

## **Routes for Development in the Pragmaticalization of *sorry* as a Formulaic Marker**

Clara Molina  
Autonomous University of Madrid  
clara.molina@uam.es

### ABSTRACT

This paper explores the diachronic transition of the adjective *sorry* from lexical towards grammatical status which resulted in its entrenchment as a formulaic pragmatic marker. As attested by *Helsinki Corpus* data, the gradual emergence of a number of context-bound complementation patterns (each one linked to distinct semantic nuances of the term) was matched by an increasing detachment of *sorry* from the domain of *sadness*, within which the adjective had been central since the earliest times. After the developments had been completed in Early Modern English, the increasingly frequent use of *sorry* in everyday discourse made for the entrenchment of the novel pragmaticalized instances, which have only gained salience in the language ever since. The processes presented in this paper provide insights into the factors involved in diachronic change and contribute to the ongoing discussion of pragmatic markers.

### **1. Introduction**

Back in Old English, the terms *sorry* (< OE *sárig* < \**sairaz-*) and *sorrow* (< OE *sorg* < \**swergh-*) did not formally resemble each other, whereas *sorry* and *sore* (< OE *sár* < \**sairaz-*), of a common etymological source, did. Nonetheless, the three terms display continued semantic overlap over the centuries. According to the *OED2*, the three terms share the expression of *sadness* – *sorry* and *sorrow* from the earliest times to our day, *sore* only until Early Modern English (last attested in 1604). *Bodily pain*, expressed by *sore* from Old English to our day, is found in *sorrow* from Middle to English Modern

English (attested from 1377 to 1600) – but not in *sorry*. The alignment of *sore* with bodily ailments is stressed by the reading *injury*, attested from Old to Present-Day English, but not present in any of the other two terms. *Sorry* and *sore*, however, overlap in the expression of *sickness*, present in *sore* from Old to Early Modern English (last attested in 1727) and in *sorry* from Middle English (first attested in 1393) to the present. In turn, *sorry* overlaps with *sorrow* in the expression of *regret* – conveyed by *sorry* ever since Middle English (first attested in 1300) and briefly present in *sorrow* in Middle English (a1470). *Sympathy*, present in *sorry* from Old to Present-Day English, and *inadequacy*, ever since Middle English (first attested in c1250), remain unshared by neither *sorrow* nor *sore*.

Given the etymological connection and the large degree of formal and semantic overlap (c.f. Molina, 2005; and *Chamber's Etymological Dictionary of the English Language*, which suggests a possible alignment of *sorrow* and *sore*, while referring to *sore* under the entry *sorry*), the historical development of *sorry* might have been expected closer to *sore* than to *sorrow*, an etymologically unrelated party. Defying expectations, however, *sorry* did not remain close to *sore* for a long while, but it rather got increasingly attached in both form and meaning to *sorrow*, with which the connection was neither etymological nor formal, but rather semantic – *sorry* and *sorrow* have always conveyed emotional facets of suffering, whereas *sore* has been increasingly associated with bodily senses. As a result of the reorganization, *sorry* and *sorrow* came to be entwined to the extent in which the form of *sorry* was altered to resemble that of *sorrow*, more prototypical in the expression of *sadness*, and the meaning of *sorry* has been reinterpreted and even taken as the adjective of *sorrow*. In this respect, consider Skeat's (1894) entry for *sorry*: “sore in mind, aggrieved. (E.) M.E. *sory*. A.S. *sárig*, adj. sorry, sad, sore in mind; from *sár*, sore. Du. *zeerig*, Swed. *sárig*, sore, full of sores, words which preserve the orig. sense. ¶ Spelt with two *r*'s by confusion with *sorrow*, with which it was not originally connected”; also Shipley (1945): “I'm *sorry*, but this word has no relation (save by attachment of meaning) with *sorrow*. *Sorry* is the AS adjective *sar*, *sore*, with the adjective ending added: AS *sarig*, whence *sorry*. *Sorrow* is a common Teut. word, from AS *sorh*, from *sorh*; Du. *zorg*, G. *Sorge*, care. *Frau Sorge*, *Dame Care*, was an all too common visitor to medieval households”; and a note under the entry for *sorry* in the *OED2*: “OE. *sáriř* (f. *sár* *sore* n.1), = OS. *sêrag* (MLG. *sêrich*, LG. *sêrig*), OHG. *sêrag* (MHG. *sêrec*, G. dial. *sêrich*, etc.), WFrís. *searich*, sore, pained, sensitive, etc. In English the change of *a* to *o* and subsequent shortening have given the word an apparent connexion with *sorrow* n.”

This paper focuses on the way in which *sorry* and *sorrow* have strengthened their ties while loosening them with regard to *sore*, and on the subsequent evolution of *sorry* as a formulaic marker of empathy. As Tannen (1994: 45) points out, “contemporary *sorry* is often an automatic conversational smoother devoid of apologetic meanings – somehow like greetings, naturally not meant to elicit a detailed account of aches and pains”. Two data sources inform the discussion: on the one hand, the *Helsinki Corpus*, from which quotations for all terms beginning with either the prefix *sar-* or the prefix *sor-* were systematically elicited so as to provide a precise outline of the terms under

scrutiny. At the time of searching the *Helsinki Corpus*, four hundred characters (some seventy-five terms) were chosen to surround each instance, which was considered long enough to provide significant textual context. Once all the occurrences had been collected, those not pertaining to any of the kernel terms and their derivatives were eliminated (countless *sorcerers* and *saracens* had to be dropped at this stage). The remaining examples, some one thousand altogether, were then organized in three large groupings, each corresponding to one of the three terms under inspection: *sorry*, *sorrow* and *sore*. This process was repeated for Old, Middle and Early Middle English, and further rounded up with the subsequent subdivision in kernel versus derivational items, word classes and chronological subperiods. In spite of such painstaking methodology, a limited number of instances failed to be recorded, and markedly marginal spellings, such as *soor* (for *sore*) in example (1), were only included out of coincidence, since they neither appear in historical dictionaries as likely attested spellings, nor comply with the standard *sar-/sor-* base.

- (1) *And when þhe pepull of Jerusaleme sawe wattur in þat wale. they merweld **soor** and told Pylat. Pylat and Archelesse and Josephus, þe good clarke, went to se hit and **soor** merveld on þat case. (1420–1500: Siege of Jerusalem)*

The data selection is nonetheless thought to be highly representative, a proposition supported by the high degree of concurrence between the descriptions based on the *Helsinki Corpus* and those presented by the *OED2*, which constitutes the second data source. Aimed at proceeding from onomasiology to semasiology, the electronic version of the *OED2* was used to compile not only the information included in the paper edition, but also all the citations in which the kernel and derivative terms, in their different spellings, appear in the whole dictionary, regardless of the entry under which they are listed. Integrating lexicographic work within a framework in which syntax and semantics merge as two sides of the same reality requires transcending the narrow sentential limits within which the field has traditionally ranged, since the meaning of a term cannot be fully comprehended without knowing the context in which the term happens and has happened over the history of the language: as Biber et al. (1998: 25) point out, “lexicographic work requires the use of very large corpora, because word senses and collocational patterns are often much less common than grammatical patterns”. In this respect, the *Helsinki Corpus* offers a textual material of outstanding lineament which favors the integration of lexical semantic and discursive elements in lexicographic work. In turn, and in lieu of a context, the *OED2* provides a definition, which encompasses all and every one of the readings of a given term. For this reason, both tools are understood to be complementary. This is more so when considering that not only the treatment of textual materials differs from one to another, but the materials themselves do so as well and coincidences occur in a surprisingly low proportion. Therefore, taking into account the congenial dissimilarity and yet matching nature of both tools, a joint usage seems appropriate for an insight into diachronic variation and change in English.

## 2. Diachronic evolution of *sorry* in Middle English

This section presents an inspection of semantic and syntactic trends in *sorry* based on textual fragments from the *Helsinki Corpus*. Although the evolution of the term can be traced back to Old English, it has been preferred not to describe examples prior to 1150, since the relevant events only take place around and after 1300, and a too detailed picture of previous stages should not significantly add to a better understanding of subsequent ones. The Middle English component of the *Helsinki Corpus*, spanning from 1150 to 1500, is divided into Early (1150–1350) and Late (1350–1500) Middle English. The first period is characterized by the scantiness of texts written in English and a fairly narrow selection of text types, since these centuries still look back to the Old English literary and textual tradition. Late Middle English, on the other hand, paves the way for the Modern period, in view of both literature and non-literary writings, and of language development (Nevanlinna et al., in Rissanen et al. 1996: 33). Within each of these periods, two further subdivisions are identified: ME1 (1150–1250) and ME2 (1250–1350) within Early Middle English; and ME3 (1350–1420) and ME4 (1420–1500) within Late Middle English. Although overt reference is often made in the text to the four periods subsumed within Middle English, a semantic arrangement has been preferred to a chronological one, for the evolving meaning of the term is thought to be better represented in this way. For the sake of clarity, only a few representative examples have been included, and the contexts have been shortened to the minimum amount of text required for understanding. The quotations have not been translated, for translations impose a sieve on meaning which is regarded particularly undesirable for the purposes of an unbiased description of terminological profiles. Regarding chronological notation, observe that the *Helsinki Corpus* does not arrange materials according to exact dates, but rather to periods within which individual works belong. Such an arrangement has been preserved throughout this paper. The foregoing conventions, though non-canonical at times, are intended to serve the purpose of illustrating the text in a straightforward way, while at the same time preserving the actual materials intact for further inspection.

The adjective *sorry* is not as widely represented in the Middle English component of the *Helsinki Corpus* as the terms *sorrow* and *sore* are. The number of different spellings with which the term is attested is considerably smaller as well, although a marked tendency, also observed in *sore*, towards the progressive replacement of {a} by {o} spellings is noticeable. As such, whereas in the first subperiod {a} spellings constitute 90% of the examples, the trend is reversed from the mid-thirteenth century onwards, when {o} spellings generalize and constitute 100% of the occurrences with hardly any exceptions. As a general process in the language, the vocalic closure and length reduction ( $\bar{a} > \bar{o} > o$ ), and the subsequent replacement of {a} by {o} spellings, cannot be thought to have been triggered by the semantics of the terms, even if it served the purposes of enhancing the resemblance of *sorry* to *sorrow*. As Wardale (1937: 49) points out, the isolative change as a result of which Old English / $\bar{a}$ / was rounded to a

long, open /  $\bar{o}$  / sound took place in southerly East Midland area during the Middle English period, gradually spreading westwards and northwards, while all long vowels in unaccented syllables (including all those in the second element of compounds and words unaccented in the sentence) lost their length in Middle English as a result of a combinative change which had a precedent in Old English. The vocalic change in *sorry* can therefore be said to have taken place independently from the semantics of the term. The reduplication of {r}, however, does not seem to be the result of general processes in the language (unless that of signaling the new vocalic quantity), but rather, of an analogical change after the model provided by *sorrow* – a more prototypical term within the emotional sphere of the domain of suffering, hence an attractor. As a result of this attraction, further reinforced by means of formal rearrangements particularly suited for the purposes of the *sorry/sorrow* alliance, the initial connection between both terms came to be definitely settled. As mentioned earlier on, this powerful connection has survived to the present day, even if shortly after the formal reorganization had been completed the adjective *sorry* culminated a process of semantic and pragmatic individuation with regard to *sorrow*.

As for the meaning of *sorry* in Middle English times, the number of senses is also considerably limited when compared to the other terms – mostly in the early subperiods, when the meaning of *sorry* is virtually restricted to the sense *sad*. The adjective *sorry* is often found in context of *sorrowful*, suggesting a mutual reinforcement of both terms, understood as near synonyms (examples 2 and 3). This pattern is only found in Early Middle English, and even within this period, the frequency of the binomial greatly decreases over time: six instances were found in the first subperiod (ME1), only two in the second one (ME2) and none afterwards.

- (2) *Ofte was Uortigerne wa; neuer wrse þan þæ. & Bruttes weoren sari; & seorhful an heorte. nusten heo an world-riche; ræd þat heom weore ilike. Hengest was of ufele war; Pat he wel cudde þær. he nom sone his sonde* (1150–1250: Layamon Brut)
- (3) *And þat she þat was so fayr, þat was of Engelond rith eir, Was comen up at Grimesbi, He was ful sorful and sori, And seyde ‘Hwat shal me to rabe? Goddoth I shal do slon hem babe! J shal don hengen hem ful heye, So mote Ich brouke mi rith eie, But yif he of mi lond fle. Hwat! wenden he to deserite me?’* (1250–1350: Havelok)

Already in Early Middle English, a reading that anticipates the use of *sorry* as an apologetic marker is attested for the first time, namely, the notion of *regret for sin* in a causal relation with that of *sadness* (examples 4 and 5). This sense is introduced in very Early Middle English, becomes most frequent in the second subperiod, and is still present in later ones.

- (4) *Pe an sunegeð. and is sari for his sunne. ah he ne mei his flesch awelden* (1150–1250: Lambeth Homilies)

- (5) *To say crist for missedede, And myn auy mary – ffor my scynnes hic am sory – And my deprofundis ffor al yat y sin lys* (1250–1350: Sirith ME Humorous Tales in Verse)

Nevertheless, most of the tokens from ME1 and ME2 just display the adjectival expression of *sadness* at large, uncolored by the notion of *regret* and not ingrained within any particular textual pattern (examples 6 and 7). The term is mostly applied to sad people or to events perceived as the cause of sadness. The reading *sad* is also the most pervasive one in the subperiod spanning from 1350 to 1420 (example 8), although according to data, the frequency of the term is very low in this interval. However, it is significant, inasmuch as it marks the transition to the last subperiod (ME4), in which the meaning of the term *sorry* branches out and gets distanced from the realm of *sadness*. Examples such as (9) and (10) already display an unsteady glide towards readings of the term not interpretable as *sad*. Notice how the meaning of the first one (example 9) might be glossed as *unfortunate*, whereas the second one (example 10) is somehow closer to the meaning *vexed* than to the notion of *sadness*.

- (6) *Pe king hefde þreo dohtren; bi his drih-liche quen. nefde he nenne sune; Per-fore he warð sari. his manscipe to halden* (1150–1250: Layamon Brut)
- (7) *And spak to hym ful myldely, “why wepest þou, and art sory?”* (1250–1350: Handlyng Synne)
- (8) *Eroude was soory, and ȝit, as doctouris seyn, he was ful glad thereof; but he feynede him sory for the puple, and the puple gessid him sory* (1350–1420: Purvey Wycl Prologue)
- (9) *Whan þe rop failede in his hond, Beues held vp þat gode bronde And felde to gronde þat sori wiȝt, þourȝ out is bodi þat swerd he piȝt* (1250–1350: Bevis)
- (10) *That he the sothe him hath confessed Of al that hath be spoke and do. Mor sori than the king was tho Was nevere man upon this Molde, And thoghte in certein that he wolde Vengance take upon this wrong* (1350–1420: Confessio Amantis)

Late Middle English witnesses the culmination of this trend. While the traditional readings of the term remain most pervasive (such as in examples 11 and 12, which exhibit the senses (*cause of*) *sad(ness)* and *remorseful*, respectively), a number of other notions become attached to *sorry*. Among the novel senses, three are outstanding. To begin with, there is a reading which still preserves the notion of *sadness* as central, but which is now complemented with those of *fear* and *worry* (example 13). The second novel reading is further distanced from the notion of *sadness*. Consider example 14, in which the term *sorry* might well be glossed as *offended*, *angry* or even *cross*. Finally, there is a third reading, certainly distant from the notion of *sadness*, which may be

paraphrased as *bad* or *inadequate* (example 15). This sense is still very scarce at this time, but it is remarkable because of the increased relevance it would enjoy from Early Modern English onwards.

- (11) *A! my bak, I traw, will brast! This is a sorry note! Hit is wonder that I last, sich an old dote, All dold, To begyn sich a wark. My bonys ar so stark: No wonder if thay wark, For I am full old* (1420–1500: Towneley Plays)
- (12) *And bare hit with hym to hys ostry, and there mette with hys squyre that was sorry he had displeased kyng Arthure, and so they rode forthe oute of towne* (1420–1500: Works of Thomas Malory)
- (13) *Hyr felaschep was glad & mery, and sche was heuy & sorry for dred of þe wawys. Whan sche lokyd up-on hem, sche was euyr feryd. Owr Lord, spekyng to hir spirit, bad hir leyn down hir heuyd þat sche xulde not seen þe wawys, & sche dede so* (1420–1500: Kempe)
- (14) *Alle thise wordes herde . . . he was sorry and angry yf it myght haue proufftyed he ranne thenne the hye way to maleperduys ward / he spared nether busshe ne hawe / but he hasted so sore that he swette* (1420–1500: Reynard)
- (15) *They hadde gote the cytte of London by a mysse happe of cuttyng of ij sorry cordys that nowe be alteryde, and made ij stronge schynys of yryn unto the draught brygge of London* (1420–1500: Gregorys Chronicles)

Let us now turn briefly towards derivative terms. Both the adverb *sorrily* and the noun *sorriness* have been found in the *Helsinki Corpus*, although only in very Early Middle English, and therefore with {a} rather than {o} spellings. Few instances of the adverb have been attested, all of them in association with terms of negative connotations such as *slavery*, *repentance*, *sickness* or *misery* (as in example 16). Quite on the contrary, a large number of examples are attested for the noun *sorriness*, and in these, the most pervasive readings do not largely differ from those of the adjective *sorry* examined above. Fairly often, the sense *sad* becomes reinforced by its association with the term *sorrow* (example 17) or by the contrast with the antonymous term *bliss* (example 18). Nonetheless, the most frequent reading is that of *repentance for sins* (example 19). Recall how this sense was already salient in the adjective *sorry* from the earliest times, although not as much as the more general *sad* or *afflicted*. In the case of the noun, however, this reading outnumbers any others. An explanation for this might be found in the strength of the noun *sorrow*, which leaves little room for near synonymous terms within the onomasiological orbit. The reading *repentance*, however, is only marginally covered by *sorrow*, while at the same time closer to the apologetic nature to be developed by *sorry* over the centuries. For this reason, this reading becomes more

frequent in the case of the noun *sorriness* than the overall expression of *sadness*, which was prevalent in the case of the adjective.

- (16) *Bridde is þet þu scalt bi-wepen þine sunne bi-efen monnen and zeoten þine teres swiðe sariliche for þon drihten cweð on þan god-spelle* (1150–1250: Lambeth Homilies)
- (17) *And ðar is chiueringe of toðen for ðe unmate chele; and ðar is sorwge and sarinesse for ðare muchele ortrewnesse ðe cump of ðan zeþanke ðe hie næure mo godd ne sculen isien ne nan of his halzen* (1150–1250: Vices and Virtues)
- (18) *Wið-uten hungre. hele; wið-uten unhele. reste; wið-uten swinge. blisse; wið-uten sarinesse. Ivgeðe; wið-uten elde. Lokinge; wið-uten winkunge. song; wið-uten lisse. smellinge; mid swetnesse. and dunge; wið-uten prikunge. wone of alle uuele; wole; and alle gode. Amen* (1150–1250: Lambeth Homilies)
- (19) *Adam wes sari uor þe sunne þet he heuede idon. and for þisse sarinesse hit is seid; þat he wes half quic bileued* (1150–1250: Lambeth Homilies)

All in all, *sorry* has been seen to undergo significant changes during Middle English. As such, in Early Middle English the meaning of the term was mostly restricted to the expression of *sadness*, very often in religious contexts and in relation to *repentance from sin*. In Late Middle English, these readings become supplemented with a range of nuances increasingly distant from the domain of *sadness* proper, such as *worried*, *offended* or *inadequate*. As discussed below, the process of weakening in *sorry* and its increasingly frequent use in everyday discourse as a pragmatic marker notably distanced from the domain of *affliction* would culminate in Early Modern English. As for complementation patterns during Middle English, *sorry* was often modified by *full*, and to a lesser extent by *right*, while the term *swipe* ‘very’ was found only once in context of *sorry*. As for derivatives, both the adverb *sorrily* and the noun *sorriness* appear in the *Helsinki Corpus*, the latter to a larger extent. Quite differently to the situation found in the adjective, the noun mainly conveys the meaning *repentance* rather than *sadness*. As discussed above, the reason for this most probably lies in the overwhelming preponderance of the noun *sorrow* in the expression of emotional suffering, which forced the alignment of other terms in the onomasiological domain with other readings. As such, the reading *repentance*, which was only secondary in the case of the early adjective, is of the utmost significance in the case of the noun. This is far from surprising, considering the apologetic nature diachronically acquired by *sorry*, and in this respect, recall how later Middle English readings of the adjective also pointed towards notions other than *sadness* per se, such as *offence* or *inadequacy*. In like manner, the contemporary readings of both the adjective *sorry* and the noun *sorriness* largely concentrate on the formulaic expression of *regret* or the expression of



*inadequacy*. This trend, only anticipated in the case of the Middle English adjective, was already solid in the case of the noun.

### 3. Diachronic evolution of *sorry* in Early Modern English

The Early Modern English period, which gaps the transition from medieval to contemporary English, witnesses further developments in the adjective *sorry*. Three subperiods may be identified within this period: EModE1 (1500-1570), EModE2 (1570-1640) and EModE3 (1640-1710). An electronic search conducted within the *Helsinki Corpus* rendered a total of 23 relevant tokens, less than half the number of different entries attested in Middle English. Another diverging trend may also be acknowledged at a glance, since none of the isolated items (*sore, sorely, sores, sorest, sorie, sorow, sorow/, sorowe, sorowed, sorowfull, sorowfully, sorows, sorrily, sorrow, sorrowe, sorrowes, sorrowful, sorrowfull, sorrowing, sorrows, sorry, sory and sorye*) bears an {a} base. As in the case of Middle English, the 23 items were divided in three groups, each one comprising all the tokens for *sorry, sorrow* and *sore*, respectively. Those pertaining to the term *sorry* do not present much formal variation, since 98% of the 45 examples attested in Early Modern English only display the adjective, with only one token of the adverb *sorrily*. The adjective remains semantically close to *sorrow*, and as such, the reading *sad* or *afflicted* remains pervasive all throughout the period (examples 20 and 21).

(20) *Made gret mone & wext very sorry. In so mych that her neybour thought she wold sowne & dy for sorow/* (1500-1570: Merry Tales)

(21) *I am very sorry, my dearest, that your son Robin continues soe very ill* (1640-1710: Private Letters)

Nonetheless, Early Modern English represents a time for major change in *sorry*. Although fairly rapid in time, very short steps were taken at a time. An early one is the novel introduction of a complement with the preposition *for* followed by a noun phrase to express softer emotional suffering inspired *by others* (examples 22 and 23). A parallel trend is represented by the introduction of verbs in the infinitive after the adjective *sorry*. In these constructions, the meaning of the term may still glossed as *sad*, but certainly in a much milder way, which serves as a bridge between the domain of *sadness* and that of mere *disappointment* (examples 24 and 25). This incipient reading becomes prevalent in all the examples to be examined from now onwards, thus evidencing the shift undergone by *sorry*, as a result of which the adjective has been increasingly distanced from the domain of *sadness* to the point in which moderate, apologetic nuances have become most prototypical in our days.

- (22) *Wil Breach came to town and was **sory** for the going away of Robyn* (1570-1640: Diary of Madox)
- (23) *And then I to the office, and there late doing business, and so home and to bed – **sorry** for poor Batters* (1640-1710: Diary of Pepys)
- (24) *And I am **sorry** to adde, that the non-improvement of childrens time after they can read English any whit well, throweth open a gap to all loose kinde of behaviour* (1640–1710: Teaching School)
- (25) *I am **sorry** to find the Occasion to speak it, that under the Figure and Form of Religion such Practices should be carried on* (1640–1710: Trial Lisle)

A number of other notions get interwoven in the meaning of *sorry* in Early Modern English. Out of these, *sympathy for sickness or death* outstand, and relate the traditional reading *sorrowful* to newer discursive roles, such as the introduction of verbs in the infinitive in a formulaic way (examples 26 and 27). Another remarkable nuance is provided by those instances in which the adjective occurs in association with the notion of *regret*. Note how in these instances (examples 28 and 29) the meaning conveyed by the term *sorry* is likely to be rather intense and close to the notion of *sadness* at its best, whereas it is milder when followed by a noun phrase introduced with *for* (examples 30 and 31), and much more formulaic, thus to a larger extent devoid of lexical meaning, when followed a verb in the infinitive (examples 32 and 33).

- (26) *I was **sory to** heere of tom harstons beinge ill, but hope well of his recouery* (1570–1640: Private Letters)
- (27) *I am **sory to** heare poore Sam Lane was prest into the French Victory, and since caryed into Holland. I pitty the losse of the men* (1640–1710: Private Letters)
- (28) *I beseche you, my Lord that the said Prior may be so entreated by your help, that he be not **sory**, and repent that he hath fered and folowed your sore words* (1500–1570: Official Letters)
- (29) *And in that he had offended her, he was hartely **sory**, and did in all humblenes beseche her p~don* (1570–1640: Trial Essex)
- (30) *What if I haue? fiue hundred such haue I seene within these seuen yeares: I am **sory for** nothing else but that I see not the sport Which was betwene them whe~ they met, as they the~ selues report* (1500–1570: Gammer Gurton)

- (31) *I myghte have made yow some good chere there; but yt was not my fortune so to doo, and I ham verye **sorry for** yt, beleve me and yow wyll* (1500–1570: Troubles of Mount)
- (32) *Itt was not lawfull for him to marry his brothers wife: which the kinge, not **sorry to** heare of, opened it first to Sir Thomas Moore, whose counsell he required therein* (1500-1570: Life of More)
- (33) *Are you not a-kin to him? Yes, but I am **sorry to** own I have such a Relation* (1640-1710: Trial Oates)

Another, even more frequent, complementation pattern is represented by *sorry* when followed by a *that*-clause. This is a construction of notable pervasiveness, and one in which the overall meaning remains when the actual introductory word is omitted. The meaning is two-fold: close to an *apology* when affecting the speaker as self, more so if found in correspondence, as discussed later on (examples 34 and 35), otherwise back into the realm of *sadness* (examples 36 and 37).

- (34) *Sweet Harte (thanks be god) we are come safe to London And I am very **sorry** I came no sooner* (1570–1640: Private Letters)
- (35) *My deare, I am **sorry** that my first letter from Southold, which went by land, advized the of our 2 days stay, whereas we have bine heere 4 days, and shall stay 3 or 4 longer* (1640–1710: Private Letters)
- (36) *He was **sorry** he had lived so as to wast his strength so soon, or that he had brought such an ill name upon himself, and had an Agony in his Mind about it* (1640-1710: Biography of Rochester)
- (37) *If I die – I forgive thee; and if I live – I hope thou'lt do as much by me. I am very **sorry** you and I shou'd quarrel; but I hope here's an end on't, for if you are satisfy'd – I am* (1640–1710: Relapse)

There is a third major sense to the term, along the same lines of an ongoing process of weakening, and somehow even further away from the realm of *affliction*, namely, *disappointed*. This is a very frequent reading which largely complies with the lexicogrammatical patterns identified above, even if this set of examples (38 to 41) displays no instances of noun phrases introduced with *for*, nor any in which the term does not introduce a complement at all. Finally, there is a further construction (only attested once) in which *sorry* introduces a conditional *if*-clause (example 42). This pattern may be considered close to the mild, but not apologetic reading of those sentences in which *sorry* introduces a verb in the infinitive.

- (38) **Sorie** to heare report of your good welfare. For (as I heare say) suche your conditions are, That ye be worthie fauour of no liuing man (1500–1570: Roister)
- (39) Jack forgat not the pie, but stood faintly sicke, and refused his meate: the knight, **sory** that his best dish fayled him, made no small account of his well fare, askte him, Jack, sayes hee, where lyes thy paine? In my mouth, sayes hee (meaning, indeede, his mouth hung for the quince pie) (1570–1640: Nest of Ninnies)
- (40) Syr by my trouthe I am **sory** that ye come so late/ for I am sped all redy/ For I was made sure yester day to a nother man (1500–1570: Merry Tales)
- (41) I am **sorry** the other is a Gentleman, for less Religion will not save their Souls than a beggars; I think more will be required at the last great day (1640–1710: Compleat Angler)
- (42) I cumber you goode Margaret muche, but I woulde be **sorye**, if it shoulde be any lenger than to morrowe (1500–1570: Private Letters)

In addition to the various complementation patterns matched with distinct semantic twists considered so far, there remains a brief comment regarding genre in order to understand the term *sorry* in Early Modern English. In this respect, whereas the term *sorrow* often occurs in religious contexts, *sorry* is mostly found in letters and in relation to the notions of *disappointment* or *regret* when used in a formulaic sense. At this point, it is worth mentioning that *sorrowful* is attested only once in a formulaic way (example 43), with a function much connected to the one fulfilled by *sorry* in the preceding contexts. The quotation now recalled also belongs to the correspondence genre, which is exceedingly rare in the case of terms within the lexical field of *sorrow*. On the contrary, it has been pointed out how *sorry* is very often found in letters, and therefore it is probably not a coincidence that the one instance in which a term derived from *sorrow* displays a meaning much closer to the realm of *sorry* than to *sorrow*, it does so in a letter. A related issue is that of grammatical person, for it will have been noticed how overwhelmingly the first person singular is attached to *sorry*, whereas this seems not to be the case in other terms.

- (43) *Deare mother I am exceding **sorrowfull** that I have been forced by reason of my longe sicknes to be so often importunate to request your favour in the releafe of my greate necessities* (1570–1640: Private Letters)

Let us conclude the description of meaning nuances associated to *sorry* by considering a further reading which, quite at a distance from *sadness*, expresses the notion of *inadequacy*. Already introduced in Middle English, this reading only becomes salient within the meanings of *sorry* in Early Modern English times, and it may be considered one of the very common instances in which an item with negative connotations glides

towards meaning *bad* altogether (examples 44 and 45). In this respect, note how in the single case attested in the database in which *sorry* takes a suffix to create an adverb, the reading *inadequate* is the only one retained (example 46).

- (44) *Than mayst thou take thy **sory** weyke ewe awaye, and put her in an other place: and by this meanes thou mayste fortune to saue her lyfe* (1500–1570: Husbandry)
- (45) *That day I traueled twenty one miles to a **sory** Village called Blithe, but I was blithe my selfe to come to any place of harbour or succour, for since I was borne, I neuer was so weary* (1570–1640: Penniless Pilgrimage)
- (46) *Schoole, where many that undertake to teach it, being altogether ignorant of the Latine Tongue, do **sorrily** performe that taske, and spend a great deal of time about it to little or no purpose* (1640–1710: Teaching School)

Summing up, the term *sorry* has been found in a variety of contexts in Early Modern English, ranging from those in which the lexeme (often in association with the notions of *sympathy for sickness or death* and *regret*) conveys a rather acute facet of emotional suffering which may be glossed as *sad*, to those in which the intensity of the feeling seems to be gradually diminished up to the point in which the meaning of the term falls close to a *formulaic apology* or the mere expression of *disappointment* or *inadequacy*. The foregoing trend of lowering on the scale of intensity has been found to match a number of complementation patterns that largely determine the meaning of the term (often preceded by *very* or emphasizees such as *heartedly* or *really*) in various contexts.

#### 4. Discussion

*Sorry*, one of the oldest terms for suffering in English, is not typically associated with *sadness* any more, but rather with the formulaic expression of *sympathy* and *apology*. Tucker (2007: 405) depicts the contemporary nature of the term (refer to <http://www.onelook.com/?loc=lemma&w=sorry> for a full lexicographic description of the term): “the item *sorry* is a member of a class of adjectives that is susceptible of both tempering (intensification) and complementation ... and from a perspective of appraisal theory ... its use is typically associated with ‘affect’. It has two main senses: (a) the ‘apology’ sense ... and (b) the expression of sorrow, regret, compassion, etc. where no responsibility is assumed by the speaker. The two senses above are rarely found within the adjective in its function as modifier in a nominal group. When it is used with this function, the nominal head is rarely human and the sense of *sorry* may be glossed as ‘unfortunate’, ‘wretched’”. This profile radically departs with regard to the medieval one, and the most significant breach is to be found in the pragmaticalization process undergone by *sorry*, as a result of which everyday expressions such as “*sorry, wrong number*” display the term as a pragmatic marker, used automatically in many situations.

In the *Word frequency data from the Corpus of Contemporary American English* (Davies, 2011b), containing some 500,000 items that appear at least four times in the 410 million words COCA corpus, *sorry* occurs in 16792 texts – with a 35798 frequency. Presumably, most of those tokens should display the term in pragmatic uses, and indeed the assumption is confirmed by a search within the *British National Corpus* (Davies 2011a) – see Appendix. As Aijmer (1996: 109) states, *sorry* is “typically a device for solving communication problems” which seems to be undergoing a change in which lexical strength is being lost while the term shifts towards a pragmatic function as a marker. Wichmann’s (2004, quoted in 2006) findings confirm the trend: very few tokens of *sorry* as a straightforward apology are attested nowadays, while most of the instances are used to indicate communication difficulty. Wichmann (2006: 7) also observes the cline in discourse prosody, as her analysis of the phonetic and prosodic realizations of *sorry* (some 400,000 words of transcribed speech) reveals that heartfelt apologies display a clear articulation of the term, always accented and carrying pitch movement (a fall or fall-rise), whereas those tokens that indicated a disruption of the flow of conversation included *sorry?* (with a rising tone) as a request for repetition, and *sorry* as an utterance-initial or -final marker, attached to an utterance indicating either lack of understanding or the fact that the interlocutor was making mistaken assumptions about the speaker’s involvement.

The developments that have marked this transition from lexical towards pragmatic status can be traced back to the medieval period, when *sorry* started an individuation process that would distance it from other terms typically expressive of *sadness*, such as *sorrow*. As discussed above, back in Old English *sorry* was semantically, not formally nor etymologically, aligned with *sorrow*, with which it shared the reading *sadness* and with regard to whom it was a forerunner in the expression of one of the most distinctive readings of the noun, namely, the *outward expression of sadness*. At that time, however, *sorry* already counted among its meanings one that would later on detach it from *sorrow*, namely, the expression of *sympathy* or *condolence*. Shortly afterwards, in the thirteenth century, another nuance that would later on determine the distinctive development of *sorry* is adopted: the expression of *inadequacy*. The gradual process of individuation would continue after Early Middle English times with the adoption of a reading that fostered the potentially apologetic nature of the term, namely, the notion of *lament* and *regret* – both in the sense of *deploring* events for which no responsibility is assumed, and of *repenting* of one’s own faults. In Early Modern English times, the second route whereby *sorry* is distanced from the domain of *sadness* – the expression of *inadequacy* – is augmented with the readings *worthless* and *wretched*. From this moment onwards, the term *sorry* would drop many of its uses related to *sadness* per se, which enhanced the identification of *sorry* with the more formulaic uses. The connection with *sorrow*, however, was never lost, since the readings *sympathy* and *repentance*, even if not *sadness* proper, are afflicted feelings themselves, in the first case for mishaps distressing others (*con-dolence* is nothing but suffering *in* another) or for faults distressing oneself.

The ambivalent nature of *sorry* is thus attested by the coexistence of pragmaticalized uses, which gradually strengthen the formulaic character of the term, with a marked semantic alignment with *sorrow*, still intuitively linked to *sorry* today. As Geeraerts (1997: 134) points out, “the etymology of a lexical item can be overruled by its semantic resemblance to other conceptual categories”, and the *historically transcended* etymology of *sorry* provides evidence to back up the statement. As discussed above, the evolution of *sorry* encompasses a tendency towards the overall negativization of the term on the one hand (with the emergence of readings such as *disappointment*, *offence* or *inadequacy*, increasingly salient since Early Modern English), and a tendency towards the weakening of readings related to *sadness* on the other. As such, emotional suffering becomes restricted to bare *disappointment*, while the notion of *lamenting* or *regret* becomes largely dimmed as the term becomes a formulaic marker of *empathy* or *apology*. The transition from lexical to pragmatic status is gradually accomplished through the development of a number of context-bound complementation patterns, since the decreasing centrality of *sorry* for the expression of *sadness* is matched with the presence of the adjective in various constructions. As such, *sorry* conveys (i) an intense facet of emotional engagement when occurring as the complement of copulative structures; (ii) mild emotional discomfort inspired by others when introducing a nominal group with the preposition *for*; and (iii) a much more formulaic (hence significantly lessened) facet of affliction when introducing verbs in the infinitive and *that* clauses – a construction that marks the glide from *affliction* towards *disappointment*.

These grammaticalized instances in which *sorry* functions as an apologetic marker (largely devoid of lexical content but high in pragmatic, subjectivized content) have become increasingly salient since Early Modern English, and they embody with rare transparency the syntax and semantics continuum. As observed in the examples, the complementation patterns reveal the presence of distinct semantic profiles in *sorry*, which constitutes valuable evidence of the deep imbrications of grammar and meaning as two sides of the same reality. Ingraining semantics within a framework in which meaning is not divorced from syntax allows transcending a long tradition that has ignored the lexicon as a haphazard, arbitrary and unsystematic ensemble of elements not pertaining to the grammar of a language. As Geeraerts (1986: 73) stresses, “changes in grammatical meaning (such as the change from adverb to preposition) involve syntax just as much (if not more than) lexicology. Because they involve the expression of particular syntactic functions, they constitute one of the main areas (together with the study of word order change) of diachronic syntax. Changes in pragmatic meaning, on the other hand, involve grammatical changes (an imperative such as *please* becomes an interjection) in combination with regular changes in conceptual meaning (for instance, the French interjection *pardon* ‘excuse me’ acquires its discursive meaning by an elliptical condensation of the meaning of the full sentence *je vous demande pardon* ‘I beg you pardon’). The striking similarity between the development undergone by *pardon* in French, also present in German (*Ich bitte um*) *Verzeihung/Entschuldigung*, stands out as yet another token of regularity in semantic change, and of the role of

semasiological profiles in the activation of grammaticalization processes. When we recall the folk perception of *sorry* as the adjective of *sorrow* (even after the pragmaticalization of the former) we cannot but recognize a deeply motivated inference, for the increasing specialization of *sorry* as a pragmatic marker was preceded by a formal and semantic shift in *sorry* towards *sorrow* which has never been lost. Originally linked to both *sorrow* and *sore* to equal extents, *sorry* did not abandon the domain of suffering as *sore* did, most probably influenced by the pressure of the loanword *pain*, introduced at the turn of the thirteenth century (cf. Molina 2003). Once entrenched within the domain, however, *sorry* was influenced by the stronger position of *sorrow*, which demoted *sorry* to the expression of weaker aspects of the notion, ultimately forcing it beyond the boundaries of *sadness* per se. Prototype effects thus reveal the lexicon as the stock where to find the answer to the way in speakers create meaning, make it evolve and reflect these shifts in the grammar.

The contemporary perception of *sorry* as an automatic conversational smoother, fairly detached from any significant degree of pathos, is not but the culmination of a very long process only completed in very recent times. As Jakobsson (2004: 201) points out, “according to data from the *Corpus of English Dialogues* and *London Lund Corpus*, *pardon* seems to have been the general apology expression of the period 1560-1760, whereas the Present-Day English general purpose expression is *sorry*. The reason for this change of expression may be due to the intrinsic request-meaning of *pardon*, making it more fitting in a negative politeness culture”. According to Aijmer (1996: 84), “the frequency of *I’m sorry* (and its variant *sorry*) indicates that the phrase has developed into a general purpose or unmarked routine”, and that the centrality of *I’m sorry* as an apology in English is demonstrated by the fact that parents explicitly teach their children to apologize by means of prompts like *say sorry*. Čubajevaitė & Ruzaitė (2007: 71) confirm so: “the most frequent apology is *sorry*, which occurs 1057.60 times per million. The other three apologies are considerably less frequent. *Excuse me* occurs 74.13 times; *pardon* occurs 43.1 times; *apologise* is even less frequent and occurs in 36.03 instances. Such a drastically higher frequency of *sorry* ... can be explained by its usage peculiarities. It is the most neutral form of apologizing and thus it can be used in a much wider variety of situations”. At the same time, studies within the domain of apology suggest there is an inherent vagueness in apologies that invites language change if expressive acts are misused on grounds of social convention. As Partridge (1992: 700) points out, “where apologies are emotively colored, there is difficulty in ascertaining with any precision what the color is: true emotion (sorrow) or expediency (regret), indicative perhaps of the speaker’s attitude towards the hearer’s welfare or his/her own”. Apologetic acts, he continues, “may often – as may all expressive acts – be perverted for expediency, and may be used for the sake of social conformity or peace and quiet, in pursuance of a conventional social rather than interpersonal function”. As such, the semasiological profile of *sorry* can therefore be assumed to be intrinsically blurred. The internal structure of the category, however, is not the only factor to take into account when trying to understand the function of the term today: as depicted by



the various overlaps presented in the paper, changing onomasiological scenarios are significant too.

Over the last two decades, pragmatic markers, now firmly rooted within grammaticalization studies, have become a distinct field of linguistic enquiry (Aijmer 2002; Aijmer and Simon-Vandenberg 2006; Athanasiadou, Canakis and Cornilie 2006; Blakemore 2002; Brinton 1996; Dostie 2004; Fischer 2000, 2006; Jucker and Ziv 1998; Lauwers, Vanderbauwhede and Verleyen 2010; Lenk 1998; Martín-Zorraquino and Montolío 1998; Mosegaard Hansen 1998; Portolés 2001; Schiffrin 1987; Traugott 1998, 2002, 2008). Not many studies, however, have paid attention to the interplay of semasiological and onomasiological constraints, which probably accounts for the somewhat peripheral presence of *sorry* within pragmaticalization studies so far. According to Čubajevaitė & Ruzaitė (2007: 69), a concomitant factor is that although “the influence of context on the use of apologies is of high importance, apologies have not been studied extensively in situational contexts”. The historical developments contextually attested for *sorry* throughout this paper, however, place the term at the centre of grammaticalization studies, and stress the grammar and semantics continuum. To conclude, let us recall the five questions posed by Brinton (1990: 49) for the diachronic study of discourse markers: “First, can discourse markers, which, synchronically, are a feature of oral discourse, be found in the written texts of earlier periods? Second, will the same diversity of forms and discourse functions occur, and can one detect a continuity of development? Third, do discourse functions derive from the semantic and syntactic properties of the particular forms, or does the opposite direction of derivation hold? Fourth, is such derivation explicable by principles of semantic change? And finally, what accounts for the transience of discourse markers?” The developments described in *sorry* seem to provide an answer to each of these questions. Further research is nonetheless needed so as to integrate insights from various fields, notably pragmatics and psychology, into the study of pragmaticalization and grammaticalization processes.

## References

- Aijmer, Karin (1996): *Conversational Routines in English: Convention and Creativity*. London: Longman.
- (2002): *English Discourse Particles: Evidence from a Corpus*. Amsterdam: Benjamins.
- Aijmer, Karin and Anne-Marie Simon-Vandenberg (eds.) (2006): *Pragmatic Markers in Contrast*. Amsterdam: Elsevier.
- Athanasiadou, Angeliki, Costas Canakis and Bert Cornilie (eds.) (2006): *Subjectification: Various Paths to Subjectivity*. Berlin: Mouton.
- Biber, Douglas, Susan Conrad and Randi Reppen (1998): *Corpus Linguistics: Investigating Language Structure and Use*. Cambridge: University Press.
- Blakemore, Diane (2002): *Relevance and Linguistic Meaning: The Semantics and Pragmatics of Discourse Markers*. Cambridge: University Press.
- Brinton, Laurel (1990): “The Development of Discourse Markers in English”. In Jacek Fisiak, ed., *Historical Linguistics and Philology*. Berlin: Mouton, 45–71.

- (1996): *Pragmatic Markers in English. Grammaticalization and Discourse Functions*. Berlin: Mouton.
- Chamber's *Etymological Dictionary of the English Language* (1898) 2nd edition. London: Chambers. Available online at: <[www.archive.org/stream/chamberssetymolo00donarich#page/12/mode/2up](http://www.archive.org/stream/chamberssetymolo00donarich#page/12/mode/2up)> (Accessed 15 May 2011).
- Čubajevaitė, Laura and Jūratė Ruzaitė (2007): "Apologies in Business communications". *Eesti Rakenduslingvistika Ühingu aastaraamat* 3, 67–81.
- Davies, Mark (2011a): *BYU-BNC: The British National Corpus*. Retrieved from <[corpus.byu.edu/bnc/](http://corpus.byu.edu/bnc/)> (15 May 2011).
- (2011b): *Word Frequency Data from the Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA)*. Retrieved from <[www.wordfrequency.info](http://www.wordfrequency.info)> (15 January 15 2011).
- Dostie, Gaetane (2004): *Pragmaticalization et Marqueurs Discursifs: Analyse Sémantique et Traitement Lexicographique*. Brussels: De Boeck Duculot.
- Fischer, Kristin (2000): *From Cognitive Semantics to Lexical Pragmatics: The Functional Polysemy of Discourse Particles*. Berlin: Mouton.
- (ed.) (2006): *Approaches to Discourse Particles*. Amsterdam: Elsevier.
- Geeraerts, Dirk (1986): "Functional Explanations in Diachronic Semantics". In Alain Bossuyt, ed., *Functional Explanations in Linguistics*. Brussels: Editions de l'Université de Bruxelles, 67–93.
- (1997): *Diachronic Prototype Semantics: A Contribution to Historical Lexicology*. Oxford: Clarendon.
- Helsinki Corpus = The Helsinki Corpus of English Texts: Diachronic and Dialectal*. (1993). Helsinki: Department of English, University of Helsinki.
- Jakobsson, Mattias (2004): "Apologies and Apologetic Attitude in Early Modern English". *Nordic Journal of English Studies* 3, 3: 187–204.
- Jucker, Andreas H. and Yael Ziv. (eds.) (1998): *Discourse Markers: Descriptions and Theory*. Amsterdam: Benjamins.
- Lauwers, Peter, Gudrun Vanderbauwhede and Stijn Verleyen (eds.) (2010): *Pragmatic Markers and Pragmaticalization: Lessons from False Friends*. Special Issue of *Languages in Contrast* 10, 2.
- Lenk, Uta (1998): *Marking Discourse Coherence. Functions of Discourse Markers in Spoken English*. Tübingen: Gunter Narr Verlag.
- Martín-Zorraquino, María Antonia and Estrella Montolío (eds.) (1998): *Los Marcadores del Discurso: Teoría y Análisis*. Madrid: Arco Libros.
- Molina, Clara (2003): "Semantic Interface in the Entrenchment of Loanwords and the Estrangement of Cognates". *Studia Anglica Resoviensia* 2: 84–94.
- (2005): "On the Role of Semasiological Profiles in Merger Discontinuities". In Nicole Delbecque, Johan van der Auwera and Dirk Geeraerts, eds., *Perspectives on Variation: Sociolinguistic, Historical, Comparative*. Berlin: Mouton, 177–193.
- Mosegaard Hansen, Maj-Britt (2008): *Particles at the Semantics/Pragmatics Interface: Synchronic and Diachronic Issues*. Elsevier: Amsterdam.
- OED2 = Oxford English Dictionary*. (1992). 2nd ed. (1989) on CD-ROM. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Partridge, John G. (1992): "'Sorry!' Remarks on the Semantics and Pragmatics of Apology". In Claudia Blank, ed., *Language and Civilization. A Concerted Profusion of Essays and Studies in Honour of Otto Hietcsch*. Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 765–774.

- Portolés, José (2001): *Marcadores del discurso*. Barcelona: Ariel.
- Rissanen, Matti, Merja Kytö and Kirsi Heikkonen (eds.) (1996): *English in Transition. Corpus-Based Studies in Linguistic Variation and Genre Styles*. Berlin: Mouton.
- Schiffrin, Deborah (1987): *Discourse Markers*. Cambridge: University Press.
- Shipley, Joseph T. (1945): *Dictionary of Word Origins*. New York: The Philosophical Library.
- Skeat, Walter William (1894): *Concise Etymological Dictionary*. Oxford: Clarendon.
- Tannen, Deborah. (1994): “‘I’m Sorry, I’m Not Apologizing’: Conversational Rituals”. In *Talking from 9 to 5*. New York: William Morrow, 43–77.
- Traugott, Elizabeth (1998): “The Role of the Development of Discourse Markers in a Theory of Grammaticalization”. Paper given at the *International Conference of Historical Linguistics (ICHL) 12*.
- (2008): “Grammaticalization, Pragmaticalization and/or (Inter)subjectification: Methodological Issues for the Study of Discourse Markers”. Rounding paper given at the *New Reflections on Grammaticalization (NRG4)* conference.
- Traugott, Elizabeth and Richard B. Dasher (2002): *Regularity in Semantic Change*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Tucker, Gordon (2007): “Sorry to Muddy the Waters: Accounting for Speech Acts Formulae and Formulaic Variation in a Systemic Functional Model of Language”. In Christopher S. Butler, Raquel Hidalgo Downing and Julia Lavid, eds., *Functional Perspectives on Grammar and Discourse in Honour of Angela Downing*. Amsterdam: Benjamins, 395–418.
- Wardale, Edith Elizabeth (1937): *An Introduction to Middle English*. London: Routledge.
- Wichmann, Anne (2004): “Sorry in Causal Conversation: Functions and Segmental/Prosodic Realization”. Paper given at the *British Association of Academic Phoneticians (BAAP)* colloquium.
- (2006): “Prosody and Discourse: A Diachronic Approach”. In *Proceedings IDP05 Interface Discours-Prosodie*. Retrieved from:  
<aune.lpl.univ-aix.fr/~prodige/idp05/actes/wichmann.pdf> (1 May 2011).

**Appendix: The BNC Simple Search** (retrieved 15 May 2011)

*Results of your search*

*Your query was sorry*

*Here is a random selection of 50 solutions from the 10752 found*

**A0D 1785** Girls are always trying to make you feel **sorry** for them, but they can't fool me.

**ADF 1318** However, in spite of having continually plundered Arabia through the centuries and taken thousands of its best horses, by the beginning of this century few of their descendants remained and those that did were in a very **sorry** state of deterioration.

**AN7 2073** 'I'm **sorry** lass, I wasn't thinking,' he said quickly.

**AP1 1198** I am afraid it has met with a cool response from our colleagues, and in view of this, I am **sorry** to say that we will not be taking up your offer to publish.

**ARK 2060** 'Sorry, sir,' the guard apologized.

**BP1 1461** He practically ran the church, especially now that Nahum was away so much on Foundling Hospital business, and Sarah felt **sorry** for him.

**BP8 664** 'I'm **sorry**, Kate, I really am.

**CDY 2225** **Sorry** to have to inflict myself on you again.'

**CFJ 1606** 'Oh, **sorry!**' replied Sergeant.

**CH3 6960** 'Now there is a possibility he could miss the entire season and I feel very **sorry** for him because he's put in so much hard work.'

**CJA 1092** **SORRY.**

**ED3 982** I feel **sorry** for the chaps who discover the same problem in their 20s.'

**FNW 152** '**Sorry,**' said Uncle Albert when she returned.

**FPH 3083** Wanting him to use again his pleasant, bluff manner of speaking, she said: 'Ah, I'm **sorry.**

**FYB 71** Terribly **sorry**, couldn't find a way in.

**G17 905** It seemed improper somehow that someone like Tulagai, his motives suspect, should mock Siban, who had served the Khanate so well, and Alexei thought that he was **sorry** that he had goaded him into leaving.

**GUF 3150** ‘I’m **sorry**,’ said Charles.

**GUU 2239** ‘I’m **sorry**.

**H8M 2810** I slip some things into my holdall and work through five different ways to say I’m **sorry**, but ‘How come you only work night time?’ she wants to know.

**H94 3520** I’m **sorry** if I’m taking up your valuable time, but look on the bright side,’ she said with unarguable logic.

**HAC 2537** This should never happen, but it has been known to, and being safe rather than **sorry** is always best.

**HGJ 189** ‘I’m really **sorry**,’ said Wendy, and she was.

**HGN 1437** ‘**Sorry**, mate.

**HM6 64** I’m very **sorry** you take offence, sir.

**HTN 1293** I’m **sorry**.

**HTU 1284** ‘**Sorry**, Rex.’

**HTU 4221** ‘**Sorry** to interrupt, but there seems to be some kind of disturbance going on around Police HQ.

**HV0 412** and if you leave a message it will be dealt with and people do leave a message, whereas before when it just said I’m **sorry** I’m not available they didn’t they just put the phone down.

**HW8 29** **Sorry**.’

**HWA 1055** I’m **sorry**.

**HWXH WX 2554** Wise up Buddy, and — **sorry** to use a cliché here — don’t tar everybody with the same brush.

**J1G 3488** ‘The money aspect at Leeds is nothing to do with me but I could tell Mr Wilkinson was very **sorry** to see me go.

**J3P 260** Oh, **sorry**.

**J3S 213** No, alright, **sorry**, **sorry** alright.

**J40 129** And divorce is or **sorry**, remarriage is not allowed for members of the Anglican Church.

**JJ6 11** In that **sorry**, in agriculture when there was a good harvest, prices would fall more than proportionately to the change in quantity.

**JK5 218** Sorry I lost

**JT3 893** Anybody in a four week deferre , erm, **sorry**, anybody in group four

**KBG 1538** Tut armband I meant, **sorry**.

**KBW 12165** Oh **sorry**.

**KC9 2108** Oh **sorry**.

**KCL 5174** You what **sorry**?

**KCP 8833** Sorry, I couldn't quite manage it that time

**KD0 8477** Sorry?

**KE2 5646** Sorry?

**KLW 1396** Sorry if it ends in nought.

**KPG 412** I'm **sorry**.

**KPM 1393** sixteen, seven, er twelve, **sorry**, nine, eighteen

**KPP 1168** **sorry** man, close the door and get out

**KS7\_1226** Hello, **sorry** about all that noise