

Activity: Les excuses - Apologies in French, (50 minutes)

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This activity is designed for the end of the First-Year French sequence (FR 103) at a university, but it can be taught at any point during the first year - learning the pragmatics of apologies is important for avoiding miscommunication. Learners who might study abroad would greatly benefit from understanding the nuances of apologizing in French.

Prior to this lesson, learners should already have been exposed to some basic expressions for apologizing in French in previous classes, but they most likely do not have an understanding of the nuanced meaning of the phrases, nor how they carry connotations of power, severity, and solidarity. Often, first-year students have a tendency to use the French word *désolé.e* when they would use the English word *sorry*, which results in overuse of the word in abnormal contexts. Although *désolé.e* is commonly translated as *sorry* in textbooks, *désolé.e* is often used when the speaker's action has had a direct consequence for someone else. This lesson attempts to expand learners' awareness of other varied French expressions and how they can be used.

LEARNING OUTCOMES. Learners will be able to:

Knowledge:

- Demonstrate understanding of the variation in apologies in French by summarizing the ways different apology expressions can be used (*je suis désolé.e*, *pardon*, *excusez-moi*, *je m'excuse*, *je suis navré.e*)
- Understand the second person subject pronouns (*tu/vous*) as they are used with the expressions
- Conjugate verbs with second person subject pronouns (*tu/vous*) as they are used with the expressions

Analysis:

- Choose which of the expressions *pardon*, *je m'excuse*, *excusez-moi*, *je suis désolé.e*, and *je suis navré.e* to use depending on the context

Subjectivity:

- Explain why they chose a specific form by writing a one to two sentence justification for their choice

MODE(S) Interpretive, Interpersonal, Presentational

MATERIALS

short quiz (see "Before the Lesson")

Song: [Sexion d'assaut - Désolé](#)

[slides deck](#)

big classroom whiteboard(s)

small indiv. whiteboards (1 per pair)

whiteboard markers

teacher computer

projector setup

learner devices with internet access

headphones (optional)

note-taking supplies

teacher's phone to take photos

PROCEDURE

Before the Lesson:

1. Prepare a short quiz on your LMS (Google Forms, Canvas, etc.) or on paper. This quiz will be implemented after the lesson.
 - a. Offer different contexts - learners should compose a phrase that would be appropriate for that specific context. They should also justify their choice in one or two sentences.
 - b. Example contexts:
 - i. You are late meeting your friends at the café. You want to text them to let them know. What do you say?
 - ii. You are talking to some friends and have a hard time pronouncing the word "probablement" so you try several times. What do you say?
 - iii. You are walking on a crowded street and you try to pass people. What do you say?

Beginning of Lesson (5 minutes):

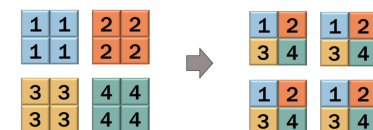
1. The song of the day, [Sexion d'assaut - Désolé](#), plays while learners enter the classroom.

2. **Awareness Building (5 min):** Ask learners to find a partner and get a small whiteboard and a whiteboard marker. In pairs, learners brainstorm and list on the whiteboards the different expressions they know in French for apologizing. After a few minutes, learners share with the class the expressions they listed.

Middle of Lesson (30 minutes):

1. **(Slide 2) Information Gathering (15 min):** Demonstrate the task using the first video. The class watches the short clip together, from 13:10 to 13:18.
 - a. Ask learners about the use of the word, for example, "Pourquoi a-t-il dit pardon ? Que s'est-il passé ? Comment le savez-vous ? " (he interrupted). Explain that this is the type of information they are looking for in the video.
 - b. **(Slide 1)** Display the guiding questions while learners complete the activity.
 - c. Divide learners into 5 groups. Assign each group to a different expression (included in the slides). Explain that the activity after this will be a jigsaw, so each person should be ready to explain the variations of their expression to other learners.
 - d. Using their laptops or other devices with internet access, learners go to their assigned slide.
 - i. **(Observe)** Each group watches the videos on their assigned expression.
 - ii. **(Analyze)** Learners analyze how it is used and in which contexts, using the guiding questions.
 - iii. Taking personal notes, learners summarize the different ways (meanings and contexts) in which their expression is used.
 - e. Make sure everyone is prepared to share about their expression before moving on to the next activity.

2. **Jigsaw (15 min):** New groups are formed with one member from each of the original groups in the new group (see image). Each learner acts as the "expert" on their expression in their new group. There will be about 5 learners per group. (Jigsaw explanation image from the Vanderbilt Center for Teaching)



- a. One by one, each "expert" takes three minutes to share what they learned about their expression. Other learners ask questions and work to understand the nuances of the expression.
- b. All learners take turns; by the end of the activity, all learners should feel they have a general understanding of the different ways each expression can be used and in which contexts.

End of Lesson (15 minutes):

1. **Class Debrief:** Learners go back to their normal seats. Five volunteers go to the whiteboards around the classroom (or five areas at one large board) and write one of the expressions discussed (each learner has a different expression: *pardon, je suis désolé.e, excusez-moi, je m'excuse, je suis navré.e*).
 - a. Focusing on one expression at a time, other learners provide information on what they learned.
 - b. The learners at the board write down ways that their expression is used as the class makes suggestions (different reasons for use, in which contexts).
 - c. The teacher adds any additional meanings or nuances to the expressions as needed.
 - d. When the notes on the board are complete, take a photo of the board that will later be added to the slides deck (so that learners can access it after class).

After the Lesson (Extend/Homework):

1. Short Quiz: Learners take the quiz prepared earlier, on the LMS or on paper.
 - a. Provide feedback and assess learners. The following is an example rubric:

Accuracy of the targeted expressions	3 pts All the expressions are correctly spelled (conjugaisons, agreements, pronouns)	2 pts Most expressions are correctly spelled (conjugaisons, agreements, pronouns)	1 pt No expression is spelled correctly (conjugaisons, agreements, pronouns)
Appropriate expressions are used	3 pts All the phrases are appropriate for the context	2 pts Most phases are appropriate for the context	1 pt No phrase are appropriate for the context

2. Reflection on Power, Solidarity and Severity: Learners choose two videos to watch from the slides deck. For each video, they take notes answering the following questions:
 - a. Do people apologize? If yes, do they apologize for something important?
 - b. Do the people seem to know each other? Are they close (friends, family)? How do you know?
 - c. Is there a power dynamic at play in the conversation?
3. Use these speculations from learners at the beginning of the next class to conduct an activity focused on power, solidarity, and severity with apologies.

Assessments:

- During the class debrief activity, give feedback and correct learners if necessary.
- Review the homework and give individualized feedback and a grade using a rubric.

Next Lesson Objectives:

Not all of the [IPIC](#) objectives will be covered in this lesson. However, the second homework activity foreshadows the following lesson, during which learners will work more closely with how these phrases are used in situations of **+ power, + solidarity, and + severity**; explore the Subjectivity and Awareness quadrants; work more with written texts; and practice with production skills.

Analysis

- SWBAT begin to assess the expressions based on their level of formality (+-power, +- solidarity)
- SWBAT begin to assess the expressions based on their indication of severity
- SWBAT discuss with their peers how the forms can be used in situations with regard to power, solidarity, and severity
- SWBAT orally compare the differences in usage between forms (based on +- power, +- solidarity, +- severity) as a class

Awareness

- SWBAT identify if their use of an expression was not received as desired
- SWBAT determine if the response to their apology expression requires repair