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**DIACHRONIC AND DIALECT VARIATION
OF ENGLISH INTENSIFYING ADVERBS
IN THE FILM DIALOGUE DISCOURSE: CORPUS-BASED STUDY**

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Abstract. The article presents a corpus-based study of the diachronic and dialect variations of adverbial intensifiers used as the expression of emotionality that is a key defining feature of interpersonal conversation in the British and American film discourse. Based on the corpora of scripts of British and American feature films released in the 1930–1950s and 1990–2010s, data on the frequency of adverbial intensifiers in the sub-corpora of the English regional varieties of the two periods were obtained and their comparative analysis was carried out to establish the regional specifics and historical dynamics of their use; the collocation profiles of adverbial intensifiers that form syntagmatic units in the dialogic speech of British and American film discourse for each of the studied periods were described; semantic classes and stylistic characteristics of adjectives that form the most frequent collocations with the intensifiers were identified; the pragmalinguistic potential of the intensifiers and adjectives to indicate informality and emotionality in the dialogues of the English film discourse was determined. The diachronic analysis revealed a decline in the occurrences of the standard register intensifiers (*terribly, awfully, perfectly, extremely, etc.*) with adjectives carrying the semantics of general evaluation, opinion, judgment, and emotionality in both corpora of modern English film discourse. In the 1990–2010s period, the process of renewal is observed in the UK and US film discourse when formerly frequent intensifiers are seen to be replaced by informal adverbs with a maximal degree of emotionality in speakers' attitudes to situations, objects of the surrounding world and the interlocutor, which reflects a trend in preference towards the colloquial and substandard stylistic register. The growth of substandard vocabulary indicates that this trend is in line with the expectations of the English-speaking discursive communities that perceive film discourse as a reflection of authentic face-to-face discursive practices.

Key words: corpus, corpus linguistics, film dialogue discourse, intensifier, English adverbs, syntagmatic unity.

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**ДИАХРОНИЧЕСКАЯ И РЕГИОНАЛЬНАЯ ВАРИАТИВНОСТЬ
АНГЛИЙСКИХ ИНТЕНСИФИКАТОРОВ
В ДИАЛОГИЧЕСКОМ КИНОДИСКУРСЕ: КОРПУСНОЕ ИССЛЕДОВАНИЕ**

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Аннотация. В статье представлены результаты корпусного изучения диахронической и региональной вариативности употребления наречных интенсификаторов как средств репрезентации эмоциональности, которая составляет отличительную черту межличностного общения в англоязычном кинодискурсе. На основе анализа британских и американских художественных фильмов (The Movie Corpus), относящихся к 1930–1950-м и 1990–2010-м гг., получены данные о частотности употребления наречных интенсификаторов в подкорпусах региональных вариантов английского языка двух периодов, проведен сопоставительный анализ и выявлены региональная специфика и историческая динамика их употребления, описан коллокационный профиль наречных интенсификаторов, образующих синтагматические единства в диалогической речи британского и американского кинодискурсов для каждого из исследуемых периодов, выявлены семантические классы и стилистические характеристики прилагательных, образующих наиболее частотные коллокации с интенсификаторами, определен прагмалингвистический потенциал сочетаемости интенсификаторов и прилагательных для репрезентации неформальности и эмоциональности в диалогах англоязычного кинодискурса. Установлено, что в диалогическом общении англоязычного кинодискурса в диахроническом аспекте реализуется тенденция к снижению числа употреблений нормативных наречий-интенсификаторов (*terribly, awfully, perfectly, extremely*) с семантикой эмоционального преувеличения признака, выражаемого прилагательным. Одновременно в период 1990–2010-х гг. в сравниваемых региональных вариантах английского языка происходит обновление интенсификаторов: на смену нормативным приходят неформальные наречия с высокой степенью эмотивности, выражающие личностное отношение говорящего к ситуациям, объектам окружающего мира и собеседнику, что подтверждает существование тенденции к снижению стилистового регистра диалогической речи современного англоязычного кинодискурса. Использование субстандартной лексики указывает на то, что данная тенденция соответствует ожиданиям англоязычного дискурсивного сообщества, воспринимающего кинодискурс как отражение реальных дискурсивных практик.

Ключевые слова: корпус, корпусная лингвистика, диалог в кинодискурсе, интенсификатор, английское наречие, синтагматическое единство.

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Introduction

The film and television dialogue as uttered or performed by characters or actors has been an object of numerous studies. With the focus either on a particular TV series [Bednarek, 2010; 2011; Quaglio, 2009; Richardson, 2010; Tagliamonte, 2008; Tagliamonte, Roberts, 2005; Toolan, 2011] or on TV dialogue in general [Bednarek, 2012], linguists analyse the nature of the film dialogue seeking to answer the core question once posed by Douglas Biber in response to the statement about the naturalness of television conversation to the normal viewer. D. Biber asks if this is natural because we have come to expect a particular style of interaction on TV, or because those interactions accurately capture the actual linguistic characteristics of everyday conversation [Biber, 2009]. To achieve this goal, linguists compare contemporary film and television dialogue with natural conversation to bring out similarities and differences. The studies conducted by P. Quaglio [2008; 2009] have shown how TV dialogue tends to capture and reproduce the linguistic characteristics of authentic face-to-face

conversations. He concludes that, on the whole, most of the linguistic features of naturally occurring conversation are shared by the sit-com corpus, thus making scripted speech a valuable substitute for spontaneous spoken data in foreign language classrooms [Quaglio, 2009, p. 149].

Several linguists study TV dialogue to explore the relationship between TV series and society. For example, J. Rey employed a diachronic perspective and sought to state the differences between male and female dialogue in various *Star Trek* series over a period of 27 years in order to explore the evolving nature of gender roles. The outcome of the study is that female language has become more informational and male language is more involved (meaning more informal, interactive and attitudinal), which suggests that “traditional differences between female and male language on *Star Trek* appear to be breaking down” [Rey, 2001, p. 155]. Drawing on the notion of “double articulation”, which means an interaction between the TV characters, on the one hand, and an interaction between the characters and the audience, on the other, linguists seek to explore the relationship between TV dialogue and its audience,

arguing that specific characteristics of episodic dialogue such as the large amount of emotional language aim at the entertainment on the part of audiences [Quaglio, 2009; Bednarek, 2011; 2012; Freddie, 2011].

Linguistic studies that examine the dialogue of particular genres (as represented by a range of TV series) are scarce. D. McIntyre investigates the language of what he calls the “genre” of movie blockbusters, examining the dialogue of thirteen screenplays, and identifying prototypical characteristics of such dialogue [McIntyre, 2012]. Similarly, Forchini’s computer analysis of movie language includes a comparison of the language of comedies with that of non-comedies. In other words, a linguistic analysis aims to tackle questions of specific genre features visible in the dialogue and/or other aspects of language use (as performed or in scripts) [Forchini, 2012]. There are studies that focus on specific language constructions plunged into film dialogues, for instance, *like, as if, as though, as when, as of* that are used to create imagery [Sternberg, 1997].

A useful approach to the exploration of language units employed in discourse is, undoubtedly, a corpus-based analysis, which allows us to obtain evidence on linguistic units that are indicative of social and cultural peculiarities in construing personal relationships and expressing emotionality by film characters. To explore a relationship between film discourse and society and track dynamics in linguistic means of expressing emotionality as a key-defining feature of film discourse [Bednarek, 2012], we explored a class of English intensifiers – a group of adverbial lexemes that perform exclusively the function of strengthening the meaning of other expressions, in our case a nuclear (head) adjective, as they are employed in film speech interactions.

In modern theory of linguistics, *intensification* is regarded as a distinct functional category that expresses a degree of a property, scaling a quality downwards or upwards. As linguists point out, it conjoins meanings of quality and quantity in a pair with the possibility of their generalized measurement [Rodionova, 2005]. It should be noted that intensification of a property differs from scaling a property that ensures a general idea of quality or quantity measurement in a certain set of language units [Kolesnikova, 2016; Kosova, 2013]. As adverbs, intensifiers are typically used

to modify words that describe qualitative and quantitative characteristics of properties, states or processes, and they are semantically attracted to a certain adjective or adverb with a full lexical meaning, so that intensifying units are incorporated into speech segments to transfer a subjective-and-evaluative opinion of the speaker [Arutyunova, 1988; Ermakova, 2005; Volf, 2002; etc.], they express personal motivation in the conversation.

The normative, functional and pragmatic aspects of intensification with its language markers have been intensively studied in the Russian language and discourse – ranging from its phonology and intonation to syntactic realizations [Rodionova, 2004; 2005; Ermakova, 2005; Furs, Nazarova, 2008; Kustova, 2005], to detailed studies on derivational innovations by intensification and deintensification [Raytseva, 2012; Sheptukhina, Meshkova, 2011]. The latest findings on the use of emotional evaluative intensifiers in the Russian-language mass discourse are presented in the publication by E. Koryakovtseva, L. Ratsiburskaya, M. Sandakova [2021]. The lexical intensifiers in English are claimed to be constructed of expended quality evaluation semes (both that are restricted to the expression of moderately high intensity), which would correspond to what Quirk et al. [1985] name *boosters*, such as *very, most, all, quite, so, too, etc.*, and *maximizers* that express maximal degree of intensity and emotive charge, such as *absolutely, extremely, incredibly, utterly, perfectly, terribly, awfully, deadly, desperately, acutely, supremely, etc.* Other groups of intensifiers include *emphasizers* that indicate a high degree of the modified proposition, such as *really* [Downing, 2015].

Even though the issue of intensification in the English language has been under description in [Bolinger, 2013; Downing, 2015; Bezrukova, 2003; Ivanova, Burlakova, Pocheptzov, 1981; Kraeva, 2017; 2021; Lebedeva, Pavlova, 2017; Quirk et al., 1985; Tagliamonte, 2008; Tagliamonte, Roberts, 2005; Turanskiy, 1990]), the historical dynamics in the use of English intensifiers and the patterns of their syntagmatic co-occurrence with adjectives in face-to-face dialogues in English film discourse have not become an object of detailed investigation so far. Notable evidence of change was discovered by S. Tagliamonte as a synchronic quantitative study of the intensifier system in the English of Toronto was carried out [Tagliamonte, 2008]; in

particular, the adverb *very* is quickly losing ground, whereas the adverbs *really*, *so*, *pretty* demonstrate a dramatic rise in frequency.

Our review of the previous studies points to dispersive expansion of pragmatic potential of discursive language units expressed in the changes in their numbers and the way they are employed in modern discursive practices. This trend suggests changes in the social norms of interpersonal communication in English, that is, a shift to an explicit expression of emotionality, in particular, its verbal evaluation acts. It breaks down the normative conventions of culturally conditioned English politeness, mood restraining, self-regulation, and keeping-distance typical of the British pattern of communication [Fox, 2005; Larina, Leontovich, 2015]. The pragmatic and semantic potential of adverbial intensifiers when they are syntagmatically incorporated into word groups in film discourse is in the focus of linguistic research in this paper. The historical and dialectal dynamics of adverbial intensifiers in film discourse that are widely used to express emotionality and judgment have not been fully analysed by corpus-based and functional-pragmatic analysis. This article aims to bridge this gap and reveal the process of renewal in means of intensification in the English language film discourse.

Material and method

This study is based on the 200-million-word Movie Corpus (part of the corpora from English-Corpora.org)¹, which is the largest available corpora of informal English. By way of comparison, it is (respectively) twenty times as large and thirty two times as large as 10 million words in the “conversation” portion of the British National Corpus (BNC), even incorporating the 2014 BNC update. The Movie Corpus includes film scripts from a variety of English-speaking countries and allows us to compile sub-corpora to explore variation over time and variation

between dialects (American and British English in particular).

Diachronic analysis is intrinsically comparative, in fact “a prerequisite for diachrony is that at least two different time points are compared” [Jucker, Taavainen, 2014, p. 5]. To investigate diachronic and dialect variation that reflects intersection between vivid discourse and social behavior trends, we have created four “virtual corpora” within the Movie Corpus that are distinct in two parameters, namely a time span and dialect. For this temporal comparison study, we chose two distinct periods instead of tracking language units over continuous data, which requires the identification of the turning-points, but these tend to emerge bottom-up from the analysis or, at least, from testing hypothesis on the data, which is beyond the scope of our study. The compiled corpora also allow us to investigate into dialect variation in the use of the intensifiers modifying adjectives by comparing evidence across the US and UK movie corpora belonging to the two periods.

The resulting corpus includes four sub-corpora, that is ‘US Movie Corpus 1930–1950s’, ‘US Movie Corpus 1990–2010s’, ‘UK Movie Corpus 1930–1950s’, ‘UK Movie Corpus 1990–2010s’. The structure of the corpus is presented in Table 1.

In this study we employ statistical analysis of discourse defined by J. Blommaert as “all forms of meaningful semiotic human activity seen in connection with social, cultural, and historical patterns and developments of use” [Blommaert, 2005, p. 3]. Discussing the role of statistics in discourse analysis V. Brezina points out that statistics presupposes collecting empirical data and evaluating the evidence, which is quantified to allow precise evaluation and comparison [Brezina, 2018, p. 260]. Corpus methodology also gives an opportunity to see what words occur near other words and categorise them to identify, for instance, broad attitude (positive vs. negative), particular relationships between the characters, gender

Table 1. The structure of the film language corpora

Corpus	Size	Number of texts
‘US Movie Corpus 1930–1950s’	668,916	149
‘US Movie Corpus 1990–2010s’	33,210,041	4103
‘UK Movie Corpus 1930–1950s’	1,692,193	181
‘UK Movie Corpus 1990–2010s’	13,684,701	1846
<i>Total</i>	49,255,851	6279

construction etc. Categorising examples is one of the basic analytical strategies in discourse analysis [Brezina, 2018, p. 268]. Categories are typically fuzzy and open to interpretation, and need to be specified under construct definition and conceptualized [Lakoff, 1987].

To answer the research questions in this paper, we used the four corpora of the film language (a) to retrieve frequencies for intensifying adverbs in the UK and US film scripts with the timespans of 1930–1950s and 1990–2010s, (b) to establish semantic classes and stylistic register of adjectives they modify, and (c) to identify dialect and diachronic variation in the use of intensifiers and, if possible, variation in the semantic classes of adjectives.

Results and discussion

In this section, the intensifiers and respective adjectives employed in the film scripts are descriptively analyzed in synchronic and diachronic perspectives to identify dialect and diachronic variation. Corpus approaches provide tools that allow us to go beyond partial examination of particular excerpts and obtain reliable evidence of the typical patterns across large bodies of texts. In the present study, despite a wide variety of intensifying devices in English, we deal with a restricted number of intensifiers, i.e. those that are most frequently used in contemporary American and British English. Table 2 presents the frequencies for the intensifiers under scrutiny across the four corpora that are temporally compared to track their development over time.

Visual representation of the data can be demonstrated by using error bars plots that show an interval within which the mean value for the group is likely to appear in 95 per cent of the samples taken from the same population. In Figures 1 and 2 an overlap on the error bar plot indicates that there is no statistically significant difference in the use of the intensifiers between the diachronic corpora. However, temporal comparison of individual intensifiers reveals that in both dialects the standard intensifying adverbs, such as *awfully*, *terribly*, *rather*, *absolutely*, *really*, and *extremely*, tend to be used less frequently as their expressivity wanes over time. These language units have been replaced by highly informal or colloquial adverbs, such as *totally*, *bloody*, *fucking* in the British Movie Corpus or *totally*, *fucking* in the US Movie Corpus. The adverb *totally* was hardly ever used in the 1930–1950s, and has emerged as a replacement for standard intensifiers (i.e. *absolutely*). The occurrences of informal intensifiers have increased manifold, as the evidence shows (*bloody* – freq. 23.04 and 89.44 (The UK Movie Corpus); *fucking* – freq. 13.45 and 497.4 (The US Movie Corpus), respectively).

Dialect comparison of the intensifiers in the ‘UK Movie Corpus 1990–2010s’ against the US Corpus reveals lexical units with statistically meaningful difference in frequencies, such as *perfectly* (freq. 36.9 vs 18.87); *terribly* (freq. 24.69 vs 9.69); *awfully* (freq. 15.49 vs 8.46), whereas as compared to the UK Corpus, the US Corpus top intensifiers are *really*, *totally* and *very* (freq. –120.95 vs 79.87; freq. 93.64 vs 51.06, and freq. –480.15 vs 76.50, respectively).

Table 2. The frequency of the intensifiers in ‘UK Movie Corpus 1930–1950s’ and ‘US Movie Corpus 1990–2010s’

‘UK Movie Corpus 1930–1950s’			‘US Movie Corpus 1930–1950s’		‘UK Movie Corpus 1990–2010s’			‘US Movie Corpus 1990–2010s’	
Adverb	Freq.	NF	Freq.	NF	Adverb	Freq.	NF	Freq.	NF
<i>bloody</i>	39	23.04	6	8.96	<i>bloody</i>	1224	89.44	126	3.79
<i>awfully</i>	189	111.68	109	162.95	<i>awfully</i>	212	15.49	281	8.46
<i>terribly</i>	234	138.28	45	67.27	<i>terribly</i>	338	24.69	322	9.69
<i>rather</i>	433	255.81	153	228.72	<i>rather</i>	1349	98.57	2410	72.56
<i>very</i>	2049	1210.8	604	902.95	<i>very</i>	10473	76.50	15946	480.15
<i>pretty</i>	253	149.51	223	333.37	<i>pretty</i>	1738	127.00	7686	231.43
<i>fucking</i>	0	0.00	9	13.45	<i>fucking</i>	3856	281.77	6202	497.4
<i>perfectly</i>	169	99.87	88	131.55	<i>perfectly</i>	505	36.90	627	18.87
<i>absolutely</i>	143	84.50	39	58.30	<i>absolutely</i>	481	35.14	737	22.19
<i>totally</i>	0	0.00	0	0.00	<i>totally</i>	1476	51.06	14355	93.64
<i>really</i>	169	99.87	151	225.73	<i>really</i>	1093	79.87	4017	120.95
<i>extremely</i>	84	49.63	13	19.43	<i>extremely</i>	253	25.22	443	16.71

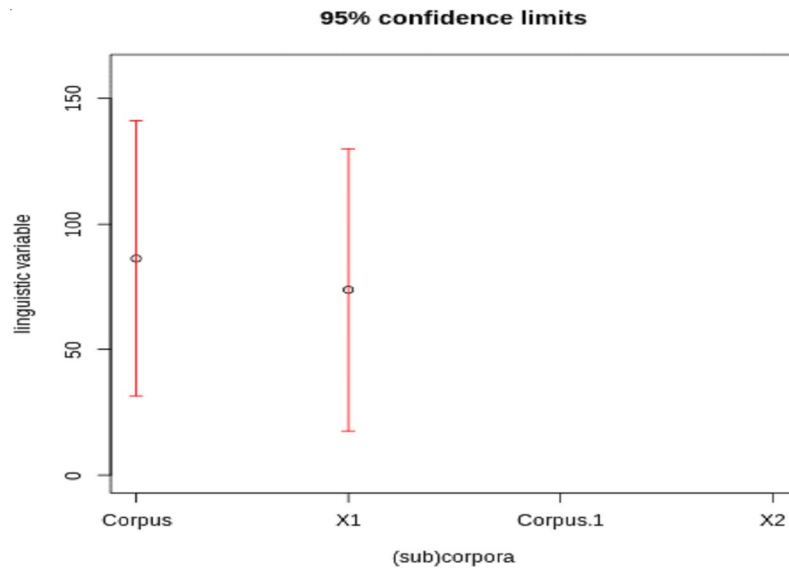


Fig. 1. Temporal comparison of the intensifiers in the UK Corpus

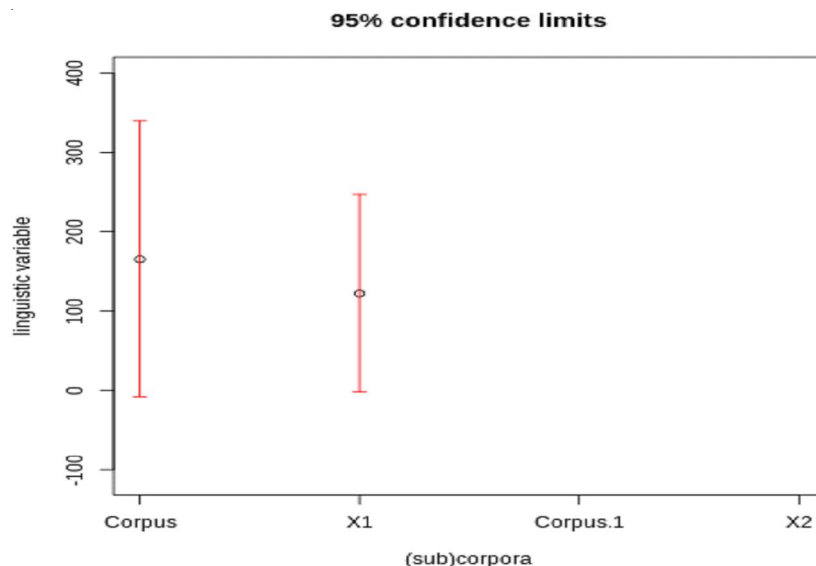


Fig. 2. Temporal comparison of the intensifiers in the US Movie Corpus

To answer the second research question about the semantic classes of adjectives that collocate with intensifiers, we have to categorise examples, which is one of the basic analytical strategies in discourse analysis. We have extracted collocations, which are habitual co-occurrences of words identified statistically using the tools of the Movie Corpus.

Tables 3 and 4 present intensifying adverbs with collocates that are adjectives extracted from the corpora under study. In brackets, we indicated collocation frequency, the tables include collocates with minimum three occurrences in the corpus under study.

The comparative diachronic analysis of adjectives across the US corpora shows that they

have become much more varied over time. The corpus of US movies dating 1930–1950s displays a rather limited number of lexical items that form collocations with the intensifying adverbs under study. The intensifiers *awfully*, *perfectly*, *pretty*, *really*, *absolutely* occur with a few adjectives expressing feelings and judgment (*awfully nice*; *awfully / terribly sorry*; *awfully glad*; *awfully / rather silly*; *awfully sweet*; *perfectly happy*). However, in the US corpus of the 1990–2010s, the intensifiers occur in a wider variety of contexts, and attract adjectives of the following semantic classes: general judgment and opinion, adjectives expressing feelings, psychological and emotional states.

Table 3. The intensifying adverbs with collocates in 'US Movie Corpus 1930–1950s' and 'US Movie Corpus 1990–2010s'

'US Movie Corpus 1930–1950s'		'US Movie Corpus 1990–2010s'	
Adverb	Collocates	Adverb	Collocates
<i>fuckin</i>	–	<i>fuckin</i>	stupid (61), dumb (14), brilliant (7)
<i>fuckin</i>	–	<i>fuckin</i>	crazy (491), stupid (429), great (242), good (214), awesome (130), weird (99), cool (83), bad (78), insane (69), sorry (60), amazing (44), disgusting (44), ridiculous (43), perfect (35), brilliant (30), terrible (30), fine (29), fantastic (27), sweet (27), lame (25), mad (25), miserable (24), hilarious (23), horrible (23), pissed (22), deaf (23), filthy (19), freak (17), annoying (16), depressing (12)
<i>awfully</i>	nice (13), sorry (13), glad (5), silly (3), sweet (3)	<i>awfully</i>	nice (14), sorry (14), big (13), lonely (5), pretty (4), glad (4)
<i>terribly</i>	sorry (8)	<i>terribly</i>	sorry (87), wrong (15), disappointed (6), important (4), exciting (3), interesting (3)
<i>extremely</i>	–	<i>extremely</i>	dangerous (43), rare (22), difficult (19), important (13), intelligent (11), valuable (9), disappointed (7), interesting (6), rude (5), proud (5), aggressive (4), attractive (4), excited (4), stupid (4), disturbing (3), unhappy (3), lucky (3)
<i>incredibly</i>	–	<i>incredibly</i>	beautiful (9), difficult (8), handsome (7), sexy (6), immature (5), powerful (5), romantic (5), smart (5), stupid (4), grateful (4), selfish (4), rare (4), attractive (4), sensitive (4), brave (4), cheap (4), dangerous (4), proud (4), lucky (4), happy (4), annoying (4), awkward (3), odd (3), gorgeous (3), exciting (3), unbelievable (3), important (3), funny (3)
<i>rather</i>	difficult (3), silly (3)	<i>rather</i>	large (11), blind (7), interesting (6), pathetic (5), unorthodox (4), unpleasant (4), difficult (4), vague (3), shocking (3), disturbing (3), extraordinary (3), amused (3), ugly (3)
<i>absolutely</i>	right (4)	<i>absolutely</i>	right (156), sure (59), beautiful (29), necessary (27), certain (25), perfect (22), true (22), fine (19), positive (18), good (17), great (17), wonderful (17), gorgeous (15), wrong (15), crazy (13), amazing (13), fantastic (11), brilliant (11), correct (11), clear (9), stunning (9), fabulous (8), incredible (8), insane (8), serious (8), disgusting (7), fucking (7), terrible (7), impossible (5), free (5), lovely (5), ridiculous (5), unbelievable (5), delighted (4), delicious (4), awesome (4), extraordinary (4), imperative (4), terrific (4), horrible (3), divine (3), best (3), worthless (3), awful (3), absurd (3), outrageous (3)
<i>pretty</i>	good (38), smart (6), bad (5), fair (3), hard (3)	<i>pretty</i>	good (1892), sure (644), cool (328), hard (307), bad (291), nice (109), funny (103), damn (93), great (84), smart (76), amazing (66), stupid (66), weird (63), crazy (54), awesome (35), exciting (30), nasty (28), shitty (28), awful (27), fucking (25), lame (25), boring (19), pathetic (19), tired (19), ugly (19), dumb (14)
<i>really</i>	crazy (4)	<i>really</i>	good (2207), sorry (1072), nice (960), bad (696), great (606), cool (286), weird (247), happy (200), glad (183), funny (176), beautiful (170), scared (148), pretty (132), stupid (131), tired (123), proud (97), crazy (93), nervous (73), scary (72), amazing (70), mad (62), shitty (51), exciting (42), wonderful (41), terrible (35), lovely (31), awful (30), awesome (29), fucking (29), horrible (29), best (26), embarrassed (25)
<i>perfectly</i>	right (10), normal (5), happy (4)	<i>perfectly</i>	good (70), normal (56), clear (54), fine (46), honest (35), safe (33), natural (23), happy (20), healthy (18), capable (15), legal (12), sane (7), willing (7), reasonable (5), acceptable (4), frank (4), adequate (3), understandable (3), delightful (3), logical (3), goddamned (3), obvious (3), innocent (3), straight (3)
<i>totally</i>	–	<i>totally</i>	different (77), fine (77), fucked (66), cool (59), honest (37), normal (32), screwed (26), insane (21), awesome (20), hot (18), amazing (14), disgusting (11), weird (11), freaking (10), unacceptable (9), inappropriate (7), irrelevant (6), pissed (6), psyched (5), messed (3), whacked (3)

A closer look at the distributional contexts shows that the intensifiers under scrutiny differ in the semantic classes of adjectives they attract as collocates. The intensifier *absolutely* collocates with nearly all of the general positive evaluative adjectives (*good, great, brilliant, fine, unbelievable, wonderful, terrific, fantastic, perfect, fabulous*), except *nice* and *acceptable*, while *pretty* and *really* tend to be used with *nice, good, wonderful* and *great*. The use of the intensifier *perfectly* is restricted to the adjectives *good, fine* and *acceptable*. Negative evaluative adjectives such as *bad, terrible, shocking*, go with the intensifiers *pretty, really*, and the mitigating intensifier *rather*.

It is notable that the intensifiers attract adjectives that express social judgment and bear the meanings of sensibility, such as *stupid, ridiculous, absurd, sane, reasonable, lonely, immature, free*; personality traits (*selfish*); politeness (*rude, grateful*): *Don't be so **bloody ridiculous**. – It was just a suggestion. Yes, well, stow it* (“An Adventure in Space and Time”, 2013, UK²); judgment of appearance, which comprises rather a large group (*awesome, amazing, awful, beautiful, lovely, attractive, unpleasant, stunning, nasty, handsome, nice, gorgeous, horrible, pretty, ugly, shitty, smart, stunning*): *Oh! You look **absolutely stunning**. Come with me. Have a look at this apartment* (“Hot Property”, 2016, UK); *Your playing. I mean, that piece is **absolutely gorgeous**. Thanks. The way the viola and the violins interact* (“Like Sunday, Like Rain”, 2014, US).

Collocates can carry the meaning of psychological states (*crazy, interesting, willing, understandable, mad, logical, intelligent*), including notions of interest and boredom (*exciting, interesting*); worry or concern (*disturbing*): *We have three new patients at work. It's **absolutely crazy**. – I can't let 'em down* (“The Creature Below”, 2016, UK); *This is ridiculous. It's **absolutely absurd**. You want to know what this is?* (“Butcher Boys”, 2012, US). The intensifiers under scrutiny tend to collocate with adjectives expressing feelings and emotional states, namely happiness or sadness (*funny, happy, proud, disappointed, unhappy, hilarious; glad, amused, embarrassed, disgusting, depressing, delightful, delighted*); calmness, violence, anger (*annoying, aggressive, nervous, miserable*): *Is*

*he the doctor? – You're **rather disgusting**, aren't you? You're not crying, are you, Louise?* (“Naked”, 1993, UK); *If I had a choice between having tons of money or another father, I'd be **absolutely delighted** to be poor* (“Investing the Abbotts”, 1997, US).

Examining the stylistic variety of adjectives that are used with the adverbs under study, it should be noted that the intensifiers *awfully, terribly, extremely, incredibly, absolutely, perfectly, rather, very* and *really* tend to modify formal or standard adjectives expressing feelings or judgments (*good, bad, nice, happy, sorry, etc.*), that appear to be rather moderate. The stylistic variety of adjectives that co-occur with the adverb *totally* differs in the English-language dialects. While in the US film discourse the intensifier *totally*, denoting more intense feelings or judgments, tends to co-occur with adjectives belonging to colloquial language (*cool, awesome, hot, crazy, freaking, etc.*), in the UK film discourse this intensifier occurs more frequently with standard or formal adjectives, thus showing practically no significant difference with standard adverbs (*alone, relaxed, innocent, disgusting, boring, weird*).

If we are guided by semantic prosody and investigate words with positive or negative connotations that occur in the postposition to the intensifiers, we observe that the lexical item *perfectly* tends to be used mainly with positively evaluated adjectives (*perfectly clear, fine, good, normal, honest, innocent, frank, safe, happy, healthy, sane, reasonable, logical, understandable, etc.*), whereas *rather* and *totally* occur predominantly in negative contexts (*rather unorthodox, unpleasant, difficult, vague, shocking, disturbing, ugly, etc.*; *totally freaked, totally disgusting, totally crazy, etc.*): *We do not need this. Our lives are **perfectly fine** just the way they are* (“Immigration Tango”, 2010, US); *Run away! Let's just say that this morning was, well, **rather shocking*** (“College”, 2008, US); *What's wrong with it? **Rather dull**, I thought* (“Into the Storm”, 2009, UK).

The rest of the intensifiers do not show a distinct preference for negative or positive adjectives, which belong to the described above semantic fields (i.e., *awfully nice, glad, sweet, pretty* or *sorry, silly, lonely; terribly important, exciting, interesting* or *sorry, wrong, disappointed, etc.*). Such

ambivalent potential points to some sematic specificity of the intensifying adverbs – modifying an adjective, they generally express exaggeration, surpassing, oversufficiency or overmatching of the quality features conveyed by the lexical meaning of a notional head word (adjective or another adverb). Moreover, the positive or negative connotation of adverbial intensifiers arises from the subjective evaluation and personal motivation of the speaker.

The comparative diachronic analysis of the adjectives that are head elements to which adverbial intensifiers are added across the UK corpora shows a similar picture (Table 4). As in the case with the US corpus (Table 3), the number of lexical items that form collocations with the standard intensifiers has expanded over time. The corpus of UK movies dating 1930–1950s displays a considerable difference related to a range of adjectives used with the intensifier *rather*, which is wider as compared to the US corpus, with a

meager set of collocates (*rather difficult, silly* in the US Corpus, *rather difficult, tired, important, unusual, silly, large, interested, embarrassing, dull, absurd, strange, serious* in the UK Corpus). In the second period dating 1990–2010s, we observed an increase in the number of collocates with negative or critical overtone that occur with the intensifier *rather* that is used to mitigate or moderate the speaker’s personal opinion (*rather difficult, odd, strange, dull, nervous, tasteless, disturbing, foolish, disappointed*) as well as convey a positive assessment of medium intensity (*rather splendid, attractive, pleasant, romantic, exciting, pleased, spectacular, charming, etc.*).

The study demonstrates the complexity of the links between language use and its social context, and explores linguistic features in which these links are expressed. As intensifiers are usually employed to strengthen meaning, a decline in the use of standard register intensifiers indicates

Table 4. The intensifying adverbs with collocates in ‘UK Movie Corpus 1930–1950s’ and ‘UK Movie Corpus 1990–2010s’

‘UK Movie Corpus 1930–1950s’		‘UK Movie Corpus 1990–2010s’	
Adverb	Collocates	Adverb	Collocates
<i>bloody</i>	likely (3)	<i>bloody</i>	awful (24), stupid (54), brilliant (17), marvelous (15), useless (14), ridiculous (10), hopeless (6), typical (6), horrible (6), furious (4), likely (4), morbid (3), miserable (3)
<i>fucking</i>	–	<i>fucking</i>	stupid (149), good (101), crazy (86), great (74), mad (65), brilliant (54), horrible (34), sorry (33), weird (32), bad (28), ridiculous (23), amazing (20), boring (19), beautiful (18), lovely (17), miserable (16), awful (15), insane (12), nice (12), cool (12), awesome (10), hilarious (10), disgusting (9), filthy (8)
<i>awfully</i>	sorry (36), nice (17), glad (5), tired (3)	<i>awfully</i>	sorry (21), good (13), nice (7)
<i>terribly</i>	sorry (51), worried (5), upset (4), busy (4), hard (3), tired (3), important (3), happy (3)	<i>terribly</i>	sorry (90), wrong (13), exciting (9), ill (5), sad (5), busy (5), clever (4), proud (4), strong (4), important (4), funny (4), keen (3), rude (3)
<i>extremely</i>	important (3), sorry (3)	<i>extremely</i>	dangerous (12), difficult (9), important (8), careful (5), wealthy (4), unlikely (4), rare (4), tired (4), fat (4), strong (4), hard (4), promising (3), valuable (3), painful (3), intelligent (3), useful (3), keen (3), ill (3), proud (3), calm (3), poor (3), happy (3)
<i>incredibly</i>	–	<i>incredibly</i>	stupid (8), important (6), powerful (5), dangerous (5), hot (5), beautiful (5), grateful (4), ugly (4), difficult (4), rude (3), bright (3), brave (3), sad (3), strong (3), funny (3)
<i>rather</i>	difficult (18), tired (11), important (9), busy (7), unusual (6), silly (5), delicate (4), large (4), interested (4), hard (4), embarrassing (3), dull (3), absurd (3), strange (3), serious (3)	<i>rather</i>	difficult (17), odd (11), large (11), strange (10), interesting (9), busy (9), dull (9), nervous (8), splendid (8), attractive (7), pleasant (6), romantic (5), nasty (5), rude (5), exciting (5), boring (4), pleased (4), tasteless (3), spectacular (3), disturbing (3), appropriate (3), foolish (3), unusual (3), curious (3), disappointed (3), embarrassing (3), complicated (3), sudden (3), charming (3), desperate (3), handsome (3)

End of Table 4

‘UK Movie Corpus 1930–1950s’		‘UK Movie Corpus 1990–2010s’	
Adverb	Collocates	Adverb	Collocates
<i>pretty</i>	bad (13), big (8), obvious (6), smart (6), clear (5), tough (4), awful (4), easy (3), busy (3)	<i>pretty</i>	good (323), sure (122), bad (58), cool (53), obvious (21), smart (18), amazing (17), serious (17), clear (15), certain (12), busy (12), boring (11), impressive (10), interesting (10), tired (10), dangerous (9), pleased (8), awful (6), dull (5), scary (5), romantic (5), nasty (4), desperate (4), odd (3), exciting (3), unhappy (3)
<i>really</i>	necessary (9), interested (5), serious (5), remarkable (3), simple (3)	<i>really</i>	weird (66), necessary (28), useful (27), cute (21), scary (14), annoying (9), awkward (9), embarrassed (9), impressive (9), tasty (7), annoyed (7), talented (7), chuffed (4), stunning (4), depressing (4), tiring (3), humiliating (3), thoughtful (3)
<i>absolutely</i>	sure (7), necessary (5), certain (4), wonderful (3)	<i>absolutely</i>	fine (47), necessary (19), certain (18), true (18), gorgeous (17), fantastic (17), beautiful (17), brilliant (16), amazing (14), perfect (14), disgusting (13), wonderful (12), stunning (11), splendid (9), ridiculous (9), essential (8), mad (8), crazy (8), fascinating (7), marvelous (7), delicious (7), positive (7), honest (7), disgraceful (6), extraordinary (6), incredible (6), correct (5), impossible (5), superb (4), marvelous (4), obsessed (4), delighted (4), charming (4), useless (4), awful (4), livid (3), sensational (3), vital (3), enormous (3), divine (3), fabulous (3), glorious (3), insane (3)
<i>perfectly</i>	well (26), right (16), sane (7), safe (7), happy (7), simple (5), charming (5), clear (5), natural (3), serious (3), true (3)	<i>perfectly</i>	clear (36), safe (36), happy (30), normal (29), honest (20), capable (15), natural (15), fine (13), healthy (12), reasonable (10), harmless (6), obvious (6), simple (6), serious (6), willing (5), frank (5), heartless (4), legal (4), charming (4), adequate (3), satisfactory (3), straightforward (3), logical (3), ordinary (3), possible (3), calm (3)
<i>totally</i>	–	<i>totally</i>	different (24), fucked (13), alone (8), unacceptable (7), relaxed (6), insane (6), inappropriate (5), normal (5), exhausted (4), illegal (4), innocent (4), honest (4), irresponsible (3), irrelevant (3), freaked (3), useless (3), responsible (3), disgusting (3), boring (3), weird (3), hot (3), crazy (3)

that their expressivity wanes over time. They are replaced by intensifiers that belong to the informal register. The following data from the ‘UK Movie Corpus 1990–2010s’ may testify it: a slang word *bloody* is in full operation (*bloody stupid / awful / useless / hopeless / ridiculous / miserable / horrible / furious* or *brilliant / marvelous / typical*); similarly an offensive word *fucking* has gained the status of a highly emotive intensifier that is added to adjectives with ambivalent coloring (*fucking stupid / crazy / mad / horrible / weird / bad / ridiculous / boring / miserable / awful / disgusting* or *good / great / brilliant / amazing / beautiful / lovely / nice / cool* etc.). The dramatic increase in highly informal intensifiers indicates a functional replacement for stylistically neutral linguistic units in the English-language dialogic film discourse. In this way, the film language seems to capture the ever increasing trend to informality that is characteristic of authentic face-to-face discursive practices, thus, meeting the viewers’ expectations to be perceived as natural.

Conclusion

Analysing the dynamics in temporal and dialect variations in the discursive mechanisms of intensifiers renewal in the English dialogic film discourse revealed evidence of ongoing changes in the models of speech behavior that mirror the advancement of informality and social liberation.

The language of films has always been an inspiration for researchers who seek to explore the relationship between film discourse and social behavior models through the study of dialogue that captures and produces linguistic features characteristic of authentic speech. Drawing on The Movie Corpus comprising UK and US film scripts of the two distinct periods, the research gives an insight into the use of English adverbial intensifiers that are viewed as linguistic units used by film characters to express emotionality and informality that are characteristic of the film dialogue. The study explores diachronic and dialect variations that reflect the changing complexity of links between language use and its social and historical context.

The corpus data retrieved from the US and UK corpora of the two periods reinforced with statistical analysis revealed a noticeable decline in the use of the standard intensifying adverbs, such as *very*, *terribly*, *awfully*, *perfectly*, *absolutely*, *extremely*, while several informal adverbs *totally*, *fucking*, and *bloody* with highly emotional intensifying force have emerged and replaced formerly frequent language units. The analysis showed that they tend to modify adjectives belonging mostly to the colloquial or informal registers. It is found that in the 1990–2010s the adverbs under scrutiny tend to be linked to the semantic fields of adjectives that express general judgment or opinion, personal feelings and emotional states. The analysis of dialect variation reveals that the maximizers *bloody*, *perfectly*, *terribly*, *awfully* are most frequently used adverbs in the UK film discourse, whereas the US Movie Corpus top intensifiers include the informal maximizers *fucking*, *totally*, the booster *very* and the emphaser *really*. The US and UK corpora of the 1990–2010s period demonstrate frequent use of informal intensifying adverbs with a high degree of emotionality, which suggests discourse communities have certain expectations about the language usage in the film discourse to be close to natural conversation.

NOTES

¹ The Movie Corpus. URL: <https://www.english-corpora.org/movies>.

² Here and below the concordance lines from The Movie Corpus are accompanied by the film title, the year of its release, reference to the UK or US sub-corpora.

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