A Corpus-based Contrastive Analysis of the Frequency of Intensifiers in Native and Iranian Nonnative English Speakers Applied Linguistics Research Articles (RAs)

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Abstract:
The purpose of this study was to examine whether there are differences between the frequency of intensifiers in Iranian MA/PhD Non-native English Speakers and Native English speakers Applied Linguistics Research Articles. Based on Quirk et al. classification (1985) the intensifiers identified in the corpora were divided into two main categories: amplifiers and downtoners. Native English and non-native English corpora of Applied Linguistic research articles were collected and the frequency of intensifiers were counted using a concordance program and calculated and compared. Both corpora included around 125000 words, with the NE and NNE corpora including 6582 and 7174 tokens of intensifiers respectively. The results revealed that: boosters are the most frequently used intensifiers in both NE and NNE corpora. Moreover, the findings confirmed that there seems to be no significant difference in the frequency of all categories of Quirk et al.’s taxonomy of intensifiers across the articles produced by Iranian non-native English speakers’ (NNS) and native English speakers’ (NS).

Keywords: Intensifier, Corpus-based Analysis, Contrastive Interlanguage Analysis, Amplifier, Downtoner.
1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Background

There are multiple ways to emphasize or stress what one is saying. One of these measures is to use adverbs that give special emphasis to what one is conveying. These adverbs are called intensifiers, such words as absolutely, extremely, very, and really. Intensifiers (degree modifiers, degree words) are an interesting subject to study based on two characteristics; firstly, because of their versatility and color, and secondly, because of their capacity for rapid change and recycling of forms (Ito & Tagliamonte, 2003, p. 258). It has also been noted by Barnfield and Buchstaller that the use of intensifiers seems to be on the rise across time (2010). This is one additional reason to study their use and makes the topic more current.

Intensification is a pervasive function in language. The importance of intensification in communication is due to the role it plays as a vehicle for praising, impressing, insulting, persuading and generally influencing the listener’s reception of message (Partington, 1993). Intensifiers are used as a general term of degree words or degree modifiers which serve to show degree or exact value of the quality of the item they modify (Mendez-Naya, 2008). Intensifiers, such as the traditionally-termed degree adverbs (Biber, Johansson, Leech, Conrad & Finegan, 1999) do not always intensify the word meanings. Each intensifier can indicate a relatively low or high point of scale, from minimum intensity like hardly to maximum intensity as absolutely Quirk, Greenbaum, Leech, and Svartvik (1985). Quark et al. (1985) classified intensifiers into the following categories and subcategories:

1. Amplifiers
   a) Maximizers as completely, absolutely, altogether, entirely, extremely, fully, perfectly, quite, thoroughly, totally, utterly, in all respects, the intensifying use of most.
   b) Boosters as highly, badly, bitterly, deeply, enormously, far, greatly, heartily, intensely, much, severely, so, strongly, terribly, violently, well, a great deal, a good deal, a lot, by far, exclamatory how, the intensifying use of more.

2. Downtoners
   a) Approximators as, nearly, virtually, almost, practically, as good as, all, but.
   b) Compromisers as kind of, sort of, quite, rather, enough, sufficiently, more or less.
   c) Diminishers as slightly, mildly, partially, partly, quite, somewhat, in part, in some respect, to some extent, a bit, a little, least (of all), only, merely, simply, just, but.
   d) Minimizers as barely, hardly, little, scarcely, in the least, in the slightest, at all, a bit

According to this categorization amplifiers are used to increase the meaning conveyed by relevant words, while downtoners decrease the meaning conveyed. Both Quirk et al. (1985) and Biber et al. (1999) refer to these elements as adverbs of degree. The semantic distinction between maximizers and boosters is due to the fact that maximizers usually modify non-gradable word or items that already convey an idea of extreme like repugnant while boosters are used with gradable words like nice and ugly.

Intensification is employed in both written and spoken language as a resource to convey a message in a more expressive way and to strengthen the speakers’ position as well as their attitude toward what they are saying. The most rapid and the most interesting semantic developments in linguistic change are said to occur with intensifiers (Quirk et al. 1985; Peters, 1994). This area of grammar is always undergoing meaning shifts (Stoffel, 1901), partly because of “speaker’s desire to be ‘original’, to demonstrate their verbal skills, and to capture the attention of their audience” (Peters, 1994).

1.2. Statement of the Problem

Due to relatively important function of intensifiers in speech or conversation, their underuse or misuse can lead to semantic or pragmatic misunderstandings, which can, in turn, have negative consequence for both native speakers who do not use those in expected ways (Lam, 2010; Wierzbika, 2003) and non-native ones. Previous studies on the use of intensifiers in L2 writing either have not used computer corpora, or when they are corpus-based they have used only a very small database, or only a small number of intensifiers are covered. So, we seek to address such a drawback by exploring the distribution of more than 70 intensifiers in papers of native and non-native speakers of English. As intensifiers play a significant role in academic papers, knowing them in helpful
for both native and non-native speakers of English to convey and share their ideas with their readers. Thus, it deserves more investigation and comprehensive research. Consequently, comparing and contrasting the frequency of intensifiers will extend our knowledge of the use of such elements in papers of native and non-native speakers of English.

1.3. Objectives of the Study

The aims of this study are: (a) to compare the frequency and type of amplifiers and downtoners in MA/PhD Iranian non-native English Speakers and Native English Speakers Applied Linguistics research articles based on Quirk et als’ classification. (b) To broaden the knowledge of the target use of intensifiers in English Applied linguistics research articles. (c) To explore the rate of use and range, or richness of intensifier use from quantitative perspective. The present study intends to compare the frequency of intensifiers in NE and Iranian NNE English research articles. Likewise, it aims to find out how much Iranian NNE research papers in Applied Linguistics are native-like in terms of using intensifiers (i.e. Maximizers, Boosters, Approximators, Compromisers, Diminishers, and Minimizers)

1.4. Research Questions

This study aim to answer following question:
1. Is there any significant difference between the frequency of maximizers in native and Iranian non-native English speakers’ Applied Linguistics research articles?
2. Is there any significant difference between the frequency of boosters in native and Iranian non-native English speakers’ Applied Linguistics research articles?
3. Is there any significant difference between the frequency of approximators in native and Iranian non-native English speakers’ Applied Linguistics research articles?
4. Is there any significant difference between the frequency of compromisers in native and Iranian non-native English speakers’ Applied Linguistics research articles?
5. Is there any significant difference between the frequency of diminishers in native and Iranian non-native English speakers’ Applied Linguistics research articles?
6. Is there any significant difference between the frequency of minimizers in native and Iranian non-native English speakers’ Applied Linguistics research articles?

1.5. Research Hypotheses

H01: There is not any significant difference between the frequency of maximizers in native and Iranian non-native English speakers’ Applied Linguistics research articles.
H02: There is not any significant difference between the frequency of boosters in native and Iranian non-native English speakers’ Applied Linguistics research articles.
H03: There is not any significant difference between the frequency of approximators in native and Iranian non-native English speakers’ Applied Linguistics research articles.
H04: There is not any significant difference between the frequency of compromisers in native and Iranian non-native English speakers’ Applied Linguistics research articles.
H05: There is not any significant difference between the frequency of diminishers in native and Iranian non-native English speakers’ Applied Linguistics research articles.
H06: There is not any significant difference between the frequency of minimizers in native and Iranian non-native English speakers’ Applied Linguistics research articles.

1.6. Significance of the Study

Recently, interest has grown in the use of language corpora and computer tools for language education and therefore there has been a plethora of corpus-based research in ESL and EFL settings. However, unfortunately, most researchers and EFL teachers have focused almost entirely on lexical studies and thus conducting a research on the function of items like modifiers- adverbs that function as modifiers of other words by boosting or maximizing their meaning in L1 and L2 seems crucial.

On the other hand, although several research supported the notion that transfer from the L1 to the L2 occurs in the recursive strategies the writers use, the rhetorical structure of the text, as well as the linguistic features produced, fewer studies have investigated similarities and differences between L2 writers at higher educational levels.
Therefore, using computer corpora, the present research aims to compare the frequency of intensifiers between Iranian MA/PhD Non-native English Speakers and Native English speakers to highlight the significant role of corpus-based research in ESL/EFL settings. Hopefully the current research may help EFL teachers to evaluate Iranian EFL learners’ writing compared to native speaker’s ones and help their students enrich their writing skill. Moreover, it might assist MA students and Ph.D. candidates to improve their writing in English in order to get better result.

In addition, the present research may facilitate investigation of multiple characteristics of Iranian EFL learners’ writing skill so that EFL teachers can gain a better understanding of underlying features and their frequency in their students’ texts. Moreover, the current research is supposed to illustrate how a corpus-based study can lead to more principled classroom materials and activities to help Iranian EFL learners achieve their goals prosperously.

1.7. Definition of Key Terms

1.7.1. Intensifier
The term intensifier is used to refer to adverbs that function as modifiers of other words by boosting or maximizing their meaning. Intensifiers can modify nouns, particles, adjectives, prepositions, other adverbs, and verbs (Quirk et al. 1985; Biber et al., 1999)

1.7.2. Corpus-based Analysis
Corpus-based analysis is the study of language in the collection of real-world text for linguistic research. Corpus-based studies use real-life texts to explore a theory or hypothesis, aiming to confirm, disapprove or define it.

1.7.3. Contrastive Interlanguage Analysis (CIA)
Contrastive interlanguage analysis (CIA) is a very popular method of investigation among researchers. It compares native and learners varieties of language (Granger, 1996). Comparison can also consist of output from learners of different L1 backgrounds to investigate what features of interlanguage are affected by L1 transfer and which ones have other sources. Also, this method emphasizes the unprecedented characteristic of learner interlanguage.

1.8. Organization of the Study
The present study consists of five chapters. The first chapter introduces the background to the study, elaborates on the statement of problem, expounds on the purpose of the study, enumerates the research questions, states the significance of the study, and ends with the definition of key terms. The second chapter provides a relevant review of the literature. The third chapter explicates the research design, the materials, and procedures used in the context of the study. The penultimate chapter indicates the results of the analyses that pinpoint the answers to the questions of the study. The final research, the discussion of research findings, implications of the study, limitations of the study, and suggestions for further research ensue.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW
2.1. Introduction
The purpose of this chapter is to propose a theoretical background, historical trajectory and variation and change in intensifiers’ system. At the end of this chapter, in the empirical background, the earlier and recent studies conducted on intensifiers are presented.

2.2. Theoretical Background
This section discusses the definition and labelling of intensifiers based on different frameworks and typology of intensifiers. Then, it’s followed by the empirical background which includes the earlier studies as well as the recent ones.

2.2.1. Intensifier: Definitions
In this thesis, the term intensifier is used to refer to adverbs that function as modifiers of other words by boosting or maximizing their meaning. Even though there are some intensifiers that can
modify nouns, particles, prepositions, other adverbs and verbs (Quirk et al. 1985; Biber et al. 1999), the focus here is on those items that modify adjectives. Various studies (Rickford et al., 2007; Tagliamonte, 2011) suggest that intensifiers occur most frequently, some of them 80 percent of the time, with adjectival heads. Therefore many previous studies have also concentrated on intensifiers modifying adjectives.

Motivation for the extensive study of intensifiers in recent years is based on the tendency for rapid change in the intensifier system (Ito & Tagliamonte 2003). Intensifiers form an open class of words where new items are quite easy to add (Quirk et al., 1985), which enables the intensifier system to “thrive on novelty”, as Lorenz (2002, p. 143) points out. Because intensification is a means for speakers to make their utterances more expressive, it naturally follows that the more novel the form is perceived as, the more expressive its power is (ibid.). Once a degree word saturates a speech community, its uniqueness and expressivity decline, and new variants need to be incorporated into the intensifier system, because the “speakers desire to be original” (Peters 1994, 271).

In the recent studies, terminology regarding amplifiers has not been entirely uniform. The literature shows that while Stoffel (1901) calls them intensive adverb, Bolinger (1972) refers to them as ‘degree words’ without separating them from ‘downtoners’. Quirk et al. (1985) talk about amplifiers while a more recent study by Ito and Tagliamonte (2003) calls them intensifiers and defines them, like Bolinger (1972) as adverbs that maximize or boost meaning, that is to say, adverb that scale a quality up. Although Carter and McCarthy (2006:908) use the term intensifiers they distinguish between two type (a) amplifiers which consist of adverb that scale a quality up such as really, very, completely, extremely, highly for example he is very nervous, he is highly nervous and (b) downtoners for instance, partly, barely, slightly among others...Amplifiers can be further subdivided into two main groups: ‘maximizers’ (absolutely, totally, completely, entirely, utterly) and ‘boosters’ (very, terribly, really, tremendously). Maximizers denote an absolute degree of intensity occupying the upper end of the scale, while boosters convey a high degree of a quality but without reaching the extreme end of the scale. Functionally speaking, maximizers are used to magnify the degree of intensification or to amplify certain qualities, so as to express the superlative degree of the modified item. Maximizers are considered in the literature to be the most frequent and most interesting (Ito & Tagliamonte 2003: 258). Amplifiers have been studied for decades and have attracted interest from a number of linguistic fields. Earlier studies of this kind have largely concentrated on the structural and semantic properties of amplifiers (e.g. Stoffel 1901, Jespersen 1922, Mustanoja 1960, malinger 1972, Quirk et al. 1985). These works have contributed greatly to the taxonomy and description of amplifiers in English.

Huddleston and Pullum refer to intensifiers by the labels degree modifiers, degree adverbs and degree adjuncts (2002). Degree adjunct are further divided into seven subgroups (maximal, multal, moderate, paucal, minimal, approximating and relative). Huddleston and Pullum state that the maximal and multal categories represent greater lexical variation and by that, these categories have far more members than the five other groups (ibid.). The maximal subgroup (e.g. absolutely, completely) is at the top of a scale of degree and the multal subgroup (e.g. deeply, greatly) covers a range from midpoint to near the top end (ibid.). The moderate subgroup (e.g. partly, quite, rather) represents a slightly lesser degree and is located close to the middle of the imaginary scale of degree (ibid.). The paucal subgroup (a bit, little) is lower than the middle of the scale and is followed by the minimal subgroup (e.g. hardly, scarcely) that represents a lower degree (ibid.). The last two subgroups in Huddleston and Pullum's categorization (ibid.) are the approximating subgroup (almost, kind of) and the relative subgroup (e.g. enough, sufficiently). As can be deduced from the examples, these categories do not represent a lesser degree, but have an approximating or quantifying function.

This chapter discusses the ways in which intensification is treated in grammars and in other earlier theoretical background. This involves discussing the problem of labelling intensifiers and giving an outline of their historical development. In addition, to account for the variation and change in the system, the mechanisms of intensifier delexicalization and recycling of intensifiers are presented. Finally, its followed by the empirical background includes the earlier studies as well as the recent ones.
2.2.2. Labeling

Grammarians are not unanimous in their classification and naming of the adverbs that intensify other words. In this section, different ways of categorizing intensifying adverbs are discussed, which will be of help when justifying the choice of intensifiers for analysis in this thesis. However, it is almost impossible to list all possible items in the open category of intensifiers, as Bolinger (1972, 21) argues. Naming of intensifiers has varied from intensives (Stoffel 1901), boosters (Bolinger 1972), and amplifiers (Quirk et al. 1985) to degree adverbs (Huddleston and Pullum 2002), among others.

Bolinger (1972) notes that intensification is most frequently discussed in connection to adjectives and other adverbs, and similarly, Biber et al. (1999, 544-5) argue that “one of the primary functions of adverbs is to modify adjectives” as degree adverbs. Bolinger (1972) divides degree words into four groups according to the part they occupy on a scale of intensification. Boosters, such as terribly, intensify upwards, compromisers, like rather, occupy the middle field, diminishers, such as little, scale down from the norm and minimizers, for example bit, occupy the bottom part on the scale (ibid.). Biber et al. (1999, 554-5) accept both terms intensifier and amplifier to refer to the words that scale upwards from a norm. These can either be used to express a great degree on the scale, like very and so do, or to express the highest possible point on the scale, which is the case with totally or absolutely. Together with diminishers or downtoners (ibid., 555), words that scale down from a norm, such as slightly and rather, intensifiers form a broader category, adverbs of degree, which “describe the extent to which a characteristic holds”.

On the other hand, for Quirk et al. (1985), intensifier is the wider term for the two subgroups of amplifiers and downtoners. Intensifiers are defined as scaling devices, and it is noted that this involves both scaling the meaning upwards and downwards (ibid., 591). They further divide amplifiers into two categories of maximizers (absolutely, completely, extremely, entirely, perfectly) and boosters (really, very, awful, dead, so, right, well, quite, pretty) (ibid., 590-1).

Furthermore, Quirk et al. (1985) distinguish emphasizers, such as really in She has a really beautiful face or all in He looked all confused, as a category distinct from degree adverbs but which, however, can have a similar meaning to intensifiers when occurring with gradable adjectives. Downtoners Quirk et al. (1985, 590) divide into approximators (almost), compromisers (more/less), diminishers (partly) and minimizers (hardly). Nevertheless, it is the booster class that is especially open for new items and most often affected by the hyperbolical change in intensifiers (ibid.), which is one of the reasons why the amplifying meaning is at the focus of this thesis.

Of the grammarians discussed here, Huddleston and Pullum (2002) most clearly seek to avoid the term intensifier altogether, although they admit it is sometimes used for the items that can occur with adjectives and adverbs, but not with verbs (Huddleston and Pullum 2002, 585 footnotes). They do not think it is necessary to separate this group from the general category of adverbs of degree, and furthermore seem to think that it is incorrect to use intensifiers to refer to items which semantically express other than high degree (ibid.). The labelling of degree words is approached only through verb modification, because for Huddleston and Pullum (2002) adverbs modifying adjectives are just a subgroup of those modifying verbs. Degree adverbs are arranged in categories from high to low degree: Maximal (absolutely, completely, totally), Multal (deeply, so), Moderate (moderately, rather), Paucal (a little, slightly), Minimal (barely, hardly), Approximating (almost, nearly) and Relative (enough, sufficiently). Table 1 sums up the discussion so far and gives further examples of the different categories.

As can be seen from Table 1, some items occur in more than one category and can sometimes be used to both amplify and to downtone. Biber et al. (1999) locate the adverb quite in both categories, because it can be interpreted to have both the meaning of ‘completely’, hence an amplifier, and ‘to some extent’, which is a downtoner. The latter meaning is said to occur usually with gradable adjectives (3) and the former with non-gradable ones (4) (illustrations from Biber et al. 1999).

| quite nice | quite motionless | quite confident |
| ‘to some extent’ | ‘completely’ | |

However, when quite modifies adjectives like confident, which can function either as a gradable or a non-gradable adjective (5), it is often impossible to separate the senses (ibid.). Therefore, quite will be excluded from the analysis in this thesis, as the purpose here is to concentrate on the amplifying
meaning. Biber et al. (1999) note that just is similar in the respect that it can either increase (just dreadful) or decrease (just 4.5 points down) the intensity of the modified item.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Author(s)</th>
<th>Terminology</th>
<th>Scaling upwards</th>
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<tr>
<td>Bolinger 1972</td>
<td>Degree words / Intensifiers</td>
<td>Boosters: terribly</td>
<td>Compromisers: rather, Fairly Diminishers: little Minimizers: bit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Biber et al. 1999</td>
<td>Adverb of degree / Degree adverb</td>
<td>Intensifiers / Amplifiers subgroups: 1) very, so, extremely, too 2) totally, absolutely, completely, quite (sense of ‘completely’)</td>
<td>Diminishers / Downtoners slightly, somewhat, rather, quite (sense of ‘to some extent’)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quirk et al. 1985</td>
<td>Intensifiers</td>
<td>Amplifiers 1) maximizers: absolutely, altogether, completely, entirely, extremely, fully, perfectly, totally, utterly 2) boosters: so, highly, well, enormously, deeply, badly, greatly, highly</td>
<td>Downtoners quite, pretty, rather, relatively, fairly 1) Approximators: Almost 2) Compromisers: more or less 3) Diminishers: partly 4) Minimizers: hardly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Huddleston and Pullum 2002</td>
<td>Degree adverbs / degree Modifiers</td>
<td>Maximal: absolutely, completely, totally, entirely, Quite Multal: deeply, so, well, strongly Moderate: moderately, partly, quite, rather Paucal: a bit, a little, little, slightly Minimal: barely, hardly, scarcely, at all Approximating: almost, nearly, virtually Relative: enough, sufficiently, too much</td>
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Even though pretty is in most cases in Table 1 listed as a downtoner, The Oxford English Dictionary (s.v. pretty adv.) describes the adverb pretty as “Qualifying an adjective or adverb: to a considerable extent; fairly, moderately; rather, quite. In later use also: very” and adds that it more recently has taken into indicating a moderately high degree. Therefore, it is justified to include pretty in the analysis section of this thesis.

Different kind of ambiguity arises with really, since it can be interpreted as a stance adverb expressing ‘in reality’ (6a.) or an amplifier (6b.) (Biber et al. 1999), and often even the context does not help in deciding between the senses. In this thesis it is decided that if such cases are encountered, they will be interpreted as amplifiers for the benefit of the analysis. Really cannot be excluded from the analysis altogether, as in previous studies it is found to be one of the most central intensifiers in English (Ito & Tagliamonte, 2003).

(6a.) it’s really wonderful.
(6b.) Susie’s really excited about that backyard.

Biber et al. (1999) note that even though many of the common degree adverbs are interchangeable from context to context, even those that are similar in meaning do have some preferences as regards their adjective collocates. Some intensifiers, on the other hand, are so semantically restricted in their adjective collocations, that they are fossilized (Partington, 1993). For example, it is acceptable to have the combination dead tired/drunk, but perhaps not *dead exhausted/intoxicated and fast asleep or wide awake, as discussed in Quirk et al. (1985).
In conclusion, what is meant by intensifiers in this thesis is a fusion of the meanings defined by the grammarians. The purpose is to concentrate on those items that scale upwards the meaning of the adjective modified (Biber et al., 1999; Huddleston & Pullum 2002) and that have either a maximizing or a boosting effect (Quirk et al., 1985). This is also the definition most frequently employed in earlier intensifier studies (e.g. Tagliamonte 2008, Tagliamonte & Roberts, 2005) and, as was already mentioned, is the class where most of the change usually takes place.

2.3. Variation and Change in the Intensifier System

One of the reasons for why intensification is a target of sociolinguistic study is the tendency for fast renewal and the great variety of forms used in expressing it. Several scholars (Bolinger, 1972, Peters, 1994, Tagliamonte, 2011) point out that it is only natural that intensifiers used in a speech community change, because their ability to emphasize meanings and affect recipients rely heavily on their novelty. Partington (1993) also agrees that new and unpredictable intensifier + adjective collocations have a more emphatic meaning than predictable ones. Bolinger’s influential observation about the nature of intensifiers sums up many points in this discussion:

Degree words afford a picture of fevered invention and competition that would be hard to come by elsewhere, for in their nature they are unsettled. They are the chief means of emphasis for speakers for whom all means of emphasis quickly grow stale and need to be replaced. (Bolinger, 1972)

By studying the rapidly changing intensifiers, scholars hope to shed light on the tendencies of language change in general. The registers in which intensifier change is most likely detected are informal rather than formal in nature (Lorenz 2002). In this section, mechanisms of change relevant for the intensifier system are presented. This involves accounting for the ways in which intensifiers come to be in the first place as well as explaining how they change, which is supported by the grammaticalization theory.

2.3.1 Open and Closed Classes of Adverbs

Quirk et al. (1985) note that intensification is usually expressed through the use of adverbs, although other parts of speech are also possible origins. They divide adverbs into a closed class constituted by simple and compound adverbs and an open class constituted by the derivation of adverbs from adjectives by using the -ly ending. The interesting question is, why some types of adverbs develop into expressions of intensity more easily than others. Lorenz (2002) argues that the open -ly class, with words such as highly, terribly and absolutely, is central to the creation of new intensifiers because most of the innovation occurs there as opposed to the closed class such as very, quiet and rather. Furthermore, Nevalainen (2008, 291) argues for the high productivity of the -ly ending in Modern English, because “it is possible to form adverbs from practically all adjectives by means of the -ly suffix”. However, Biber et al.’s (1999) findings that adverbs formed by the -ly suffixation are more frequent in written registers than conversation, and that conversation favors simple and informal intensifiers, seem to somewhat contradict the proposition that the -ly class is the most innovative. As is known, innovation generally is more common in informal and spoken registers. In addition, Fries (1940) categorizes many simple adverb forms of intensifiers into “vulgar English” while the -ly forms are Standard English, and thus more neutral in their meaning. As regards the labelling of intensifiers presented in section 2.1, the booster class is the most open and frequently gains new members (Quirk et al., 1985; Peters, 1994).

2.3.2 Delexicalization

In addition to the classes described above, delexicalization, one of the processes of grammaticalization, has to be taken into account to understand the linguistic mechanisms of how intensifiers undergo change and new intensifiers come to be (Ito and Tagliamonte 2003, 261). Partington (1993, 183) describes the outcome of delexicalization as “the reduction of the independent lexical content of a word, or group of words, so that it comes to fulfil a particular function but has no meaning apart from this to contribute to the phrase in which it occurs”. Reduction of lexical content is a gradual process, as presented in Figure 2, which may require generations of language users to go through. As Partington continues, language items in the process of delexicalization can typically be
found at different points along the scale from full lexical meaning to more or less advanced delexicalization.

![Diagram](Lexical Word
Used for Occasional Emphasis
Used More Frequently
Used with Wider and Wider Range of Words)

[concomitantly original lexical meaning gradually lost]

*Figure 2. The delexicalization process (Tagliamonte & Roberts, 2005, p. 285)*

Figure 2 also shows how the linguistic item going through delexicalization gradually loses its collocational restrictions and increases in frequency (Lorenz, 2002, p. 144). Unarguably, the most fully delexicalized intensifier in use today is *very*, which has now completely lost its historical meaning of ‘truly’ and collocates widely with all kinds of adjectives (ibid., p. 145). One example of an intensifiers at the opposite end of the delexicalization cline is *terribly*, which still has some lexical meaning left evident from its frequent occurrences with negative adjective collocates (ibid.). Bolinger (1972) categorizes intensifiers into more grammaticalized, such as *very*, *so*, *pretty* and *well* and less grammaticalized, where he interestingly places *really* and many adverbs with the -ly ending. Tagliamonte (2008) and Lorenz (2002) have found evidence of *really* being the most likely intensifier to fully delexicalize next.

Being able to determine the delexicalization stage of intensifiers can account for the ongoing changes in the system as well as allow predicting some probable future developments. In other words, the approach analyses the current situation synchronically to account for diachronic changes. Although determining the delexicalization stage is not always a simple task, two means have been employed for that purpose: syntactic function and collocational behaviour. The former involves looking into the syntactic position of an adjective modified by an intensifier. Findings by Mustanoja (1960), Ito and Tagliamonte (2003) and Macaulay (2006), among others, all indicate that the more frequently the intensifier collocates with predicative adjectives (1) than with attributive adjectives (2), the further advanced it is in delexicalization. Intensifiers co-occurring predominantly with the predicative position are thus far in the delexicalization process and have lost much of their original meaning, whereas those co-occurring notably with the attributive function are new to the system and not yet fully delexicalized.

(1) Predicative position
- I checked ur ger ger out liao...she is super shortsighted...and hse [sic.] refuse to wear specs coz it ruin her face [TP2005*laurence82*110199]
- I like schu's shoes. But nowadays it's getting so expensive. [PTT2008*Mimmy*334262]

(2) Attributive position
- This is a very huge change that will be phased in gradually. [MN2004*dkhoo*82496]
- I found this really wonderful facial cleanser at Watson's when I was shopping with my sis last week. [PTT2005*starlet**124123]

In a study on York English by Ito and Tagliamonte (2003), both *very* and *really* occur more frequently with predicate adjectives throughout the whole corpus, therefore validating the claim that they are well advanced in delexicalization. As expected, *very* is developed further, because it prefers the predicative function markedly more than the attributive, whereas with *really* there is a slightly weaker preference of the predicative function. Surprising findings are reported by Barnfield and Buchstaller (2010) who studied some fairly new intensifiers *proper*, *canny*, and *dead* in their Tyneside data in order to see whether they preferred the attributive function. The findings indicate, however, that while with other intensifiers the predicative position is slowly increasing in time, these newer forms occur markedly less in the attributive function than older intensifiers to begin with and seem to prefer the company of a predicative adjective, contrary to the hypothesis (ibid.). The findings are therefore not
always simply in support of the theory, the reason why it is interesting to test the same hypotheses in new data and see how the intensifiers studied are distributed syntactically.

Another intralinguistic method for analysing the stage of delexicalization with intensifiers is to measure how widely they collocate with different kinds of adjectives. According to Partington (1993), a correlation exists between the range and number of adjectives the intensifier collocates with and the delexicalization stage of the intensifier. Therefore, newer intensifiers are expected to have relatively fewer collocates than old ones. For example Ito and Tagliamonte (2003) base this analysis of collocational restrictions on semantic categories of adjectives established by Dixon (1982). Dixon divides adjectives into seven semantic types (given with typical examples) of dimension (big, long, fat), physical property (hard, heavy, hot), human propensity (jealous, happy, clever), age (new, young, old), value (good, proper, excellent) and speed (fast, quick) with the possible addition of an eighth category, position (high, low, near). If an intensifier has collocates in many of those semantic groups, it is fully delexicalized, whereas those intensifiers that collocate in only a few categories have stronger lexical meanings. Dixon (1982) excludes from his categorization adjectives like familiar, important, easy and difficult because of the difficulty in labelling them. A full analysis based on Dixon’s classification is not attempted in the thesis, since it can be anticipated that not all adjectives found in the data conform to these categories and much material would therefore need to be excluded from analysis.

2.3.3 Renewal and recycling of intensifiers

Besides delexicalization described above, and closely connected to it, intensifier system changes due to two other processes: renewal and recycling. Renewal, according to Hopper and Traugott (2003, 122), is the process whereby “existing meanings may take on new forms” as opposed to divergence where forms take on new meanings, according to the grammaticalization theory. In renewal, the meaning, in this case intensification stays roughly the same, while multiple forms can be used to express that meaning. As an example they (ibid.) give the forms awfully, frightfully, fearfully, terribly, incredibly, really, pretty, truly that have been popular alternatives for very at different times. Hopper and Traugott note that renewal is typical for intensifiers because of their emotional function. While speakers aim at the strongest emotional impact possible with their utterance, it is predicted that only a handful of forms will not suffice, but the greater variety of forms to express this meaning an individual masters, the greater the possible impact Tagliamonte (2011) describes the recycling of intensifiers as a process where old forms that have gone through at least partial delexicalization, but for some reason were left unused in the system, are taken back into active use. Recycling therefore entails some degree of previous advancement in delexicalization. Bolinger (1972, 18) describes recycling as the old popular forms’ retreating to “islands bounded by restrictions (in collocation)”. This idea is useful in explaining why the grammatical change of intensifiers is not always a continuous process and why older forms keep emerging in contemporary language use in different English varieties in different times. For example so, which is found as a new rising trend in many studies, is likely to have appeared first just little after very 400 years ago, but has been recycled into new use in AmE and BrE after decades of unpopularity.

2.4. Empirical Background

In this section of the thesis, I will present the results of previously conducted studies on intensifiers. Firstly, I will introduce some general patterns of intensifier use and frequencies of commonest intensifiers. Secondly, the age of the speaker and its influence on intensifier use is discussed and thirdly, the gender of the speaker and its influence on intensifier use is demonstrated.

2.4.1. Patterns of Intensifier Use in Previous Studies

Amplifiers such as very, so, absolutely and totally are a common type of intensifiers that semantically function to increase intensification, or ‘scale upwards from an assumed norm’ (Quirk, Greenbaum, Leech and Svartvik 1985:590), in contrast to ‘detensifiers’ (Hübler 1983:68), i.e. attenuating devices such as downtoners or hedges that have a ‘lowering effect’ (Quirk et al. 1985:590). The degree thus expressed is of a subjective nature as it reflects and indexes the attitude of the speaker or writer.
Amplifiers have been studied for decades and have attracted interest from a number of linguistic fields. Earlier studies of this kind have largely concentrated on the structural and semantic properties of amplifiers (e.g. Stoffel 1901, Jespersen 1922, Mustanoja 1960, Bolinger 1972, Quirk et al. 1985). These works have contributed greatly to the taxonomy and description of amplifiers in English. Since the 1970s numerous studies focus-ing on amplifiers have been conducted in the areas of gendered language and language and power.

Robin Lakoff, a pioneer in language and gender, draws attention to women’s use of amplifiers (and hedges) as a prominent feature of ‘powerless language’ (Lakoff 1973, 1975, 1990). She claims that women often use expressions such as I like him so much so as to ‘weasel on’ the intensity of their emotions, and this effect is achieved through the semantic vagueness of amplifiers such as so (Lakoff 1975:55). Thus the use of amplifiers is considered a concomitant feature of the frequent use of hedges (I guess, I think, etc.) by women, who are said to ‘be more tentative than men in their use of language […]’, tending to use more hedges, possibility modals, and “egocentric sequences”’ (Biber 2000).

While Lakoff’s claims may not be new, as early works by Stoffel (1901) and Jespersen (1922) also observed impressionistically that the use of amplifiers was characteristic of women’s speech, it was Lakoff (1975) who inaugurated the research in gender and language, though the findings yielded in such research have often been inconsistent. For example, while some studies confirm Lakoff’s (and in fact Stoffel’s & Jespersen’s) claim that women use intensifiers more frequently than men (Bradac, Mulac & Thompson, 1995; Stenström, 1999; Tagliamonte & Roberts, 2005), others find just the opposite. For example, Drescher’s (2003) study of the TOEFL 2000 Spoken and Written Academic Language (T2K-SWAL) Corpus shows that men use significantly more amplifiers than women, while Vasilieva (2004) also finds that men use boosting and hedging adverbs more frequently than women in the instructional computer-related texts.

Still yet, others emphasize that intensifiers are not a unified category as far as gendered use is concerned. For example, Bradac et al. (1995) find that while women use more commonly used intensifiers (e.g. so, really), men are associated with less frequent items (e.g. pretty, completely), indicating some level of within-category variability. Stenström (1999) and Stenström, Andersen and Hasund (2002) also find different preferences of intensifiers by London teenagers. Specifically, while girls are generally more frequent users of amplifiers, they prefer weaker expletives (with such amplifiers as really) when compared to boys, who are found to use strong swear terms such as bloody and fucking more frequently.

Barnfield and Buchstaller studied the use of intensifiers in Tyneside in three corpora that gave them good material for a longitudinal study. They had multiple striking results in this study. Firstly, Barnfield and Buchstaller noticed that the use of very was overpowering in the 1960s as it had a 65% portion of the variable context, but in the 1990s it had given way to really (25.1%) and dead (35.9%) retaining only 18% of the variable context (2010, 267). Secondly, as can be deduced from the mentioned percentages, the rise of really is evident in the data from the 1990s as well as 2007/8. The use of really had risen from 8.6% in the 1960s to 25.1% in the 1990s and slightly to 26.7% in 2007/8 . Thirdly, the sudden rise and fall pattern of dead was equally peculiar: dead was non-existent as an intensifier in the data from the 1960s, had become the most common intensifier in the 1990s, but had declined to less than 10% of the variable context by 2007/8 (Barnfield and Buchstaller 2010, 273). Lastly, Barnfield and Buchstaller maintain (2010) that by 2007/8, there were a host of other intensifiers that had been non-existent or very infrequent previously, but had appeared in the 2007/8 data. This could mean that the number of intensifiers is increasing in English, because of the possibility of adding new suffixed intensifiers in the language.

The majority of studies on intensifiers and amplifiers have focused on L1 varieties generally and British and (North) American English in particular, often in comparison. Comparative studies of world Englishes are practically non-existent. Fuchs and Gut (2016) are the only ones to discuss non-L1 varieties so far, but the paper is very specific in its focus (cluster analysis and comparison of genres in the ICE-corpora for India, the Philippines, Singapore and Great Britain).

Biber et al.’s (1999, p. 565) comparison of pre-modifying amplifiers in BrE and AmE conversation reveals major similarities and some differences, mostly concerning so and real being more prominent in the latter variety. Tagliamonte’s work on BrE (Ito & Tagliamonte, 2003), AmE TV dialogue (Friends, Tagliamonte & Roberts, 2005; Quaglio, 2009) and Canadian English (Toronto;
Tagliamonte, 2008) allows some generalisations and includes claims about possible trajectories, supplemented by e.g. Barnfield and Buchstaller's 2010 study on NECTE (Tyneside; 1960s vs. 1990s).

Based on their findings for the scripted TV dialogue in the first 8 (out of 10) seasons of Friends, Tagliamonte and Roberts allude to a possible change in the system preceding from ‘older’ very via more modern really to ‘twenty-first-century’ so (2005:288). Shortly thereafter, Tagliamonte claims that the Friends distribution might “herald developments to come” (2008:371). She finds support in the apparent-time distributions of very, really and so in her York (UK) and Toronto (Canada) data: younger speakers generally favour really and so over very, which is in turn more typical of older speakers (Ito & Tagliamonte, 2003; Tagliamonte, 2008). Not all later studies confirm this claim -- Quaglio (2009), while replicating Tagliamonte’s findings for Friends, observes much lower frequencies of so in his comparative conversational corpus. D’Arcy (2015), investigating the historical trajectory of intensification patterns in New Zealand English data, also finds that New Zealanders do not seem to follow the dramatic increase in so over generations, with so being ranked only 4th in data from speakers born in the 1980s. In her most recent paper, Tagliamonte extends her claim to computer-mediated communication: she finds that in Toronto data from 2009 to 2010, “[email] is the most conservative, following (sic) by [instant messaging via computer] and SMS. The use of the incoming intensifier so varies incrementally by register.” (2016, p. 20).

Tagliamonte is one of the scholars who have done plenty of research in recent years on intensifiers. Ito and Tagliamonte (2003) examined the use of intensifiers occurring with adjectival heads, as the majority of intensifiers are used with adjectival heads. Indeed, already in 1973, Bäcklund found that circa 72% of intensifiers occur in this position (1973, 279). The most common intensifiers used in the York data were very (38.3%), really (30.2%) and so (10.1%).

Two years later in 2005, Tagliamonte and Roberts examined the use of intensifiers in ten seasons of Friends, one of the most popular television comedies of all time. In this television data of American English, Tagliamonte and Roberts found that most commonly used intensifiers were so (44.1%), really (24.6%) and very (14.2%) (2005, 287). These results are somewhat different as compared to the York data. The three commonest intensifiers are the same in both data sets, but the rankings are quite different as very and so change places in the rankings between the two data sets. Tagliamont (2008, 368) has also looked into the use of intensifiers in CanE and found that the four most commonly used intensifiers in the adjective premodifying position were really, very, so and pretty. Really was the most common with 1282 hits, followed quite equally by very (651), so (599) and pretty (497) respectively (ibid.).

De Haan and Van der Haagen (2012) used intensifiers to identify differences between the language use of native English and Dutch EFL students. They found that EFL writers used more intensifiers than native writers. But apart from studying the differences in the use of intensifiers between Dutch EFL students and English students, they also investigated how the use of intensifiers of Dutch students developed through their first, second and third year at university. They compared this development to that of English students, using data from English students at the end of secondary school and from undergraduates. They found that while developing their academic writing, the number of intensifiers used by Dutch EFL and English students decreased. Nevertheless, the number for Dutch EFL students remained higher than for native speakers of English. De Haan and Van der Haagen (2012) ascribed the use of more intensifiers by EFL writers to the attempt to be creative. The use of more intensifiers by EFL writers is associated with an informal style and an exaggerated tone which is considered to be inappropriate in formal texts (Recski, 2004).

More research is needed to further explain the differences De Haan and Van der Haagen (2012) found. They only compared the use of intensifiers by Dutch EFL writers to the use of intensifiers by native English writers, so they are not able to provide a possible alternative source for the differences they found. They did not compare their results to Dutch essays. A native language is expected to influence an L2. If they would have included Dutch essays, they could have compared the observed differences in the use of intensifiers to the Dutch language itself. It could be possible that the Dutch language itself uses more intensifiers, more of the same intensifiers, or different kind of intensifiers in their writing.

Partington (1993) examined the intensifiers used in persuasives essays by ESL university students. They found that differences between essays that received good ratings and essays that
received poor ratings were found in the number of words, T-units, and density of intensifiers. That is, the former was represented by a high density of these features.

Trudgill (2000) analyzed argumentative texts written by students who worked on the propositional content of their essays and who were taught using a process approach and those who centered on the pragmatic functions of intensifiers by enjoying direct teaching of intensifiers. The results showed that students receiving direct instruction on intensifiers used them more effectively and also became more sensitive to their readers’ needs, thereby making global changes that enhanced their papers.

Martinz (2004) worked on the impact of intensifiers in compositions of Spanish undergraduate. The learners studied in advanced level. Students used various intensifiers and some types used more than the others. As the result of the study showed boosters were the most frequently used then diminishers was used as the second group. He found a positive relationship between the use of intensifiers and writing quality of the learners. He also concluded that the number of intensifiers can affect the writing quality of the learners.

Murphy (2007) selected three groups of university students which include: native English speaker, non-native Chinese students (CNNS) and non-native Japanese students (JNNS). He worked on the similarities and differences of intensifiers, for example, only, so, etc. According to the result, all three groups used intensifiers in their writing but the study investigated the differences in the use of intensifiers among three the groups as well. In the use of different types of intensifiers, an obvious difference was found between three groups of learners. The huge gulf observed in the number of used intensifiers as CNNS used 65, JNNS 40 while native speakers used 86. Therefore, native speakers had the capacity to use intensifiers more than the other groups.

Xiao and Tao, (2007) explored how extralinguistic constraints affect the use of amplifiers in British English, with particular reference to sociolinguistic variables. Specifically, they have examined the distribution of a total of 33 amplifiers across the following categories: register, gender, age, education level, audience gender and age, and publication date, which are encoded in the British National Corpus (BNC), the largest balanced corpus of British English today. They results paint a complex picture. That is, while some tendencies are quite clear – for example, amplifiers appear more frequently in speech than in writing, higher levels of education correlate with higher frequencies of use, and there is an overall decrease in the use of amplifiers over a 30 year period – other areas defy simple generalizations (e.g. gender differences between men and women vary from speech to writing, so do the differences among individual amplifiers and among age groups.

Serhold (2012) examined the use of hedge and booster in academic writing of Swedish advanced learners of English according to the IMRAD model. The results showed that hedges and boosters were used in the Introduction and Discussion more than the remaining sections. Also, the results further revealed that male students used more hedges and fewer boosters than their female counterparts. The findings of previous research show that the use of hedges and boosters is of paramount importance in different articles with different formats. Based on the importance of the use of these meta-discourse markers in different texts, in this study, the use of hedges and boosters in newspaper articles in Iran and the United States of America have been analyzed by comparing Keyhan and Washington post articles during the course of Iran’s eleventh presidential election.

Haris (2014) investigated the utilization of intensifiers among Form Four second language learner (SLL) students in essay writing. The result of the study demonstrated that the misused and overused of intensifiers indeed influenced the flow of the students’ essay writing and makes it less coherent. Hence, intensifiers are clearly significant in someone’s writing and it should emphasize in teaching and learning process. The students need not solely to focus on grammatical or vocabulary meaning, but they also need to focus on the content and the objective of their writing as well.

Saarenppa (2016) claimed that the most popular intensifiers were very, really, so and pretty in his corpora. It turned out that females do use more intensifiers than the males, but the proportion of usage could have been even larger in regard to earlier research. Nonetheless, the hypothesis that females use more intensifiers than males can be confirmed in ICE-CAN and ICE-NZ.

Zutphen (2017) concluded that, although Dutch EFL writers and English writers differed in the use of intensifiers in some categories, Dutch EFL blogs were more similar to English blogs than to Dutch blogs. Dutch EFL writers differed in four categories in the use of intensifiers from native English
writers, while they differed in nine categories from the Dutch writers. Concluding from these results, it seems that the native language only has a limited influence on the use of the type of intensifiers, because the influence was only clearly visible in three categories. In general, Dutch EFL bloggers are capable of using the appropriate types of intensifiers.

Many researchers have conducted studies on the use of hedges and boosters as meta-discourse markers. Many of those studies show cross-cultural and cross-linguistic differences. According to this notion, in a study conducted by (Hu & Cao, 2011), hedges and boosters were examined in the abstracts of applied linguistics articles of English and Chinese-medium journals and also between abstracts of empirical and non-empirical academic articles. To this end, 649 abstracts were collected from 8 journals of applied linguistics. The results showed that there was significant difference between these articles. English-medium journals used more hedges and boosters than non-empirical academic articles. Similarly, (Mirzapour & Mahand, 2012) examined hedges and boosters in native and non-native Library and Information and Computer Science Research Articles. Therefore, 20 research articles were chosen from Iranian and international journals. The findings revealed that hedges and boosters used in Library and Information articles were more than Computer Science Research Articles.

In Tafaroji-Yeganeh, Mellati-Heravi and Sawari’s study (2015), the use of hedges and boosters were examined between four different groups. The results revealed that there is significant relationship between these groups in the use of hedges and boosters. The findings of their study are in consistence with the study conducted by (Mirzapour & Mahand, 2012) in which hedges and boosters were examined in native and non-native Library and Information and Computer Science Research Articles and there were found significant relationships between them. The findings of this study are also consistent with the study done by (Hu & Cao, 2011) in which hedges and boosters were examined in the abstracts of applied linguistics articles of English and Chinese-medium journals and also between abstracts of empirical and non-empirical academic articles and the results showed that there was significant difference between these articles.

Intensifiers are also discussed by a number of other scholars, including Labov 1985, Partington 1993, and Peters 1994, all of whom attribute to intensifiers a key role in the social and emotional expression of speakers. Two key characteristics of intensifiers are (i) versatility and color, which Bolinger (1972:18) refers to as the result of “fevered invention”; and (ii) their capacity for rapid change and the recycling of different forms. These attributes are reflected in the following remarks:

**Versatility and color:**

Degree words 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, p. 18)

... a vehicle for impressing, praising, persuading, insulting, and generally influencing the listener’s reception of the message. (Partington, 1993)

**Constant change:**

The process is always going on, so that new words are in constant requisition, because the old ones are felt to be inadequate. (Stoffel, 1901)

When the strong word is used on light occasion its strength begins to be dissipated, and when the fitting moment for it actually arrives it will no longer serve; familiarity has bred contempt in the hearer, and one must begin again to find a new ‘strong word’. (Robertson 1954)

... As each newcomer has appeared on the scene it has elbowed the other aside. The old favorites do not vanish but retreat to islands bounded by restrictions ... and the newcomer is never fully successful and extends its territory only so far (Bolinger, 1972, p. 18). In English, speakers often resort to other resources to intensify language, such as derivation by prefixation, expressions with negative import, negative polarity idioms, use of expletives and particular lexical words and expressions with an intensifying meaning. Adjective and adverb intensifiers in English have been widely studied (Altenberg, 1991; Bolinger, 1972; Méndez- Naya, 2008; Paradis, 1997; Partington, 1993; Stoffel, 1901; Tagliamonte, 2005; Tao, 2007; to mention just a few) because they serve to express the speakers’ emotions, a language area of special importance in the communication process, but also because of their flexibility or versatility, contextual sensitivity, ongoing change, and the processes of grammaticalization that they undergo in some cases. Most intensifiers, in fact, go through a process of “delexicalization.” Thus, Tagliamonte and Roberts (2005, p. 284–285) explain how the
Original meaning of these lexical items is gradually lost as they evolve into intensifying markers that can combine with a wide range of adjectives. Bolinger (1972, p. 18), Altenberg (1991, p. 128), and Ito and Tagliamonte (2003: 259) also refer to the competition among intensifiers from the Old English period up to the present. Likewise, intensifiers have often been associated with the spoken language (Altenberg, 1991, p. 127; Paradis 1997, p. 34), with women’s speech (Stoffel, 1901; Jespersen, 1922), and with informal and nonstandard varieties (Ito & Tagliamonte, 2003).

Most previous research has focused on amplifiers and some authors, such as Ito and Tagliamonte (2003), use the term intensifier to refer to what Quirk et al. (1985) call amplifiers. Several studies have addressed the question of whether particular groups of speaker have preference in terms of which intensifiers they use and how often they use them. More solid evidence has been presented to suggest that, among adults, younger speakers use intensifiers more often than older speaker (Barbieri 2008, Ito & Tagliamonte 2003), while teenagers appear to employ intensifiers in their speech somewhat less often that adult in their twenties (Nunez Pertejo & Palacios Martinez 2014, Palacios Martinez & Nunez Pertejo, 2012; Tagliamonte, 2008). Social class (Wodak, 2015) and dialect (Biber et al., 1999; Fuch & Gut, 2016; Holmes et al., 1998) are further variable known to influence how frequently intensifiers occur.

2.4.2. The Impact of Age and Gender on the Use of Intensifiers

The ways people use language inside a speech community is very seldom homogeneous, but different social factors intervene to produce variation from speaker to speaker. People’s gender, age, religion or social class can, according to Trudgill (2000, 24), function as social barriers creating distance which prevents the diffusion of linguistic features, such as intensifiers, through the speech community much like actual geographical barriers would. On the other hand, certain linguistic features may be used and even exaggerated to signal identity or membership in a group (ibid., 13). It has been argued that by examining these social factors simultaneously with the intralinguistic patterns of delexicalization ways in which linguistic and social factors interact in language change can be found (Ito and Tagliamonte 2003, 262) and hypotheses about future changes made. The correlation of two factors most frequently discussed with intensifier use are speaker age and gender, even though the use of specific items may no doubt also signal in-group membership (Tagliamonte 2011, 321; Peters 1994) or depend on the educational background of speakers (Ito and Tagliamonte 2003, 275). Unfortunately the latter two factors are not attainable through the data used in this thesis.

2.4.2.1 Age

According to many studies on intensifiers young people often prefer newer, trendy and incoming forms of intensifiers whereas older people resort to a more traditional set (Barnfield & Buchstaller, 2010; Ito & Tagliamonte, 2003; Macaulay, 2006; Stenström et al., 2002). Younger speakers have also been noted to employ intensifiers more frequently in their speech than adults have, meaning a decrease in frequency among older generations (Ito & Tagliamonte 2003). In general, many scholars agree on the role of the young as innovative and exaggerating speakers and the old as more conservative language users (Paradis 2000). Some trendy intensifiers favoured by young in different varieties are well, right, bloody (Stenström et al., 2002), pure, dead (Macaulay, 2006; Barnfield & Buchstaller 2010) and all (Rickford et al., 2007) These hypotheses are supported by the findings in York English, where very was only frequent among the speakers aged 35+ but not among the 17-34 year-olds who favoured really (Ito & Tagliamonte, 2003). Similarly, Tyneside teenagers were found to be using the trendy intensifier dead and slowly increasing their use of really, while the older generation still preferred very (Barnfield and Buchstaller 2010, 267). While dead in Tyneside in the 1990s seems to be a case of age grading, which means that its users discontinued its use when they aged, really has had a more lasting effect on the speech community and still favoured among the young of the 2000s (Chambers, 2003). From the point of view of language change, it would seem that innovations leading to change are usually introduced into the system by young people, as for example Lorenz (2002) argues.

Ito and Tagliamonte found in their study of York English that the frequency of intensification gradually increases from the oldest (66+) to the youngest age group (17-34) (2003, 264). What is more exciting is that they found a generation gap in York English: preferring very as an intensifier meant that
you were over 35, whereas the use of really meant that you are under 35 years of age (2003). Murphy obtained converging results in her study of Irish English spoken by women, indeed, the 20s age group were using really at a frequency of 1923 per million words, the 40s group only 483 per million words and the 70s/80s groups the least with a frequency of 271 (2010, 116). The pattern observed also holds for very, as the youngest 20s group had a substantially lower frequency (961) than the two older age groups, 40s (4347) and 70s/80s (2658) (Murphy, 2010).

2.4.2.2. Gender

One of the explanations for why men and women use language in different ways, are the expectations, roles and attitudes that society impacts on different genders (Trudgill 2000). For example, one of such hypotheses of difference is that women use emotional and emphatic language more than men, which is why they would also use more intensifiers (Tagliamonte & Roberts 2005). Labov (1984) and Partington (1993) touch on this in stating that intensifiers are central means of emphasis and therefore used more by women. Stoffel (1901, 101) already established a connection between women and passionate forms such as so, stating that “ladies are notoriously fond of hyperbole” and that so is “a purely feminine expression”. Jespersen (1922) goes further by assigning women an important role in language change because their hyperbolical expression drives the intensifier system forward. Even though it is argued (e.g. Jespersen, 1922; Trudgill 2000) that women subconsciously tend to use more conservative and closer-to-standard forms than men, Labov (1990, 215) has also shown that whenever there is a situation of linguistic change, women innovate new forms and use more incoming forms than men. Even though Stoffel’s and Jespersen’s hypotheses are based on casual observations and stereotypes rather than systematic empirical analyses (Smith 1985, 14), they are one of the earliest accounts on the differences in speaking styles between sexes, and influenced a wide array of studies on intensifiers later on. More recently, empirical analysis has revealed some aspects of the way women and men use intensifiers. In a study on the TV-series Friends, Tagliamonte and Roberts (2005) found that the female characters indeed used the incoming form so more than twice as often and really markedly more often than the male characters did. They also analysed so in the data to see whether it collocates predominantly with adjectives of emotion, and found that the correlation can be seen in the speech of both genders, but more markedly in the female characters’ speech. They concluded, therefore, that so might be tied to both emotional and female language.

Putting the effects of age and gender together, it could be predicted that young women lead the change in the intensifier system by being the first to frequent a new incoming form in their speech. The different studies have not, however, always been unequivocally in support of this claim. In Toronto, the 13-29-year old women seem to have introduced so into the system, but interestingly, the young men lead in the use of the intensifier pretty (Tagliamonte, 2008). In Tyneside English, the 1990s trend dead was led by young female speakers, whereas their role in introducing really, another incoming form, was not markedly different from that of male adolescents (Barnfield & Buchstaller 2010). The factors affecting intensifier use in York English were also more varied than what the arguments about young female-led change assume. With the incoming intensifier really, gender was a significant factor only in the middle age group, whereas among the youngest age group the level of education played a more important role, since both young women and educated men used the form frequently while uneducated young men did not (Ito & Tagliamonte 2003).

Both speaker age and gender are common social variants in the studies on intensification, because the patterns discovered are thought to mirror the sequential delexicalization process (e.g. Tagliamonte, 2008; Macaulay, 2006). Whenever the age groups are differentiated in their selection or intensifiers, a rapid change is probably taking place in the intensifier system, as was the case in York, where the significant point of change was found between the young and middle-aged generations (Ito & Tagliamonte 2003). This way it is has been possible to single out the age group responsible for the change in the speech community. The most fully delexicalized intensifiers are found to be evenly distributed between genders, such as very in Toronto English (Tagliamonte 2008, 383). On the other hand, forms that are in the process of becoming delexicalized are often well diffused across the whole speech community with their popularity fluctuating in time unsystematically, such as is the case with really in Toronto (ibid., 388).
2.4. Chapter Summary
In conclusion, what is meant by intensifiers in this thesis is a fusion of the meanings defined by the grammarians. The purpose is to concentrate on those items that have either a maximizing or a boosting effect (Quirk et al., 1985). To the extent the literature review shows, there are significant differences and similarities between frequency and use of intensifiers applied by native and non-native EFL learners. Non-native English speaker and native English speakers’ Applied Linguistics research articles should be analyzed to help non-native writers to come up with a more native like English language competence and performance. The present study aimed to explore to see whether non-native speaker discourse competence could approach native speakers’ discourse competence in the term of the use of intensifiers.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY
3.1. Overview
The thesis research questions were outlined in Chapter One along with the aims of the study. Relevant literature was touched upon in Chapter Two. This chapter provides details of methodology undertaken to collect data to analyze the research questions. The research problem was to find out whether there are significant differences in the frequency of intensifiers across non-native English speakers’ (NNS) and native English speakers’ (NS) Applied Linguistics research articles corpora. This chapter, which focuses on the methodology employed in the present study, is concerned with methods and procedures used in the study for data collection and analysis. The first part of this chapter, which focuses on the methodological framework, includes a detailed description of Quirk et al’s classification of intensifiers. The second section deals with the materials including 60 applied linguistic research articles and the concordance software TextStat. The next part explains how the data were collected and statistically analyzed.

3.2. Methodological Framework
The selection of the intensifiers for the study is based on Quirk et al.’s (1999, 2006) taxonomy of intensifiers due to the fact that it seems to be the most comprehensive classification in written discourse. Quirk et al (1985) classified intensifiers into the following subcategories:

Amplifiers
Maximizers as completely, absolutely, altogether, entirely, extremely, fully, perfectly, quite, (a) thoroughly, totally, utterly, in all respects, the intensifying use of most.
Boosters as highly, badly, bitterly, deeply, enormously, far, greatly, heartily, intensely, (b) much, severely, so, strongly, terribly, violently, well, a great deal, a good deal, a lot, by far, exclamatory how, the intensifying use of more.

Downtoners
Approximators as, nearly, virtually, almost, practically, as good as, all, but. (a)
Compromisers as kind of, sort of, quite, rather, enough, sufficiently, more or less. (b)
Diminishers as slightly, mildly, partially, partly, quite, somewhat, in part, in some respect, (c) to some extent, a bit, a little, least (of all), only, merely, simply, just, but.
Minimizers as barely, hardly, little, scarcely, in the least, in the slightest, at all, a bit. (d)

3.3. Material
The material used for the study consisted of two comparable corpora of Applied Linguistics research articles taken from electronic versions of the major US and Iranian journals, representing respectively Native English (NE) and Non-native English (NNE). Since the study compares and contrasts NNS and NS corpora in their employment of intensifiers, it is necessary that the data under investigation are comparable. To achieve this, the variables such as educational stage and, text type have been controlled in collecting the corpora. As the texts used in the corpora were available in electronic format, the compilation process had to follow a “clean-text” policy (Sinclair, 1991, p.21), keeping the text clean of any additional marks embedded in the corpora. This means that texts downloaded from the Internet may include minute quantities of additional information (i.e. photos, tables, ads, etc.) or additional texts such as links (back, home, etc.) which should be excluded from the corpora because they are not part of the major body of the articles. To meet this condition, the
three corpora were readily saved in distinct files of .txt format which contained only plain texts and thus speeded up the following processing of the data. The corpora of the groups NS and NNS were analyzed with the aid of concordance software TextStat which can provide the number of times intensifier appear in the corpora (raw frequency). In creating the two corpora, it is essential to pay attention both to quantitative and qualitative considerations so that the compiled corpora had adequate size and were originally produced by native/non-native writers. Based on the quantitative consideration, the current aspects of the collected text archives provided sufficient tokens of all the categories of intensifiers, guaranteeing minimal representativeness and reliability of the use of these linguistic elements in NE and NNE corpora. The two corpora were remarkably homogenous in terms of the variety of the English language, the total number of words and the number of the tokens of intensifiers found in each one.

Table 3.1 Description of NE and NNE corpora of research article

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Corpus</th>
<th>Total Words</th>
<th>No. of tokens of intensifiers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Native English (NE)</td>
<td>125,842</td>
<td>6582</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-native English (NNE)</td>
<td>128,665</td>
<td>7174</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The NE corpus consisted of around 125,842 words altogether; 6582 tokens of intensifiers were found in the corpus. The NNE corpus amounted to approximately 128,665 words. There were 7174 tokens of intensifiers in this corpus. Table 1 shows a summary of the general properties of the corpora used in the study.

3.4. Processing the Material

The method used to process the data in this study can be labeled as Corpus-based Contrastive Interlanguage Analysis (CCIA) in that it is both corpus-based and contrastive. Following the approach employed in corpus-assisted discourses studies (CADS), the intensifiers in the corpora were concordance of using automated analysis. Also, the concordance outputs were subsequently checked by manual analysis so as to prevent introducing any noise into the data. Additionally, the Contrastive Interlanguage Analysis (CIA) method was used to compare the frequency of intensifiers in Native English (NE) and Non-native English (NNE texts as the first step in conducting the corpus-based analysis of the frequency of intensifiers, the concordance program TextStat was used to concordance intensifiers in the each corpus. To achieve this quantitative step, intensifiers were searched as Key Words in Context (KWIC) and the frequency of each one was calculated.

The concordance of intensifiers can be seen in the following examples showing the screenshots of the concordances of “extremely” as maximizers, “highly” as boosters, “but” as approximators, “rather” as compromisers, “only” as diminishes and “little” as minimizers.

![Figure 3.1. The Use of “Extremely” as a Maximizer](image-url)
In addition, they argue that students in this technique are highly dependent on teachers who introduce the general topic of the study an curriculum while the other areas of the curriculum remain highly competitive and teacher-centered. So, the educational culture as a whoherent. The results suggest that thematic organization is a highly effective and valuable technique in writing as it enhances connectivity between native and non-native speakers, and that even highly organized texts by learners are still far from native speaker norms.

Figure 3.2. The Use of “highly” as a Booster

Figure 3.2.
The Use of “highly” as a Booster

students’ familiarity with formal features of citation but their ignorance of the functional features. Alireza Jalilifar 1. Intr
do not want only to express themselves, and their own work, but they also need to refer to the works of others, their findings, and the interest not only to information scientists (White 2004), but also to English for academic purposes (EAP) scholars (e.g., Swales 19)
ciscourse is not only to acknowledge the works of others but also to promote the writer’s own knowledge claims. Recently, a number

title discussion of the reasons why writers opt for one form rather than any other, and limitations of generalizations to other discipliner the cited concept and proposition to an author (source) rather than to introduce the creator of that concept (origin). In the theses their claims within the text by emphasizing the researcher rather than the research whereas the latter prefer to draw on information, cements to adopt a laissez faire approach to citing other works rather than develop an awareness of what type they deploy. On the other hand

Figure 3.3. The Use of “but” as an Approximator

Figure 3.3.
The Use of “but” as an Approximator

In writing for academic purposes, researchers do not want only to express themselves, and their own work, but they also need to refer distinguishing feature of academic writing is of interest not only to information scientists (White 2004), but also to English for academe the role of citation in scientific discourse is not only to acknowledge the works of others but also to promote the writer’s own refine the operation of citation patterns in one discipline only—applied linguistics. Finally, since a majority of citation studies

Figure 3.4. The Use of “rather” as a Compromiser

Figure 3.4.
The Use of “rather” as a Compromiser

of certain types of citation and not others, small corpus, little discussion of the reasons why writers opt for one form rather than an considering the large number of MA theses written every year, little citational work has been done even though studying the way that study seems to help students to get the necessary information with little effort. Therefore, these topics were chosen to reinforce students’ sessions indicate that students received much peer input and little input from the teacher because of the existing interaction and commun

Figure 3.5. The Use of “only” as a Diminisher

Figure 3.5.
The Use of “only” as a Diminisher

(Consequently, it could be that too much peer input and little teacher input can cause student to acquire incorrect language skills

Figure 3.6. The Use of “little” as a Minimizer

Figure 3.6.
The Use of “little” as a Minimizer
A supplementary aspect of the processing of the corpora is the Contrastive Interlanguage Analysis (CIA) method. According to Granger (1993), this method entails two types of comparison:
– Comparison of native speaker (NS) productions vs. non-native speaker (NNS) productions to highlight the features of non-native ness including overuse, underuse, and misuse;
– Comparison of two or more varieties of NNS productions to determine whether non-native features are L1-specific (i.e. transfer-related errors), or whether they are universal (i.e. shared by several groups of NNSs), which would point to a developmental or interlanguage issue. Adopting the NS-NNS comparison, the present study intended to compare the frequency of the two categories of intensifiers in NE with that of NNE to clarify features of non-nativeness, if any.

3.5. Chapter Summary
This chapter elaborated the procedures of the study. The next chapter reports the results for the six research questions.

4. RESEARCH RESULT
4.1. Overview
Chapter Three identified the methodologies that were selected to empirically investigate the research questions. This chapter reports on the outcomes of data-gathering phase. The data collected are analyzed in relation to the overarching research questions posed in this study: Is there any significant difference in the frequency of intensifiers in non-native English speakers’ (NNS) and native English speakers’ (NS) Applied Linguistics research articles corpora?

The design of the present study was descriptive in order to compare frequency counts and compute Chi-square of intensifier across non-native English speakers’ (NNES) and native English speakers’ (NES) Applied Linguistics research articles corpora. It is done since one of the basic items that can facilitate to make a piece of well-organized writing is the use of intensifiers. Two corpora of Applied Linguistics research articles were collected and the frequency of intensifiers were computed with the aid of a concordance program and compared. Prior to dealing with the in-depth analysis of the data, taking a look at the comprehensive structure of the collected data is necessary. Table 4.1 shows the frequency counts of a collection of markers in six extensive classes of intensifiers (i.e. maximizers, boosters, approximator, compromiser, diminisher, and minimizer) across NE and NNE (i.e. L2 English by Persian speakers) corpora.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Intensifier</th>
<th>Tokens in Native English (NE)</th>
<th>Tokens in Non-native English (NNE)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Maximizers</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Completely</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Absolutely</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Altogether</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Entirely</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extremely</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fully</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perfectly</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quite</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thoroughly</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Totally</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Utterly</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>in all respects</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Most</td>
<td>177</td>
<td>169</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>262</td>
<td>199</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Boosters

Highly        24

Total         28
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Comparative Adverb</th>
<th>Total Compromisers</th>
<th>Total Diminishers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Badly</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bitterly</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deeply</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enormously</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Far</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greatly</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intensely</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heartily</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Much</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Severely</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>So</td>
<td>1313</td>
<td>1353</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Terribly</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Violently</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Well</td>
<td>94</td>
<td>121</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A lot</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A great deal</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A good deal</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exclamatory</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>By far</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More</td>
<td>552</td>
<td>611</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>2110</strong></td>
<td><strong>2255</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Compromisers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Comparative Adverb</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>kind of</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sort of</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Altogether</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quite</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rather</td>
<td>112</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enough</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sufficiently</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More or less</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>183</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Diminishers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Comparative Adverb</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Slightly</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mildly</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Partially</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Partly</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quite</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somewhat</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In part</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In some respect</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To some extent</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A bit</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A little</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Least (of all)</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Only</td>
<td>242</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Merely</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Simply</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Just</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>But</td>
<td>372</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>225</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4.2. Descriptive Statistics of the Frequency of Intensifiers

The data in Table 4.1 are illustrated in Figures 4.1, showing respectively the frequency counts of maximizers, boosters, approximators, compromisers, diminishes and minimizers in the two corpora, and thus facilitating the comparison of the frequency of all intensifiers in NE and NNE research articles corpora.

4.3. Results of Research Question 1

The first research question posed in this study was: Is there any significant difference between the frequency of maximizers in native and Iranian non-native English speakers’ Applied Linguistics research articles? Its corresponding null hypothesis will assume that there is not any significant difference in the frequency of maximizers across non-native English speakers’ (NNES) and native English speakers’ (NES) Applied Linguistics research articles corpora. To test this hypothesis, Mann-Whitney U test, a non-parametric alternative to independent-samples t-test, is the appropriate statistical test to address the question.
Table 4.2 Mann-Whitney U Test Exploring Between-Group Difference in the Use of Maximizers across NE and NNE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mann-Whitney U</td>
<td>78.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wilcoxon W</td>
<td>169.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Z</td>
<td>-.34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
<td>.73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exact Sig. [2*(1-tailed Sig.)]</td>
<td>.76</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As shown in Table 4.2, the main values needed to look at in the output of the Mann-Whitney U test are the Z value and the significance level, which is given as Asymp. Sig (2-tailed). In the Mann-Whitney U test exploring the difference in the frequency of maximizers across NE and NNE, the Z value is -.34 with a significance level of p = .73. Since the probability value (p) is not less than or equal to .05, there is no statistically significant difference in the use of maximizers across NE and NNE corpora.

4.4. Results of Research Question 2

The second research question posed in this study was: Is there any significant difference between the frequency of boosters in native and Iranian non-native English speakers’ Applied Linguistics research articles? Its corresponding null hypothesis will assume that there is not any significant difference in the frequency of boosters across non-native English speakers’ (NNES) and native English speakers’ (NES) Applied Linguistics research articles corpora. To test this hypothesis, the Mann-Whitney U test, was run:

Table 4.3 Mann-Whitney U Test Exploring Between-Group Difference in the Use of Boosters across NE and NNE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mann-Whitney U</td>
<td>239.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wilcoxon W</td>
<td>492.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Z</td>
<td>-.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
<td>.94</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

According to Table 4.3, in the Mann-Whitney U test exploring the difference in the frequency of boosters across NE and NNE, the Z value is -.07 with a significance level of p = .94. Since the probability value (p) is not less than or equal to .05, there is no statistically significant difference in the use of boosters across NE and NNE corpora.

4.5. Results of Research Question 3

The third research question posed in this study was: Is there any significant difference between the frequency of approximators in native and Iranian non-native English speakers’ Applied Linguistics research articles? Its corresponding null hypothesis will assume that there is not any significant difference in the frequency of approximators across non-native English speakers’ (NNES) and native English speakers’ (NES) Applied Linguistics research articles corpora. To test this hypothesis, Mann-Whitney U test, a non-parametric alternative to independent-samples t-test, was used:
Table 4.4 Mann-Whitney U Test Exploring Between-Group Difference in the Use of Approximators across NE and NNE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mann-Whitney U</td>
<td>24.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wilcoxon W</td>
<td>52.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Z</td>
<td>-.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
<td>.95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exact Sig. [2*(1-tailed Sig.)]</td>
<td>1.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As given in Table 4.4, in the Mann-Whitney U test exploring the difference in the frequency of approximators across NE and NNE, the Z value is -0.06 with a significance level of p = .95. Therefore, there is no statistically significant difference in the use of approximators across NE and NNE corpora.

4.6. Results of Research Question 4

The forth research question posed in this study was: Is there any significant difference between the frequency of compromiser in native and Iranian non-native English speakers’ Applied Linguistics research articles? Its corresponding null hypothesis will assume that there is not any significant difference in the frequency of compromisers across non-native English speakers’ (NNES) and native English speakers’ (NES) Applied Linguistics research articles corpora. To test this hypothesis, Mann-Whitney U test, a non-parametric alternative to independent-samples t-test, was employed:

Table 4.5 Mann-Whitney U Test Exploring Between-Group Difference in the Use of Compromisers across NE and NNE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mann-Whitney U</td>
<td>24.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wilcoxon W</td>
<td>52.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Z</td>
<td>-.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
<td>.95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exact Sig. [2*(1-tailed Sig.)]</td>
<td>1.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

According to Table 4.5, in the Mann-Whitney U test exploring the difference in the frequency of compromisers across NE and NNE, the Z value is -0.06 with a significance level of p = .95, suggesting that there is no statistically significant difference in the use of compromisers across NE and NNE corpora.

4.7. Results of Research Question 5

The fifth research question posed in this study was: Is there any significant difference between the frequency of diminishers in native and Iranian non-native English speakers’ Applied Linguistics research articles? Its corresponding null hypothesis will assume that there is not any significant difference in the frequency of diminishers across non-native English speakers’ (NNES) and native English speakers’ (NES) Applied Linguistics research articles corpora. To test this hypothesis, Mann-Whitney U test, a non-parametric alternative to independent-samples t-test, was used:

Table 4.6 Mann-Whitney U Test Exploring Between-Group Difference in the Use of Diminishers across NE and NNE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mann-Whitney U</td>
<td>118.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wilcoxon W</td>
<td>271.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Z</td>
<td>-.90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
<td>.37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exact Sig. [2*(1-tailed Sig.)]</td>
<td>.37</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As illustrated in Table 4.6, in the Mann-Whitney U test exploring the difference in the frequency of diminishers across NE and NNE, the Z value is -0.90 with a significance level of p = .37,
indicating that there is no statistically significant difference in the use of diminishers across NE and NNE corpora.

4.8. Results of Research Question 6

The sixth research question posed in this study was: Is there any significant difference between the frequency of minimizers in native and Iranian non-native English speakers’ Applied Linguistics research articles? Its corresponding null hypothesis will assume that there is not any significant difference in the frequency of minimizers across non-native English speakers’ (NNES) and native English speakers’ (NES) Applied Linguistics research articles corpora. To test this hypothesis, a Mann-Whitney U test, a non-parametric alternative to independent-samples t-test, was employed:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mann-Whitney U</td>
<td>29.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wilcoxon W</td>
<td>65.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Z</td>
<td>-.28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
<td>.78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exact Sig. [2*(1-tailed Sig.)]</td>
<td>.80</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Based on Table 4.7, in the Mann-Whitney U test exploring the difference in the frequency of minimizers across NE and NNE, the Z value is -.28 with a significance level of p = .78. Therefore, there is no statistically significant difference in the use of minimizers across NE and NNE corpora.

4.8. Chapter Summary

The present study examined the frequency of intensifiers in Iranian non-native English speakers’ and native English speakers’ Applied Linguistics research articles. Boosters are the most frequently used intensifiers in NE and NNE corpora. Moreover, the overall frequency of intensifiers in NNE corpus is nearly equal to the frequency level of intensifiers in NE corpus.

The findings of the study are:

Findings 1: There is not any significant difference between the frequency of maximizers in native and Iranian non-native English speakers’ Applied Linguistics research articles.

Findings 2: There is not any significant difference between the frequency of boosters in native and Iranian non-native English speakers’ Applied Linguistics research articles.

Findings 3: There is not any significant difference between the frequency of approximators in native and Iranian non-native English speakers’ Applied Linguistics research articles.

Findings 4: There is not any significant difference between the frequency of compromisers in native and Iranian non-native English speakers’ Applied Linguistics research articles.

Findings 5: There is not any significant difference between the frequency of diminishers in native and Iranian non-native English speakers’ Applied Linguistics research articles.

Findings 6: There is not any significant difference between the frequency of minimizers in native and Iranian non-native English speakers’ Applied Linguistics research articles.

There is no significant difference in the frequency of intensifiers in Native English (NE) and Non-Native English (NNE) corpora, suggesting that Iranian advanced speakers of English have approximated the native level in using all categories of intensifiers.

5. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

5.1. Overview

The present study aimed to analyze the frequency of intensifiers that includes maximizers, boosters, approximators, compromisers, diminishers, minimizers across non-native English speakers’ (NNS) and native English speakers’ (NS) Applied Linguistics research articles corpora. The summary of the results elaborated in Chapter Four is once again touched upon here: (a) boosters are the most
frequently used intensifiers in NE and NNE corpora. Moreover, the overall use of intensifiers in the NNE is nearly equal to the frequency level of intensifiers in NE corpus. (b) There is not any significant difference in the frequency of intensifiers includes maximizers, boosters, approximators, compromisers, diminishers, minimizers in non-native English speakers’ (NNS) and native English speakers’ (NS) Applied Linguistics research articles corpora.

5.2. Discussion

The first finding of the study shows that the most frequent maximizers in non-native English speakers’ (NNS) Applied Linguistics research articles corpora is “most”. Similarly, in native English speakers’ (NS) Applied Linguistics research articles the same phenomenon was considered. Although, it is indicated that the use of maximizers across non-native English speakers’ (NNS) and native English speakers’ (NS) Applied Linguistics research articles are not statistically and descriptively different, Iranian EFL teachers should pay more attention to the role intensifiers (in this case contrastive ones) play in negotiation of meaning and provide more native like texts for MA and PhD students at the universities.

The second finding of the study shows that the most frequent boosters in non-native English speakers’ (NNS) Applied Linguistics research articles is “so”. Similarly, in native English speakers’ (NS) Applied Linguistics research articles the same phenomenon was considered. Therefore, it is indicated that the use of boosters across non-native English speakers’ (NNS) and native English speakers’ (NS) Applied Linguistics research articles are not statistically and descriptively different. Since boosters signal a quasi-parallel relationship between S2 and S1 so that S2 constitutes an elaboration of S1, Iranian EFL teachers should pay more attention to the role of intensifiers and provide more native like texts for students at the universities.

The third finding of the study shows that the most frequent approximator in non-native English speakers’ (NNS) Applied Linguistics research articles is “all”. Therefore, it is indicated that the use of approximators across non-native English speakers’ (NNS) and native English speakers’ (NS) Applied Linguistics research articles are not statistically and descriptively different. Since approximators signal a quasi-parallel relationship between S2 and S1 so that S2 constitutes an elaboration of S1, But Iranian EFL teachers should pay more attention to the role of intensifiers and provide more native like texts for students at the universities.

The fourth finding of the study shows that the most frequent compromisers in non-native English speakers’ (NNS) and native English speakers’ (NS) Applied Linguistics research articles is “rather”. Therefore, it is indicated that the use of compromisers across non-native English speakers’ (NNS) and native English speakers’ (NS) Applied Linguistics research articles are not statistically and descriptively different. Since compromisers signal that some event in S2 is temporally related to some occurrence, teachers should pay more attention to the role of intensifiers and provide more native like texts for students at the universities.

The fifth finding of the study shows that the most frequent diminishers in non-native English speakers’ (NNS) and native English speakers’ (NS) Applied Linguistics research articles is “but”. Therefore, it is indicated that the use of diminishers across non-native English speakers’ (NNS) and native English speakers’ (NS) Applied Linguistics research articles are not statistically and descriptively different. Since diminisers signal that some event in S2 is temporally related to some occurrence, teachers should pay more attention to the role of intensifiers and provide more native like texts for students at the universities.

The sixth finding of the study shows that the most frequent minimizers in non-native English speakers’ (NNS) Applied Linguistics research articles is “little”. Similarly, in native English speakers’ (NS) Applied Linguistics research articles the same phenomenon was considered. Therefore, it is indicated that the use of intensifiers across non-native English speakers’ (NNS) and native English speakers’ (NS) Applied Linguistics research articles are not statistically and descriptively different. Since minimizers signal a quasi-parallel relationship between S2 and S1 so that S2 constitutes an elaboration of S1, Iranian EFL teachers should pay more attention to the role of intensifiers and provide more native like texts for students at the universities.
The seventh finding of the study shows that the most frequent intensifiers in non-native English speakers’ (NNS) and native English speakers’ (NS) Applied Linguistics research articles are boosters. Furthermore, it is indicated that the use of all types of intensifiers in non-native English speakers’ (NNS) Applied Linguistics research articles are the same.

In the same vein, Talebinejad and Namdar in their (2011) study exploring the role of intensifiers in Iranian High School English text books have concluded that boosters are more frequent in fourth grade textbook than the others. Therefore, the findings of this study verify their claims.

In a similar study, Martinez (2004) worked on the impact of intensifiers in compositions of Spanish undergraduate. The learners studied in advanced level. Students used various intensifiers and some types used more than the others. As the result of the study showed boosters were the most frequently used then diminishers was used as the second group. He found a positive relationship between the use of intensifiers and writing quality of the learners. He also concluded that the number of intensifiers can affect the writing quality of the learners. But no significant difference was found between native and ESL students in the frequency of the intensifiers.

Tuomas Saarenppa (2016) claimed that the most popular intensifiers were very, really, so and pretty in his corpora. It turned out that females do use more intensifiers than the males.

Comparing the frequency of intensifiers used by native and non-native speakers of English, Murphey (2007) examined 135 expository essays by Singaporean secondary students. They found that there is no difference between native and ESL students in the frequency of the use of intensifiers.

Partington (1993) examined the intensifiers used in persuasive essays by ESL university students. They found that differences between essays that received good ratings and essays that received poor ratings were found in the number of words, T-units, and density of intensifiers. That is, the former was represented by a high density of these features.

Some studies revealed other factors in related to intensifiers: For example, Drescher’s (2003) study of the TOEFL 2000 Spoken and Written Academic Language (T2K-SWAL) Corpus shows that men use significantly more amplifiers than women, while Vasilieva (2004) also finds that men use boosting and hedging adverbs more frequently than women in the instructional computer-related texts. Still yet, others emphasize that intensifiers are not a unified category as far as gendered use is concerned.

De Haan and Van der Haagen (2012) used intensifiers to identify differences between the language use of native English and Dutch EFL students. They found that EFL writers used more intensifiers than native writers.

### 5.3. Conclusion

Intensifiers have a great effect on the cohesion and coherence of writing. “Intensifiers tell us not only about the linguistic properties (e.g. semantic and pragmatic meanings, source, functions) of a set of frequently used expressions, and the organization of social interactions and situations in which they are used, but also about the cognitive, expressive, social, and textual competence of those who use them. Because the functions of intensifiers are so broad, any and all analyses of intensifiers - even those focusing on only a relatively narrow aspect of their meaning or a small portion of their uses - can teach us something about their role in discourse.

Although many studies on the role and use of intensifiers have been done, little attention was paid to their comparison in non-native English speakers’ (NNS) and native English speakers’ (NS) Applied Linguistics research articles. This study was to discover and describe the differences and similarities across maximizers, boosters, approximators, compromisers, diminishers, minimizers and all types of intensifiers use in Applied Linguistics research articles developed by native (English) and non-native (Iranian) authors.

According to the achieved results, it was found that ‘boosters have been employed most frequently in non-native English speakers’ (NNS) and native English speakers’ (NS) Applied Linguistics research articles followed by ‘approximators’ ‘diminishers’, ‘maximizers’, ‘compromisers’ and then ‘minimizers’.

To the extent this study was concerned, the findings confirmed that there seems to be no noticeable difference in categories of Quirk’s taxonomy of intensifiers across the articles produced by Iranian non-native English speakers’ (NNS) and native English speakers’ (NS). In other words, it can
be concluded that maximizers, boosters, approximators, compromisers, diminishers, minimizers are utilized similarly in compared texts.

One of the key findings of the study concern the obvious lack of the transfer of intensifiers patterns from advanced NNSs’ L1 to L2. Ruling out the effect of L1 transfer can present some challenges to Kaplan’s (1966) contrastive rhetoric. Kaplan (1966) suggested that all written languages contain a variety of organizational patterns, and that NSs recognize which patterns to use and the consequences of their choices. In other words, he implied that NNSs do not possess a complete inventory of possible alternatives, do not recognize the discoursal constraints of those alternatives, and do not know what constraints a choice imposes on the text. However, the Corpus-based Contrastive Interlanguage Analysis (CCIA) approach adopted in the present study convincingly evinced that advanced NNSs use each category of intensifiers as frequently as NSs do, and do not significantly overuse or underuse these elements in their writings. Although it can’t be denied that L2 writers are prone to reproduce L1 patterns of text organization at the beginning and lower-intermediate proficiency levels, advanced NNSs seem to have access to some kind of discourse repertoire which is triggered upon long-term exposure to sufficient samples of L2 written discourse.

5.4. Implications of the Study

Intensifiers influence the quality of writing since intensifiers improve the cohesion and coherence of the writing. Therefore, the results of the study support the findings of many researchers who displayed that intensifiers improve the quality of language. Briefly, intensifiers play a vital role in constructing the quality of a text—written or spoken, which means that they improve the quality of a piece of writing if they are used purposefully and properly. The findings of the present study showed that Iranian non-native English speakers’ and native English speakers’ do not use a wide range of intensifiers and that they use some particular intensifiers like “but” in a significantly higher manner than other. This rather overuses of “but can be a sign of weakness on the part of these learners in their writings. This implies that teachers can work more on incorporating the use of intensifiers in their teaching. In other words, teachers need to raise the students’ awareness of textual norms of practice and sensitize them to the use of particular devices and their frequency of use in particular types of texts. This way, the student would learn how to produce texts which have different purposes and structures, and which types of intensifiers are more commonly used in which particular text types, when writing in English. In addition, the lack of the relationship between writing quality and intensifiers use can imply that the use of intensifiers has not been done appropriately and purposefully by undergraduate EFL learners. Thus, teachers can work not only on the quantity of intensifiers but also on their quality. They would need to raise the students’ awareness of the appropriate use of individual categories of intensifiers and how they can be used in creating a coherent text. They would also need to let the learners realize that intensifiers are not the only textual devices which can add to the quality of a text. Rather, there are other elements that can make a text more cohesive and thus add to the quality of the texts. Hence, the results of the study are capable to be implemented in the curriculum courses, in teaching procedures for teachers and teachers’ trainers as well as for learners to improve their writing ability.

5.5. Limitations of the Study

The present study has several limitations. First, it is a corpus-based study and the size of the designed corpus is relatively small and it is comprised of essays written by non-native English speakers and native English speakers. Second, sample texts used in the corpora were necessarily narrowed down to Applied Linguistics research articles corpora; hence the findings may not be positively applied to other types of research articles. Third, This study analyzed intensifiers based on the Quirk’s (1999, 2006) taxonomy of intensifiers and it excludes other intensifiers categories such as Halliday and Hasan’s (1976) additive, adversative, Quirk et al’s (1985) listing, summative, appositional, resultative, inferential, contrastive and transitional adverbial connectors, etc. A further limitation, also regarding the scope of the data, relates to the corpus representing NNE, which was confined to L2 English by Persian speakers, and excluded corpora of any other L1 backgrounds.
5.6. Suggestions for Further Research

Owing to the fact that writing skill is one of the two productive language skills which are highly dependent on coherence and cohesion and among the diverse influential variables the role of semantic markers among intensifiers is prominent, larger corpus-based studies on the use of intensifiers may be carried out in the future. Very simply, a replication study could compare larger corpus of a variety of English research articles.

Future research may also investigate intensifiers in other writing genres regarding the individual use of intensifiers analyzing the relationships between the writing genre and the types of the used intensifiers. Also, other researches can be conducted to analyze intensifiers in Applied Linguistic research articles based on the different categories other than Quirk’s (1999, 2006) taxonomy of intensifiers. Finally, in a study similar to the present study, intensifiers can be analyzed in articles written by a variety L1 backgrounds.

6. REFERENCES