Workshop 3: Beyond the well-known: current foci and issues in research on intensification

Date: 2017.08.09 (Wed) 9:00-12:00
2017.08.10 (Thu) 10:30-12:30
Organizer: Susanne Wagner

Abstract:

Among the most prominent means of intensifying in English are amplifiers modifying adjectives. For the past few decades, very (1), really (2) and so (3) seem to have shared the top slots in terms of relative frequency. Pretty (4) is a relative newcomer, mostly associated with American English (Biber et al. 1999).

(1) when they’re going off to relax in their very nice cottages in the countryside (GloWbE GH G)
(2) It makes you feel really cool and powerful! (GloWbE AU G)
(3) So glad this collection has been preserved . (GloWbE US B)
(4) and im pretty sure you hav no proof at all that the earth is 4.3b years old? (GloWbE sic: HK G)

Previous studies have analysed the historical development of intensification (Gonzalez-Diaz 2008, Mendez-Naya 2008, Nevalainen 1997) as well as preferences according to genres and (major) varieties (Biber et al. 1999). Most attention has been paid to variation and change in the system and the role of social factors in it, where notions such as “recycling” (Ito & Tagliamonte 2003, Tagliamonte 2008) and rapid change (Barnfield & Buchstaller 2010, Macauley 2006, Tagliamonte & Roberts 2006) are emphasised. While several (semi-) comparative studies exist (e.g. Reichelt & Durham fc. vis-à-vis Tagliamonte & Roberts 2010, Wagner et al. in progress), coding and extraction procedures often differ to such an extent that comparability of results is hindered. Thus, the papers of the session will all include an updated view on methods in line with what is at the core of Methods in Dialectology conferences: What are the (dis)advantages of coding strategies, how exactly should the envelope of variation be defined, which in-/exclusions are justified on what (theoretical, comparative etc.) grounds?

Recently, the focus of research has shifted more and more to areas beyond the “traditional” sociolinguistic interests. Given these emergent interests, this session brings together established and young scholars working on intensification. Each
paper will involve a closer look at core methodological issues that pose challenges for analysis and comparability beyond the “basics” that have been established in previous research:

- beyond adjectives: intensified verbs, (pro)nouns, etc. (Stange)
- beyond one-word units: the role of 2-grams, collocations, collostructions etc. (Waters, Wagner)
- beyond current change: focus on historical developments (Breban, Mendez-Naya, Waters)
- beyond L1 varieties: intensification in World Englishes (Wagner)
- beyond basic social correlates: modelling speaker-, context-, etc. dependent behaviour (Breban, Schweinberger)
- beyond established statistics: how best to model intensification statistically (Schweinberger, Tagliamonte, Wagner)
- beyond standards and into the hinterlands: constraints on intensification in local dialects (Tagliamonte)

The session will include a discussion session to bring together the different contributors’ viewpoints. A publication based on the session is planned.

References

Reichelt, Susan & Mercedes Durham. (under review). Adjective intensification as a means of characterization: Portraying in-group membership and Britishness in Buffy the Vampire Slayer.


