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Sunday, March 8th: 11:30 -12:00

From Super Hottcore to Simply Amazing: A Longitudinal Study of a Blogger's Intensifier Use

In this paper, I have chosen to study variable intensifiers across five years of an online journal from 2002-2006 (livejournal). Intensifiers are adverbs that boost or enhance the meaning of the adjectives they modify as in the examples below:

- (1) i'm still immensely tired though (MAY 2002)
- (2) Yeah, i had a very very mixed weekend (SEP 2003)

Previous research has indicated that the intensifier system in English is undergoing robust change, particularly within adolescent speech communities (Ito & Tagliamonte 2003). The expansion of communication via the internet has created a multitude of new linguistic genres from simultaneous chat to e-mail to the blogosphere. In addition, it has provided linguists with ample amounts of data that has never before been analyzed.

By studying a single individual's intensifier system using real-time, online data, I hope to accomplish three goals: 1) to situate an individual within the broader speech community undergoing linguistic change, 2) to test predictions made by apparent-time studies using real-time data and 3) to test the constraining factors present in this form of online communication in order to observe the influence of these genres, especially in contrast to verbal and written discourse.

The results of this study indicate that the rate of intensification of this individual isn't terribly different from that of the larger speech community, but that there are specific constraining factors found in the online discourse that are not found in verbal speech. This suggests that the online medium is presenting language with entirely new genres of discourse different from the standard verbal and written ones.

References

- Ito, Rika & Sali A. Tagliamonte 2003. Well weird, right dodgy, very strange, really cool: layering and recycling in English intensifiers. *Language in Society*. 32(2): 257-79.
- Livejournal 1999-2008. Livejournal, Inc. <<http://www.livejournal.com>>