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### **LEARNER CORPUS PECULIARITIES OF THE ENGLISH NOMINATIVE UNITS**

*У даній статті розглянуто загальні та диференційні ознаки вживання номінативних одиниць у сучасній англійській мові. Порівняльний аналіз проведено серед носіїв мови та студентів, вивчаючих англійську, як іноземну.*

*В данной статье рассматриваются общие и дифференцированные особенности употребления номинативных единиц в современном английском языке. Сравнительный анализ проведён среди носителей языка и студентов, изучающих английский, как иностранный.*

*In present paper the general and differential features of the nominative units usage in Modern English are revealed. Comparative analysis is made among native speakers and students who study English as a foreign language.*

With electronic text corpora becoming increasingly accessible for computational analysis [3], there have been a number of studies over the last decade in the field of intensification or related areas. This kind of adverbial usage had been described previously. D. Bolinger [5] and U. Bäcklund [4] among others, have already provided relatively detailed accounts. Before these more recent studies, incidentally, the field seems to have been largely the domain of Germanic scholars.

In this article we represent one of the studies carried out on material from the International Corpus of Learner English (ICLE), supplemented by data from younger learners and native speakers. It addresses the following main goals:

- a) a functional account of adjective intensification in present-day written English;
- b) the exploration of native vs. non-native usage and the notion of idiomaticity.

At first glance, the grammar of intensification seems to be fairly straightforward; intensifiers are often considered to be a syntactic class that is easy to delimit. As D.Allerton points out: “The syntactic class of intensifiers has, in many modern linguistic works, been separated off from the large traditional class of adverbs in recognition of the fact that some words (such as *very (good)*, *relatively (weak)*) occur exclusively or predominantly as modifiers of adjectives (and also of adjective-based adverbs) while others (such as *greatly (appreciate)*) seem to be specialized in the role of modifiers of the verb within the verb phrase” [1, p. 6].

B. Altenberg [2, p. 128] basically distinguishes the same two types and adds three minor usages to the first one, namely those acting as premodifiers of:

- determiners (e.g. *absolutely no reason*),
- pronouns (*absolutely nothing*) and
- prepositional phrases (*quite at ease*).

The differentiation between intensification a) within a clause constituent and b) on the clause level, conforms with most of the standard descriptions. J. Sinclair [13, p. 294], for example, speak of *sub-modifiers* versus *emphasizing adverbs*, whereas R. Quirk et al. [11] distinguish even further between *intensifiers*, *emphasizers* and *focusing subjuncts*.

On the whole, R. Quirk et al.'s classification has, of course, been highly influential. Their use of the term *intensifier*, however, has given rise to frequent misunderstanding, referring, as it does, to an adverbial class which not only comprises 'amplifiers', such as *strongly*, *completely* or *infinitely*, but also 'downtoners', such as *rather*, *slightly* or *scarcely*. The later, of course, tend to have a lowering, mitigating effect on the meaning of their focus, which is not readily inferred from the category label *intensifier*.

The Quirkian terminology seems to have been largely inspired by D. Bolinger, who already stressed: "I use the term *intensifier* for any device that scales a quality, whether up or down or somewhere between the two" [5, p. 17].

The seeming structural simplicity of intensification and the clarity that the terminological distinctions suggest is set off against its semantic-functional and stylistic complexity. Being emphatic conveys a great deal about a speaker's or writer's point of view, i.e. the importance and personal involvement they assign to quality value judgments and their own propositions. A. Partington writes that intensification is a direct indication of a speaker's desire to use and exploit the expression of hyperbole [10, p. 178]. In other words, she/he tells the listener that what is being said is sincerely vouched for. The importance of intensification in the communicative process is that it is a vehicle for impressing, praising, persuading, insulting, and generally influencing the listener's reception of the message.

In short, intensification expresses an 'interpersonal' message in what might otherwise be taken to be a purely 'ideational' statement. It signals personal commitment as well as truth and value judgments, and it is this very function which links the syntactic class of intensifiers to the functional category of epistemic modality.

More than most areas, intensification is a field of highly individual preference and self-expression. Speakers make conscious use of the idiosyncratic nature of intensification. Like all emphatic means of expression, intensifiers are used as 'shibboleths', as linguistic clues to the identity and group-membership of the speaker. This is particularly apparent in the language of 'yoof': every generation of teenagers creates its own set of expressions like *ab fab* (*absolutely fabulous*), *bloody brill* (*brilliant*), *dead cool* or *well wicked*. And just as these expressions are noted by outsiders and begin to be adopted on a wider scale, they are "out" and obsolete in their in-group function. Crudely speaking, such items either disappear or become mainstream usage.

The interpersonal function of intensifiers has long been recognized as fuelling a continual process of linguistic innovation; cf. H. Spitzbardt: "Originally most of the adverbs of degree have come into existence by individual coinage which will be raised into general usage after some time, only to be gradually pushed aside and replaced by ever new and more effective adverbs after some more time. In other words, they arise occasionally under the influence of certain *external* factors such as social origin of the speaker, his education, age, profession, sex, social surroundings, speech-situation, etc., and *internal* factors such as individual mood, personal feeling and temperament, in which, somehow or other, the environmental conditions may be involved again" [13, p. 349].

The study of intensification is therefore likely to provide insights into the mechanisms of linguistic change, short-lived as well as more permanent. D. Bolinger makes a similar point in a much more drastic manner [5, p. 18]. He notices that the study of degree words is of more than intrinsic interest. The comforting view of language is that it is sedate, structured in an orderly manner, and reducible to rule. But in another view, it is at war with structure, which is to say that it is at war with itself. Structure is the resolution of a conflict that is never settled; for when a pact is made at one point it is soon challenged at another, and the clash of structure is as violent as that of the ideologies to which they give rise as linguists look more intently here than there. 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.

In Gricean terms, too, there is good reason why we should be constantly creating and applying

new means of emphasis [6]. According to Grice's maxims, our utterances must be 'relevant', which implies that they should preferably be marked as such. In speech as well as in writing, we are constantly having to justify that X actually *needs* to be said, that it is *frightfully important, highly interesting* – or *well wicked*.

Intensification can therefore be defined as a functional category with a permanent need for new linguistic means [7]. Intensifying items foreground the meaning of their focus; they either enhance or mitigate, emphasize or tone down, but whichever degree they select, they always explicitly make a point.

Now we shall point out intensification as a foreign language learner's task.

In the manual M.Scott's and T. Johns's reports [12] the query of a non-native speaker of English, presumably fairly advanced, who was concerned that she over-used *extremely* as an intensifier, and who asked whether *immensely* could serve as a suitable alternative. A concordance search of *MicroConcord Corpus Collection A*, which comprises one million words of native English journalistic text, predictably revealed that *extremely* is used as a fairly general, 'all-round' kind of intensifier, while *immensely* occurs less frequently and in more restricted, almost exclusively positive contexts.

It is not this finding which is of interest here, nor the consideration of whether an examination of a corpus of *spoken* English would have produced a different result. What this point does illustrate, however, is that intensification is an important and, beyond the elementary level, intricate part of foreign language learning. Moreover, it also shows that learners themselves do tend to be aware of the significance of this task.

As has been pointed out above, intensification conveys speaker involvement; by using amplifiers and downtoners we signal how much we are committed to what we are saying about people, objects, events etc. and the qualities we attach to them. It was furthermore noted above that intensification serves as a marker of group-membership, too – a function which learners will not always be aware of. (And even if they were, it is doubtful whether they would have the linguistic skills to perform accordingly.)

Now we shall focus on the learner corpus principles.

One part of the learner corpus in our investigation consisted of essays written by students of the English Department at the University of Iowa (IA, USA). The essays were taken from the three consecutive writing classes for future teachers of English (Writing English, Composition & Style and Essay Writing). They were partly submitted as home assignments and partly written as a course examination. (The sub-corpus was coded for level and grade, where possible, but these codes do not feature in our study.) The students were mostly aged between 20–24, and as future teachers of English must be assessed by the most rigorous standards of 'advanced level'.

Learners' foreign language productions are the manifestations of their respective interlanguage. If interlanguage is indeed systematic, it is only a small step from this realisation to compiling a corpus of foreign language (FL) data and investigating it in a similar way as the corpus of any naturally occurring language. The present learner corpus in our investigation is based on the following axiomatic presuppositions:

1. *The strength of learner corpus analysis lies in the detection of patterns, not errors*

While much work is being done to improve automatic error recognition, it has not reached a standard that could compete with competent human evaluation. But on a much more modest scale, the computer can help the human analyst in studying large amounts of data and grouping it into the characteristic frequency profiles that mark non-native 'over-indulgences' and 'under-representations', for example. In this way, learner corpus analysis can assist in detecting patterns of learner language which would go unnoticed in a purely manual examination of individual learner productions.

Learner corpora are hence best employed for large-scale, computational and computer-assisted analysis. As such, they should not replace, but merely supplement more traditional, error-oriented approaches to learner language.

2. *'Naturalness' and 'idiomaticity' are probabilistic concepts*

Perceptions of linguistic 'naturalness' and 'idiomaticity' are highly subjective; they are based on the analyst's intuitions as to the usual way of putting things [8, 9]. Where single violations are perceived as 'awkward' or 'unidiomatic', these intuitions and perceptions are of a probabilistic nature. All linguistic choices lie somewhere on a scale of 'commonness', which ranges from markedly unnatural ('deviant') to markedly idiomatic. This point was further elaborated in J. Sinclair [14.]. More often than not, however, the impression of unidiomatic language is a cumulative one. As this cumulative effect is based on the probabilities of single choices, it should be quantifiable in a large corpus of learner language.

3. *Learner corpus studies are best directed at the 'advanced' level*

This principle directly follows from (1) and (2) above. At the initial stages of FL learning, most of the learner's efforts are directed at grasping the FL's basic rules and at acquiring as much vocabulary as possible. It would be misguided – and unfair – to analyse the productions of beginners or intermediate learners in terms of lexico-grammatical naturalness, while these are still busy getting to grips with the larger regularities of a new language. Naturalness and idiomaticity are – if at all attainable – part of the 'fine-tuning' at the advanced level.

Unfortunately, it is not entirely clear what exactly qualifies a learner to be 'advanced'. There seems to be a methodological paradox inherent in this notion: if we are seeking to determine the exact characteristics of advanced learners' infelicities, we cannot yet define the advanced level on strictly linguistic grounds. The present definition is therefore based on external factors and inductive reasoning: advanced learners are learners who have to meet advanced foreign language requirements, i.e. learners who are generally expected to have mastered the basic rules and regularities of the language they are learning.

#### 4. *The characteristic patterns of advanced learner language are best studied in written production*

Most past pragmatic studies of learner language were based on spoken language. The picture that has emerged from these investigations is one of 'functional reduction' on the part of the learners. It is posited here that written language in principle displays the same type of problems, only in writing a) they are more subtle, and b) the effects are less tangible.

With respect to a), most learners' instruction will have been largely text-based. The learner patterns which – despite this familiarity – still occur in written production are therefore likely to be the most resilient. And while it is also important to identify the learners' oral communicative deficits, the picture is here distorted by the learners' difficulties in the on-line planning of both linguistic form and ideational content. The less immediate nature of written language alleviates this double strain and enables the analyst to concentrate on the more reflected structural infelicities.

As regards b), functional reduction is far more evident in spoken interaction; it is instantiated, for example, in single speech acts or turns, which are best studied individually. In written language, single choices may not even be perceived as deviating. The effects are more covert and accumulative, as explained above (2). One of the main advantages of a learner corpus lies precisely in laying open such covert patterns.

#### 5. *Naturalness can be improved by making covert patterns explicit*

Although it has often been doubted that explicit teaching helps FL performance, there is plenty of protocol-based evidence which suggests that advanced learners do resort to conscious knowledge in FL production, writing in particular. It is assumed here that, once patterns of non-native deviance have been discovered, students can be explicitly made aware of these patterns, and that, given time, motivation and the opportunity to practise, they will eventually be able to modify their linguistic behaviour into a more native-like direction.

Learner corpora are, of course, not a cure-all against fossilisation, and it would be foolish to expect them to make a vast difference in a short span of time. But this study aims to make a small contribution towards improving advanced learners' idiomaticity. There can be no doubt that this is a worthwhile endeavour.

In sum, these principles provide the basic rationale for the large-scale compilation and investigation of advanced learners' essays. Some of their aspects will be taken up again and elaborated at various points of our study.

In view of an oft-noted learners' tendency towards 'functional reduction', all the manifestations of personal and interpersonal style are of interest. It is, moreover, a matter of intense interest whether learners can remain 'up-to-date' in their acquisition of intensifiers. They are, after all, potentially short-lived and may – to reiterate Bolinger's words – "quickly grow stale and need to be replaced".

From a structural point of view, too, the use of intensifiers puts great demands on the learners' collocational skills. Referring to the subclass of amplifiers they constitute a particularly rich category of lexical collocation involving as they do a complex interplay of semantic, lexical and stylistic restrictions and covering the whole collocational spectrum, ranging from restricted collocability – as in *bitterly cold* - to wide collocability – as in *completely different/new/free/etc.*

We can make our conclusion taking into account D. Altenberg's hypothesis: "What makes amplifiers an interesting category to study from a collocational point of view is that they are subject to a number of syntactic, semantic, lexical and stylistic restrictions affecting their use in various ways and fostering a great deal of competition between them" [2, p. 128]. For these reasons, an investigation into learners' use of intensifiers can be expected to provide valuable insights into foreign language behavior at its most committed.

Beside considering of adverb intensification, our study concentrated on the investigation of adjectival qualities. It will be the topic of our future discussion.

The method of our research is strictly functional: it does not aim to determine the collocates of previously selected intensifiers, but rather focuses on how native and non-native writers modify adjectival qualities in degree.

Such an 'onomasiological' line of inquiry, from function to form, appears to be the appropriate one to take, especially with respect to foreign language acquisition. It is the same open approach that learners are forced to pursue when they feel a communicative need and seek the means to express it.

We have provided brief description on the topic, along with the references for further study. Some linguistic material and facts are also included in this paper. We plan to present other results of our research in future articles.

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### ПОСТМОДЕРНІСТСЬКЕ ТЕКСТОТВОРЕННЯ ХУДОЖНЬОГО ТЕКСТУ: КРЕАТИВНИЙ ПОТЕНЦІАЛ РИЗОМАТИЧНОСТІ

*У статті зосереджено увагу на вивченні постмодерністського текстотворення на матеріалі американських постмодерністських текстів малої форми. Аналізуючи базові ознаки постмодерністської поезики, у статті визначено власне постмодерністські мовностилістичні та композиційні прийоми, які беруть участь у творенні сучасних американських оповідань з погляду їх нарративності та ризоматичності.*

*Статья посвящена проблемам постмодернистского текстообразования в современных американских художественных текстах малой формы. В статье также анализируются базовые признаки постмодернистской поэтики, изучаются именно постмодернистские лингвостилистические и композиционные приемы, которые принимают непосредственное участие в образовании современных американских постмодернистских рассказов в аспекте их нарративности и ризоматичности.*

*The article deals with the creative potential of rhizomatic text formation in postmodern literary texts. By means of eliciting the range of basic traits of postmodern poetics manifested in postmodern American short fiction various stylistic and compositional devices of postmodern nature typical for this literary genre have been defined and analyzed. Postmodern literary texts are viewed from the narrative and rhizomatic creative potential.*

**Постановка проблеми у загальному вигляді, її актуальність та зв'язок із науковими завданнями:** Формування теорії текстотворення тісно пов'язане з важливими досягненнями лінгвістики тексту у різних її аспектах: у структурно-граматичному – з визначенням типів зв'язності тексту (В. Дресслер, О. І. Москальська, Є. А. Реферовська, Т. А. ван Дейк тощо); у структурно-семантичному – із з'ясуванням особливостей членування тексту з різних семіотичних позицій, зважаючи на контактні чи дистантні зв'язки між текстовими одиницями (О.П. Воробйова, І.Р. Гальперін, М.Я. Димарський, Г. А. Золотова); у стилістико-композиційному – з типологізацією способів вира-