

Apologies Across Cultures: An Analysis of Intercultural Communication Problems Raised in the *Ehime Maru* Incident

Darren Lingley

Kochi University, Japan

Bio Data

Darren Lingley has worked in a variety of teaching contexts in Japan for 13 years. He is currently an Associate Professor in the Department of International Studies at Kochi University in southern Japan where he teaches Intercultural Communication and Comparative Culture. His research interests include content-based language teaching, Intercultural Communication and curriculum design.

Abstract

This paper describes in detail an example of a failed intercultural communication and offers a teaching procedure to help students cope with culture's impact on language. Using the 2001 accident involving the sinking of the *Ehime Maru*, a Japanese fisheries high school training boat, the paper employs a "critical incidents" approach to suggest how differing cultural norms and values surrounding apologies in America and Japan caused serious intercultural communication problems. A pedagogical background demonstrating the importance of emphasizing culture and awareness-raising activities in language teaching is provided along with intercultural communication background specifically situating differing cultural apology values as a potentially huge area for intercultural miscommunication. Using a critical incidents approach, a teaching procedure and supplemental materials are then offered as a possible method for helping students understand differing expectations that might occur when apologizing across cultures. The procedure is linked to Bennett's (1993) Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity and encourages students to deal with cultural difference in a way that best represents the spirit of ethnorelativity as described in the "acceptance" stage of Bennett's model.

Introduction

On February 9th, 2001, the USS Greenville, a U.S. Navy submarine, surfaced on a training maneuver near Hawaii and accidentally hit the *Ehime Maru*, a Japanese high school training ship. Nine members on board the *Ehime Maru*, including several students, died in the accident. The accident became an international incident with much of the attention centering on the different cultural norms related to apologies, with the bereaved Japanese families expecting a form of apology that was not immediately forthcoming from the American side, particularly the captain of the submarine. The issue was further complicated by frenzied media attention both in Japan and in the U.S. which attempted to portray the *Ehime Maru* accident in light of other vaguely or unrelated issues including the American military presence in Okinawa, the raising of the boat to recover the dead, the questionable performance of the Japanese Prime Minister, and, later, the issue of apology in the context of Japan's imperialistic history. This paper offers the incident as an example of an intercultural communication problem with special reference to helping students understand how cultural factors can impact apologies. Using a variety of authentic materials (media reports, opinion pieces and letters), a teaching procedure is then described to help students analyze such culturally influenced communication problems. The teaching procedure is strongly influenced by Bennett's (1998) Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity and is based on materials that might help students reach the first of Bennett's ethnorelativist stages, that of *acceptance*.

Intercultural Communication: The culture and language bridge

Teachers working in EFL contexts where such intercultural communication crises might occur need to be prepared to deal with incidents like this and the cultural questions that are sure to arise in the classroom. Such incidents provide an opportunity to show how culture impacts on language and behaviour, and to show how to overcome, or preferably prevent, the cultural resentment that so naturally appears in failed intercultural communication. This paper focuses on different cultural expectations regarding apologies between Japanese and Americans with particular emphasis on how differing cultural norms regarding apologies can seriously impact intercultural communication. Culture clearly featured strongly in this case and such examples provide pieces of the cultural puzzle that language learners must always deal with as they progress in overall language development. The *Ehime Maru* accident is presented here as a real life example of a clearly failed intercultural communication, a 'critical incident' that can also be used to help students understand some of the fundamental theory of intercultural communication research as well as culture's influence on language. A teaching procedure for analysis of apologies across cultures is offered as a means for helping students realize what psychological conditions are necessary to reach the "acceptance" level of the ethnorelativist stages of Bennett's (1993) intercultural sensitivity model. It is based on analyzing cultural difference in ways that help students better understand both the "Self" and the "Other".

Description of the intercultural communication problem

For the purposes of this paper a brief account of what transpired in the month or so following the accident is necessary to give the reader a better understanding of the controversy surrounding cultural norms of apology seen in the incident. In the period

between February 9th and February 28th, the U.S. was slow to officially apologize for the incident with public statements offering only such phrases as "sincere regret" if indeed the U.S. Navy is found to be at fault. On the U.S. side, at stake was a tense political relationship between the two countries, legal issues, an accident investigation and the matter of compensation. Finally, on February 27th, an American envoy was sent to Japan with an official and comprehensive apology from the U.S. President delivered both at the diplomatic level and to the bereaved families, a full apology that was well-received but still failed to appease the families as it did not come directly from the submarine captain. During this period, the captain of the submarine, Cmdr. Scott Waddle, maintained a silence that increasingly infuriated the families of the victims on the Japanese side. Waddle's non-apology during this period is best explained in light of his being the subject of an ongoing Navy investigation and in terms of the constraints of potential legal liability. Finally, also on February 27th, he expressed an apology in the form of "sincere regret" for the accident in written letters to the families delivered to the Japanese consulate in Hawaii. This gesture of apology was rejected outright by the victims, deemed too impersonal and insufficient for making amends. While he did express a desire to formally visit Japan to apologize, legal issues prevented him from doing so.

During this same period, it became clear that the type of apology the Japanese victims and the public wanted from the submarine captain was unlikely to be offered any time soon. Japanese families repeatedly requested a clear and public expression of contrition from Cmdr. Waddle, given directly to the victims to include an acknowledgement of responsibility and to reflect that he was aware of the grief the

families were feeling. The Japanese maintained that the apology must have a human face and many even demanded that Cmdr. Waddle should kneel and bow before them, as is ritual in Japan in similar serious cases. His reluctance to make any public remarks and to express an apology to the families directly was viewed as offensive and as a failure to abide by Japanese cultural norms of the victims valuing decorum and form. To the degree that the one making an apology is personally involved and responsible, and should express that sense of responsibility and sorrow directly to the victim, the *Ehima Maru* incident can be seen as straddling the domains of public and interpersonal apologies. With the direct apology desired by the victims, they then can choose whether or not to accept the apology. Although the incident was a public act, it required from the Japanese victims a more interpersonal form of apology from the person directly responsible and therefore the case does not fit neatly into either category.

Bennett's Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity

Bennett's (1993) DMIS model of IC sensitivity is rooted in developmental psychology and views understanding of cultural difference in terms of personal growth spanning a continuum from Ethnocentric Stages (denial, defense, minimization) to Ethnorelative Stages (acceptance, adaptation and integration). The "acceptance" level has been described by Bennett (1998) as follows:

"People at the acceptance stage enjoy recognizing and exploring cultural differences. They are aware that they themselves are cultural beings. They are fairly tolerant of ambiguity and are comfortable knowing there is no right answer (although there are better answers for particular contexts). "Acceptance" does not mean that a person has to agree with or take on a cultural perspective other than his or her own. Rather people accept the *viability* of different cultural ways of thinking and behaving, even though they may not like them." (1998, p. 28)

The parallel aims of this paper - analysis of apology behaviours across cultures and provision of a teaching procedure to help students deal with cultural differences of apologies - integrate Bennett's model in the sense that fostering ethnorelative thinking in students leads to smoother intercultural communication. It is suggested here that encouraging students to reach a minimal level of ethnorelative thinking as exemplified by the acceptance level is a worthy endeavour and appropriate in terms of the developmental level of intermediate-level Japanese students embarking in the field of Intercultural Communication. It is particularly useful as a model in the sense that it mainly aims at awareness raising with respect to perception of cultural difference. As a model though, it does have limitations not the least of which is that it fails to adequately deal with "difference-within-difference", as Guilherme (2002, p. 136) has noted, and "does not problematise the formation of (inter)cultural identities sufficiently" (op. cit.). However, with a critical approach to both analysis of Japanese and American apology behaviours and the materials used to help students negotiate and understand apologies across cultures, the model has proved useful in determining whether or not students can deal with difference in a culturally appropriate way in this particular context of IC learning.

Pedagogical background: Use of "Critical Cultural Incidents"

Critical incidents are defined in Chen and Starosta (1998) as case studies based on real-life experiences with people from other cultures which "depict a controversy or source of conflict that reflects cultural values or other aspects of a culture" (p. 272). Tomalin and Stempleski (1993) have shown how critical incidents and cultural incidents can be used to develop effective teaching materials for increasing cultural awareness

and sensitivity in students. Brislin (2002) suggests that critical incidents are useful for intercultural communication training and education because they provide an approach whereby students can analyze cases "that depict people in intercultural encounters that involve a misunderstanding or a difficulty"(Brislin, 2002, cited online). In the process of working through an incident to identify why a communication may have failed, students can also be introduced to "research-based concepts that assist in understanding many other intercultural interactions they are likely to have in the future" (op. cit.). While exploration of critical incidents is a student-centered strategy, the teacher may at times integrate a mini-lecture style format to focus on IC concepts as they arise.

While critical incidents are usually brief descriptions of situational events between interlocutors from different cultures, the *Ehime Maru* accident is offered here as a "critical cultural incident", a more complicated and involved incident which is familiar to Japanese students. Brislin (1993) notes that ideal critical incidents "include experiences with which all...participants can identify" (p. 227). The *Ehime Maru* incident is also controversial enough to elicit a variety of culturally biased emotions and reactions to be identified and dealt with by the teacher. Use of critical cultural incidents is suggested here not only for more typical ELT situations but also in more specific course offerings where EFL teachers are often asked to coordinate their English language classes as part of broader fields such as "Intercultural Communication" or "Comparative Culture".

Noting that critical incidents may be preferable to "presenting prescriptive rules" (p. 26), Meier (1997) has called for more awareness-raising activities in language teaching

suggesting the potential for the second language classroom as a "venue for culture teaching" (p. 26). Use of a critical incident approach to study apologies is also in line with Meier's (1998) position that findings in the literature on apology behaviour in English are too varied and that general descriptions of behaviour are not sufficient. At the very least, use of a critical incidents methodology for teaching intercultural communication can create an environment in which learners "gain insight into cultural assumptions which underlie the perception of contextual and situational factors as they inform linguistic behaviour" (Meier, 1997, p. 25).

A valuable precursor to the teaching of apology strategies used in English is the contrastive teaching of cultural norms related to apologies in a specific EFL context. This comparative method of teaching, sensitive to how the needs of both cultures should be considered, studies factors that can potentially impact on how an apology is given or received, and even whether or not an apology is actually offered. This kind of comparative analysis has the potential, as Byram (1997) notes, to turn "learners' attention back on their own practices, beliefs and social identities" (p. 20). The *Ehime Maru* incident provides a case where learners can consciously "understand that different evaluations of appropriateness may exist across cultures" (Meier, 1997, pp. 24-25). It should be noted here that contrastive analysis does have potential "traps" many of which have been detailed by Guest (2002). These include very real dangers such as oversimplification, polarization of cultural attributes and cultural reductivism (pp. 154-155). There is also the possibility that critical incidents, especially those as emotionally charged as the *Ehime Maru* case, might serve to create even stronger feelings about how one feels about members of another culture, thus reinforcing

stereotypes and generalizations. Further, in terms of working with cases such as the *Ehime Maru* incident, special heed is called for with respect to Guest's fear that contrastive analysis can "lead to cross-cultural paralysis" (p. 25). Rather than reducing dealings with the target culture to a level of "hypersensitivity", this kind of study is meant to prepare students with the skills "to be able to look at their own interaction with others analytically with fresh eyes in order to solve the puzzle of what is going on" (Holliday, Hyde and Kullman, 2004, p. 2). Indeed, as a strategy contrastive analysis should involve the utmost in terms of sensitivity, acknowledgement of exceptions, and avoidance of "otherization". As such, close analysis of an intercultural critical incident gone wrong can help learners attain a level of development of intercultural sensitivity close to the initial phase of Bennett's (1998) ethnorelative stages. Intercultural analysis of this kind helps students to recognize, appreciate and accept difference and sets the stage for better linguistic understanding of apology strategies for actual use in English.

For language teachers working in EFL contexts, mainly with lower-intermediate or intermediate level students, the research findings from Maeshiba, Yoshinaga, Kasper and Ross (1996) are of particular interest here. They found that native Japanese learners of English at the intermediate level were three times more likely to apply their native apologetic behaviours than more advanced learners. If indeed one aim of intercultural communication and language teaching is to help students improve pragmatic ability in English, cross-cultural studies of apologies such as the one presented here should be of value to the learner. The primary objectives of this lesson focus on developing a "critical cultural awareness" (Byram, p. 35) consisting of recognition of cultural differences, tolerance of others' values and understanding of cultural relativity. During

this process of ethnorelative learning, the degree to which students choose to adopt the cultural norms regarding apology as an influence on actual production of the target language is left to the discretion of the individual student. The native-speaker cultural norms (in this case American) are presented alongside the Japanese cultural norms influencing apology. If, as Gieve (1999) hopes, such study "empowers students to co-create an interactive context of their own inter-cultural space" (p. 7), then the teaching approach can be deemed successful. Focus on the development of key intercultural communication skills such as self-awareness and cultural sensitivity can be seen as ends in and of themselves.

IC background: Culturally influenced apologies between Japan and America

Intercultural communication scholars from Japan and America have given a great deal of attention to cultural differences between the two countries and how they might negatively impact communication. A study by Barnlund and Yoshioka (1990) found that although both Japanese and Americans chose to offer apologies directly, most other forms and behaviours related to the delivery of apologies were fundamentally different. They conclude that the act of "offering an apology, what prompts it, to whom it is offered, how it is offered, with what consequences, embodies underlying cultural assumptions and values" (p. 203). While the focus of their study is on strategies for offering genuine apologies in interpersonal situations, they begin by comparing public apology strategies of similar real-life accidents to demonstrate differing cultural values. Differing assumptions, in our case with respect to apology behaviour, highlight what Gudykunst and Nishida (1994) have termed "violations of expectations" (p. 86) in a communication, causing an arousal in either or both interlocutors.

Studies in Japan include Naotsuka, Sakamoto, et al (1981) who attempted to explain cultural differences in apology styles between the two countries in terms of mutuality. They highlight the mutual aspect of Japanese apologies as a social lubricant by suggesting that "one is always expected to apologize in any awkward situation, regardless of the degree of actual personal responsibility for the awkwardness, in order to keep things running smoothly"(p. 166). This they contrast to a more adversarial approach by Americans where apologies are proffered less willingly, instead using "mutual confrontation as a social catalyst"(p.167) with apologies "considered to be more voluntary"(p. 167). This view is supported by Sugimoto's (1997) comparative study of American and Japanese college students which found that Japanese students put more importance on expression of regret, were more willing to offer and receive apologies and that Japanese participants in the study were more concerned with saving face than their American counterparts who tried to maintain autonomy by offering nothing to remedy situations warranting repair. She also noted that Americans tended to accompany their apology with explanations while Japanese simply admitted fault.

A later study by Sugimoto (1998) offers more in terms of the differing cultural values involved in constructing apologies in America and Japan. Although her study does not specifically address apologies other than in interpersonal contexts, it is of particular relevance to the *Ehime Maru* incident in that it also provides a detailed comparative explanation of the extent of personal responsibility in a public apology. She cites Tavuchis' (1991) example detailing the 1972 massacre at Lod Airport in Israel in which Japanese terrorists killed several people, setting off, by western standards, a

rather unusual string of public apologies ranging from Japanese youth groups to the President of Kyoto University to the Foreign Minister of Japan. This incident speaks to the importance of a comparatively greater range of accountability among Japanese and suggests that the average Japanese has "far more occasions to apologize than does the average American" (p. 255). Barnlund and Yoshioka (1990) offer another real-life example of differences in public apologies (see Appendix 1 for an adapted version for classroom use). Both examples use real-life situations warranting public apology to frame cultural differences regarding interpersonal apologies as a lead-in to intercultural analysis.

The Sugimoto study also noted the importance of the concept of "*sunao*" in Japanese apologies in contrast to the emphasis Americans place on sincerity. While there are similarities between "*sunao*" and sincerity such as truthfulness, the concept of "*sunao*" involves submission, compliance and a stronger tone of "self surrender", an important detail in that "Japanese apologizers need to be true to the recipient's perception of the situation" and throw themselves "at the mercy of the victim" (p. 257). By contrast, Sugimoto notes the difference of the American notion of a sincere apology as including "taking responsibility, and expressing remorse but not to the extent of unconditional 'selfless surrender'." (p. 257). Several of the differing message construction principles of apologies Sugimoto found between Japanese and Americans are summarized in Table 1.

Table 1.

Cultural Differences Impacting Apology Construction

Japanese apologies	American apologies
Preference for formulaic expressions; form considered more important than content; clichéd repetition regarded as safe.	Emphasis on spontaneity and originality of the message; manner and tone of delivery more important than words.
Values self-castigation with any deviation from the actual apology viewed with suspicion. Expression of humility and submission seen as fundamental.	Importance placed on elaboration, including accounts, offers of repair, denial of vindictiveness and promises of future improvements.
Relational reality; apologies tailored to the recipient's perception of reality; negative face plays key role.	Appeals to individual aspect of the relational dimension; places more value on the personal touch.

While caution is advised here in that these contrasting aspects of apology suggest a cultural dichotomy and can potentially lead to stereotyping of apology behaviours, it is notable that part of the problem in the *Ehime Maru* incident was that the Japanese victims were expecting a style of apology in accordance with many of the cultural norms presented by Sugimoto. Being aware of these fundamental differences in how the two cultures attach meaning to the form and function of apologies is key to understanding and adapting to intercultural situations that call for apologies. The extent to which those directly involved in the *Ehime Maru* incident, as well as the general public and the media, failed to recognize these differing cultural values explains much about why this case is so valuable as a study of intercultural communication problems.

As noted, one interesting aspect of the apology issue in the *Ehime Maru* incident is that it crossed the border of what might be considered a public apology (or non-apology in this case) and an interpersonal apology. Christie (2005) notes that much is potentially at stake because "apologies by public figures can carry different implications

for audiences from different cultures" (p. 3). Further, Barnlund and Yoshioka (1994) contrast casual apologies, which EFL students are more likely to study, with genuine apologies, summarizing the latter as consisting of a "recognition that another person has been harmed", awareness of responsibility for harm done and "obligation to acknowledge this awareness" (p. 194). They raise a key point by noting that, like casual apologies, genuine apologies "permit a wide range of behaviour" (p. 194). The apology behaviour demonstrated by the submarine captain is reflective of this range in that it failed to meet the expected genuine public apology behaviour desired by the victims in the *Ehime Maru* incident. Students need to be ready for intercultural situations that might occur in which genuine apologies, perhaps even public apologies, are called for. Like the *Ehime Maru* case, these situations will be fraught with unique situational factors that will complicate matters. Attaining a minimal level of intercultural competence whereby an intercultural communicator can successfully mine what they "know or can predict about the [other] interlocutor's communication expectations" (Clyne, 1994, p. 194) is of fundamental importance. However, as FitzGerald (2003) notes, the teaching and training of intercultural communication skills still leaves much to be desired. Materials designed to develop these skills are needed now more than ever. Any cultural awareness skills a student brings to an intercultural situation calling for both casual and genuine apologies will help in the public and interpersonal understanding of what might be expected.

Teaching Procedure

The aims of the proposed teaching procedure are 1). to teach some basic concepts of Intercultural Communication, 2). to build self-awareness skills and heighten awareness

of cultural differences with respect to apologies, 3). to show how cultural norms can potentially negatively impact intercultural communication, 4). to analyze a critical incident from an intercultural perspective, and 5). to help students move to the "acceptance" level on the ethnorelative end of Bennett's Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity. The procedure is designed for lower-intermediate to intermediate level Japanese students. The envisioned course for this procedure is "Intercultural Communication Between Japan and America" but it is suggested here as appropriate for both Intercultural Communication courses in general and EFL classes dealing with apologies. It is noted here that the materials and procedure used could be used with students from either of the two representative cultures.

In a brief teacher-fronted introduction to a unit on intercultural sensitivity based on differing cultural norms of apology, students are given a short lecture contrasting American and Japanese apology strategies. Apologies are also discussed in more general terms considering why they are given and how they are performed. Depending on the level of the students, this mini-lecture may be used as a listening activity in which students use a note-taking print. The teacher also introduces pertinent vocabulary (apology, apologize, ethnocentric, ethnorelative, self-awareness, sensitivity, norms, competence) for the unit. Students are given examples of differing cultural expectations regarding apologies. An excellent example is provided in Samovar (2000) who advises that from an American perspective, apologies should be avoided in public speaking noting that although they might be appropriate in Japanese culture, apologies offered at the beginning of a speech actually have the effect of "reducing one's credibility" (p. 305). The lecture may or may not be supported by OHP or PowerPoint Presentation to

assist the learner. During this brief lecture students may be asked to share personal experiences of apologizing across cultures. Many Japanese students mention differences in apology on the most basic linguistic level, questioning for example when "I'm sorry" can be used as "Excuse me". While basic, these questions provide opportunities to deal more specifically with language-related aspects of apologizing in English such as direct or indirect apologies and intensifiers.

Having completed the introduction, the next stage involves introducing some basic critical incidents (see Appendices 1 & 2) to familiarize students with this method of intercultural analysis and to provide clear examples of how culture impacts the act of apology as much as, or more than, the language used. These easier critical incidents also serve the primary function of introducing the concept of self-awareness with each incident representing some apology-related aspect of Japanese culture that students can identify with. Appendix 1 introduces the idea that differing legal systems may be a factor in how apologies are given while Appendix 2 contrasts differing values regarding responsibility when apologizing. Students are asked to read and discuss these critical incidents in small groups and report their findings to the whole class.

Continuing with cultural self-awareness, students are then given a more difficult critical incident (Appendix 3) in which they are asked to speculate as to how an airplane crash in Japan was handled differently than a similar crash in the U.S. in terms of apology behaviours. Whereas the first two critical incidents are fictional, this one is based on a real-life incident. While discussing this incident, the teacher's role is as facilitator, eliciting responses from students as they work through their interpretation of

the incident. In addition to the critical incident method, at this stage, students are also directed to other apology behaviour resources such as recordings from the Japanese television news media of official apologies which show examples of company presidents apologizing for defective products, or university presidents apologizing for entrance examination mistakes or sexual harassment misconduct by faculty members. It is interesting to note that the company official or the faculty member directly responsible in the matter is rarely asked to apologize directly to the public. Such examples serve to direct attention at the cultural values of "the self" and set the tone for the more detailed analysis of the *Ehime Maru* incident.

Moran's (2001) guidelines for the teaching of culture call for "participation, description, interpretation, and response" (p. 137) on the part of learners as they make their way through his four stages of the experiential learning cycle. The authentic materials from Appendices 4-7 are presented as a means of helping students with "interpretation" and "response", with both stages combined at the end of the unit for assessment of students. The four documents each discuss the *Ehime Maru* incident in terms of contrasting cultural norms and differing apology behaviours. In the interpretation stage students are asked to sift through the documents separating fact from opinion and creating a rough timeline of events. Using these sources, students are asked to note differences of apology behaviour expectations by citing specific examples and to offer an explanation of the incident from both perspectives. In the response stage, students are asked to express their opinions and feelings about the incident and suggest ways in which both sides could have handled the incident to alleviate or prevent this particular failed intercultural communication. Due to the passions and strong opinions

raised in this real life critical cultural incident, whether or not students can successfully handle the "response" stage will tell the teacher if they are operating on the ethnorelative end of the intercultural sensitivity spectrum. During the three years in which this procedure has been piloted, it is interesting that assessment of ethnorelative sensitivity from the response stage, whether it be in oral or written form, shows the same limitations people exhibit that Bennett noted (p. 28) in his discussion of the acceptance stage. While students seem to genuinely enjoy the exploration of cultural differences of apology, many still tend to value their own cultural norms when discussing or writing about the *Ehime Maru* incident and are often at a loss in suggesting solutions (see Appendix 8 for brief examples of student responses). Nevertheless, the process is an important one and success in reaching the ethnorelative stage of acceptance, as might be assessed in a particular course, is not always comparable with the process of attaining a level of ethno relativist thinking in a student's real-life intercultural sensitivity development.

Conclusion

This paper has described in detail an example of a failed intercultural communication due to the differing cultural norms and values surrounding apologies. Discussion of pedagogical background demonstrated the importance of emphasizing culture and awareness-raising activities in language teaching. The intercultural communication background specifically situated differing cultural apology values and behaviours as a potentially huge area for intercultural miscommunication. Using a critical incidents approach, a teaching procedure and supplemental materials were offered as a possible method for helping students understand differing expectations that might occur when

apologizing across cultures. In doing so, students are encouraged to deal with cultural difference in way that best represents the spirit of ethnorelativity as described in the acceptance stage of Bennett's model. The degree to which students exhibit intercultural sensitivity as shown by acceptance is assessed in how they respond to the materials.

References

- Barnlund, D. & Yoshioka, M. (1990). Apologies: Japanese and American styles. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, 14, 193-205.
- Bennett, M. (1993). Towards ethnorelativism: A developmental model of intercultural sensitivity. In R. M. Paige (Ed.), *Education for the intercultural experience* (pp. 21-71). Yarmouth, Maine: Intercultural Press.
- Bennett, M.J. (1998). Intercultural communication: A current perspective. In M.J. Bennett (Ed.), *Basic concepts of intercultural communication* (pp. 1-34). Yarmouth, Maine: Intercultural Press.
- Brislin, R. (April 8, 2001). Apologies in Japan don't imply guilt. *Honolulu Star Bulletin* (On-line edition). Retrieved June, 22, 2005 from <http://starbulletin.com/2001/04/08/business/brislin.html>
- Brislin, R. (2002). Encouraging depth rather than surface processing about cultural differences through critical incidents and role plays. In W. J. Lonner, D. L. Dinnel, S. A. Hayes, & D. N. Sattler (Eds.), *Online readings in psychology and culture* (Unit 16, Chapter 2), (<http://www.wvu.edu/~culture>), Center for Cross-Cultural Research, Western Washington University, Bellingham, Washington USA. Retrieved February 22, 2005 from <http://www.ac.wvu.edu/~culture/brislin.htm>

- Byram, Michael. (1997). *Teaching and assessing intercultural communicative competence*. Clevedon: Multilingual Matters.
- Chen, Guo-Ming & Starosta, W. (1998). *Foundations of intercultural communication*. Boston: Allyn & Bacon.
- Christie, C. (2005). Editorial. *Journal of Politeness Research*, 1, 1-7. Retrieved June 17, 2005 from http://www.degruyter.de/journals/jpr/2005/pdf/1_1.pdf
- Clyne, M. (1994). *Intercultural Communication at work: Cultural values in discourse*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- FitzGerald, H. (2003). *How different are we? Spoken discourse in intercultural communication*. Clevedon: Multilingual Matters.
- Gieve, S. (1999). Learning the culture of language: Intercultural communication and second language learning. In M. Hyde and A. Pulverness (Eds.), *Confronting culture: Constraint or resource? IATEFL Literature and Cultural Studies Special Interest Group Newsletter*, Issue 18. Papers from the Canterbury Conference, July, 1998.
- Gudykunst, W. (1994). *Bridging differences: Effective intergroup communication* (2nd Edition). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Gudykunst, W. & Nishida, T. (1994). *Bridging Japanese/North American differences*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Guest, M. (2002). A critical 'checkbook' for culture teaching and learning. *ELT Journal*, 56(2), 154-161.
- Guilherme, M. (2002). *Critical citizens for an intercultural world*. Clevedon: Multilingual Matters.
- Holliday, A., Hyde, M. & Kullman, J. (2004). *Intercultural communication: An advanced resource book*. London: Routledge.

- Kataoka, H. & Kusumoto, T. (1991). *Japanese cultural encounters*. Chicago: Passport Books.
- Kramersch, C. (1993). *Context and culture in language teaching*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Maeshiba, N., Yoshinaga, N., Kasper, G. & Ross, S. (1996). Transfer and proficiency in interlanguage apologizing. In S. M. Gass & Neu (Eds.), *Speech acts across cultures: Challenges to communication in a second language* (pp. 155-197). Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter.
- Meier, A. (1997). Teaching the universals of politeness. *ELT Journal*, 51(1), 21-28.
- Meier, A. (1998). Apologies: What do we know? *International Journal of Applied Linguistics*, 8(2), 215-231.
- Moran, P. (2001). *Teaching culture: Perspectives in practice*. Boston: Heinle & Heinle.
- Naotsuka, R., Sakamoto, N. et al. (1981). *Mutual understanding of different cultures*. Osaka: Taishukan.
- Pulverness, A. (1998). Now write about your country: ELT and the ownership of cultural meaning. In M. Hyde and A. Pulverness (Eds.), *Confronting culture: Constraint or resource? IATEFL Literature and Cultural Studies Special Interest Group Newsletter*, Issue 18. Papers from the Canterbury Conference, July, 1998.
- Samovar, L. (2000). *Oral communication: Speaking across cultures* (11th edition). Los Angeles: Roxbury.
- Sawyer, M. and Smith, L. (1994). Approaching cultural crossover in language learning. In R.W. Brislin & T. Yoshida (Eds.), *Improving intercultural interactions: Modules for cross-cultural training programs. Multicultural aspects of counseling Series 3* (pp. 295-312). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Scollon, R. & Wong Scollon, S. (2001). *Intercultural communication* (2nd edition).

Oxford: Basil Blackwell.

Sugimoto, N. (1997). A Japan-U.S. comparison of apology styles. *Communication*

Research, 24(4), 349-370.

Sugimoto, N. (1998). Norms of apology depicted in U.S. American and Japanese

literature on manners and etiquette. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*,

22(3), 251-276.

Tomalin, B. & Stempelski, S. (1993). *Cultural awareness*. Oxford: Oxford University

Press.

Appendix 1: Critical Incident - Apology

(From *Japanese Cultural Encounters*, p. 2)

Tom rented a car one weekend. It was his first time driving a car in Japan, but he had been an excellent driver in the United States. On his way to his friend's house, however, he had an accident. A young child about four years old ran into the street from an alley just as Tom was driving by. Tom was driving under the speed limit and he was watching the road carefully, so he stepped on the brakes immediately. However, the car did brush against the child, causing him to fall down. Tom immediately stopped the car and asked a passerby to call the police and an ambulance.

Fortunately, the child's injuries were minor. The police did not give Tom a ticket, and he was told that he was not at fault at all, thanks to some witnesses' reports. He felt sorry for the child but decided that there was nothing more he could do, so he tried to forget about the accident. However, after several days, Tom heard from the policeman that the child's parents were extremely upset about Tom's response to the incident.

Why were the child's parents upset?

In Japan, one is expected to apologize and visit the victim of an accident, even if one is not at fault, to show his or her sincerity. In fact, one is expected to apologize whenever the other party involved suffers in any way, materially or emotionally. In many court cases, perpetrators get a lighter sentence when it is clear that they regret their actions, as reflected in their apology.

Appendix 2: Critical Incident - Apology

(From *Online Readings in Psychology and Culture*)

Harumi Tanaka, from Osaka, Japan, had accepted an assignment in Boston. His task was to explore the possibility of developing joint ventures with American firms. He had been invited by one company to spend a month and had been assigned an office and a research assistant. He agreed on a Monday to present a business plan the following Friday. On Tuesday, the computers in the company crashed and the research assistant called in sick with a severe case of the flu. Still, Harumi pushed forward and presented his plan on Friday. He began his presentation, "I'm sorry that I am not well prepared. This meeting may not be a good use of your time." He then went into a clear, interesting presentation. After the meeting, one of the American executives said, "I don't know why you had to apologize. Everyone knows about the computer crash and your assistant's illness." Harumi responded that he thought that the apology would be a good introduction to his presentation.

Explanation:

The misunderstanding in this incident occurred because apologies are interpreted differently in the United States compared to Japan. In the USA, apologies are associated with weakness and with the admission of guilt. In this case, people at the meeting might interpret Harumi's apology as an admission of responsibility for a poor presentation. In Japan, apologies are less associated with weakness or with the admission of guilt. Apologies show concern for the difficulties and emotional distress people are experiencing. However, Japanese people making apologies are not necessarily claiming that they are responsible for the difficulties or distress.

Appendix 3: Case study activity

(Adapted from Barnlund and Yoshioka, 1990)

In 1982, two fatal airplane crashes occurred at roughly the same time. One was in Washington, D.C., killing 77 people. The other air crash happened in Tokyo Bay with 24 dead. In the American situation, there was an attempt to explain what happened but the crew, officials from the airline, and the government made no effort to apologize to

the public or to any of the families of the victims. In an attempt to explain the accident, officials tried to say that because of poor safety records at the airport, the accident was to be expected.

In Japan, what happened with respect to how the fatal crash in Tokyo Bay was handled was very different. Can you suggest how officials in Japan handled this case?

Answer key:

1. The president of the airline company apologized to the public and visited every family involved to apologize personally.
2. The president gave his resignation and apologized.
3. The captain and co-pilot officially apologized for the accident even before it could be determined whether or not the cause of the crash was pilot error.
4. The Director of Transportation resigned his position to take responsibility.

Appendix 4

We've Apologized Enough to Japan

By Richard Cohen

The Washington Post

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/ac2/wp-dyn/A59562-2001Feb26?>

Tuesday, February 27, 2001; Page A23

I cannot tell you how the USS Greeneville surfaced under a Japanese fishing vessel, the Ehime Maru, sinking it with the apparent loss of nine lives. I cannot tell you if the presence of civilians in the sub contributed to the accident or if some piece of

equipment malfunctioned or if someone was incredibly negligent. I can tell you, though, that it was an accident and that the United States has apologized enough.

But not for the Japanese. Now the vice chief of naval operations, Adm. William J. Fallon, has joined the group of apologizers. He follows President Bush, Secretary of State Colin Powell, Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld, the U.S. ambassador to Japan, Tom Foley, and the sub's skipper, Cmdr. Scott Waddle. By now, the Japanese ought to get the message: We are sorry.

And we are. The accident was a tragedy. Most of those on board the Ehime Maru were students. It was a training vessel. Some of those missing and presumed dead are students. Their parents are in agony; they have suffered an incalculable loss. They are permitted to say anything they want, to demand anything that will salve their grief. That includes the demand to raise the Ehime Maru and recover the bodies of the dead.

But other Japanese -- everyone from editorial writers to opportunistic politicians -- are demanding more than they are entitled to. The constant calls for more and more apologies. The implications that, somehow, the Americans are unfeeling and cavalier about the loss of Japanese life. These are calumnies. The collision was a tragedy, but it was an accident. The Greenville was not even in Japanese waters -- it was off Hawaii. If the Greenville was being reckless, it was more than likely that American lives would have been in danger.

This constant call for one apology after another may well reflect a cultural difference between Japan and the United States, but it also smacks of epic hypocrisy. It took the Japanese forever to acknowledge that approximately 200,000 Asian women were forced to become the sex slaves of the Japanese military during World War II. Only grudgingly did Japan compensate some of them and even more grudgingly did it offer remorse. As far as some of the surviving "comfort women" are concerned, no apology has ever been forthcoming.

It has been the same story when it comes to other examples of Japanese war crimes before and during World War II. The Japanese have been extremely reluctant to own up to such barbarities as the so-called Rape of Nanking. That Chinese city was seized in 1937, and anywhere from 100,000 to 350,000 Chinese civilians were slaughtered, mutilated and raped by the Japanese Imperial Army. Once again, no apology has been forthcoming. Even the facts have been disputed.

The United States, in contrast, has become the most apologetic of nations. We are sorry for just about everything. Bill Clinton apologized in Africa for the enslavement of that continent's black peoples -- and he should have. We have apologized to the Indians of this continent and to this or that group which, in the past, was once a victim of discrimination and injustice. If you're wrong, you say you're sorry.

But it's hard to apologize for an accident. You're sorry it happened and you're sorry a boat's at the bottom of the ocean and you're sorry -- really sorry -- that people were killed. But there was no intent to harm anyone and no one was acting in an irresponsible fashion because he did not value the lives of non-Americans. This was Hawaii, for crying out loud.

Yet in Japan, the accident has been conflated with the behavior of some servicemen on Okinawa, a Japanese island. It has also been conflated with the remarks of U.S. Lt. Gen. Earl Hailston referring in an e-mail to Japanese lawmakers as "nuts . . . and a bunch of wimps." Put it all together and the newspaper Asahi Shimbun recently wondered if the security provided by the United States is worth all the trouble. "We cannot help asking whether security must come at the expense of people's lives," it said in a recent editorial. I cannot help asking if it ever heard of an accident.

So, one more time: We're sorry. All of America is sorry. Something went terribly wrong on the Greenville and of course we apologize for the loss of the Ehime Maru and the apparent deaths of nine persons aboard. But we are the same guys who have provided Japan with a security shield ever since World War II, helped rebuild the country and have been its steadfast ally and best friend.

Don't make *us* sorry.

Appendix 5

Letter from the Mayor of Uwajima, Japan

<http://archives.cnn.com/2001/US/02/19/uwajima.letter/>

February 19, 2001

Dear residents of Hawaii:

As the Mayor and representative of the people of Uwajima, I kindly ask you to read the following message.

There are the three main reasons why we are still strongly urging the U.S. authorities to continue its search for the missing nine members of the Ehime-Maru, the Uwajima Fisheries High School training vessel, one week after the tragic collision with the USS Greenville occurred.

1. It is a fact that the bodies of drowning victims generally rise to the surface after 4 to 10 days.
2. It is the custom of Japanese fishermen to continue their search for those missing at sea for about two weeks.
3. Whereas in Christianity the soul of the person is considered of paramount importance, in Japan, the body takes a much more important role. In Buddhism, which is the predominant religious belief in Japan, when the funeral is held, the custom is to say a final farewell to the deceased before cremating them. The ashes are the final remains of the deceased and, as such, are cherished.

Uwajima is a small, close-knit fishing community and such beliefs are still strongly held. Thus I, and the victim's families, urge you again to press for a further continuation of the search for the missing.

After listening to the stories of the survivors, rescued thanks to the diligent work by the U.S. Coast Guard and Navy, even though two people, one high school student and one crew member, were seen on the deck as the accident happened, they have yet to be found. Please listen to the voices of the families and people of Uwajima, who are

hoping that those nine missing people, four of which are high-school students, will still be rescued.

If you see anything which you believe may be connected to the Ehime Maru while you are out on the water, please report it to the appropriate authorities. We know that the people of America are dedicated believers in the value of the family and that you will empathize with us in trying to bring our loved ones home.

The oceans of the world are all connected and flow freely as one great body of water.

Furthermore, there is an old saying in Japan; "Hate not the people, but the crime." We hope and pray that this tragic incident does not harm the warm and truly special relationship that our two countries share.

Yours Truly,

Hirohisa Ishibashi,
Mayor of Uwajima

Appendix 6

Japan culture is crux of apology demands

A letter from Bush is presented in Tokyo today, but people still want an apology from the captain

<http://starbulletin.com/2001/02/27/news/story2.html>

By Janine Tully

Star-Bulletin

Even as a special U.S. envoy hand delivered a letter today from President Bush to apologize for the sinking of a high school fisheries training ship, many Japanese still want the commander of the USS Greeneville to personally apologize.

Differing U.S. and Japanese views on apologies and on the raising of the Ehime Maru reflect differing cultural and religious beliefs.

"The Japanese would like the captain to admit responsibility, not that they feel that he's guilty, but it's a matter of him making an acknowledgment," East-West Center President Charles Morrison said. Japanese also have a hard time understanding the legal constraints affecting Waddle, said Morrison.

"I keep telling my Japanese friends to accept the higher-ups' apology, because it will be difficult for Waddle to apologize for legal reasons."

Adm. William J. Fallon, vice chief of naval operations, met with Prime Minister Yoshiro Mori today in Tokyo to present Bush's letter.

"It is my intention to use every opportunity while in Japan to convey the sincere apologies of the president of the United States and the Navy and all American citizens," Fallon said after the meeting.

Fallon said Mori asked that the United States do the utmost to salvage the sunken Japanese fishing vessel and give a full accounting of the Feb. 9 collision.

The U.S. envoy said Bush's letter expressed "our nation's apologies and regret."

Japanese Foreign Ministry official Toyohisa Kozuki told reporters that Bush's letter said American authorities would do what they could to raise the ship, and pledged that the investigation into the accident would be transparent.

Fallon was scheduled to meet with families of the nine Japanese missing and presumed dead in the accident, and with other government officials before leaving Japan Thursday.

But even Bush's personal letter might not be enough for the Japanese public, which perceives the submarine commander's reluctance to personally apologize as politically incorrect and offensive, experts say.

Greenville's Cmdr. Scott Waddle broke his silence Sunday by sending a written statement to the Japanese, in which he expressed his "sincere regret" for the accident, which had caused "unimaginable grief" to the Japanese people.

Waddle's statement may help, but it still may be considered too impersonal, said George Tanabe, Department of Religion chairman at the University of Hawaii-Manoa. To the Japanese, Waddle is responsible for the accident, so he's the one who should apologize.

This is not to say that he is guilty, said Tanabe, but it would show that he is painfully aware of the grief the accident caused. Government officials and company executives often apologize in public for misdeeds that subordinates have done, he said.

Sheila Smith, a specialist in U.S.-Japan relations at the East-West Center, said the Japanese families would like to put a "human face" on the apology. That was evident, she said, from the emotional plea given by the father of one of the missing men during a recent press conference here. At that meeting, Kyosuke Terada demanded that Waddle kneel and bow his head in front of the families. Such a gesture is the highest form of apology a Japanese can offer, Smith said.

Long-time foreign correspondent and author Richard Halloran agrees that there are fundamental differences between Japan and the U.S. in regards to apologizing. "From our American side it's an admission of guilt, and he (Waddle) is not willing to do that at this point until the formal inquiry is carried out," Halloran said. But it doesn't mean he's not sorry. "I'm sure he is; I have no doubt he is," he added.

People have lost sight of the fact that the accident occurred in U.S. waters, consequently U.S. law and American customs prevail, Halloran noted.

Also in Japan an apology is almost a ritual, he said, and has very little legal implication like it does here.

Halloran criticized Japanese political leaders and the press for not explaining to the captain of the Ehime Maru and survivors that Japanese traditions do not prevail in the U.S. "Somebody should explain that to the Japanese," he said. "This (accident) unfortunately happened in America, so Waddle is obligated to follow U.S. law."

The apology controversy is not the only misunderstanding that has caused a furor in Japan. The families have also demanded that the ship, which rests 2,003 feet below the surface, be raised.

The request is based on religious ground, said Tanabe.

The Japanese believe the souls of their loved ones are not at peace until they are cremated and entombed. Having their remains, or an article that belonged to them, would give the families a sense of closure, Tanabe said.

While in America people often scatter the ashes of loved ones, in Japan they are preserved in an urn and honored.

"Cremation for the Japanese is not disposal, but preservation," he said.

Appendix 7

Sub commander apologizes to families

March 1, 2001

CNN.com

<http://archives.cnn.com/2001/WORLD/asiapcf/east/02/28/submarine.apology.02/index.html>

TOKYO, Japan -- The commander of the U.S. submarine involved in a collision with a Japanese trawler has written to the families of the victims apologizing for the accident.

The letters from Commander Scott Waddle to the relatives of the nine people still missing after last month's collision, were delivered to the Japanese consulate in the Hawaiian state capital, Honolulu Tuesday.

Also included were letters to the Japanese Prime Minister Yoshiro Mori, the trawler's captain, the governor of the prefecture from which the students came, and the principal of their School.

The nine victims, including four students, are missing presumed dead after the submarine U.S.S. Greenville collided with and sank the Japanese training vessel, the Ehime Maru on February 9 off the coast of Hawaii.

It is thought their bodies may be trapped in the hull of the vessel, which is currently lying on the seabed in the waters off Hawaii.

26 others from the 55-meter (180-foot), 500-ton Japanese ship were pulled from life rafts soon after the collision.

Expressions of regret

Waddle has been the subject of growing criticism in Japan where his earlier expressions of regret over the incident have been interpreted as falling short of a formal apology.

His letters were delivered to Japanese Parliamentary Secretary Yoshio Mochizuki, in Honolulu for transportation to Japan. Mochizuki later told reporters that Waddle was crying as he handed them over.

On Wednesday the special U.S. Navy envoy, Admiral William J. Fallon, met with relatives of the trawler victims and offered his personal apology for the incident.

"I'm here to request in the most humble and sincere manner that you accept the apology of the people of the United States and the U.S. Navy as a personal representative of President Bush," he told the families.

The meeting in the U.S. ambassador's residence in Tokyo was meant to quell growing Japanese anger over the accident, the U.S. failure to make appropriate apologies and the slow pace of investigations.

The Admiral said he plans to travel to Iwojima Thursday, the hometown of the missing students for further meetings with relatives and town officials.

Earlier Fallon, the Navy's number two man in Washington, delivered a letter of apology from the U.S. president to Prime Minister Mori.

He also briefed him on details of the ongoing investigation and the Navy Court of Inquiry slated for March 5.

The White House said Bush's letter was a sign of the importance placed on its relations with Japan by the U.S., keen to ease tensions between the two countries.

Security ties between the two were strained prior to the accident by a series of crimes committed by U.S. servicemen on Okinawa.

Apology 'sincere'

Fallon's apology appeared to be well received in Japan.

"I felt the envoy was sincere, and it was the most satisfying meeting we have had yet," said Ryosuke Terata, father of one of the missing victims.

However, he said the families would also like to hear apologies from the sailors in the submarine responsible for the accident.

Apologies are considered vital in Japanese society, where they are seen as a display of the sense of shame at the trouble caused.

During their meeting with Admiral Fallon the families of the victims also reiterated their request that the trawler be raised from the ocean floor so they can recover the bodies of their loved ones.

"Traditional Japanese are very much concerned to have some remains or anything associated with the dead," said anthropologist Teigo Yoshida. "They would be satisfied if they can say 'good-bye.'"

Fallon said Washington was "politically committed" to raising the vessel but could say nothing more concrete until after the completion of a feasibility study around March 8.

Salvage experts say raising the Ehime Maru will be a difficult task given the depths at which it lies -- more than 600 meters (1,900 ft) below sea level.

Appendix 8: Student response samples (unedited)

Student A: First of all, this accident happened in Hawaii, so Japan could not punish the American sailor by Japanese criminal law because of extraterritorial rights. This is the greatest pain for the bereaved families. I think this incident is very difficult to solve. In Japanese, there is an ultimate way to apologize. People bow down on their hands and knees to beg forgiveness for their behavior. I think the families hoped this way of apologize, but in America, this is an unusual way. The American sailor and government officer must have apologized sincerely before Japanese media or bereaved families, but Japanese felt their apologize is not sincere. I felt sad because I can see that the difference of culture sometimes causes a trouble. I can understand the both side, but

from the fact that the accident could have prevented, America has to make an effort to go along with the bereaved family's hope.

Student B: I understand Waddle's situation, but even so I think it's not the problem of legal or not. It's the problem of his behavior toward the families of the victims and Japan. Even if not by accident but by design, it is right for him to admit and apologize when he makes a fault. Sincere apologetic word toward the victims and their families or such an attitude should abate their feelings.