APOLOGY: A SPEECH-ACT SET

Elie Olshtain
Tel Aviv University

Andrew D. Cohen
Hebrew University of Jerusalem

Recent interest and research directed toward sociolinguistics and ethnographic studies have heightened the ESL/EFL methodologist's awareness of the need to incorporate such a focus in TESOL planning. The shift from grammatical to communicative competence in language learning has further reinforced that need. A growing number of textbook writers, curriculum designers, teacher trainers, and language teachers have been eagerly awaiting the latest results of sociolinguistic research.

Although the importance of communicative competence in TESOL is fully recognized, research on the specific components that make up such competence is still limited. If the learner of a new language is to acquire the rules for appropriate use of the linguistic forms in that language, we need to know more about those rules. The study of speech acts can provide us with better understanding and new insights into the interdependence of linguistic forms and sociocultural context.

The objective of this paper is to relate theoretical descriptions of speech acts to empirical studies involving data collected from language users. We will focus on the act of apologizing, which we refer to as a "speech-act set." Our discussion will relate to a group of studies conducted by ourselves and by other researchers. Certain research issues which have been underscored by these studies will be discussed, and recommendations for the application of such research to TESOL will be presented.

THE SPEECH-ACT SET

Since Hymes (1964) introduced the notion of communicative competence encompassing both the speaker's knowledge of the linguistic rules as well as the sociocultural rules for appropriate use, there has been an increasing interest in empirical research in the area and in practical applications of such sociolinguistic studies. Perhaps the most important realization of language teaching methodology has been the fact that effective communication involves the processing of social as well as linguistic knowledge.

The development of speech-act theory (Austin 1962; Searle 1969, 1975, 1976; Sinclair and Coulthard 1975) has given us a better understanding of what a speaker needs to know in order to perform effectively and appropriately in the act of communicating. Speech-act theory has also stimulated research focusing on speech events and speech acts, the results of which have made us more aware of the interplay of situational, sociolinguistic, and linguistic types of knowledge.

The distinction proposed by Hymes (1972) among speech situation, speech event, and speech act provides the sociolinguistic researcher with a framework for studying communicative competence. This framework provides a hierarchy which places the speech situation at the top, having the broadest scope; speech events come second since they take place within the speech situation; and speech acts, which have the narrowest scope of the three, come at the bottom of the ladder. According to this hierarchy one finds many speech situations within a speech community—e.g., meals, parties, auctions, and conferences, which in themselves are not governed by consistent rules. Speech events, on the other hand, are restricted to activities that are directly governed by rules of speech—e.g., lectures, introductions, advertising, and two or more party conversations. Speech acts are the minimal terms on the scale and refer to the acts we perform when we speak: giving reports, giving advice, agreeing, complaining, apologizing. Speech acts are thus defined in terms of discourse functions.

Although a speech act can occur within various speech events (one can apologize as part of a two-party conversation or as part of a lecture), they are triggered by specific behavior or discourse situations that need to be defined beyond one sociocultural context as well as within each such context. It may be that a person would need to apologize when hurting another person unintentionally—no matter where the situation occurred. Yet different degrees of severity in the action or different circumstances related to the behavior may call for different types of apologies and different intensities of such apologies in different cultures. We need to focus our discussions of speech acts on non-language-specific and language-specific features as well as on situation-specific information.

Austin (1962) drew our attention to the fact that many speech acts in English are closely related to the verbs that carry the semantic meaning implied in the speech act—for instance, "to request," "to complain," "to suggest." On the basis of Austin's notion of a performative act these verbs are referred to as performative verbs; they "name" the act which is being performed. Yet, as Searle (1976) has pointed out, these verbs are not really markers of the force of speech acts. A variety of verbs, although differing in semantic meaning, may be useful in bringing about the realization of the same speech function. In fact, only in very formal speech events would one prefer to use expressions like "I request . . ." or "I apologize . . ." as opposed to expressions like "Please give me . . ." or "I'm sorry." Moreover, as Searle (1975) points out, some speech acts are indirect—in other words, one speech
act is brought about indirectly by performing another one. Thus a statement like "the food smells delicious" may in one instance serve as an expression of the speaker’s hope that dinner will soon be ready, and in another as just a compliment for the hostess.

In this paper we would like to suggest a slight expansion of the notion "speech act" so as to clarify the relation between a discourse situation and the specific utterances that can qualify for certain speech functions. Since we intend to focus on apology, we will be concerned with the discourse situations which usually call for apologies and with the semantic formulas that would be appropriate for natives in such situations, in English and in other languages.

The act of apologizing is called for when there is some behavior which has violated social norms. When an action or utterance (or the lack of either one) has resulted in the fact that one or more persons perceive themselves as offended, the culpable person(s) needs to apologize. We are dealing here, therefore, with two parties: an apologizer and a recipient. However, only if the person who caused the infraction perceives him/herself as an apologizer do we get the act of apologizing.

The act of apologizing requires an action or an utterance which is intended to "set things right." Whether a specific discourse situation calls for an apology and whether a certain utterance qualifies as such an apology will depend on both linguistic and sociocultural norms.

In our effort to study apologies, we soon realized that the literature did not provide us with a good working definition of the notion "speech act." The difficulty of defining the term "speech act" is discussed by Schmidt and Richards (1980). They point out the key problem, namely, the fact that a speech act cannot be equated to a sentence, an utterance, or a turn since it is in essence an act and not only a unit of speech. According to Schmidt and Richards, Searle's (1976) classification of speech acts is still the best taxonomy available. According to this taxonomy, apologizing is an "expressive" act along with other speech acts such as "thank you," "congratulating," and "offering condolences." Searle's taxonomy gives us, at best, a useful classification of speech acts but still leaves us without an operational definition of what a speech act actually is.

On the basis of our work on apologies, we would like to suggest that sociolinguistic research dealing with speech acts concern itself more with the internal composition of a speech act. We know that a speech act can be performed in a number of different ways—i.e., by using the relevant performative verb, by using a direct act, or by using an indirect one. We have not yet been concerned sufficiently, however, with all the potential types of sentences or utterances that together create a set of parameters belonging to any particular speech act.

Fraser (1980) describes "semantic formulas" used in executing the act of apologizing. Each semantic formula consists of a word, phrase, or sentence which meets a particular semantic criterion or strategy, and any one or more of these can be used to perform the act in question. We would like to suggest that our goal be the description of the maximal potential set of semantic formulas for each act. Therefore, a "speech act set" would consist of the major semantic formulas, any one of which could suffice as an "emic" minimal element to represent the partic-

ular speech act. A combination of some of the formulas or all of them is also possible. Research will have to concern itself with the reasons why sometimes speakers prefer one formula and at other times another. This differential preference will need to be examined as it relates to the particular discourse situation within which the speech act is performed.

Apology then has a speech act set which will consist of a number of semantic formulas. The question now arises as to how we can arrive at the description of the complete speech-act set. We must first accept the fact that this is an idealized goal which requires considerable research of an ethnographic and sociolinguistic nature. The long-range aim can be defined as the quest for the semantic formulas which are non-language-specific, or in other words, universal in nature. The realization of such formulas might, however, be language-specific. Thus it may be reasonable to expect all apology acts to contain some form of an "expression of responsibility" on the part of the apologizer who has caused some infraction. Yet the specific sociocultural situations in which native speakers will produce this expression of responsibility may vary significantly from language to language.

Furthermore, the speech-act set, as well as any one formula within it, can be situation-specific. In addition, semantic formulas can be expressed through direct or indirect utterances. It is therefore necessary to apply the notion of indirect speech, as initially developed by Searle (1975) and further studied by others (Brown and Levinson 1978, Labov and Fanshel 1977, Shoshana Blum-Kulka 1982), to the semantic formulas within the speech act. The application of such an approach will become clearer in the subsequent discussion of the apology speech act set.

APOLOGIES

In describing the apology speech act set, we are assuming that there are two participants—one perceiving him/herself as deserving an apology and the second perceived by the first as having the responsibility for causing the offense. The second participant, therefore, needs to apologize yet may not perceive him/herself as responsible for the offense and may therefore choose to accept or deny it. With regard to the interaction between the recipient and the apologizer, we can describe the apology speech act set from a number of different points of view:

1. The recipient's expectations based on his/her perception of the degree of severity of the offense
2. The offender's apology based on his/her perception of the degree of severity of the offense
3. The offender's apology based on the extent of reprimanding expected from the recipient
4. The interactive nature of both the initial apology and the recipient's response
5. The social status of the two participants
6. The way the tone of voice may function to convey meaning

The first five points of view are usually integral aspects of the discourse situation within which the apology occurs, and they will be discussed with regard...
to how they affect the choice of semantic formulas within each apology speech-act set. (Tone of voice is mentioned in passing below in relation to the judged acceptability of an apology.) The discussion will focus on two dimensions: (1) the severity of the offense and (2) the status of the recipient. Thus a more serious offense might bring about an expression of apology like “I’m terribly sorry” (high intensity) as opposed to “I’m sorry” (low intensity). Similarly, one may offer an apology of higher intensity to a recipient of a higher status. In the Cohen and Olshain (1981) study which will be described below, special situations were chosen in order to allow for varying degrees of intensity.

In discussing the semantic formulas of the apology speech-act set, we need to distinguish between the case in which the offender perceived the need to apologize as opposed to the case where he/she denies all responsibility. When the offender is positively inclined to apologize, five potential semantic formulas seem to emerge:2

1. An expression of an apology
2. An explanation or account of the situation
3. An acknowledgment of responsibility
4. An offer of repair
5. A promise of forbearance

In most cases just one of the formulas is sufficient in order to perform an apology, but often two or three are combined together and thus create higher intensity of apology.

“An expression of apology,” the first formula in our set, consists of a number of subformulas:

a. An expression of regret, e.g., “I’m sorry.”

b. An offer of apology, e.g., “I apologize.”

c. A request for forgiveness, e.g., “Excuse me.” “Please forgive me.” or “Pardon me.”

In all these subformulas the apology is direct and one of the apology verbs is used: “apologize,” “be sorry,” “forgive,” “excuse,” and “pardon.” It may very well be that the major semantic formulas in a speech-act set are non-language-specific and that each language has a direct expression of apology using one or more of the “apology” verbs. The number of subformulas and their appropriateness to certain discourse situations would vary, however, from language to language. Moreover, which of the subformulas is most common in any language may be specific to that language. In English it seems that the first subformula, an expression of regret, is most common.

The second formula is “an explanation or account of the situation” which indirectly brought about the offense and is offered either in addition to or in lieu of the expression of an apology. Thus a person late for a meeting might explain “The bus was delayed.” We might hypothesize that the semantic formula as such is non-language-specific, while its appropriateness to certain discourse situations may be language-specific.

The third formula is “an acknowledgment of responsibility” and is non-language-specific. This formula will be chosen by the speaker/offender only when he/she recognizes responsibility for the offense. There are four subformulas in this case, and they can be described as follows:

a. Accepting the blame, e.g., “It is my fault.”

b. Expressing self-deficiency, e.g., “I was confused.” “I wasn’t thinking.” or “I didn’t see you.”

c. Recognizing the other person as deserving apology, e.g., “You are right!”

d. Expressing lack of intent, e.g., “I didn’t mean to.”

Among these four subformulas we see that only the first one is a direct acknowledgment of responsibility while the other three are indirect expressions of responsibility.

The last two semantic formulas in the above set are situation-specific. An offer of repair would be relevant only if physical injury or other damage has resulted (e.g., “I’ll pay for the broken vase” or “I’ll help you get up”), while a promise of forbearance relates to a case where the offender could have avoided the offense but did not do so, perhaps repeatedly; e.g., when someone has forgotten a meeting with a friend more than once, the person might want to say something like “It won’t happen again.” These two semantic formulas can therefore occur only if the specific discourse situation calls for such formulas.

We have so far discussed the case where the offender recognizes the need to apologize. We will now consider the case where the need to apologize is rejected. One possible case is where the offender does not react at all. When there is a verbal reaction, it can be:

1. A denial of the need to apologize, e.g., “there was no need for you to get insulted.”

2. A denial of responsibility

   a. Not accepting the blame, e.g., “It wasn’t my fault.”

   b. Blaming the other participant for bringing the offense upon him/herself, e.g., “It’s your own fault.”

The above description of the semantic formulas comprising the apology speech-act set will serve as a framework for discussing the various studies that we and our students at Hebrew University, Tel Aviv University, and UCLA have carried out.

ISSUES IN STUDYING NONNATIVE SPEAKERS’ SPEECH ACTS

The studies that will be discussed in this paper were motivated by a number of issues that have emerged out of the need to describe communicative competence. The following are some of the leading issues:

1. What kind of proficiency does the nonnative speaker need to have, in addition to linguistic proficiency, in order to accomplish the act of communicating successfully?
2. Can we describe the typical preferences that native speakers of a language manifest as they select semantic formulas for performing a certain speech act?
3. Can we develop measures for use in cross-cultural comparison of native-speaker preferences in selecting semantic formulas for certain speech-act sets?
4. Do we find evidence for language-universal components of speech-act sets?

Given our research interest in the act of apologizing in both first and second language, we saw the need to collect empirical data on the way in which apologies are performed in each of the languages with which we worked. In other words, we felt it necessary to set up native-speaker norms before we could study the difficulties faced by nonnative speakers.

As Manes and Wolfson (1981) state in their paper on the compliment formula, the best approach to collecting data about speech acts is the ethnographic approach—i.e., the collection of spontaneous speech in natural settings. From our perspective, however, there are disadvantages to collecting data in this way. Collecting a corpus of naturally occurring speech behavior takes considerable time. In addition, some speech acts, like apologies, occur less frequently and are more situation-dependent than others. Furthermore, we wanted to determine the selection and realization of semantic formulas in given discourse situations in order to produce archetypal sets for each given situation in each language. We therefore decided to set up a number of fixed discourse situations to use as a constant element in a series of studies (Cohen and Olshoain 1981).

In order to establish what the nonnative speaker needs to know in order to communicate successfully, we must have a description of the apology speech-act set in the target language and in the native language. We can then analyze nonnative performance data in terms of negative transfer, avoidance of negative transfer, and lack of linguistic or sociocultural proficiency. This was the approach followed in Cohen and Olshoain (1981). Another way of evaluating successful communication by nonnative speakers is to have their performance evaluated and rated by native speakers in terms of its acceptability, an approach followed by Blum-Kulka (1982) and by one of the student studies reported subsequently in this paper. Perhaps a combination of both approaches would be most revealing.

Another issue is the extent to which nonnative speakers’ lack of linguistic proficiency is or may be the cause for deviation from native-speaker norms. Nonnative speakers may choose different communication strategies in order to overcome their perceived lack of proficiency: they may either be very concise and tend to use the most general semantic formulas, or they may choose to elaborate and “say too much” in order to express their need to apologize. Thus, often the lack of appropriateness is a direct result of the lack of linguistic and not necessarily sociocultural proficiency. Moreover even with regard to non-language-specific semantic formulas, the nonnative speaker may resort to the strategy of avoidance due to lack of linguistic proficiency. This can only be studied by comparing L1 norms with L2 norms.

Another issue in nonnative speakers’ performance is their preconceived notions of the target sociocultural rules relating to the particular speech act.

Jordens and Kellerman (1981) studied the learner’s perception of how distant the target language is from the native language, the learner’s perception of markedness which is transferable to the new language, and how these perceptions affect learning strategies. In our studies we felt that it would be important to focus on the learner’s perception of the speech act in terms of language specificity or language universality. In the case of apologies, for instance, if the learner’s perception is that “one apologizes profusely or not very frequently” in the target language, the tendency might be to increase or lower the degree of apology, respectively. On the other hand, if the learner perceives the speech act as universal in nature, the tendency might be to transfer apology behavior directly from L1. This aspect was studied to some extent in the Olshoain (1981) study.

Finally, we come to the issue of establishing universal features of speech-act sets. Once we have established archetypal sets within a number of languages, we could conduct cross-cultural comparison of these speech acts. Such comparisons would render a list of components having universal features, at least with respect to the languages in question. As we continue to do such cross-cultural studies, a more complete picture will emerge.

REVIEW OF APOLOGY STUDIES

The Cohen and Olshoain Hebrew University Study

Our first apology study involved eight apology situations selected to assess cultural competence. We were looking for language behavior in apologizing that reflected negative transfer from native language, an avoidance of negative transfer, or lack of grammatical proficiency. Four of the situations were especially set up to elicit different degrees of intensity of regret (e.g., “sorry” vs. “I’m really sorry”)—hitting a car; and bumping into a lady (1) hurting her, (2) just shaking her up, and (3) because she was in the way. The remaining four situations were meant to assess the effect of status of the addressee on the formality of the apology—insulting someone at a meeting, forgetting a meeting with (1) a boss, (2) a friend, and (3) your son.

The situations were randomly ordered and responses elicited without any intended reply from the addressee. The respondents read the situation to themselves, and then the investigator role-played the person doing the apologizing.

The subjects were 44 college students around 20 years of age. Twelve were native English speakers (E1), who provided data on how English speakers apologize in their native language. The remaining 32 were native Hebrew speakers, 12 of whom provided Hebrew (H1) responses and 20 of whom provided English-as-a-foreign-language (E2) responses.

We found situations in which E2 deviations from the cultural patterns of E1 appeared to be a result of negative transfer from H1 patterns since the deviant patterns were similar to those present in H1 responses. For example, E2 speakers did not express an apology as much as E1 speakers in insulting someone at a meeting and in forgetting to take their son shopping. Nor did E2 speakers offer
repair as frequently as E1 speakers in forgetting a meeting with their boss and in forgetting to take their son shopping.

There were also situations in which E2 responses were more like E1 than H1 responses. It may have been that in these situations E2 speakers were successful at avoiding negative transfer of sociocultural patterns operating in their native language. For example, E2 speakers expressed an apology frequently in bumping into a lady because she was in the way, as E1 speakers did but unlike H1 speakers. Also, E2 speakers acknowledged responsibility like E1 speakers, in forgetting a meeting with the boss and in insulting someone at a meeting.

We did find certain situations where E2 responses seemed to indicate a deficiency in linguistic proficiency—situations where E1 and H1 responses were similar and more complete. In other words, there were situations in which E2 respondents may not have been proficient enough in English to readily include the expected semantic formula in their responses in the testing situation. For instance, E2 speakers were less likely than E1 or H1 speakers to offer repair in backing into someone else’s car and in bumping into a lady, hurting her. Likewise, E2 respondents were less likely to acknowledge responsibility in the situation of bumping into a lady, shaking her up a bit.

We also found that E2 responses did not always reflect the appropriate intensity of regret (e.g., “I’m very sorry.”). For example, in the situations of forgetting to get together with a friend and bumping into a lady, hurting her, E2 respondents did not intensify their regret as much as E1 respondents. This deviation may well have been the result of native-language transfer, since intensity in Hebrew can be signaled by an interjection. With respect to stylistic behavior, we found only negligible deviation for both E2 and E1 respondents.

There was a numerical component to this study—i.e., the generating of a rating scale. This component will be referred to under Applications below.

Finally, this study provided a set of data from which it would be possible to derive an archetypical apology for each of the apology situations. Table 1 suggests what such apologies might look like. Their semantic formulas are labeled, using the formulas that we had developed for that study.

A Hebrew University Study of Apology Based on Dramatic Role Play by Pairs of Hebrew-Speaking Children

Ilana Yaacov, a student of Cohen’s at the Hebrew University, did an apology study using as native-speaker respondents Israeli elementary students (grades 2 and 4) participating in a drama class. The focus of this study was on the degree of apology that a child would use in response to the severity of the offending action. Two children were given the task of role playing the two participants in each apology situation (same sex and cross sex). The following is a typical situation from this study:

Two girls are participants in an apology situation in which the recipient owns a beautiful dress she received for her birthday, which the offender borrowed for a special occasion. The dress got damaged in the process. The girls act out the same situation three times, but each time a

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 1 Archetypal Apologies by Situation</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Insulting someone at a meeting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I’m very sorry. (APOL) I really didn’t mean it as a personal insult. (RESP)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Forgetting a meeting with your boss</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I’m sorry. (APOL) I completely forgot about it. (RESP) Is it possible for me to make another appointment? Can we meet now? (REPR) This won’t happen again. I promise. (FORB)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Forgetting a meeting with a friend</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I forgot all about our meeting. It slipped my mind. (RESP) I’m sorry. (APOL) We can arrange another time shortly. (REPR)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Forgetting to take your son shopping</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ah, sweetie. Mommy didn’t mean to forget. (RESP) I’m sorry. (APOL) I promise to make it up to you as soon as I get home today. (REPR) It won’t happen again. (FORB)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Backing into a car</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I’m very sorry, sir. (APOL) I didn’t mean to. The fault is totally mine. (RESP) I’ll take care of it. (REPR)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bumping lady, spilling packages and hurting her</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I’m really sorry. (APOL) I didn’t see you. (RESP) Are you O.K.? Can I help you? Let me help you pick everything up. (REPR)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bumping lady, shaking her up</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I’m sorry. (APOL) I didn’t mean to bump into you. (RESP) Let me help you pick up these things. (REPR)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bumping lady because she is in the way</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I’m sorry for knocking into you (APOL), but you were in my way.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

KEY: APOL — expression of an apology  
RESP — acknowledgment of responsibility  
REPR — offer of repair  
FORB — promise of forbearance

different degree of severity of damage is assumed: (1) the dress is dirty, (2) the dress is torn, (3) the dress is lost.

This study found the following: when apologizing at the lowest level of severity, the offender mostly used the semantic formula “an expression of an apology” and a subformula of “acknowledgment of responsibility”—expressing lack of intent. At the two higher degrees of severity, offenders used the formula “offer of repair.” Perhaps the most striking finding in this study was that the children tended to “deny responsibility” when apologizing at the highest degree of severity, since they expected strong reaction from the recipient. Although in this case the subjects were young children, this finding would suggest that we need to study the relationship at various age levels between the type of apology selected and the extent of reprimand expected from the recipient.

The Olstain Study of Adult Learners of Hebrew

This study focused on speakers of Russian and English learning Hebrew in Israel. The eight original apology situations that had been used in the Cohen and Olstain (1981) study were once again utilized for data collection in this study.
Furthermore, the native-speaker response norms for apologies by discourse situations as developed in the earlier study served as the basis for both cross-cultural comparison and evaluation of the nonnative speakers' production in Hebrew.

The group of 12 English speakers from the earlier study represented the English native norm and the group of 12 Hebrew speakers represented the Hebrew norm. For the Olshaint (1981) study a group of 12 Russian speakers were given the same situations in order to collect data on Russian and thus arrive at a norm in Russian. In addition, a group of 13 speakers of English and 14 speakers of Russian, all learning Hebrew at about the same level of proficiency (intermediate to advanced) were asked to react to the eight situations in Hebrew. They were given cards with the situation written out both in Hebrew and in their native language, and then the investigator acted out the initial statement by the recipient of the offense to which the subjects had to react in Hebrew. The subjects were mostly in the 20 to 30 age group, with a small number of Russian speakers slightly older. They had all been living in Israel from 6 months to 2 years. Their Hebrew was approximately at the same level since some of them had had Hebrew before they had arrived in Israel. There was an equal number of men and women.

The study first dealt comparatively with the norms for apologizing in each of the three languages. The conclusions drawn from this part of the study established that the major semantic formulas were "universal," at least with respect to the three languages studied. The average frequency of all semantic formulas except "offer of repair" was higher for English (L1) and Russian (L1) than for Hebrew (L1). The study found that the highest degree of apology overall was in English, somewhat lower in Russian, and the lowest in Hebrew. The comparison could be described as follows:

   English > Russian > Hebrew

On the other hand, the formula "offer of repair" stood out as fairly high in Hebrew, though still slightly lower than in English, but considerably higher than in Russian. On the basis of this cross-cultural comparison one might expect that the learner of Hebrew who is sensitive to overall differences will apologize less in Hebrew than in the native language.

In addition to the data collection carried out as part of this study, the subjects were also interviewed in order to establish their overall perception of apology as language-specific or language-universal. It was found that English speakers tended to perceive spoken Hebrew as calling for fewer apology acts and therefore maintained that one needed to apologize less in Hebrew. The speakers of Russian, on the other hand, had a much more universal perception, claiming that people need to apologize according to their feelings of responsibility regardless of the language which they happen to be speaking.

We found that speakers of English in fact did tend to apologize considerably less in Hebrew (H2) than they did in English, consistent with their perceptions about H2, while speakers of Russian apologized more in H2 than in their native language, again consistent with their perceptions about H2.

The Olshaint (1981) study seems to point to the fact that attitudes and preconceived notions about the target language and the universality of the speech act may play a significant role in the performance of adult learners. Moreover, it raises the question of the relationship among the semantic formulas within the speech-act set, a relationship that may produce differences in cross-cultural comparison.

The UCLA Studies

Four graduate students in the TESL Program at the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA) did apology studies under Cohen's supervision. A brief description of some of the salient features of these projects is presented below. The studies are valuable both for the methodological decisions taken and for some of the more striking findings that warrant scrutiny despite the small sample sizes.

The Ford Study—Apologies in English and Spanish

In this study (Ford, 1981) there were eight apology situations, five of which were in the Cohen and Olshaint study. This time there were also three situations that did not call for apologies (two request situations and one in which the subject was apologized to). The investigator reported doing this in order to keep the subjects' attention and to make them think carefully before each response.

The subjects were three native English speakers who served as E1 respondents and three Spanish-speaking Latin Americans who served as both S1 and E2 respondents. The investigator also used two of the E1 respondents plus another E1 speaker to be raters of the acceptability of E2 apologies on a three-point scale.

In analyzing her data, Ford saw the need to make "excuse" a separate semantic formula, rather than a subformula of "expression of apology." She also formed a semantic formula called "intention"—i.e., a statement that the act was unintentional.

Ford's major finding was that the Spanish speakers, in both S1 and E2 responses, expressed an apology twice as often as did E1 speakers. This finding is consistent with a common belief that Latin Americans are more polite than Americans in certain ritualized interaction situations.

Ford's use of raters to determine the acceptability of apology not only provided information as to which speakers and situations produced the most and the least acceptable apologies. The raters also provided explanations as to why they rated responses as they did. For example, "tone of delivery" was considered important. One subject was rated down in two situations for not sounding regretful enough. Another factor was inappropriate word choice. In one case, the word was not stylistically appropriate in that the respondent used the slightly disrespectful word "lady" in "I'm sorry, lady. I didn't see you." In another case, the word reflected an inaccurate word choice—"guess" instead of "hope," in "I guess I didn't hurt you."

The Castello, Kim, and Wu Studies—Apologies in English, Spanish, Korean and Chinese

Three apology studies were conducted as a team effort. Each investigator used the same eight situations, which were fashioned for the most part
after Cohen and Olshain (1981). The situations were designed to tap intensity of regret and stylistic formality. The situations included coughing in the middle of a sentence, missing a meeting with a professor, missing lunch with a friend, not having data ready for a professor, bumping into another student’s tray, picking up the wrong umbrella from a man/woman, and damaging a friend’s bike. In this study, the informants were not told to apologize but simply to react—i.e., “How would you react? What would you say, if anything?” This allowed for a non-apologetic response.

In the English-Spanish study (Castello, 1981) there was a native English (E1) respondent and a native Spanish speaker, who provided both S1 and E2 responses. In the English-Korean study (Kim 1981), there was also a native English (E1) respondent and a native Korean speaker (providing K1 and E2 responses). In the English-Chinese study (Wu 1981), there were three native English (E1) respondents and three native Chinese speakers (providing C1 and E2 responses).

The three investigators included in their data analysis a semantic formula called “offer of explanation,” and found that all the E2 responses included an explanation of the situation, whereas this was generally not the case in native-language (E1, S1, K1, or C1) responses. Thus, sometimes nonnatives are deviant for saying too much, not just for saying too little. For example, in the situation of taking the wrong umbrella, the E1 respondents usually refrained from offering an explanation. They just said something like “Right you are. So sorry. There you go,” while a Chinese E2 respondent said, “Oh, excuse me. I didn’t want to take away your umbrella. Uh... if I wanted to take your umbrella away, I should take away my umbrella also. But my umbrella is still in the place.”

Whereas we (Cohen and Olshain 1981) found that Hebrew E2 respondents did not intensify their expressions of regret as much as E1 respondents, Wu found Chinese respondents intensified regret far more than E1 respondents, in both E2 and C1 responses. The E1 respondents used three times more low-intensity regret (“I’m sorry”) than high-intensity regret (“I’m very sorry”). The E2 responses reflected almost twice as much high-intensity as low-intensity regretting, and C1 responses more than three times more high-intensity regretting. Thus, while Hebrew E2 speakers may appear somewhat rude to native English speakers when expressing regret, Chinese E2 speakers may appear overly polite, even obsequious.

To get a feeling for apologies across languages, we will look at responses across languages in one situation in this set of studies, that of a student’s not having data ready to show a professor. This situation was meant to collect data on the issue of apologizing to someone at a higher status level.

**Situation**

You are a student doing independent study. You had promised your professor that you would have your data ready by a certain date. The date arrives and you don’t have it ready. (You had too much work in all of your other classes and just got behind.)

**Responses:**

**English E1:** I’m sorry but I don’t have my data ready yet. I’ve been really busy with my other classes. I just haven’t been able to get everything done that I promised to do for you. But I promise to get it in as soon as possible. I’m working hard on it now.

**Spanish E2:** I’m sorry. I have not yet obtained all your data. I will need a few more days. You know I’ve had so much work with the other assignments these days.

**Korean E2:** I’m terribly sorry, sir. I can’t prepare data. I have many things to do. Within ten days, I try to report it to you. Sorry.

**Chinese E2:** I’m so sorry I didn’t finish you give me the task, because this week I have a heavy task.

These are not intended to be archetypal nonnative responses. As is evident even from this small sampling, the utterances are from nonnatives at varying levels of linguistic proficiency.

**METHODOLOGICAL ISSUES AT LARGE**

Conducting research on speech-acts sets has brought up a number of methodological issues which have yet to be mentioned in this paper. These issues relate to three broad areas—design of the study, data-collection procedures, and data analysis.

**Study Design**

We have already made an effort to look at the effects of the status of the person receiving the apology upon the formality of the apology (e.g., student to professor or employee to boss). We have also looked at the intensity of apology according to the perceived severity of the offense. We have not dealt with the sex of the apologizer and the recipient in any systematic way. A set of three UCLA/TESL M.A. studies of complaints by native speakers of English (Schaefer 1982), Spanish (Giddens 1981), and Japanese (Inoue 1982), respectively, have dealt systematically with the sex of the respondent and addressee. Twenty males and 20 females have served as respondents in each study, and the sex of the addressee for each situation is alternated for two male/female subgroups of 10 respondents. This procedure has produced striking results, particularly in certain situations (e.g., Spanish speakers complaining to same/opposite sex about their smoking in a nonsmoking section on an airplane; Giddens 1981).

Another design issue is how to avoid getting response sets from the respondents. Even though we presented the situations in a different random order to each of our students in the Cohen and Olshain (1981) study, the students still were into a mind set that they had to do was to apologize. Hence, there could have been a carry-over effect from one response to another. In her study, Ford (1981) added a few distractor situations to offset this. Castello (1981), Kim (1981), and Wu (1981) refrained from instructing students to apologize, and thus left the students more to their own devices. The former approach of having distractor situations lengthens the elicitation session. The latter approach of not stipulating that apologies are called for may not produce a desired quantity of apologies.

Another design issue involves care in devising situations. In the Cohen and Olshain (1981) study, there were three responses delivered over the phone, all regarding forgetting an encounter. We did not consider the fact that the medium of the telephone may well influence the respondent’s output. Perhaps the
The notionally based syllabus, as first suggested by Wilkins (Bibliography, 1976) and later discussed in many papers and presentations (see, in the Bibliography, Campbell, Rutherford, Finocchiaro, and Widdowson in Blatchford and Schachter 1978; Crandall and Grognet 1979), is an attempt to incorporate sociocultural competence, as one aspect of communicative competence, into the teaching syllabus.

Sociocultural competence, in the framework of our study, refers to the speakers’ ability to determine the pragmatic appropriateness of a particular speech act in a given context. At the production level, it involves the selection of one of several grammatically acceptable forms according to the perceived degree of formality of the situation and of the available forms. Therefore, communicative competence needs to be translated into the choices and preferences which the learner will have to be able to make in order to perform speech acts in the new language.

As discussed earlier in this paper, in order to evaluate the knowledge of a nonnative speaker or to plan the content of a teaching program, we must have a description of the speech-act sets in the target language. We can then make didactic decisions related to teaching. As an example of such decision making, let us consider the case of the apology speech-act set.

At the present stage of analysis we know what major semantic formulas make up the English apology speech-act set. For the purpose of syllabus design we will assume that the learner needs to know how to apologize in a variety of interactive discourse situations in the target language. However, which of these are the most likely to be encountered by a specific group of learners will have to be considered separately in each case. As a result of such considerations, syllabus designers need to come up with a list.

Once we have developed a tentative list of apology situations relevant for a particular group of learners, we need to decide which of these are suitable for the early part of the course of study and which should be left for a later stage. Such sequencing decisions will depend mostly on the immediate needs of the learners, but course designers will also have to take into account the “spiral” reintroduction of the apology speech act throughout the entire course of study.

The next step in the syllabus design process will be to decide which and how many semantic formulas should be introduced at each point in the syllabus or textbook, in accordance with the situations which have been selected. Such decisions can be made only when good descriptions of speech-act sets are available for both L1 and L2. In order to lead the learners to an ultimate level at which they will make their own choices, we need to expose them to the patterns used most commonly by native speakers of the L2. Sociolinguistic research has already been of great help in this respect. Manes and Wolfson (1981) emphasize the relative “lack of originality” expressed by native speakers in English compliments. They point to the striking repetitiveness of linguistic forms in English compliments. From our own studies concerning apologies we can further reinforce this point; within each of the five major semantic formulas of the apology speech act set, there is relatively little variation. The form “I am sorry” is by far the most widespread expression of apology.
The second edition of the textbook, published in 1961, included a number of significant changes from the first edition. The authors, aiming to make the content more accessible, focused on providing clearer explanations and additional examples to aid understanding. The textbook was revised to incorporate feedback from educators and students, resulting in a more refined and user-friendly structure.

The revised edition also placed greater emphasis on the application of social and cultural perspectives in education. This approach was intended to broaden the students' understanding of the diverse contexts in which educational practices occur. The authors highlighted the importance of considering cultural and social factors in the design and implementation of educational programs.

Key topics covered in this edition included the influence of social and cultural factors on educational outcomes, the role of culturally responsive teaching, and the importance of adapting teaching strategies to meet the needs of diverse student populations. The textbook also included case studies and examples drawn from various educational settings, providing practical insights into the application of theoretical concepts.

Additionally, the second edition featured updated research and statistics, reflecting the latest developments in the field of education. The authors acknowledged the dynamic nature of education and the need for ongoing revision and update to ensure that the textbook remains relevant and useful for students and educators alike.

Overall, the second edition of the textbook aimed to foster a more inclusive and culturally sensitive approach to teaching, encouraging educators to reflect on the diverse backgrounds and experiences of their students and to adapt their practices accordingly.