicited requests.

Still on possible correlations, it is quite surprising that neither of the next two structures reported to be most likely to spontaneously come to mind, namely ‘Would you mind...’ and ‘Do you mind...’, occurs a single time in the twenty-eight authentic requests. One might be tempted to explain this by pointing out that it was not the same group of subjects that judged the ten request structures and produced the non-elicited ones. However, with reference to everyday Kenyan English, what is surprising is not the non-occurrence of the two structures in the request notes—as they are indeed seldom used; it is rather the high percentage at which they were claimed to spontaneously come to the minds of the respondents. With the exception of the ‘Please, proofread...’ and ‘Kindly proofread...’ formulas, rarely will any one of the other ten structures in the questionnaire be encountered in Kenyan English. To this extent, even the low percentages of 18 and 15.3 reported for ‘Will you be so kind as to proofread...’ and ‘Could you possibly proofread...’ are surprisingly high, compared to their occurrence in reality.

In fact, the second and only other request structure among the ten in the questionnaire that occurred at all in the twenty-eight non-elicited requests is that of the ‘Kindly + verb’ type. It is surprising that its percentage of 34.2 in Table 1 is lower than those for ‘Would you mind...’ (57.6%) and ‘Do you mind...’ (50.4%). After all, the ‘Kindly + verb’ structure is not infrequent in

Kenyan English where—one could hypothesize—it seems to be the more polite alternative to the ‘Please + verb’ formula.

Excluding the case of the ‘please, proofread...’ structure, the lack of ‘correlation’ between the results in the two tables may be taken as evidence for the observation sometimes made that what language users think they say is not always what they indeed say. So, perhaps the judgements expressed in Table 1 should be best interpreted as those of the structures that those respondents would accept, and not necessarily those which they themselves would use.

In this connection, it would be interesting to turn to the sixteen added structures, which a fraction of the respondents claimed they would use, to see if they carry greater resemblance to the authentic data in Table 2. To a limited extent, they do: that is, to the extent that they contain at least three structures that were actually used in some of the request notes. The three are: the ‘imperative verb alone’ in (xiii), the ‘I’d be grateful if you...’ in (viii), and the ‘I ... request you...’ in (xii) and (partially) in (xi). Of particular interest is the last one, which is the second most frequent structure type in Table 2.

But of course any frequency reported in Table 2 should be kept in perspective, simply because the sample of requests under analysis is small. In spite of this, a picture of which request structures would be expected to occur with any significant frequency in Kenyan English emerges by collating observations from both the elicited and non-elicited data. Such structures are basically of three types: one, a ‘broad’ imperative construction with three variants, namely the imperative alone, the imperative introduced by the mitigator ‘please’ and that introduced by the mitigator ‘kindly’;¹ two, an indicative statement explicitly using the word ‘request’; three, the ‘I would + verb’ structure. Note that the first structure occurs in at least half of the twenty-eight requests (i.e. fifteen times), the second in about one-fifth of them (i.e. five times) and the third in one-tenth of them (i.e. three times).

¹ The term ‘mitigator’ used to refer to ‘please’ and ‘kindly’ was borrowed from Wardhaugh (1998: 227).

3.2 Requests in Kenyan English vs. requests in British English

As a starting point for comparing requests in Kenyan English to those in its ancestral variety, let us first look at what Swan (1996: 507) considers as ‘some typical structures used in requests’ in British English:

Could you possibly help me for a few minutes? (very polite)

Would you mind helping me for a few minutes?

Would you like to help me for a few minutes?

Could you help me for a few minutes? (more informal)

You couldn't help me for a few minutes, could you? (informal)

...

I wonder if you could (possibly) help me for a few minutes.

And Swan goes on to comment that:

If we use other structures (for example imperatives...), we are not asking people to do things, but telling or advising them to do things. These structures can therefore seem rude if we use them in requests... *Please* makes an order or instruction a little more polite, but does not turn it into a request. The following structures can be used perfectly correctly to give orders, instructions or advice, but they are not polite ways of requesting to do things.

Please help me for a few minutes.

...

Carry this for me, please.

Please answer by return of post.

Please type your letter.

...

You are kindly requested not to smoke.

Swan's comments are self-explanatory. And they can be backed by statements from other authors, like the following from Leech *et al.* (2001) who, while discussing ways of expressing politeness, add that ‘in REQUESTS, it is generally polite to use a question form, and a tentative form like WOULD’ (p. 403).

However, in addition to agreeing with Swan's point that 'please' makes an order (rather than a request) more polite, some authors would further accept that 'please' (and 'kindly') will be enough to give an imperative structure the force of a polite request. Thus, Quirk *et al.* (1985: 832) note that:

Please and (to a lesser extent) *kindly* ... may be added to imperative sentences with the illocutionary force of a request to convey greater overt politeness [as in]: *Please eat up your dinner* [and] *Kindly move to the next seat*.

They go on to recognize, though, that

Requests are *often* [Emphasis added] expressed by questions and statements, eg: *Will you shut the door, please?*, *Would you mind shutting the door?*, *Could you shut the door for me?*, *I wonder whether you would mind shutting the door*.

Now, by relating what seems to be the common structures in Kenyan English to the statements quoted in the preceding two paragraphs, one would make the following observations: one, those structures which Swan (1996) clearly says are not request formulas at all in British English tend to be the most frequent in Kenyan English. (Note in passing that they include the structure explicitly using the verb 'request'.) Two, and as a consequence of one, the structures in the form of direct questions (like 'Would you mind helping me?') or indirect questions (like 'I wonder if you could help me'), which are longer and thus taken to be more polite,² seem to be rare in Kenyan English.

² The link between length and degree of politeness can be summed up thus: 'The usual rule is: 'The more words you use, the more *polite* you are!'' (Leech *et al* 2001: 402). However, Wardhaugh (1998) cautions us that there seems to be an (undefined) limit to length, when he points out that a request (translated from French) like 'Would you be so obliging as to want to inform me which way I should go for Lyon Station?' would be 'almost certainly too obsequious.' He equally remarks that a request by a superior to an inferior expressed with a 'long mitigator' is likely to be interpreted as sarcastic, as in 'Would you mind, Mr Smith, if I asked you to try occasionally to get to work on time, please?' (p. 277)

The conclusion that can be drawn from the two observations is that the ‘imperativeness’ and relative ‘shortness’ of the requests in Kenyan English would support the view that ‘being polite is different in different countries’ (Leech *et al* 2001: 403). And since ‘different countries’ entails ‘different cultures’, one could assert, as if in response to Swan’s (1996: 507) comments, that imperative structures do express requests, and polite ones for that matter, but in a variety of English that is different, at least on this particular culture-specific aspect of language, from British English.

3.3 Requests in Kenyan English vs. requests in the acquisition of English as an L2

Such a comparison is relevant because the vast majority of speakers of English in Kenya learnt it as a second language. Here, the comparison will be based on the following points made by Ellis (1994: 168-74) about requests in English learnt as an L2:

- A number of studies have investigated learners’ intuitions about what constitutes an appropriate request. A focus of enquiry is whether L2 learners are able to recognize the distinctions between polite and less polite forms. (p. 168)
- Walters (1979) and Carrell and Konneker (1981) ... report that the advanced learners they studied perceived the politeness level of different requests in accordance with native speaker norms. However, there is also evidence of some differences. ... Carrell and Konneker found that their advanced learners tended to perceive more distinct levels of politeness than native speakers. A tentative conclusion, therefore, is that with sufficient exposure to the L2, learners are able to perceive the sociolinguistic distinctions encoded by native speakers in requests, but that they may become oversensitive to them. (pp. 168 & 171)
- Many of the studies [that focused on production of requests] have investigated high-intermediate or advanced learners. One of the strongest findings from these studies is that even these learners do not acquire fully native-like ways of requesting. In particular, they tend to produce longer requests than native speakers.... (p. 172)

- Other differences between high-level learners and native speakers have been noted. For example, they tend to overuse the politeness marker 'please', to employ more double-markings (for example, 'Could you possibly present your paper this week?')... These high-level learners, however, show control over a wide range of forms and strategies for performing requests. (p. 172)

In contrast, lower-level learners display only a limited range of politeness features.... For example, they [use] imperative requests to all addressees irrespective of social distance and power differences.... (pp. 172-3).

With reference to the findings about requests in SLA, it appears that requests in Kenyan English do not conform to the general picture encapsulated in the points quoted above. The Kenyan English users whose data have been used in this paper cannot be considered anything less than advanced learners of English. With this in mind, a number of observations can be made: firstly, concerning their ability 'to recognize the distinctions between polite and less polite requests', the picture we get from both Tables 1 and 2 is somewhat blurred. This is because two arguably very polite request structures, viz. 'Would you mind proofread...' and 'Do you mind proofreading...', were relatively highly rated, but even more highly rated was 'Please, proofread...', a structure which would not qualify as a typical polite request in British English. And, turning to the twenty-eight requests, we realize that the few different formulas used in them do not provide solid ground to talk of clear distinctions between polite and less polite forms either. Nonetheless, beyond structural considerations, it would be hard to imagine that the subjects in this study do not have the ability to distinguish between polite and less polite request forms. We should assume they do. We have to accept that the mitigators 'please' and 'kindly' are polite enough, if one considers that even mere imperative forms were used in the non-elicited requests (see Request Notes 3, 8 and 9) in a situation that unquestionably required polite language.

Secondly, as concerns the ability of advanced learners 'to perceive the politeness level of different requests in accordance with native speaker

norms', and even the tendency for some of them 'to perceive more distinct levels of politeness than native speakers', there are two things to say: one, even if the subjects in this study were able to do so, we would not be able to tell for sure because the questionnaire they answered was not phrased in such a way as to measure the politeness level of the ten request formulas proposed. However, one might infer from the fact that the respondents showed preferences among the ten formulas submitted to their judgment that they indeed could perceive the politeness level involved. Two, for their part, and as already observed, the non-elicited requests present a reduced range of request structures compared to that available for British English users. So, if we were to take the latter as the reference 'native speakers', the conclusion would be that the subjects in this study do not follow native speaker norms. But, on the other hand, since they are advanced learners of English all the same, a more appropriate conclusion (already hinted at in the preceding paragraph) should be that the apparently limited range of formulas is, in all likelihood, all that is readily available in their variety of English.

Thirdly, regarding the advanced learners's tendency 'to produce longer requests than native speakers', this does simply not seem to be the case in the present study, if by 'native speakers' we mean those of the ancestral variety. The data speak largely in favour of shorter requests.

Fourthly, the tendency of high-level learners 'to employ more double-markings [as in] 'Could you possibly present your paper this week?'' does not appear to be a frequent option for Kenyan English users either. The low frequency rate of 'Could you possibly proofread this draft for me' would testify to this. And so would the twenty-eight non-elicited requests, in which the only cases of 'double markings' are those of 'if it could be possible' (in structure No. 10 in Table 2) and (perhaps) of the co-occurrence of 'please' and 'kindly' (in structure No. 4). As for the tendency 'to overuse the politeness marker 'please'...', one would very easily conclude that this is indeed the difference par excellence that characterizes Kenyan English. That said, it might as well be argued that the term 'overuse' implies that this 'please' is used even in cases where other forms are more appropriate. And yet we are talking of a situation where 'please' typically alternates only with

'kindly' and the mere imperative form. So, the term 'overuse' may not be appropriate to this context.

Finally, consider how intriguing the final lines of the above quotation from Ellis (1994) would be if they were to be applied to the Kenyan English situation: the lines suggest that it is the lower-level learners who use a limited range of politeness features and use imperative requests to all addressees irrespective of social distance and power differences. This is intriguing because the non-elicited requests reported in this study were produced by high-level learners and were addressed to an addressee at a higher power scale and yet use, in their majority, the imperative form. Clearly, then, if those subjects used mainly imperative requests, this should have nothing to do with their level of knowledge of English; it rather seems to have to do with some accepted cultural way of expressing requests in a specific variety of English, Kenyan English.

4. Conclusion

This study has brought to light the fact that in its expression of polite requests, written Kenyan English tends to rely mainly on imperative structures of three forms: the mere imperative, the imperative mitigated by 'please', and the imperative mitigated by 'kindly'. The explicit use of the verb 'request' seems to be also another preferred choice. Now, recall that the two types of structure are the very ones that Swan (1996: 507) says 'can be used perfectly correctly to give orders, instructions or advice, but they are not polite ways of requesting to do things'. Taking into account the fact that Swan's reference variety is British English, we can readily go along with Wardhaugh's observation that 'while people must be polite everywhere [,] they are not necessarily polite in the same way or for the same reasons' (1998: 276).

Furthermore, in view of the fact that the way people express polite requests is culturally determined, this study has produced further evidence that

... cultural appropriateness may need to be replaced by the concept of appropriation, whereby learners make a foreign language and culture their own by adapting it to their own needs and interests. (Kramsch 1998: 81)

What Kramsch calls 'foreign language' here is what has been called 'second language' throughout this paper. Otherwise, by way of conclusion the quotation could not be more fitting: it invites us to think of request formulas in Kenyan English not as 'appropriate' vis-à-vis e.g. British English, but as forms that fit in a model of expressing requests 'owned' by a different variety.

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Alfred Buregeya

Appendix: Written request notes received by the author

(Note: The request structures under consideration are highlighted in bold type. The highlighting is mine.)

Request note 1

Dr Buregeya

Please leave my C.A.T. paper with Mr O. I have been coming everyday since Friday last week and it seems I will never trace you. **Kindly leave** it behind. Thanks in advance.

M. S. N. (4th year student, 1999)

Request note 2

Dr Buregeya

A REQUEST:

Please mark for me this work before the end of this week so that it can help me revise for my exams.

K. M. N. (4th year student, 1999)

Request note 3

Cancelled. **Mark** this.

(from an exam paper of a 4th year student, 1999, in which the student concerned wanted the lecturer to ignore one of the two proposed answers and consider the other.)

Request note 4

Dr. Alfred Buregeya

Re: CLL 303 [timetable]

... the following hours are free:

Friday: 9-10 a. m.; 10-11 a.m.; 1-2 p.m.

Please make a choice from the above hours **and inform** us in the next class.

Yours faithfully,

Student I. E. (3rd year student 1999)

Request note 5

To Mr Buregeya,

This is to request permission to be away during your class this week due to both domestic and academic problems. I will give you an explanation later.

Please abide and consider my request.

Yours

Student O. H. O. (4th year student, 2000)

Request note 6

Att. Mr Buregeya

I came over to see you, but unfortunately I've bounced you.

Please do kindly fill that referee form for me. I'll come to see you later.

Yours faithfully

K. A. F. (April 2001, 4th year student in 2000)

Request note 7

Dear Sir

REF: REQUEST FOR REFEREESHIP

I herein request that you be my referee. Please, write and send a recommendation letter to a university I intend to join and have therefore applied to.

G. M. A. (January 2001, 4th year student in 1999)

Request note 8

Dr Buregeya

Hallo! How are you!

I did pass by your office at 10.00 only to be informed that you were in class. Otherwise I am fine. **I am once again requesting your services -to be my referee. Please, kindly fill** in that form and send it to that college. The deadline for the application has already passed but it doesn't matter. **Ask Mr O.** to do that favour for me too.

Thanks and see you.

G. M. A. (May 2001, 4th year student in 1999)

Request note 9

Dr Buregeya,

Please, sign for me these letters and leave them with Mr O.

Sign all of them. I will pick them tomorrow. Nice evening.

B. W. W. (MA 2 student, June 2001)

Request note 10

Sir,

... I really didn't get the full details of what was being done in the term paper. I got second hand information on how to do it. **I would pliz [sic] like you to give me** my papers to redo them. Sorry for the inconveniences caused. Your help will be highly appreciated.

Thanks

N. P. (BA III student, April 2002)

Request note 11

Dr. Buregeya,

Alfred Buregeya

I am shocked with the lowest marks you have awarded me in the 'Research Paper'. There is a possibility that I did not understand what is required. May I discuss the issue with you. **Kindly let me know** through Mr O. when you will be in the office and free for discussion.

Thank you in advance,

Student [O. J., BA III, 11 June 2002)

Request note 12

Dear Sir,

RE: A REQUEST FOR MY GRADE

I am very worried about my C.A.T. mark. ... **I would be very grateful if you let me know** my grade... This will help me know what to do [in preparation for my exam]. **A note in the students' pigeonhole will do.**

Thanks in advance.

Yours faithfully,

P. M. (MA II student, 6 June 2002)

Request note 13

Hello Daktari [: Dr]

I would like you to be my referee for an application I am doing/making to the University of Hull. I hope to secure a scholarship from DFID upon admission. Your recommendation will of course go a long way to ensure that. **Please write up** something expressing my interest ...

Thanks in advance.

O. N. (15 July 2002, 4th student in 1999)

Request note 14

Kindly Daktari,

Ask R. to collect her book from Dr. E. She had asked me to leave it with you, but I couldn't trace you in your office.

A. A. (MA 1 student, 21 January 2003)

Request note 15

Hello Doc! Long time. I hope you are well. I came around at 3.30. I need some help from you concerning the letter of reference. There is this Fulbright Language Teaching Assistant opportunity [I] am willing to pursue and **would highly appreciate if you filled** one of the three letters of reference. ...

Thank you very much.

G. G. (17 March 2003, 4th year student in 2000)

Request note 16

Dr Buregeya

I've been revising for your paper... but I've been shocked to learn on Saturday that the paper was done on Wednesday 2-4.00 pm. ... **Could you please** though very sorry for the inconvenience to you **please prepare** a special paper to me because I wasn't aware that you've changed the timetable... **I don't know whether it could be possible for you to have me do** the paper on Friday the 25th of April... if you consent to my request.

Once more Sir, I'm very sorry for the inconveniences and **I do request you to consider my request** although I'm trying very hard to trace you before then.

Yours faithfully

K. B. M. (4th year student, 21 April 2003)

Request note 17

Dr Buregeya

I am applying for the Tutorial Fellow position as advertised in the attached copy of the *Daily Nation* newspaper, and **[I] would therefore like to request you to be** one of my referees.

As indicated in the last paragraph of the advertisement, **I would greatly appreciate if you would write** a recommendation letter about the said position for me.

Yours truly

G. S. (MA 2 student in 2002)

4 September 2003