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Historical dictionary definitions revisited from a prototype theoretical standpoint

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Historical dictionaries have not yet incorporated prototype theoretical principles, from which singular enhancements might be obtained in historical lexicography. Revisiting diachronic definitions from a prototypical standpoint underlines how salience-based definitions comply more accurately with the cognitive constraints of the human mind. Upon this realization, the paper presents a template for reorganizing historical definitions according to the principles of prototype theory. The resulting definitions depict the semasiological profile of terms in a more transparent way while stressing the mutual interface between linguistic and extralinguistic data and between synchrony and diachrony. At the same time, the paper shows how the theoretical tenets of cognitive linguistics can be put to use in the field of applied linguistics, viz. lexicography.

Keywords: historical lexicology and lexicography, prototype theory, semasiology, *Oxford English Dictionary*

1. Foreword

A rigid divide between linguistic and encyclopaedic information has long been considered untenable both among cognitive linguists and among historical linguists. For

the former, the objection is inherent to the nature of language(s). For the latter, the fact that there are no living speakers to act as informants poses insurmountable difficulties unless encyclopaedic data bridges the gap. Hence, both theoretical and matter-of-fact claims for the integration of linguistic and encyclopaedic data meet in lexicography. However, only a few synchronic dictionaries and lexicological works have joined cognitivist enterprises so far (Hanks 1994, Hanks & Pearsall 2005, Lipka 2002), while historical dictionaries have largely escaped the influence of recent theoretical developments in cognitive linguistics. The reason for this breach is simple: all cognitivist linguists are interested in meaning, most are in the lexicon, only a few in lexicography and still fewer in historical lexicography. The numbers of historical lexicographers who would claim to be among the ranks of cognitivism are even scarcer.

As such, the needs of historical lexicologists and lexicographers (which motivate most of their decisions) are unknown to cognitivists (who might end up showing little understanding of what historical linguists want from a diachronic dictionary), while the theoretical tenets of cognitive linguistics (from which historical lexicology and lexicography can benefit a great deal) are largely unknown to those in touch with historical dictionaries, who might end up feeling that a prototype approach may work for synchronic dictionaries but is debatable for diachronic ones. At the same time, although acknowledging that there is an unbroken thread that joins synchrony and diachrony, most cognitivist linguists (most linguists, in fact) tend to disregard the diachronic perspective in their enquiries. The interface between present and past, however, is to be stressed for the proper understanding and description of language phenomena in all of their complexity and evolving nature, and of course for an adequate

lexicographic treatment of it, not only in synchronic dictionaries but also in diachronic ones (Coleman & Kay 2000).

The following pages display a pilot pattern that combines prototype theory and historical lexicography by means of revisiting a number of definitions from the *Oxford English Dictionary*, to this day the most outstanding lexicographic work in the world together with the *Woordenboek der Nederlandsche Taal*. The *OED* (Mugglestone 2005, Murray 2001, Winchester 2003) was first published in 13 volumes in 1933, later on supplemented and published in 20 volumes as *OED2* in 1989 and is currently undergoing major editorial work as *OED3*. In 2000, roughly at the same time in which *OED2* was issued in CD-ROM format, the *OED Online* (containing the entire *OED2* as well as quarterly updates with the revisions to be included in *OED3*) became available to subscribers. The *OED* has always aimed, and largely succeeded at, recording all known uses of words in all varieties of English, past and present. Although everyone admits there are faults in the *OED*, the point is not to ponder on these (*OED3* is already heading towards a thorough revamp of the dictionary) but to present a new insight into diachronic definitions that probably feels somewhat alien to both historical lexicologists and cognitive linguists, but of which lexicographic enterprises could benefit.

In comprehensive historical dictionaries it is not always possible to arrange the semantic distinctions of a word or the quotations in chronological order. Consequently the semantic distinctions are arranged in logical groups on the basis of semantic relatedness or on the basis of other principles, and then only within each grouping according to the historical principle. This method results in historical dictionaries overlapping to a marked degree with comprehensive synchronic dictionaries. (Swanepoel 2003:55)

Whether a dictionary is good or not largely depends on what users want it for (Hartmann 2000:83). Therefore, there is neither one single scheme according to which a successful dictionary is to be designed, nor one single theory which is suitable for informing lexicography. Approaching dictionary definitions from the standpoint of prototype theory, however, seems particularly ad hoc since it aids dictionary users by providing them with tools for analyzing the meanings of words in the holistic way in which cognitive science long ago found out we make sense of the world. As Geeraerts has oftentimes claimed over the last two decades, the point is not that there are not, or have never been, theoretical influences on lexicography. Rather, the crucial point is that a lot of the characteristics and procedures of lexicography have no clear theoretical basis and that there is no encompassing theory that unites the diversity of lexicographic practice in a single theoretically viable framework (Geeraerts 2006 and elsewhere). To his mind, prototype theory stands out as an optimal candidate for matching the flexibility required by the demands of lexicographic practice and the need of stringent methodological procedures aimed at producing corpus-based, quantitatively operationalized studies that fulfil the explanatory requirements of linguistic theory. However, prototype theory has only been timidly tried out in synchronic dictionaries, and it has not reached historical dictionaries such as the *OED*.

Of course, the end product of revisiting *OED* definitions is not to depart in any radical way from the *OED* itself, so objections posed to a scheme aimed at providing alternative prototype-based definitions on the basis of *OED* definitions will be grounded. However, the very fact of reconceptualizing existing definitions from a cognitivist approach surely provides new insights into the semasiological profile of

terms and into the way in which concepts and readings get diachronically involved. It is a psychologically well known fact that conceptualization is a continuous process in which subsequent visits allow the identification of more and more connections. Just as teachers learn because of their reorganization, for the sake of teaching, of things already known, our brains learn and find new associations every single time a given concept is revisited. Just as our cognition does not merely stack files but creates reality once and again, the data used for compiling a dictionary may serve more than one purpose if consecutive visits to that data are granted, and this is precisely the aim of the pages that follow.

Integrating dictionary making within a suitable theoretical framework involves constraints that hinder the task of upgrading existing definitions. However, enhancements aimed at avoiding the classical linearization problem and arguable hierarchical arrangements while acknowledging the import of salience in semasiological profiles seem worth the effort. Rearranging historical definitions in a way that brings together lexicographic practice and recent theoretical insights into semantics allows a departure from traditional checklist approaches, hence favouring new insights into meaning.

A prototypical conception of meaning allows us to interpret seemingly unreliable facts or non-facts as interesting data that are theoretically perfectly plausible ... An introspective method is likely to yield distortions with regard to actual usage, as not all readings of a word have the same psychological salience. For a conception of meaning that does not take into account differences in salience between the readings of a word, it is not so obvious that a lexicographer, during his introspective activity, perceives some meanings and forgets others. However, if

one accepts that differences in salience form an integral part of the structure of word meaning, it is logical that the more salient meanings surface more easily into the introspective consciousness than other, less salient readings ... Ultimately, a researcher who starts from a prototype-theoretical point of view perceives things that his opponent does not, or at least, perceives certain things more easily, and less freely discards them as irrelevant. The prototypical conception of meaning, in short, conforms to what we expect of a theoretical paradigm in linguistics: it is a view on language phenomena. (Geeraerts 1997:174)

2. Revisiting *OED* definitions

The revisited definitions belong to a broader, single-handed project accomplished for stressing the suitability of cognitive linguistics for historical lexicology. Naturally, a team effort such as the one involved by most dictionaries would have rendered more ambitious results, mostly nowadays in the age of dictionary IT (Oppenocht & Schutz 2003), but the outcome is nonetheless deemed worth considering, as it stands as a model for the design of prototype-based diachronic definitions.

In order to elaborate the parallel definitions upon cognitivist tenets, no information was retained except the actual citations that accompany every sense in the *OED*. Such citations constituted the raw material for the proposed definitions, which emerged from a careful process of reading, organizing and classifying materials according to the nuances conveyed by every quotation. Of course, relying on the *OED* implies some degree of inaccuracy, since the emerging definitions were compiled upon material taken as representative, while in fact the consecutive editorial policies of the

OED might or might not have favoured the inclusion of given senses or quotable sources, thus limiting the trustworthiness of the resulting output to a certain extent.

The *Oxford English Dictionary* was dedicated to Queen Victoria, and it is unmistakably a product of Victorian Britain. For example, it omits all the four-letter Anglo-Saxon words ... The extent to which this great lexicographical achievement suffered the confines of Victorian mores is further illustrated by its failure to record not only words but also senses of words that its editors thought tainted. For example, the entry for 'to die' runs to many columns, but readers will be unable to learn from the *Oxford English Dictionary* that Shakespeare sometimes used the verb in the sense of 'to have an orgasm' (Finegan 1992:123)

Another trait that somewhat limits the trustworthiness of the end product is the *OED* criterion for obsolescence. In the *OED*, citations are often not provided after the nineteenth century for fully-fledged contemporary readings. However, informing the definitions with contemporary data was not considered methodologically appropriate for a project seeking to update existing definitions. As for the process of creating the novel definitions, the repeated reading of slips containing *OED* quotations led to the gradual emergence of patterns, according to which citations were grouped under rough definitional headwords. Subsequent scans made it possible to distinguish nuances within broader readings. Once the bulk of quotations had been allocated, successive reviews allowed to decide whether any of the categories should be combined or rather subsumed within a broader one.

The classificatory process is not, of course, necessarily simple or straightforward. The first draft of a classification is a somewhat hit and miss affair, and the most important thing to maintain is an open mind about the patterns being found forming. This means that one must always keep in mind possible alternative arrangements and that many readings and re-readings of the slips are essential. At this stage one often finds it possible to place the problem slips as their definitions usually carry some reference to one or other of the sub-categories (Sylvester 1994:30)

Once a definition had been roughly sketched, the nuances and readings were chronologically ordered with regard to their sequence of appearance in the language, and all quotations within each grouping revised. Those citations which had not been yet allocated usually required a larger amount of context in order to determine the nature of their meaning. When the broader context of a given quotation (originally available to the compilers of the dictionary though not to the reader any more) could not be located, the *OED* criterion was the ultimate source for their placement. By the time each and every one of the citations had been incorporated back into the definition and a time span had been identified for every nuance and reading, a representative quotation was chosen to illustrate each of the senses and included in the final draft.

A sample revisited definition is displayed below (FIGURE 1), followed by the corresponding *OED* entry without the accompanying citations (FIGURE 2).

INSERT FIGURE 1 HERE

A mere glance at both definitions already suggests the breach between them, since relative length and informative load seem to be in reverse proportion. In placing the emphasis on semantic salience, the revisited definition strikes as significantly more transparent than the *OED* definition. The impact of relative weights in definitional outlines is thus attested.

INSERT FIGURE 2 HERE

The highly contrastive structure of both definitions also results from the diverging arrangements favoured by each approach. Whereas the *OED* definition concentrates on the expression of SUFFERING and subsumes all other nuances within it, the revisited definition overtly profiles a series of less salient readings that depart from the expression of SUFFERING. Thus, the notions of PUNISHMENT, EFFORT, SICKNESS and BOTHER are presented as distinct readings, which is not the case in the *OED* format. In addition, the readings pertaining to the domain of SUFFERING proper are fragmented in separate (even if cross-referenced) senses in the *OED*, thus making for a much more extended definition than the revisited one.

Hence, a more transparent overview of distinct readings and of the relations among nuances is matched with a much more economical format in the revisited definition, which enhances an expedient apprehension of both salient and non-salient facets. For the sake of clarity and reader friendliness, the full number of *OED* quotations was not included in the revisited definition, which aimed at maximum schematicity. Apart from encouraging an understanding of the meaning of the term at a glance,

keeping proportions in command goes along with the painful task of reducing editorial costs to a maximum imposed on lexicographers, a factor not to be understated.

It is not entirely sure whether the canonical linear form of the dictionary is indeed a straightforward consequence of the classical theory of categorization. On the one hand, the classical expectation of minimal overlapping among lexical meanings will probably have exerted a certain degree of influence, but on the other hand, it is equally probable that lexicographers, through their extensive empirical familiarity with actual semantic structures, have been long aware of the difficulties surrounding the classical expectations ... And obviously, if the influence of theoretical conceptions on the linear order of dictionaries is indeed restricted ... material constraints acquire more weight (Geeraerts 1990:201)

In this respect, it should be pointed out that not all features of the template for upgrading definitions follow directly and necessarily from prototype theory. Restricting the definition to short glosses is a matter relating to the pragmatics of dictionaries (making things easy for the dictionary user), and not something that follows from taking a prototype-theoretical point of view. Similarly, restricting the number of quotations mentioned in the entries is a matter of methodological convenience, since from a theoretical point of view the number of quotations would have to reflect the salience of a given reading. In this respect, the proposed model is informed by practical considerations of a purely lexicographical nature just as much as by theoretical principles of a prototype-theoretical nature.

In order to meet the demands of the latter, however, the revisited definitions were complemented with two figures, the first of which (FIGURE 3) aims at

counterbalancing the absence of a larger number of illustrative quotations for senses of a higher frequency. As such, the first appended figure (which together with the subsequent one is an add-on with regard to the *OED*) displays the relative salience of individual nuances (both statistically and in a pie diagram), as well as information about total counts within the *OED* corpus of citations, and the total number of quotations per nuance and reading.

INSERT FIGURE 3 HERE

The second appended figure (FIGURE 4) was sketched in order to relate polysemy and semantic change by means of charting sense development over time in a representational format easily apprehensible for dictionary users. As such, a diachronic illustration depicts the rise and disappearance of senses, listed from the oldest to the most recent one in the language. The senses included in this diachronic figure correspond to those identified at the time of profiling the semasiological load of the term in FIGURE 1.

INSERT FIGURE 4 HERE

On the whole, the revisited definition provides a new way of looking at word meaning from different perspectives and, to this end, semantic information has been reorganized and approached from various standpoints. As a result, insights that would have otherwise remained hidden within a traditional definition (exceedingly exhaustive but not transparent) come to the fore. However, definitions such as the ones presented here

(which include various diagrams and are sketched around prototypical attractors) might not seem entirely plausible in everyday dictionary making for reasons that largely go beyond market boundaries. Innovative and increasingly greeted formats such as electronic and online dictionaries, in which actual printed expanse does not constitute a problem, still preserve traditional traits enforced by the conservative demands of average dictionary users (Cowie 1983:99) and, in this respect, prototype-based definitions are halfway between traditional expectations of a dictionary entry and linguistic inquiries into lexicographic paths for development.

Among these inquiries, the naturalness of taxonomic hierarchies as an organizational principle has been seriously questioned within the cognitive framework. For this reason, in the prototype-based definitions the numerical ordering of senses has been replaced by broad headings under which semantically related sub-headings are listed, all in chronological order of appearance in the language. Because of this arrangement, the proposed definitions offer a glimpse of the semantic relationships established among senses, while promoting a quick scan of the appended figure that charts the diachronic development of the term. As a result, the prototype-based proposal provides explanatory headings suggestive of the overall meaning of the category rather than individual definitions for senses. However, although comprehensive headings have been favoured, a particular emphasis has been placed on avoiding mistaken conceptions often caused by overgeneralizations that disregard the actual context in which the meaning of a term unfolds.

A dictionary entry is like an equation [which on the left-hand side pursues the goal of] accounting for patterns of word use in terms of the company they keep, [whereas on the right-hand side] the lexicographer has to go on to say what the

unique contribution of each word is to the contexts in which it occurs, or rather its potential contribution to any context in which it may occur. (Hanks 1987/2003:204)

While potentially less accurate than the *OED*, however, the prototype-based definitions aim at eliciting a global understanding of the concept rather than a detailed account of all the cases in which this is materialized, hence avoiding much of the circularity and cross-reference at times present in dictionaries. At the same time, including a representative quotation rather than an exhaustive set of citations aims at promoting a rapid understanding of readings. Such a focus on economy, together with the iconic way in which nuances are categorized, renders a more holistic definition in which the chronological axis is overtly represented and in which salience is foregrounded. For all these reasons, prototype-based definitions seem more tuned to human cognition and as such, best suited for fulfilling the needs of dictionary users.

3. Definitional approaches

Beyond representational formats, the revisited prototype-based definitions also constitute an attempt to tackle a number of recurrent flaws in the *OED*. In aiming at an explanation of the etymological origin and development of contemporary words through an examination of the meanings those words have had in history, the very statement of purpose of the *OED* places an emphasis on synchrony rather than on diachrony, and a backwards trajectory from the present towards the past. Besides, the *OED* encompasses the work of different editors over a very extended period of time, which is only natural

when considering the scope of a project naturally meant to expand over generations and to survive subsequent editors and editorial policies, often without an explicit guidepost and at a time in which linguistic theory could not be considered properly so.

As a result, not only the standard but the very nature of definitions largely differs from term to term and, although the bulk of the text has been periodically supplemented and revised ever since it was first completed, the original traits of definitions often persist. Therefore, while some of them reveal the pen of authoritative scholars with a fine intuition for subjects beyond the scope of any scientific endeavour at the time, some other definitions lack the cogency required to endure inspection. Thus, a number of *OED* definitions reveal flaws such as the seemingly arbitrary disunion of nuances within the same reading; the merger of distinct readings under single headings; and a widespread confusion of causes, effects and instances. Another conflictive trait that significantly distances the *OED* from prototype-based definitions relates to the interplay of linguistic and extralinguistic information within the dictionary. It goes without saying that miscellaneous data does serve an instructional purpose for *OED* users, since it provides the reader with an easily apprehensible and accurate idea of the meaning of the term in history, as well as a large number of notes on derivational and compound terms, prepositional patterns and idiomatic expressions.

Another area which depends a great deal upon the sensitivity and judgement of the individual lexicographer is sense-division — what definers term 'lumping' (broad, inclusive defining) and 'splitting' (fine sense-discrimination). Decisions on the distinction between full sense and subsense, on the role played by context in determining sense-division, and indeed on how far the fineness of sense-division should be taken, are open to dispute. (Silva 2000:86)

Nevertheless, and although no degree of granularity is to be regarded as inherently better or worse than any other (since it depends on what the dictionary is required for) a close scrutiny of *OED* definitions often reveals unsatisfactory arrangements in which meaning is coalesced with no stable criteria with a miscellaneous assortment of usage-related, cultural and dialectal information: in the *OED* there are a good many examples of sense division based upon the *function* ascribed to the word, rather than upon the intrinsic meaning of the word in the quotation (Silva 2000:87). As such, it is very often the case that reference to specific usage is listed separately from the core meaning and, as a result, entirely distinct listings for the same nuance, only that with different prepositions, are ubiquitous. Obviously, this topic links with a debate of endless repercussions, namely the dictionary-encyclopaedia debate. However, in this case the clash needn't be so, or at least not to any significant extent, since both historical and cognitive linguists acknowledge the relevance of extralinguistic information for the actual comprehension of linguistic items. The problem arises when miscellaneous linguistic and extralinguistic information (by all means necessary) is presented in traditional works such as the *OED* with no sound criteria, which naturally upsets those feeling that the role of prototypicality and salience is violated once again. That is, while users of historical dictionaries do need encyclopaedic information and may welcome extra citations for debatable meanings, the way in which these tokens of encyclopaedic information are integrated into the definition is indeed significant in theoretical terms, for not all arrangements go. Likewise, whereas from the point of view of historical lexicographers a chronological arrangement is motivated, this arrangement (if introduced with no further notice) is likely to pose problems for those approaching the

historical dictionary from a theoretical background in which the notions of prototypicality and salience are to be properly (and overtly) addressed. For this reason, revisions should abound that address the old problem of blending lexicographic practice with lexicological theory.

Another pervasive slip that has been revised in the prototype-based definitions has to do with entries within compounds and derivatives on the one hand, and within crystallized expressions on the other. The latter are consistently listed in the *OED* separately from the actual meaning of the term per se and rather under miscellaneous headings. An example is to be found in the *OED* definition for the adjective SORE and the singular heading deserved by the expression “a bear with a sore head” (cf. sense 9d in FIGURE 5 below: *used allusively for a type of sullen irritability, peevishness, or sensitiveness*).

INSERT FIGURE 5 HERE

This trend is thought to be misleading, for although the expression does mean “irritable, peevish or sensitive”, the term SORE in it surely does not, but rather belongs within the most prototypical meaning of the term, PAINFUL or IN PAIN. As such, making room for this expression should be to the advantage of the dictionary user, but as a collocational template within a more encompassing reading, not as a distinct sense. Likewise, readings such as 13 in the *OED* definition have been dropped as distinct nuances from the prototype-based definition, since the meaning of the term SORE in a compositional item such as “sore-footed” has not been considered distinct enough as to deserve an individual treatment severed from the more encompassing heading

CAUSING OR INVOLVING BODILY SUFFERING. For this reason, such instances have been allocated under properly semantic headings in the prototype-based definition and integrated back into broader nuances, as displayed below (FIGURES 6-7-8).

INSERT FIGURE 6 HERE

INSERT FIGURE 7 HERE

INSERT FIGURE 8 HERE

The decision to subsume specific expressions such as “a bear with a sore head” or “sore-footed” within broad headings, or rather to keep them as individual nuances, does not alter the semantic description of the term to any significant degree, since the existence of metaphorical and metonymic extensions is usually mirrored in the range of readings of the term. The nuance CAUSING OR INVOLVING OFFENCE (encompassing the readings OFFENDED OR IRRITABLE and OFFENDING), for instance, was already part of the meaning of the term since a much earlier date than the idiomatic expression itself. A reallocation of tokens seems inescapable in order to properly understand and define the meaning of a term, and a meaning-based approach certainly helps identify and amend misguided decisions. However, the prototype-based proposals still have room for further amendments that contemplate a full treatment of metaphorical and metonymic extensions and a more detailed reflection on the actual nature of semantic relations within senses. As a matter of fact, much work is still to be

done in order to account for the complexity of meaning extension in dictionary definitions.

It would be helpful if lexicographers paid more attention to the question of what kind of etymological information is suitable for general dictionary users ... The strong point of etymology in general dictionaries could be the attention paid to form and meaning developments of derivations and compounds, and the complex relations between them. This aspect has been so far sadly neglected – the reason being that the etymologies derive from existing etymological dictionaries that do not focus on derivations and compounds either. (Van der Sijs 2003: 319)

A final aspect which impoverishes *OED* definitions, this time in relation to semasiological salience, is that of the choice of quotations. Fairly often, in seeking a larger degree of understandability of the non-prototypical readings of a term, many more quotations are offered for marginal readings than for central ones.

Unlike much of linguistics, the field of dictionary making has long been influenced by empirical and corpus-based methods ... In the late 1800s, a large group of texts was collected as the basis for the *Oxford English Dictionary*, and as many as 800 volunteers read through the texts and sent in citation slips with quotes using their assigned words. Such work, however, differed greatly from the use of a corpus-based approach today. First of all, these earlier text collections were not meant to be representative of the language ... The entries in the *Oxford English Dictionary* ... were dependent upon what the volunteer readers happened to notice, and dictionary makers found that readers paid more attention to unusual uses of the words than common ones (Biber et al. 1998:22)

Taking prototypical meanings largely for granted in dictionary definitions (that is, providing little information but the testimony of their peaceful existence over the history of the language) is both cognitively natural in terms of perception and convenient in that it serves matter-of-fact requirements. However, it befouls frequency counts and distorts the semasiological balance of the term being defined. To make things worse, this trend has been reinforced in the subsequent editions of the *OED*, which have often witnessed the enlargement of corpora illustrative of non-salient readings. An example of this may be found in the *OED* definition of the term DISTRESS (FIGURE 9), which in the second edition was upgraded with a very large number of quotations illustrating the NAVAL EMERGENCY reading (cf. I.2.c) while the rest of the senses remained unmodified. As a result, the relative percentages obtainable from the paper version of *OED1* differ a lot from those obtainable from the CD-ROM edition of *OED2*, while in fact the reading remains equally non-salient in both cases.

INSERT FIGURE 9 HERE

INSERT FIGURE 10 HERE

INSERT FIGURE 11 HERE

INSERT FIGURE 12 HERE

Once again, only a definitional approach (FIGURES 10-11-12) that profiles relative salience overtly may overcome such flaws. However, being this a project aimed at updating existing definitions, the problem could not be properly addressed, since any analysis of a skewed data collection provided by the *OED* would have rendered distorted results in all cases. Nonetheless, the combination of stringent notice of semasiological salience and of the possibilities of electronic dictionaries (the potential of an ever-up-to-date electronic medium of presentation, already meriting increasing attention, will make proposals formerly unfeasible increasingly pervasive) betokens new prospects for synchronic/diachronic lexicography.

4. Afterthought

The foregoing account should not translate into harsh criticism of the *OED*, which remains an outstanding piece of work to be thoroughly trusted. However, the possibilities that prototype theory has for diachronic (as well as synchronic) lexicography cannot be stressed enough, even if at first sight the impact might not seem groundbreaking. Since the number of prototypes identified in the revisited definitions seems to correspond quite closely to the number of *OED* senses, some might wonder whether the end product of the revision is in fact significantly different from the *OED*, and as such worth the effort. A couple of remarks come up at this point. On the one hand, one is to acknowledge that both the *OED* and the revisited definitions spring from the same set of quotations and although the revision has been drawn from scratch, it remains a revision of existing material. In this respect, the very fact that both definitions

have independently come to identify a number of coincident senses suggests that the description of the semasiological profile of the term is adequate in both cases.

On the other hand, the fact of presenting the same profile under a different light is in itself significant. The decision of making meaning the organizational principle while demoting the chronological arrangement to a more peripheral role is not only coherent with the theoretical tenets of cognitive linguistics, according to which meaning is the core of language and should therefore be most central within the definition. Making semantic salience the organizational principle is also adequate in that it allows the identification of senses at a glance, hence favouring the apprehension of the semantic load of the term in a more expedient and global way, which is indeed valuable for those users who require a quicker look at the dictionary for a specific purpose rather than for scholarly analysis.

In other words, while an in-depth etymological analysis of a term in English will always require (at least) the *OED* in full, not all users of the *OED* approach the dictionary for the same purpose, and both scholars and casual users of the dictionary could benefit from a prior approach to the term that highlights the role of salience and depicts the semantic profile of the term in a transparent way, just as sociocognitive approaches to terminology are also doing as of late (Temmerman 2000). At the same time, in highlighting the differences between the readings of a word, definitions upgraded on prototypical grounds provide users with further tools for analyzing the trends in which polysemous and synonymous terms get diachronically involved, which enhances an understanding of the way in which synchrony and diachrony are interlaced. The theoretical import of revisiting dictionary definitions upon prototypical tenets is then an emphasis on the way in which salience-based definitions seem to comply more

accurately with the cognitive constraints of perception, categorization, memory and understanding. A prototype-based approach provides historical dictionary users with a holistic understanding of terms in time: whether that is the end of the story or only the beginning depends not on the dictionary but rather on the user.

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PUNISHMENT †	_____	1297-1884
	PUNISHMENT OR FINE: <i>He shal pay the same payne as afor is saide.</i>	_____1297-1859
	MENACE INTO RISK OF ~: <i>Vndir great payne of horrible death suffring.</i>	_____c1380-1884
BODILY SUFFERING	_____	a1300-1974
	BODILY SUFFERING AS PUNISHMENT: <i>Of every lust thende is a peine.</i>	_____a1300-1598
	TORTURE FOR INFORMATION †: <i>They..wolde confesse sum grete matier if they</i>	_____1535
	<i>might be examyned as they ought to be that is to sey by paynes.</i>	
	BODILY SUFFERING: <i>For peyne of the paume powere hem [fingers] failleth to</i>	_____1377-1973
	<i>clucche or to clawe.</i>	
-	In euphemistic expressions for merciful homicide: <i>God tooke him owte of thi</i>	_____1481-1808
	<i>carcerall payne.</i>	
-	In compound term ~ KILLER, a medicine against ~: <i>The many painkillers invented</i>	_____1853-1974
	<i>have diminished largely the amount of human suffering.</i>	
	CHILDBIRTH LABOUR: <i>She bowed her selfe, and traueled, for her paynes cam vpon her.</i>	_____a1300-1889
EFFORT	_____Who wyll take payne to folowe the trace.	_____a1300-1889
EMOTIONAL SUFFERING	_____	1340-1911
	CONDEMNATION IN HELL †: <i>His saule wente vn-to payne.</i>	_____1340-1598
	DISTRESS: <i>Syn I knowe of loues peyne.</i>	_____1375-1911
	WORRY †: <i>I am in a great deal of pain to know how my horses have performed the</i>	_____1638-1789
	<i>journey.</i>	
SICKNESS † (OF THE FEET IN HORSES):	<i>Peynys, yvyl yn horsys fete.</i>	_____1440-1610
BOTHER:	<i>I was a sickly youngster..a frail problem child, a pain in the neck</i>	_____1908-1977

Figure 1: Prototype-based proposal for the definition of PAIN

pain, *n.*

1. a. Suffering or loss inflicted for a crime or offence; punishment; penalty; a fine. Obs. exc. in phr. pains and penalties, and as in b.

b. esp. in phr. on, upon, under (†up, †of, †in) pain of: followed by the penalty or punishment incurred in case of not fulfilling the command or condition stated, as on pain of death; also, formerly, that which one is liable to pay or forfeit, as on pain of a hundred pounds, on pain of life, or the crime with which one is liable to be charged, as on pain of felony. Formerly sometimes with ellipsis of on, etc. (pain of = †on pain of).

† c. pain fort and dure: see peine.

† d. in pl. Judicial torture. Obs. rare.

2. a. A primary condition of sensation or consciousness, the opposite of pleasure; the sensation which one feels when hurt (in body or mind); suffering, distress. With a and pl., a single feeling of this nature. In early use esp. Suffering inflicted as punishment. (Cf. sense 1.)

† b. spec. The punishment or sufferings of hell (or of purgatory). Obs.

c. to put out of (one's) pain, etc.: to put to death, dispatch (a wounded or suffering person or animal).

3. a. In specifically physical sense: Bodily suffering; a distressing sensation as of soreness (usually in a particular part of the body).

b. spec. (now always pl.) The sufferings or throes of childbirth; labour.

c. pain in the neck (colloq.) (also simply pain), an annoying or tiresome person or thing; also, in same sense (but vulg.), pain in the arse. Also, to give (someone) a pain (in the neck or arse), to be annoying or tiresome (to someone).

4. a. In specifically psychical sense: Mental suffering, trouble, grief, sorrow.

† b. spec. Distress caused by fear of possible evil, anxiety; anxious desire or apprehension. Obs.

† 5. Trouble as taken for the accomplishment of something (= pains, sense 6); also, in early use, trouble in accomplishing something, difficulty. (F. peine.) Phrases. to do one's pain; to take pain; to lose one's pain. Obs. in sing.: see 6.

6. a. pl. Trouble taken in accomplishing or attempting something; labour, toil, exertions, or efforts, accompanied with care and attention, to secure a good or satisfactory result. Most freq. in phr. to take pains, to be at (the) pains.

b. In this sense the pl. pains has been freq. construed as a sing. (Cf. means, news.)

c. for (one's) pains: in return or recompense for one's labour or trouble; now usually sarcastic or ironical, implying that the labour is misspent or futile, or that the return for it is the contrary of what was desired.

7. attrib. and Comb.

a. attrib., as pain-sensation, -sense, -sensitivity;

b. instrumental, as pain-afflicted, -bought, -chastened, -dimmed, -distorted, -drawn, -racked, -shot, -stricken, -worn, -wrung adjs.;

c. objective, as pain-assuaging, -bearing, -dispelling, -giving, -inflicting, -killing, -producing, -relieving adjs.; pains-hating adj.

[after painstaking: see 6];

d. pain-free a., free from pain;

pain-killer, one who or that which does away with pain; spec. name of a medicine for alleviating pain;

† pain-piss Obs., painful urination, strangury;

pain point Physiol. = pain spot;

pain-proof a., having immunity from pain.;

pain spot Physiol., a small spot on the surface of the skin that is sensitive to pain;

pain-threshold, the upper limit of tolerance to pain. See also painstaking, etc., painsworthy.

Figure 2: Senses within the *OED* definition of PAIN

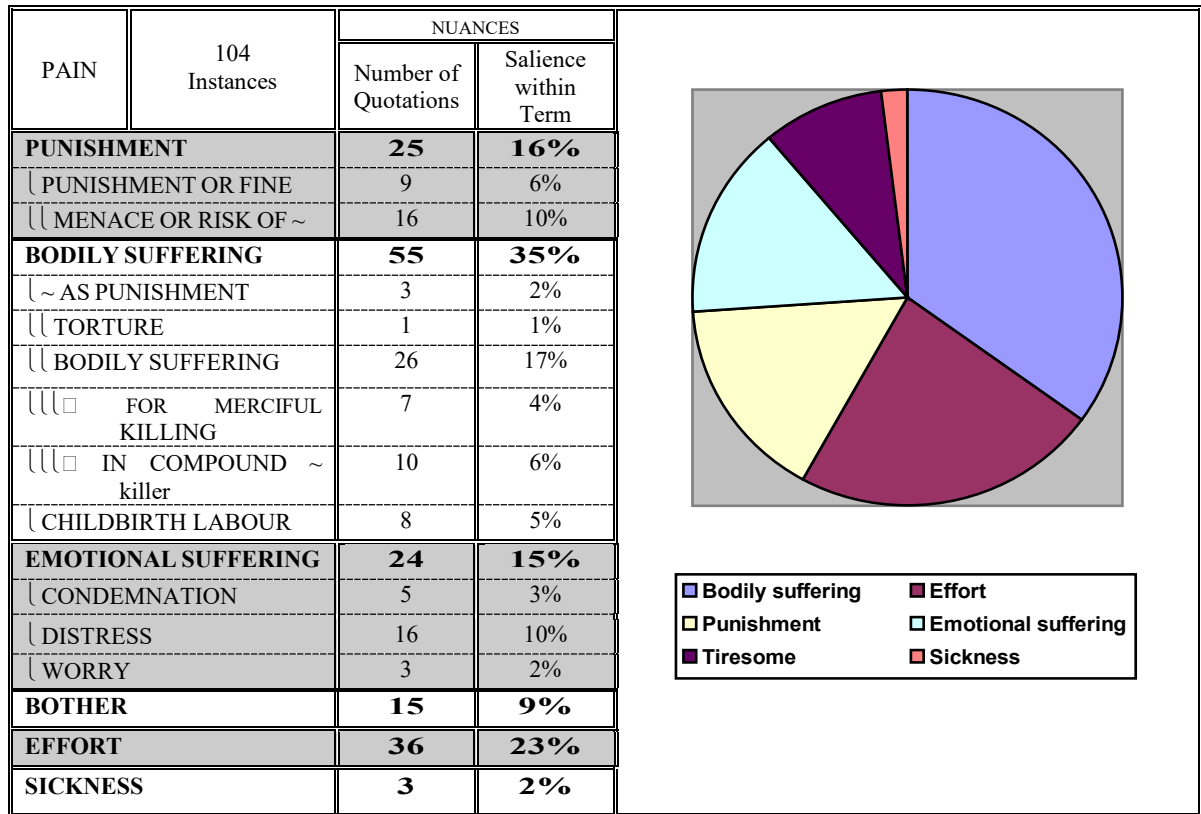


Figure 3: Relative saliences in PAIN

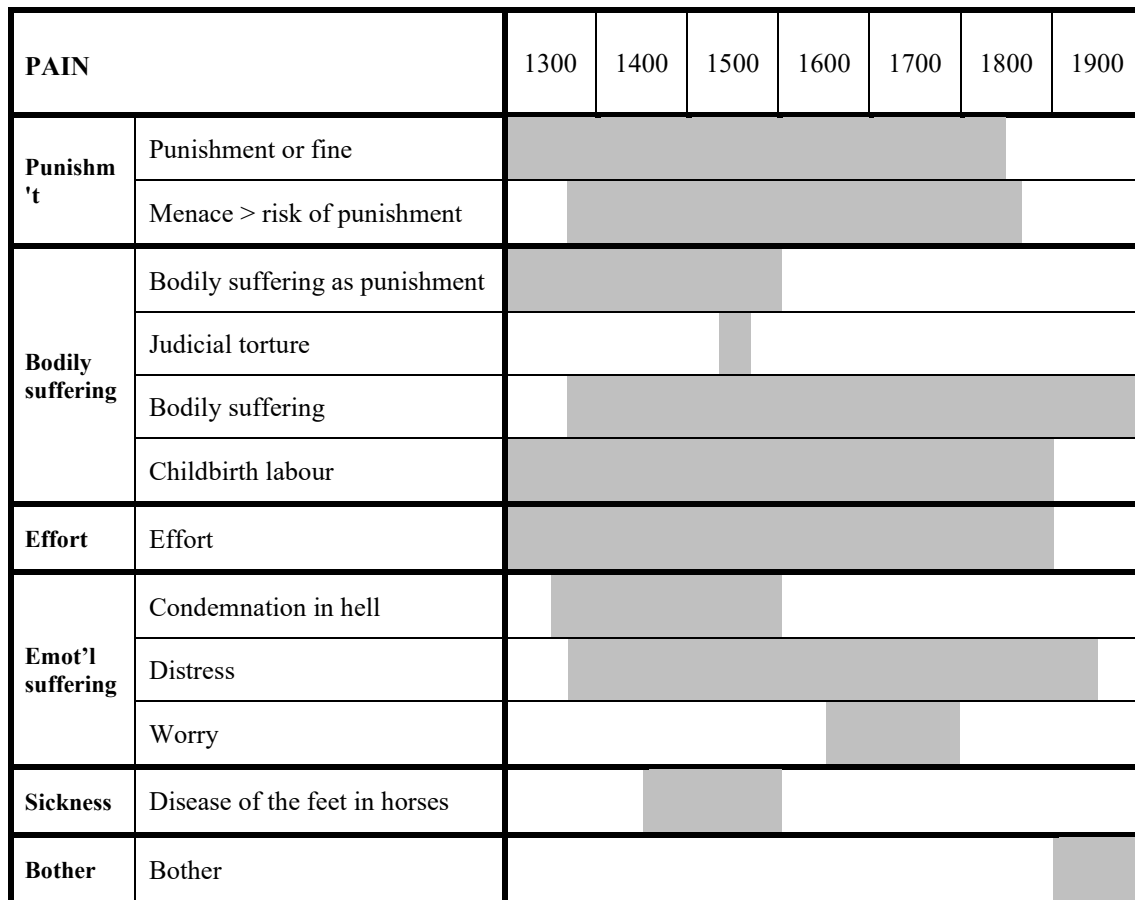


Figure 4: Diachronic overview of sense development in PAIN

sore, a.¹

Senses 1-8 are now mainly *arch.* or *dial.*

I. 1. Causing or involving bodily pain; painful, grievous; distressing or severe in this respect:

a. Of wounds, hurts, ailments, or similar causes of physical suffering.

b. Of a blow, bite, weapon, etc.

c. Of sickness. Passing into the merely intensive sense of 'severe'.

2. a. Causing or involving, accompanied by, mental pain, trouble, or distress.

b. Of sorrow, repentance, or other feelings.

c. Of manifestations of grief: Bitter, painful.

3. a. Involving great hardships, painful exertion, unusual difficulty, etc.

b. Of battle or other conflicts: Severe, fierce, hot.

4. a. Pressing hardly upon one; oppressively heavy or severe; difficult to bear or support.

b. Of troubles, afflictions, evils, etc.

c. Of trials or temptations.

d. In intensive use: Very great or serious.

5. Severe, stern, hard, or harsh:

† a. Of language, commands, etc. *Obs.*

b. Of persons. Now *dial.* (Common in 16th c.)

6. Of a strong, severe, or violent character in respect of operation or effect:

a. Of feelings.

b. Of storms, weather, etc.

c. Of persons or other agents.

d. Of actions. *rare* l.

† 7. Strong, weighty, valid. *Obs.*

8. *dial.* = sorry *a.*

II. 9. a. Of parts of the body: In pain; painful, aching. Now *spec.*, having the skin broken or raw.

b. Of the eyes, throat, etc.: Painful through inflammation or other morbid condition. *a sight for sore eyes*:

see sight *n.*¹ 1 d.

c. *Sc.* Of the head: Aching. *a sore (Sc. sair) head*, a headache.

d. *a bear with a sore head*, used allusively for a type of sullen irritability, peevishness, or sensitiveness.

Cf. sore-head, -headed.

e. Colloq. phr. *dressed (or done, etc.) up like a sore finger (or toe)* and *varr.*, overdressed. *Austral.* and *N.Z.*

10. Of persons: Suffering pain (from wounds, disease, or other cause). Freq. in alliteration with *sick*. Also *absol.*

11. Afflicted with sorrow or grief; pained, distressed:

a. Of the heart, etc.

b. Of persons. Now *dial.*

12. a. Of persons or their feelings: Inclined to be irritated or grieved; irritable, sensitive; angry, resentful.

Also const. *about*, *on*, and *at*. Now *colloq.* (chiefly *N. Amer.*).

b. *sore place*, *point*, *spot*, a point or matter in respect of which one is easily vexed or irritated.

13. *Comb.*, as *sore-foot*, *-footed*, *-hearted* (hence *sore-heartedness*), *-rimmed*, *-tOED* adjs.;

sore-back attrib., (of horses) having a sore back;

so *sore-back v. trans.*, to give (a horse) a sore back, *sore-backed a.*;

sore-eyed a., having sore eyes; also applied to sheath-billed pigeons, which have reddish caruncles round the eyes.

sore, a.² Obs. exc. Hist.

1. *Falconry*. Applied to a hawk of the first year that has not moulted and still has its red plumage (now called a *red hawk*); hence applied to the plumage itself; occas. extended to other birds of prey, as the kite and eagle.

† 2. Of a horse: Of a reddish-brown colour. *Obs.* Cf. *sorrel a. a.*

Figure 5: Senses within the *OED* definition of SORE

CAUSING OR INVOLVING BODILY SUFFERING	c897-1977
PAINFUL OR IN PAIN –OFTEN THE CONSEQUENCE OF SICKNESS	c897-1977
OF OPEN WOUNDS: <i>Hyt makyth a full heuy and a full Soore wounde.</i>	c897-1847
OF BODY PARTS: <i>The Parts so stiff and sore, as if they never would be well.</i>	a1000-1977
OF THE THROAT: <i>I have a cold and a sore Throat.</i>	c1000-1898
OF FEET: <i>We see him arriving sorefoot at the Three Pigeons in Brentford.</i>	a1300-1927
OF EYES: <i>Well, sayng that you can heale sore eyes, what is an eye?</i>	a1400-1915
OF THE HEAD: <i>The decoctione of it is remeid for ane sair hede.</i>	1549-1880
OF FINGERS: <i>Get an eyeful of him! Done up like a sore toe.</i>	1919-1977
–FIGURATIVE FOR OVERDRESSED, HENCE NOTICEABLE	
OF HORSES' BACK: <i>But he went to see the gals on a sore-backed hoss.</i>	1835-1933
OF PEOPLE: <i>If you went in paine Master, this knawe wold goe sore.</i>	1297-1837
OF SICKNESS > SERIOUS: <i>My loins are filled with a sore disease.</i>	a1300-1831
PAINFUL TO TOUCH: <i>There was no spot sore to touch.</i>	1639-1881
CAUSING BODILY SUFFERING: <i>Castor..suet vnto Sedar with a sore wepyn.</i>	c1205-1607
CAUSING OR INVOLVING EMOTIONAL SUFFERING	a900-1923
DISTRESSING: <i>Sore task to hearts worn out by many wars.</i>	a900-1871
DISTRESSED [†]: <i>I most departe Frome hir..With hairt full soir.</i>	a1000-1923
OF OUTWARD EXPRESSION OF DISTRESS: <i>Ioseph herd pair murning sare.</i>	c1200-1611
EXTREME	c1400-1923
VIOLENT (OF CONFRONTATIONS): <i>In that sore battle when so many dyd</i>	c1400-1816
STRICT (OF BURDENS AND PUNISHMENTS): <i>The hand of Heaven is sore upon us.</i>	c1420-1786
SERIOUS (OF FAULTS OR PROBLEMS): <i>A dum pastour or a wicious, is a sair scourge on</i> <i>the peple.</i>	c1449-1892
DIFFICULT TO BEAR (OF WORK OR EFFORTS): <i>I haue off tymes swet in seruice full sair.</i>	c1475-1824
HARSH † (OF DISCOURSE): <i>A soore word for them that are negligent.</i>	1526-1551
CRUEL (OF PEOPLE): <i>I dare not be so sore as vtterly to forbid it.</i>	1534-1923
INTENSE (OF FREAK WEATHER): <i>Soch a sore snowe & a frost.</i>	1535-1866
DESTRUCTIVE (OF OTHER AGENTS): <i>Cattle, Horses..are sore hurtsboth to</i> <i>Gardens & Orchards.</i>	1602-1688
CAUSING OR INVOLVING OFFENCE	a1694-1980
OFFENDED OR IRRITABLE (OF PEOPLE): <i>Who while my soul is sore Of fresh affronts,</i> <i>are meditating more.</i>	a1694-1980
OFFENDING (OF ISSUES): <i>This, however, is a sore subject, as..there is scarcely any one</i> <i>that sees who is not a living victim.</i>	1803-1886
BAD OR INADEQUATE [†]: <i>It's been a sore chance for you, young man, hasn't it?</i>	a1825-1880

Figure 6: Prototype-based proposal for the definition of SORE

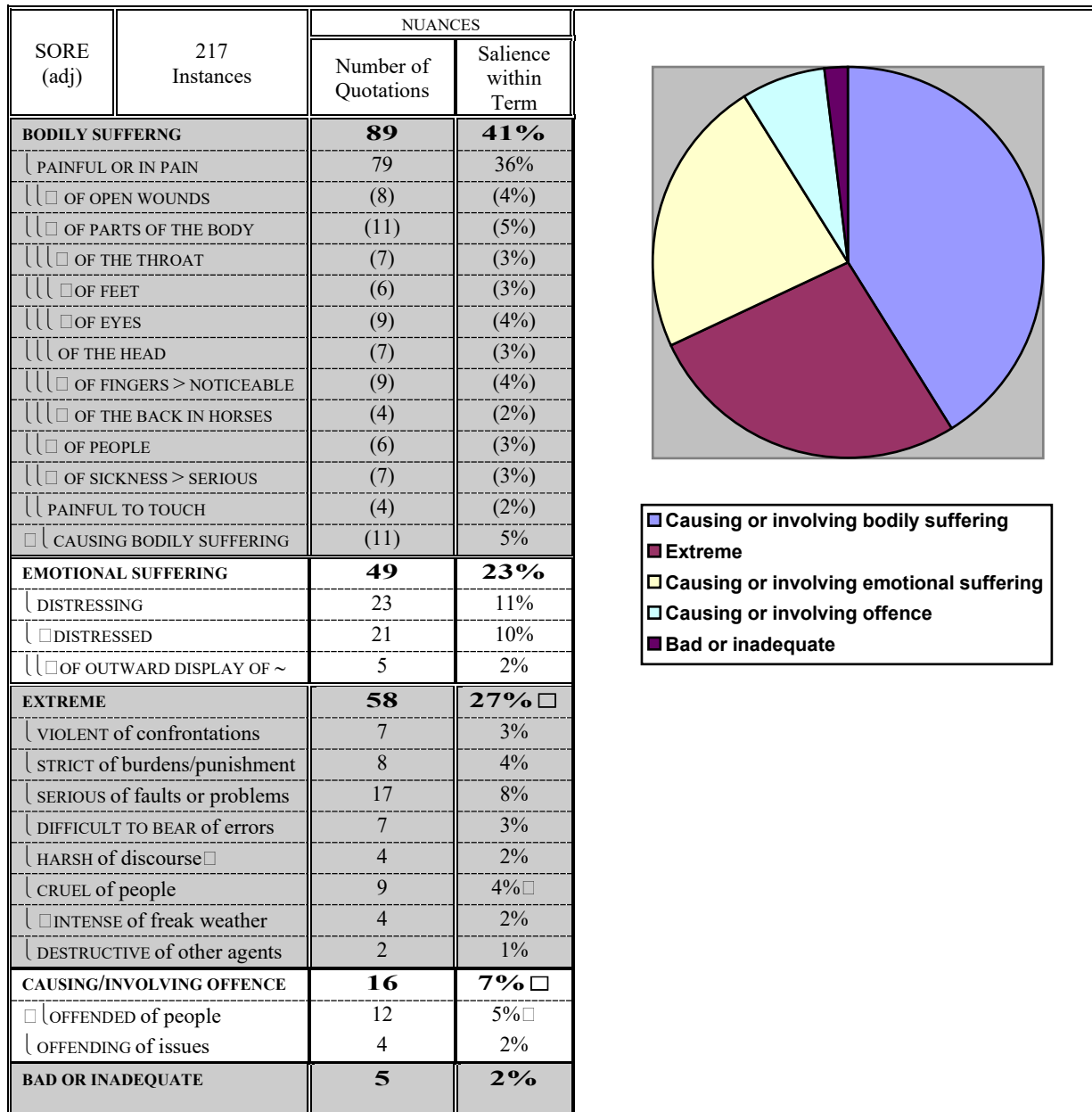


Figure 7: Relative saliences in SORE

SORE		1300	1400	1500	1600	1700	1800	1900
Causing/ involvin' bodily suffering	Painful or in pain, often the consequence of sickness	SINCE <i>c</i> 897						
	Causing bodily suffering	SINCE <i>c</i> 1205						
Causing/ involvin' emot'l suffering	Distressing	SINCE <i>a</i> 900						
	Distressed	SINCE <i>a</i> 1000						
Extreme	Extreme							
Causing/ involvin' offence	Offended or irritable, of people							
	Offending, of issues							
Bad	Bad or inadequate							

Figure 8: Diachronic overview of sense development in SORE

distress, *n.*

I. † 1. a. The action or fact of straining or pressing tightly, strain, stress, pressure; fig. pressure employed to produce action, constraint, compulsion; less usually, pressure applied to prevent action, restraint. Obs. exc. in dial. (in which the primary sense is still used.)

2. a. The sore pressure or strain of adversity, trouble, sickness, pain, or sorrow; anguish or affliction affecting the body, spirit, or community.

b. with a and pl. A sore trouble, a misfortune or calamity that presses hardly; esp. in pl. straits, distressing or strained circumstances.

c. Naut. 'A term used when a ship requires immediate assistance from unlooked-for damage or danger' (Smyth Sailor's Word-bk.).

d. 'Distressed' or exhausted condition under extreme physical strain. (Also fig.)

II. Law.

3. a. The action of distraining; the legal seizure and detention of a chattel, originally for the purpose of thereby constraining the owner to pay money owed by him or to make satisfaction for some wrong done by him, or to do some other act (e.g. to appear in court); according to later practice, in order that out of the proceeds of its sale (if not redeemed within a fixed period) satisfaction may be obtained of some debt or claim, now, especially, for rent unpaid.

b. double, grand, finite, infinite, personal, real distress: see quotes.

† c. The right or power of distraining, the seignior of a district. Obs. rare.

4. a. The chattel or chattels seized by this process.

† b. Old Law of Scotl.: see quotes. Obs.

III. 5. attrib. and Comb., as (sense 2 c) distress call, light, message, signal, signalling, etc.;

distress committee, a committee set up to help people in distressed circumstances;

distress-gun, -rocket, signals of a ship in distress;

distress-sale, a sale of distrained goods;

distress-warrant, a warrant authorizing a distress;

distress work, work provided for people in distress.

Figure 9: Senses within the *OED* definition of DISTRESS

EMOTIONAL SUFFERING	_____	1297-1970
AFFLICTION (FOR PRESSURE OF ADVERSE CIRCUMSTANCES): <i>To egipt is sche fled for dred</i>	_____	1297-1867
	<i>& for destresse.</i>	
ADVERSE CIRCUMSTANCES: <i>The Company's finances, always in distress.</i>	_____	1481-1905
NEED OF ASSISTANCE, IN ~ (OF SHIPS): <i>Some ship in distress, that cannot live in such</i>	_____	1659-1970
	<i>an angry sea!</i>	
PRESSURE OR CONSTRAINT †	_____	13..-1879
PRESSURE: <i>Swathe a tender vyne in bondes softe: Ffor bonde to hardde wol holde it in</i>	_____	13..-1879
	<i>distresse.</i>	
~OF ANGER, HUNGER, FREAK WEATHER...: <i>I was sayling, and by distresse of weather,</i>	_____	1485-1793
	<i>I was driuen into these coasts.</i>	
EXHAUSTION: <i>The lady arrives at the top [of the stairs] with very visible signs of..distress</i>	_____	1803-1887
	<i>in wind and limb.</i>	
[THE LAW OF DISTRESS	_____	c1290-1905]
<i>The law of distress:</i> according to the <i>OED</i> , legal figure in which DISTRESS stands for legal seizure and detention of a chattel in order to constrain the owner to pay a debt or restore wrongdoing as requested, or in order to pay a debt with the money obtained from its sale if not redeemed by a fixed time		

Figure 10: Prototype-based proposal for the definition of DISTRESS

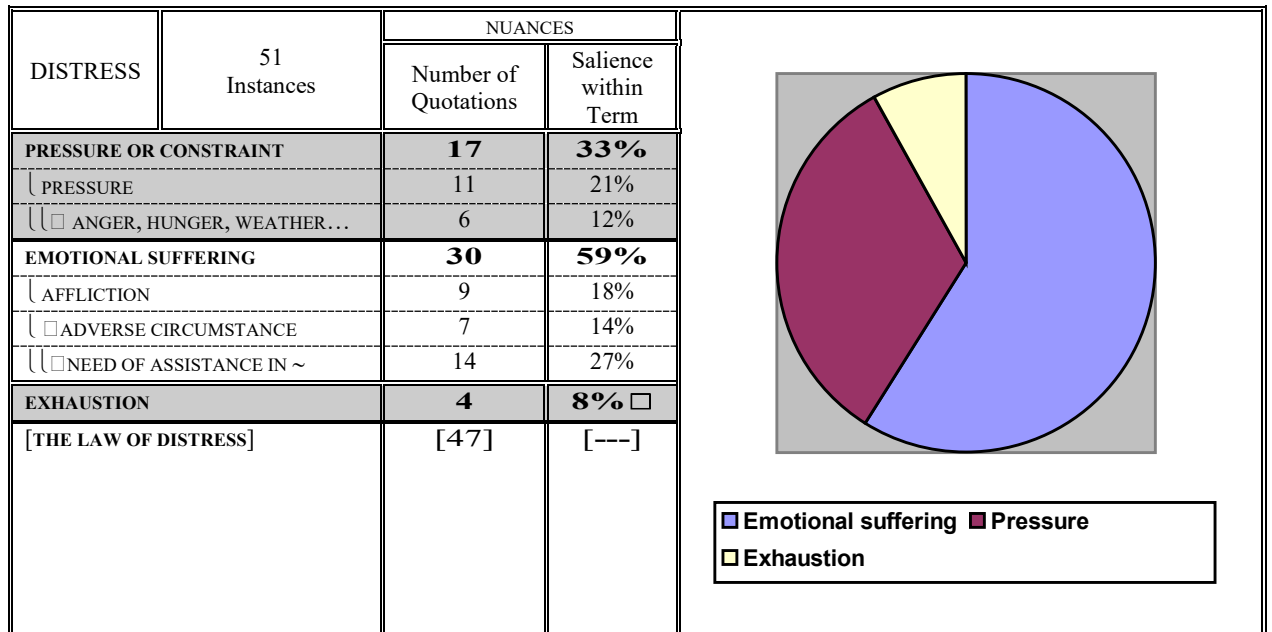


Figure 11: Relative saliences in DISTRESS

DISTRESS		1300	1400	1500	1600	1700	1800	1900
Emot'l suffering	Affliction for pressure of adverse circumstances	Still in use but no <i>OED</i> quotations after 1867						
	Adverse circumstance							
	Need of assistance in adverse naval circumstance							
Pressure, constraint	Pressure							
	Pressure of anger, hunger, freak weather...							
Extreme fatigue	Exhaustion							
[The law of ~]	Legal figure...							

Figure 12: Diachronic overview of sense development in DISTRESS