
FUNCTIONS OF INTENSIFIERS IN ENGLISH COLLOQUIAL SPEECH

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Abstract:	Keywords:
The article deals with the problem of functions of English intensifiers in colloquial speech. Some types of English Intensifiers such as emphasize, amplifiers, downtoners, diminishers and their functions are characterized and analyzed.	Intensifiers, emphasize, amplifiers, downtoners, diminishers

Introduction

The aim of the article is to bridge the gap by supplying learners of English with Conversational Structures and patterns without which a conversation does not sound natural to analyze and characterize some types of English Intensifiers, to study the functions of intensifiers in colloquial speech. More over to investigate language means of expressing emotive emphasis is of great importance at present time.

To some degree, an intensifier acts as a signal: it announces that the word following it is worn out, and that it should be understood as inadequate. For example, in the phrase "an utterly beautiful night", the author means 'Look, I mean something beyond beautiful, even if I don't have the precise word'; try to imagine it. When intensifiers lack force, they are sometimes propped up by italics-she was very important, very rich"-or, in speech, by volume and theatrical pauses: 'She was a [pause]wonderfully [pause] special person.' But when used repeatedly, such props become so weak that they de-intensify; they become irritating and annoying.[1, 96]

"The sheer number of intensifiers, all with more or less the same meaning, is significant. "Intensifiers can be repeated for emphasis, e.g. very, very good, so so much better, far far more carefully . An informal, expressive feature attaches to multiple intensification [5, 201].

What grammarians call 'a repeat-intensifier'--for example, 'I so so love you' or 'I really really really love you'-has the paradoxical effect of lessening the sentence's sincerity [4,23]. In terms of sense and rhythm, there is nothing that anyone can do to make the most famous three-word sentence in the English language more heartfelt or convincing than it already is. 'I love you' can never be more than 'I love you.' Those who try to extend it through repetition are often trying to cover up a lack of true feeling.[4,3]. Rather, very, little, pretty--these are the leeches that infest the pond of prose, The constant use of the adjective little (except to indicate size) is particularly debilitating; we should all try to do a little better, we should all be very watchful of this rule, for it is a rather important one and we are pretty sure to violate it now and then."[1,56]

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You'll hear native English speakers using intensifiers in normal everyday conversational English, and it won't conform to the standards of "good" English. For example, in the desire to show intensity of emotion, we say things that are redundant. We say them all the time, but we wouldn't write them in any kind of formal, i.e., academic or business writing. Here are a few examples:

- "I'm totally finished with Fred. I'm never dating him again." Well, you can't be partially finished, or "totally" finished. You're finished, or you're not finished. The word "totally" is redundant. [8,103]
- "He really screamed when his boss fired him." A scream is a very loud noise! The word "really" doesn't make his scream any louder, because it's already very loud without the word "really".[8,98]

Here's another example:

Three friends go to a concert together. After the concert, they go to visit Vicky, who hasn't been to the concert. When she asks if they liked the concert, Johnny says with obvious pleasure, "Oh, it was a good concert." Nessie says, "Yes! It was a really good concert!" Howard says, "Wow! It was a really really good concert!" Clearly, they enjoyed the concert. Who enjoyed it most? Well, there's no way to know. Listening to Johnny's voice, Vicky was sure that he enjoyed the concert very much. Did Howard enjoy it more, because he said "really really?" [7,213]

We'll never know. But what's important here, is to get an idea about how Americans talk to each other when they're speaking informally.

Imagine a scale for these intensifiers that goes from one to ten. 'One' is the lowest number, and gives a mild effect to the verb. 'Ten' gives the verb the strongest effect. Here are a few examples of low-level intensifiers:

"I kind of like him." (I like him a little bit.)

"He rather likes her." (He likes her--a little bit more than 'kind of'.)

"We almost gave up." (It doesn't sound like a high-level emotion. They almost gave up, but they didn't.)

Some show a higher level of emotion:

- "She really scolded him." (You can scold someone with a low tone of voice, and very few words. The word really tells us that the person doing the scolding was doing it loudly, and had a lot to say!)
- "He had barely finished the test at the moment the teacher said "Stop". (That sentence doesn't sound like there was a crisis, but if the person taking the test had been trying very hard to finish the test, he finished just in the nick of time: at the last possible moment; barely.)

Some show a very high level of feeling: "I completely give up!" (The speaker is feeling exasperated! (extremely annoyed/irritated/frustrated)

You will see that some words can be more than one place on the scale, i.e., showing low-level emotion in one sentence, and high-level in another. Much depends on the context of the sentence, and the intent of the speaker. You just read the sentence with "barely" in it. Compare it to this sentence:

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- "They barely had time to rescue the children from the burning house!"
1. Emphasizers: usually precede the word they are emphasizing. When a word is used as an emphasize, it cannot be the first word in the sentence. Few words used as emphasize can be used as nouns.
- "Father literally kicked the salesman out of the house."
2. Amplifiers: There are two kinds: maximizers and boosters. These show a high degree of emotion.
- "Cindy's teacher absolutely refuses to let lazy students stay in his class."
3. Downtoners: lower the effect of the verb. There are four kinds of downtoners: compromisers, diminishers, minimizers, and approximators.
Compromisers: slightly reduce the force of the verb.
- "Kevin kind of plays the piano." (He knows a little bit about playing the piano, but not very much.
4. Diminishers: show a small amount of positive meaning, i.e., "He arrived at the meeting slightly late." (just a few minutes)
"Stuart felt slightly ill." (Not seriously ill; just a little sick.)
5. Minimizers: A bit, barely, hardly, little, scarcely; Nonassertive; in the least in the slightest, at all.
Example: I didn't enjoy it in the least.
A: Do you like her?
B: A bit.
- Minimizers modify the degree of truth of what the verb says.
"We could hardly catch our breath." (We could certainly breathe, but we were feeling out of breath; breathing hard from running fast, or being extremely surprised, frightened, etc.)
6. Approximators deny the truth of what the verb states.
- "She nearly left him." (She did not leave, but she had been planning to.)
- Almost, nearly, as. Noun phrases are quite common as non-assertive minimizers example:
"I didn't sleep a wink last night". "I don't owe you a thing".
- In conclusion it is stated that though different by nature all intensifiers have in common a heightening or lowering effect on the whole sentence or some part in the sentence. Thus we distinguished between two groups of intensifiers according their place or use in the sentences structure. General sentence intensifiers which give emotive force to the sentence as a whole. Those which add emotive emphasis to a certain part of a sentence.

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