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## **Adjective Intensification as a Means of Characterization: Portraying In-Group Membership and Britishness in *Buffy the Vampire Slayer***

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### **Abstract**

This paper examines the use of intensifiers on the television show *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* in order to establish the ways in which they can be used for characterization. We found that the male and female characters used intensifiers differently (similarly to what is found in natural speech), but also that intensifier choice was related to changes in social networks for several of the female characters on the show (*so* and *totally*). Furthermore, intensifiers were also used to distinguish the British characters on the show from the American ones (*extremely*, *terribly*, and *bloody*). By comparing our results to findings for other television shows (*Friends*) and for natural speech, we were able to establish the extent to which the show makes use of (then) innovative linguistic features for characterization. These findings underline the extent to which scriptwriters and/or actors were able to use linguistic features to index specific types of character.

### **Keywords**

**Intensifiers, television, sociolinguistics, gender, British English, American English**

### **1. Introduction**

The various ways in which language is used in scripted dialogue, such as television series and film, have been given increasing attention by researchers in the past decade. Some have focussed on how close scripted language is to natural speech (Quaglio 2009;

Bednarek 2012a, 2012b), some on how language shows relations between characters (Bubel 2006; Mandala 2007), and some on what it can demonstrate about ongoing language change (Rey 1996; Tagliamonte & Roberts 2005).

Only recently has sociolinguistic research approached how language may be used for characterization purposes, particularly in cases where characters do not all have the same dialect. Hodson (2014) discussed media restrictions of dialect representation in film and literature and focused on the role stereotypes play in character creation. Queen (2015) found that language variation can be an important tool in highlighting characteristics in film and television, and drew on examples of mostly phonetic realizations of regional dialects. While both studies offered numerous examples taken from recent scripted media, they did not provide a wider systematic overview of how variation is employed throughout the entirety of a medium, how consistent the presented diversity in language choices is, or how character development can be traced over time through changes in linguistic behavior. This article aims to offer further insight into how linguistic resources in fictional television strengthen characterization and portray in-group membership (particularly in terms of core/non-core members and in terms of gender). It also examines how intensifiers (i.e. forms such as *very*, *really*, *so* that serve to modify adjectives) can serve to differentiate British characters from others on an American television show, thereby enabling us to establish if particular intensifiers are seen as stereotypically British by the writers.

Intensifier use in television has already been examined by Tagliamonte and Roberts (2005), who demonstrated that characters in the American television show *Friends* used intensifiers at rates and in ways similar to natural speech. While we also compare our results to natural speech and as such provide further insight into how ongoing changes in intensifier selection are portrayed on another contemporary television show,

our primary aim is to examine how television shows manipulate linguistic features to portray particular dimensions of a character's background or personality, and how they can make use of these features to achieve this goal within the created world of the show.

As a background to the analysis, the paper first discusses previous research on language in television and the insights it has yielded, then presents the main findings on intensifier use both in natural speech and television, before moving on to a discussion of *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* and how intensifiers are used by the various characters on the show. Among other things, we focus on how Giles and Spike, the two British characters, are portrayed with respect to their use of intensifiers alongside the American characters.

## **2. Language in Television**

Television is an integral part of modern life and was “the dominant mass medium of the second half of the twentieth century and into the first decade of the twenty-first century” (Richardson 2010:1). Despite claims that television has been superseded by new online media (Luckerson 2014), recent analyses have shown that while traditional television viewership has indeed gone down, television viewership has actually increased through more flexible and mobile on-demand online services such as Netflix or YouTube, as well as time-shifted viewing through DVR (Stelter 2012; Ericsson Consumer Lab 2014). Although the precise contribution of television to language change remains rather contested (see Bell and Sharma (2014) for a collection of articles on language and media), it is clear that the language used on television is worthy of diverse linguistic consideration, something that is explored in more detail in Bednarek (2010:1-3) and Queen (2015:20-21).

Similarly to Tagliamonte and Roberts (2005), whose findings are detailed in the discussion of previous literature on intensifiers below, Quaglio (2009) examined *Friends* and compared a corpus comprising nine seasons of the show with a corpus of spoken

American English. Quaglio (2009) considered which specific language features might be different in the two genres and consequently which might be relevant when using scripted language in linguistic research. He found that “the language of the television show is similar to face-to-face conversation from a grammatical point of view” (2009:68) but that they differ in pragmatic functions (in that television language is less vague and more emotional<sup>1</sup>). Bednarek (2012b) built on these findings and used a similar method to compare the spoken part of the American National Corpus to a television dialogue corpus. Rather than focusing on a single television show, she examined seven television series from five different genres to obtain as broad a context as possible. Confirming Quaglio’s results, Bednarek (2012b:48-49) found that the language of fictional television is: (a) close to natural conversation, and (b) more emotional.

While comparative studies of television dialogue and naturally occurring language have mainly focused on issues of authenticity, it is worth exploring language patterns that deviate from sociolinguistic expectations. The creative use of marked linguistic features can also provide insight into identity practices, as Mandala (2007) proved in her study on communities of practice within *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* (see section 4). She examined individual characters’ use of marked *y*-suffixes to create new adjectives, e.g., *heart-of-darkness-y*, *cute-y*, *out-of-the-loop-y*, and *vein-y*. Adams (2003:42), in his book on “Slayer Slang,” had claimed that these forms had “very quickly come to characterize the whole Scooby Gang, serving as the adhesive that binds them together.” Mandala (2007) verified this hypothesis and established that these kinds of adjectives function as a marker of in-group identity and membership for the core group of friends in *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* (the “Scooby Gang” or the “Scoobies”). In this paper, we claim that character groupings can be indicated not only through marked lexical items, but that features such as intensifiers can be equally revealing.

To examine this, we draw on theories related to “communities of practice,” particularly in terms of in- and out-group membership and the linguistic consequences of such membership to see to what extent scriptwriters make use of it in their characterizations. Exaggerated forms of character groupings can be seen in a variety of modern teen movies, for example in *Mean Girls* (2004), in which the following presentation of the high school cafeteria and its inhabitants can be heard: “You got your freshmen, ROTC guys, preps, J.V. jocks, Asian nerds, cool Asians, varsity jocks, unfriendly black hotties, girls who eat their feelings, girls who don’t eat anything, desperate wannabes, burnouts, (...).” While sociolinguistic research found that these distinctions are of course much more nuanced (see Bucholtz 1999, Eckert 2000), television tends to favor schematic stock characters because they quickly establish very distinct roles. We discuss below how characters are able to evolve within these schemas in some instances. Tagliamonte and Roberts (2005:281) noted that television language is ideal for a sociolinguistic exploration of variation and change due to its constant challenge of newness and audience engagement. We want to take this further and not only explore the variation and shift of intensifier use on television as such, but how this variation reflects individuality among the users of intensifiers: the characters.

### **3. Previous Research on Intensifiers**

Intensifiers, which are also sometimes called adverbs of degree (Biber et al. 1999), intensive adverbs (Stoffel 1901), degree modifiers (Paradis 1997), or degree words (Bolinger 1972), are forms that add “a degree measure onto its referent” (Tagliamonte 2012:320). Compare examples (1)-(3).

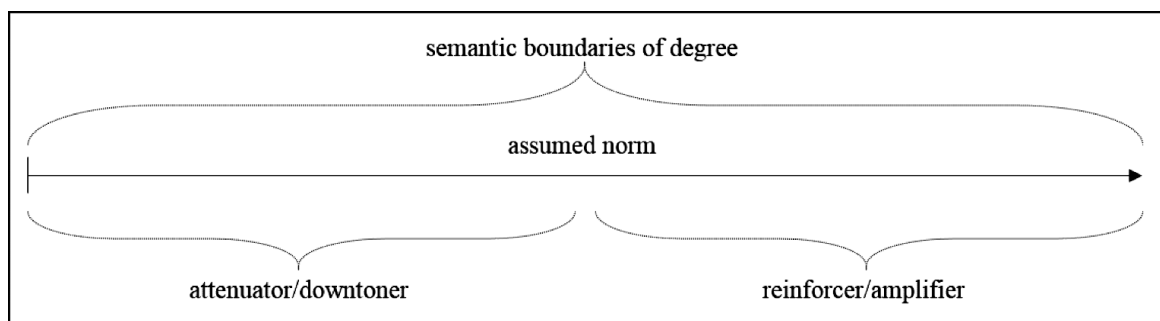
- (1) That’s weird.

- (2) That's *so* weird.  
 (3) That's *a bit* weird.

Example (1) shows the adjective *weird* without any modification. This is the assumed norm of what we would define as 'weird.' In (2), this quality is increased through the addition of intensifier *so*. The attribute of weirdness is heightened. In (3), this effect is reversed: the situation that is referred to falls short of being what we generally consider to be weird. Thus, intensifiers can modify the head of a phrase in either direction of a scale.

Biber et al. (1999:554-555), in their treatment of what they call adverbs of degree, distinguish between “amplifiers” and “downtoners,” whereas Paradis (1997, 2000) designates these two options as “reinforcer” and “attenuator,” respectively (illustrated in Figure 1).

**Figure 1:** Scalarity After Biber et al. (1999) and Paradis (1997, 2000)



Intensifiers are pragmatic features that derive from various word forms (such as adverbs or quantifiers) and appear in diverse syntactic structures: they can pre- or postmodify (4-5) the head of the phrase or the whole phrase; they can modify noun phrases (6) and verb phrases (7), as well as occur with attributive (8) or predicative adjectives (9) .

- (4) Uh, I have a *really* bad idea. (Buffy, 316<sup>2</sup>)

- (5) Pathetic *much*? (Buffy, 202)
- (6) I'm the *very* spirit of vexation. (Spike, 507)
- (7) I *so* get that now. (Buffy, 612)
- (8) You're a *very* bad man. (Spike, 308)
- (9) He's *so* cute! (Buffy, 106)

For this paper, following previous studies, we focus solely on intensifiers that modify adjectives.<sup>3</sup> Adjective intensification is the most common form of intensification (Bäcklund 1973:279; Biber et al. 1999:544). Further constraints on token inclusion are presented in section 5 after a brief overview of previous findings.

Because many studies disagree on definite categories of intensification and which features to include, we have chosen to primarily focus on the two main distinctions from the model of scalarity that was introduced previously. Within the group of amplifiers, the intensifiers that scale upwards are distinguished by Quirk et al. (1985:591) in terms of “maximizers” and “boosters” with the former denoting “the upper extreme of a scale” and the latter merely indicating “a higher degree.” Paradis (1997, 2000) takes up this notion and proposes the distinction between “totality” and “scalar modifiers” within adjective intensification. This allows her to apply Quirk et al.’s (1980) distinction to both amplifiers (reinforcers) and downtoners (attenuators).

**Table 1** Levels of Degree (Paradis 2000:141)

Degree	Totality Modifiers	Scalar Modifiers
Reinforcers	maximizer <i>completely</i> (full)	booster <i>very</i> (tired)
Attenuators	approximator <i>almost</i> (full)	moderator <i>quite</i> (tired)
		diminisher <i>a bit</i> (tired)

Paradis (2000) claims that, depending on whether the modified adjective (the head) is “bound” (non-gradable) or “unbound” (gradable), intensifiers are likely totality or scalar modifiers respectively. This means that “maximizers and approximators are both associated with totality and combine with adjectives which are associated with a boundary,” while on the other hand “[b]oosters reinforce the gradable property denoted by the adjective” (Paradis 2000:148).

We can show this to be true from the examples below, where the gradable adjective *long* is intensified through the scalar modifier *very* (10) and the non-gradable *beachless* combined with the totality marker *totally* (11). However, this categorization does not hold up in all cases.

(10) Reason number one on a *very* long list. (Buffy, 615)

(11) I was *totally* beachless for a month and a half. (Cordelia, 201)

Paradis (2001:48) herself notes that boundedness “is not fixed but can be changed through contextual modulation.” Similarly, Rickford et al. (2007:7) remark on the difficulty in always making clear distinctions between gradable and non-gradable patterns. This means that, while we applied these categories in our overall analysis, we were aware that clear-cut distinctions were not always possible and thus used these categories primarily as guidelines.

This was crucial, because there are some intensifiers that fall into more than one category. *Quite* can either be used with a maximizer function in combination with totality adjectives (12 and 13), or as a moderator (within the category of attenuator or downtoner) with unbounded adjectives (14).



- (12) No, you're *quite* right. (Giles, 205)
- (13) *Quite* different, actually. (Giles, 604)
- (14) For what it's worth everyone at your house seemed *quite* relieved at the arrangement. (Giles, 717)

However, we found that in cases where *quite* was combined with an adjective that is unbounded as well as with stance markers of certainty (i.e. *actually, certainly, to assure, etc*), the function is clearly heightening, as in examples (15 and 16), which meant that the categorization was not always clear-cut.

- (15) Uh, it was *quite* an amusing story, actually. (Giles, 210)
- (16) I assure you she's *quite* capable. (Giles, 215)

Paradis (1997, 2000) categorized *pretty* and *fairly* in the same way as *quite*, i.e., as scalar attenuators, because they “approximate an average range on a scale” (2000:148), although it is not specified whether they can also be used as both totality and scalar modifiers.

It is clear then that these categories often overlap in ways that are not always readily distinguishable. So, rather than trying to completely differentiate the various intensification types and risk second guessing the scriptwriters' intentions, we have chosen to use loose distinctions that will allow us to get a general idea of the distribution of intensifier use. Following an initial analysis of the data, we found that all words classified as moderators (e.g., *quite*) can have the dual function mentioned above and consequently made the decision to group them together (separately from maximizers and boosters). Additionally, because we were primarily interested in intensifiers with a heightening effect,, we only included modifiers that were combined with unbounded (or gradable)

adjectives as well as those where the context of the utterance clearly pointed to a heightening effect, following Paradis' categorization and excluded the remaining moderator tokens.<sup>4</sup> Our analysis then considers the most frequent items in three categories of intensifiers: maximizers, boosters and moderators (after Paradis' 1997, 2000 definition). A detailed description of criteria for token inclusion and how we have broken them down is presented below.

Generally speaking, the overall versatility of intensifiers related to external factors such as age, gender, and location marks this feature as outstanding for sociolinguistic research. Barnfield and Buchstaller (2010) found that within a timeframe of even just fifty years, patterns of intensifier use shift considerably and that each generation tends to favor different variants, which leads to a "longitudinal expansion of the system" (2010:253).

Previous sociolinguistic research on adjective intensifiers has found various patterns that serve as a backdrop for our own analysis. As mentioned previously, Quirk et al. (1980:276) found *very* to be the most frequent intensifier in contemporary British English, while Labov (1984:44) suggested that *really* was one of most frequently used intensifiers in North America, an observation that was later confirmed quantitatively by Rickford et al. (2007:9) and Tagliamonte (2008:367). Additionally, women show higher rates of intensifier use than men (Tagliamonte 2008:632) and teenagers not only show higher rates, but also greater use of new and incoming intensifiers (Stenström 1999; Paradis 2000; Stenström et al. 2002; Macaulay 2006; Tagliamonte 2008).

In terms of the specific intensifiers used, numerous other studies (Bolinger 1972; Stenström 1999; Stenström et al. 2002; Ito & Tagliamonte 2003; Tagliamonte & Roberts 2005; Macaulay 2006; Tagliamonte 2008; Barnfield & Buchstaller 2010; Tagliamonte 2012) found that the most frequent intensifiers are: *very*, *really*, *so*, *pretty*, *totally*,

*extremely, absolutely, quite, and rather*. While this general pattern is consistent across many studies, the ranking of the most frequent intensifiers varies by speech community.

Two studies that were conducted following similar methods found that intensifier use in York, UK, and Toronto, Canada, is very different in terms of the frequency of the main variants (Ito & Tagliamonte 2003; Tagliamonte 2008). According to their findings, York shows a clear preference for *very* (38.3 percent) over *really* (30.2), while the North American data indicates that *really* is the most frequently used variant (with 35.9 percent over 18.2 percent for *very*). This finding is congruent with Rickford et al. (2007), who investigated intensifier usage in California. All three studies also show *so* to be a new incoming variant.

Tagliamonte and Roberts (2005) focused on intensifier use in the popular television series *Friends* and it found that intensifier *so* was used much more frequently (44 percent) than reported in other studies, overtaking *really* (25 percent) and leaving *very*, the most frequent intensifier in the UK, in third place (14 percent) (Tagliamonte & Roberts 2005:287). Tagliamonte et al.'s studies suggest that intensifier *so* is replacing other intensifiers (*really* and *very*). This can be seen looking across age ranges and also for gender, as female speakers are innovators (for a detailed longitudinal study see Barnfield and Buchstaller (2010)).

This change in intensifier preference, documented within just a short amount of time, underscores the observation that intensifiers undergo “constant renewal” (Tagliamonte 2008:632) with new forms continually being used alongside the existing variants.

#### **4. Buffy the Vampire Slayer**

*Buffy the Vampire Slayer*'s (henceforth *Buffy*) first incarnation was a 1992 movie written by Joss Whedon which gained a modest cult following. In 1997, Whedon turned the film

script into a television show which soon became one of America's most talked-about series among teenagers and adults alike (Adams 2003). It can be located in a genre somewhere between science fiction and teen dramedy; a user of the IMDb movie database, referring to its original movie version, calls it "no-longer-waiting-for-her-prince, newly-empowered, women-who-can-kick-butt genre" (IMDb). The show was hugely successful and remains a part of popular culture to the present day (the series is successfully continued in graphic novel format and has accumulated over three million viewer ratings just on Netflix since it was added to their streaming service in 2013). Additionally, the show may be the television series to have received the most (in any case a considerable amount of) scholarly attention (Macnaughtan 2011).

A very brief overview of the show is necessary to understand the later analyses: it revolves around sixteen-year-old Buffy Summers, portrayed by Sarah Michelle Gellar, who moves to Sunnydale, California, to attend high school. Unlike most teenagers, however, Buffy has been chosen by an ancient prophecy to be the Slayer and with her friends (the reserved, but incredibly smart Willow, the unpopular, comic foil Xander, and Cordelia, who started off as her high school rival), Giles, the eccentric English librarian, and Angel and Spike, vampires who become her friends, she must fight the vampires and demons that plague the town.

The language of *Buffy* has attracted diverse scholarly attention, including Mandala's (2007) in-group membership study mentioned above. "Slayer Slang" (elsewhere also "Buffyspeak," "Whedonspeak," or "Buffinese") describes the often remarked upon creative and linguistically innovative writing in the show. It lends itself neatly to studies of innovative linguistic features, particularly because the main characters of *Buffy* are young women, a group which has repeatedly been found to lead in the use of such features (Labov 1990; Eckert 2000). The diversity of characters but also character

interactions on the show enables analysis of not solely factors of gender and nationality (as has been done in previous studies), but additionally a closer investigation of (performed) interactional identity practices.

The show was broadcast over seven seasons between 1997 and 2003 in the United States and successively all over the world. The corpus we used comprises every episode<sup>5</sup> and comes to approximately 582,000 words, with roughly 412,000 words spoken by the main characters that are the focus of our analysis. The episodes were transcribed by fans of the show and put online on a dedicated webpage (Buffyworld n.d.). Before extracting and coding the data we checked individual transcripts at random and found they accurately recorded what was said on screen. To avoid any potential issues along these lines (discrepancies between scripts and transcripts, as well as inaccuracies in transcriptions; see Adams 2013), we only considered transcripts based on aired episodes. Tagliamonte and Roberts (2005), Quaglio (2009), as well as Bednarek (2010, 2011, 2012a, 2012b) used the same method and, like us, found the online databases of television transcripts to be not only extensive, but accurate and very detailed in descriptions of discourse context as well as content.

While Tagliamonte and Roberts (2005) included only the six main characters in their study of *Friends*, we focused on a range of characters, including both the core characters (Buffy, Willow, Xander, and Giles) and more peripheral characters (Spike, Angel, Anya, Dawn, etc.). However, we did not include every character from the series, as intensifier-use patterns were only interpretable for characters with sufficient speech for analysis. Thus, we will focus on those characters we considered to have enough speech in the show. Table 2 shows individual characters and their speaking portion; the “other” category consists of peripheral characters, those that appeared in only a few episodes, or were unnamed extras. We decided not to include characters with a total word count below

10,000 words, which led to an exclusion of characters Tara and Faith, who, despite being meaningful within the storyline, did not produce enough words or tokens to permit comparison with others. As the characters have varying numbers of lines on the show (Buffy, as the main character, speaks twice as much as Willow, for instance), we take the total word count per character into consideration for the analyses that compare different characters. Also note that the whole of data for English characters is based on the speech of Giles and Spike.

**Table 2** Characters of *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* by Total Words Spoken

Character	Spoken words total	Gender	Nationality
Buffy	126325	female	American
Willow	61067	female	American
Xander	57658	male	American
Giles	48527	male	English
Spike	32270	male	English
Anya	22714	female	American
Dawn	16241	female	American
Cordelia	13299	female	American
Riley	12036	male	American
Joyce	11102	female	American
Angel	11027	male	Irish-American <sup>6</sup>
Others	164008	\	\

## 5. Variable Context

All the tokens of adjective intensification were extracted from the data for the main speakers, but only the most frequent variants, as detailed below, will be examined here. Although some previous studies (e.g., Tagliamonte & Roberts 2005) included cases of zero-intensification, they were not examined in the present study. Similarly to Barnfield and Buchstaller (2010:262), we were more interested in the choice of intensifiers and “their constraints relative to one another,” rather than use vs. non-use. This is tied to our focus on how characters were differentiated in terms of the forms.. The most frequent

intensifiers found in our corpus were then grouped according to the previously mentioned categories of boosters, maximizers, and moderators.<sup>7</sup>

To make the results more comparable with previous studies and because certain contexts are not fully variable, tokens in questions (17), those including negation (18), and comparatives or superlatives (19) were excluded.

- (17) a. Don't you think that went *very* well? (Willow, 302)
- b. Have you gone *completely* carrot-top? (Spike, 721)
- (18) a. And he's obviously not *very* stable. (Joyce, 217)
- b. That's not *very* industrious of you. (Spike, 411)
- (19) Oh, uh, faster, but... not *really* safer. (Willow, 110)

Furthermore, intensifiers were coded for episode and character (including gender, age, geographical background, and species<sup>8</sup>). We also examined variation in terms of two internal factors that had been examined previously and been found to be relevant (Ito and Tagliamonte 2003:261, Tagliamonte 2008: 363, Tagliamonte and Roberts 2005:295). We coded each token to assess whether it was used with an attributive (20) or a predicative adjective (21). The former comprises contexts in which the modifying intensifier and following adjective are part of a noun phrase while the latter is related to the modification of adjectives occurring in verb phrases.

- (20) We got a *very* exciting shipment in at the gallery. (Joyce, 302)
- (21) I'm *very* sorry about Tara. (Giles, 622)

We also classified adjectives in terms of their overall frequency of use with intensifiers: adjectives occurring six or more times were classed as high frequency (e.g., *good*, *cool*, and *weird*) while those occurring five or fewer times were classed as low frequency (e.g., *homicidal*, *Evita-like*, and *romantic*).

We present the overall distributions within the corpus first before introducing each intensifier type in more detail, which leads into discussions of specific characteristics and character development.

## 6. Overall Distribution

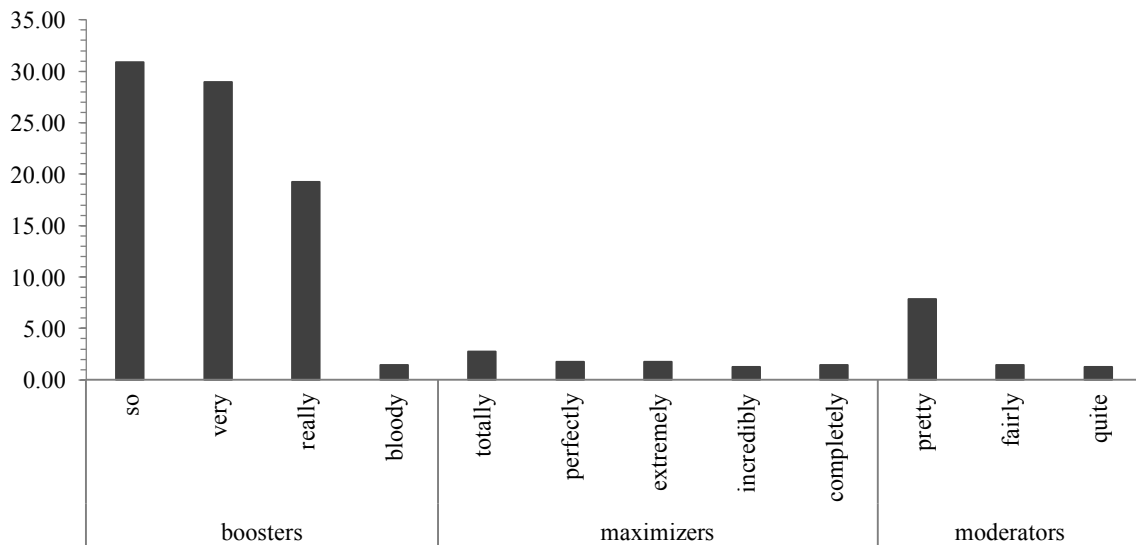
A total of 1123 intensifiers were included in the analysis after the exclusion of modified adverbs, negations, superlatives, etc. We only examined intensifiers that accounted for at least 1 percent of intensification in order to detect patterns of intensifiers that contributed to characters' linguistic repertoire.<sup>9</sup> Table 3 lists the intensifiers studied and their frequencies while Figure 2 presents the overall distribution broken down by intensifier category (as introduced earlier) in percentages.

**Table 3** All Intensifiers Included in the Analysis by Number of Occurrences

Intensifier	N	%
<i>so</i>	347	30.90
<i>very</i>	325	28.94
<i>really</i>	216	19.23
<i>pretty</i>	88	7.84
<i>totally</i>	31	2.76
<i>perfectly</i>	20	1.78
<i>extremely</i>	20	1.78
<i>fairly</i>	16	1.42
<i>completely</i>	16	1.42
<i>bloody</i>	16	1.42
<i>quite</i>	14	1.25
<i>incredibly</i>	14	1.25



**Figure 2:** Overall Distribution in Percent

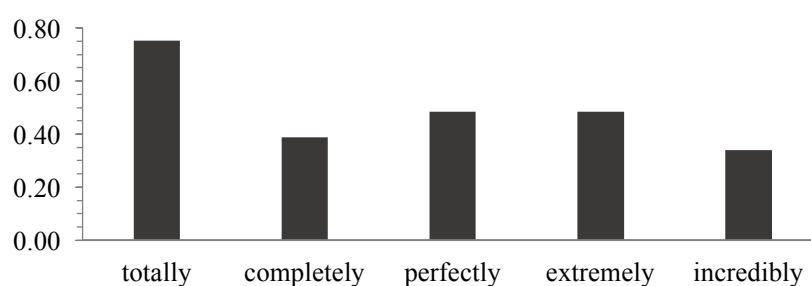


The graph in Figure 2 shows that boosters are considerably more frequent than the other types of intensifiers included in this study. Since frequencies vary greatly for the categories of intensifiers, we focus the detailed analysis of social character backgrounds on each intensifier type individually. We are primarily interested in character creation and in how intensifier use corresponds to characterization, such as character development and the stereotyping of national backgrounds. Our findings are not predominantly focused on how closely the scriptwriters mimic naturally occurring language. Rather, we show how they use their impression of such language to represent diverse and versatile characters. For that reason, we concentrate our analysis on social factors of gender, nationality, and group memberships. For the detailed analysis of distributions across different speaker groups and individual characters we look at each of the three intensifier categories in turn, starting with maximizers.

## 7. Maximizers

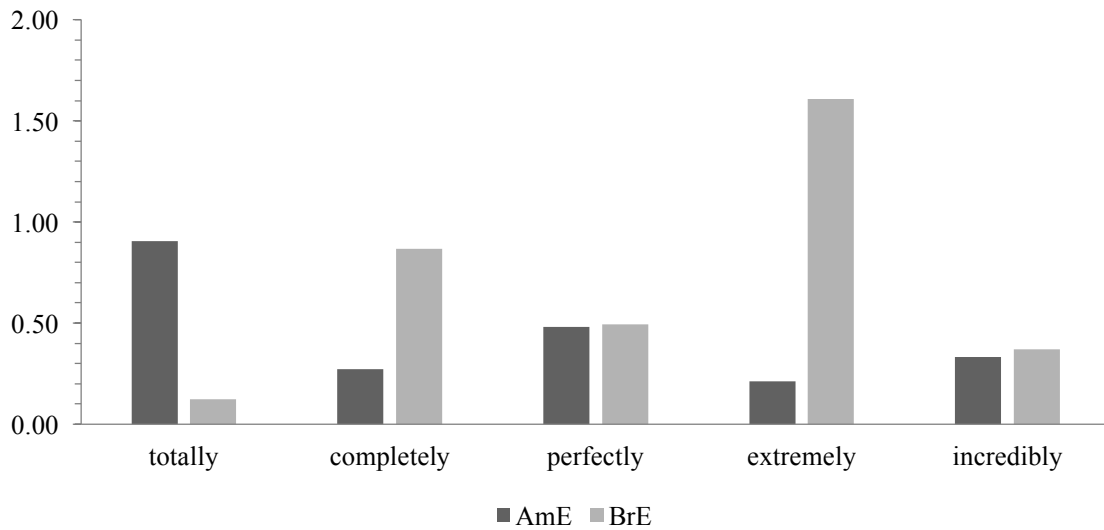
Within our corpus, we categorized 101 tokens as maximizers. Because our focus is on characterization and there are differences with respect to word counts across characters, we normalized the data and report intensifier use per 10,000 words spoken from this point onwards. This allows us to mitigate the effect of varying word counts per character or character group and to make statements on general patterns of use across individual speakers. The overall distribution in Figure 3 shows that maximizer *totally* is used ahead of *extremely*, *perfectly*, *completely*, and *incredibly*, a pattern in line with previous studies as discussed below. With most characters being young and American, these findings reflect what we expect from studies on naturally occurring language as summarized below.

**Figure 3:** Overall Maximizer Distribution per 10,000 Words



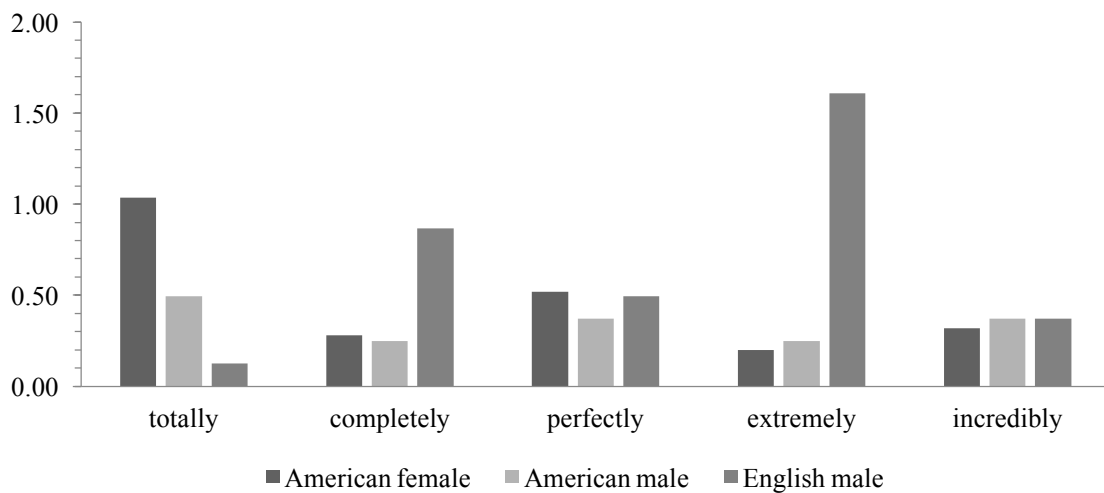
The main differences in maximizer use among the *Buffy* characters relate to nationality of the speakers (see Figure 4): previous studies found that the most frequent American maximizers are *totally* and *completely* (Biber et al. 1999:554; Tagliamonte & Roberts 2005:287; Tagliamonte 2008:368), while British English favors *absolutely* over *completely* and *totally* (Biber et al. 1999:554; Stenström et al. 2002:143; Ito & Tagliamonte 2003:266). In our data, frequencies of *absolutely* were below the threshold of inclusion within our study, as there were only four occurrences (all by Giles, a British character).

**Figure 4:** Maximizer Use by Nationality per 10,000 Words



Our findings confirm that *totally* is a mainly American maximizer ( $p < .05$ ),<sup>10</sup> while *extremely* ( $p < .001$ ) and *completely* ( $p < .05$ ) appear to be used more by the British characters. Additionally, it is worth noting that, in relative numbers, British characters use maximizers more than American characters. Note that the whole of data for the English characters is based on the speech of Giles and Spike.

**Figure 5:** Maximizer Use by Nationality and Gender per 10,000 Words



A breakdown of maximizer use across gender and nationality (Figure 5) shows that *totally* is used mainly by the female characters, which could be associated with the young speakers in this group and a conscious stereotyping of a Valley Girl speech pattern (Bucholtz et al. 2007). We return to this notion later in the analysis.

## 8. Moderators

We found a total of 118 heightening moderators in the data, which represents 2.8 tokens per 10,000 words spoken. The overall distribution across the main characters in Figure 6 shows that *pretty* is much more common in use than *quite* and *fairly*. The latter two are used with similar frequencies.

**Figure 6:** General Distribution of Moderators per 10,000 Words

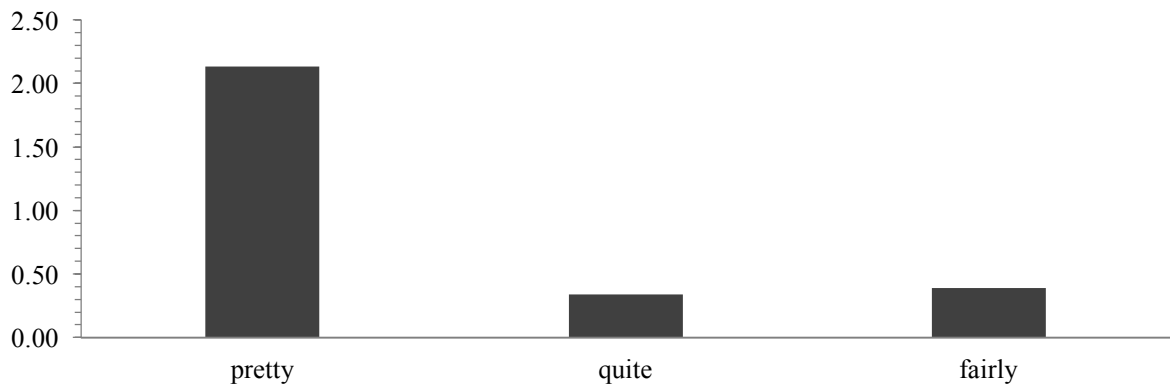
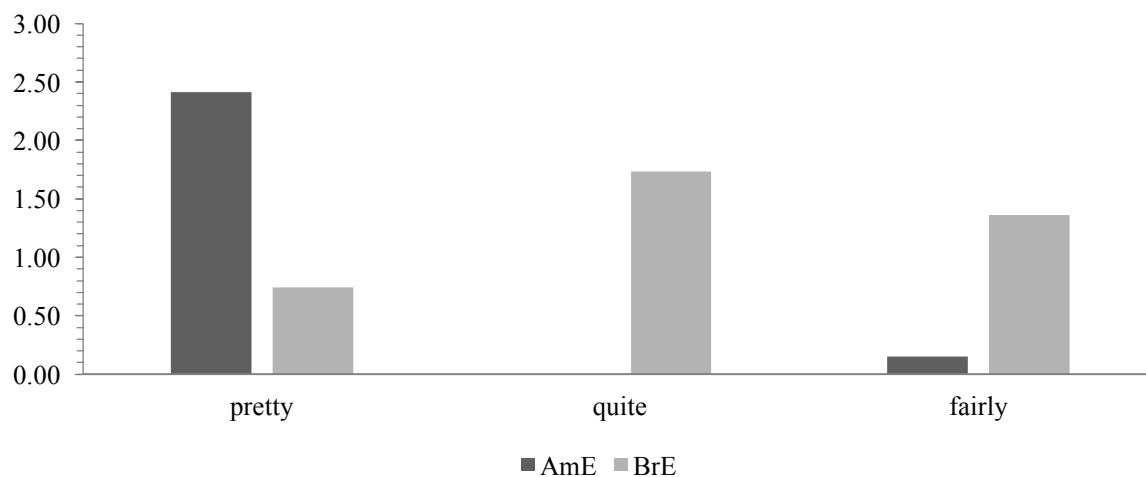


Figure 7 considers use across nationalities and shows that the high usage of *pretty* is dominated by the American characters ( $p < .001$ ), who, in turn, hardly use the other three variants. Moderator use for American characters is not as varied as for British characters, who use moderators more frequently overall. We found that the moderators

were not used differently by the American men and women and so do not present these results.

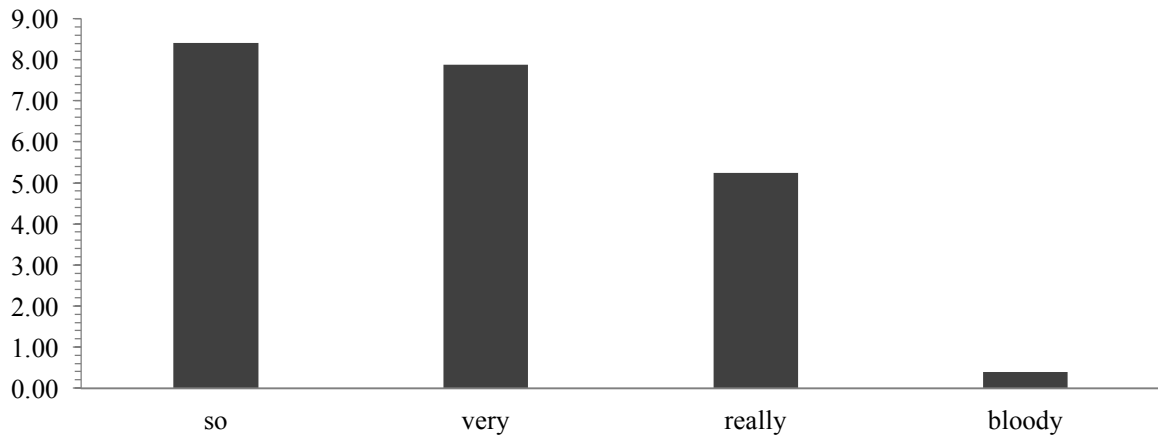
**Figure 7:** Moderator Use by Nationality per 10,000 Words



## 9. Boosters

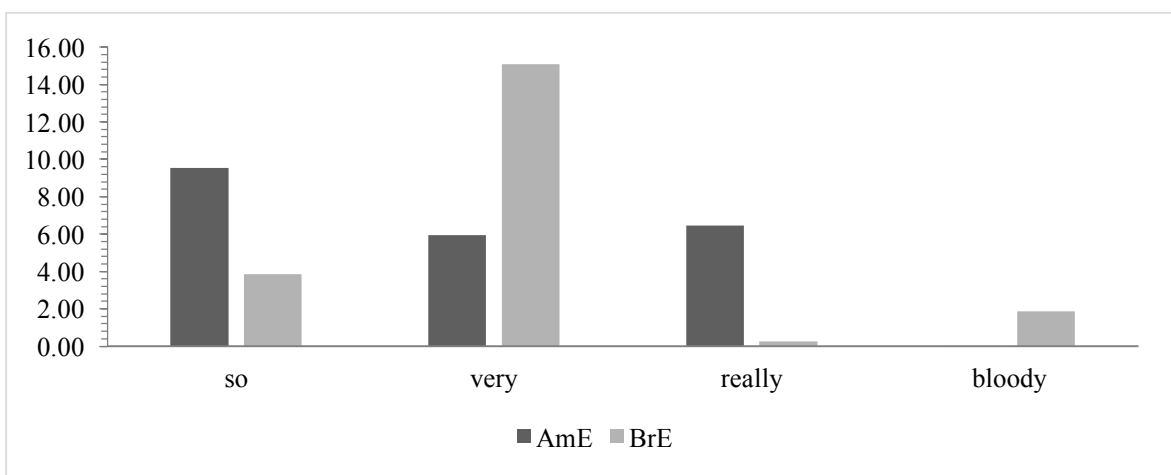
We found 904 boosters in our corpus, which represents about twenty-two boosters per 10,000 words. As this is the most frequent intensifier type, we focus our discussion of characterization mostly on these variants. Figure 8 shows the overall distribution of booster use by the main characters per 10,000 words spoken.

**Figure 8:** Overall Distribution of Boosters per 10,000 Words



Overall the characters use *so* most frequently, followed by *very*, *really*, and *bloody*, respectively. This in itself does not tell us much, as previous research has shown that with boosters, frequencies are highly dependent on where the study was carried out. As mentioned previously, general patterns show *really* as most frequent in American English and *very* most frequent in British English, with *so* coming in as a new favorite variant (Tagliamonte & Roberts 2005). To see in what ways these findings comply with our data, Figure 9 illustrates nationality representations of *Buffy*.

**Figure 9:** Booster Use by Nationality per 10,000 Words

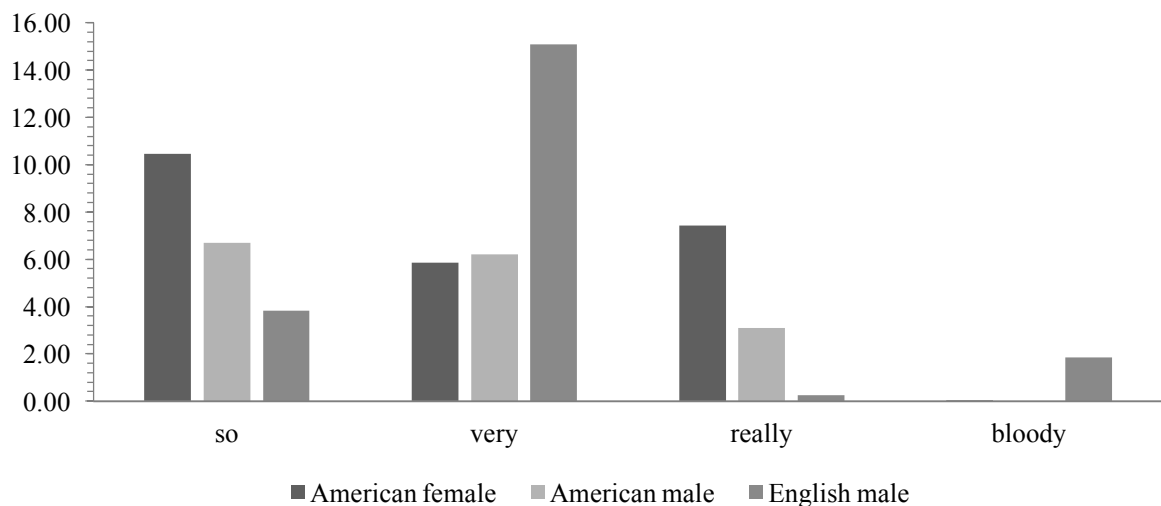


Nationality-based distinctions here indicate that *very* is indeed used most frequently with the English characters. The American characters, however, do not use *really* as frequently

as previous studies would suggest, and it appears only marginally more often than *very*. *So* is the most frequent variant for American characters and the second most frequent for English characters. This reinforces findings by Tagliamonte (2008) and Tagliamonte and Roberts (2005), which stated that *so* was an incoming popular intensifier.

Figure 10 breaks this down further, considering both nationality and gender. This data makes it clear that the surprising national differences are mainly due to the American male characters, who have higher rates of *very* and lower rates of *really* than the female characters.

**Figure 10:** Booster Use by Nationality and Gender per 10,000 Words



The booster *bloody* is a special case, as it is also used as an expletive and here serves as a linguistic stereotype. It is highly associated with Britishness and its distribution across speakers shows that it is used almost exclusively by English characters Giles and Spike (see Figure 10). Buffy seemingly uses it once as well; however, a closer examination of the particular scene she uses it in reveals that it is being used precisely to show that it is not really Buffy speaking (see 22).

(22) Angel’s lame. His hair grows straight up and he’s *bloody* stupid. (Buffy, 518)

In this episode, Buffy is in fact a cyborg (called “Buffybot”) constructed for (and controlled by) Spike. This means that her statement here and her word choice reflect Spike’s opinions and language patterns rather than her own.

#### 10. Comparison with previous television data

Because some features were used at similar rates to what was found for natural occurring speech and some differed considerably, we now offer a comparison between our data and the results in *Friends* (Tagliamonte & Roberts 2005). This allows us to gain more insight into scripted intensification in general and also determine whether the differences in intensifier frequencies we found are related to the media. Table 4 shows the most frequent intensifiers in the two series with the *Buffy* tokens filtered to include only the characters that have the same sociolinguistic characteristics as those in the *Friends* corpus: i.e., only twenty-something Americans.<sup>11</sup>

**Table 4** Frequency of Intensifiers in the *Friends* Study (Tagliamonte & Roberts 2005:287) and in *Buffy*

Intensifier	<i>Friends</i>		<i>Buffy</i>	
	N	%	N	%
<i>so</i>	832	44.1	158	33.9
<i>really</i>	464	24.6	110	23.6
<i>very</i>	269	14.3	113	24.2
<i>pretty</i>	115	6.1	44	9.4
<i>totally</i>	53	2.8	13	2.8
others	153	8.1	28	6.0
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>1886</b>		<b>466</b>	

In the *Friends* corpus, as noted earlier, *so* is by far the most frequent intensifier, followed by *really* and *very*. The most frequent intensifier in *Buffy* is also *so*, which supports the claim that *so* is the new “favorite of American English” (Tagliamonte & Roberts 2005:296). In the *Friends* data, and in other studies of North American intensifiers, *really*



has overtaken *very* in frequency. In *Buffy*, however, *very* and *really* are used at nearly identical rates though this is, as we have seen in Table 2, mainly due to the high use of *very* (and low use of *really*) by the male American speakers.

The general distribution of boosters, maximizers, and moderators has shown that television dialogue data can be compared to real-life language and shows similar patterns, but also presents several differences. Tagliamonte and Roberts (2005:296) concluded their *Friends* study by saying that the language “of these media,” with respect to the use of intensifiers, is similar to that of natural occurring speech and that it might even reflect ongoing changes in language. Our data gives further weight to that claim, although we suspect that certain factors related to the scripted nature of the medium might nevertheless produce patterns that differ from what we would expect in natural occurring language use.

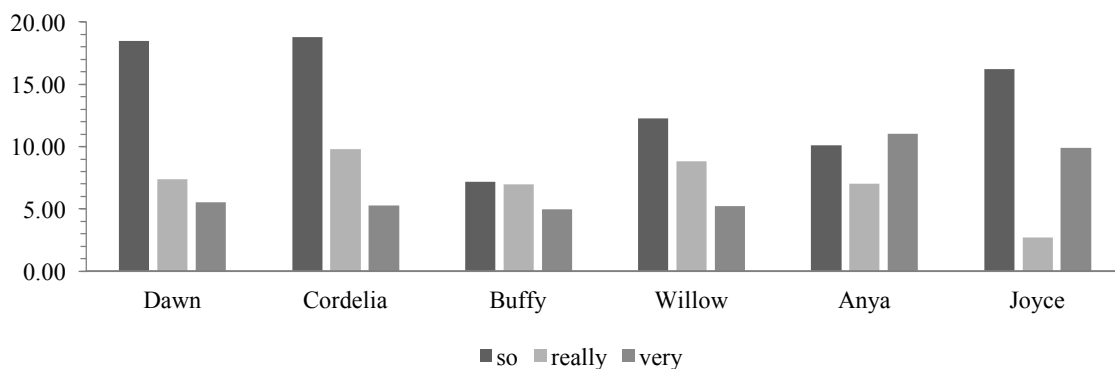
### **11. Intensification for Characterization**

In the following discussion we focus on the distribution of the main intensifiers for individual characters and character networks in order to establish what may explain the sometimes unusual distributions found within the speaker groups. In this way, we investigate the possibility that these patterns are linked to the television show and to specific characterizations rather than to an approximation of natural occurring speech. That is to say, we examine whether intensifier usage correlates with the show’s storyline and character development. Additionally, while we base all assumptions on the data available to us, we recognize that this discussion necessarily remains conjecture and interpretation in part.

Just as particular intensifiers correlated with Britishness, our analysis found that intensifiers were used for characterization in other ways as well. This aligns with previous studies (Bubel 2006; Mandala 2007; Bednarek 2010) which have shown that in-group

membership and the portrayal of gender differences are further factors that are indicated by scripted language choices. For a closer analysis, we now focus on possible gender distinctions, as well as character groupings, starting with the intensifier use of individual female characters (Figure 11). Because of token numbers, we will only present the three most frequent intensifiers, *so*, *really*, and *very*.

**Figure 11:** Main Boosters Across Main Female Characters per 10,000 Words



Dawn and Cordelia are very similar in their choice of intensifiers and have very high rates of *so*, followed by *really*, then *very*. Both these characters, unlike most of the others, were only on the show during their high school years: Cordelia went to high school with Willow and Buffy (seasons 1-3), and Dawn joined in season five as a character who was younger than the rest of the Scooby Gang. Additionally, both were initially portrayed primarily as being opposed to Buffy and defined as popularity-seeking, unlike many other characters on the show.<sup>12</sup> Thus, we can assume that the high use of *so* might be linked to their supposed age and their characterization in keeping with the general pattern that incoming features are adopted by younger generations sooner.

Buffy’s intensifier usage pattern is surprisingly leveled: she shows the same general tendencies as the other characters, but her rates of the three main boosters are

almost identical with no clear preference in her use. As mentioned above, perceived high school groupings (e.g., jocks and nerds) are frequently stereotyped on television shows or movies to quickly sketch easily recognizable character types. Buffy's unusually balanced use of intensifiers might be due to a conscious counter-stereotyping. By disassociating her character from the patterns of characters such as Cordelia, the main theme of the series is picked up on: Buffy is different from what the audience expects. She is not the helpless and slightly airheaded girl that gets herself killed; in fact, she is doing the killing herself (cf. Moss 2001). Furthermore, it is possible that because the show is known for its innovative use of linguistically marked forms and because Buffy is the main user of these forms (see example 24), there could have been a risk of veering into caricature if she had also used overly innovative intensification, and so the scriptwriters consciously avoided it. Additionally, Tagliamonte and Roberts (2005:292) and Lorenz (2002:144) found that the newer intensifiers came up more often in specific collocations in their datasets: it is possible that Buffy's high use of (innovative) adjectives (see examples 23-25) diluted any potential effect of those that commonly collocate with *so* (e.g. *good, bad and nice*).

Adams (2003:42) remarks on Buffy leading with innovative uses of language, such as marked use of *y*-suffixes (as discussed in Mandala 2007), or the prefix *un-*, as in *unbudger* or *unmad*. Indeed, in our data we found Buffy as the user of most innovative modified adjectives following intensification, as seen below in (23-25).

(23) It's been a *very* slay-heavy summer (Buffy, 401)

(24) Uh, he didn't show up when he was supposed to last night, and then, when I went over to his place, he was acting... well, *very* anti-Giles. (Buffy, 208)

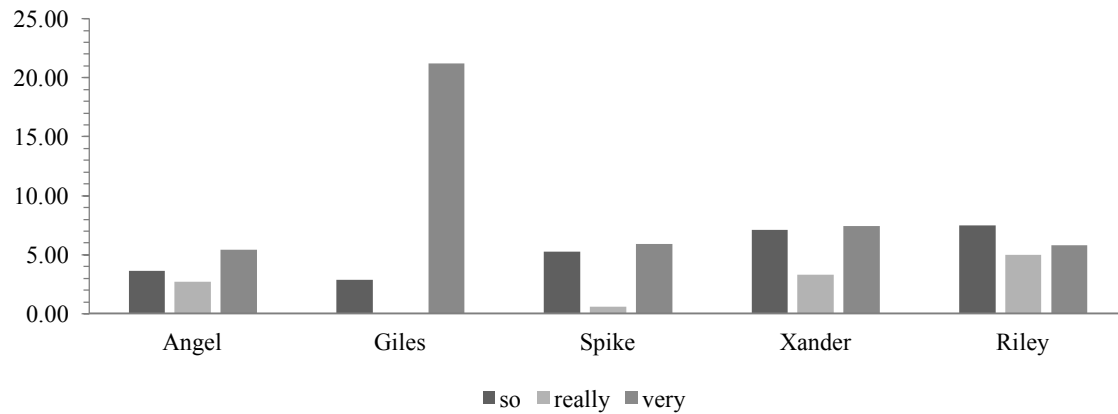
(25) Xander has been acting *totally* wiggy ever since we went to the zoo. (Buffy, 106)

Notably, none of these marked adjectives appear with the new and incoming intensifier *so*. Therefore, assuming that markedness is used predominantly to establish Buffy's character as quick-witted and linguistically creative, this trend could have further impacted her use of similarly innovative intensifiers. We suggest then that the scriptwriters might have made her intensification appear slightly more conservative to avoid exaggerated innovation and potentially over-the-top Buffyspeak.

While Buffy's intensifier pattern characterizes her individually, we also found patterns of intensification that emphasize a character's social grouping within the storyline. For example, Anya's use of intensifiers is different from the other female characters, and she favors *very* above *so* and *really*. This is not altogether surprising, as she is not well integrated into the group of women: she first appears on the show as Buffy's enemy but then becomes Xander's love interest. This puts her in the middle of the overall storyline, but she is still portrayed as an outsider (see also Mandala 2007:60). Her main link to the group is Xander, and, as Figure 12 below shows, their use of intensifiers is very similar, marking Anya as being closer to the male group than to the female one.

Joyce, Buffy's mother, is the only female character outside the young girls' age group (in terms of casting at least: Anya, as a demon, is said to be at least a hundred years old). Joyce's age may be reflected in her high use of *very*, but she also has a high rate for *so*. What stands out particularly with Joyce is her infrequent use of booster *really*. As we demonstrate below, Giles (and Spike to some extent) do not use *really* either so it may be that on the show avoiding *really* is a marker for outsider identity of some sort (British and/or older).

**Figure 12:** Main Boosters Across Main Male Characters per 10,000 Words



Outside of the similarity between Xander and Anya, the distribution of intensifiers in the male group is very different from what was found for the women: while for the female speakers *so* was the most frequently used variant, men favor *very*. This finding supports the idea that the women’s use of *so* may be partly stereotypical, although, at the same time previous studies had found that women tended to lead in the use of this form (Tagliamonte 2008).

Giles in particular stands out with a remarkably high use of *very* compared to the other men on the show. Considering Spike, a fellow English character, alongside him, it appears that, in terms of intensifier use on the show, Britishness is not solely expressed through a high use of *very*, but also with very low rates of *really*. Interestingly, this at least partly matches what was found in York by Ito and Tagliamonte (2003). The other male characters, however, do not completely match the patterns found for male speakers of their age in the United States in that they have low rates of *really* and high rates of *very*. This raises the question of why the scriptwriters made such intensifier choices for their characters. We turn to the issue of conscious stereotyping below.

## 12. Conscious Stereotyping

We now want to focus on intensifier usage for the purposes of creating and changing fictional identities. Characters on television series are often introduced as stereotypes to make the audience quickly engage and empathize. By looking at two specific cases of stereotyping in *Buffy*, we aim to show (1) how stock characters can be imbued with linguistic traits by scriptwriters, and (2) in what ways character development occurs as well as how (or if) a retreat from these stereotypes is possible.

The characters Cordelia and Willow could be said to be stereotyped as a Jock and a Nerd respectively at the start of the show (see Bucholtz 1999 for a discussion of these categories in society rather than on television). In fact, in Cordelia's first dialogue (see 26), she underlines the exclusiveness of her status, as well as the importance of being cool. This, as Bucholtz (1999:211) notes, is a jock's "ultimate goal." Cordelia's speech and general demeanor are evocative of the Valley girl stereotype, as seen in movies such as *Clueless* (1995, Paramount) or, more recently, in *Mean Girls* (2004, Paramount).

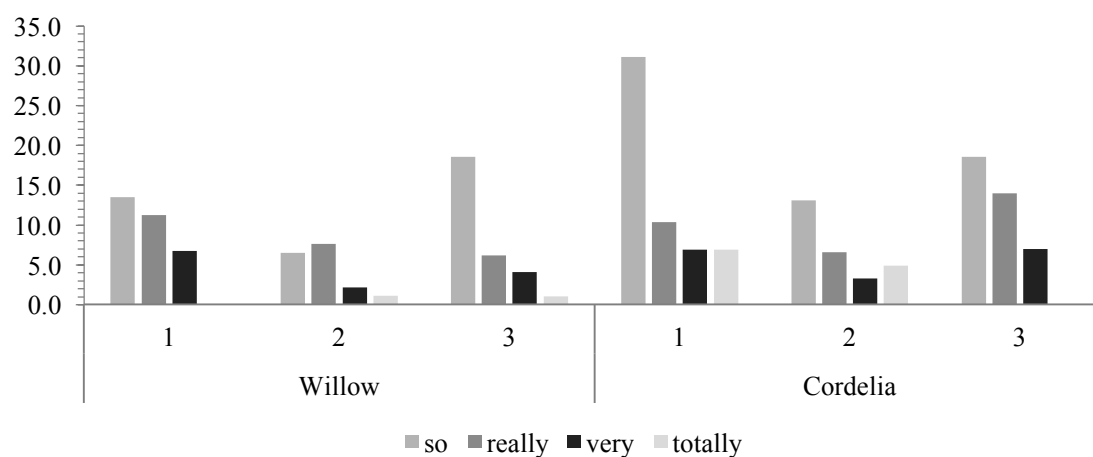
- (26) Well, you'll be okay here. If you hang with me and mine, you'll be accepted in no time. Of course, we do have to test your coolness factor. You're from L.A., so you can skip the written, but let's see. (Cordelia, 101)

Willow is portrayed as Cordelia's opposite and is generally considered to be a nerd. Bucholtz (1999:213) summarises several characteristics of nerdiness, including preferring silliness to cuteness, reading novels instead of fashion magazines, and wearing clothes that are not considered cool or fashionable. In the scene where the audience is first introduced to Willow, Cordelia comments on her choice of clothes and warns Buffy not to befriend her (27).

(27) You wanna fit in here, the first rule is: know your losers. Once you can identify them all by sight they're a lot easier to avoid. (Cordelia about Willow, 101)

During the first three seasons of the show (and during their high school years) the social status of both characters undergoes changes, and while intensification is only a limited part of their linguistic repertoire, we found that certain shifts in characters' stereotyping, as described above, are observable. Figure 13 expands on the picture from Figure 11, which provided characters' use throughout the whole series, by presenting Willow's and Cordelia's intensification rates across seasons one to three.

**Figure 13:** Intensifier Usage of Willow and Cordelia, Seasons 1-3, per 10,000 Words



In season one, Cordelia's use of intensification, particularly the use of intensifier *so*, is significantly higher than Willow's ( $p < 0.05$ ) and, we would argue this is used within the show to mark her out as a jock and differentiate her from the other characters. In other

ways, however, Willow's and Cordelia's patterns are very similar: *so* has the highest rate and *very* and *really* have lower, but similar rates.

Over the course of the three seasons both the characters' frequency of intensifier use becomes more similar; while there was a statistically significant difference in Cordelia's and Willow's use of intensifiers in the first season, the difference is no longer significant in the second or third season ( $p > 0.05$ ). Willow's use of the most common intensifier for her age and gender (*so*) increases, while Cordelia's use of it decreases. Cordelia also stops using *totally*, which might signal a move away from a highly stereotypical (i.e., jock or valley girl) use of that intensifier. These patterns make sense in the context of the plot and the character developments within the first three seasons. Willow becomes a more confident character with a steady group of friends (the Scoobies), while Cordelia becomes a member of the same group, after being abandoned by her jock friends for her relationship with Xander. By season three their rates of intensification and the choice of variants are much closer, establishing Cordelia and Willow as equals within their group.

While the example of Cordelia and Willow suggests how a character's linguistic usage can move away from stereotypes towards more "natural" patterns, in other cases it is the characterization itself (in this instance Britishness) that allows us to gain insight about what stereotypes there may be. To do this we compared the English characters Spike and Giles. As mentioned, Giles' Britishness (in regards to intensifier use) is represented through high frequencies of *very* and *quite*. While *very* is a common variant in American English (albeit less so than *really* and *so* for younger speakers; Tagliamonte 2012:328-331), *quite* is not common in the US (Quirk et al. 1980:453; Biber et al. 1999:561). His use of them within in the show underlines his distinctiveness. In addition to this linguistic display of Britishness, the character dresses in tweed, drinks copious amounts of tea, and



directly comments on his nationality and how some aspects of American culture are incomprehensible to him, as seen in (28)-(30).

(28) Buffy: We don't say 'Indian'.

Giles: Oh, oh, right! Yes, yes. Um, always behind on the terms. Still trying not to refer to you lot as 'bloody colonials'. (408)

(29) Giles: I just think it's rather odd that a nation that prides itself on its virility should feel compelled to strap on forty pounds of protective gear just in order to play rugby. (202)

(30) Buffy: (about buying frozen peas) They're gonna be mushy.

Willow: They won't be mushy.

Giles: I like mushy peas.

Buffy: You're the reason we had to have pilgrims in the first place. (408)

While Giles is presented as somewhat posh and reserved but undoubtedly one of "the good guys," Spike is presented as his polar opposite. Not only is he a vampire with a reputation that inspired the nickname "William the Bloody," but he is also a rebellious punk who repeatedly undermines Giles' authority as watcher. He is portrayed in leather and without manners (he gambles using kittens as his stake in episode 605) and is at one point referred to as "a Billy Idol wannabe" (708).

Example (31) shows Spike and Giles after a magical spell has robbed them of their memories. Spike is in the process of mocking Giles' accent when he notices his own Britishness after counting British words off his fingers, most of them expletive in nature.

(31) Spike: Oh, listen to Mary Poppins. He's got his crust all stiff and upper with that nancy boy accent. You Englishmen are always so... bloody hell. -- Sodding, blimey, shagging, knickers, bollocks. Oh, God. I'm English.

Giles: Welcome to the nancy tribe. (608)

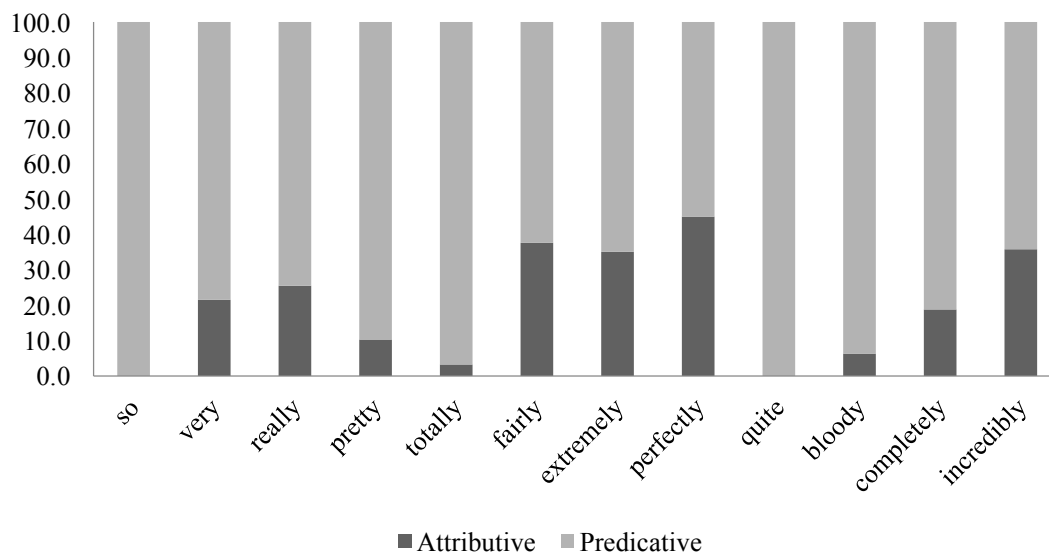
We can see here that Britishness is stereotyped quite obviously through lexical markers, but, as we have shown, pragmatic markers such as intensifiers can be equally indicative. Both English characters use a very particular set of intensifier variants that distinguishes them from the other speakers: *very* and *quite*, as well as a lack of *really*. However, we can see distinctions between these two characters, each highlighting different kinds of British stereotypes: that of the older posh gentleman (with an exceptionally high use of the seemingly outdated and un-American *very* and *quite*) and that of the punk (with a higher use of *bloody*).

### 13. Internal Factors

Thus far we have demonstrated how scriptwriters are able to make use of the variability found in language for characterization purposes, but primarily in terms of aspects that were above the level of consciousness. What of more underlying constraints and internal factors: are these available to scriptwriters as well? To establish whether internal factors have an impact on characterization, we examined two aspects: attributive vs. predicative use and the overall frequency of the adjectives occurring with intensifiers. Because our main focus is on characterization and we found that the internal factors we examined were not used for characterization, we present these findings briefly.

First, we calculated the ratio of attributive and predicative use for each intensifier used overall, as well as per character. Previous research has shown that this distinction is important in considerations of intensifier change and development. The Toronto study by Tagliamonte (2008) showed that intensifiers *very*, *pretty*, and *really* were used differently in attributive and predicative contexts depending on the age of the speaker. The overall distribution of intensifiers in these grammatical contexts from the *Buffy* corpus can be seen in Figure 14.

**Figure 14:** Distribution of attributive and predicative adjectives by intensifier



While we found that the distribution of attributive and predicative forms varied by intensifier, similarly to previous findings (Ito and Tagliamonte 2003: 261, Tagliamonte 2008:363), there was no indication that these internal patterns correlated to characterization processes. When comparing individual characters' distribution of attributive vs. predicative with overall patterns we found no statistically significant differences with respect to age, nationality, or group members. Table 5 presents the overall

ratio of the most frequent intensifiers (excluding *so*, which only appeared in predicative uses) as used by the four characters with most words spoken within the corpus<sup>13</sup>.

**Table 5** Use of Intensifiers in Attributive and Predicative Phrases by Character

%	BUFFY		GILES		WILLOW		XANDER	
	A	P	A	P	A	P	A	P
<i>really</i>	29.5	70.5	-	-	27.8	72.2	21.05	78.95
<i>very</i>	23.8	76.2	20.4	79.6	25.0	75.0	23.26	76.74
<i>pretty</i>	11.1	88.9	33.3	66.7	4.5	95.5	15.38	84.62

Additionally, we tested adjectives for frequency effects, comparing high frequency forms, defined as appearing at least six times, with low frequency forms that appeared five or fewer times. Out of the three most common intensifiers, *so* is used most often for the high frequency adjectives followed by *really*, then *very*. The low frequency adjectives show a different pattern: *very* > *so* > *really*. However, this pattern was largely due to Giles' high use of *very* combined with him using a higher proportion of low frequency adjectives overall. We interpret this to mean that characterization patterns override frequency of adjective effects: Giles overwhelmingly uses *very*, regardless of whether it is with a frequent or an infrequent adjective. The other characters show no differentiation from each other, using *so* > *really* > *very* regardless of adjective frequency.

We tentatively suggest that this indicates that internal patterns may not be available to scriptwriters when using language for characterization, although they may recreate some of the patterns simply because they are also in their own dialects. Further research might consider a wider range of internal factors when examining characterization to confirm whether this is the case.

#### 14. Discussion and Conclusion

Our analysis has shown that there are a number of aspects that can be taken into consideration when looking at intensification in a television series such as *Buffy*. When

comparing the results with the *Friends* data (Tagliamonte & Roberts 2005), we noted that television series are not solely trying to replicate naturally occurring language, but they are using language creatively for characterization. This means that depending on the type of series and set-up of characters, a multitude of sociolinguistic aspects (such as social categories or interactional styles) need to be investigated. While *Friends* portrayed characters with roughly the same background, the characters in *Buffy* are more diverse, which allowed us to examine language use on television in a broader way.

Our main findings are the following:

- As in natural speech, boosters are the main type of intensifiers in *Buffy*, with moderators and maximizers used less frequently.
- The intensifiers that are most frequent in *Friends*, as well as in the Toronto study by Tagliamonte (2008), are the most frequent ones in *Buffy* as well: *so*, *really*, *very*, *pretty*, and *totally*.
- Intensifiers are marked for social categories of region (*very* and *quite* are British), gender (high frequency use of *so* by women, especially for particular female jock stereotype characters), as well as interpersonal relations and character shifts (intensifier uses converge as characters become friends).
- Internal factors, or more generally factors which are completely below the level of consciousness, may not be as readily available to scriptwriters for characterization purposes.

This means that intensifier use in the show reflects not only what can be expected from a sociolinguistic viewpoint, but also with respect to broader stereotypes, which helps account for unusual distributions. Our findings demonstrate that in *Buffy*, characterization and group membership play a large part in booster distribution, and that, alongside gender

and national background differences, they are key for predicting which intensifiers are chosen.

On the whole, the patterns of intensification are similar to what was found in previous studies on intensifier use in naturally occurring language as well as on television, in that the most common intensifiers (*very, really, so*) are used and a generational change can be observed likewise. Additionally, this study demonstrates that characters of fictional television series, in this particular case *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, are linguistically defined not only through clearly marked features, as Mandala (2007) found, but that more ordinary features such as intensifiers are also indicative of identities, social categories such as gender, age and region, as well as social links between the characters. We found that intensifier usage of many characters is informed by established stereotypes, such as exaggerated use of British marked *bloody* or an overuse of *totally* and *so* as intensifiers that are generally associated with typical American girly girls. While this does not necessarily always reflect actual use of these features found in previous sociolinguistic studies, within the fictional world language is employed to replicate some commonly held stereotypes in order to create identifiable character roles.

## Notes

1. Emotionality here links to the terms of expressivity and stance, which features such as intensifiers are part of, following discussions in Bednarek (2011:8), Quaglio (2009:91), and Tagliamonte and Roberts (2005:289, 296).

2. Examples are given with character name indicating the speaker, as well as episode code, which consists of three digits. The first digit stands for the season (1-7), the second and third stand for the episode number within that season (1-22). This form is

conventional within the genre, and the reader will find more information on episode title and content following a search with this code.

3. The initial analysis included modified adverbs, which, according to Quirk et al. (1985:278) follow similar patterns. Although we found this to be the case, the low frequency of intensifiers of adverbs made it difficult to demonstrate this trend conclusively, and we have chosen to exclude them from the main analysis.

4. This represented around half the moderator tokens (116/234). An example of one of the excluded tokens is: “I’m *pretty* good at sensing what’s going on around me” (Buffy, 211).

5. Episode 607 (Once More With Feeling) is only partially included in the study, as the characters, charmed by a demon, break into song throughout the episode. Spoken dialogue was included; the songs however were not. Episode 410 (Hush) it was included in the analysis, although it is worth noting that there is only approximately 15 minutes of dialogue in the 44 minute episode as the plot involves a spell cast to make it impossible for the characters to talk.

6. Although the character Angel is originally from Ireland, where he became a vampire in 1753, the American actor who plays him did not attempt to show this linguistically for the most part and uses his own accent (this is different from Spike who is played by an American actor who puts on a British accent throughout the series). It is only in brief flashbacks aimed to underline his Irish heritage that Angel is given an Irish accent. None of Angel’s intensifier tokens in this study come from flashbacks, so we grouped him with the other American males for our analyses despite his Irish heritage

7. As previously mentioned, we further analyzed the moderator group according to adjective gradability to only include those with a heightening effect. Additionally, due to

their ambiguous nature and in line with previous studies, we decided to present them separately from boosters and maximizers.

8. We found no general discernable distinction between human and vampire (or human and ex-demon, for character Anya) patterns, although characteristics that can be associated with vampires for individual characters were indeed found with Spike.

9. The total number of intensifiers in the data set, before exclusions and including those occurring less than 1 percent overall, was 1872.

10. For significance testing throughout the paper we used the Fisher's Exact Test, due to its accuracy with low numbers. In most instances, we tested using the raw numbers of the intensifier examined alongside the overall word count across the categories we were looking at (for example, for *totally*, the thirty American tokens out of the 331,469 total words for American characters were contrasted with one English token out of a total of 80,797 words for English characters).

11. We only included the main American characters from season four onwards in this table (excluding Dawn, as she was only fourteen when she joined the storyline in Season 5), which is the time after graduating from high-school when they entered various jobs, college, etc.

12. Cordelia, for example, was portrayed as a cheerleader/jock.

13. The token numbers by variant and across attributive and predicative contexts were too low for the other speakers to allow any conclusions to be drawn.

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