



## A CORPUS-BASED STUDY ON 'REGRET' AS A FACTIVE VERB AND ITS COMPLEMENTS

Elçin Ölmezer-Öztürk<sup>i</sup>

Anadolu University, Turkey

### Abstract:

Factive verbs are known to presuppose the truth of their complements, and regret is an example of factive verbs. This corpus-based study aims to investigate the complement, use, and frequency of occurrence of regret in COCA, and shed light on various uses of this verb. The scope of this study was limited to the bare form of regret, and most common complements of regret were analyzed throughout the study. The findings revealed that all the complements were presupposed to be true due to the factive verb regret, and regret has various complements such as regret + Ving, regret + to V1, regret + that. What is more, all these complements assign different meanings to regret in context.

**Keywords:** factive verb, true factive, presupposition, regret, complement, corpus-based study

### 1. Introduction

The term “factivity” came to the stage with the pioneering study of Paul and Carol Kiparsky (1970) (Karttunen, 1971). Kiparsky and Kiparsky (1970), who were the first to study factivity, classified verbs under two main headings which are factive verbs and non-factive verbs. Since then, factivity has been under discussion in the field of syntax and semantics (Hooper & Thompson, 1973; Hegarty, 1992). In their paper, Kiparsky and Kiparsky (1970) made a distinction between factive verbs and non-factive verbs by stating that factive verbs are the ones that presuppose the truth of their sentential complements; on the other hand, non-factives do not presuppose the truth of the clausal complement, but rather asserted it (Kallulli, 2006). While some of the factive verbs

---

<sup>i</sup> Correspondence: email [elcinolmezer@gmail.com](mailto:elcinolmezer@gmail.com)

include regret, resent, hate, comprehend, forget, make clear; some non-factive verbs are believe, claim, say, assert. Thus, these two categories have different semantic features, and for this semantic division, presupposition plays a pivotal role. Karttunen (1971, p. 123) explained presupposition in relation to the factive verbs, and stated that “*a sentence with a factive predicate indicates belief on the part of the speaker in the truth of the complement sentence. This relation is usually described by saying that the complement of a factive predicate is a presupposition for the sentence as a whole*”.

Some examples for this are as follows:

(1) “*I regret that I came to school late.*”

*Presupposition: I came to school late.*”

(2) “*I remember that John came home at 12.*”

*Presupposition: John came home at 12.*”

(Grissom & Miyao, 2012, p. 4069)

In examples (1) and (2), the sentences including factive verbs, which are *regret* and *remember*, presuppose the truth of their sentential complements. More specifically, in (1), the complement of the sentence “*I came to school late*” is presupposed to be true, and similarly, in (2), the complement of the sentence “*John came home late*” is again presupposed to be true. In other words, there is a commitment of the speaker to the belief that the sentential complement is true, just by itself (Karttunen, 1971). This presupposition results from the factive verbs which are regarded as “*presupposition triggers*” (Birner, 2013, p. 219).

Even if in interrogative and negative forms, the feature of presupposition is kept in factive verbs (Karttunen, 1971). No difference emerges among the sentences in affirmative, interrogative, or negative. There is still presupposition that the complement is true. Zaenen and Karttunen (2013) exemplified this issue with respect to factive adjectives one of which is *annoying*. The examples illustrating this situation are as follows:

(3) “*It is annoying that people post stuff that no one cares about. (affirmative)*”

(4) “*It is not annoying that people post stuff that no one cares about. (negative)*”

(5) “*Is it annoying that people post stuff that no one cares about? (interrogative)*”

All of the examples above, no matter their forms differ, indicate that the truth of the sentential complement, which is *people post stuff that no one cares about*, is

presupposed to be true, and it is a fact. Thus, sentence formation does not have an effect on the presupposition of the sentence.

Karttunen (1971) also classified factive verbs into two as true factives and semi-factives. Some of the true factives include regret, forget and resent, and some of the semi-factives are discover, find out and realize. True factives are considered to be factive at all times; however, semi-factives may lose its factivity under certain circumstances such as conditionals and questions.

This classification basically relies on the classification of Kiparsky and Kiparsky (1970), and what is common in all of them is that true factives presuppose their complement sentence to be true.

Based on the research on semantic and syntactic features of factive verbs in the literature, *regret*, which is a factive verb and also a true factive verb, has been selected for the focus of this study. Hooper (1975) stated that *regret* is a good representative of factive verbs, thus by analyzing *regret* and some of its complements, the features that factive verbs possess will be analyzed as well. For this reason, by choosing a true factive verb, this study aims to find out the semantic and syntactic features of *regret* and some of its complements.

With this aim, the following research question is asked throughout the study:

- How does *regret* as a factive verb occur in COCA in terms of its use, frequency and complements?

## 2. Methodology

The present study is a corpus-based study and aims to investigate the syntactic and semantic features of *regret*, a factive verb, in terms of its complement, use, and frequency of occurrence in COCA.

All the occurrences of *regret* as a verb were searched in COCA. For the analysis of *regret*, the scope of this research was narrowed down, and bare form of *regret* was searched and analyzed. Besides, the analysis of the complements of *regret* were restricted to a number of complements which were regret + Ving, regret + to-infinitive, regret + that clause, regret + that-less clause (zero clause), regret + wh clause, regret + the fact that, regret + for and regret + not, since some of these syntactic features of the complements of factive verbs (Ving, to-infinitive, that-clause, that-less clause, wh-clause, the fact that) were mentioned in the literature, and some of them were data-driven (for and not).

For the analysis of the data, both qualitative and quantitative methods were employed. For qualitative analysis of the verb *regret*, each verb was analyzed whether it was used as a verb or not. After identifying the verbs, they were analyzed based on

their complements. More specifically, the complement of *regret* such as *regret* taking gerund, to infinitive, that clause, wh clause, zero clause (that-less clause) was analyzed one by one, and how *regret* as a verb was used and functioned in each group, and the interpretation of each occurrence were also analyzed. After qualitative analysis, quantitative analysis was carried out in order to determine the frequencies of *regret* in each group of complement. Along with the researcher of this study, another researcher, who holds a PhD in ELT, also helped the researcher for the identification of the occurrences of *regret* and its complements and their interpretations for cross-checking.

Employing both qualitative and quantitative data was believed to provide insight and shed more light on the issue. Regarding this, Conrad (2002, p. 78) stated that “*even the most sophisticated quantitative analyses must be tied to functional interpretations of the language patterns*”. Thus, along with providing numbers through frequencies, qualitative analysis was also found necessary for the interpretation of the occurrences.

### 3. Results and Discussion

The scope of this study was restricted to the true factive verb *regret*, and bare form of *regret* was taken into consideration for the analysis. Thus, the verb *regret* taking subjects I, you, we and they were analyzed under the scope of this study. In addition to this, the analysis of the complements of *regret* was restricted to regret + Ving, regret + to-infinitive, regret + that clause, regret + that-less clause (zero clause), regret + wh clause, regret + the fact that, regret + for and regret + not. Within this scope, all the occurrences of *regret* and its complements were analyzed. The features of factive verbs discussed in the literature review part were taken into consideration, and based on these; first of all, all the occurrences of *regret* were searched in COCA. It was seen that *regret* had 7495 occurrences in total in COCA. All the instances were manually sorted out, and the manual analysis indicated that out of 7495 occurrences, 3273 were verbs. In other words, *regret* was used as a verb in 3273 occurrences. Table 1 indicates this frequency.

**Table 1:** Total frequency distribution of regret as a verb

|               | Total hits | Total hits as verbs |
|---------------|------------|---------------------|
| <b>Regret</b> | 7495       | 3273                |

Out of 3273 occurrences of *regret* as a verb, the complements of *regret* were also analyzed, and the following categories were formed based on the data in COCA, and also the literature. Table 2 below presents the overall distribution of certain complements of *regret* within the scope of this study.

**Table 2:** Total frequency distribution of the complements of regret

| Complement of regret                    | Total hits |
|---|------------|
| regret + Ving (gerund)                  | 250        |
| regret + to-infinitive                  | 153        |
| regret + that clause                    | 329        |
| regret + zero clause (that-less clause) | 46         |
| regret + wh clause                      | 45         |
| regret + the fact that                  | 14         |
| regret + for                            | 8          |
| regret + not                            | 84         |

Each category in this table will be discussed in detail with examples for detailed analysis and interpretation.

### 3.1. Regret + Ving

For the *regret + Ving* complement, Table 3 presents the distribution of Ving complement of *regret* with respect to the verbs that follow *regret* most frequently. When COCA was analyzed, the occurrences of *regret* followed by Ving were 399. 149 occurrences were excluded from the analysis, since *regret* was not functioning as a verb in these occurrences. Thus, in total, there were 250 occurrences of Ving which were the complements of the verb *regret*.

**Table 3:** Total frequency distribution of Ving complement of regret

| Regret + Ving    | Total hits |
|------------------|------------|
| regret + having  | 69         |
| regret + doing   | 19         |
| regret + saying  | 14         |
| regret + making  | 11         |
| regret + being   | 10         |
| regret + getting | 9          |
| regret + leaving | 8          |
| regret + setting | 8          |
| regret + going   | 8          |
| regret + giving  | 6          |
| <b>In total</b>  | <b>250</b> |

As it is seen in Table 3, *regret* was followed by *having* most. The second mostly used verb that follows *regret* was *doing*, followed by *saying*. Making, being, getting, leaving, setting, going and giving were the other verbs which go after *regret*. There were also 88 occurrences which were not present in Table 3. In these 88 occurrences, *regret* was used with other verbs, but their frequencies were very low that they were not in the list

above. The detailed analysis of the data indicated that *having* has three different interpretations. Among 69 occurrences, *perfect auxiliary have* has 52 occurrences, *have* (meaning own, possess) has 12 occurrences, and *have to* has five occurrences. Below are the examples for *regret + having* category.

(6) "Do you regret having these credit cards in the first place?"  
(COCA: SPOK, 2009)

(7) "Do I regret having so many things piled up in my closet?"  
(COCA: SPOK, 2006)

*Have* means possess or own in these examples. In example (6), the speaker is asking a question to the addressee to learn whether the addressee feels sorry or is sorrowful for the present situation, which is having credit cards in the first place. In example (7), the speaker is asking a question to her/himself if s/he feels sorry, or regret for this situation which is having lots of things in the closet. In both examples, the situation does not belong to past, rather, it is still going on. That is, the situation belongs to present.

(8) "Alan, do you regret having been a spokesperson for Winston?"  
(COCA: SPOK, 2005)

(9) "Immediately, I regret having made a joke of their sincere attempt to offer me their care."  
(COCA: ACAD, 2005)

*Having* is followed by the past participle form of the verb, because *having* is the perfect auxiliary in the examples (8) and (9). Perfect auxiliary *have* indicates that the action has been completed before the speaker's utterance. In (8), Alan was a spokesperson at any time in the past, and the speaker is questioning whether Alan feels sorry or regret for this past situation. Feeling regret is present, but the situation, which is being a spokesperson, is past. Thus, the action took place before the act of regretting. Similarly, in (9), the speaker made a joke in the past. At the time of the utterance, the speaker feels regret or sorry for her/his making a joke. Thus, what the speaker feels now is because of an event that happened in the past.

(10) "No matter which one they pick, they'll regret having to pass up the other."  
(COCA: MAG, 2007)

(11) "I regret having to refer to it here, but that is unfortunately unavoidable."  
(COCA: SPOK, 1991)

*Having* is followed by *to* + bare verb form in these examples. In (10), the speaker thinks that they will experience the feeling of regret or sorrow in the future due to the necessity that they have to pass up the other. In (11), *have to* indicates that it is necessary for the speaker to refer to it here. The speaker is not very enthusiastic about referring to it here, but s/he stated that it is a necessity for her / him to do this. The speaker implies that s/he has no other choice other than referring to it here.

More examples related to regret + Ving are as follows:

(12) *"In no way do I regret doing Beethoven symphonies.*

(COCA: NEWS, 1990)

(13) *"But I truly regret doing this to you without your knowledge or permission."*

(COCA: FIC, 2006)

In (12) and (13), the speaker is talking about her/his feelings by stating that s/he feels sorry or regret for an event that happened prior to the time of the utterance, that is before the act of regretting. This stems from the verb *do*, because *do* in the examples is used for the actions completed or occurred in the past. Hence, embedded clause of the sentence happened before the speaker intends to talk about her/his feelings. In (13), the speaker did something to the hearer sometime before that sentence takes place. Now, the speaker feels regret, sorrow or remorse due to the things s/he did in the past. What is more, by accompanying regret with the adverb *truly*, the speaker indicates the degree of her / his remorse, and *truly* shows that s/he has these dense feelings.

(14) *"Do you regret going in and taking the test"?*

(COCA: SPOK, 1996)

(15) *"Lagon Fellerd didn't regret setting a meeting in the public natural growth area of the city."*

(COCA: FIC, 1991)

(16) *"Do I regret making a beautiful house for my children?"*

(COCA: SPOK, 2006)

In the examples (14) and (16) above the speaker is asking a rhetorical question to her/himself, and questions whether s/he experiences feelings of regret, sorrow or remorse for the things happened. In (15), the speaker is talking about a person named Lagon Fellerd, and states that this person does not feel remorse or regret for what he did in the past. In all these examples above, there is an action or an event taking place in the past before the act of regretting.

What is worth mentioning is that among all the examples in COCA related to *regret + Ving*, similar to *having* which is used for three different meanings, *being* has also a second interpretation. During the analysis, the examples indicated that among ten occurrences of *being*, it is also used as a passive in two occurrences. Below are the examples for different uses of *being*.

(17) "I don't regret being opposed to Vietnam War."

(COCA: NEWS, 1997)

(18) "Do you regret being named Mickey Rooney Jr.?"

(COCA: SPOK, 1994)

In example (17), *being* is *to be verb*, and when used after *regret*, it takes V + ing. The speaker is talking about a situation, and stating that s/he has a feeling of remorse or regret for this situation. However, in (18), *being* is not used as *to be verb* here, rather, it is used as a passive.

### 3.2. Regret + to-infinitive

Based on the data analysis in COCA, *to-infinitive* has 190 occurrences as the complement of *regret*. All these 190 occurrences were investigated, and 37 occurrences were excluded from the study since *regret* was not used as a verb in these 37 occurrences.

It was seen that there is tendency that *regret* is used with certain verbs as its complement. Table 4 below, which includes all the verbs following *regret to*, displays the distribution of these verbs.

**Table 4:** Total frequency distribution of to-infinitive complement of regret

| Regret + to-infinitive                         | Total hits |
|--|------------|
| regret + to say                                | 73         |
| regret + to inform                             | 47         |
| regret + to report                             | 16         |
| regret + to tell                               | 7          |
| regret + have to + verb<br>(add, tell, inform) | 4          |
| regret + to talk                               | 1          |
| regret + to advise                             | 1          |
| regret + to state                              | 1          |
| regret + to hear                               | 1          |
| regret + to announce                           | 1          |
| regret + to learn                              | 1          |
| <b>In total</b>                                | <b>153</b> |

(19) "I regret to say that Rhode Island has a reputation for corruption."

(COCA: SPOK, 2011)

In this example (19), *regret to + infinitive* has a different meaning when compared to *regret + Ving*, which shows the emotions and subjective attitudes of the speaker for a present or past action or event. In (19), the speaker is going to give information to the hearer, but before providing that information, the speaker starts her/his sentence with a subject + regret + to-infinitive. In this example, the speaker is not feeling regret or remorse for the situation, but rather the speaker makes use of regret to + infinitive just before giving bad news or unwelcome information about a situation to the hearer. In other words, the speaker is not very happy or eager to give this information to the hearer, and by using regret to + infinitive, the speaker expresses her/his emotions or feelings as well by giving the information. Here, both the speaker and the hearer are not responsible for this unwelcome or negative situation, and the speaker is only responsible for announcing this information. The speaker means that s/he is sorry to say that Rhode Island has a reputation for corruption.

(20) *I regret to inform that my research grant is almost completely exhausted at this point.*

(COCA: FIC, 2008)

In this example, there is no expression of regret or remorse of the speaker, but rather, the speaker is not happy with the information in the complement clause, which is *my research grant is almost completely exhausted at this point*. This is an unwelcome situation for the speaker; hence, before giving that information the speaker starts the sentence by expressing her/his emotions on this situation. Here, neither the speaker nor the hearer is responsible for this negative situation, and the speaker is just responsible for giving this worrying information to the hearer. Besides, the speaker thinks that this information will create some worrisome for the hearer as well. The speaker means that s/he is sorry to inform that her/his research grant is almost completely exhausted at this point.

After the analysis of the data, it was noticed that *regret to infinitive* has a parenthetical use as well. The manual analysis displayed that *regret* has a new function when used in parenthesis. This parenthetical use is only compatible with the verbs *say*, *report* and *admit* in the data, and this use has 32 occurrences in the entire data. Table 8 indicates their frequencies.

**Table 8:** Total frequency distribution of parenthetical use of regret to infinitive

| Parenthetical use of "regret" | Total hits |
|-------------------------------|------------|
| I regret to say               | 28         |
| I regret to report            | 3          |
| I regret to admit             | 1          |
| In total                      | 32         |

(21) "*Some of our critics, I regret to say, have shown less affection for detail.*"  
(COCA: SPOK, 2001)

(22) "*The answer, I regret to say, is that it matters more than one might guess.*"  
(COCA: ACAD, 1998)

Here, the speaker uses *regret to infinitive* as a parenthetical verb. By using *regret* in this way in (21), the speaker displays her / his feelings for the information which is *critics' showing less affection for the detail*. The speaker is not happy with this situation, and by using *regret to infinitive* in parenthesis, along with giving information s/he is also showing her /his emotions towards *critics' showing less affection for the detail*. Similarly, in (22), the speaker displays her / his emotions and subjective attitudes towards the information s/he is going to give. By using *regret to infinitive*, it is possible that the speaker puts emphasis on her / his emotions. Contrary to regular use of *regret to infinitive* which is used at the beginning of the sentence, the parenthetical use of *regret to infinitive* is not present at the beginning of these sentences. By putting *regret to infinitive* in the middle of the sentence in parenthesis, there seems to be more focus on the emotions of the speaker in the instances.

### 3.3. Regret + that clause

Bornstein (1984) pointed out that "*that*" is the most common complementizer in English. In this data, *that* is also the most commonly used complementizer of *regret*. Bornstein (1984) stated *that* is empty in terms of its meaning, and it just introduces the upcoming sentence, and it serves in a way indicator of the following sentence. In this study, the occurrences of *regret* followed by *that* were searched in COCA, and it was found that there were 769 occurrences of *regret that*. However, when manual analysis was done, it was observed that not all the occurrences with *that* were *that clauses*. 243 occurrences were disregarded owing to the fact that *regret* was not used as a verb in these examples. In 242 occurrences, *that* was used as an object pronoun. Thus, the rest included 329 occurrences of *regret* followed by *that clauses*.

(23) "We regret that we are unable to respond to every letter."

(COCA: MAG, 2012)

In this example, *regret* is followed by *that clause*. The speakers are giving information to the hearer, and they feel sorry and are not pleased with giving this information, which is not being able to respond to every letter. Thus, the information *that clause* has is unwelcome by the speakers, and they think that the hearer won't also like hearing this information. Hence, by using *regret + that clause*, the speakers, in a way, soften the possible negative impact of the information embedded in *that clause* on the hearer. Here, since it is possible that the hearer will not like the information in the embedded clause, the speakers use a hearer-directed expression by saying *we regret that*. The speakers mean they are sorry that they are unable to respond to every letter. There is also a polite decline by the speakers. Under normal circumstances, the hearers expect to be given responses for their letters, but the speakers, by using *we regret that*, are giving information which is in contrast to the hearer's expectations. Thus, this is a kind of decline for the expectations of the hearers.

(24) "I regret that I have offended some people, Sotomayor said."

(COCA: NEWS, 2009)

Here, the speaker also feels regret or remorse, and s/he is sorry that s/he has offended some people in the past. Thus, what s/he feels is present, but s/he has these feelings for a situation that happened prior to the utterance of the speaker. The function of *regret + that clause* is also different from the functions of *regret* in the examples (23) and (24).

To summarize, *regret + that* has two different meanings. One is the speaker is not happy with giving the information in the embedded clause, thus feels sorry for giving this bad news to the hearer. The other one is that the speaker feels regret or remorse for an event that took place in the past or an event that is still going on. Thus, *regret* has two different functions when the complement is *that clause*. It was observed that this complement of *regret* has a tendency for the first meaning of *regret + that*, which indicates the regret or remorse of the speaker. The frequency of occurrences in this sense is more when compared to the second function of *regret that clause* (giving bad news). The other meaning is only present in limited contexts such as not being able to respond to a letter which was used a lot in the data.

### 3.4. Regret + wh clause

The wh complements of *regret* were searched in the entire data. Broekhuis and Nye (2013) stated that factive verbs can take interrogative clauses as their complements. In the light of this, the data were searched, and it was found that *regret* took only *what* and *how* as its complements. Table 10 presents the detailed analysis with respect to each wh category.

**Table 10:** Total frequency distribution of wh-complement of regret

| Regret + wh clause | Total hits |
|--------------------|------------|
| what               | 39         |
| how                | 6          |
| In total           | 45         |

As it is shown in Table 10, *regret* is followed by *what* clauses most, followed by *how*. Indeed, there are 68 occurrences of *regret + what* in COCA, but the analysis indicated that *regret* is used as a noun in 29 occurrences. The second mostly used one is *how* which follows *regret*. It has six occurrences. In fact, there are eight occurrences, but two of them were disregarded because *regret* was not used as a verb in two occurrences. In total, *regret + when* has 17 occurrences, and *which* has one occurrence. However, in the examples, it was seen that in all of these occurrences, *regret* was used as a noun, thus they were all excluded from the analysis. No occurrence was found related to *regret + what time*, *regret + who(m)*, and *regret + why*.

The examples are provided below for this category:

(25) "But I do regret what it has cost you, all your life."

(COCA: FIC, 2008)

(26) "We regret what happened, but we're not going to apologize until we know what happened."

(COCA: SPOK, 2001)

All the examples above (25, 26) indicate that the speaker used *regret* here for the purpose of expressing regret or remorse about an event that took place in the past, at least prior to the utterance of the speaker. That event occurred sometime in the past, and the speaker is saying that s/he feels sorry with a feeling of regret for this past event.

(27) "I do regret how I spent my refund."

(COCA: SPOK, 2007)

(28) “How do we not come to the end of our lives and regret how we lived it?”  
(COCA: NEWS, 2010)

*Regret* in examples (27) and (28) are followed by *how* clause. In these examples, the speaker feels regretful about something s/he did in the past. Thus, s/he remembers those situations with a feeling of regret and sorrow.

To sum up, when *regret* is followed by a *wh* clause, it indicates that the speaker experiences regret or remorse for an event or action that took place in the past, before the act of regretting.

### 3.5. Regret + zero clause (that-less clause)

The data were searched in order to find out if there exists *that-less* clause. It was seen that there are 46 occurrences in which *regret* was used as a verb, and also followed by a *that-less* clause. In all instances, *regret* was followed by a subject pronoun. Whether *regret* was followed by a proper noun was searched in COCA, but there were no such occurrences. Besides, whether possessive adjective followed by a noun was used as the subject of the complement clause of *regret* was searched in the whole data, but there were not any results matching this. Table 11 presents the detailed analysis of *that-less* complement of *regret*.

**Table 11:** Total frequency distribution of that-less complement of regret

| Regret + that-less clause | Total hits |
|---------------------------|------------|
| regret + I                | 25         |
| regret + we               | 9          |
| regret + they             | 5          |
| regret + he               | 2          |
| regret + she              | 2          |
| regret + you              | 2          |
| regret + it               | 1          |
| In total                  | 46         |

As Table 11 reveals, *regret* is followed by the subject pronoun *I* most. Second most used subject pronoun with *regret* is *we*, followed by *they*. Yet, their frequencies are low when compared to the subject pronoun *I*. All the subject pronouns are the subject of the embedded clause in all occurrences, and *that* is deleted in these examples.

The examples for *regret* followed by *that-less* clauses are as follows:

(29) “I regret it can’t give you your job back and restore that foreclosed home.”  
(COCA: SPOK, 2010)

(30) "I just regret he won't be with me."

(COCA: NEWS, 1993)

(31) "In my brief meeting with him at Calais, I regret I did nothing to bridge our differences."

(COCA: FIC, 2008)

The examples above show that in all instances, the speaker prefers not to use *that* in her / his utterances, thus *that* is deleted. The function of *that-less* clause is similar to *that clause* following *regret* in the previous section. Here, the speaker either feels regret or remorse for an action / event taking place before the act of regretting as in (31), or feels sorry for a situation that is for a present situation in (29), and a future situation in (30). Bornstein (1984) stated *that* has an empty function, and it is used just to inform the hearer that another sentence is coming. Thus, *that clause* following *regret* and *that-less* clause following *regret* are not differ from each other in terms of their functions and interpretations.

### 3.6. Regret + the fact that

When the data were analyzed, it was found that in 16 occurrences, *regret* was followed by *the fact that*. Two of them were excluded from the analysis due to the fact that *regret* was not used as a verb in these examples. Thus, in total *the fact that* follows *regret* in 14 occurrences in the entire data. Table 12 illustrates this.

**Table 12:** Total frequency of the fact that complement of regret

|                      | Total hits |
|----------------------|------------|
| Regret the fact that | 14         |

The examples are as follows:

(32) "I definitely didn't want to get to the end of my life and I regret the fact that I hadn't taken advantage of this opportunity."

(COCA: SPOK, 2007)

(33) "I kind of regret the fact that I never got a degree (from Oxford)".

(COCA: SPOK, 1992)

In the examples above, the speaker experiences a feeling of regret or remorse for a past situation, which is supposed to be fact by the speaker. In (32), the speaker did not take an advantage of an opportunity which is given in the complement clause, and it is a fact for the speaker. For this reason, the speaker feels regret or remorse for this past

situation. What s/he feels is for now but for a past event / action. For Bornstein (1984), *fact* serves as an abstract noun here. Thus, it does not attach a different meaning to the sentence when compared to *that-clause* complement or *that-less* complement of *regret*.

### 3.7. Regret + for

*Regret+ for* was analyzed in the whole data, because the researcher noticed that in some of the examples *regret* was followed by *for* in the analysis of the occurrences in the previous parts. Thus, it was found that in COCA, there were 177 occurrences in which *regret* was followed by *for*. During the analysis, it was observed that *regret* was used as a noun in 169 of them, hence these occurrences were disregarded. Eight occurrences were left for the analysis. When further analysis was done, it was seen that *regret for* was followed by *the rest* in five of the occurrences, and the other three examples included *regret for + noun*. Table 13 presents this.

**Table 13:** Total frequency of *for* complement of *regret*

|            | Total hits |
|------------|------------|
| Regret for | 8          |

The examples are as follows:

(34) "I regret for the rest of my life the pain and the harm that I have caused to the others."

(COCA: SPOK, 2011)

In (34), the speaker gave harm to the others in the past, prior to the act of regretting. Now, the speaker experiences a feeling of remorse or regret for this past event. *The rest of my life* goes after *regret* in this example, and *the rest of my life* indicates time. What the speaker feels remorse or regret is given after *for the rest of my life*.

(35) "I don't regret for one minute making the decision to quit movies for my children."

(COCA: SPOK, 1996)

Here, *for* is again followed by a time marker which is *one minute*. What the speaker states that s/he does not feel regret or remorse is given after *for one minute*. In this example, the speaker quits movies for her / his children, and s/he says that s/he is not experiencing regret or remorse for that decision which was made in the past. The feeling is present, but not feeling regret or remorse is for a past action or event.

### 3.8. Regret + not

During the analysis, it was noticed that in some examples, *regret* was followed by *not*. The search for *regret + not* revealed that there were 115 occurrences. 28 of the occurrences were excluded from the analysis, because in those sentences, *regret* was not used as a verb. The rest included 84 examples in which *regret* was used as a verb. What is worth mentioning is that in these examples, *regret not* was followed by only Ving. In other words, the only complement *regret not* took is Ving, and *regret not* was not followed by other complements apart from Ving. Table 14 presents the frequencies.

**Table 14:** Total frequency distribution of not as the complement of regret

| Regret not             | Total hits |
|------------------------|------------|
| regret not + Ving      | 60         |
| regret not + having V3 | 24         |

As Table 14 demonstrates, in 60 occurrences, *regret not* was followed by a gerund, and in 24 occurrences, *regret not* was followed by having V3-past participle.

The examples are as follows:

(36) *"We truly regret not going on a honeymoon right after our wedding."*

(COCA: MAG, 2014)

(37) *"We all regret not taking elections quite seriously."*

(COCA: NEWS, 2004)

In (36) and (37), *regret not* was followed by a gerund. Here, the negation is not on the factive verb, but on its complement clause. The complement clause is negated in these examples, and the speakers feel sort of sorry, remorse or regret for a situation or event that happened in the past. In all of the occurrences in COCA, when *regret not* is followed by Ving, the speakers express their feelings or emotions about a past event. Here, in (37) the complement clause is *not taking elections seriously*. The speakers did not take elections quite seriously in the past, thus they experience a state of regret or remorse now for not taking them seriously. What they feel is present, but the situation or the event belongs to the past.

(38) *Do you ever regret not having been more committed to practice or to physical fitness?*

(COCA: MAG, 2015)

(39) *"They regret not having had the courage to express their feelings."*

(COCA: MAG, 2012)

In these examples, *regret not* was followed by *having + past participle*. The speaker in (38) is asking a question to the hearer whether the hearer has a feeling of sorrow, remorse or regret for that past event, which is *not having been committed to practice or physical fitness*. The information in the embedded clause was not realized by the hearer; thus, this part was only negated. For this reason, the speaker is questioning the hearer's present feelings for a past situation. In (39), the subjects utter that they are regretful and feel remorse because they did not have the courage to express their feelings in the past. They're not having had the courage to express their feelings is in the past, but the subjects experience these feelings now, and remember what did not happen in the past with regret or sorrow.

Furthermore, what is given in the embedded clause starting with *not* is presupposed to be true by the speaker. For instance, in (39), the embedded clause is *not having had the courage to express their feelings*. What is given in this complement clause is presupposed to be due to the verb-*regret*.

In addition to focusing on these features of *regret* and some of its complements which have been mentioned above, the researcher had a detailed look at certain data in COCA which have been noticed during the analysis of previously mentioned features because of the saliency of these data. Hence, the negation of *regret* and the use of *I regret it/that/this* were also searched in the data. The findings are as follows:

### 3.9. Do not regret

After the analysis of the negation in the complement of factive verb-*regret*, the negation of the factive verb was also analyzed in the whole data. The findings revealed that negation of the factive verb, *do not regret* in the scope of this study, has only 41 occurrences. When detailed analysis was conducted, it was seen that *regret* was part of the subordinate clause in eight of the occurrences, thus as *regret* was not used as the main verb of the sentence, these eight occurrences were excluded from the analysis. In conclusion, there are 33 examples in which *regret* was used as a verb. Table 15 displays the frequency of *do not regret*.

**Table 15:** Total frequency of the negation of regret

|               | Total hits |
|---------------|------------|
| Do not regret | 35         |

## 4. Conclusion and Suggestions

This study investigated the syntactic and semantic features of the factive verb-*regret* and some of its complements. Since Kiparsky and Kiparsky's (1970) pioneering work,

factive verbs are associated with the presupposition. They stated that the complement of a factive verb is presupposed to be true in affirmative, negative and interrogative forms. In other words, the complement clause is presupposed to be true for the whole data to be felicitous. Kiparsky and Kiparsky (1970) stated that it is the presence of a factive verb that triggers the presupposition. Whether the speaker is telling the truth or not is not important to consider the embedded clause as presupposed to be true, because this is given by the factive verb in the sentence, and in this study *regret* has this role. As a factive verb, and also a true factive verb, *regret* and some of its complements were analyzed in terms of syntactic and semantic features. Because *regret* has been regarded as a good representative of true factive verbs which always presuppose the truth of its complement (Hooper, 1975), it was chosen for the focus of this study to obtain data related to the features of factives. In the examples in the entire data, the complements of *regret* were presupposed to be true by the speaker. The further analysis indicated that *regret* has various syntactic features. It can be followed by *Ving*, to infinitive, that clause, that-less clause (zero clause), for, the fact that or not. When it is followed by *Ving*, it means that the speaker experiences sort of regret or remorse, and remembers the situation with these feelings. The speaker has these feelings for the situation given in the embedded clause. This situation can be either present or a past. If *regret* is followed by having + past participle, the *perfect auxiliary have* makes it clear that the situation given in the complement clause is a finished one. The speaker wishes that the situation or event had never happened. When *to infinitive* goes after *regret*, its meaning is totally different. In this situation, the speaker does not experience regret for a situation, but rather, the speaker gives information to the hearer. The speaker is not happy with giving this information because either the information is bad for the hearer, or it is thought by the speaker that the hearer will not like to hear it. The speaker also thinks that the information s/he is announcing is not in line with the expectations of the hearer. The results also displayed that there is strong tendency that *regret* is followed by a limited number of verbs in this *regret + to infinitive* structure. The most frequent verbs are *say*, *inform* and *report*. During this analysis, it was found that *regret* has a parenthetical use which occurred with only ways: *I regret to say*, *I regret to report*, and *I regret to admit*.

Additionally, *regret* is also followed by *that clause*. In this use, *regret* has two different interpretations. One is similar to the use of *regret + Ving*. The speaker is feeling regret, remorse or sorrow for a present or past situation, and the other is similar to the use of *regret* used with *to infinitive*. In that sense, the speaker gives bad news to the hearer and the speaker also knows that it is unwelcome information for the hearer. There were also some occurrences in the data in which after *regret*, *that* is deleted before the embedded clause. Though the frequency is low, such occurrences were encountered

in the data. As *that* has been considered as carrying no special information, but rather an empty one (Bornstein, 1984), the meaning of *that-less* complement of *regret* is the same with *that clause* complement of *regret*. Though low in frequency, *wh clause* complements follow *regret*. It was seen that *regret* was followed by only *what* and *how* as its complement. In these occurrences, the speaker is experiencing regret or remorse for what happened in the past. After *what* and *how*, which is given in the embedded clause of the sentence, there is always a past and finished event. In some occurrences, *regret* was followed by *the fact that*. The frequency is not high, and the function is similar to the *Ving* complement or *wh* complement of *regret*. After the speaker uses *the fact that*, s/he gives the situation which leads her / him to the state of regret or remorse. There is a fact for which the speaker is experiencing regret or remorse. It was noticed that *regret* was also followed by *for* in some occurrences. In most of the occurrences, *the rest of my life* goes after *regret*. It was also seen that negation word *not* follows *regret* in some occurrences. Here, the complement clause is negated. What is worth stating is that only *Ving* comes after *not*. Finally, in the negation of *regret*, there were some occurrences in COCA, but it was found that the frequency is too low when compared to the affirmative use of *regret*.

In conclusion, De Cuba and Ürogdi (2010, p. 41) defined factivity as “*a lexico-semantic property of verbs that yields (truth conditional) presupposition of the complement*”. The relationship between factivity and presupposition is clear in all the examples. Haegemann (2006) stated that there is speaker deixis in the complements of factive verbs, thus they are related to illocutionary force. In all the examples found in the data, by using *regret*, the speaker is involved in the information given in the sentence, and integrates her / his subjectivity and emotions to the information given in the complement clause of *regret*.

This research study is limited in its scope, since it only focused on certain aspects of the factive verb-*regret*. Further studies can compare *regret* and another factive verb in terms of their use, occurrence and complements in order to see whether there exist certain similarities or differences between them. Besides, another study could focus on all the other syntactic and semantic features of *regret*, which is not dealt in this study, in detail and analyze them. Finally, COCA was searched in this study, and the instances of *regret* were limited to the examples in COCA. Thus, other corpora can be searched in order to explore the occurrences of *regret* and its complements.

## References

1. Birner, B. J. (2013). *Introduction to pragmatics*. Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell.
2. Broekhuis, H. & Nye, R. (2013). Factivity and interrogative complement clauses. Retrieved from <http://ling.auf.net/lingbuzz/001773>.
3. Conrad, S. (2002). Corpus Linguistic Approaches for Discourse Analysis. *Annual Review of Applied Linguistics*, 22, 75-95.
4. De Cuba, C. & Urogdi, B. (2010). Clearing up the 'Facts' on complementation. *University of Pennsylvania Working Papers in Linguistics*, 16 (1), 41-50.
5. Grissom, A. & Miyao, Y. (2012). Annotating factive verbs. *Proceedings of the Eight International Conference on Language Resources and Evaluation*, 4068-4072.
6. Haegeman, L. (2006). Conditionals, factives and the left periphery. *Lingua*, 116, 1651-1669
7. Hooper, J. B. (1975). On assertive predicates. In J. P. Kimball (Ed.), *Syntax and semantics*, (pp. 91 – 124). New York, N.Y.: Academic Press.
8. Hooper, J. B. & Thompson, S. A. (1973). On the applicability of root transformations. *Linguistic Inquiry*, 4, 465 - 497.
9. Hegarty, M. (1992). *Familiar complements and their complementizers: On some determinants of A'-locality* (Unpublished manuscript). University of Pennsylvania, The USA.
10. Kallulli, D. (2006). Triggering factivity: Prosodic evidence for syntactic structure. In D. Baumer, D. Montero & M. Scanlon (Eds), *Proceedings of 25th West Coast Conference on Formal Linguistics* (pp. 211-219). Somerville, MA: Cascadilla Proceedings Project.
11. Karttunen, L. (1971). Implicative verbs. *Language*, 47 (2), 340-358.
12. Kiparsky, P. & Kiparsky, C. (1970). Fact. In M. Bierwisch & K. E. Heidolph (Eds.), *Progress in linguistics* (pp. 143-173). The Hague: Mouton.
13. Zaenen, A. & Karttunen, L. (2013). Veridicity annotation in the lexicon? A look at factive adjectives. *Proceedings of 10th International Conference on Computational Semantics*, pp. 51-58.

Creative Commons licensing terms

Author(s) will retain the copyright of their published articles agreeing that a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License (CC BY 4.0) terms will be applied to their work. Under the terms of this license, no permission is required from the author(s) or publisher for members of the community to copy, distribute, transmit or adapt the article content, providing a proper, prominent and unambiguous attribution to the authors in a manner that makes clear that the materials are being reused under permission of a Creative Commons License. Views, opinions and conclusions expressed in this research article are views, opinions and conclusions of the author(s). Open Access Publishing Group and European Journal of Foreign Language Teaching shall not be responsible or answerable for any loss, damage or liability caused in relation to/arising out of conflicts of interest, copyright violations and inappropriate or inaccurate use of any kind content related or integrated into the research work. All the published works are meeting the Open Access Publishing requirements and can be freely accessed, shared, modified, distributed and used in educational, commercial and non-commercial purposes under a [Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License \(CC BY 4.0\)](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/).