Although acts that employ simple formulas are usually considered relatively straightforward (and thus unnecessary to teach), the potential for misinterpretation exists even in these formulaic exchanges. When acts that are potentially face threatening, such as apologies, are involved, the potential is even greater. Apologies are by their nature face threatening. By apologizing, the speaker assumes responsibility and seeks to “reestablish social harmony” (Bergman & Kasper, 1993, p. 82) after an offense or perceived offense was committed by the speaker (or by a person or institution that the speaker represents). The hearer, in turn, can choose whether to accept the apology.

As with other speech acts, cultural differences can affect the assessment of the severity of an offense, the offender’s perceived obligation to apologize, and the language used to perform the apology. When nonnative speakers apologize, cultural and linguistic differences can cause their apologies to vary from native-speaker (NS) norms, compounding an already difficult situation. On the other hand, because basic apologies are relatively formulaic, the linguistic aspect is fairly easy for learners to master. Consequently, teachers can concentrate on teaching students when to apologize and how elaborate an apology is required in the target language.

This chapter focuses on apologies in response to a common experience that requires an apology in U.S. contexts: bumping into someone. Because of the potential for miscommunication, particularly for learners in multiethnic countries such as Australia, Great Britain, and the United States, the study of this speech event is not just theoretical but highly practical.

After providing a brief overview of the most widely used strategies for performing apologies in general, the discussion concentrates on the particular strategies typically produced in the United States by native speakers who bump into someone.
**CONTEXT**

The materials in this chapter were designed for students in a conversation class at a 3-year nursing college in Japan (i.e., an English as a foreign language setting). All of the students were Japanese, with the majority entering college immediately after high school. Overall, their English was at a low-intermediate level. Most had not been overseas before taking the English conversation course that incorporated these materials. However, the students had positive attitudes toward English and actively participated in class.

Apologies after bumping into someone were selected because Japanese students had observed that some Japanese did not apologize when they bumped into someone (Lieske, 2010). As a result of incorporating the activities described in this chapter into the second language (L2) classroom, students’ awareness of the apology when bumping into someone in the United States increased. For one thing, they realized that an apology is expected; as a result, after completing the activities, one student noted, “Japanese may often be seen as rude” (for not always apologizing when they bump into others). In addition, classroom discussions demonstrated students’ increased awareness of the perceived force of different apologies and variations in the linguistic and strategy choices of apologies in their first language (L1) and L2. (See Lieske, 2010, for a detailed discussion of the research that generated these materials and the classroom learning that resulted from utilizing them.)

Since this material was first developed, it has also been used with adults with low-level English skills, English majors at a 2-year college, and non-English majors at a university (all of whom were native Japanese speakers studying in Japan). The results have been similar, but the material is particularly effective when some or all of the students visit an English-speaking country and return before the end of the course. In this respect, students already living in a target-language culture have the advantage of being able to easily observe naturally occurring situations.

**Apology Strategies**

Olshtain (1989) categorizes apology strategies into five types: two general strategies that can be used in all situations requiring an apology and three situation-specific strategies (see also Blum-Kulka, House, & Kasper, 1989a, 1989b):

**General Strategies (generally formulaic, routinized forms)**

1. Explicit apology, also referred to as illocutionary force indicating devices (IFIDs):
   a. expression of regret (e.g., *I’m sorry*)
   b. offer of apology (e.g., *I apologize*)
   c. request for forgiveness (e.g., *Excuse me, Forgive me, Pardon me*)

2. Taking on responsibility (e.g., *I didn’t mean to do it*)
Situation-Specific Strategies (nonconventional; require information specific to the situation)

1. Explanation or account for the offense (e.g., I missed the train)
2. Offer of repair for the offense (e.g., I'll buy you a new one)
3. Promise of forbearance from similar offenses in the future (e.g., I won't be late next time)

Apology Sequence: Bumping Into Someone

Even though bumping into someone is a common occurrence, few textbooks for English language learners deal with this speech event. This omission may be the result of an assumption that the speech act is universally similar, but as Suszczynska (1999) has demonstrated, there are culture-specific differences. In its basic form, when someone bumps into another person, the event includes the following:

1. nonlinguistic opening (i.e., speaker [S] bumping into hearer [H])
2. S’s apology
3. H’s acceptance
4. departure of S and H (nonlinguistic)

In cultures in which an utterance is expected, the apology is instantaneous, suggesting that it is fairly routine and scripted, with explicit apologies often used independently or in combination with other strategies.

Using a discourse completion test (DCT) to collect apologies from native speakers of American English, Hungarian, and Polish, Suszczynska (1999) studied a number of situations requiring an apology, including bumping into an elderly woman who drops her packages. She coded the responses using Olshtain’s (1989) five verbal strategies, adding concern for the hearer as a sixth strategy. Suszczynska’s study illustrates how culture affects even a “simple” speech act such as the apology offered after bumping into another person. For example, Suszczynska found that in the situation with the elderly woman, not only differences in the frequency of strategy use occurred, but also important differences in linguistic choices. For example, all of the informants regularly used explicit apologies, but whereas 85% of the Americans used a form of I’m sorry and the Polish most often used I apologize, the Hungarian apologies were more evenly divided among four IFIDs, with a preference for Don’t be angry. This type of explicit apology would be inappropriate in American English. Similarly, 24% of the Polish informants offered to help pick up the packages and drive H home or to another location. However, in the United States this would quickly raise H’s suspicions, and H might conclude that S had deliberately bumped into H with some ulterior motive. Other cultural and linguistic differences in the characteristics of the
apologies in Suszczynska’s study include the results found in Table 1. Modifications “upgrade” apologies by expressing emotion and making the apologies more sincere and substantive (Bergman & Kasper, 1993, p. 96); functions are not expressed.

Suszczynska’s (1999) research demonstrates an ordered set of strategies, with the American English prototypical form being “Oh, I’m so sorry! Are you all right? Let me help you with your things” (p. 1061). In spite of the fact that Suszczynska found prototypical Hungarian and Polish apologies more difficult to formulate than those in English, one similarity among the three cultural groups was that the apology usually consisted of more than just an explicit apology.

**CURRICULUM, TASKS, MATERIALS**

When first studying speech acts, students find it easier to examine events that have “well-defined boundaries” (Saville-Troike, 1997, p. 141). Consequently, the material discussed in this chapter is limited to apologies associated with bumping into someone. Not only is this situation comparatively independent of social factors such as status and profession (Suszczynska, 1999), but actual damage is usually not inflicted. These characteristics further limit the scope of the speech event. In addition, bumping into someone is especially relevant to students because it is an experience that students from all cultures have had, and it is an event that warrants an apology in many cultures.

The purpose of the following activities is to

- increase students’ awareness of the speech act and the unconscious cultural norms associated with it,
- help students discover differences between their L1 and the L2 that could lead to miscommunication,
- provide students with appropriate L2 language for the specific speech event.

**Table 1. Apology Strategies and Modifications by Speakers of Three Languages**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strategy or Modification Employed</th>
<th>American</th>
<th>Hungarian</th>
<th>Polish</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strategy: Offer of repair (e.g., <em>Let me help you</em>)</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>80%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strategy: Expression of concern for Hearer (e.g., <em>Are you OK?</em>)</td>
<td>71%</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Modification: Emotional exclamation (e.g., <em>Oh!</em>)</td>
<td>64%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Modification: Intensification (e.g., <em>so sorry</em>)</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>69%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The activities included here were generally presented during 6 nonconsecutive class periods, but by tackling several activities on the same day, the teacher could cover the material in fewer classes.

Activity 1: Raising Awareness
Students are first asked to complete a questionnaire about utterances when bumping into people. Before distributing Worksheet 1 (see Appendix A), the teacher can explain or demonstrate the act of bumping into someone, noting that it is usually not deliberate. It can help for the teacher to demonstrate various degrees of offense (e.g., lightly brushing a person as you pass by, bumping into a person with more force, bumping into a person hard enough that something is dropped). When demonstrating bumping into someone, it is important not to utter anything that could influence students’ questionnaire responses. (Before class the teacher may want to practice bumping into someone without saying anything—even “Ah!”—because it is surprisingly difficult to do so.)

When students seem to understand the basic concept, the teacher can elicit from them examples of places where people often bump into each other. Students’ answers generally focus on either a small space or an area that is full of people, such as crowded trains, airplanes as people board and stow luggage, narrow hallways filled with people waiting to enter a room, and department stores, particularly during big sales.

At this point, students are ready to complete Worksheet 1, which instructs them to report what they think they usually do when they bump into someone in their own culture or in the United States. Students should write their responses on their own. To assist them in discovering their cultural assumptions, the teacher might encourage students to think about why they answered the way they did.

After students have finished writing and thinking about their answers, the teacher collects the questionnaires. Several students can then give general opinions about what would happen in their country or countries. The teacher may need to emphasize that because cultures cannot be judged as right or wrong but only as different, no answer is incorrect. In classrooms with students from various countries, it is important to call on students from different parts of the world.

The teacher can then ask students why they believe an apology is or is not needed in their cultures, sharing any pertinent experiences. Then in pairs or small groups, students can reflect on how foreigners who do not comply with NS norms are viewed. For example, students may say that they have a negative feeling about the foreigner, that the foreigner seems rude, or that they believe the foreigner’s L2 ability is low.

Despite evidence to the contrary, in many cases students will believe that people in their country always apologize when they bump into someone. If students are going to be collecting data in their own country, the teacher should refrain from mentioning any experiences he or she may have had. If, however, students will not be collecting data in their L1 (see Activity 2), the teacher may
want to discuss his or her experiences. Because neither language nor culture can be more or less polite, but rather will have different rules or norms of courtesy, this discussion should be factual and avoid passing judgment on the students or their cultures. During this class, students’ L2 responses on the questionnaire are not discussed.

To enable learners to use appropriate strategies, it is helpful to have them provide literal translations of their L1 utterances (on Part I of Worksheet 1) in their L2. In multicultural classrooms, this not only demonstrates how culture is reflected in language but also enables students to learn about the L2 and other languages.

At some time before conducting Activity 4, the teacher will compile students’ responses to Part II of Worksheet 1. Some version of the blank Teacher Worksheet (see Appendix A) can be used to record students’ responses. The Sample Compilation Sheet in Appendix A can be used as a guide. Completing the Teacher Worksheet involves a few simple steps:

1. Write in all student responses.
2. Count the number of students who gave each response (e.g., with check marks).
3. Calculate percentages. (These help the teacher understand how students answered.) Percentages can be calculated by adding the total number of students and then using the following formula:

   \[
   \frac{\text{Number of students for each answer}}{\text{Total number of students}}
   \]
4. Notice how many times the same utterances were given.
5. Determine the proportion of the utterances that vary from the NS norm (e.g., only two students, most of the class).
6. Analyze the types of mistakes students are making (e.g., literally translating an apology from their L1, omitting an apology).

Activity 2: Collecting Natural L1 Speech

In this activity, students collect samples of actual spoken apologies. If students have access to natural speech in their L1, they should collect spontaneous data. Even if not all students have access to natural speech, the class can learn from the answers of the students who complete the activity.

Students who do not live in the L1 culture can collect data by watching movies or TV shows or accessing examples of natural speech on the Internet. The teacher may want to provide a focus for these students by asking them to first look for scenes from crowded trains or subways or shows that might have people getting on and off airplanes. After this, they can begin a broader search for other situations.
Students will collect data by going to public places and observing situations in which two people accidentally bump into each other. They must then record data in their L1 on Worksheet 2 (see Appendix A) immediately after witnessing the event. They should not try to remember the situations and fill in the sheet later. The teacher assigns a date for submission of Worksheet 2.

After the homework has been collected, the teacher calculates the number of times no apology or response was given on the students’ worksheets and, if possible, the languages/cultures in which nothing was said. In the next class, students are asked to talk about anything that surprised them when they collected their L1 data (e.g., I thought all people would apologize, but some people didn’t; When a little girl ran into someone, the parents didn’t tell her to apologize so she just went skipping away. It’s bad manners.). The teacher can then report how often an apology was not given and invite students who observed these encounters to tell the class the following:

• how the person who was bumped reacted
• the impression the speaker created
• what, if any, of the students’ previous impressions or beliefs they revised

Activity 3: Practicing Apologies for Different Levels of Offense

This activity is designed to make students aware that there is more than one form (I’m sorry) that can be used as an apology and that the form of the apology is affected by the situation (e.g., perceived level of offense, relationship of bumper and bumpee). The teacher begins the session by explaining the following about English apologies:

• American English speakers almost always apologize when bumping into someone.
• The American English apology is fairly formulaic.
• Because there is no time to think, this type of apology is a spontaneous reaction to the situation.
• The apology needs to be practiced until it becomes automatic.
• I’m sorry by itself may not be adequate.

Students then receive Worksheet 3 (see Appendix A). Students may help the teacher demonstrate several of the conversations in Part A. After completing Part A with the teacher, students practice the short interactions in Part B. Students and their partners then create their own conversations.

After students have practiced their own apology interactions in pairs, they can perform role-plays in small groups and then take turns performing them in front
of the class. The teacher continues with Parts II and III of Worksheet 3 to reinforce and expand learning in a future class.

**Activity 4: Identifying Native-Like Apologies**

In this activity, the teacher reports the results of students’ responses to the questions in Worksheet 1 Part II (“In the United States”) and guides students in recognizing appropriate (i.e., native-sounding) and inappropriate (i.e., nonnative-sounding) responses.

The teacher begins by discussing the students’ English responses to Worksheet 1 Part II, letting them know which utterances were most frequent and how often the class as a whole gave NS-like responses. (The teacher can refer to the information recorded on the Teacher Worksheet for this activity.) This is an excellent time to reinforce native-like apologies; the Sample Compilation Sheet (see Appendix A) has examples of apologies and responses that would be appropriate (left side) and inappropriate (right side) in the United States when bumping into someone. Using the Sample Compilation Sheet and Worksheet 3 as references, the teacher can write some examples of native-like apologies and responses on the board. The teacher may want to remind students that the apology is fairly formulaic.

Students then form pairs or small groups. The teacher reads aloud NS-like and non-NS-like apologies from the lists in the Compilation Sheet and from students’ own responses. The teacher can also create apologies by combining strategies from Worksheet 3 (e.g., exclamation + taking on responsibility + concern for hearer). In their groups, students then determine whether each of the apologies is native-like. Students can be instructed to correct unnatural utterances. For example, if the teacher says, “Oh! I’m so sorry. Please don’t be angry,” students could provide a more natural American apology, such as “Oh! I’m sorry.” Students can also be asked to identify the following:

- portions of the utterances, referencing their handout from Activity 3 (e.g., show surprise, show you’re sorry)
- elements that make them stronger (e.g., exclamations, intensification)

More advanced students can be challenged to give reasons for their choices.

**Activity 5: Collecting Natural L2 Speech**

This activity is appropriate for students who live in or will be traveling to a target-language country. If they do not have direct access to situations in which L2 speakers might bump into each other, they can watch English-language TV and movies, noting any apologies and responses when people bump into each other.

In this activity, students again use Worksheet 2, but this time to collect data from L2 speakers. The teacher explains the task and gives students a deadline for completing the homework. On the assigned day, students bring their data
collection sheets to class. As students look at their L2 data collection sheets, they should be encouraged to reflect on and discuss their observations and draw conclusions. The teacher may need to encourage and prompt students to make these discoveries by asking questions such as these:

- Were there words in the apologies and responses other than those we studied (e.g., *Oops!* in class?
- Were any forms of the apology (e.g., *Sorry!* used more often than others?
- Were some apologies longer than others? If necessary, the teacher may ask more specific questions such as the following:
  — Did one person say, “Sorry!” while another person said, “Oh! I’m so sorry. Are you all right?”
  — Did one person say, “Oh!” but another say, “Oh. Excuse me”?
  — Why do you think some apologies were longer (e.g., severity of offense, who H was)?
- Did everyone apologize? If no, who didn’t (e.g., men or women, people of a certain age)? Did this surprise you?

**Activity 6: Role-Playing**

Communication cards can be used for additional role-play practice or to assess learning. These are small cards that have pictures or simple explanations of various situations. In pairs, students select a set of cards and role-play the situations presented on the cards. For example, two cards might have a picture of two people (marked Student A and Student B) bumping into each other and B dropping something, with “What do you do?” on the Student A card and “Respond to A” on the Student B card. By adjusting the linguistic difficulty and situations, communication cards can be used with students of any level. A simple set of communication cards can be found in Appendix B. Teachers might want to add pictures.

**REFLECTIONS**

From a linguistic point of view, the apologies in this chapter are easy enough for students of any age and level and are appropriate for students in a variety of learning situations. However, teachers in various contexts may find some of the activities and worksheets more appropriate than others, depending on students’ proficiency, class time constraints, and access to native speakers of both the students’ L1s and English. Additional activities, such as those in Activities 5 and 6, can be used to supplement the core material presented in this chapter. Teachers with more advanced students may want to introduce Activity 4 before Activity 3, leading students to discover characteristics of appropriate apologies in English.
To simplify Activity 1, a modified DCT, that is, a scene with a blank for the student to write in a response, can be used rather than the questionnaire on Worksheet 1 (see sample in Appendix C). Because the DCT does not require students to give reasons why the conversation changes if the person drops something or to consider how the social characteristics of the interlocutor can affect the apology, it allows learners to focus on the language of the speech act. Students are not asked to directly consider their cultural assumptions. This makes the DCT less complex and more appropriate for younger students or those with lower L2 proficiency.

Carmella Lieske has been teaching EFL in Japan since 1993. She has taught students of all ages, ranging from preschool to adult. Her research interests include pragmatics, English as an international language, and materials development. She has conducted research in Japan, South Korea, Thailand, and the United States.

APPENDIX A: WORKSHEETS AND ANSWER KEYS

Worksheet 1: Apology Questionnaire
Name ___________________________ Class ___________________________

Answer the questions in Part I in your native language; write your answers to Part II in English.

Part I: In Your Country
1. You are in a store. You accidentally bump into someone.
   Would you say anything? (Circle one.) YES NO SOMETIMES
   Why or why not? _______________________________________________________
   YES or SOMETIMES => What would you say in your own language?
   _____________________________________________________________________
   Would the other person say anything after you said that? YES NO
   YES => What? (In your own language) ______________________________________

2. If you bumped into someone and the person dropped what he or she was holding, would that change your answer? (Circle one.) YES NO
   YES => Why? How? ___________________________________________________

3. When you answered Questions 1 and 2, what kind of person did you imagine bumping into? (Example: Man or woman? Someone you know or a stranger? Young or old?) ________________________________
**Teaching Apologies**

**Part II: In the United States**

4. You are in a store. You accidentally bump into someone.

Would you say anything? (Circle one.)  
YES  NO  SOMETIMES

YES or SOMETIMES => What would you say? _____________________________

What would the other person say? ________________________________________

5. Would your answer change if the person dropped something?  
(Circle one.)  YES  NO

6. Does your answer change depending on who you bumped into? (see Question 3)  
(Circle one.)  YES  NO

Why or why not? _______________________________________________________

**Worksheet 1: Sample Answers**

Answers will vary, particularly for Questions 1, 2, and 3, which are based on various L1 cultures and languages. Japanese will be used to give one example.

**Part I: In Your Country**

1. Yes. Japanese students believe everyone says something because it is rude not to say anything. Other possible answers include:
   - I should apologize because it is expected of me.
   - I should apologize because that’s what I was taught when I was a child.
   - I should apologize because I’ve invaded the other person’s personal space.
   - I should apologize because it’s bad to bump into someone.
   - I should apologize because I want the other person to know I didn’t do it deliberately.

Yes, the other person would respond. In Japanese the conversation might be:
   A: *Sumimasen.* (I’m sorry.)
   B: *Douitashimashite.* (It’s OK.)

2. Yes, the dialogue would probably change because the person would express more concern for the listener. For example:
   A: *Sumimasen. Daijoubudesuka?* (I’m sorry. Are you all right?)
   B: *Daijoubudesu.* (I’m all right.)

3. Students who imagine an older male who is a stranger may produce a more formal apology than students who imagine bumping into a younger sister. An example of the latter might include:
   A: *Gomen.* (Sorry.)
   B: *Iie.* (OK.)
**Part II: In the United States**

4. Yes, most Americans would say something. In its most basic form, the conversation might be:
   
   A: *Sorry.*
   
   B: *Sorry.*

5. Yes. The apology might be strengthened, an expression of surprise added, and/or an offer of help extended. For example:
   
   A: *Oh, I’m so sorry. Let me help you.* (as you bend down to help)
   
   B: *Thanks.*

6. Yes. The answer might change if the speaker wished to strengthen the apology or express surprise to emphasize it was not deliberate (e.g., if the other person looked angry).
   
   A: *Oh! Excuse me.*
   
   B: *It’s OK.*
## Teaching Apologies

### Teacher Worksheet: Compilation Sheet for Students’ Responses to Worksheet 1 Part II, 4

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Appropriate When Bumping Into Someone</th>
<th>Number of Students</th>
<th>Inappropriate When Bumping Into Someone</th>
<th>Number of Students</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Apologies</td>
<td>Apologies</td>
<td>IFIDs—Expression of Regret</td>
<td>Explanation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IFIDs—Request for Forgiveness</td>
<td>Taking on Responsibility</td>
<td>IFID + Intensification</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IFID + Intensification</td>
<td></td>
<td>Concern for Hearer</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exclamations</td>
<td>Promise of Forbearance</td>
<td>Combinations</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Responses</td>
<td>Responses</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Note:** IFID = illocutionary force indicating devices (also known as explicit apology).
**Teacher Worksheet: Sample Compilation of Students’ Responses to Worksheet I, Part II, 4**

### In an American Store

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Appropriate When Bumping Into Someone</th>
<th>Number of Students</th>
<th>Inappropriate When Bumping Into Someone</th>
<th>Number of Students</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Apologies</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Apologies</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I’m sorry.</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>I didn’t see for shopping.</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sorry.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>IFIDs—Expression of Regret</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Explanation</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I’m sorry.</td>
<td>8</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I didn’t see for shopping.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>IFIDs—Request for Forgiveness</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Taking on Responsibility</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Excuse me.</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>I never did it on purpose.</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>IFID + Intensification</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I’m so sorry.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>I never did it on purpose.</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It’s my fault.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Concern for Hearer</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Are you OK?</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>It’s your own fault.</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Are you all right?</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Exclamations</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Promise of Forbearance</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oops!</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>I won’t do it again.</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oh.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ah.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Combinations</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oh, I’m sorry. Are you OK?</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ah. Excuse me.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oops! I’m so sorry. Are you all right?</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Responses</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Responses</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>That’s all right.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>You are welcome.</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>That’s OK.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Don’t mind.</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It’s OK.</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Never mind.</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It’s all right.</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Not at all.</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sorry.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No problem.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Worksheet 2: Data Collection Sheet

Name ___________________________ Class ___________________________

Go to a public place. Observe people accidentally bumping into each other.

Answer the questions. Circle Y or N for each situation. Circle M or F for each person.

Use these codes to guess the people’s ages:

1: younger than elementary school  5: 25–40 years old
2: elementary school               6: 41–60 years old
3: junior or senior high school    7: over 60 years old
4: college student

1. Where? _______________________________ Was anything dropped?  Y  N
   Person doing the bumping  M  F  Age ____  Said something?  Y  N
   **If said something** What? _____________________________________________
   Person being bumped  M  F  Age ____  Said something?  Y  N
   **If said something** What? _____________________________________________
   Any other important information? _________________________________________

2. Where? _______________________________ Was anything dropped?  Y  N
   Person doing the bumping  M  F  Age ____  Said something?  Y  N
   **If said something** What? _____________________________________________
   Person being bumped  M  F  Age ____  Said something?  Y  N
   **If said something** What? _____________________________________________
   Any other important information? _________________________________________

3. Where? _______________________________ Was anything dropped?  Y  N
   Person doing the bumping  M  F  Age ____  Said something?  Y  N
   **If said something** What? _____________________________________________
   Person being bumped  M  F  Age ____  Said something?  Y  N
   **If said something** What? _____________________________________________
   Any other important information? _________________________________________

4. Where? _______________________________ Was anything dropped?  Y  N
   Person doing the bumping  M  F  Age ____  Said something?  Y  N
   **If said something** What? _____________________________________________
   Person being bumped  M  F  Age ____  Said something?  Y  N
   **If said something** What? _____________________________________________
   Any other important information? _________________________________________
### Worksheet 2: Sample Answers

When complete, students’ answers may look like this. Answers will vary.

Example of answers that would be in student’s **L1**:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Answer</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Where?</td>
<td>mise (“store”)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Was anything dropped?</td>
<td>Y N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Person doing the bumping</td>
<td>M F Age 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>If said something</strong></td>
<td>Gomennasai (“I’m sorry.”)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Person being bumped</td>
<td>M F Age 7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>If said something</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Any other important information?</td>
<td>No.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Example of answers in English (i.e., student’s **L2**):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Answer</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Where?</td>
<td>Department store</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Was anything dropped?</td>
<td>Y N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Person doing the bumping</td>
<td>M F Age 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>If said something</strong></td>
<td>I’m sorry. Are you OK?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Person being bumped</td>
<td>M F Age 7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>If said something</strong></td>
<td>Yes, thanks.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Any other important information?</td>
<td>It sounded like something broke.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Worksheet 3: Practicing Apologies With Three Levels of Offense

Name ___________________________ Class ___________________________

This worksheet provides practice with apologies involving at least 3 levels of offense: low, medium, and high.

I. Low Level of Offense: Even when we barely bump into someone, we apologize in English. These conversations can be short, but both people usually say something.

A. Typical Language

If you are the first person (the person who does the bumping), you

1. can show surprise.
   (a) Oops!
   (b) Oh!
   (c) Ah!

2. must show you are sorry.
   (a) I’m sorry.
   (b) Sorry.
   (c) Excuse me.

3. can make it stronger. So is used most often.
   (a) I’m so sorry.
   (b) I’m terribly sorry.
   (c) I’m very sorry.

If you are the second person (the person who is bumped), you should show you are OK.

   (a) It’s OK.
   (b) That’s OK.
   (c) Sorry.
   (d) That’s all right.

Once in a while, you may show surprise.

   (a) Oops!
   (b) Oh!

B. Practice

With your partner, practice the three conversations below.

1. A: I’m so sorry.     Apology (show you are sorry + make stronger)
   B: That’s all right. Acceptance

2. C: Excuse me.       Apology (show you are sorry)
   D: It’s OK.          Acceptance

3. E: Oh, sorry.       Apology (surprise + show you are sorry)
   F: Oh! Sorry.        Acceptance (surprise + show you are OK)

Now practice making your own conversations. Use ideas from above.
II. Medium Level of Offense: If you bump into someone and the person drops something that doesn’t break, the conversation is usually longer.

A. Typical Language

If you are the first person, you

1. can show surprise.
2. must show you are sorry.
3. should make it stronger.
4. Many people will start to pick up whatever is dropped without saying anything or as they pick something up say
   (a) Let me help you.
   (b) Let me get that for you.

If you are the second person and the person helps you, say

1. Thanks.
2. Sorry.
3. If A says Let me get that for you, you can say That’s OK.

B. Practice

Use the conversations below to practice bumping into someone when the other person drops something. Then make your own conversations.

1. A: Oh, I’m so sorry. Let me help you. (as you bend down to help)
   B: Thanks.
2. C: Oh, sorry.
   D: (as C bends down to help) That’s OK.

III. High Level of Offense: If you bump into the person hard; the person spills food or a drink, especially something hot; or something breaks.

A. Typical Language

If you are the first person, you

1. will probably make the surprise stronger. (Oh my gosh!)
2. must show you are sorry.
3. will probably make it stronger.
4. should add concern (for example: Are you OK? Are you all right?).
**Teaching Apologies**

If you are the second person, you can respond

1. Yes, thanks.
2. Yeah, I guess so.
3. Yes, I think so.
4. Could you . . . ? (for example: Could you get me a wet towel to wipe off this spaghetti?)

B. Practice

With your partner, practice the conversations below. Then make your own.

1. A: Oh my gosh! I’m so sorry. Are you all right?
   B: Yeah, thanks.

2. C: (spills coffee on D’s pants) Oh! I’m so very sorry. Are you OK?
   D: Yeah, I think so, but I’m not too sure about these pants.

**APPENDIX B: SAMPLE COMMUNICATION CARDS**

**Situation A**

**Student A**
- Place: airplane
- You are walking down the aisle and bump into Student B.

**Student B**
- Place: airplane
- Respond to Student A.

**Situation B**

**Student A**
- Place: train station
- Respond to Student B.

**Student B**
- Place: train station
- You are in a train and bump into Student A, who drops his or her bag.

What do you do and/or say?
APPENDIX C: WORKSHEET 1A
(ALTERNATIVE TO WORKSHEET 1)

Name ___________________________ Class ___________________________

Discourse Completion Test to Elicit Apologetic Responses

Part I. You are shopping in a store in your country. You accidentally bump into someone.

A. Do you say anything? (Circle one.) YES NO SOMETIMES
   NO => Go to Part II.
   SOMETIMES => When would you say something? __________________________
   YES or SOMETIMES => Complete the following conversation.
   I would say (in your language) _______________________________________
   The person would respond (in your language) __________________________

   B. You accidentally bump into someone, and the person drops something.
      Is the conversation different than in Part I A (above)? (Circle one.) YES NO
      NO => Go to Part II.
      YES => Complete the following conversation.
      I would say (in your language) _______________________________________
      The person would respond (in your language) __________________________

Part II. You are shopping in a store in the United States. You accidentally bump into someone.

A. Do you say anything? (Circle one.) YES NO SOMETIMES
   NO => Why not? ______________________________________________________
   SOMETIMES => When would you say something? __________________________
   YES or SOMETIMES => Complete the following conversation.
   I would say (in English) ______________________________________________
   The person would respond (in English) _________________________________

   B. When you accidentally bump into someone, the person drops something. Is the
      conversation different than in Part IIA (above)?
      (Circle one.) YES NO
      NO => You are finished.
      YES => Complete the following conversation.
      I would say (in English) ______________________________________________
      The person would respond (in English) _________________________________