

On the emergence of the stance–marking function of English adverbs: A case of intensifiers*

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Rhee, Seongha. 2016. On the emergence of the stance-marking function of English adverbs: A case of intensifiers. *Linguistic Research* 33(3), 395-436. Stance-marking is nearly ubiquitous and possibly inevitable in most instances of language use. One of the prominent functions of English adverbs is their stance-marking function, especially in the domain of illocutionary modification, i.e., intensification. This paper addresses the developmental processes of 72 stance-marking adverbs tracing their lexical origin in history, focusing on their source characteristics and mechanisms whereby they acquired this (inter)subjective function. A historical analysis reveals that the lexical sources of these stance-markers largely belong to four major semantic categories, i.e. MARKEDNESS, COMPLETENESS, EMOTION and TABOO. Among the notable observations is the pattern of semantic change involved in the development, i.e., abstraction from the referring function or description of tangible objects to denoting highly subjective meanings. Another notable aspect in the development is their movement toward form-function iconicity, i.e., use of adjectival forms in place of adverbial forms. Also evident in the development are (inter)subjectification, creativity, renewal and frequency effect, among others. (Hankuk University of Foreign Studies)

Keywords stance marker, English adverbs, grammaticalization, intensifier

1. Introduction

In his discussion of diverse personal and interpersonal aspects of linguistic communication, Stubbs (1986: 1) aptly notes: “whenever speakers (or writers) say anything, they encode their point of view towards it [...] The expression of such

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speakers' attitudes is pervasive in all uses of language. All sentences encode such a point of view, [...] and the description of the markers of such points of view and their meanings should therefore be a central topic for linguistics." It is indeed true that with possible exception of the special genre where informational objectivity and speaker invisibility are intended at a maximal level, stance-marking is nearly ubiquitous and possibly inevitable in most instances of language use.

The relevance of stance marking is applicable to lexical and grammatical categories. In particular, one of the prominent functions of certain English adverbs is their stance-marking function, especially in the domain of illocutionary modification, i.e., intensification (Quirk *et al.* 1985; Biber and Finegan 1988, 1989; Nevalainen 1991; Traugott and Dasher 2002; Athanasiadou 2007; among others). For instance, the adverbs in common use, such as *absolutely*, *actually*, *so*, *very*, *really*, *awfully*, *extremely*, *literally*, *most*, *quite*, *terribly*, *totally*, etc., share the function of marking the speaker's stance of emphasis, thus labeled as intensifiers, as illustrated in (1):

- (1) a. "I'm *absolutely* angry, it's such a senseless thing," she said. (2015 NY Times) (emphasis added) (compare: "I'm angry.")
 b. It's *awfully* different without you. (2015 B.B. King on Life) (emphasis added) (compare: It's different without you.)

The objective of this paper is threefold: (i) to identify the lexical source categories of English intensifying adverbs, (ii) to investigate their historical development, and (iii) to explore the cognitive forces and mechanisms involved in the development. In pursuit of such goals, this paper is organized in the following way. In section 2, certain preliminary issues are addressed. In section 3, terminological issues involving intensifiers are clarified and an inventory as target items for analysis is determined and classified according to their source meanings. Section 4 presents historical development of some selected lexemes by the established categories and subcategories. Section 5 discusses theoretical issues such as grammaticalization, subjectification and intersubjectification, form-function iconicity, frequency effect, and renewal, among others. For discussion of contemporary distributional patterns, two representative corpora of Modern English, i.e., the British National Corpus (BNC) and the Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA), are used as data sources, and for diachronic data the Corpus of Historical American English (COHA) is used.¹ Section 6 summarizes the discussion and concludes the paper.

2. Preliminaries

2.1 Stance-marking

‘Stance’ as used in language science is by no means a monolithic concept (Englebretson 2007). The notional complexity is compounded by two major factors, i.e., absence of consensus with respect to how the term ‘stance’ should be defined, and existence of various other competing terms with similar functions, often used exclusively, inclusively or even interchangeably, such as ‘stance’ (Biber *et al.* 2000[1999], Berman *et al.* 2002; Traugott 2003; Dancygier and Sweetser 2005), ‘subjectivity’ (Benveniste 1971; Lyons 1982, 1994; Stein and Wright 1995; Langacker 1999; Thompson and Hunston 2000; Nuyts 2001; Smith 2002; Aijmer 2016), ‘evaluation/evaluative’ (Hunston and Thompson 2000 and works therein, Smith 2002; Hyland and Tse 2005; Hunston 2007, 2011; Bonami and Godard 2008; Jaffe 2009), ‘addressee orientation’ (Sacks *et al.* 1974; Arnold 2008; Lam 2014; Schröter 2014), ‘point of view’ (Stubbs 1986; Mitchell 1986; Prince 2001; Fleischman 1991; Hirose 2000; Smith 2002), among others.

All these terms refer to the lexical and grammatical coding of speaker’s attitudes and beliefs, largely following the tradition of Lyons (1982). It is also noteworthy that stance as a linguistic device encoding speaker’s attitudes and beliefs encompasses a large variety of conceptual categories. For instance, Rhee (2011), noting diverse usages of the term suggests ATTITUDINAL, EPISTEMIC, EMOTIONAL and EVIDENTIAL as its subcategories, as shown in (2).

- (2) Stance subcategories (modified from Rhee 2011: 405)
- a. ATTITUDINAL: Cold, Friendly, Enthusiastic, Indifferent, Helpless, Promissive, Intentional, Directive, Encouraging...
 - b. EPISTEMIC: Certain, Likely, Possible, Impossible, Confident, Suppositive...
 - c. EMOTIONAL: Positive, Negative, Neutral...

¹ The BNC is a 100 million word collection of samples of written and spoken language to represent British English from the later parts of the 20th century, and the COCA is a 520 million word collection of American English samples from 1990 to 2015. The COHA is a 400 million-word corpus based on the compiled texts from 1810s to 2000s, which show frequencies at 10-year intervals. These corpora are accessed from September to October, 2016.

- d. EVIDENTIAL: Direct, Indirect, Inferential, Reportative,
Nonvisual, Witnessed, Non-witnessed, Sensory, Assumed...

2.2 English adverbs and stance

Linguistic forms marking the speaker's stance, e.g., stance adverbs, degree modifiers, and focus and scalar particles, can be used to indicate the degree of strength of the meaning of a proposition as a whole or in part, by way of signaling evidence, certainty, confidence and insistence. There have been studies that observed certain patterns in the development of these stance adverbs. For instance, in a discussion of interpersonal and metalinguistic uses of stance adverbs, Powell (1992: 76) asserts that a whole class of stance adverbs e.g. *actually*, *generally*, *loosely*, *really*, *strictly*, etc., show similar development, i.e., from manner adverbs to encoding the speaker's normative judgment respecting degree or conditions of truth, and as adverbs of modality which may act preemptively to inform and to persuade a hearer of the nature and importance of the speaker's evaluation.

In a similar vein, Traugott (1995a) also asserts that English degree modifiers, e.g. *very* (<'truly'), *pretty*, *awfully*, *virtually*, etc., all began their life as manner adverbs and over time became particles indicating the speaker's assessment of the normative referentiality of the lexical item selected (Traugott 1995a: 44). Traugott (2010: 32) also notes that diachronic development of stance adverbs may create polysemy and homonymy. This type of functional divergence is observed in the contrasts of '*They competed fairly*' vs. '*The answer is fairly straightforward*' and '*It really happened*' vs. '*That's really nice,*' etc.

3. Intensifiers

3.1 An inventory

Partly due to the terminological complexity noted above and partly due to the gradient nature of the strength of illocutionary force modulated by the speaker, there has not been a well-established inventory of stance markers in English, and, for that matter, in any language. Speakers and writers frequently experience internal desire to

be expressive (mostly by increasing force but, albeit less frequently, by reducing force, as well) in any discourse scene as part of a persuasion strategy, and recruit diverse linguistic resources to fulfil that desire. For instance, Altenberg (1991) observes that boosters form an open class; and thus anything can be an intensifier, e.g. *absurdly easy*, etc. (also see discussion in Simon-Vandenberg 2008: 1530).

The present study draws upon the inventories of earlier studies, i.e., Benzinger (1971), Quirk *et al.* (1985), Lenk (1998), Cheng and Warren (2001), Ito and Tagliamonte (2003), Athanasiadou (2007), Hoeksema and Napoli (2008), Mendez-Naya (2008), Nevalainen (2008), Simon-Vandenberg (2008), Tagliamonte (2008), Jung (2009), Yaguchi *et al.* (2010), Wittouck (2011), among others. Stance adverbs taken from these studies are sorted according to the following selectional criteria: (i) the form is a monolexemic adverb, (ii) it has the ability to modify adjectives, adverbs or propositions, (iii) it encodes evaluation or reflects the speaker's positionality, and (iv) it modifies the illocutionary force of the modified by way of intensifying it. Based on these criteria certain forms that fall under the categories of pure discourse markers, adjectives, interjections, or periphrastic forms are excluded. This selectional procedure renders a total of 72 terms that qualify as intensifiers, as listed in (3)².

- (3) *absolutely, actually, assuredly, awful, awfully, bloody, categorically, certainly, completely, damn, darn, dead, deeply, definitely, dreadfully, emphatically, enthusiastically, entirely, exactly, exceedingly, excellently, extremely, fabulously, fairly, fantastically, freely, fucking, fully, genuinely, gloriously, hella, highly, honestly, immensely, incredibly, insanely, just, keenly, literally, madly, magnificently, marvelously, mightily, most, positively, precious, precisely, pretty, quite, rather, real, really, remarkably, sincerely, so, splendidly, strongly, super, superbly, supremely, surely, terribly, terrifically, too, totally, truly, unbelievably, undoubtedly, unquestionably, utterly, very, wonderfully*

3.2 Categories and subcategories

Despite the numerousness of the intensifying stance adverbs in the target

² This list is by no means exhaustive mainly due to the gradient nature of the notion 'intensification'. This list is slightly expanded from an earlier version following the suggestion of a reviewer.

inventory it is observable that there are certain semantic categories from which they originated. This state of affairs bears significance in grammaticalization studies with respect to the significance of sources, cf. the Source Determination Hypothesis (Bybee *et al.* 1994: 9-12).³

In broad terms, they come from four major semantic fields: MARKEDNESS, COMPLETENESS, EMOTION, and TABOO. These major categories can be further divided into 18 subcategories, as shown in (4).⁴

(4) English intensifiers by source categories

CATEGORY	SUBCATEGORY	INTENSIFIER
MARKEDNESS	SURPASSING	<i>exceedingly, excellently</i>
	INSANITY	<i>insanely, madly</i>
	DIMENSION	<i>deeply, extremely, highly, immensely, most, rather, super, supremely, utterly,</i>
	ABILITY	<i>keenly, mightily, pretty, strongly</i>
	VIVIDNESS	<i>fairly, gloriously, remarkably, splendidly, superbly</i>
	VIRTUE	<i>honestly, just, precious, sincerely, truly</i>
	IRREALIS	<i>fabulously, fantastically, incredibly, magnificently, marvelously, unbelievably, wonderfully,</i>
COMPLETENESS	ENTIRETY	<i>absolutely, completely, definitely, entirely, exactly, fully, precisely, so, totally</i>
	ABSENCE OF OBSTRUCTION	<i>assuredly, categorically, certainly, freely, positively, quite, surely, undoubtedly, unquestionably</i>
	REALITY	<i>actually, genuinely, literally, real, really, very</i>
	ATTAINMENT	<i>too</i>
EMOTION	FEAR	<i>awful, awfully, dreadfully, terribly, terrifically</i>

³ The main idea of the Source Determination Hypothesis is that “the actual meaning of the construction that enters into grammaticization uniquely determines the path the grammaticization follows and, consequently, the resulting grammatical meanings” (Bybee *et al.* 1994: 9).

⁴ An anonymous reviewer raises an issue of justification regarding the categorization presented here. Most categories, be they ontological or conceptual, are non-discrete by nature and allow overlap, and, thus, a level of variability is unavoidable in analyses involving categorization. Single-member categories involve the granularity issue. They are well addressed in, among numerous studies in linguistics, psychology and cognitive science, Taylor (1995[1989]) and Smith (2015: 188-192; cf. ‘quirky properties’). Thus, the categorization here, largely based on the researcher’s intuition, is admittedly contestable. These issues are of great theoretical import and may warrant future research.

	FERVOR	<i>emphatically, enthusiastically</i>
TABOO	BLOOD	<i>bloody</i>
	DEATH	<i>dead</i>
	CURSE	<i>damn, darn</i>
	HELL	<i>hella</i>
	SEX	<i>fucking</i>

4. Diachronic emergence and developmental paths

A diachronic survey of the stance adverbs in our inventory reveals that they have undergone significant semantic bleaching often to the point of complete loss of original conceptual meaning (cf. Desemanticization, Heine and Kuteva 2002: 2). Bleaching may result in the loss of link to original source domains. The surviving elements are used to express the high degree of certainty and speaker's commitment.

A few remarks in the context of diachronic investigation are in order. First of all, a scrutinizing inquiry into the historical development of all individual items is beyond the scope of this study both for space limitation and for our immediate interest of obtaining synchronic and diachronic views of English stance adverbs from a telescopic viewpoint. For this reason, the present study is necessarily cursory in approach in investigation of the development of individual intensifiers.

Secondly, development of a linguistic form is always gradual and non-discrete exhibiting layering and overlapping at multiple levels, particularly at the semantic level. A natural consequence of this state of affairs, in our research context, is that there is no way to establish the unequivocal date of a form when it began to function as an intensifying stance adverb. Thus, we draw upon the authority of the Oxford English Dictionary (OED henceforth, 1991, 2nd edition) for the semantic designation and functional classification of individual items, whereby we can determine with reasonable conviction the dates of the earliest attestation of such usage. With this regard, the lexicographers of the OED state that the historical record, though not complete, is "usually sufficient to enable [the lexicographers] to infer the actual order [of significations]" and list the significations in the order they appear to have arisen (OED 1991 [print edition]: xxix). Therefore, notwithstanding the absence of conclusive ways to establish the date of unambiguous stance usage,

this study lends a full credit to the OED lexicographers for their expertise in establishing semantic categories of significations. For this reason, the dates indicated in this study need to be taken not conclusively but as an approximation (for discussion of this and related issues, see Rhee 2004: 401-402; Barcelona 2003: 230; Clausner and Croft 1999).

The dates thus determined from a survey of the 72 stance adverbs of intensification can be presented as in (5).⁵

(5) Emergence of stance adverbs by centuries (no century-internal ordering)

-1000	-1100	-1200	-1300	-1400	-1500
<i>fully</i> <i>highly</i> <i>keenly</i> <i>so</i>			<i>truly</i>	<i>absolutely</i> <i>assuredly</i> <i>certainly</i> <i>deeply</i> <i>entirely</i> <i>freely</i> <i>gloriously</i> <i>most</i> <i>quite</i> <i>strongly</i> <i>too</i> <i>utterly</i> <i>very</i>	<i>excellently</i> <i>incredibly</i> <i>positively</i> <i>precious</i> <i>surely</i> <i>undoubtedly</i>
-1600	-1700	-1800	-1900	1901-	
<i>completely</i> <i>dead</i> <i>emphatically</i> <i>exceedingly</i> <i>extremely</i> <i>fairly</i> <i>mightily</i> <i>pretty</i> <i>really</i> <i>sincerely</i> <i>supremely</i>	<i>bloody</i> <i>categorically</i> <i>dreadfully</i> <i>genuinely</i> <i>immensely</i> <i>precisely</i> <i>rather</i> <i>real</i> <i>remarkably</i> <i>splendidly</i> <i>terribly</i> <i>unquestionably</i> <i>wonderfully</i>	<i>damn</i> <i>darn</i> <i>enthusiastically</i> <i>just</i> <i>literally</i> <i>superbly</i> <i>terrifically</i>	<i>actually</i> <i>awfully</i> <i>awful</i> <i>exactly</i> <i>fabulously</i> <i>fucking</i> <i>honestly</i> <i>madly</i> <i>marvelously</i> <i>magnificently</i> <i>unbelievably</i>	<i>definitely</i> <i>fantastically</i> <i>hella</i> <i>insanely*</i> <i>super</i> <i>totally</i>	

⁵ The adverb *insanely* is listed among the forms encoding “extreme positive emotion” commonly used by “deceptive CEOs”, in Larcker and Zakolyukina (2010), perfectly matching the intensifier criteria given above. The OED, however, lists only “in an insane manner, madly” as its designation, and thus its intensifier date is not indicated in the table.

As shown in (5) the development of intensifiers did not occur frequently prior to the 14th century, even though the exact reasons of which are yet unknown. The 14th century marks an explosion of stance adverbs and numerous forms follow suit in the ensuing years. Now we turn to a brief discussion of the development of the stance adverbs by categories, exemplified by representative cases in each subcategory.

4.1 Markedness

Comprising 34 stance adverbs in seven subcategories, the MARKEDNESS constitutes the primary source category. This is a natural consequence since ‘emphasis’ *per se* (the core notion of intensifiers) is closely related with the notion of markedness. The subcategories, as illustrated in (4) above, are SURPASSING, INSANITY, DIMENSION, ABILITY, VIVIDNESS, VIRTUE, and IRREALIS. Semantic change that operated in the development of these stance adverbs led them to the point where diverse source aspects are neutralized and only the ‘markedness’ notion is highlighted.

[SURPASSING] The intensifiers in the subcategory of SURPASSING are *excellently* and *exceedingly*. According to the OED, the source form *excellent* and its derivative adverb *excellently* have undergone semantic and functional change that can be schematically presented as (6a), and the stance adverbial function is exemplified by the citation in (6b), also taken from the OED (formal highlight added for enhanced conspicuity in citations hereafter).⁶

- (6) a. [excellently] 1384 *excellent* ‘excel’ > 1400 *excellently* ‘surpassing others’
> 1460 ‘unusual degree’
b. c1460 tr. Thomas à Kempis *Imitation of Christ* 145 Dispute not.. why
þis is so gretly peyned, and he is so *excellently* lifte up. [Do not dispute...
why he is so greatly pained and he is lifted up so extraordinarily.]

The adverb *excellent* inherently involves a reference point as part of its

⁶ Following the notational convention of the OED, “c” affixed to a year denotes *circa* ‘about’, and “a”, *ante*, in OED citations. Numbers following the source may mean the page on which the citation occurs in the source text or the numbered act, scene, line, canto, stanza, etc. depending on the text type (see OED 1991 [print edition]: xxix-xxxi for details). For some examples of OE and ME translations are added by the author.

semantics. However, semantic bleaching eliminates the concrete reference point and highlights markedness in general, from around 1460.

[INSANITY] The intensifiers in the INSANITY category are *madly* and *insanely*. These intensifiers are of relatively recent origin. Semantic change involved in the development of *madly*, as illustrated in the OED, and its function are as follows:

- (7) a. [madly] 1225 ‘mad manner’ > 1756 ‘passionately’ > 1888 ‘extremely’
 b. 1888 H. James Reverberator II. i. 16, I was not madly impatient to see you married.

The adverb *madly* (and *insanely* as well) originally makes reference to pathological physiological condition, i.e., madness. But the semantic bleaching eliminates the notion of deviance from sanity around the 18th century as shown in ‘passionately’ that lacks the negative connotation. The ensuing semantic change to ‘extremely’ also eliminates the physiological aspect from the previous stage and highlights markedness in general.

[DIMENSION] The intensifiers in the subcategory of DIMENSION constitute the largest subcategory with *highly*, *utterly*, *most*, *deeply*, *extremely*, *supremely*, *immensely*, *rather* and *super*. The intensifier *highly* is among those that have the longest history whose semantic change and example are shown in (8).

- (8) a. [highly] 825 *high* ‘tall’ ‘thought’ > 900 *highly* ‘high position’ > 971 ‘greatly’
 b. 971 Blickl. Hom. 33 He wolde þæt his lof þe healicor weoxe. [He wished that his renown would grow greatly.]

The history of the adjective *high*, as shown in (8) goes back to OE, in which it meant ‘tall’, i.e., being lofty in terms of the vertical dimension. However, this spatial notion becomes bleached to mean ‘greatly’, being extraordinary in any dimension. Similarly, the other members in this subcategory have undergone semantic bleaching in which dimensional axes (upward, downward, size, time, etc.) are neutralized through semantic bleaching, thus merely highlighting the unusual extent.

[ABILITY] The intensifiers in the subcategory of ABILITY are *keenly*, *strongly*, *pretty*, and *mightily*. The intensifier *pretty*, which is productive in PDE, has undergone change as shown in (9) along with its first attestation in OED.

- (9) a. [pretty] OE ‘cunning, skilful’ > 1565 ‘rather, fairly, very’
b. 1565 T. Cooper *Thesaurus*. Audaculus, a *pretie* hardie felow: vsed in derision. [Audaculus, a very hardy fellow: used in derision]

As shown in (9), *pretty* is an OE adjective which signified mental and physical ability. In the 16th century the semantic component of mental and physical capability is bleached and the remaining semantic notion, i.e. empowering, is highlighted. Similar developments are also attested with the other intensifiers in this subcategory.

[VIVIDNESS] The intensifiers in the subcategory of VIVIDNESS are *gloriously*, *fairly*, *remarkably*, *superbly* and *splendidly*. The semantic change of *fairly*, still in common use in PDE, is illustrated below:⁷

- (10) a. [fairly] 1400 *fairly* ‘beautifully’ ‘gently’ > 1599 ‘completely, really, actually’
b. a1599 Spenser *View State Ireland* in J. Ware *Two Hist. Ireland* (1633) 9 All which they neverthelesse *fairely* overcame. [All which they nevertheless overcame completely.]

The adverb *fairly*, as indicated in (10), originally included the semantic component involving qualities in the physical domain such as ‘beautiful’ and ‘gentle’, the latter describing physical motion or bearing. However, physical vividness, e.g., visibility, attractiveness, lucidity, etc., neutralizes into mere markedness.

[VIRTUE] The intensifiers in the subcategory of VIRTUE are *truly*, *precious*,

⁷ An anonymous reviewer suggests that *fairly* may be categorized under the [VIRTUE] category. Despite its predominant usage in PDE in relation to virtue, this contemporary usage dates back to the 17th century. OED significations suggest the vividness, splendor, grandeur, etc. as the dominant meanings of *fairly* from OE to the 16th century, when the intensifier usage emerged.

sincerely, *just*, and *honestly*. The semantic change of the intensifier *truly*, still in common use in PDE, is as follows:

- (11) a. [truly] 1000 ‘faithfully’ > 1275 ‘indeed’
 b. c1275 (?a1200) *Laḡamon Brut* (Calig.) (1978) l. 10338 *Arḡur* [etc.]..*ḡene wude al bileien..treo uppen oḡer treo-liche faste*. [Arthur (and others).. [the Britons] surrounded the wood entirely..[and on one side they felled] tree after tree hastening extremely.]

As shown in (11) above, the source meaning of *truly* is ‘faithfully’ rather than its more apparent modern meaning related to factual correctness. This semantic component becomes bleached in the 13th century and, as a consequence, it comes to mean ‘indeed’ which is closer to the modern meaning. Similarly, the other intensifiers in this subcategory undergo semantic bleaching, whereby virtuous aspects, e.g., faithfulness, value, uprightness, honor, etc., are neutralized into markedness.

[IRREALIS] The intensifiers in the subcategory of IRREALIS are *incredibly*, *wonderfully*, *unbelievably*, *fabulously*, *marvelously*, *magnificently*, and *fantastically*. With seven members, this subcategory constitutes one of the largest. The development of the intensifier *marvelously* is schematically given in (12).

- (12) a. [marvelously] 1330 *marvellous* ‘surprising’ > 1382 *marvellously* ‘wonderfully’ > 1859 ‘extremely’
 b. 1859 Dickens *Tale of Two Cities* ii. vi. 65 In the arrangements of the little household, Miss Pross took charge of the lower regions, and always acquitted herself *marvellously*.

The intensifier *marvelously* originates from the 14th century adjective *marvellous* that signified ‘surprising’, something related to the state of affairs that is not expected in a given situation. Irrealis, by virtue of deviance from the reality, is itself marked. Cognitive and perceptual irrealis features are neutralized and only the markedness survives and becomes highlighted.

In the preceding exposition of the intensifiers under the MARKEDNESS category, one intensifier from each subcategory was chosen for a cursory view of its

semantic change and its attestations in OED citations. The lexical source meanings and their first attestation date of the 34 intensifiers are summarized in (13).

(13) Intensifiers in the MARKEDNESS category

Subcategory	Intensifier	Source Meaning	First Attestation
SURPASSING	<i>excellently</i> <i>exceedingly</i>	‘excelling’	1460
		‘to pass the limit’	1535
INSANITY	<i>madly</i> <i>insanely</i>	‘demented’	1888
		‘out of mind’	recently
DIMENSION	<i>highly</i>	‘high’	971
	<i>utterly</i>	‘farther out’	1374
	<i>most</i>	‘greatest degree’	1387
	<i>deeply</i>	‘depth’	1400
	<i>extremely</i>	‘endmost’	1554
	<i>supremely</i>	‘highest’	1597
	<i>immensely</i>	‘unmeasured’	1654
	<i>rather</i> <i>super</i>	‘more quickly’ ‘above, top’	1662 1954
ABILITY	<i>keenly</i>	‘wise, clever’	1000
	<i>strongly</i>	‘powerful’	1400
	<i>pretty</i>	‘cunning, crafty’	1565
	<i>mightily</i>	‘powerful’	1587
VIVIDNESS	<i>gloriously</i>	‘ostentatiously’	1393
	<i>fairly</i>	‘attractive’	1599
	<i>remarkably</i>	‘attract attention’	1614
	<i>splendidly</i>	‘brightly’	1651
	<i>superbly</i>	‘impressibly’	1769
VIRTUE	<i>truly</i>	‘faithful’	1275
	<i>precious</i>	‘high value’	1449
	<i>sincerely</i>	‘not perverted’	1577
	<i>just</i>	‘righteous’	1726
	<i>honestly</i>	‘honorable’	1898
IRREALIS	<i>incredibly</i>	‘beyond belief’	1500
	<i>wonderfully</i>	‘surprising’	1617
	<i>unbelievably</i>	‘not believable’	1839
	<i>fabulously</i>	‘of fable’	1845
	<i>marvelously</i>	‘surprising’	1859
	<i>magnificently</i>	‘immaterial thing’	1868
	<i>fantastically</i>	‘visible, imagination’	1923

4.2 Completeness

The category COMPLETENESS consists of 25 members in total in four subcategories, i.e., ENTIRETY, ABSENCE OF OBSTRUCTION, REALITY, and

ATTAINMENT. The diverse semantic aspects in these subcategory meanings, variously referring to COMPLETENESS, have become neutralized and the resultant notion of completeness is highlighted.

[ENTIRETY] The intensifiers in the subcategory of ENTIRETY are *so, fully, entirely, absolutely, completely, exactly, definitely, precisely* and *totally*. The semantic change of the intensifier *absolutely* is as follows:

- (14) a. [absolutely] 1400 *absolute* ‘not dependent’ > 1425 *absolutely* ‘entirely’ ‘whole-heartedly’
 b. ?a1425 tr. Guy de Chauillac *Grande Chirurgie* (N.Y. Acad. Med.) f.155v, flebotomye is *absolutely* better [L. *melior absolute..*].
 [Phlebotomy (blood extraction) is absolutely better.]

As shown above, the intensifier *absolutely* originates from the adjective *absolute*, the meaning of which basically relates to being whole and thus independent from others. With the intensifiers in this subcategory, the notions originally present in the source meaning along with the notion of entirety in various dimensions such as volume, degree, etc. are bleached to the point where only the general core meaning of completeness survives.

[ABSENCE OF OBSTRUCTION] The intensifiers in the subcategory of ABSENCE OF OBSTRUCTION are *quite, freely, positively, categorically, certainly, surely, assuredly, undoubtedly* and *unquestionably*.⁸ The progressive semantic change of the intensifier *quite*, one of the most common intensifiers in PDE, is illustrated in (15).

- (15) a. [quite] 1225 *quit* ‘no obligation, free’ > 1330 ‘completely, thoroughly’
 b. c1330 (1300) *Guy of Warwick* (Auch.) p. 604 (MED), His riȝt arme wiþ alle þe hond He strok of *quite* and clene. [He cut off

⁸ An anonymous reviewer suggests the possibility of placing *categorically* under the [ENTIRETY] subcategory. It is true that *categorically* is synonymous with *entirely* in modern usage. The OED, however, suggests that its source meaning is ‘not involving a condition or hypothesis’, thus synonymous with *absolutely*. Thus, conceptual affinity with [ENTIRETY] notwithstanding, *categorically* is placed under [ABSENCE OF OBSTRUCTION].

completely and cleanly his right arm with all the hand.]

The intensifier *quite* originates from the ME adjective *quit*, the meaning of which is related to ‘having no obligation or debt; free, clear.’ With the intensifiers in this subcategory, the notion of absence of obstruction of various kinds is neutralized and completeness is highlighted.

[REALITY] The intensifiers in the subcategory of REALITY are *very*, *really*, *genuinely*, *real*, *literally*, and *actually*. The semantic change involved in the development of the intensifier *very* is as follows:

- (16) a. [very] 1250 *very* ‘real, true’ > 1375 ‘truly, really’
b. c1375 Cursor M. (Fairf.) 22973 Bot mani man þat wele can rede
vnderstandis noȝt al *verray* quat þe vale of Iosaphat is to say. [But
many men who can read well understand truly nothing at all that
the Valley of Iosaphat is to say.]

The intensifier *very*, one of the top frequency intensifiers (see discussion 5.4), originates from the adjective that meant ‘real, true’, which ultimately can be traced back to the Old French *verai* and further to the Latin *vērus* ‘true’ (OED). The motivation behind this development is intuitively straightforward because matching the reality suggests completeness. Diverse attendant aspects are neutralized and completeness survives and is highlighted.

[ATTAINMENT] There is only one intensifier in the subcategory of ATTAINMENT, i.e., *too*. Its semantic development is given in (17).

- (17) a. [too] 875 *to* ‘to, motion directed toward and reaching’ > 888 *too*
‘also’ > 971 ‘overmuch’ > 1275 ‘regretable extent’ > 1300 ‘in
excess’ > 1340 ‘excessively, extremely’
b. 1340 Ayenbite (1866) 95 The wel greate loue and *to* moche charite
of god þe uader [The exceedingly great love and extremely much
charity of God the Father]

The intensifier *too*, often with a negative connotation for being excessive, originates from *to*, a marker of direction, commonly for dative as well in MoE, contrary to the common misconception that *too* and *to* are only homonyms (they are in fact heteronyms). The source lexeme *to* is one of the oldest prepositions/adverbs and expressed ‘motion directed towards and reaching: governing a n[oun] denoting the place, thing, or person approached and reached’ (OED). In other words, unlike the modern day preposition *to* that may merely encode ‘direction’, it originally signified ‘attainment’ or ‘reaching’ the referenced landmark by the trajector in addition to ‘direction’ or ‘orientation’.⁹ The notion of attainment or reaching develops into completeness, the very basis of the semantics of intensifiers.¹⁰

In the preceding exposition of the intensifiers under the COMPLETENESS category, one intensifier from each of the four subcategories was chosen for a cursory view of its semantic change and its attestations in OED quotations. The lexical source meanings and the first attestation dates of the 25 intensifiers are summarized in (18).

(18) Intensifiers in the COMPLETENESS category

Subcategory	Intensifier	Source Meaning	First Attestation
Entirety	<i>so</i>	‘same, such’	888
	<i>fully</i>	‘replete’	900
	<i>entirely</i>	‘whole’	1400
	<i>absolutely</i>	‘completed’	1425
	<i>completely</i>	‘entirely’	1526
	<i>precisely</i>	‘with perfection’	1765
	<i>exactly</i>	‘with entire approval’	1869
	<i>definitely</i>	‘determinately’	1931
	<i>totally</i>	‘of whole’	1972
	Absence of obstruction	<i>quite</i>	‘no obligation’
<i>certainly</i>		‘without fail’	1375
<i>freely</i>		‘no subjection’	1393
<i>assuredly</i>		‘without doubt’	1400
		‘imposed by authority’	1443

⁹ For instance, in an OE example, *Ic ðær furðum cwom, to ðam hring-sele* (Beowulf 2010) “There I went to the ring-hall first (to salute Hrothgar)”, Beowulf not only moved to but also arrived at the ring-hall, as encoded by the preposition *to* (translation taken from Kim 2013: 402-403).

¹⁰ According to the OED, the adverb *too* is the stressed form of the preposition *to*, which in the 16th century, began to be spelt *too* (see details under *too*, adv.). It is widely known that historically English prepositions and adverbs often share the origin and are differently classified in terms of grammatical category only by means of the absence and presence of a noun following them.

	<i>positively</i> <i>undoubtedly</i> <i>surely</i> <i>categorically</i> <i>unquestionably</i>	‘without doubt’ ‘without danger/risk’ ‘no condition’ ‘beyond dispute’	1500 1523 1603 1644
Reality	<i>very</i> <i>really</i> <i>genuinely</i> <i>real</i> <i>literally</i> <i>actually</i>	‘of truth’ ‘of things’ ‘natural, not foreign’ ‘of materials’ ‘written, not figurative’ ‘of deeds’	1375 1561 1640 1645 1769 1870
Attainment	<i>too</i>	‘to, motion reaching’	1340

4.3 Emotion

The third category of source lexemes for the intensifying stance adverbs is EMOTION. Along the development of the lexemes in this category, the diverse affective aspects as part of their semantics are neutralized and only the associated emotive value becomes highlighted.

[FEAR] The intensifiers in the subcategory of FEAR are *dreadfully*, *terribly*, *terrifically*, *awfully*, and *awful*. The semantic change that occurred to *terribly* in its development into a intensifier is shown in (19).

- (19) a. [terribly] 1400 *terrible* ‘causing terror’ > 1473 *terribly* ‘very painfully’
> 1500 ‘in a terrible manner’ > (1668) ‘very, excessively’
b. 1668 A. Marvell *Let.* 28 Nov. in *Poems and Lett.* (1971) II.82 He
is here a kind of decrepit young gentleman and *terribly* crest-falln.

As shown above, the notion of invoking terror is neutralized in the course of the development of the intensifier *terribly*. Only the emotive value toward a state-of-affairs is highlighted. Similarly, the notions of fear and dread are bleached in the other intensifiers in this subcategory.

[FERVOR] The intensifiers in the subcategory of FERVOR are *emphatically* and *enthusiastically*. The semantic change associated with the development of the intensifier *enthusiastically* is as follows:

- (20) a. [enthusiastically] 1603 *enthusiastic* ‘possessed by a deity’ > 1614 *enthusiastical* ‘moved by irrational impulses’ > 1691 *enthusiastically* ‘under religious delusion’ > 1786 ‘with ardor, enthusiasm or rapturous feeling’
- b. 1786 W. Gilpin in Mrs. Delany's Corr. 2nd Ser. III. 346 Plants, of which she is *enthusiastically* fond.

As shown with the intensifier *enthusiastically* above, conative states induced by religious empowerment are neutralized and the associated fervor becomes highlighted. A similar kind of development is also attested with *emphatically*.

In the preceding exposition of the intensifiers under the EMOTION category, one intensifier from the FEAR and FERVOR subcategories each was chosen for a cursory view of its semantic change and its attestations in OED quotations. The lexical source meanings and the first attestation dates of the seven intensifiers are tabulated in summary in (21).

(21) Intensifiers in the EMOTION category

Subcategory	Intensifier	Source Meaning	First Attestation
Fear	<i>dreadfully</i>	‘full of fear’	1616
	<i>terribly</i>	‘causing terror’	1668
	<i>terrifically</i>	‘causing terror’	1777
	<i>awfully</i>	‘causing fear’	1816
	<i>awful</i>	‘causing fear’	1818
Fervor	<i>emphatically,</i>	both: ‘vigor in words’ ‘religious delusion’	1587
	<i>enthusiastically</i>		1786

4.4 Taboo

One of the intriguing states of affairs that is commonly found across languages is that taboo terms are frequently recruited in the development of intensifiers (Peters 1994, Stenström *et al.* 2002, Napoli and Hoeksema 2009, Murphy 2010, Wittouck 2011, among others). Taboo terms, by virtue of their unacceptability and avoidability in interactive scenes, adds force to the linguistic form.

[BLOOD] There is only one intensifier in the subcategory of BLOOD, i.e.,

bloody. The semantic change of the intensifier *bloody* in its development into an intensifying stance adverb is as follows:

- (22) a. [bloody] OE *bloody* ‘containing blood, resembling blood, covered with blood, blood-red, bloodthirsty, sanguinary’ > c1225 ‘with blood’ > 1676 ‘absolutely, completely, utterly’
b. 1676 G. Etherege *Man of Mode* i. i. 10 Not without he will promise to be *bloody* drunk.

There has been a number of hypotheses with respect to the development of *bloody* into an intensifier (see OED for details). One of the suggested sources in OED is “the oaths referring to the blood of Christ (e.g. *Christ’s blood!*, *God’s blood!*)”. OED also notes that the intensifier use of the adjective *bloody* predates that of the adverb by a century.

[DEATH] There is only one intensifier in the subcategory of DEATH, i.e., *dead*. The semantic change of *dead* is shown in (23).

- (23) a. [dead] OE adj ‘ceased to live’ > ?c1225 ‘insensible (of parts of the body)’ > 1393 ‘characteristic of death, with extreme inactivity or stillness’ > ?1589 ‘utterly, entirely, absolutely’
b. ?1589 T. Nashe *Almond for Parrat* sig. 5v, Oh he is olde dogge at expounding, and *deade* sure at a Catechisme. [Oh he is an old dog at expounding, and dead sure at a catechism.]

Death, referring to the cessation of life of an animate being, undergoes semantic bleaching to the point that it does not involve the loss of life. Only the notion of firmness or absoluteness, originally associated with death, survives the change and becomes the basis of the intensifier (see Blanco-Suárez 2014 for detailed analysis of the intensifier *dead* from ME).

[CURSE] The intensifiers in the subcategory of CURSE are *damn* and *darn*. The latter, according to OED, is an arbitrary perversion of the former. This kind of arbitrary formal mutation is commonly observed in curse words (e.g., *Gee/Jeez/Gee whiz* for *Jesus*, *gosh/golly/goodness* for *God*, *fink/figs* for *fuck*, *shoot/shucks* for *shit*,

etc.). The semantic change of *damn* is sketched in (24).

- (24) a. [damn] (clipped form of *damned*) *damned* 1393 ‘doomed to eternal punishment’ > c1440 ‘condemned, judicially sentenced’ > 1757 ‘damnably’
- b. 1757 R. Lloyd Satyr and Pedlar in *Poet. Wks. I. 57* Damn'd's the superlative degree; Means that alone and nothing more.. Examples we may find enough, *Damn'd* high, *damn'd* low, *damn'd* fine, *damn'd* stuff.

As shown above, *damn* (and *damned*) originally carries a theological notion of condemnation but only the force associated with it survives the semantic change. This force of irretrievability or firmness becomes the semantic basis of the intensifier.

[HELL] There is only one intensifier in the subcategory of HELL, i.e., *hella*. Probably, the intensifier *hella*, according to OED, originates from *helluva* (adj.) or *hellacious* (adj.) through clipping or shortening. The semantic change associated with it is as follows:

- (25) a. [hella] eOE *hell* (n.) ‘dwelling place of the dead’ > c1680 *a hell of a* ‘terrible, exceedingly bad’ > 1847 *hellacious* (adj.) ‘terrific, tremendous’ > 1905 *helluva* (adj.) ‘great, extreme’ > 1987 *hell* (adv.) ‘very, exceedingly’
- b. 1987 *Toronto Star* 11 Apr. m2/4 The horse went *hella* whoopin' down the trail, trailing 50 feet or more of the best Berkley Trilene Monofilament line.

As shown in (25) above, the intensifier *hell* is of recent origin, developed from the noun *hell* that denotes the dwelling place of the dead. The insuperable force associated with it becomes the basis of the intensifier.

[SEX] There is only one intensifier in the subcategory of SEX, i.e., *fucking*. Despite its high frequency in use, the intensifier *fucking* is coarse slang thus

considered avoidable. The semantic change is sketched in (26).

- (26) a. [fucking] ?a1513 *fuck* (v) ‘have sexual intercourse’ > 1776 *fuck* (v) ‘damage, destroy’ > 1864 *fucking* (intensifier)
 b. 1864 *Suppressed Bk. about Slavery!* 211 The Woman writhed under each stroke, and cried, ‘O Lord!’.. The Doctor..thus addressed her (the congregation must pardon me for repeating his words.) ‘Hush, you ***** b–h, will you take the name of the Lord in Vain on the Sabbath day?’

The OED does not provide the meaning of *fucking* and simply provides its functional classification as an intensifier. This suggests that the intensifier *fucking* only carries the intensifying function without any identifiable denotation. Another noteworthy point is that in the OED quotation above, the intensifier is not spelled out but appears obscured with asterisks. The OED comments that the number of asterisks and contrast with the less vulgar *b-h* (‘bitch’) suggest that the obscured word may be *fucking*. This pattern of obscuring this intensifier is still in practice in ‘decent’ writing. This strongly suggests the level of vulgarity and avoidability associated with it.

In the preceding exposition of the intensifiers under the TABOO category, one intensifier from each of the five subcategories was chosen for a cursory view of its semantic change and its attestations in OED quotations. The lexical source meanings and the first attestation dates of the six intensifiers are summarized in (27).

(27) Intensifiers in the TABOO category

Subcategory	Intensifier	Source Meaning	First Attestation
Blood	<i>bloody</i>	‘of blood’	1676
Death	<i>dead</i>	‘dead’	1589
Curse	<i>damn</i> <i>darn</i>	‘condemned’ ‘condemned’	1757 1789
Hell	<i>hella</i>	‘of hell’	1987
Sex	<i>fucking</i>	‘copulate’	1864

5. Discussion

In the foregoing section the patterns of semantic change that the intensifiers have undergone, though in a cursory manner, are presented along with the examples of their usage. Now we turn to a discussion of the issues that bear theoretical import.

5.1 Grammaticalization

The first issue relates to the status of the phenomenon, i.e., the development of intensifiers. The perspective assumed in the present study is that of grammaticalization and the issue that arises immediately in this context is whether the development of intensifiers qualifies as grammaticalization. From a simplistic view of language as consisting of the open-class and closed-class linguistic forms in mutually exclusive dichotomy, adverbs as a word class have open-class productivity and thus they appear to be disqualified as a grammatical category. We, however, argue otherwise.

Traditionally, grammaticalization has been viewed as a process of the increase of the range of a morpheme advancing from a lexical to a grammatical or from a less grammatical to a more grammatical status, e.g. from a derivative formant to an inflectional one (Kuryłowicz 1965: 69). Hopper and Traugott (2003[1993]: xv) define grammaticalization as the change whereby lexical terms and constructions come in certain linguistic contexts to serve grammatical functions, and, once grammaticalized, continue to develop new grammatical functions.

Then the key issue in the present context is whether the intensifiers carry a ‘grammatical’ function. We argue that they do. Grammar does not simply refer to rules governing morpho-syntactic patterns. Various devices, ranging from individual sounds to discourse, that give language its form all constitute grammar (cf. Rhee 2007 for discussion of related issues). This view calls for a broadened view of grammar to include discourse structure (thus, discourse markers) and intersubjectivity marking (thus, stance adverbs), among others (for a discussion of expanded notion of grammar, see Kaltenböck *et al.* 2011).

In addition, according to Heine and Reh (1984), grammaticalization is an evolution whereby linguistic units lose in semantic complexity, pragmatic significance, syntactic freedom, and phonetic substance, respectively. Numerous

studies also characterize grammaticalization as often accompanying p h o n e t i c reduction, syntactic rigidification, and semantic abstraction (Heine *et al.* 1991; Hopper and Traugott 2003[1993]; Geurts 2000). Many, though not all, of these characteristics are exhibited in the course of the development of intensifiers.

Furthermore, Heine *et al.* (1991), Heine *et al.* (1993), Nevalainen (2008), among others, acknowledge the categorial differences of adverbs from the open-class (nouns and adjectives) and the closed-class (adpositions, conjunctions, etc.), and place them in between along the cline as in (28) (see also Rhee 2016: 114-117). In this view, adverbs are detached from, thus, more grammatical than, the lexical categories.

(28) lexical > (adverbs >) adpositions > case affixes > zero
(Heine *et al.* 1991: 167)

Another relevant point is that some intensifiers have developed, or are currently in the process of developing, into discourse markers. Discourse markers have received much attention among discourse analysts and grammaticalizationists alike, and many of the latter consider the development of discourse markers an instance of grammaticalization (Traugott 1995b; Wischer 2000; Diewald 2011; Rhee 2014; contra Waltireit 2006; see, for alternative concepts, Norde 2009; Frank-Job 2006 for ‘pragmaticalization’; Heine 2013; Heine *et al.* 2013 for ‘cooptation’ of theticals). Therefore, if the development of discourse markers qualifies to be an instance of grammaticalization, the development of intensifying stance markers, by virtue of their being on the same continuum moving toward the pole of discourse markers, may also qualify to be one.

5.2 Subjectification, intersubjectification and interactivity

Semantic change is ubiquitous in language. One of the most interesting aspects associated with the development of the intensifier function is that of semantic change. As noted in the exposition of individual adverbs, the stance adverbs often originate from the forms whose semantic designations involved the referring function or description of tangible objects. This meaning becomes gradually bleached out through the increase of abstractness, which later becomes the semantic basis of the speaker’s stance, i.e., intensification. This is well illustrated by the two intensifiers,

really and *quite*, as in (29).

- (29) a. *really*: originated from Latin *res* ‘matter, thing’, i.e. the first-order entity ‘actual’, ‘in fact’ > the use with reference to the speaker’s opinion rather than a fact
 b. *quite*: Latin *quietus* ‘at rest’ with reference to stopping movement (cf. English *quit*) termination > nothing more, free > extremity > intensification

As shown in (29), *really* and *quite* are both traceable to Latin etymons, which denoted the first order entity and physical cessation of locomotion, respectively. These are categorical examples of the “meanings based in the external described situation” (Traugott and König 1991: 208), the basis of subjectification as proposed by Traugott and König (1991: 207-212) with their Semantic-Pragmatic Tendencies, as summarized in (30).

- (30) Semantic-Pragmatic Tendencies
 I. Meanings based in the external described situation > meanings based in the internal (evaluative/perceptual/cognitive) situation
 II. Meanings based in the described external or internal situation > meanings based in the textual situation
 III. Meanings tend to become increasingly situated in the speaker’s subjective belief-state/attitude toward the situation

The stance markers under the present analysis exhibit the Tendencies I and III by virtue of carrying the function of marking the speaker’s evaluative and attitudinal stances. It has been noted that semantic bleaching that recurrently occurred to the source lexemes led them to increased subjective meaning.

It is also noteworthy that subjectification is gradient along the continuum between the two poles: the concrete, lexical, and objective, on one end, and the abstract, pragmatic, interpersonal, and speaker-based, on the other. In other words, semantic change from source lexemes to intensifiers tend to be gradual rather than abrupt, e.g., *madly*: mad manner (pathological) > passionately (emotion) > extremely (manner) (see (7) above), even though detailed trajectories of change for each

intensifier could not be elaborated for the interest of space.

Furthermore, the developmental path of these intensifiers is largely in support of Traugott's (2010) directionality of [non-subjective > subjective > intersubjective] and Athanasiadou's (2007) [property > quantification > intensification > emphasis]. For instance, concreteness associated with objective meanings of a source lexeme tend to acquire subjective meanings, thus subjectification (cf., again, 'pathological' > 'emotional,' with *madly*), which proceeds to the interactional meaning (cf., again, 'emotional' > 'stance of manner,' with *madly*). A similar interpretation is also available to Athanasiadou's directionality in part, i.e., [property > quantification > intensification], especially with the intensifiers in the COMPLETENESS category. For instance, the intensifier *absolutely* originates from its adjectival counterpart *absolute*, which signified absence of dependence in its earliest attestation, which changes into a marker of degree 'completely' from 1425. The OED notes, under this signification, "in later use frequently as simple intensifier" and also states that it comes to mean 'certainly, definitely' from around 1825 in colloquial usage as an interjection (e.g. *Yes, absolutely; she will tell you herself*, OED, tr. B. de Molleville in A. Thiers and F. Bodin Hist. French Revol. I. 523). This series of change well exemplifies [property] (of being autonomous and independent) > [quantification] (of being complete, full) > [intensification] (to the fullest degree).

In general, intensifier usage is closely related to interactivity by virtue of its prominent function of intensifying the propositional meaning for the speaker's desire to facilitate securing the addressee's attention. It also involves intersubjectivity in the sense that the speaker seeks shared common ground or epistemic/affective states of affairs with the addressee. As exemplified with individual examples in the foregoing discussion, (inter)subjectification involves the reanalysis as coded meanings of pragmatic meanings arising in the context of speaker-hearer negotiation of meaning (Traugott 2010).¹¹

5.3 Form–function iconicity

A noteworthy aspect associated with the emergence of stance adverbs is the movement toward form-function iconicity, as displayed by some of them. For

¹¹ Similar directionalities have been also suggested in other studies, e.g., [descriptive > subjective/affective > intensifying], in Adamson 2000).

instance, in PDE *real* and *really* are in use as intensifiers, the former often denounced as ‘ungrammatical’ by prescriptivists. Some relevant forms are as listed in (31).

- (31) a. *real* vs. *really*
 b. *very* vs. *verily*
 c. *precious* vs. *preciously*
 d. *awful* vs. *awfully*

To illustrate the point, let us briefly look at the history of *very* and *verily* for contrast. According to the OED, *very* began its life as ME *verray* with an etymological connection with Aglo-Norman *verrai*, etc. and Old French *verai*, etc., ultimately traceable to Latin *vērus* ‘true’, as noted in 4.2 above. The OED lists the first attestation of the adjective *very* with a citation in c1250 which denoted possessing the true character with reference to person or deity. With the notion of ‘truth’ in its semantics, *very* soon develops into one carrying the emphatic meaning in denoting someone’s qualification in the fullest sense (1384), and by c1400, it comes to mean ‘extremity of degree or extent’, a good descriptor for emphasis. Since adverbial derivation from adjectives is a productive process, soon after the adjective *very* is introduced (c1250), its derivative adverb *verily* comes into being, with its first citation dated c1340. Its basic semantics was ‘in truth or verity; really’ (OED). It is noteworthy that soon afterwards, i.e., c1375, *very* acquires the function of an adverb to mean ‘truly, really’ and ultimately of purely intensive use for emphasis in 1567.

An intriguing aspect with the use of these two closely related lexemes is that soon after *verily* came to be used as an emphasis-marking adverb in c1340, the adjective *very* also became one, without any change in form. The innovative form *very* becomes dominant and the older form *verily* consequently becomes defunct. A natural query, then, is why this happened. This type of formal and functional interaction between related lexemes applies to not only the *very-verily* pair but also others listed in (31).

A historical survey reveals that it is often the case that the *-ly*-counterparts constitute older usage whereas the shorter ones (adjectival, in form) are innovations. In this context, it is noteworthy that adjectives and adverbs have subtle yet consistent

functional differences. There are two relevant issues involved, i.e. relevance and conceptual hierarchy.

The notion of ‘relevance’ first advanced by Bybee (1985), in her study of verbal morphology, refers to significance of a modifier in relation to the modified. When there are multiple modifiers, their conceptual distance from the modified determines their respective positions. In fact, distance in syntagma plays an important role among linguistic forms for their role in integration in terms of their syntagmatic organization (cf. Langacker 1991: 439). This leads to a general hypothesis that syntagmatic distance is an iconic reflection of the relation among linguistic forms. In this respect, adjectives are, *vis-à-vis* adverbs, conceptually closer to a nominal.

In terms of conceptual hierarchy of ontological entities, i.e., the relative degree of abstractness in human cognition, the notional distinctions among ‘first-order’, ‘second-order’, ‘third-order’ entities are useful. Adjectives are typical modifiers of first-order entities (persons, objects, etc.), whereas adverbs are typical modifiers of second-order entities (events, actions, states, etc.) or of third-order entities (propositions, facts, etc.) (cf. Mackenzie 2004: Ch. 94; 973-983). In other words, adjectives tend to describe the qualities inherent in the object being described, whereas adverbs describe the non-inherent aspects of motion, state, or event, such as manner, degree, location, quantity, purpose, contingency, instrument, etc.

In other words, adjectives have a higher level of ‘semantic intimacy’ with the noun being modified than adverbs, and the qualities described by adverbs tend to be more detached from the essence of the entity or event being referred to. This strongly suggests, though not conclusively, that the speakers have the conceptualization that the shorter forms are more appropriate for describing the essence of the modified, perhaps due to their formal resemblance to adjectives, as compared with the adverbs whose modification is relatively detached and non-essential and thus less powerful. This is an excellent case of form-function iconicity with conceptual motivation.

5.4 Frequency, novelty and renewal

Another issue involved in the development of the stance adverbs relates to frequency, novelty and renewal. Some studies suggest that frequency of use is the major or even the only source of linguistic change (Bybee and Hopper 2001 and

works therein, Krug 2001; Bybee 2003, 2006, 2007, 2011; Bybee and Beckner 2009; Torres Cacoullos and Walker 2011). However, Heine and Stolz (2008) and Heine (2009), noting that the potential of frequency is limited, assert that creativity is a driving force of language innovation (see also Napoli 2003, Ch. 9).

Frequency of use and creativity both carry relevance in the development of intensifiers. For instance, speakers of language are constantly under the pressure of expressivity and thus often resort to the use of intensifiers, unless the speech situation warrants more objective and toned down language use. Therefore, the overall frequency of intensifiers may remain at a reasonable degree. At the same time, when the frequency of a particular intensifier reaches the point where it becomes a cliché, the desired force will diminish and may eventually disappear, thus a need for a replacement arises. Thus we address these issues together.

For a quantitative analysis, the frequencies of intensifier tokens are taken from two representative corpora, the British National Corpus (BNC) and the Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA).¹² The 66 intensifier rankings are shown in (32).

- (32) Top 20 intensifiers per BNC and COCA frequency ranking (and frequency per million)

Intensifier	BNC Ranking	COCA Ranking	Intensifier	BNC Ranking	COCA Ranking
<i>so</i>	1 (2,178)	1 (2,006)	<i>exactly</i>	11 (105)	10 (139)
<i>just</i>	2 (1,266)	2 (1,762)	<i>highly</i>	12 (91)	15 (74)
<i>very</i>	3 (1,150)	3 (970)	<i>fully</i>	13 (89)	16 (64)
<i>too</i>	4 (680)	4 (707)	<i>completely</i>	14 (85)	14 (84)
<i>most</i>	5 (572)	6 (615)	<i>entirely</i>	15 (69)	20 (48)
<i>really</i>	6 (472)	5 (695)	<i>extremely</i>	16 (68)	18 (50)
<i>rather</i>	7 (425)	12 (112)	<i>fairly</i>	17 (67)	[23] (38)
<i>quite</i>	8 (405)	8 (172)	<i>surely</i>	18 (61)	[26] (34)
<i>actually</i>	9 (259)	7 (282)	<i>totally</i>	19 (58)	[21] (47)

¹² Frequency searches are based on the part of speech tagging of the intensifier, i.e., adverb, and thus may contain noises (cf. You are *really* so gentle with my mother (intensifier) vs. what *really* happened (non-intensifier), both taken from COCA). Wittouck (2011: 55) also presents frequent intensifiers from BNC and COCA, but due to the differences in inventory and search algorithm, e.g. limiting the target to collocation with adjectives, the results in her study are not consonant with the analysis presented here.

<i>certainly</i>	10 (194)	9 (146)	<i>absolutely</i>	20 (58)	13 (95)
			<i>pretty</i>	[21] (50)	11 (135)
			<i>truly</i>	[25] (32)	17 (52)
			<i>definitely</i>	[26] (31)	19 (49)

As shown in (32), there is a correspondence in the inventories of the 20 most frequent intensifiers in British and American English, with a few exceptions, i.e., *fairly*, *surely* and *totally* (included in the BNC's top 20 only) and *pretty*, *truly*, and *definitely* (included in the COCA's top 20 only), thus nearly identical sets for the top 26 intensifiers. It is remarkable that the intensifier *so* is used as the absolutely most dominant form (see also Tagliamonte 2005, Kuha 2005) in both varieties, a stark contrast with Stoffel's (1901: 101, 113) comment a century ago that *so* was still considered vulgar and a typical feminine expression (as cited in Wittouck 2011: 7). Incidentally, there are intensifiers that seem to be used with a relatively higher frequency in one variety *vis-à-vis* the other (e.g. *rather*, *quite*, *pretty*, etc.), but we will discuss this issue later. In general, however, there is a high level of correspondence in intensifier uses between the two major varieties of English. A high level of correspondence is also observed in the patterns of supremacy by source categories and subcategories as shown in (33) and (34).

(33) Source category ranking by token frequency (raw and normalized per million)

Source Category	BNC Frequency Raw and (p.m.)	BNC Ranking and (%)	COCA Frequency Raw and (p.m.)	COCA Ranking and (%)
COMPLETENESS	591,166 (6,014)	1 (68.1%)	2,939,492 (5,653)	1 (65.0%)
MARKEDNESS	270,355 (2,750)	2 (31.1%)	1,557,900 (2,996)	2 (34.4%)
TABOO	4,347 (44)	3 (.5%)	11,790 (23)	4 (.3%)
EMOTION	2,528 (26)	4 (.3%)	13,505 (26)	3 (.3%)
Total	868,396 (8,834)	(100%)	4,522,687 (8,697)	(100%)

- (34) Source subcategory ranking by token frequency (normalized permillion)

Source Subcategory	BNC Ranking / Freq p.m.	COCA Ranking / Freq p.m.	Source Subcategory	BNC Ranking / Freq p.m.	COCA Ranking / Freq p.m.
ENTIRETY	1 / 2,707	1 / 2,562	FEAR	10 / 18	10 / 20
REALITY	2 / 1,918	2 / 1,993	IRREALIS	11 / 17	9 / 27
VIRTUE	3 / 1,324	3 / 1,833	SEX	12 / 12	13 / 5
DIMENSION	4 / 1,213	4 / 906	DEATH	13 / 9	11 / 11
ABSENCE OF OBSTRUCTION	5 / 707	6 / 391	FERVOR	14 / 7	12 / 6
ATTAINMENT	6 / 680	5 / 707	SURPASSING	15 / 5	15 / 3
ABILITY	7 / 100	7 / 173	CURSE	16 / 3	16 / 3
VIVIDNESS	8 / 89	8 / 51	INSANITY	17 / 2	17 / 3
BLOOD	9 / 19	14 / 4	HELL	18 / 0	18 / 0

As shown in (33), despite the minor difference in the ranking of the TABOO and EMOTION categories, the overall pattern is remarkably similar. Likewise, ranking patterns by the subcategory in the two varieties exhibit great similarity, as shown in (34), the only notable exception being the BLOOD subcategory (e.g. *bloody*).

As noted in passing above, there are certain intensifiers that reflect predilection of the two varieties. When we sort the intensifiers focusing on their levels of comparative frequencies, we have a list as in (35).¹³

- (35) Criticism and Americanism in intensifier uses

Intensifier	BNC Frequency per million (ranking)	COCA Frequency per million	Percentage Increase
<i>bloody</i>	19 (23)	4 (35)	BR +375%
<i>rather</i>	425 (7)	112 (10)	BR +280%
<i>sincerely</i>	11 (32)	3 (37)	BR +267%
<i>undoubtedly</i>	24 (27)	10 (36)	BR +140%
<i>fucking</i>	12 (30)	5 (32)	BR +140%
<i>pretty</i>	50 (18)	135 (9)	AM +170%
<i>quite</i>	405 (8)	172 (8)	AM +136%
<i>incredibly</i>	8 (34)	17 (23)	AM +113%

¹³ The selection is based on the following criteria: (i) a form with a per million frequency rate of 10 or higher at least in one corpus, and (ii) a form exhibiting a contrast of 100% of frequency rate. The percentage has been calculated by using the lower token frequency as the divisor.

A quantitative analysis reveals that *bloody*, the usual suspect of Britishness (cf. Biber *et al.* 2000[1999]), ranks first in the contrast. Also found among Britishness are *rather*, *sincerely*, and *fucking*. Of these, *fucking* comes as a surprise considering previous studies (e.g. Mencken 1922) that assert higher use of taboo intensifiers in American English. The three instances of Americanism in intensifier uses are *pretty*, *quite* and *incredibly*, contradicting earlier studies (e.g. Biber *et al.* 2000: 567) that state that there is a clear preference for *quite* in British English.¹⁴

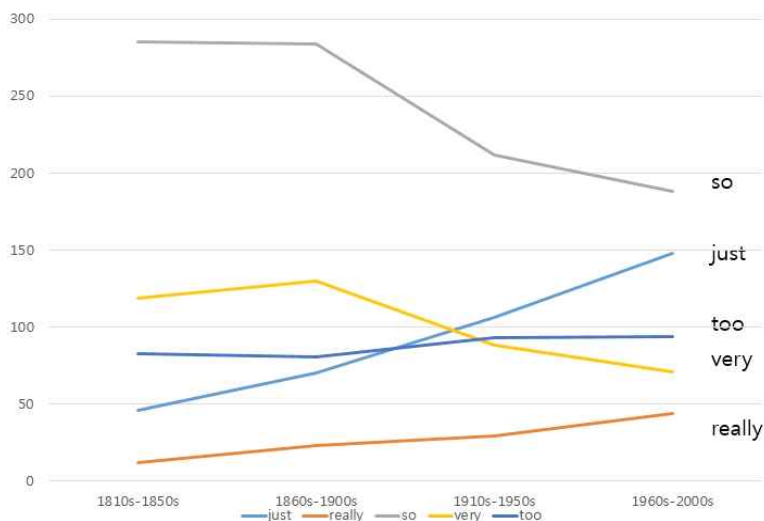
Another intriguing issue is the diachronic development. Intensifiers are particularly susceptible to renewal (Stoffel 1901: 2; Quirk *et al.* 1985: 590; Peters 1994: 269; Hopper and Traugott 2003[1993]). Intensifiers afford “a picture of fevered invention and competition that would be hard to come by elsewhere, for in their nature they are unsettled” (Bolinger 1972: 18). In order to investigate the diachronic development of intensifiers, the COHA (Corpus of Historical American English), a corpus of 400 million words from the 1810s through 2000s, was used as a data source. Normalized frequency counts for 50 year periods for six intensifiers that have undergone a high level of increase or decrease are as shown in (36).

- (36) Frequency change of six high-frequency intensifiers from 1810s to 2000s (Frequency normalized to thousands, based on COHA)

The diagram in (36) shows the frequency change of the top five intensifiers in COCA. The normalized tokens of the first 50-year period (1810s-1850s) as compared with the last 50-year period (1960s-2000s) of these intensifiers show their increase or decrease rates: *really* (+249%), *just* (+219%), *too* (+13%), *very* (-40%) and *so* (-34%). It is particularly noticeable that the frequency of *so* is fast dropping, whereas those of *just* and *really* are fast rising. Considering that the first intensifier use of *so* dates back to 888 (see (18) above), the functional primacy of *so* for a millenium is

¹⁴ The discrepancies may arise for a number of reasons, but, most importantly, it may originate from the differences in part-of-speech (POS) tagging. For instance, a COCA string frequency search for *super* returns 2,117 instances that premodify adjectives, many of which are intuitively intensifiers (e.g. Fast food makes you *super* fat; I was *super, super* nervous; etc.), yet the item with a specified POS (adverb), i.e. “super_r” returns no hits. Similarly, a string frequency search for *darn* followed by an adjective returns 770 hits (e.g., They had a pretty *darn* good idea; we were *darn* sure nobody could see; etc.), but no hits with a specified POS (adverb); and a string search for *hella* followed by an adjective returns 10 hits (e.g., I been here *hella* long; it’s *hella* sexy; she was *hella* cooler than I’d ever be; etc.) but, again, no hits with a specified POS (adverb).

on its fast decline from the turn of the 20th century. *Really*, on the other hand, began its life in the 16th century and has been on a sharp increase during the past four centuries, and likewise *just* has been on a comparable increase since the early 18th century.



Other intensifiers that have undergone a high level of increase/decrease, i.e., 50% or higher, though not mapped in (37) for their low frequency, are: *definitely* (+1032%), *actually* (+165%), *exactly* (+111%), *totally* (+95%), *pretty* (+61%), *completely* (+52%), *assuredly* (-88%), *entirely* (-60%), *superbly* (-57%), and *undoubtedly* (-54%). If we look into the detail, an interesting picture emerges from the development of *totally* that records decrease by 36% (between 1810s-1850s and 1860s-1900s) and 7% (between 1860s-1900s and 1910s-1950s), then a remarkable increase by 231% (between 1910s-1950s and 1960s-2000s). Another notable intensifier is *truly* that records, in the periods partitioned above, remarkable decreases by 38% and 42%, and then turns around to an increase of 45%. These states of affairs point to the fact that the development of intensifiers is not uniformly unidirectional but may undergo fluctuation en route.

We are not equipped with a measure to gauge the renewal rate of the intensifiers largely because of the absence of well-documented, reasonably large, balanced

diachronic corpora covering an extended period of time, and partly because of the absence of modus operandi to quantify rates of change of linguistic forms that are inherently non-discrete in many aspects. However, based on the COHA that covers two centuries, we can see, though limited in scope, a picture of intensifiers that are in constant fluctuation. The rise and fall of intensifiers suggest that intensifiers are indeed susceptible to change because they are recruited to emphasize a part or whole of the speaker's intended message, and repeated use necessarily renders them trite and uninteresting, thus motivating renewal of alternate forms. However, such an ongoing pressure does not cause fast-paced renewal, considering that certain forms are surprisingly stable and enjoy the functional primacy over a long period of time (see the case of *so* above, and *highly*, which has been in use steadily from the 10th century).

5.5 Remaining issues

In the preceding discussion, we have looked at the diverse aspects of the development of English intensifiers. Since the primary objective of this study is to sketch the picture in large brush-strokes, explorations into the details of individual intensifiers are beyond the scope, but the details call for further investigation. In addition to the need for an in-depth study of individual forms, there are other issues that are left untreated for space limitation, which warrant a brief mention before we conclude the discussion.

The first issue is the development of discourse markers from intensifiers, e.g., *indeed*, *actually*, etc. Previous studies addressed the issue (e.g., Traugott and Dasher 2002; Haselow 2012; Defour 2010). Athanasiadou (2007: 562) notes that elliptical answers, originally used for emphasis, tend to develop into discourse markers through subjectification, as shown in (37):

- (37) a. And we missed that? - *Completely*.
b. So things have changed. - *Not completely*.
c. But I'd had a lot of experience. - *Perfectly*.
d. We understand, don't we? - Oh, *absolutely*.
e. Do you let them travel alone? - *Absolutely* not.
f. He's in business, right? - *Totally*.

Since these discourse markers are intricately related to intensifiers and their development often goes through the stage of intensifier formation, a comprehensive study of these discourse markers is called for in order to better understand the relationship between intensifiers and discourse markers.

The second issue involves the scope of the target inventory. There are numerous other linguistic forms that carry the intensification function, especially those that are in periphrastic forms, e.g. *the hell, in the hell, the heck, the hell out of, in fact*, etc. The intensifier *hella*, included in the present research, is in fact a form the internal structure of which is still visible (*hell of*) or in spoken language the two forms are largely indistinguishable. A more dynamic picture of intensifiers, both in diachronic and synchronic dimensions, requires an in-depth study of these periphrastic forms in conjunction with their related forms.

Still another issue involves the functional relatives of intensifiers. For instance, attenuators (or moderators, mitigators) carry the function of marking the speaker's stance. For instance, *nearly, somewhat, kind of, sort of, a bit of, a shred of*, etc. mark the stance in the reverse direction vis-à-vis intensifiers. There are other grammatical forms that bear similar functions, e.g., focus adverbs (*only*, etc.), additives (*again, also, equally*, etc.), restrictive-exclusives (*alone, exactly, exclusively*, etc.), restrictive-particularizers (*chiefly, especially, notably*, etc.) (see Quirk *et al.* 1985; Nevalainen 1991; among others). Furthermore, similar functions may be performed by adjectives, e.g. *perfect, complete, absolute, total*, etc. (Athanasiadou 2007; Ghesquière 2010; among others). An investigation of these stance markers in the adverb and adjective categories is in need in order to understand the ubiquitous stance phenomena in a more comprehensive way.

6. Summary and conclusion

This study addressed the development of stance adverbs in English from a grammaticalization perspective. Certain English adverbs carry the stance-marking function, especially in the domain of illocutionary modification. Based on the definition of intensifiers as those that mark the speaker's stance of intensification in attitudinal, epistemic, emotional and evidential domains, an inventory of 72 intensifiers was formed for analysis.

A semantic analysis revealed that these intensifiers come from four major semantic categories, i.e., MARKEDNESS, COMPLETENESS, EMOTION, and TABOO, which are then further subcategorized into 18 classes, i.e., SURPASSING, INSANITY, DIMENSION, ABILITY, VIVIDNESS, VIRTUE, IRREALIS, ENTIRETY, ABSENCE OF OBSTRUCTION, REALITY, ATTAINMENT, FEAR, FERVOR, BLOOD, DEATH, CURSE, HELL, and SEX. In the course of the development, the intensifiers in general lose their particular meanings and retain only the core categorial notions that attribute to the acquisition of intensification meaning, often through subjectification and intersubjectification (interactivity).

We also observed that there is a form-function iconicity between the *-ly*-suffixed form and its bare counterparts, normally one isomorphic with the adjective. The strategic choice of the adjectival form over the adverbial form is hypothesized to have been motivated by the categorial conceptualization that adjectives, vis-à-vis adverbs, tend to encode more essential qualities of entities, states and events, thus carrying more descriptive power than the adverbs, whose semantics is more detached and, thus, weaker in power.

Based on contemporary data sources, this study showed that British and American varieties of English exhibit a remarkable level of correspondence in categorial and functional primacy of individual intensifiers, even though there are a few intensifiers that exhibit Briticism (*bloody, rather, sincerely, undoubtedly* and *fucking*) and Americanism (*pretty, quite* and *incredibly*). Drawing upon historical data, this study also noted that intensifiers are particularly susceptible to renewal because of the easy loss of the novelty value, thus creating instability for intensifiers. However, we also noted that such linguistic instability does not bring forth fast-paced renewal, as is well shown by certain intensifiers (e.g. *so* and *highly*) that have long remained in this functional domain with relatively stable productivity for over a millenium.

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