

A Corpus-based Analysis of the Adjective Collocates of “Sorry” in Different Genres

Mahdar, Universitas Airlangga

Abstract

Sorry is commonly used to express apology to restore social relational agreement after the offense is committed (Deutschmann, 2003). The functions of *sorry* are easily recognized but it is difficult to identify what or whom the word *sorry* is uttered for. It is important to know the purpose why the speaker utters *sorry* after doing something mistake. The purpose of *sorry* might be recognized easily if the adjective collocates of *sorry* is explicitly mentioned. This study aims to analyze the adjective collocates of *sorry* through Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA), and to classify the similar semantic categories of the adjective collocates of *sorry* through WordNet. This study is analyzed based on descriptive-qualitative research design. Kwary and Arum (2011) stated that corpus linguistic research needs to be interpreted more with qualitative considerations. The data are collected by using corpus-based approach, Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA), and classified by using WordNet application. The result provides the word *sorry* is found in each genre of COCA. The word *sorry* is mostly followed by the objects related to the semantic category *time* and *event* in academic, related to *relative* in fiction, related to *abstract entity* in spoken, related to the physical entity in magazine, and related to *event* in newspaper.

Keywords: collocates; corpus of contemporary American English (COCA); sorry; WordNet

1. Introduction

Sorry is commonly used to express apology to restore social relational agreement after the offense is committed. The intrinsic sense of *sorry* as a term of apology is for “claiming personal responsibility for repair-related trouble” (Robinson, 2007). The word *sorry* might also be used as signaling to check understanding, correcting errors, searching for words, acknowledging mistakes or potential misunderstanding, disagreement, or new important information (Yang & Zhang, 2017).

The functions of *sorry* are easily recognized but it is difficult to identify what or whom the word *sorry* is uttered for. It is important to know the purpose why the speaker utters *sorry* after doing something mistake. For example, there is a young man doing something mistake to a young girl. The man accidentally stepped on the girl's foot. Then the man utters *sorry* without giving more explanation. It is clear enough he apologizes for his mistake. Otherwise, there is a man directly say *sorry* when he passes in front of a girl. The girl probably has many interpretations whether the man did mistake or will make mistake for her. It might occur because the man does not mention his purpose in uttering *sorry*.

The purpose of *sorry* might be recognized easily if the adjective collocates of *sorry* is explicitly mentioned. The use of *sorry* with the clear adjective collocates can be seen in The Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA) whose word list used in spoken, newspaper, academic, fiction and magazine. COCA is available online since 2008, and is the largest free English corpus. Davies (2009, in Xu Yusu, 2014) states COCA has significant advantages over other free corpora in terms of vocabulary study.

There have been three previous studies attempted to discuss the word *sorry*. The first is conducted by Sara Lynch (2013) explores the variations of the word *sorry* as part of Irish English discourse. The study shows that *sorry* in Irish English does not only function as an apology, but identifies ten different functions including as a discourse marker, a request or to demonstrate a hearing offence. The results demonstrate that females use the token more than males. It is more inclined to be used in informal conversation than formal. The word *sorry* tends to be used by the younger and older

age categories rather than the middle-aged categories, and self-identified Christians appear to use the token more than those who do not identify as Christian.

The second previous studies is conducted Barr and Gillberry (2010) explore how and when Canadians say the word *sorry* and how this differs between age groups and from other nationalities. This paper found that Canadians would make more use of the word *sorry* to avert or alleviate a problem than other nationalities. Those aged 18-25 were found to use the word *sorry* more frequently and in different scenarios. In comparison to those in the 26 and older category, the 18-25 year olds were more likely to use the word *sorry* when they were not the one at fault. It is used to keep the relationship positive. Then, the word *sorry* is also seemed to be used to express the idea “*Please disregard what I've done*,” which holds less concern for the other person than apologizing and taking the blame by saying *sorry* or “*I regret what I did. Could you please forgive me?*”

The third previous study is conducted by Yang and Zhang (2017) examines different functions of the apology-based term, *sorry*, in language-based classrooms using the methodology of conversational analysis. Our findings suggest that *sorry* can perform a dual function in interaction between learners and tutors in L2 classrooms. For L2 adult learners, *sorry* is used as a strategy to obtain opportunities for their L2 learning during classroom interaction. At the same time, it could be adopted to claim personal responsibility for troubles caused during the learning process.

The three previous studies explained above have different purpose. The first study aims to explore the variations of the word *sorry* as part of Irish English discourse. The second study aims to explore how and when Canadians say the word *sorry* and how this differs between age groups and from other nationalities. The third study aims to examine different functions of the apology-based term, *sorry*, in language-based classrooms using the methodology of conversational analysis.

From the three purposes above, there is no one having purpose to identify the adjective collocates of *sorry* through COCA, and to classify the objects related to similar semantic meaning through WordNet application. Therefore, this study aims to analyze the adjective collocates of *sorry* through COCA, and to classify the adjective collocates of *sorry* related to similar semantic meaning through WordNet.

2. Method

Since this study aims to analyze the adjective collocates of *sorry* through Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA), this study is analyzed based on descriptive-qualitative research design. Kwary and Arum (2011) stated that corpus linguistic research needs to be interpreted more with qualitative considerations.

The data are collected by using corpus-based approach, Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA), and classified by using WordNet application. WordNet is a large lexical database of English. Nouns, verbs, adjectives and adverbs are grouped into sets of cognitive synonyms (synsets), each expressing a distinct concept. Synsets are interlinked by means of conceptual-semantic and lexical relations (IGI global, 2018).

The adjective collocates of *sorry about* appear in all genres of Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA) are categorized as data. There are several procedures to collect the data completely. The first, the researcher opens *access* Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA). The second is to choose *search*. The third is to select *collocates*. The fourth is to type the word *SORRY about* in *word/phrase* column. The fifth is to select *noun.ALL* in collocates list. The sixth is to select three collocations follow. The seventh is to select *sections*. The eighth is to choose each genre such as academic, fiction, spoken, magazine and newspaper. The ninth is to select *find collocates*. The tenth is to capture the adjective collocates found in each genre through Snipping Tool. The Snipping Tool is a screenshot utility included in Windows Vista and later versions that can take screenshots in a variety of ways.

After doing data collection completely in COCA, The adjective collocates of *sorry about* is classified into similar semantic categories through checking in WordNet application. There are some procedures to classify the similar semantic categories. The first is to open application downloaded. The second is to type a word searched in search word column. The third is to search the noun hypernym of the word. By using hypernym, the adjective collocates of *sorry* can be classified in some semantic categories. The data are analyzed and interpreted descriptively. After doing analysis and interpretation, the researcher takes conclusion from the result of data collection, data classification and data analysis.

3. Discussion

There are five genres in Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA) become source of data. The five genre are spoken, fiction, magazine, newspaper, and academic. The data of the adjective collocates of *sorry about* from each genre of COCA are classified semantic categories. There are seventeen semantic categories of WordNet used to classify the adjective collocates of *sorry*, they are age, animate entity, association, body, food, beverage, physical process, emotion, physical entity, event, space, pronoun, relative, condition, sound, time, and abstract entity. See the following discussions:

In spoken, the sixty-three adjective collocates of *sorry* are classified into nine semantic categories; animate entity (i.e., people), beverage (i.e., tea), physical process (i.e., move), physical entity (i.e., pen), event (i.e., death), relative (i.e., father), condition (i.e., pain), time (i.e., night), and abstract entity (i.e., fact). The most semantic category influence the use of *sorry* is the abstract entity. It indicates speakers utter *sorry* for abstract entity. It means that the word *sorry* used to apologize for something that does not appear physically.

In fiction, the hundred adjective collocates of *sorry* are classified into fifteen semantic categories. They are animate entity (i.e., dog), association (i.e., friend), body (i.e., hand), food (i.e., dinner), beverage (i.e., drink), physical process (i.e., crying), emotion (i.e., cunt), physical entity (i.e., car), event (i.e., accident), space (i.e., crack), relative (i.e., mother) condition (i.e., inconvenience), sound (i.e., noise), time (i.e., night), and abstract entity (i.e., way). From the various semantic categories found, it indicates the word *sorry* is commonly used in various purposes and it often used for apologizing relatives.

In magazine, the twenty-four adjective collocates of *sorry* are classified into ten semantic categories. They are animate entity (i.e., turkey), food (i.e., meat), beverage (i.e., milk), physical process (i.e., rain), physical entity (i.e., phone), event (i.e., election), relative (i.e., father), condition (i.e., condition), time (i.e., wait), and abstract entity (i.e., pun). From the various semantic categories found, the word *sorry* is commonly used to apology for *physical entity*.

In newspaper, the seventeen adjective collocates of *sorry* are classified into seven semantic categories. They are animate entity (i.e., girl), emotion (i.e., feeling), physical entity (i.e., wall), event (i.e., wedding), relative (i.e., dad), condition (i.e., problem), abstract entity (i.e., oversight). The use of *sorry* is often used to apologize for the events. The abstract entity becomes second semantic category makes people use the word *sorry*.

In academic, the six adjective collocates are classified into four semantic categories based on WordNet categories. They are time (i.e., delay), event (i.e., death), association (i.e., couple), and pronoun (i.e., it). The word *sorry* is dominantly used to apologize for time, and event.

4. Conclusion

This study aims to analyze the adjective collocates of *sorry* through COCA, and to classify the adjective collocates of *sorry* through WordNet. The result of this study reveals that the word *sorry* is found in each five genres of COCA. All genres of COCA show the adjective collocates from the word *sorry*. The adjective collocates of *sorry* is most commonly found in fiction. In academic, the

word *sorry* is mostly followed by the objects related to the semantic category *time* and *event*. In fiction, the word *sorry* is mostly followed by the objects related to the semantic category *relative*. In spoken, the word *sorry* is mostly followed by the objects related to the semantic category *abstract entity*. In magazine, the word *sorry* is mostly followed by the objects related to the semantic category *physical entity*. In newspaper, the word *sorry* is mostly followed by the objects related to the semantic category *event*.

References

- Barr, C. & Gillberry, J. 2010. "Sorry . . . I'm Canadian" an analysis of when Canadians use the word "sorry". *Strathy Undergraduate Working Papers on Canadian English*, 8, 31-39.
- Corpus of Contemporary American English*. Available at <http://corpus.byu.edu/coca/>. (Accessed 7 June 2018).
- Deutschmann, M. 2003. *Apologising in British English*. Umeå Universitet. Tryckt av Print and Media.
- IGI Global Dissiminator of Knowledge*. Available at <https://www.igi-global.com/dictionary/ontology-based-multimodal-language-learning/32725>. (Accessed 7 June 2018).
- Kwary, D. A., & Arum, K. A. 2011. Lincoln's vs. Obama's presidencies: A diachronic corpus based analysis of the adjectival collocates of [man] and [woman] in the American English'. *ReVel*, 9(17), 211-225.
- Lynch, S. 2013. *A corpus based analysis of the presence of sorry in Irish English discourse*. Thesis. University College Dublin, Dublin, Irlandia.
- Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary*. Available at <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/sorry>. (Accessed 6 June 2018).
- Robinson, J. D. 2007. Managing trouble responsibility and relationships during conversational repair. *Communication Monographs*, 73(2), 137-161.
- Xu Yusu. 2014. On the application of corpus of contemporary American English in vocabulary instruction. *International Education Studies*, 7(8), 68-73.
- Yang, R. & Zhang, X. 2017. Sorry used by L2 adult learner: Managing learning opportunity and interpersonal relationship in classroom interaction. *International Journal of English Linguistics*, 8(2), 48-55.