

INTENSIFIERS IN LATE MODERN ENGLISH

The development of intensifiers has long been identified as an area of vibrant change in Late Modern English. This groundbreaking book provides the first comprehensive study of intensifiers in this period and shows how they have changed over time. It uses speech-based and interactive data from the Old Bailey courthouse in London, enriched by extralinguistic information in the Old Bailey Corpus, to investigate an unprecedented range of intensifiers, including downtoners, boosters, and maximizers. The courtroom acts as a social microcosm of the period, providing unique insights on gender, class, and courtroom roles, and their effects on language use. The usage of intensifiers is illuminated from a lexico-grammatical angle, focusing on their formal and semantic features, as well as those of the items they modify. These perspectives are linked to temporal developments from 1720 to 1913, to offer a complete picture of variation and change in the intensifier area.

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 Claudia Claridge, Ewa Jonsson, Merja Kytö
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A Sociopragmatic Approach to Courtroom Discourse

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*To the memory of
our mothers*

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Acknowledgements

Intensification and degree phenomena have increasingly attracted attention in research on the sociopragmatics of English usage, present and past. Our book turns to the sociopragmatics of intensifiers in Late Modern English, zooming in on usage in a setting of sociohistorical and judicial importance, the Old Bailey courtroom over a period of 200 years, from the early 1700s to the early 1900s. Some of our speakers in the courtroom were seeking justice, while others were defending their lives against accusations, true or false. There were also witnesses giving testimony and answering questions posed by the judges or other legal professionals. For all these speakers, intensifiers were an important linguistic device that helped them to make themselves heard, whether in the most convincing terms possible or in hedged messages that did not provide more precise information to the court than circumstances warranted. The records of these courtroom sessions have been the source of our intensifier data, which we have explored over the course of our book project. Over the years, this has been an exciting journey, full of discoveries and new things to learn.

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Abbreviations and Notations

Abbreviations for Corpora and Other Data Sources

BNC ₁₉₉₄	The British National Corpus, 1994 version
BNC _{2014S}	The British National Corpus, spoken 2014 version
CED	A Corpus of English Dialogues 1560–1760
CLMETEV	The Corpus of Late Modern English Texts (extended version)
COHA	The Corpus of Historical American English
HTOED	The <i>Historical Thesaurus of English</i>
OBC	The Old Bailey Corpus, version 2.0
OED	<i>Oxford English Dictionary</i> , online
<i>Old Bailey Online</i>	<i>The Proceedings of the Old Bailey, 1674–1913</i> , online
<i>Proceedings</i>	<i>The Proceedings of the Old Bailey, 1674–1913</i> , the original printed version (in facsimile form on the <i>Old Bailey Online</i> website)

Linguistic Abbreviations

Adj	Adjective
Adv	Adverb
Det	Determiner
EModE	Early Modern English
LModE	Late Modern English
ME	Middle English
N	Noun phrase
Ndet	Nominal determiner
Num	Numeral
OE	Old English
PDE	Present-day English
Pp	Prepositional phrase

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Pple	Participle
Pron	Pronoun
V	Verb/verb phrase

Other Abbreviations

CI	Credible interval
Def	Defendant
f	Female
HISCLASS	Historical International Social Class Scheme
HISCO	Historical International Standard Classification of Occupations
Jud	Judge
Law	Lawyer
m	Male
NHST	Null-hypothesis significance testing
Vic	Victim
Wit	Witness

Notational Conventions

OBC file reference	tYearMonthDay-ID, e.g. t18720610-483 = t(rial) year 1872, month 06 (June), day 10, ID 483
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