Reasons for requests

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Abstract

Reasons play an important role in social interaction. We study reasons-giving in the context of request sequences in Russian. By contrasting request sequences with and without reasons, we are able to shed light on the interactional work people do when they provide reasons or ask for them. In a systematic collection of request sequences in everyday conversation (*N* = 158), we find reasons in a variety of sequential positions, showing the various points at which participants may orient to the need for a reason. Reasons may be left implicit (as in many minimal requests that are readily complied with), or they can be made explicit. Participants may make reasons explicit either as part of the initial formulation of a request or in an interactionally contingent way. Across sequential positions, we show that reasons for requests recurrently deal with three possible issues: (1) providing information when a request is underspecified, (2) managing relationships between the requester and requestee and (3) explicating ancillary actions implemented by a request. By spelling out information normally left to presuppositions and implicatures, reasons make requests more understandable and help participants to navigate the social landscape of asking assistance from others.

Keywords

Accounts, reasons, requests, Russian, conversation.

Introduction

People need reasons to make sense of their social world. However, they do not always make them explicit. This study examines when and why people give reasons in social interaction. We study reasons-giving in the context of request sequences in Russian. By

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contrasting request sequences with and without reasons, we are able to shed light on the interactional work people do when they provide reasons. We find that many simple requests occur without reasons. When reasons are provided, they might be interactionally generated (e.g. following a delay in compliance or a repair initiation), while at other times they are formulated as part of the request. We find that reasons for requests can be used to deal with at least three issues. First, they provide information when the request is informationally underspecified. Second, they justify requester's (potential) disregard for recipient's deontic and epistemic authority and by this preserve the relationship between them. Third, they explicate that the request in question is performing additional actions such as joking, rebuking or complaining.

This article makes a distinction between providing reasons and providing accounts in interaction. We see reasons as a more general phenomenon that involves causal statements for any behaviour. An account is a subtype of a reason used in the context of a delicate action.[1] The traditional definition of an account states that it is 'a statement made by social actor to explain unanticipated or untoward behaviour' (Scott and Lyman, 1968: 46). Although this definition is broad, research has largely focused on accounts for behaviour that is explicitly delicate or untoward. For instance, Scott and Lyman's work focused on interviews with individuals who account for their unconventional sexual orientation and violent behaviour. Similarly, much work in conversation analysis has focused on accounts in the context of delicate responsive actions, such as rejections of offers, invitations or requests (Antaki, 1994: 68–91; Davidson, 1984; Heritage, 1984: 265–273, 1988; Schegloff, 1988, 2007: 58–96; Sterponi, 2003; Wootton, 1981). In this line of research, accounts are often characterised as excuses or justifications. Excuses aim to diminish speaker's responsibility for the problematic conduct by relying on forces outside his/her control. Justifications do not take away actor's responsibility for troublesome behaviour, but mitigate its problematic character.

This, however, cannot be the entire story. Little is known about accounts or reasons that come with initiating actions, such as requests. Requests are traditionally thought of as dispreferred and delicate social actions (Heritage, 1984; Levinson, 1983; Robinson and Bolden, 2010; Schegloff, 1990, 2007; Taleghani-Nikazm, 2006). Recent insights, however, suggest a more nuanced picture (Kendrick and Drew, 2014). Politeness theory predicts that a request will come with a reason when it is highly face threatening, that is, when it makes a big imposition or when the social asymmetry between participants is large. While this accounts for reasons-giving in delicate and big requests, it raises the question whether reasons are produced for requests that score relatively low on these criteria – and if so, what would explain reasons-giving in these cases. Other factors besides imposition and social asymmetry might play a role and may explain why requests come with a reason.

Prior work has put forward a number of relevant proposals. In casual German telephone conversations, accounts were observed to pursue compliance when rejection of the request was projectable (Taleghani-Nikazm, 2006). In a study of reasons in advice sequences, Waring (2007) found that reasons have multiple functions. They forestall problems with acceptance of advice, manage face threats and serve educational purposes. In her data, which consisted of video recordings of peer tutoring sessions, reasons were withheld not only when the advice concerned local problems such as grammatical mistakes, but also

when the advice was initiated by the recipient. Houtkoop-Steenstra (1990) studied reasons for proposals, which in her definition comprise requests, suggestions, offers, and the like. She notes that a reason is provided when it is not inferable from the conversational context or situation. Parry (2009) studied how clinicians explain their requests in the context of physiotherapy and explicitly looked at what preceded the requesting sequence. She found that reasons are produced in several conversational contexts with distinct functions. For instance, reasons were encountered after patients' expression of concern, where they deal with patients' negative emotions. She also observed that reasons were given when patient and clinician differed in perspective about underlying treatment rationale. Clinicians' reasons supported their rationale while acknowledging patients' way of thinking. Finally, physiotherapists provided reasons when requesting adjustment or removal of clothing. Such reasons indicate that physiotherapists do not treat these actions as a routine part of the therapy. At the same time, they cancel implicatures about other possible reasons for requesting that a patient remove their clothes.

In this study, we examine reasons for initiating actions in informal interaction. Before we can understand how reasons for initiating actions work in institutional settings and in the context of delicate actions, it is crucial to have a reference point of reasons-giving in everyday interaction. We focus not merely on the reason and its formatting, but take into account the request itself and its sequential environment. The interactional data examined in this article come from Russian, a major world language for which research on spontaneous interaction has only recently begun (Bolden, 2008, 2011, 2012, 2013; Bolden and Guimaraes, 2012). So, this study will provide new insights not only into reasons in casual interaction in general, but also on the use of Russian as interactional medium.

To enable the identification of reasons for requests in the video-based data, we work with the following definition: a reason is a rightful answer to a why-question. A reason refers to past, present and/or future states of affairs. Following recent work in conversation analysis (Kendrick and Drew, 2016; Rossi, 2012), we define a request as an attempt to enlist a recipient to perform a practical action. In this study, we look only at requests that concern an immediate action that is or can be performed in the here and now, because this enables us to take into account the presence or absence of a fitted response to the request. Examples of such practical actions include transfer of an object ('*Give me a spoon*', Extract 3), provision of a service ('*Open the window*', Extract 14) or alteration of recipient's ongoing behaviour ('*Don't taste this*', Extract 5).

Data and method

This study is based on a corpus of 6 hours and 20 minutes from 17 different recordings of spontaneous conversations among native speakers of Russian. All recordings were made in the region of Chelyabinsk. In all, 62 adults and 13 children participated in the recordings. The participants are family members (11 interactions), friends (4 interactions) and colleagues (2 interactions) engaged in everyday activities such as cooking and eating. The video recordings were made at participants' homes and on two occasions at their workplace. All participants gave their informed consent. A total of 158 verbal and non-verbal request sequences were identified. Non-verbal requests involved bodily behaviour that was responded to with some practical action.

Table 1. Sequential structures of request sequences in our collection.

Request sequences	N
Request (no reason)	101
Request → Problematic uptake → Reason	25
Request and reason together	25
Reason as pre → Request	1
Request → Compliance → Reason	6
Total	158

The request sequences were analysed using conversation analytic methods: sequential analysis of the actual recordings of talk-in-interaction, attending to structural aspects of possible relevance for the participants in interaction (Heritage, 1984; Levinson, 1983; Schegloff, 2007; Sidnell, 2010; Sidnell and Stivers, 2013). We inspected the cases in the collection to identify shared sequential structures and interactional features. As our primary interest is in reasons, we first make a broad division into requests with and without reasons; within the latter category, the sequential placement of the reason in relation to the request motivated a further division, as shown in detail in the following.

Analysis

A comprehensive analysis of the request-reason formats in the collection yielded five sequential structures, listed in Table 1: (1) requests without a reason, (2) reasons provided following a delay or problem in uptake, (3) immediate reasons that are built into the requesting turn, (4) reasons that function as a pre for the actual request and (5) reasons provided after compliance with the request. The different sequential environments in which reasons are provided allow us to investigate the interactional work that is being done with reasons in each case. We will discuss each of the basic sequential structures separately in the following sections.

Request (no reason)

Often, requests are produced and complied with without further ado, as reported for interaction in both casual (Houtkoop-Steenstra, 1990; Taleghani-Nikazm, 2006) and institutional settings (Parry, 2009, 2013; Waring, 2007). Producing a simple request reveals an orientation on the part of the requester that it should be straightforwardly compliable with and does not require the provision of additional information (Couper-Kuhlen, 2012; Garfinkel, 1967).

In our data, the great majority of requests without reason (93 out of 101) are complied with right away, without any interactional problems or perturbations. The most minimal format for this kind of case is a non-verbal request, as in Extract 1.

The extract starts with an offer made by the host of the gathering, Anna, to one of her guests, Pavel. Pavel initially accepts the offer (line 3), but subsequently notes that he still

has some tea in his cup (lines 5–7). Anna treats this account as a rejection by directing her offer to another participant. In the meantime, Pavel finishes his tea and requests a refill by stretching his arm out in Anna's direction while holding his cup. Anna responds by putting the tea bag into his cup and pouring boiled water into it.

Extract 1. 20120602_family_friends_2_1085520

1	Anna	Pavel ^chaj kofe
		Name tea coffee
		Pavel, tea, coffee?
2		(0.7)
3	Pavel	.hhhh chijku esli tol'ka luchshe
		tea-DIM-GEN if only better
		If {possible} better some tea
4	Anna	((takes a tea bag from [the box))
5	Pavel	[((lifts his cup and looks into it))
6		o:pa
		INTJ
		Oh
7		u minia eshio est' An'
		with I-GEN still is Name-VOC
		I still have {some}, Anna
8	Anna	[((turns to different speaker)) ^Ir
		Name-VOC
		Ira?
9	Pavel	[((finishes his tea))
10		(0.9)
11	Ira	(ni budu [spasiba)
		NEG be-FUT-1SG thanks
		I won't, thank you
12	Anna	[((is laying the tea bag on the [table))
13	Pavel	[((holds out his cup for Anna))
14	Anna	((puts the tea bag into Pavel's cup))
15		((takes the cup, pours hot water into it and gives it back to Pavel))

Under different circumstances, Pavel's gesture could have meant various things: give me some coffee, take the cup away, wash the cup, give me another cup, and so on. How can a massively underspecified gesture serve as a successful request? The request is temporally proximal to the offer sequence that precedes it (see also Rossi, 2014). This sequential embedding allows Pavel to keep his request minimal. Also the timing of the request is crucial. Anna is still standing at the table with the water kettle and a tea bag in her hands, keeping herself available for pouring tea (Drew and Couper-Kuhlen, 2014). In this manner, it is clear that her offer still stands.

Of the requests without reasons, quite a few are non-verbal, and all of them are immediately complied with, as in Extract 1. Non-verbal requests are typically well embedded in the activity that is taking place so that a mere gesture or other non-verbal action is enough for the recipient to infer a meaning. It appears that requesters orient to these possibilities for minimisation in designing their requests.

Not all requests are as minimal as this. A large chunk of requests without reason are verbal, as illustrated in the following two cases. In Extract 2, several family members have gathered in the kitchen for dinner. One of the guests, Tanya, offers her little son something to drink. After he agrees to have some milk, Tanya makes a request for the host to give it.

Extract 2. 20120114_family_visit_2_164605

1	Tanya	mozhet malaka?
		Maybe milk-GEN
		Maybe some milk?
2	Child	((nods with his head))
3		(0.7) ((Tanya turns away from the child towards the host))
4	Tanya	((nods)) malaka
		Milk-GEN
		Some milk
5	Host	((takes milk from the refrigerator, pours it into a cup and puts it on the table in front of the child))
6	Child	(spasiba)
		Thanks
		Thanks

In contrast with Extract 1, the offer sequence preceding the request in Extract 2 is not between the requester and requestee. It is between the requester and the benefactor of the request, her son. The requestee is the host of the gathering and a witness to the interaction between mother and son. After the child accepts the offer of milk, Tanya formulates a rather minimal (information-wise) request. She only provides the name of the object, the milk, which she combines with an empathic head nod. How is so little information enough for the recipient to understand it is a request at all?

The interpretation of the request is aided by the offer sequence. From this sequence it can be inferred that Tanya's goal is to get her child a drink. The host places the cup of milk in front of the child, revealing her knowledge of the information she could only have access to by having witnessed the offer sequence. Finally, similar to Extract 1, the host is standing next to the table while the guests are seated. By this, she is making herself available for requests like the one Tanya has made. In contrast, Tanya has little freedom to navigate around the room as she is sitting on the kitchen bench surrounded by other guests.

Another request without a reason is illustrated in Extract 3. It starts with Lida taking a teaspoon for herself from the closet shelf behind her. By this, she demonstrates where the teaspoons are and that she can reach them. Some time later Yana, sitting at the table, is about to drink her tea. She turns and looks towards the closet (line 3). Taking a spoon would require her to stand up from the table. Instead of doing it, Yana makes a request for Lida to give her a (tea)spoon (line 5). Lida complies right away.

Extract 3. 20120114_memorial_1_835270

1	Lida	((takes a spoon from the closet behind her))
2		((6.6 sec of unrelated talk))

3	Yana	((looks up in the direction of the closet))
4		(1.6)
5	Yana	^daj mne lozhichku mama

Give-IMP-PFV I-DAT spoon-DIM-ACC mama

Give me a little spoon, mama

6		(0.7)
7	Lida	((turns her torso towards the closet))=
8		=((reaches towards the closet))=
9		=((takes a spoon and gives it to Yana))
10	Yana	spasiba

Thanks

Thanks

The activity in which the request occurs makes it straightforward to comply with without the provision of a reason. From the immediately preceding context, it is clear who is the most relevant recipient for the request (Lida), where the requested object can be found (in the closet) and that the object is likely to be available (as Lida has helped herself to a spoon just previously). Finally, Yana's request for a teaspoon corresponds well with the ongoing activity of drinking tea and coffee.

In all, 8 out of 77 verbal requests without a reason do not receive compliance and are also not pursued. Four of them are non-serious, where the requester does not seem to go for real compliance. In three other cases, the recipients or the beneficiary of the request explain why the requested action cannot or should not be performed. In the remaining case, the recipient ignores the request and leaves the room. As a consequence, the request becomes irrelevant and is not pursued. Requests that involve multiple attempts due to, for instance, problems with compliance are not included in this category.

The request sequences presented here show that effective requests can be minimally designed and result in immediate compliance. Such minimal requests are maximally supported by the conversational and material environment. The immediately preceding talk, the activity that is taking place and the physical configuration of participants and objects all contribute to making minimal requests readily interpretable. In short, requests that are not accompanied by reasons tend to occur in environments that support them and enable compliance.

Requests with a reason

While many requests are minimally designed and are readily complied with, our collection contains a sizable number of sequences (a good third of the total number of cases) in which a reason is provided at some point in the interaction. We will examine these sequences to shed light on the reasons for reasons.

To foreshadow the analysis, we will show that reasons make requests more understandable and easy to comply with by spelling out the kinds of information left to presuppositions and implicatures in minimal requests. Requesters can provide reasons in response to recipients' trouble with compliance, or they can package request and reason together, displaying an orientation to various ways in which a request may be unexpected

or otherwise underspecified for a recipient. We start with cases that are structurally clos-est to the minimal sequences previously analysed.

Request → Problematic uptake → Reason

Sometimes minimally designed requests fail to get immediate compliance: a fitted response may be delayed by an insert sequence, or noticeably absent. In this context, requesters often upgrade their request by providing a reason. This is illustrated in Extract 4, taken from a conversation between Maria and her daughters Katya and Olia. Maria stands at the kitchen counter talking to Olia, who is in a different room. Maria puts a cup with boiled water on the table for Katya. Katya is about to put some instant coffee in it.

Extract 4. 20110827_Family_2_820127

```
1     Katya     (( takes the bag of instant coffee (duration 0.3) ))
2     Maria     [ ((places a cup before Katya containing boiled water ))
3     Katya     [(( opens up the bag of instant [coffee (duration 6.2) ))
4     Maria                                     [nu   vot   Ol'ka=
                                                 PCL PCL  Name-DIM
                                                 So, Olia
5               = ja  kartoshku-ta          [padzha:rila,
                   I    potato          PCL  baked
                 I   did bake the potatoes
6     Katya                                 [ ((takes tea spoon from the table))
7     Maria     shias nada, =
                Now need-MOD
                Now {I} need
8               =((brings the spoon to the bag))=
9     Maria     ka[pu:staj         zaniaca
                Cabbage-INSTR get busy
                To start with the cabbage
10    Katya     [d↑aj       lo:shku              dru[guju    pazhalu(sta)
                Give-IMP spoon-ACC           other-ACC  please
                Give me another spoon, please
11              [((looks at the spoon and frowns)) [((puts the spoon back on the table))=
12    Maria     =[^lo:shku-    (.)  drug↑uju?
                   Spoon-ACC     other-ACC
                   A spoon? Another one?
13              [(((turns her torso towards Katya ))
14              = ((reaches to the drawer with cutlery))=
15    Katya     = [uhu:m,
                  Uhuh
16    Maria     [ ((opens the drawer))
17    Katya     [ana v malake: pa    xodu dela     eta
                She in milk     along route business DEM-F
                It looks like this one has been {dipped} in the milk
18              [(( frowns and bends forward to look at the spoon on the table))
```

19	Maria	[ta da:. v malake:

DEM-F yes in milk-LOC
That one, yes, {it's been dipped} in the milk

20		[((is selecting a spoon from the drawer, duration 5.5 sec))
21		((gives a teaspoon to Katya))
22	Katya	[((is putting coffee into her cup with the given spoon))
23		[spasiba

Thanks
Thanks

Katya takes up a teaspoon from the table (line 6), but after inspecting it puts it down again while asking, *Give me another spoon please* (line 10). Maria self-selects in the next turn, indicating that she takes the request to be addressed to her. However, instead of complying with the request (which would be the preferred response), she produces two next-turn repair initiators in quick succession: *A spoon? Another one?* (line 12). Maria's repair initiations highlight specific elements of Katya's turn as troublesome: first the object requested, then the formulation of the request. By repeating *drug↑uju?=* 'Another one?' she draws attention to the fact that Katya already has access to a spoon. By initiating repair, Maria treats Katya's request for another item when she already has one as departing from common sense and requiring clarification.

Katya responds to the repair initiations with a simple confirmation (line 15), closing the repair sequence and resuming the base sequence. Orienting to the problematic character of her request, she supplements it with a reason (line 17): *It looks like this one has been {dipped} in the milk.*

Let us make two further observations about this case. First, the reason is formulated as a tentative observation ('*it looks like*'), without attributing agency or blame. This no-fault quality (Heritage, 1984) is a known feature of many accounts in conversation and helps participants to avoid threats to social relationships. Still, by drawing attention to a less than spotless cutlery item, Katya potentially blames the host, Maria, for letting a dirty spoon linger on the table. The minimal formulation of the initial request was possibly oriented to this risk of apportioning blame.

Second, the reason is effectively solicited by Maria's repair initiation (line 12). Explicit reason solicitations (e.g. by asking 'why?') are rare in interaction, perhaps because they are not just queries but also on-record suggestions that the behaviour in question does not accord with common sense (Bolden and Robinson, 2011; Garfinkel, 1967; Heritage, 1984; Houtkoop-Steenstra, 1990). The pattern seen here, where a repair initiation is treated as asking for a reason, is typical of the cases in our collection; indeed there are no cases of direct why-questions in our sample.

Another minimally designed request leading to interactional trouble and ultimately the provision of a reason is shown in Extract 5. Vera and Valia are school cleaners having lunch in the staff room together with several other colleagues. Vera proposes to taste the ginger that one of their colleagues brought to work, and Valia agrees with the proposal. Ania, entering the room a moment later, overhears a part of this conversation and tells Valia not to taste it. This request does not get immediate compliance.

Extract 5. 20120120_colleagues_casual_2_661290

1	Vera	[dastat' imbir' chto li paprobavat' s su:pam?
		Take out-INF ginger Q-PCL taste-INF with soup
		Shall {I} take the ginger to taste with the soup?
2		[((looks at Valia
3		(0.7)
4	Valia	nu: papro:buj
		PCL taste-IMP-PFV
		Do taste {it}
5		(0.3)
6	Vera	khm khm=
7	Valia	=ja [vot du:maju no
		I PCL think-1SG but
		I am thinking {about it} but
8	Ania	[((Enters the room and looks at Valia))
9	Valia	to:zhe ne [s chem (0.8) probu-ta sniat'
		Also NEG with what sample PCL take
		there's also nothing (0.8) to taste it with
10		[(((turns and looks at Ania))
11		(0.8)
12	Ania	((nods [to Valia))
13	Marina	[kto prinios?
		Who-Q brought
		Who brought {it}?
14		(0.2)
15	Valia	imbir'
		ginger
		ginger
16	Olia	Evse:ja
		Name
		Evseya
17		(1.1)
18	Ania	Val' ni pro:buj.
		Name-VOC NEG taste-IMP-IMPFV
		Valia, don't taste {it}.
19		(0.5)
20	Valia	da?
		PCL
		No?
21		(0.8)
22	Ania	nu esli tol'ka S CHE:M-nibut'
		PCL if only with something
		Well, only if it's WITH SOMEthing
23		(0.6)
24	Vera	nu my ja gavariu von s su:pam
		PCL we I say-1SG PCL with soup
		Well, we I am saying with the soup
25	Ania	^a:::

```
              INTJ
              Oh
26            bhu: a      tak,
              INTJ PCL so
              Yuck, {just} like that
27            (0.6)
28            eta       nipiridava:emye  ashiushenia
              It/ this  undescribable-PL  sensations
              the sensations are indescribable
29            (0.9)
```

Ania says, '*Valia, don't taste {it}*' (line 18). Valia does not immediately accept the request, but initiates a repair (line 20). In response, Ania modifies the initial request by stating that ginger should only be tasted in combination with something else, implying that the ginger should not be tasted simply on its own. In response to this, Vera explains she proposed to taste it with the soup. Then at lines 25–28, Ania provides further justification for her injunction by uttering an exclamation of disgust and saying that ginger might bring sensations that are indescribably.

Like before, the original request is minimal and comes out of the blue: it is Vera's first verbal contribution to the interaction. It is not immediately complied with, instead resulting in a repair sequence followed by the provision of a reason. So here again, we see that repair can be treated as a request for a reason (see also Robinson and Bolden 2010), and a reason can help to make the initial request more intelligible. Instructing someone *not* to perform a planned activity implies that this activity is somehow problematic. In a situation like this, the requester claims deontic authority over recipient's actions, which has to be justified. One way to justify this is by claiming epistemic authority over the subject matter, in this case the qualities of ginger and how it is to be tasted.

The following extract illustrates another request that intervenes with recipients' ongoing behaviour. The interaction involves Tanya, her husband and their son visiting their relatives. Just prior to the target sequence, a proposal by the hostess to have some tea has been met with a counter-proposal by Tanya: '*well, we need to go*'. Family member Lida goes out to the sauna, where some other relatives are lingering, '*to ask what they are up to there*'. Meanwhile, Tanya starts dressing her son, a visible sign of her commitment to leaving. Extract 6 starts when Lida returns and issues a bald on-record request to the guests:

Extract 6. 20120202_cooking_3_184770

```
1    Lida    sadite's                i   ch- i   eta=
             Sit-IMP-IMPFV-PL and       and PCL
             Sit down and te- and well
2            =i   pejte                  chaj
             and drink-IMP-IMPFV-PL tea
             and drink tea
3            (1.1) ((The host looks at Lida, Tanya continues to dress her child))
4            ani    eshio minut       pitnacat' [budut
             They else  minute-GEN  fifteen  will be
             They'll {only} take 15 more minutes
```

5	Host		[da xot' dva:tsat'
			PCL least twenty
			Well even {if it's} twenty {minutes}
6		pri chiom zdes' chaj=	
		At what-Q here tea	
		What {has} the tea {to do} with this	
7		=[ani sami-	
		they selves	
		they themselves-	
8	Lida	[^a chio gavarit my do:lgda,=	
		PCL what-Q say-3SG we long	
		Why, {she} says, {have} we {been here too} long?	
9		=ja gavariu nichio ni dolga=	
		I say-1SG nothing NEG long	
		I said no, not {too} long	
10		=prosta Taniusha sabralasia a eta nu la:dna	
		simply Tanya-DIM got ready PCL PCL PCL all right	
		{It's} just {that} Tanya got ready {to go}, well it's all right	

Lida issues a request to '*sit down and te- and well, and drink tea*' (lines 1–2). Recall that requests without reasons usually fit the activity in which they are produced. In contrast, Lida's request here goes against the activity that is currently taking place. Lida requests that Tanya and her husband sit down and have a cup of tea, while they have just rejected a tea offer from the hostess and are already dressing their young child for cold weather. In this context, complying with the request would require the couple to undress their child and go home later than they had stated. Lida's request encroaches upon the recipients' deontic authority (Stevanovic and Peräkylä, 2012) and proposes a course of action that is at variance with the visible commitment of Tanya and her family.[2]

A pause at the transition relevance place (line 3) provides an opportunity for the recipients to respond, but no response follows; instead, Tanya continues dressing the boy, and the hosts turn their gaze towards Lida. Following the noticeable absence of a response, Lida now shares information that can be construed as a reason behind the request: '*They'll {only} take 15 more minutes*', referring to the people in the sauna (see also Robinson and Bolden 2010 on how refraining from talking at a transition relevance place can function as a tacit reason solicitation strategy). Mentioning these people and the small amount of time it will take for them to re-join the social encounter has the effect of reformulating the requested action: it is not about having tea, but waiting briefly until the others can join. This is made even clearer by the exchange that follows: the host asks what the tea has got to do with it (line 6), and Lida reports telling the people in the sauna that 'Tanya got ready {to go}' (line 10), thus aligning herself with Tanya's visible commitment to leaving while also indicating the desirability of making sure Tanya won't have left before the sauna-goers get back. Lida's contributions following the unsuccessful request amount to a reason that makes clear how this request fits into the ongoing activity and that validates meddling into Tanya's affairs. The reason makes the request more comprehensible to the recipients, increasing the likelihood of compliance (Davidson, 1984; Pomerantz, 1984; Wootton, 1981).

Occasionally, requests evoke implicatures that may need to be cancelled or reinforced. Such implicatures may concern requests' ancillary actions such as complaining, joking or

rebuking (Grice, 1975; Levinson, 1983: 186). The following extract demonstrates how a reason makes the non-serious character of the request clearer. The interaction is between several school cleaners who are having dinner together. Anna is having soup with some bread and Alifa is taking a soup bowl from the closet behind Anna. Alifa makes a request for Anna to serve her some soup:

Extract 7. 201220120_colleagues_casual_2_498040

1	Alifa	((takes a bowl from the closet and puts it on the table next to Anna))=
2	Anna	=[loshku ( )
		spoon-ACC
		a spoon ( )
3	Alifa	[Anna- Anna Batkiyevna,
		Name Name Patronymic ((non-serious))
		Anna- Anna the daughter of a father
4	Anna	aye:
		INTJ
		hey
5		(0.3)
6	Alifa	pazhalsta nakla:dyvajte mneh
		please put-IMP-IMPFV-PL I-DAT
		You may do {some} serving for me please
7		(0.4)
8	Vera	khahahm[hmhm
		((laughter))
9	(Marina)	[(Ret')kiyevna
		Patronymic ((non-serious))
		Daughter of the (radish)
10	Anna	[((puts her loaf of bread on the table))
11		[h.hehehe
		((laughter))
12		(0.5)
13	Anna	((takes Alifa's bowl from the table))=
14	Alifa	=[ty zhe po:var u na[s
		You-SG PCL chef with us
		You are our chef here
15	Anna	[((stands up and starts serving the soup))
16	Anna	[eta to:chna
		It exactly
		Exactly

Alifa's request at lines 3–6 is formulated in a non-serious manner. A jokey person reference *Anna Bat'kiyevna* starts the request sequence. The word *Bat'kiyevna* has the format of a Russian female patronymic,[3] but it is clearly a non-serious one. It is based on the archaic Russian word for father – *bat'ka* – with a female patronymic ending –*evna*. Furthermore, Alifa is addressing Anna with the polite *plural you* (line 6). This is consistent with the use of the patronymic, which is in general not used with a singular *you*. It is, however, in contrast with the singular *you* that Alifa uses later at line 14. This suggests that Alifa is acting as if there is a status difference between her and Anna, but she is also making clear that it is only pretense.

The request contains one more feature that contributes to its non-serious character. Alifa makes use of imperfective imperative *nakladyvajte (put/serve* at line 6) as opposed to its perfective version *nalazhite.* Such imperfective imperatives can be used for expressing permission (Benacchio, 2002; Timberlake, 2004), giving rise to the translation '*you may* …'. Along with the patronymic person reference, this formal, almost pompous-sounding formulation contributes to the non-serious nature of the request.

Vera and Marina immediately respond with laughter to this designedly overwrought request. However, Anna, the main target of the request, provides only a minimal response – a smile. As the women do not face each other, it is unlikely that Alifa sees this. Alifa may also not have seen that Anna put down the loaf of bread she was eating and took up Alifa's bowl. To pursue compliance and appreciation of the joke, Alifa provides a reason for it: *you are our chef here*. This reason explains recipient selection implying that it is Anna's duty as a chef to serve the soup. Attributing to Anna the role of a chef (evoking scenes of a restaurant or a canteen) helps underline the non-serious nature of the earlier request. Far from being an actual chef, Anna only happened to have made this particular soup for everyone to eat. By invoking the role of a chef, the reason emphasises the non-serious character of the request while acknowledging Anna's efforts in making the soup.

A similar use of a reason is illustrated in Extract 8. This extract introduces Maria and her adult daughter Katya. Maria requests that Katya feeds her son and supports her request with a reason.

Extract 8. 20110827_Family_2_755320

```
1    Maria    NET. NU ON KUSH- ON KUSHAT' -TA  ^BUDIT SIODNE
              No  PCL he eat-   he  eat-INF   PCL will-3G  today
              NO, HE EA-, WILL HE EAT TODAY?
2    Katya    on ni   pridiot      siuda ja tibe        gavariu=
              He NEG come-FUT-3SG here  I  you-SG-DAT say-1SG
              He won't come here, I'm telling you
3             =eta nada      s   tarelkaj    idti   tuda:
                It  need-MOD with plate-INSTR go-INF there
              {I} need to go there with the plate
4             i    kar[mit' evo
              And feed-INF him
              and feed him
5    Maria          [znachit idi          tuda i   karmi,
                     So   go-IMPFV-IMP there and feed-IMP-IMPFV
                     So go there and feed {him}
6    Katya    (( looks away ))
7    Maria    chio.
              What-Q
              What
8             (0.6)
9             nalivaj         chaj pej            i   idi           tuda:
              Pour-IMP-IMPFV tea  drink-IMP-IMPFV and go-IMP-IMPFV there
              Make tea, drink {it} and go there
10            (1.2)
```

11   a   to,
            PCL PCL
            Because
12   (0.3)
13   kto-ta   vystual   shto ribionak galodnyj,
            Somebody performed that child   hungry
            Someone whined that {her} child is hungry
14   celymi   dniami utram   i   vechiram
            Entire-INSTR-PL days   in morning and in evening
            all day in the morning and night
15   (0.9)
16   Katya no vot tut ^utram   von shias vot my fst^ali
            But PCL here in morning PCL now PCL we woke up-PL
            Well, when we woke up this morning here
17   on u   minia xarasho: pakushal
            He with I-GEN good-ADV ate-PFV
            He ate well with me
18   (0.8)
19   to   est' on (.) ^utram=
            That is   he   in morning
            So he (.) in the morning
20   Maria =eta on uzhe   znaet shto zave:dama=
             It he already knows that in advance
              So he already knows in advance
21   =shto evo   tol'ka [v(h)e:chiram nak(h)ormiat
             That hi-ACC only   in evening   feed-FUT-3SG
              That he'll be fed only in the evening
22   Katya   [ha
                                     laughter
                                     ((laughter))

The extract starts with an exaggerated question by Maria, who expresses her amazement that her grandson has not had dinner yet by openly wondering whether he will even eat today (line 1). At line 5 Maria requests that Katya goes to the room where the child is and feeds him. Feeding children is the parents' responsibility. Parents are also the ones who have deontic authority over their children's actions (Sterponi, 2003; Stevanovic and Peräkylä, 2012). Asking a mother to feed her child disregards her authority on this matter. Such a request is therefore potentially delicate.

A response does not immediately follow; instead, Katya looks away (line 6), upon which Maria upgrades the request by making it more specific (lines 7–9) and, after another long silence (line 10), providing a reason. The reason that Maria provides (lines 11–14) refers to Katya's own previous complaints that her son does not eat properly. This reason does not mitigate the delicate character of the request. On the contrary, it makes the request even more urgent and renders the mother's behaviour even more problematic. This is consistent with our interpretation of Maria's request as a rebuke. This interpretation is also supported by Maria's use of extreme expressions, such as '*whined*', '*all day*' and '*every day and night*', which are also encountered with complaints (Pomerantz, 1986).

Katya's response to the rebuke is disaligning. She resists Maria's reasoning by stating that her child did eat well in the morning (lines 16–17). This contradicts Maria's statement that the child did not eat all day. As often happens, the argument is resolved with a joke and laughter (line 22).

We have examined a number of sequences that start out as a minimal request, yet are not followed by immediate compliance like the requests in the previous section. We have seen that in such cases, requesters can upgrade or further specify the request by providing a reason. The reasons serve a range of functions. They may provide background information about the request that was underspecified (Extract 4). They may be addressed to the delicate nature of requests that require recipients to alter an ongoing course of behaviour, explicating why this may be necessary and preserving the relationship between requester and requestee (Extract 5, Extract 6). Or they may explicate ancillary actions that may have been part of the request either by design or by implication (Extract 7, Extract 8). In all cases, the reasons make the requests more 'palatable' by adding information, re-specifying the fit to ongoing activities or appealing to authority. As interactionally generated upgrades, these reasons seem designed to pursue compliance.

Request and reason together

So far, we have seen that designedly minimal requests are often followed by immediate compliance ('Request (no reason)' section) and that when this is not the case, requesters may pursue compliance by providing a reason ('Request→Problematic uptake→Reason' section). Requesters can also forestall potential problems by providing relevant information for their request straightaway. This results in more complexly formatted requests, produced with a reason before problems in uptake become apparent.

Extract 9 illustrates such a case. Several family members are having dinner together on the porch of a country house. One of them, Julia, was also at the table but went outside to take some pictures. She is an honoured guest visiting from abroad. Julia's uncle, Pavel, was sleeping when she left the table. So, at the beginning of this extract, he is unlikely to be aware of Julia's whereabouts:

Extract 9. 20110821_ Family_dinner_Country_A2_876874

```
1    Pavel    ((joins the others at the table after being outside))
2             Dozhdik   zamarasil        [u   vas
              Rain-DIM drizzle-PST-PFV with you-PL
              It has started drizzling in your {village}
3    Lida                                 [pasmatri,  vyjdi        iz-za: ako:li-=
                                          look-IMP   go out-IMP from fen-
                                          Take a look, go out behind the fen-,
4             = eh    eta  samae Julia  pashla (pa-moemu)      snimat',
                INTJ PCL PCL   Name  went   (according to me) record-INF
              uh Julia went to take pictures, I think
5             (0.3)
6    Pavel    shias (pajdu)
              now  will go-1SG
              In a bit (I'll go)
```

7		(0.8)
8	Lida	[pajdiosh?
		will go-2SG
		You will go?
9	Pavel	[((goes towards the door into the house))
10		(19.8)
11	Pavel	((returns to the porch with his jacket on))
12		((goes outside where he meets Julia))

Lida's initial formulation is as minimal as others we have seen in the first section: she simple asks Pavel to take a look and go outside. Unlike those earlier minimally formatted requests, however, there are three potentially problematic aspects to this request. First, it does not exhibit a tight fit to the ongoing activity: a gathering around the table does not make relevant a request to go outside. Second, it is underspecified in terms of what action Pavel has to perform: it merely states he has to go outside and take a look. Third, it is potentially problematic to ask Pavel to go outside just after he has joined the others with a remark that it has started drizzling there, which could be construed as a reason to not be outside. These three features – lack of fit to ongoing activity, underspecification of desired action and being at odds with requestee's projected course of action – are the kind of things that can be obstacles to immediate compliance, as we have seen in the 'Request→Problematic uptake→Reason' section.

Lida abandons the final part of her not yet completed request turn and immediately adds, '*uh Julia went to take pictures, I think*'. The link between the request and the reason is established via a rush-through (Couper-Kuhlen, 2012; Schegloff, 1982; Walker, 2010). By self-repairing the initial minimal formulation and adding more information, Lida can be seen to orient to the need to provide a reason for her request in the given context. The reason now connects the request to Julia (the honoured guest) and her being alone outside. By implication, it also links the request to Pavel's own statement that it is drizzling: not only is Julia outside, she is outside in the rain. This enables Pavel to infer what is to be done, and he verbally commits to compliance (line 6) after which he goes indoors, prompting a request for confirmation by Lida (lines 7–8). After a while, he returns with his jacket on (a visible sign of the need to be sheltered against the rain) and goes outside where he meets Julia.[4]

Extract 10 features another request immediately followed by a reason. Several co-workers are about to eat the soup that one of them has made. The transcript starts with the participants laughing at Vera, who took a small soup bowl. Vera replies that the size of the bowl is fine for her (line 4). However, at line 11, she makes a request for a bigger bowl:

Extract 10. 20120120_colleagues_casual_2_321790

1	Anna	mnoga ni pakazhica?	[((laughs))
		A lot-ADV NEG will seem-3SG	
		Won't it be too much? hahaha	
2	Vera		[((laughs))
3		(0.4)	
4		narma:l'na	

		Normal-ADV
		{It's} all right
5		((8.2 sec of unrelated talk))
6	Vera	((removes the cover from the soup pan and lays it on the table))
7		(0.9)
8		oj xa[chu ja uzhe e:st' fsio
		INTJ want-1SG I already eat-INF all
		Oh that's it, I want to eat already
9		[((puts the ladle into the soup))
10		(1.2)
11		>ladna Anna davaj bal'shuju tarelku=
		OK-ADV Name give-IMP-IMPFV big-ACC plate-ACC
		OK, Anna, do give me a big bowl
12		=tut kartoshka takaja krupnaja bliam.<
		Here potato-F such-F large-F INTJ
		The potatoes are so large here, damn
13		(0.3)
14	Anna	a ja i gavar[iu,-
		PCL I PCL speak-1SG-PRS
		{that's what} I was saying-
15	Vera	((to others)) [dve shtuki fsivo vlezit=
		Two pieces in total fit-FUT
		only two pieces will fit {in here}
16		=blina ((laughs))
		INTJ
		damn hahahah
17	Anna	^na taku:ju dat'?
		PCL such-ACC give-INF
		here, shall I give you this one?
18	Vera	^da:a:
		yes
		Yeah

The colleagues make jokes about Vera's choice of a soup bowl. With an assertion that a smaller bowl is fine for her (line 4), Vera refutes these jokes. Vera's request for a bigger bowl (lines 11–12), however, contradicts her previous statement. The request is followed by an assessment that can be construed as a reason for needing a bigger bowl: 'The potatoes are so large here, damn'. After completing the unit containing the request, Vera rushes into the reason, giving the recipient no time to intervene. In addition to this, both the request and the reason follow the same line of pitch declination, linking the two units to each other (Couper-Kuhlen, 2012). By immediately providing a reason for her request, Vera acknowledges the lack of sequential fit for her request and forestalls potential comments from her colleagues. When Anna responds at line 14, Vera overlaps with her turn, upgrading her reason by noting that only two potato pieces would fit into the small bowl. Vera's reason, provided with a swear word and upgraded with the claim that at most two pieces would fit in the small bowl, amounts to an extreme case formulation, a format well known for its interactional use in proposing causes and legitimising claims (Pomerantz, 1986). The final laughter particles appended to it may invite an

interpretation of the extreme formulation as ironic (Edwards, 2000). Anna responds to the request and reason by offering another bowl (line 17).

The following extract features a request that aims to alter the course of the recipient's ongoing behaviour and is not well-fitted to the ongoing activity. The requester packages her request with a reason. The extract starts with Olia entering the kitchen, where her mother Maria and sister Katya are sitting.

Extract 11. 20110827_Family_2_545980

1	Olia	[((Enters the kitchen))
2		[chaj (ili) kofe
		tea or coffee
		tea or coffee
3		(0.2)
4	Maria	NO:GI moj
		Legs/feet wash-IMP-IMPFV
		wash {your} FEET
5		(0.4)
6		kofe ej [( )
		coffee she-DAT
		coffee for her ( )
7	Katya	[(mam) tam-
		mom there
		(Mom) there-
8		[((touches Maria's arm))
9		((points [with her finger towards the kitchen counter))
10		[Maria Marianna[5]
		Name
		Maria Marianna
11		(0.9)
12	Katya	O:l'ka nalej iz fil'tra tam dalzhno setavat'
		Olia-DIM pour from filter there must verb-PFV-INF[6]
		Olia, pour there for me from the filter it should be already done.
13		[nu i vo:t,
		PCL and PCL
		So
14	Olia	[((stands next to the camera))
15		[^a minia zdes' ni vi:dna. Hahaha ((=laugheter))
		PCL I-GEN here NEG visible-ADV
		{You} cannot see me here haha
16	Maria	^da ^O[:l'
		PCL Name-VOC
		{Come on} Olia
17	Katya	[s- skazhi mne ja tibe tozhe sk[azhu
		Say-IMP I-DAT I you-SG-DAT also will say-1SG
		Tell me and I will tell you
18	Maria	[m-
19		((points to something off camera))
20		[m

21		[((points to something off camera))
22	Olia	[(adnoj) mne kofe ( )
		Alone-DAT I-DAT coffee
		coffee (just) for me ( )
23		(0.6)
24	Maria	[chitaj. eta nikuda daliko ni pajdiot
		read-IMP-IMPFV DEM nowhere far NEG will go-3SG
		Read {it}. This will not go anywhere
25		[((points in the same direction off camera))
26		(0.8)
27	Olia	[nu i chio?
		PCL and what
		And then?
28		[((takes a cup from the table))
29		zvani:t ana tibe.
		call-3SG she you-DAT
		she calls you
30		(29.3 of unrelated talk)
31	Olia	((takes the informed consent form and reads it))

Starting from line 18, Maria produces an interjection *m* (lines 18 and 20) and a pointing gesture (lines 19 and 21) towards something off camera, which the later interaction reveals to be an informed consent form. At the same time, Olia says '*coffee (just) for me*'. Finally, Maria verbalises her request that Olia '*read {it}*', stating in the same turn that the activity of coffee drinking will not 'go anywhere', implying it will still be possible later on. The link between the request and its reason is also in this case established via a rush-through. Maria's request interferes with Olia's ongoing course of action and, by this, invades the area of her deontic authority; additionally, the request departs from the projected activities of pouring water and drinking coffee. The reason serves to provide justification for delaying these activities. Olia does not comply immediately: she takes a cup from the table at line 28 and puts the kettle on. Only after this does she comply with Maria's request by taking the form and reading it (line 31).

In the following request sequence, Anna is having dinner at the kitchen table. Marina is sitting next to Anna, holding her dog in her arms. Anna requests that Marina lets go of her dog (Extract 12):

Extract 12. 20110807_Family_evening_1_459097

1	Marina	((talking to the dog)) sla:tkaja maja: de-
		Sweet-F my-F
		My sweet gi-
2	Marina	[(devachka)
		girl
		(Girl)
3	Anna	[nu Marish, [pusti: ejo, ja pa-pae:m spako:jna
		PCL Name-DIM let go-IMP-PFV her I finish eating-FUT-1SG quietly
		Marisha, let her go, I'll finish eating in peace

```
4                                [((waves with one hand from left to right))
5              (0.2)
6     Marina   ja sh    tibe          nichio, ni    eta.
                I  PCL  you-SG-DAT nothing NEG PCL
                But I nothing, well
7     Marina   ^my sh   tibe          nich^io ni    delaem,
                We PCL  you-SG-DAT nothing NEG do-PL
                We aren't doing anything to you
```

Marina is involved in playing with her dog at the table (lines 1–2). Anna's request that she lets go of the dog interrupts this activity. It also directly interferes with Marina's deontic authority. Furthermore, given the special relationship between dogs and their owners (which does not extend to non-owners), an intervention in this relationship is a delicate matter. Packaged with Anna's request is the statement '*I'll finish eating in peace*'. The request and the reason are delivered as one prosodic unit. The juxtaposition of request and reason implies that finishing dinner in peace is incompatible with the presence of the dog at the table. Marina orients to this negative implication with her response, stating that she and her dog '*aren't doing anything to you*'. Thus, she resists the request-plus-reason with a counter-reason of her own.

The requests we have seen in this section differ considerably from the straightforward, minimal requests discussed earlier. They go against the expectations set by the previous sequence or the current activity that the participants are involved in, or they include requests that can be called delicate because the requesters intervene with recipients' freedom to act upon their own wishes. The added reasons orient to this potential problem by providing grounds for such an intrusion. It explains, for instance, that recipient's actions harm the requester, that the recipient will benefit from compliance, that the recipient can complete his/her own project after having complied with the request and so on.

As discussed earlier, a request might perform additional actions besides requesting alone. An immediate reason can make these actions explicit. We will illustrate this with two examples.

In Extract 13, participants are family members who are about to read an informed consent form. Fyodor and Nina are husband and wife who are both severely visually impaired. Vera is Nina's sister. She can read with her reading glasses on, but they are elsewhere in the house. The conversational environment preceding the request sequence can be characterised as non-serious. Fyodor advises Vera to sign the form without reading it and supports it with various jokey arguments.

Extract 13. 20110816_Sisters_A_1_188525

```
1     Vera     ne:t prosta  intiresna        pachit(at')
                No   just    interesting-ADV read-(INF)
                No, {it's} just interesting to read
2              (0.4)
3     Fyodor   ((reads out loud)) <sagla:sin ucha:stvavat'    e::h [u:hm>
                                    agreed-M participate-INF
                                    {I} agree to participate eh uhm
```

4	Vera		[nu chitaj.=
			PCL read-IMP-IMPFV
			Do read
5	Vera	=ty vot v achkax chitaj.=	
		You-SG PCL in glasses read-IMP-IMPFV	
		You're wearing glasses, {so} read	
6	Fyodor	=AHA:	
		INTJ	
		UHUH	
7		(0.2)	
8	Nina	a: [vot Julia	
		PCL DEM Name	
		Julia (here)	
9	Fyodar	[a: ja paetamu i v achkax-ta tolkam [( )	
		PCL I therefore and in glasses-PCL properly	
		That's why I'm wearing glasses, {I} properly ( )	
10	Nina		[^chitaj Julia da i fsio
			Read-IMP Name PCL and all
			Read, Julia, and that's it

Fyodor is reading the form out loud (line 3). His difficulties in doing it are expressed by his relatively slow reading rate and stretching of the vowels. Right after his reading becomes disfluent and results in *e::h*, Vera makes her request: *Do read* (at line 4). By this, Vera is appointing him to continue reading the form out loud for everyone. In the light of Fyodor's recently displayed difficulties reading the form along with the public knowledge of his visual impairment, Vera's request can be interpreted as disregarding his health problems. This makes the request delicate and potentially harmful for Vera's and Fyodor's relationship. She immediately rushes into a reason explaining why she selected Fyodor for the task: *You're wearing glasses, {so} read.* This implies that with his glasses on Fyodor should be able to read the form. This reason is, however, problematic. Fyodor has trouble reading even with his glasses on, as evident from line 3. Recordings also reveal that Fyodor never removes his glasses and even then he has difficulties navigating his surroundings. This leads to our conclusion that the request is not a serious one and does not prefer compliance in response. Considering conversational context preceding the request sequence, it is possible that Vera is taking back on Fyodor's jokey suggestion that Vera signs the form without even reading it.

Fyodor responds to Vera's request with an exclamation *UHUH* (line 6). He then attempts to rebut her request by saying that he is wearing glasses for a reason (line 9). Also Fyodor's wife, Nina, does not orient to Vera's request as seeking actual compliance from Fyodor. At lines 8 and 10, she proposes that the researcher, Julia, reads the form out loud. In fact, Julia is the only person in the room who is not visually impaired and can read the form.

A reason can also exaggerate a complaint done through a request. This is represented in Extract 14, where several friends are gathered for dinner. Sasha makes a request to the host, Ksenia, to open a window. The extract starts with a conversation between Ksenia and Liusia on an unrelated topic:

Extract 14. 20110813_School_Friends_2_164910

1	Liusia	a chio ana u to:j babushki u Ivanovoj zhiviot?
		PCL what-Q she with DEM grandmother with Surname lives
		Why is she staying with that grandmother, with Ivanova?
2		(0.5)
3	Ksenia	nu u etaj adna komnata u toj-ta
		PCL with DEM-F one room with DEM-PCL
		This one has one room and the other
4		(0.2)
5	Ksenia	dve ili tri
		Two or three
		Two or three
6		(0.3)
7	Liusia	a: ana to:zhe adna zhiviot [da?
		INTJ she also alone-F lives PCL
		Oh she also lives alone, doesn't she?
8	Sasha	[ty b[y xot' =
		You-SG would at least
		You'd at least
9	Ksenia	[da.
10	Sasha	=akoshki atkryla (a t[o) <takaja (.) duxa[ta>,
		Windows-DIM opened-F PCL PCL such sultriness
		open the windows, (because) it's so stuffy {in here}
11	Ksenia	[((reaches to the curtians and opens them
12	Ksenia	[^DA: TY chio.
		PCL you-SG what-Q
		REALLY?
13	Ksenia	davaj atkroju akno
		Give-IMP-IMPFV open-FUT-1SG window
		Let me open the window
14	Sasha	a chio u tibia setki ( )=
		PCL what-Q with you-SG nets
		Why are your screens are ( )
15	Ksenia	=((opens the window))
16	Galina	ana ni atkryvaet shto shias eti arat' budut
		She NEG open-3SG that now DEM-PL scream be-FUT
		She doesn't open {it} because those {ones} will start screaming
17		(0.8)
18	Ksenia	kto [ara(l).
		Who-Q scream-(PST)
		Who (was) screaming
19	Galina	[shias ani: budut arat' DEti ^nu byvajut (oni)
		Now they be-FUT scream-INF children PCL occur they
		They'll start screaming now the CHIldren, well they might

A trajectory of falling pitch unites Sasha's request and its reason (lines 8–10). This request interrupts Ksenia's ongoing conversation with Galina. This interruption adds to the urgency of the request. The request goes, '*you'd at least open the windows*'.

The request already conveys Sasha's negative evaluation of Ksenia's failure to open the window by stating that it is the least she could do. The request calls on Ksenia for her failure to act as a proper host. Sasha expands her request with an immediate reason that explicates the complaint – '*it's so stuffy {in here}*'. Instead of mitigating its delicacy, the reason exaggerates it. As often encountered with complaints, the request and its reason use extreme case formulations as '*at least*' and '*such*' (Pomerantz, 1986). In response, Ksenia does more than simply comply with the request. She also acknowledges her failure with an expression of surprise '*DA TY chio.*' (line 12) and corrects the situation hastily. Orienting to Vera's complaint, one of the guests defends Ksenia by providing a possible explanation why Ksenia did not open the window in the first place (lines 16 and 19).

To summarise this section, a reason can support a request that is otherwise informationally underspecified (Extracts 9 and 10). A reason can create a link between the request and the preceding sequences in interaction. Occasionally, a request forces the recipient to stop or alter his/her ongoing activity (Extracts 11 and 12). Such requests invade the domain of recipients' deontic and epistemic authority and with potential implications for the relationship between requester and requestee. Requesters can supplement their requests with a reason that justifies this invasion and pursue compliance. A reason can also explicate a request's possible ancillary actions (Extracts 13 and 14). Such ancillary actions can, for instance, be joking, rebuking and complaining. Reasons explicating non-serious requests contain information that is not entirely truthful. Reasons for rebukes and complaints exaggerate the complainable matter instead of mitigating it. Such reasons often make use of extreme case formulations.

In terms of design, the cases discussed in this section featured requests packaged together with reasons. These reasons were non-contingently produced. They were tied to the requests via a rush-through and/or by means of prosodic integration (Couper-Kuhlen, 2012). In all cases, the reason followed the request. The types of request mirror the initially unsuccessful requests of the previous section. While those resulted in problems in uptake and the subsequent provision of a reason, here we see no such problems in uptake. Essentially, by providing a reason right away, a requester can help render the request intelligible and increase the chances of immediate compliance.

Reason as pre → Request

So far, we have seen that request sequences can consist of a bare request, a request with an interactionally generated reason or a request and reason produced together. Thus, most of the time, requesters let recipients infer the rationale behind requests, or subsequently supply this rationale, either in response to problems in uptake or in anticipation of such problems.

However, since reasons supply information that makes a request intelligible, it is also possible for them to stand in for a request or, in other words, to serve as a pre-request. Extract 16 starts with Maria taking a seat on the kitchen bench with her back blocking the camera view. Katya points Maria to this problem. Only when Maria does not respond to this problem statement, Katya makes an explicit request for Maria to change her position at the table.

Extract 15. 20110827_Family_2_437830

```
1      Maria    ((to the cat)) [Kir             padvin'sia
                               Name cat-VOC move over-IMP
                               Kira, move over
2      Maria                   [ ((sits down on the kitchen bench next to the cat))
3      Katya                   [( )
4               (0.4)
5               ja patom k        kantsu u    nivo zabrala,
                I later    towards end    from him  took away
                Later, towards the end, I took {it} away from him
6               (1.0)
7               e:ta
                PCL
                Well
8               (0.3)
9               ty        naverna [sela  v't    kak ras
                You-SG probably sat-F DEM just right
                You've probably sat down exactly {there}
10                              [((finger pointing towards the camera
11              (0.9)
12              zakrylasia        [na stul  tuda  sadis'
                covered-REFL-F7 on chair there  sit
                {It} got obscured, sit on the chair there
13                              [((points to the chair))
14              (0.6)
15     Maria    ((shifts on the kitchen bench))
```

The turn in focus are lines 7–9, where Katya produces a statement along with a point-ing gesture: '*Well (0.3) you've probably sat down exactly {there}*'. This highly under-specified statement draws attention to a potentially problematic state of affairs: Maria has chosen to sit right in front of the camera, blocking the ongoing recording. Participants in interaction do not normally explicitly describe each other's position, and so this explicit formulation appears designed to make relevant a response from Maria. A response remains noticeably absent (as seen from the silence at the transition relevance place, line 11). Katya then adds more information together with an explicit request: '*{it} got obscured, sit on the chair there*' (with a pointing gesture). In response, Maria com-plies, though only partially: instead of taking a seat on the chair, she shifts on the bench, partially uncovering the view of the camera.

The semantic relation between the initial description and the subsequent request is the same as in the cases we have seen before: the reason specifies information that may not be apparent from the request alone. The sequential relation between the two is reversed compared to the earlier cases: here the reason functions as a pre-request, and the request follows only when a response remains noticeably absent (so it is a mirror image of the sequences discussed in 'Request→Problematic uptake→Reason' (see also Schegloff, p. 68)). One advantage of a pre-request is that it is defeasible: it is off record and so may mitigate potential face-threatening consequences of a direct request

that intervenes with Maria's deontic authority. The disadvantage is, however, that Maria cannot be held accountable for not complying. When Katya's reason fails to achieve desired response, she expands on her reason and makes her request explicit at line 12.

Only one request in our collection has shown this sequential structure in which the reason functions as a pre-request. Its relative rarity suggests that other sequential solutions are preferred in the kind of data we study here: practical requests in informal face-to-face interaction, which can receive immediate compliance. It is possible that reasons used as pre-requests are more common in other kinds of contexts (see also Houtkoop-Steenstra, 1990; Parry, 2009; Taleghani-Nikazm, 2006; Waring, 2007).

Request → Compliance → Reason

In some cases, a recipient indicates willingness to comply with a request only to find out that it is missing some crucial information. Then a reason can help to explicate the requested action and resolve problems of understanding.

Several relatives have gathered in Lida's living room for a memorial dinner. Lida has just poured tea for some guests. She then requests that her daughter Yana, who has just entered the room, brings more boiled water from the kitchen. Yana shows signs of compliance, but a problem arises when she arrives in the kitchen (line 8).

Extract 16. 20120114_memorial_1_198851

1	Lida	Yan,
		Name-VOC
		Yana
2		(0.4)
3	Lida	prinisi mne: yeshio: kipitka,
		bring-IMP-PFV me else boiled water-GEN
		bring me more boiled water
4	Yana	((Yana goes off to the kitchen))
5	Lida	i chajnik adin elektricheskij=
		and water kettle one electric
6		=kakoj-nibut' pastaf'
		some/any put on-IMP
		and put one of the electric kettles on
7		(16.1 of unrelated talk)
8	Yana	ma:m ((from the kitchen))
		Mama-VOC
		Mom
9		(7.8 of unrelated talk)
10	Yana	ma:m ((from the kitchen))
		Mama-VOC
		Mom
11		(0.4)
12	Lida	a?
		INTJ
		Ha?

13	Yana	a gde ty tut kipitok nashla?
		PCL where-Q you-SG here boiled water found-PFV-F
		Where did you find boiled water here?
14		(0.4)
15	Lida	kipitok f cha:jnike
		Boiled water in water kettle
		Boiled water is in the water kettle
16		(0.6)
17	Yana	tam ano chut'-chu::t'
		there it little-ADV
		There's very little
18	Lida	nu prinisi zdes' nam xvatit=
		PCL bring-IMP-PFV here we-DAT be enough-FUT
		Well bring {it}, {it} will be enough here
19		=evo razba:vit'=
		he-ACC dilute-INF
		to dilute it.
20		=a: eletricheskij adin fkliuchi:
		PCL electric-M-SG one-M-ACC put on-IMP-PFV
		and put one electric {kettle} on.
21	Yana	((returns from the kitchen and gives the water kettle to Lida))
22	Lida	patamu shta- sli:shkam eta-
		because too PCL
		Because it's too well-
23	Yana	krepkij?
		Strong-M-SG
		Strong?
24		(0.5)
25	Rima	kre:pkij (.) krasnyj sil'na sil'na KRASNYJ
		stron-M-SG red-M very very red-M
		Strong (.) very red, very RED.

There are two notable aspects to Lida's request. First, its formulation suggests that Lida needs a lot of boiled water by asking for the water already available in the water kettle and for more water to be boiled. Second, the request is twofold: bring boiled water *and* put one of the electric kettles on. As it later becomes clear, these requests have different reasons behind them, but Lida does not make this explicit right away.

Initially, the request does not seem to cause problems on Yana's side. The first sign of potential trouble is Yana's summons '*Mom*' at line 8, repeated at line 10 and responded to with '*a?*' by Lida. Having secured Lida's attention, Yana then asks her to specify the location of the boiled water in the kitchen. Lida treats it as an information question by simply telling where the water can be found – in the water kettle (line 15). Yana goes on and specifies the problem: there is only very little water in the kettle. Lida repeats her request at line 18, this time adding a reason: it is just to dilute the tea, which explains why a small amount of water will be enough (lines 18–19).

In the next turn, Lida also repeats her second request to put one of the electric kettles on. By doing this, she makes clear that not all the water is needed to dilute the tea. This implies that the two requests have different rationales behind them. When Yana returns

from the kitchen with the water to dilute tea, Lida provides an additional reason justifying her request for a little water – the tea she made for one of the guests was too strong (lines 22). Although, she seems to have trouble finding the right word to describe the tea, which results in the incomplete turn: 'Because it's too well-' Yana had no access to this information before because she entered the room too late to witness the interaction between Lida and the guest. Yana displays her understanding and acceptance of the reason by helping Lida with her word search at line 23.

Note that Lida prefaces the repeated reason at line 22 with a causal connective *patamu shta* 'because'. This may be a way to establish a direct link between the reason and the initial request at line 3, repeated at line 18. Reason and request have become sequentially separated from each other by the intervening, second request (line 20) (see also Couper-Kuhlen, 2011). When reason and request are closer to each other, the link between them may be supported by their sequential proximity, the meaning, contextual aspects and prosodic features (Couper-Kuhlen, 2012; Gohl, 2000). Grammatical features may also contribute to the link between requests and their reasons, as they usually match in tense and lexical items in an English sample (Parry, 2013). In our collection, only three reasons were prefaced with a causal connective: *patamu shta* 'because' (Extract 16), and *a to* 'because' (Extract 8) and *shtoby* 'so that' (comes from a request sequence that is not presented in this paper). The broader literature on accounts has also shown that causal connectives are not all that common (Ford, 2005; Heritage, 1988; Houtkoop-Steenstra, 1990; Taleghani-Nikazm, 2006; Waring, 2007); this is likely because request and reason are normally close enough together to be indexically linked without requiring an explicit connective.

The latter case shows that reasons are not merely a device to pursue a response in the absence of one or to avoid anticipatable problems in uptake; they are also employed when compliance is well underway or indeed completed. Even when requestees are willing and able to comply, they may run into an incongruity or ambiguity in the request. Reasons provided after response initiation offer one way to address such incongruities or ambiguities, justifying or clarifying the request post-hoc.

Extract 17 provides another example of a post-compliance reason. Similar to what we saw in Extracts 7 and 8, the request from Extract 17 here is performing an additional action. Inna is making a request for her adult grandson to pour brandy for grandpa as well:

Extract 17. 20110821_Family_dinner_Country_A_2_572060

1	Grandson	((pours brandy for himself and brings the screw cap to the bottle neck))
2	Inna	[de:du.
		grandpa-DAT
		for grandpa.
3	Grandson	[((puts the screw cap on the bottle))
4		(0.8) ((Grandson screws the cap on the bottle))
5	Inna	[a ^dedu.
		PCL grandpa-DAT
		And for grandpa.
6		(0.5) ((Grandson seems to unscrew the cap))

7	Inna	[a ^dedu.
		PCL grandfather-DAT
		And for grandpa.
8	Grandson	[((unscrews the cap from the bottle))
9		(0.4)
10	Grandpa	a dedu ni abizatel'na=
		PCL grandpa-DAT NEG necessary-ADV
		And for grandpa it's not necessary ((places his glass closer to the bottle))
11	Inna	=[HAHAHAHA
12	Grandson	[((pours the drink for grandpa))=
13	Inna	=.h sibe nalil i la:dna
		Self-DAT poured-M and all right
		you poured {it} for yourself and that's it

Inna makes her request three times (lines 2, 5 and 7), allowing her grandson little time to comply. She gives a reason for her request at line 13, although compliance was already underway at line 8 and completed at line 12. This reason points to the problematic aspect of the grandson's behaviour – the fact that he poured brandy for himself without offering his grandfather some as well. This suggests that Inna's request was aimed at doing more than just getting her grandson to comply: the added reason retrospectively turns it into a rebuke. In this sequential position, the reason's role is to explicate the ancillary action implied by the request, and thereby justify its formulation and repetition. Grandfather also makes a contribution to Inna's request by upgrading it to '*And for grandpa it's not necessary*' (line 10). At the same time, he places his glass closer to the bottle, which suggests the opposite and implies that his previous statement was ironic. This is also supported by Inna's laughter at line 11.

To conclude this section, reasons in post-acceptance position can deal with informationally underspecified requests (Extract 16) and with the ancillary actions implied by a request (Extract 17); in both cases, the reason serves as much to clarify as to retrospectively justify the request.

Discussion and conclusion

Much prior work on reasons or accounts has focused on responsive actions, such as rejections of offers, invitations or requests. Such actions are dispreferred and potentially delicate, and the accounts accompanying them are often excuses and justifications that disclaim a speaker's responsibility for the problematic action, or diminish its problematic character by referring to the speaker's inability to accept the offer or invitation (Davidson, 1984; Heritage, 1988). However, such delicate situations are not the only contexts in which people provide reasons in interaction. Here we have studied reasons-giving in a sequential environment that is ubiquitous: simple, practical requests in everyday face-to-face interaction.

Initiating actions, such as requests, are less clearly dispreferred, and for the practical requests we consider, the requester's ability to perform the requested action is hardly ever at issue. Perhaps because of this, requests without a reason make up a large part of our collection. Houtkoop-Steenstra (1990) and Waring (2007) report similar

findings in their studies of accounts for proposals and advice. Houtkoop-Steenstra states that for proposals without accounts, the necessary information is inferable 'from the conversational context or from the situation'. Similarly, minimal requests can be supported and contextualised by ongoing activities, as when a dinner setting implies a certain distribution of roles and responsibilities and makes relevant the transfer of food, and they can also be supported by preceding talk, as when prior talk has established the involved parties and specified a certain type of object or service, which is then requested.

Over a third of the requests in our collection (57 out of 158) did come with a reason at some point in the sequence. Reasons were encountered in four sequential positions, reflecting different points at which participants may orient to the need for a reason. The four positions are as follows. (1) Reason after a delay or problem in the uptake of a request: here the reason is provided following the noticeable absence of a preferred response. By providing background information for the request, the reason asserts the continuing relevance of a response without overtly holding the requestee accountable for failing to provide a preferred response immediately. (2) Reason provided together with the request: by specifying how a request is to be understood right away, the requester can be seen to orient to a potential lack of fit of the request to the ongoing activity or participant structure, thereby making immediate compliance both easier and more likely. (3) Reason used as a pre-request: stating a reason allows a requester to explore preconditions without being on record as issuing the request. (4) Reason provided after acceptance or compliance: here the reason's role is often to clarify the request post-hoc, justifying the initial formulation and specifying the ancillary action implied.

Despite the positional variation, we found some strong commonalities in the interactional functions of reasons across all these contexts. Reasons serve to make requests more readily understandable and increase the ultimate likelihood of compliance. They do so by addressing the potential underspecification of requests in three broad domains: matters of information, social relation and action. We will now discuss each issue separately.

Some requests are informationally underspecified. In interpreting such requests, participants cannot fully rely on the preceding talk and the ongoing activity. In some cases, the context supports the request only partially, while in others the context even contradicts it, and the request itself may lack crucial information about the requested action. In this kind of case, reasons providing missing information help specify what the requested action is and how the request fits the ongoing talk or activity (Extracts 4, 9, 10 and 16).

Some requests invade the domain of recipients' deontic and epistemic authority, with potential implications for the relation between the requester and requestee. Such requests, for instance, instruct the recipient *not* to perform an action that he or she is currently involved in. In such cases, requesters support their requests with a reason that justifies this invasion and pursues compliance. A reason can, for instance, explain that recipients' actions harm the requester, that the recipient will benefit from compliance, that the requested action is more important or urgent than what the requestee is currently doing and so on (Extracts 5, 6, 8, 11, 12 and 15).

Finally, sometimes a request is performing an ancillary action, that is, some action beyond mere requesting. Ancillary actions such as joking, complaining and rebuking can be done through the vehicle of a request. Reasons can be used to emphasise these additional actions or make them explicit (Extracts 7, 8, 13, 14 and 17). One indication that the reason in such cases may not directly speak to the content of the request is the fact that such reasons can be produced after compliance has already occurred. We are not aware of earlier reports of this interactional use of reasons, but it does fit the general nature of reasons as making social actions more intelligible.

In terms of linguistic design, we find that reasons usually take the form of a description of a state of affairs that supplies the informational, relational or action-implicative content supporting the request. Although in the literature reasons are commonly linked to causal connectives like 'because', we found such a connective only in three cases, suggesting that the sequential positioning of the reason is in most cases sufficient to convey its relation to the request. As in other studies on explanations in interaction, reasons in our sample were never elicited using direct why interrogatives (Houtkoop-Steenstra, 1990: 119; Parry, 2009).

To conclude, interpreting a request is not always a straightforward task, and reasons provide help when needed. A range of available sequential positions for reasons show the various points at which participants may orient to the need for a reason. Regardless of its position in relation to the request, a reason makes the request understandable, increasing the likelihood of compliance (Davidson, 1984; Pomerantz, 1984; Wootton, 1981). Reasons deal with requests that may be problematic in various ways: they may be informationally underspecified, delicate or potentially harmful for participants' relationship, or they may involve ancillary actions. Provision of a reason can solve these problems and aid the interpretation of the request. Reasons are a rich source of information that place requests in a larger context. By creating a context for the request wherein the requested action fits the normal course of events, reasons normalise requests. Reasons can make requests clearer, mitigate certain interpretations of the request and emphasise others. In short, reasons are a versatile communicative tool when requesting assistance from others.

Notes

1. Other authors also make similar distinctions (Buttny and Morris, 2001; Parry, 2009, 2013; Waring, 2007).
2. An a nonymous reviewer pointed out that Lida's lines 1–2 are also interpretable as a request disguising itself as an offer. Taking into account previous context (recipients rejected a similar offer earlier), Lida's own agenda (involving people in the sauna) and the questionable benefit for the recipients (involving the effort of undressing their child and going home later than stated), we consider Lida's turn primarily as a request (see also Clayman and Heritage, 2014).
3. Russian people use their patronymic along with their first and last names. Whereas the last name is the family name of the person, the patronymic refers to his/her father. Commonly, a patronymic is used when the addressee is older than the speaker. In this case, it does not apply. Alifa is at least 10 years older than Anna.
4. Taleghani-Nikazm (2006: 55) reports a reason that has a similar function of specifying the requested action.
5. A nickname that she has for her mother.
6. This verb is based on a demonstrative. It means that the recipient has to be looking in the pointed direction to see what action the verb represents. In this case, the verb most probably refers to the just mentioned water filter that has finished filtering water.
7. The female ending of the word *zakrylasia* 'got obscured' most likely refers to the female word *kamera* 'camera' that Katya does not explicitly mentions but points to with her finger.

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Appendix 1 Abbreviations and Symbols

1	first person
2	second person
3	third person
SG	singular
PL	plural
F	feminine
M	masculine
DIM	diminutive form
GEN	genitive
DAT	dative
ACC	accusative
INST	instrumental
LOC	locative
VOC	vocative
IMP	imperative
INF	infinitive
PFV	perfective
IMPFV	imperfective
MOD	modal verb
REFL	reflective verb

FUT   future
NEG   negation
PST   past
DEM   demonstrative
INTJ   interjection
ADJ   adjective
ADV   adverb
Q   question
PCL   particle

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