

### 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

1. Tine Breban : *Collocational expansion and semantic generalization: the development of adjectives ending in -y into intensifiers.*
2. Belen Mendez-Naya : *Of right heirs and right idiots: A historical account of the intensifying adjective right.*
3. Cathleen Waters : *Very different and most important: Examining lexical patterns in degree modification.*
4. Sali Tagliamonte : *Into the hinterlands: Probing urban to rural diffusion in intensifier variation.*
5. Ulrike Stange : *Beyond adjectives - So going to in the SOAP corpus.*
6. Martin Schweinberger : *Modelling intensification in New Zealand English data.*
7. Susanne Wagner, Ulrike Stange : *Beyond the intensifier: the importance of 2-grams in adjective intensification.*

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### 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, collocations etc. (Waters, Wagner)
- beyond current change: focus on historical developments (Brebán, Mendez-Naya, Waters)
- beyond L1 varieties: intensification in World Englishes (Wagner)
- beyond basic social correlates: modelling speaker-, context-, etc. dependent behaviour (Brebán, 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.

Confirmed speakers:

- Breban, Tine (U Manchester) – Changing collocations and other contextual elements: the historical perspective.
- Mendez-Naya, Belen (U Santiago) – Of right heirs and right idiots: A historical account of the intensifying adjective right
- Schweinberger, Martin (U Hamburg) – Modelling intensification in New Zealand English data.
- Stange, Ulrike (U Mainz) – “You are so going to regret this.” – The use of GenX *so* in American English Soap Operas.
- Tagliamonte, Sali (U Toronto) – Into the hinterlands: Probing urban to rural diffusion in intensifier variation.
- Wagner, Susanne (U Mainz) – Beyond the intensifier: the importance of 2-grams in adjective intensification.
- Waters, Cathleen (U Leicester) – *Very different* and *most important*: Examining lexical patterns in degree modification.

References:

- Barnfield, Kate, and Isabelle Buchstaller. 2010. Intensifiers on Tyneside: Longitudinal developments and new trends. *English World-Wide* 31:252–287.
- Biber, Douglas, Stig Johansson, Geoffrey Leech, Susan Conrad, and Edward Finegan. 1999. *Longman Grammar of Spoken and Written English*. London: Longman.
- González-Díaz, Victorina. 2008. Recent developments in English intensifiers: the case of very much. *English Language and Linguistics* 12:221–243.
- Ito, Rika, and Sali Tagliamonte. 2003. *Well weird, right dodgy, very strange, really cool*: Layering and recycling in English intensifiers. *Language in Society* 32:257–279.
- Macauley, Ronald. 2006. Pure grammaticalization: The development of a teenage intensifier. *Language Variation and Change* 18:267–283.
- Méndez-Naya, Belén. 2008. On the history of downright. *English Language and Linguistics* 12:267–287.
- Nevalainen, Terttu. 1997. The processes of adverb derivation in Late Middle and Early Modern English. in *Grammaticalization at work: Studies of long term developments in English*, ed. Matti Rissanen, Merja Kytö, and Kirsi Heikkonen, 145–189. Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter.
- Reichert, Susan & Mercedes Durham. (under review). Adjective intensification as a means of characterization: Portraying in-group membership and Britishness in *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*.
- Tagliamonte, Sali. 2008. So different and pretty cool! Recycling intensifiers in Toronto, Canada. *English Language and Linguistics* 12:361–394.<sup>[1]</sup><sub>[SEP]</sub>
- Tagliamonte, Sali, and Chris Roberts. 2005. *So weird; so cool; so innovative*: The use of intensifiers in the television series *Friends*. *American Speech* 80:280–300.
- Tagliamonte, Sali, et al. 2016. So sick or so cool? The language of youth on the internet. *Language in Society* 45:1–32.
- Wagner, Susanne et al. (in progress). Still *so weird*? Intensification patterns in *The Big Bang Theory*.

Relevance to Methods XVI:

This special session addresses all core issues of the Methods conference series: regional, social and historical variation in language. Papers will also address two of the Methods XVI themes, namely dialect contact (all papers involving local varieties, non-L1 varieties) and innovation (all papers; change-in-progress, historical changes, changing collocations, etc.).