

"So sori my ladies, malo sam se raspisala": A contrastive analysis of pragmatic functions of "sorry" in English and Croatian

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"sorry" in English and Croatian

Master's thesis

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Abstract

This paper will provide some insight into the use of the word *sorry* in English and Croatian online communication. The paper aims to demonstrate that the use of the *sorry* is not limited to apologies, as well as to discuss different patterns of its use in English and Croatian. After introducing the topic, defining the theoretical framework and presenting the research methodology, the syntactic structure of *sorry* will be analyzed in both languages, and instances of the lexeme "sorry" in English and Croatian, as well as the orthographically adapted *sori*, will be analyzed and contrasted. Looking into examples in English and Croatian, *sorry* will be primarily analyzed as an apology speech act, a discourse marker, and as a sarcastic or non-apology, and the frequency of each of these uses, combined with syntactic implications and interesting examples, will be used to identify patterns that may be worth exploring in the future. The main findings of the paper include: English speakers use *sorry* primarily to express sympathy or regret in online communication, whereas Croatian speakers use *sorry* to compensate for minor offences, most often accompanying this apologetic expression with an explanation for their actions; the pragmatic meaning of *sorry* in Croatian is more limited than that in English, but no conclusive evidence of similarities and differences could be established in the scope of this paper; orthographic adaptation of the pragmatic borrowing *sorry* has no significant influence over the range and frequency of its pragmatic functions in Croatian. The patterns in the use of *sorry* in both languages described in this paper are considered to be valuable insights which invite further research on a larger scale and different corpus.

1 Introduction

Sorry is one of the most versatile expressions in the English language, and it tends to be first associated with apologies. The dictionary definition of the term *apology* itself is "a word or statement saying *sorry* for something that has been done wrong or that causes a problem"¹ However, uttering *sorry* exhibits a much broader range of functions often less related to what first comes to mind when one thinks of apologies. These functions can differ based on a range of criteria in the English language, from age and gender implications to specific varieties of English. Furthermore, the complexity of the use of *sorry* extends past its source language. *Sorry* is widely used by non-native speakers, both in their production of English and as a pragmatic borrowing into their native languages, and it takes on (and abandons) different functions and properties as a result of the impact of the native language of the non-native speakers, as well as the cultural context it is borrowed into. This paper will provide insight into the pragmatic characteristics of *sorry* in English and Croatian in order to determine similarities and differences between the use of *sorry* in English online communication and its use as a pragmatic marker in Croatian online communication, in both its original spelling and its orthographically adapted version (*sori*). The paper will draw upon theories in the field of pragmatics, namely speech act theory, politeness theory, and interlanguage pragmatics, to lay the groundwork for a more detailed analysis of the topic. By exploring the diverse pragmatics of *sorry*, this paper aims to provide further insight into the intricacies of cross-cultural borrowing and communication.

¹Oxford Learners Dictionary; italics added by me

2 Literature review

Sorry is one of the most common lexemes in the English language, and is frequently used in many other languages, especially among younger generations that have been more influenced by (social) media and Western culture. Its frequency and versatility have led to a consistent interest from linguists, predominantly in pragmatics.

One of the fundamental theories that investigate themes related to *sorry*, and that most relevant research touches upon, is speech act theory, first proposed by Austin (1962). Speech act theory proposes that words are not only used to present information, but also to carry out actions through various utterances. Actions that can be carried out through language include requests, promises, apologies, etc., the latter being the most relevant for *sorry*, as one way to apologize is using an illocutionary force indicating device (IFID) such as "I'm sorry". In other words, while speakers may first associate the word *sorry* with apologizing despite its range of functions, pragmatics confirms this assumption is much more true than not.

While apologies have been extensively examined in terms of speech act theory, the insight into apologetic speech acts was largely complemented by politeness theory, introduced by Brown and Levinson (1987). Apart from language being used for performing actions as according to Austin (1962), politeness theory explains that language is used to manage social relationships, and bases its claims around the concept of face – the public self-image one wants to present and preserve in social interactions. Apologies play a key role in managing social relationships, as the various apology strategies in combination with politeness strategies are language tools to mitigate damage, resolve misunderstanding and restore social harmony. Using *sorry* independently or in combination with other strategies, or opting to use a different apology word, can make a big difference, leading to diverse interpretations, face threats, and resolutions at the level of social relationships. One telling example is the difference between the use of *sorry* and *I'm sorry*, as recounted by Arizavi and Choubsaz:

"Most instances of the lexeme *sorry* were used to indicate interruption, self-repair, and expressing regret, whereas *I'm sorry* was chiefly exploited to express regret and apology." (2018: 1)

Over the years, the interpretation and use of speech acts, and *sorry* as an apology expression,

IFID, and/or politeness marker, have been studied not only with native speakers of various varieties of English, but also with non-native English speakers around the world. The scope of such research belongs in the realm of interlanguage pragmatics. While Kasper and Blum-Kulka (1993) describe interlanguage pragmatics as sitting at the intersection of several areas in the study of language, primarily interlanguage studies, pragmatics, and second language research (3), Kasper and Schmidt (1996) define interlanguage pragmatics as "the study of the development and use of strategies for linguistic action by nonnative speakers" and in terms of the focal points of research in interlanguage pragmatics being skewed towards pragmalinguistic and sociopragmatic knowledge, argue that the field "has thus been primarily a study of second language use rather than second language learning" (150). Such perspectives on non-native speakers use of second language has provided useful insight into the pragmatic functions of speech acts, and has also touched upon *sorry* in terms of English apologetic speech acts.

One of the earliest investigations into apologetic speech acts in native and non-native speakers was done by Olshtain and Cohen (1983), who identified a gap in the definition of speech acts in general; there was an understanding of the ways in which a speech act can be performed, and lacking were "the types of sentences and utterances that together create a set of parameters belonging to any particular speech act." (20) The study acknowledges that apology speech acts can be studied from different points of view, yet focuses on two dimensions that can impact the intensity of an apology: the severity of the offence, and the status of the recipient. (22) The emerging semantic formulas for apologizing the authors identify are "an expression of an apology, an explanation or account of the situation, an acknowledgment of responsibility, an offer of repair, and a promise of forbearance", wherein an expression of an apology, more precisely an expression of regret, as in *I'm sorry*, "seems to be most common in English", with more evidence supporting the frequency of *I'm sorry* in apology contexts emerging around this time: according to Borkin and Reinhart (1978), *I'm sorry* is most used "in remedial interchanges when a speaker's main concern is about a violation of another person's right or damage to another person's feelings" (61)

Further research into the use of apologetic speech acts by native and non-native English speakers supports these findings. In her study of multiple apology strategies in native speakers of English and Danish, Trosborg (1995) finds "the routine formula *I'm sorry* is by far the most commonly used form of expression of apology", with non-native speakers using more adverbial intensifiers such as *really* and *terribly* along with it, as well as displaying some inappropriate uses, where the formula preceded a direct face attack. (399)

The frequency of (*I'm*) *sorry* has all but decreased over time. In a study of the development of apologetic speech acts in the Corpus of Historical American English (COHA), covering American English in use from 1810 to 2009, Jucker (2018) found that "the frequency of apologies increased considerably throughout the period covered by COHA." (1) The author also notes the weight of apologetic speech acts has decreased over time, as "what used to be a heartfelt expression of regret for having committed an offense has in many cases turned to a conventionalized phrase with little meaning", and highlights *sorry* as "by far the most important apology expression today." (22) The findings described so far help shape my first research question: RQ1: How are English and Croatian speakers using *sorry* to perform apologetic speech acts in online written conversations?

Much like *sorry* is used more and more in the English language, the English language is a language spoken more and more in the world. As such, a number of commonly used English expressions have been adopted into foreign languages. These borrowed and lexicalized elements are referred to as anglicisms, and there has been extensive research into this linguistic behaviour on many linguistic levels, with Andersen (2014) arguing that "current anglicism research is predominantly concerned with lexis and terminology, while relatively few studies focus on linguistic features beyond the word level." The most relevant research area and angle for this paper is concerned with the notion of pragmatic borrowing, which is "the incorporation of pragmatic and discourse features of a source language into a recipient language." (17)

Interestingly, in the context of pragmatic borrowing, *sorry* has gained the closest attention as a self-standing expression (previously named studies examined it almost exclusively as an IFID with the copula *be*), and the scope of its meaning has been far less limited to apologetic speech acts. Terkourafi (2011) examined the status and development of *sorry*, *thank you*, and *please*, as borrowed expressions in Cypriot Greek. Her data consisted of recordings of conversations amounting

to about 60 000 words, wherein *sorry* appeared a total of six times, and complemented those with an internet search of its Greek transliteration, which returned results mainly from chatrooms and blogs. The findings indicate that the primary function of the expression is of self-repair, and that *sorry* is "transformed into a marker of discourse structure, ensuring the smooth flow of the interaction by helping interlocutors maintain mutual alignment." (222-229) In this case, the use of *sorry* is no longer tied to apologetic speech acts in any form; instead, it moves to the realm of discourse markers. As opposed to speech acts, the primary function of discourse markers is to contribute to the coherence and flow of discourse. A definition of discourse markers proposed by Schiffrin (1987) frames them as "sequentially dependent elements that bracket units of talk" (31), whereas Fraser (1999) narrows this understanding of discourse markers down to "a class of linguistic expressions drawn primarily from the syntactic classes of conjunctions, adverbials, and prepositional phrases" (931).

Perhaps the most relevant research available in relation to this topic comes from Mišić-Ilić (2021), who studied the pragmatic adaptation of English *sorry* in Serbian, a language that, like Croatian, belongs to the South Slavic group of Indo-European languages and as such is quite similar to Croatian, with very similar grammar and vocabulary, and a main difference in their written forms: while Croatian only uses the Latin script, Serbian is officially written in both Latin and Cyrillic script. The study by Mišić-Ilić was done based on data from electronic corpora of Serbian and a small personal corpus of written and some spoken use, "with annotations regarding sociolinguistic data about the context and the participants." (326) In comparison with the most general pragmatic marker for apology, the study found the pragmatic marker *sori* (in both scripts) to have "a narrower range of pragmatic meaning" and "a more restricted use, limited to colloquial urban style and the medium of spoken language, social networks and tabloid media." (323) While the present paper will not consider Croatian pragmatic markers of apologetic speech acts or sociolinguistic factors influencing the pragmatic meaning, its insights, together with Terkourafi (2011), form the basis for my second and third research question: RQ2: What linguistic or contextual factors might account for similarities and differences in the use of *sorry* between English and Croatian online conversations? RQ3: To what extent does the pragmatic meaning of *sorry* and *sori* differ or overlap in Croatian?

Based on the research into related topics done so far, I posit that the marker *sorry* will serve

different roles in English and Croatian online conversations, with certain functions more prevalent in one language due to variances in communication styles and conventions. Further, the function of *sorry* in Croatian will likely be more limited, partially due to the effects of pragmatic borrowing, as well as syntactic limitations. Lastly, I believe that the range and frequency of functions will not be affected by the differences in orthography in Croatian.

3 Research methodology

The research in this paper was conducted using two online corpora via Sketch Engine, a corpus manager and text analysis software. The English online conversation data was gathered from en-TenTen20 (365 billion lexemes), and the Croatian online conversation data was gathered from hrWaC 2.2 (1,2 billion lexemes). To make sure that the data in question was indeed comprised of online conversations, both corpora were filtered to only show results from online communities such as forums. To ensure a level playing field and relevant conversational data, the largest online forums for each language by number of users were selected as the sole source of the data.

The contexts for the use of *sorry* in English (henceforth: English (*sorry*)) was gathered from reddit.com, one of the most popular communities on the Internet. Reddit has over 57 million daily active unique users and over 100,000 active communities (known as 'subreddits') according to the information listed on their page.² Reddit is a globally popular site, meaning part of the conversations on the platform are not in English. To date, there is no academic research into the representation of different languages on Reddit known to the author. However, an analysis conducted in 2021 by a Reddit user performed on a dataset of 938,131 comments across 3,860 subreddits has shown that only 3 % of the comments were in a language other than English.³ A small part of the mentioned percentage is taken up by Croatian, which was detected in 319 contexts in the subreddit r/croatia and 128 contexts in the subreddit r/serbia.⁴ The former has gained popularity in recent

²<https://www.redditinc.com/>

³<https://towardsdatascience.com/the-most-popular-languages-on-reddit-analyzed-with-snowflake-and-a-java-udtf-4e58c8ba473c>

⁴<https://public.tableau.com/app/profile/felipe.hoffa/viz/202110-redditlanguages-pub/Dashboard1>

years among Croats, much like the platform, and it counts 229,000 users as of July 2023. However, r/croatia was not chosen as a source for this paper, as it is not included in the available Croatian corpus, and is not the largest online forum in the Croatian language at the time of writing.

The contexts for the use of *sorry* in Croatian (henceforth: Croatian (*sorry*)) and the use of *sori* in Croatian (henceforth: Croatian (*sori*)) were gathered from forum.hr, a general-purpose online forum with over 384,000 members as of July 2023 according to the usage statistics listed on the forum homepage.⁵ Launched in 1999, forum.hr is one of the oldest Croatian online discussion boards which reached its peak before the rise of social media. Seeing as its recorded member count was almost half a million users in 2017⁶, with its relevance ironically brought up on Reddit⁷, it is apparent that social media sites, including those with a similar discussion style such as Reddit, are driving its traffic away. However, for the purpose and scope of this paper, forum.hr is found to still be a relevant source of linguistic information.

At the level of the chosen corpora, a total of 4,018 hits matched these requirements in enTenTen20. In hrWaC, the search returned 11,819 hits for *sorry*, and 1,747 hits for *sori*. Out of those results, the top 50 contexts were selected from all three searches and analyzed manually. An initial assessment of the data entailed looking for the fulfillment of two basic criteria:

1. *Sorry* or *sori* must carry some pragmatic meaning arising from its active use in conversation (as opposed to e.g. being used in a quote).
2. *Sori* must be used as an orthographically adapted version of *sorry*. (Other less common, yet possible uses of *sori* include the third person singular form of the verb *soriti* (to destroy, to shatter) and the dative singular form of the noun *šora* (slang term for a fight), with the diacritical mark omitted).

After the initial assessment, 47 adequate contexts of *sorry* in English, 49 of *sorry* in Croatian,

⁵<https://www.forum.hr/index.php>

⁶<http://planb.hr/forum-hr-jos-uvijek-ziv-zdrav/>

⁷https://www.reddit.com/r/croatia/comments/102t918/ima_li_vas_aktivnih_na_forumhr_i_zna_li_se_koliko/

and 47 of *sori* in Croatian were considered for a more in-depth analysis.⁸ While the main objective was to pinpoint the different uses of *sorry* in online written communication contexts, a number of other parameters were noted in order to identify possible patterns and connections.

3.1 Classification framework

In forming the division of the selected contexts into categories, the classification systems used in previous research were assessed and adapted to the needs of this dataset. A framework which many relevant works either follow or use as a basis to develop their own systems is the Cross-Cultural Speech Act Realization Project (CCSARP) coding scheme for apologies, proposed by Blum-Kulka and Olshtain (1984). At a basic level, the framework is based on the assumption that a speaker can perform an apology by selecting an explicit illocutionary force indicating device (IFID) and expressing regret through a routinized formula, or using an utterance which relates to "one or more elements from a closed set of specified preconditions" (206). The speaker can also choose to employ a combination of both an IFID and an utterance related to one or more preconditions. Apart from the IFID, the framework lists four other strategies that can qualify as apologies:

1. An explanation or account of the cause behind the offense
2. An expression of the speaker's responsibility for the offense
3. An offer of repair
4. A promise of forbearance

While this framework covers the make-up of apologies as expressions of regret, previous research into the topic has demonstrated a tendency to use apologies in contexts that neither require a notable degree of sympathy nor contain offenses in the strongest sense, as in serious impositions or breaches of consensus that would likely require its use with a performative verb as an IFID. Based on previous research, the use of *sorry* as a heartfelt apology would presumably not be represented in a significant part of the corpus, so an appropriate classification system for this case

⁸The final list of the analyzed examples supporting the findings of this paper are available from the author upon request.

would require categories for minor and no transgressions. A framework covering part of this requirement was developed by Aijmer (1996) and consists of the following six categories of offenses warranting an apology:

1. Talk: interruption, not having heard or understood what sb says, 'slip of the tongue', digression, correction, not having made oneself clear
2. Time: being late, wasting another person's time, causing delay, keeping another person waiting, not keeping in touch, cancelling an appointment
3. Space: disturbing or bothering another person, intruding on sb's privacy
4. Social gaffe: clearing one's throat, hiccuping, coughing, etc
5. Inconvenience or impoliteness to another person: mistaking sb's identity, leaving the room before the conversation is finished, non-compliance with a request, invitation, proposal, etc
6. Possession: damaging a person's possessions (109)

Taking into account the nature of the data analyzed in this paper, it is apparent that a significant part of these (sub)categories will not be applicable here, as they require oral communication as opposed to a written interaction. Moreover, while Time offenses and subsequent apologies may occur in written conversations, they will likely occur in combination with one of the CCSARP categories, e. g. offering an explanation for being late, taking responsibility for not keeping in touch, etc. Despite the valuable insight this categorization as a whole gives us into the reasoning for apologizing, and given the size of the corpus in this paper, defining (sub)categories that will likely be used in combination would lead to excessive granularity and misleading patterns.

While a combination of these two taxonomies provides a solid ground for the analysis, covering both "real" apologies and ritualistic expressions for minor offenses, an important angle that is not yet covered is a category/categories for no transgressions, i.e. contexts where, although an apology expression is used, it carries either minimal or no apologetic meaning. Due to the informal nature of online communication via forums, *sorry* may occur as part of a joke or humorous remark which would greatly reduce its apologetic status, or as a sarcastic or ironic comment.

The established classification for this paper draws mainly on the two aforementioned frameworks

while adapting them in order to fit the need of this particular corpus. Taking into account the small number of contexts analyzed, the main taxonomy for this paper consists of four major categories: **Apology, Face-keeping, Discourse management, and Non-serious apology.**

4 *Sorry* in context: analysis and discussion

4.1 Apology

The category of Apology in this taxonomy is largely based on the premise behind the Cross-Cultural Speech Act Realization Project (CCSARP) framework, a methodology used in an international effort to study requests and apologies across different cultures. (Houck 1992: 217)

Apologies here are considered post-event acts involving the speaker recognizing and admitting to a violation of a social norm. (Blum-Kulka and Olshtain, 1984: 206) Given the nature of the corpus at hand, which primarily includes online communication, it is hypothesized that most instances of norm violations will be minor offences, mandating a mitigating speech act – an apology – to restore interpersonal harmony and uphold the speaker’s positive face while minimizing potential damage to the hearer’s negative face (Brown and Levinson, 1987).

Additionally, the Apology category includes instances in which *sorry* is used to express sincere sympathy for the hearer’s situation, although the speaker’s prior actions did not offend or affect the hearer in any way.

Overall, Apology accounted for 49% of the contexts in total. At the level of the three subcorpus analyzed, 48.9% of English (*sorry*), 53.1% of Croatian (*sorry*) and 44.7% of Croatian (*sori*) carried an element of a "real" apology, either one of heartfelt sympathy or regret for an offence. Despite the similar representation of "real" apologies across the subcorpora, significant differences arise when looking into the distribution of contexts with a distinct element of sympathy for the hearer. This meaning of *sorry* accounts for 52% of the Apology category in English (*sorry*), while this meaning is largely reduced in Croatian (*sorry*) (15% of the category) and has no members in Croatian (*sori*).

The facet of the category involving *sorry* as a speech act aimed at recognizing and admitting an offense was broken down into the four categories as proposed by the CCSARP framework, with

the names slightly adapted for clarity:

- Explanation/account
- Taking responsibility
- Offer of repair
- Promise of forbearance

The latter two subcategories considered were not represented in this corpus. However, some interesting patterns in Explanation/account and Taking responsibility, as well as the aforementioned Expression of regret or sympathy, were discovered in this study. Before proceeding into a more detailed review of the three subcategories, an important observation to make is that the aim of examining the subcategories and other discussed parameters in the Apology category and other categories is not to draw definitive conclusions based on quantitative data, as the further breakdown of the categories on subcorpora of this size results in groups of meaning with few (>15) members. However, it is intended to identify possible patterns of pragmatic behavior, which may be confirmed or denied in further research.

4.1.1 Expression of regret or sympathy

Apart from *sorry* as a sincere expression of regret or sympathy towards the hearer being far more frequent in English than in Croatian, the situations where such a function occurs in English very clearly call for such an expression, as in the following examples:

1. I'm so *sorry* that this happened to you, just know it isn't your fault you are perfect
2. *Sorry* you're having a rough time with it.
3. I feel *sorry* for all the people who must be so unhappy (...)

All the contexts clearly show empathy for the hearer or a group throughout the rest of the utterance, albeit in slightly different ways on a syntactic level. (1) is the most prototypical example of this function of *sorry*, preceded by the performative verb *be* and with the sympathetic component emphasized with the intensifier *so*. In (2), *sorry* is a standalone element at the beginning of the

sentence, yet the rest of the sentence supports the apologetic expression and the sympathy behind it, albeit in a more toned-down manner than (1). The last example is one which is not meant for the interlocutor, but occurs as part of the speaker expressing a stance. Here, *sorry* is not complemented by the performative verb *be*, but it stands next to the linking verb *feel*, which achieves a similar goal in combination with *sorry* in this context.

In the Croatian subcorpora, *sorry* as an expression of sympathy was identified in a single case:

1. Popravni je pred komisijom... *sorry* stari...: D (The makeup exam is with a committee... *sorry* man... : D)

This case is different than the examples in English, as it is not based solely on the sympathetic expression. Instead, the speaker brings up the source of sympathy by sharing a piece of information they believe to be true and negative for the hearer's case, and showing sympathy through a highly informal expression, with *sorry* accompanied by *stari* as a term of endearment. Additionally, the speaker aims to keep the conversation and tone positive despite the information by adding an emoticon to the end of their utterance. Here, it is visible that more strategies are employed apart from expressing sympathy through *sorry*, and yet the sympathetic statement itself seems to be weaker for it.

Another example of combining strategies is the following part of a discussion:

1. (...) i jako mi je žao što ti misliš drukčije, *sorry*, ali nadam se da si u stanju prihvatiti da netko tko je totalno van teme i čita ju posve neutralno, ima drukčije mišljenje (and I'm really sorry you think differently, sorry, but I hope you're able to accept that someone completely neutral to this topic has a different opinion)

Before introducing the interjection *sorry*, the speaker uses the Croatian apologetic expression *žao mi je* with an intensifier, forming *jako mi je žao*, to appease the interlocutor and express regret for their disagreement. The speaker then makes another effort to express this regret by employing *sorry*, before continuing to a counterargument where they politely defend their stance by indirectly guiding the person towards an acceptance of facts.

A third example in the Croatian subcorpus demonstrates how *sorry* works in Croatian to express regret in a simple sentence:

1. *sorry* što ne znam više da ti pomognem: tuzni: (sorry that I don't know how to help you any more :sad:)

In the example above, *sorry* marks the start of the speaker's expression of regret and is followed by a subordinate clause with more context, including a symbol for a forum emoticon. Along with the rest of the context, this emoticon proves useful in identifying the tone behind the message. Seeing as the sentence structure, along with the weakened pragmatic meaning of *sorry* as a sincere apology as evidenced by previous studies, could also be interpreted as sarcastic, the speaker's effort to detail their feelings beyond words in a digital setting makes a difference in the classification of this instance in a research setting, but also in achieving mutual understanding at the level of the dynamics of online communication.

4.1.2 Explanation/account

The Explanation/account category closely follows the CCSARP classification, and encompasses contexts in which *sorry* is used along with the reasoning behind the offence brought upon the hearer. This subcategory comprised a significantly larger part of the Apology categories in Croatian than in English, with 46% of Apology in Croatian (*sorry*) and 57% of Apology in Croatian (*sori*) expressing this meaning, compared to 26% of Apology in English (*sorry*). To gain further insight into explanations in both languages, an additional taxonomy as proposed by Kasper et al. (2003) in their dialog construction study was applied in this case. In their classification, a similar category is named "Downgrading responsibility or Severity of offense" and includes utterances "reducing the speaker's accountability for the offense" (excuses, justifications, claiming ignorance, problematizing a precondition, and denial, along with utterances "reducing severity of offense". (94) In all three subcorpora, justifications were commonly represented instances:

1. Lamictal, colonzapen, and Lithium? Are you doing other recreation drugs like weed, opiates, etc? Are you exercising? *Sorry* I'm not answering your question 100%. It's just that You want to be very careful combining stuff with clinical (...)
2. Ali to ije razlog da mi se grad ne svidi. *Sorry* morala sam stati u odbranu svoga grada, ipak mi je zao ovoga grada i ljudi u njemu. (...) (But this is not a reason for me not to like a city. Sorry, I had to defend my city, I feel sorry for this city and the people in it after all.)

3. A dobro, *sori* , ja sam u većem gradu pa mi je malo čudno za čut tako nešto... (...) (Alright then, sorry, I'm in a bigger city so it's a bit weird to hear something like that...)

Another common use of *sorry* was as part of excuses. Here, the distinction between justifications and excuses may be important to note. In justifications, the aim of the speaker is to convey the reasoning behind their action to the speaker and present an argument for their action being suitable or understandable. On the other hand, excuses involve the speaker attempting to evade responsibility by blaming another person or an external factor. In all three contexts above, the speakers attempt to present their rationale, while taking the blame and extending an appropriate apology; in all three contexts, *sorry* can be considered an appropriate choice, as the offenses at hand are minor. The following three contexts have been found to exemplify excuses:

1. *Sorry* for the hard to read, speech to text sucks
2. *Sorry* Potala, al me gđa Jagoda iz ZA⁹ iznervirala do krajnjih granica svojom zatucanim ograničenim vidom razmišljanja (...) (Sorry Potala, but Ms Jagoda from FoE got on my last nerve with her narrow-minded way of thinking)
3. *Sori* , zakasnila..... i neka... ionako sam najstarija ovdje.... čekajte... i ja čekam po cili dan pa ništa.... (Sorry, am late... as I should be... I'm the oldest one here anyways... wait... I wait all day too so what)

In all three contexts, the speaker attempts to blame technology (1), another individual's behaviour (2), or makes a small attempt at explaining their case before withdrawing it by providing a counterargument (3).

Another noted use in this category present in all subcorpora was claiming ignorance:

1. Wow that was meant to be a list that morphed into a paragraph with no grammar when i posted it. *Sorry!*
2. Hej, javit ću ti se sutra na pm, ok? Sada dok ja nešto smislim i iskopam, potrajat će. *Sorry* , sad sam primjetila tek tvoj post. :) (Hey, I'll reach out to you tomorrow via pm, ok? Now it'll take me a while to think of something. Sorry, I've just now noticed your post.)

⁹The speaker is referring to Jagoda Munić, a prominent member of Zelena Akcija (Friends of the Earth Croatia).

3. a *sori* , nisam mislio da ima i starijih od mene koji se jos ozbiljno loze na total chaos i exploited... (well sorry, I didn't think there were older people than me who are still really into total chaos and exploited....)

Notably, the second example was one rare instance across all subcorpora where the wider context around the expression *sorry* contained an offer of repair as an additional apology strategy.

Overall, the frequency of this meaning of *sorry* in both Croatian subcorpora corresponds with Mišić-Ilić's (2021) findings, where she recounts many apologies of speakers "providing reasons and explanations for not complying with the request (...) and/or offering other options" (330).

4.1.3 Taking responsibility

In a similar vein as the previous subcategory, Taking responsibility was a meaning more commonly found in Croatian than in English. Looking into the Apology category, 22% of its English (*sorry*) contexts involved some degree of taking responsibility, 38% in Croatian (*sorry*), and 43% in Croatian (*sori*). As in the previous subcategory, an additional taxonomy provided in Kasper et al. (2003) was used to identify patterns. Their paper describes this as "speaker admitting the offense" by means of self-blame, lack of intent, and admission of fact (94).

The latter was frequently used in both languages, in all three subcorpora:

1. That 30 seconds also has the extra stuff around it like loading in data etc, I forgot to write that *sorry* .
2. eto recepta, 11 mjeseci te nema na godinu i ljubav traje. *Sorry* , nisam mogao odoljeti, sviđa mi se priča, i mislim da je prilično nemoguća u naše vrijeme. (There's your recipe, be gone for 11 months a year and love will last. Sorry, I couldn't help myself, I like the story, and I think it's pretty unlikely in this day and age.)
3. *sori* , krivo sam te svatia. moja isprika a šta se tiče teme. i to je sad kao to? (sorry, I misunderstood you. my apologies, now about the topic. that's it then?)

A small number of examples of *sorry* with self-blame were also found in all three subcorpora:

1. This post helped me realize that it is possible to breath and not get sucked in! </s><s> Thanks and *sorry* . </s><s> I had been doing so well ignoring the emails that she sent no matter what, I don't know why I came so close with this one.
2. nemoj... oprosti ti meni... rastuzilo me, raspizdilo sve to danas... pa sam skocila na tebe... a nisi kriva *sorry* (don't... you forgive me... all this today, it saddened and angered me... so I jumped on you... and it's not your fault sorry)
3. *Sori* slabo palim (plavuša), dalmatinska zagora?: D Ja ne mislim da je dole netko manje vrijedan. (Sorry, I'm a bit slow (blonde), inland Dalmatia? I don't think anyone there is less worthy)

The second and third example of self-blame are interesting for multiple reasons. In the second example, *sorry* is used on top of *oprosti*, the equivalent of a sincere apology equivalent to *I'm sorry* or *I apologize* in English. As such, this contexts puts three strategies to work in order to offer an apology: beginning with an IFID, offering an account and justifying the speaker's reaction, and acknowledging the lack of the hearer's fault ending with an informal apologetic expression. A similar pattern can be found in the third example of admission of fact (in that case closer to admission of guilt): the orthographically adapted *sori* was followed by the speaker explaining his fault in the matter, then apologizing once again with *moja isprika* (equivalent to *my apologies*), and explicitly reverting the conversation back to the topic of conversation once the speaker felt their speech acts sufficed in saving their face.

In the third example, we are not looking at an apology as much as a humorous remark containing an assumption of responsibility. Here, the meaning is still associated with taking responsibility, yet it moves away from an apologetic meaning and serves more of a softening function, as the discussion being held is presumably one of conflicting views.

4.1.4 Special cases: Conditional apologies

Looking at the syntactic structure of all members of the Taking responsibility subcategory, it is apparent that *sorry* occurs either in the beginning or ending of a sentence, with the utterance denoting the speaker's responsibility preceding or following it directly. However, there are some contexts where *sorry* is followed by the conjunction *ako* (colloquially *ak*) in Croatian.

1. Pri tome nisam aludirao kako medvjeda treba i ovdje zastiti, niti mi je bila namjera izvlaciti takav argument. *Sorry ako* si to tako shvatio. (By this I did not mean that the bear should be protected here too, nor did I mean to make such a point. Sorry if you understood it that way.)
2. Nije mi bila namjera nikog napast. *Sorry ako* je tako zvučalo. (I didn't mean to attack anyone. Sorry if it sounded like that.)
3. oprosti ak sam zbrndano napisala.. pečem oni tvoj čoksi:) i *sori ak* sam pretjerala. (I'm sorry if I wrote messily... I'm baking that choc thing of yours:) and sorry if I went too far.)

Describing this function accompanying *sorry* as Taking responsibility is true to an extent. However, at the level of this paper's taxonomy and CCSARP as its baseline in this section, it should be noted that, as according to Deutschmann, the CCSARP taxonomy has received some criticism in regard to Taking responsibility, which "includes sub-strategies which actually involve the partial or total rejection of responsibility" (2003: 83). With this in mind, a more accurate way to describe these occurrences is by referring to conditional apologies. According to Zhang (2018), conditional apologies can be used to deny full responsibility and decrease face threat to the speaker; for the speaker to "distance themselves from the offense, question the offensiveness of the event and to deny the speaker's knowledge of it or involvement in it." (96) Drawing on these proposed meanings, the examples above can be deemed closest to questioning the offensiveness of the event (1), or denial of the speaker's knowledge of the offence at hand (2, 3). An additional example with a different syntactic pattern was noted:

1. *Sorry u tom slucaju*. Zamijenio sam te s nekim drugim likom (...) (Sorry in that case. I thought you were another guy.)

Here, a prepositional phrase with a similar meaning to *if* is used instead of it, yet the pragmatic meaning still denotes only a conditional willingness to take responsibility, that is, if "the case" fulfills the need to extend an apology.

No such instances were found in the English subcorpus as part of Taking responsibility, but it should be noted that such contexts appeared in other meanings:

1. the career is so hard and \$53k a year, working 9 months, with benefits like a 13.5% pension is "not enough to survive on". *Sorry if* this comes off harsh but the reality is that a ton of job markets in Vancouver need support.
2. (...) I'm *sorry if* that's condescending but based on your post I couldn't help but feel like you have never had sex before (...)
3. Do you mind if I ask why you feel like you'd kill him if you worked together? I'm *sorry if* it seems rude but I am genuinely curious as this is a foreign concept to me.

The difference between the described Croatian contexts and the English one is the surrounding context. While it is fully conditional in Croatian, i. e. assuming the apology to be such only in case the offence actually exists, the English contexts contrast, or supplement, the conditional meaning by offering more information, which is mostly comprised of a disagreement or an inquiry or statement the hearer may find uncomfortable. As such, the English contexts do not fully demonstrate taking responsibility for an offence; rather, the conditional content can be considered an attempt to save face and evade a counter-attack, more so than a "real" apology. The next category will discuss such functions of *sorry* in more detail.

4.2 Face-keeping

In the context of this taxonomy, the category of Face-keeping contains instances where the marker *sorry* is used to preface or soften a disagreement or statement that may be unpleasant to the hearer. Unlike Apology, this usage of *sorry* does not admit any wrongdoing but functions as a strategy to reduce the impact of a potential face-threatening act. Compared with other taxonomies, this category may be viewed as encompassing Deutschmann's (2003: 64) Breach of Consensus category in a reduced scope.¹⁰

In evaluating the category 'Face-keeping', there is a fairly uniform distribution of instances across the subcorpora (21.3% in English (*sorry*), 26.5% in Croatian (*sorry*), and 34% in Croatian (*sori*)). An interesting finding to point out in this category is related to this function being used as a preemptive strategy in all three subcorpora:

¹⁰Deutschmann's Breach of Consensus category of offence entails "disagreeing or contradicting, reprimanding, refusing, denying, retaliating, insisting, challenging.

1. *Sorry* but oldcron lore is 100% better than the crap the Necrons are all about now...the whole eldritch horror they had going (...)
2. *Sorry*, meni je normalno napraviti kompromis u braku, ali imam granice (npr. nikada ne bih pristala na trojac). (Sorry, I find it normal to compromise in marriage, but I have boundaries (eg. I would never agree to a threesome.)
3. *sori* ali ja ne mogu vjerovat da ovo piše 19 - godišnjak. (sorry but I can't believe a 19-year-old is writing this.)

Interestingly, *sorry* was used in the beginning of a sentence in 80% of the contexts in English (*sorry*), 62.5% of those in Croatian (*sori*), and slight less frequently in Croatian (*sorry*)(53.8%). This distribution supports the established evidence on the mechanisms of apologetic speech acts and expressions when used in face-threatening situations.

Another syntactic pattern visible in the examples above, as well as other examples in this category, that co-occurs in all three subcorpora, is the use of the coordinating conjunction *but* in English and *ali* in Croatian. A conjunction was added after *sorry* in 50% (English (*sorry*), 61.5% (Croatian (*sorry*), and 43.8% (Croatian (*sori*)) contexts involving a face-threatening act in the form of an opposing statement or unpopular opinion.

One pattern represented only in Croatian (*sorry*), is the use of address terms in attempting to save face, as in the following examples:

1. *sorry stara*, ali zarucnik ti je onak malo jadan.... mene je moj decko poveo na svadbu od najboljeg prijatelja kojem je bio kum (...) (sorry girl, but your fiance is like a bit lame... my boyfriend took me to his best friend's wedding where he was best man (...))
2. poslije 6 god. braka..... to je tvoj negativan stav, čak bi se usudila reći u najblažoj formi tvoj problem ne njegov *sorry draga* ali tako je (after 6 years of marriage..... that's your negative perspective, I'd even dare say in the lightest form your problem not his sorry dear but that's how it is)
3. *sorry stari*, ali moram ti reći da sereš... na šetalici se jasno vidi... ovo (sorry man, but I have to tell you you're full of shit... you can clearly see this on the walkie...)

Notably, the coordinating conjunction *ali* is present in all three cases, and the address terms are all terms of endearment often used colloquially among friends to emphasize closeness. Additionally, in comparison to the examples of face-keeping noted above, these contexts contain much more direct language, hence more face-threatening statements. Therefore, it can be argued that *sorry* is followed by colloquial terms of endearment as a positive politeness strategy, where the speaker appeals to the hearer's positive face in order to minimize the negative effect of the following statement.

4.3 Discourse management

The category Discourse management represents the use of *sorry* to manage and navigate the flow of conversation, thus functioning as a discourse marker. Compared to the taxonomies mentioned above, Discourse management closely matches Talk offences as described by Aijmer, albeit in a reduced or adapted capacity because of the communication medium; 'not having heard or understood what sb says' and 'slip of the tongue' as discourse markers arise from verbal communication, and are thus not expected to appear in this analysis, except possibly in an attempt to achieve humorous effect.

With this in mind, some subclassifications were established for easier identification of patterns, and the markers were initially considered according to more specific functions they could exhibit as discourse markers, namely interruptions, corrections, digressions, requests for clarification, and acts of self-repair. However, this granular view proved not viable for identifying reoccurring patterns, as the Discourse management category is much less frequent in all subcorpora than the previous two, accounting for 12.5% of the entire corpus. However, some interesting patterns arise from the few contexts appearing in this function in the frequency of *sorry* as a discourse marker appearing in English versus Croatian subcorpora. While 8.5% of English (*sorry*) consisted of discourse management through *sorry*, the same function ended up occupying 12.2% of Croatian (*sorry*), and 12.8% of Croatian (*sori*). The subcorpora will be discussed separately, and some reference will be made to the initial subclassification in order to point out differences in use.

The English subcorpus contained *sorry* in multiple uses, with different syntactic features:

1. *Sorry* this is unrelated, but would a seam ripper work on this Armani Exchange logo on the

left shoulder?

2. (...) this on youtube and they rebranded to TikTok edit: Actually, looks like it was purchased by TikTok and rebranded. *Sorry!*
3. Customer: Where's the Corona? *</s><s>* Me: I'm *sorry* - you said you wanted the lime? Did you want to order a Carona as well?

While in (1) *sorry* occurs in the first position and is followed by the conjunction *but*, much like in many cases in the previous category, (2) features *sorry* as a standalone interjection following a self-correction. In (3), *sorry* again occurs in the beginning, but in this case following the copula as a predicative adjective.

In Croatian (*sorry*), no instances of digressions were found, and the predominant functions of *sorry* were to interrupt and ask for clarification:

1. Samo jedno pitanje, je li to 4 tisuće po parceli ili sve skupa? *Sorry* al stvarno ne znam kako se kreću cijene, znam samo da je skupo. (Just one question, is that 4 grand per unit or in total? *Sorry* but I really don't know how the prices go, I only know it's expensive.)
2. *Sorry* što upadam ovako, ali brzinsko guglanje nije mi dalo odgovora... Lijepi pozdrav (*Sorry* for barging in like this, but a quick Google search gave me no answers... Best regards)
3. *sorry* al kaj ovo dokazuje? da je kamera 20 metara dalje bilo bi ima slike nema tona.. al svejedno dobra brojka.. (*sorry* but what does this prove? if the camera were 20 meters further it would be all picture no sound... but good number anyway)
4. (...) morala sam se osobno javiti na šalter državnih tijela zbog vlastoručnog potpisa. Kaj ti točno nije jasno??? *Sorry*, ne živiše u HR? (I had to personally report to the counter of the authorities for a handwritten signature. What exactly don't you understand??? *Sorry*, you haven't lived in CRO?)

The first two examples are ones of interruptions, where *sorry* is followed by an explanation aimed to further minimize the imposition and appease the hearer's negative face. The other two, on the other hand, are requests for clarification, but their surrounding context makes *sorry* function less as a tool to redirect the conversation, and more as a way to introduce an opposing statement

in a similar way to Face-keeping (3), or soften a reaction which the hearer may find threatening to their face (4).

Unlike in Croatian (*sorry*), no meanings of *sorry* as discourse marker for requesting clarification have been found in Croatian (*sori*). Instead, the functions are equally distributed between interruptions, digressions, and an unexpected use considering the written medium – *sorry* as a slip of the tongue or act of self-repair:

1. ok, pogrijesio sam vjerojatno, ali jel ti jasno da nije to bas najbitnije. jel trebam jos jedan but bitat.. *sori* .. put pitat sto je bitno? (ok, I was probably wrong, but do you get that this isn't exactly the most important. do I need to ask again... *sorry*... ask again what's important?)
2. nju jebe ego, ti petljaš s njezinom frendicom... tj. *sori* , ne petljaš nego ideš na kave, al nećeš bit s njom jer ju ne voliš, al postoji fizička privlačnost (...) (her ego is messing with her, you're messing around with her friend... I mean sorry, not messing around but getting coffee, but you don't want to date her because you don't love her, but there is physical attraction)

Of course, these instances of self-repair are not true representations of this strategy, as the nature of written online communication allows for preparation and correction of the messages before sending them to the interlocutor. It can thus be concluded that these examples include a strategy closer to expressing disagreement or making an opposing point in a way that exploits language creatively. Nevertheless, the basic pragmatic meaning of *sorry* can be considered one of discourse management.

Although the frequency of the use of *sorry* as a discourse marker does not correspond to Terkourafi's (2011) findings, the higher frequency of this use in Croatian compared to English, and larger representation in Croatian subcorpora overall, does correspond with the assertions made about the shift in pragmatic function of such borrowings towards a discourse management function, even if on a very small-scale corpus. However, this observation should by no means be deemed conclusive, as it may be a result of this particular random selection of contexts.

4.4 Non-serious apology

The category of Non-serious apology refers to instances where the term *sorry* is used in a sarcastic or humorous context, and is devoid of an expression of remorse. In other words, the use of

sorry here does not carry an apologetic significance; instead, it marks a change in tone, signals a humorous intent or attempt at camaraderie, or demonstrates a viewpoint in a light-hearted manner. Such uses of *sorry* were more common in English, occupying 21.3% of English (*sorry*), and almost equally common in the Croatian subcorpora (8.2% in Croatian (*sorry*) and 8.5% in Croatian (*sori*)). Despite the small number of hits in one language, a subclassification into Sarcasm and Joke was established to investigate different uses and ways in which a conventionally apologetic marker can serve an opposite purpose.

Sarcastic apologies have been recounted by Deutschmann (2003) as being made for the same offences as sincere apologies, as well as used in two opposing ways: as face attacking devices, and as markers of positive politeness among friends. (94-95)

The first of the described uses was found in English in the following examples:

1. *Sorry*, were you there? Did you watch this play out? If so, please enlighten me, as you seem to be so sure of how everything went.
2. She said "Well you can just pick it out for me then." *Sorry* picking the bits out of your salad that you don't want, isn't my job.

In (1), the speaker uses *sorry* to introduce a disagreement and challenge the interlocutor's stance, attacking the hearer's negative face. Although previous examples of other uses of *sorry* have shown that it being in the first position usually serves to soften an imminent threat to the hearer's face, this example shows *sorry* in very different use. This instance of *sorry* could also be considered a discourse marker used for the purpose of rerouting the conversation focus back to the hearer, and simultaneously expressing a change in tone and stance. (2) shows less confrontation and criticism, partly due to the context being one recounting a past event instead of an unfolding disagreement. Here, the speaker uses *sorry* as a sarcastic apology for a request they deem unreasonable. While the sarcastic tone of the context overall denotes critique, *sorry* conveys no remorse, but shows firm disagreement with the expectations in the situation.

A similar example can be found in Croatian (*sorry*):

1. Kad mi netko cijelo vrijeme govori da se požurim.: mad: *Sorry* što nemam 4 noge i 3 ruke.
(When someone keeps telling me to hurry up :mad: Sorry I don't have 4 legs and 3 arms.)

Similarly to the second example in English, the speaker uses *sorry* as a sarcastic apology for not being able to fulfill the demand they find impossible, without any regret or remorse in the marker or context. These examples are also similar on the syntactic level, both appearing at the beginning of the sentence and followed by a subordinate clause containing the reasoning for their sarcastic apology.

The Joke subcategory, containing all instances of *sorry* being used in an apology-like setting, but lacking sincerity and containing a humorous element, contains several interesting humorous uses of *sorry* in different contexts.

1. Great teamwork, it's much nicer to watch than Clippers, Houston etc. But tonight I'm *sorry* you will come for one big L xD *Sorry* for my bad English
2. A: (...) a co-worker and I made plans to go get sushi but it fell through, so he brought me a box of Costco crab and cali rolls. B: *Sorry* bro, that doesn't count as sushi for me, haha.

(1) contains a jocular sorry followed by an (unrelated) 'real' *sorry*. The first instance of *sorry* in (1), as an introduction to a light-hearted opposing stance, is used with the copula, which, according to previous research, denotes more sincerity and remorse than *sorry* without a performative verb. The second use of *sorry* in this example marks the hearer extending a more sincere apology for the possible inconvenience their fluency may have caused, thus expressing sincere regret, albeit for a minor or non-existent offence.

In (2), *sorry* is used to express disagreement with the interlocutor, with several accompanying elements contributing to the light tone, namely the informal address term *bro*, used to emphasize friendliness, and the interjection *haha* following the statement of disagreement, possibly in an attempt to further soften the potential face attack and clarify that the speaker's intentions are not to confront or judge the hearer. A similar closing element is found in (1) as well, where the speaker follows his opposing view with *xD*, a popular emoticon representing an amused face, in this case aimed at better conveying the speaker's positive intent.

In Croatian (*sorry*), the small amount of contexts identified as Jokes consists of two contexts contributed by the same speaker, where they show the same use and a distinct pattern with their jocular use of *sorry*:

1. Konzul Hegemonije je svirao Rahmanjinov preludij u cis-molu na starom, ali dobro ocuvanom Steinwayu.... ups, *sorry* Bio sam ponukan navalom besmisla gore. :) (The Consul of Hegemony was playing Rachmaninoff's Prelude in C sharp minor on an old but well-kept Steinway.... oops, *sorry* I was prompted by the onslaught of nonsense above. :))
2. a šta ti ga onda dođe onaj tvoj Burnać?? isto sranje, drugo pakovanje..... ups, *sorry* , smetnuo sam s uma da Burnać, da te citiram, radi isključivo urbanu glazbu: rolleyes:: (what does it make that Burnać of yours then?? same garbage, different dumpster..... oops, sorry , I forgot that Burnać, to quote you, only makes urban music: rolleyes::)

Both examples show *sorry* used ironically, as a tongue-in-cheek comment or even an introduction to a punchline. In (1), *sorry* follows an incongruent detail, intended as a humorous remark that draws the hearer's attention to the nonsensical contents of the discussion in a witty manner. In (2), *sorry* again prefaces an ironic comment, but also a playful disagreement with the hearer; content-wise, this context would be considered an apology where *sorry* introduces an admission of guilt, but the speaker leaves a number of clues to emphasize their ironic and humorous intent. The disagreement starts with a direct question challenging the hearer's perspective, followed by a brief statement of their view through a common informal remark. Then, the speaker flips the narrative by introducing *sorry* preceded by the interjection *ups* (cf. *oops*), denoting an accident or mistake, and expressing an insincere admission of guilt, which is actually another jocular jab at the speaker's stance. A pattern in the speaker's manner of communicating shown here is the building of a narrative and undermining by using *sorry* ironically, preceding it with the interjection *ups*, and finishing their statement with emoticons further denoting their stance.

One interesting use of *sorry* as a joke appears in Croatian (*sori*):

1. Meni je on presmješan: cheer: *sori* što se uvalih među mrzitelje :) (I find him so funny :cheer: sorry for joining the haters:))

By now, it is visible that many examples of *sorry* being used informally and satirically involve the use of emoticons in the end of the statement. Presumably, the limitations of written communication nudge speakers towards expressing themselves as unambiguously as possible to avoid misunderstanding or a face-off, and emoticons appear as a way to compensate for the lack of a possibility to display emotion as one would through (audio)visual cues. However, this example is

interesting as it shows *sori* in use for signaling a kind of alignment with a group with opposing views, calling the group 'haters'. In this context, *sori* may be considered a preemptive strategy to avoid a possible imposition, which could be brought upon the speaker by them expressing a differing opinion.

With all these informal and satirical uses, it is important to note that such uses of apologetic structures, especially including *sorry* as a frequently used expression, may be overlooked. As Deutschmann (2003) notes in his research, "in instances where such information was lacking or incomplete, however, sarcastic usage may have been overlooked since the lexical and syntactic forms of both sincere and sarcastic apologies were found to be similar in the corpus" (19) Given the similar forms of both types of apologies in this corpus, mainly in terms of face-keeping and expressing regret, there is a possibility that some instances of sarcastic or comedic use may have been misinterpreted.

4.5 Final discussion

In brief, this thesis has explored the use of the word *sorry* in English and Croatian online communication and has demonstrated that its functions are not limited to apologies in either language. Before summarizing the quantitative findings of this study, I will readdress the main research questions that guided this study:

RQ1: How are English and Croatian speakers using *sorry* to perform apologetic speech acts in online written conversations?

RQ2: What linguistic or contextual factors might account for similarities and differences in the use of *sorry* between English and Croatian online conversations?

RQ3: To what extent does the pragmatic meaning of *sorry* and *sori* differ or overlap in Croatian?

To provide an answer to the first research question, the frequency of the different uses classified as apologies in the subcorpora should first be considered:

/	EN(<i>sorry</i>)	HR(<i>sorry</i>)	HR(<i>sori</i>)
1	12	4	1
2	6	12	12
3	5	10	8

Table 1: 1: Expressing regret or sympathy. 2: Explanation/account. 3: Taking responsibility.

Overall, the data shows that *sorry* is used considerably more frequently as a sincere expression of regret, as opposed to Croatian where this use is very limited, and even in the small number of contexts where this sentiment can be identified, it usually co-occurs with other strategies which minimize its sincerity. Considering previous research, this finding comes as no surprise, as Terkourafi (2011) notes the weakening of the realization of speech acts in borrowed forms carrying pragmatic meaning from a cross-cultural standpoint, and Jucker (2018) emphasizes the decreased weight of apologies in general, including *sorry* as an IFID, based on available historical data.

Conversely, *sorry* has been found to operate as an apology marker in Croatian, occurring in more instances than English in both Croatian subcorpora with an explanation (excuse or justification) of the speaker's perspective after committing an offence, which was, as expected in online contexts carrying a degree of distance and lowered imposition, a minor transgression in all examined contexts warranting an apology. As for *sorry* used with assuming responsibility for the offence, such contexts were also more numerous in Croatian. However, the manner of taking responsibility (admission of fact and self-blame), as well as conditional apologies as strategies aimed at evading responsibility without explicitly stating this intent, were distributed and represented evenly across all subcorpora. Therefore, it can be concluded that English speakers use *sorry* primarily to express sympathy or regret in online communication, whereas Croatian speakers use *sorry* to compensate for minor offences, most often accompanying this apologetic expression with an explanation for their actions.

For the second research question, the factors surrounding *sorry* were highlighted and contrasted in an attempt to shed a light on their influence over the pragmatic functions of *sorry* in both lan-

guages. Overall, one emerging pattern concern a syntactic limitation of *sorry* in Croatian: as it, unlike English, cannot take a performative verb, operating instead as an interjection, *sorry* is less applicable in Croatian contexts requiring a sincere apology or expression of sympathy (as evidenced by a lower frequency of such apologies using *sorry* in Croatian, as well as previous studies concerned with pragmatic borrowing) because its standalone form does not denote enough of this meaning. Another emerging pattern points to some similarities in the connection between syntactic implications and pragmatic meaning in English and Croatian, namely in cases of *sorry* used to mitigate face-threatening acts, wherein the same patterns concerning the placement of *sorry* in the statement and the use of the coordinating conjunction *but* or *ali* emerged across languages. In terms of *sorry* as a discourse management tool and non-serious apology, *sorry* was found to occur more frequently and diversely in this meaning in Croatian (albeit on a very small scale) for the former, and various similarities and differences were found for the latter category. However, apart from concluding and describing the differences found in this corpus, no definitive answer could be given due to the size of the corpus and relatively balanced overall distribution of strategies.

For our final research question, a summary of the frequency of the data in both Croatian sub-corpora will be considered to provide compact evidence:

/	HR(<i>sorry</i>)	HR(<i>sori</i>)
1	26	21
2	13	16
3	6	6
4	4	4

Table 2: 1: Apology. 2: Face-keeping. 3: Discourse management. 4: Non-apology.

The qualitative data at the level of the four defined categories shows a consistent distribution of the functions of *sorry* and *sori* in Croatian, with slight deviations in the largest, Apology category, due to slightly more representation of strategies involving expressions of regret and taking responsibility with *sorry* in its original spelling. This may be due to the random selection of contexts for analysis, and may be contested on a different sample using the same corpus search, but seeing as no differences in use which could be traced to differences in orthography were found in the qualitative part of the analysis, it can be concluded that orthographic adaptation of the pragmatic borrowing *sorry* has no influence over the range and frequency of its pragmatic functions.

5 Conclusion

This study has explored the pragmatic functions of *sorry* in English and Croatian online communication, using a corpus of 143 examples in total, and analyzed the syntactic structure and frequency of *sorry* in both languages, as well as its orthographically adapted form *sori* in Croatian. Based on the taxonomies found in relevant studies, a classification framework was established and presented in the study, and *sorry* was compared and contrasted as an apology speech act, a discourse marker, and a sarcastic or non-apology in English and Croatian. Drawing on speech act and politeness theory, as well as other relevant papers, three research questions and hypotheses were established, and the main findings of the study were found to be as follows:

1. English speakers use *sorry* primarily to express sympathy or regret in online communication, whereas Croatian speakers use *sorry* to compensate for minor offences, with providing an explanation.
2. The pragmatic meaning of *sorry* in Croatian is more limited than that in English, but no conclusive evidence of similarities and differences could be established in the scope of this paper.
3. Orthographic adaptation of *sorry* in Croatian has no significant influence over the range and frequency of its pragmatic functions.

Overall, this study has identified a number of patterns in the pragmatic functions of *sorry* in English and Croatian, and has brought different communicative practices to light. The findings of this study contribute to the existing literature on the pragmatics of *sorry*, as well as to the understanding of cross-cultural communication and language contact. However, due to the limited scope and size of the data, this study cannot claim to provide a comprehensive or representative account of the use of *sorry* in English and Croatian online communication. Therefore, further research is needed to examine more sources and genres of online communication, as well as to include other languages and varieties that use or borrow *sorry*. Additionally, further research could employ different methods, such as surveys or experiments, to elicit more natural conversational data from speakers of English and Croatian and provide more insight into *sorry* as a discourse marker and a

non-apology, two areas that have proven underrepresented in this paper, yet make fertile ground for future research into the evolving nature of language and its creative use across different cultures.

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