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Bakalářská práce

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Adverbial intensifiers of adjectives in today's British English  
Adverbiální intenzifikátory adjektiv v současné britské angličtině

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Velice děkuji vedoucí své bakalářské práce doc. PhDr. Markétě Malé, Ph.D., za její trpělivost, vstřícnost, cenné rady a podnětné připomínky a komentáře.

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## **Abstrakt**

Cílem bakalářské práce je popsat výskyt a chování adverbálních intenzifikátorů adjektiv v současné neformální mluvené britské angličtině. Pro nedostatek volně dostupných korpusů je materiál čerpán z dialogů populárního televizního seriálu *Skins*. Teoretická část práce stručně vymezuje výskyt intenzifikátorů na základě jejich elementárních syntaktických a sémantických funkcí a charakterizuje hlavní tendence, jež mají vliv na chování intenzifikátorů v současné hovorové angličtině. Dále podává stručný přehled základních gramatických rysů konverzace a popisuje rozdíly mezi autentickou konverzací a televizním dialogem. Závěrem stručně komentuje výskyt a chování intenzifikátorů v jazyce amerického sitcomu *Friends*.

Praktická část práce nejprve zkoumá gramatické rysy konverzace v jazyce seriálu *Skins*. Dále se pak zabývá vlastní analýzou intenzifikátorů, a to především frekvencí výskytu, stupněm delexicalizace a kolokacemi, ve kterých se vyskytují.

**klíčová slova:** intenzifikace, adverbální intenzifikátory adjektiv, kolokace, gramatické rysy konverzace, hovorová angličtina, televizní dialog, autentická konverzace

## **Abstract**

The objective of the thesis is to describe the use and behavior of adverbial intensifiers of adjectives in today's informal spoken British English. For the lack of freely available corpora, the language of the popular television series *Skins* is used as the source of material. In the theoretical part of the thesis, the use of intensifiers based on their elementary syntactic and semantic functions is briefly described, and the main tendencies that influence their behavior in present-day colloquial English are characterized. The theoretical part then lists the basic features of the grammar of conversation and identifies the differences between authentic conversation and television dialogue. Finally, it gives a short description of the use and behavior of intensifiers in the language of the American sitcom *Friends*.

The initial section of the practical part of the thesis examines the features of conversational grammar in the *Skins* dialogues. It subsequently provides an analysis of the use of intensifiers in the series, with a special focus on their frequency of occurrence, degree of delexicalization and collocational patterns.

**key words:** intensification, adverbial intensifiers of adjectives, collocational patterns, grammar of conversation, colloquial English, television dialogue, authentic conversation

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## **List of abbreviations**

PWS	prefabricated word sequences
LGSWE	Longman Grammar of Spoken and Written English
COLT	The Bergen Corpus of London Teenage Language

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## 1. Introduction

The aim of the present thesis is to provide an overview on the use of adverbial intensifiers of adjectives in today's informal spoken British English. The thesis consists of two major parts – a theoretical part, which sums up relevant findings obtained in previous research on intensification and describes the basic features of conversational grammar, and a practical part, which traces those features in the language of the British television series *Skins* and presents an analysis of the use of intensifiers in the series.

The theoretical part gives an overview of the basic syntactic and semantic properties of intensifiers as described in the *Longman Grammar of Spoken and Written English* (Biber et al. 1999) and *A Comprehensive Grammar of the English Language* (Quirk et al. 1985). The *LGSWE* also serves as the source of information for the summary of the features of conversational grammar. The research conducted by Barnfield and Buchstaller (2010: 252-287), Ito and Tagliamonte (2003: 257-279), Pertejo and Martínez (2014: 210-237), and Stenström, Andersen and Hasund (2002: 131-163) provides a detailed insight into the behavior of intensifiers in present-day English. A comparison of the studies carried out by Bednarek (2011: 54-83), Piazza, Bednarek and Rossi (2011: 1-17), Quaglio (2009), and Tagliamonte and Roberts (2005: 280-300) gives a thorough description of the relationship between scripted and unscripted conversation. Finally, a summary of the use of intensifiers in the American TV series *Friends* is given, drawing upon the research done by Tagliamonte and Roberts (2003: 257-279).

The practical part is further divided into two main sections. The first section provides an overview of the basic features of the grammar of conversation in *Skins*. The latter section analyzes the use of intensifiers in the series – it focuses mostly on their frequency of occurrence, degree of delexicalization and collocational behavior.

## 2 Theoretical background

### 2.1 Adverbial intensifiers of adjectives

Intensifiers are modifying adverbs that are commonly used as "a scaling device... which cooccurs with a gradable adjective" (Quirk et al. 1985: 445). Quirk et al. (ibid.) distinguish two types of intensifiers - "amplifiers", which will be discussed in the present study, and "downtoners", which have "a lowering effect" and therefore will not be studied here. Amplifiers intensify meaning, i.e. they "scale upwards from an assumed norm" (ibid.), as in ex. (1).

(1) Amplifiers:

- a. *awfully* sorry
- b. *extremely* dangerous
- c. *deeply* concerned
- d. *perfectly* reasonable (ibid.)

Biber et al. (1999: 209), on the other hand, refer to these modifiers of adjectives as "degree adverbs", and note that they "describe the extent of a characteristic ... [and] can be used to emphasize that a characteristic is either greater or less than some typical level". Biber et al. (1999) also distinguish two types of degree adverbs – "amplifiers", or i.e. "intensifiers" (ibid: 209), and "downtoners", which they also refer to as "diminishers". As can be seen in exx. (2), (3), (4) and (5), several subtypes of amplifiers exist (ibid.).

(2) Amplifiers that modify gradable adjectives and indicate degrees on a scale:

- a. Our dentist was *very* good.
- b. Most will be *extremely* cautious until new case law defines the extent of the new Act. (ibid.)

(3) Amplifiers that indicate an endpoint on a scale:

- a. *Completely* cold and unemotional.
- b. But snow and ice accumulate in a *totally* different way from sediment. (ibid.)

(4) *How* as an amplifier in exclamatory sentences:

- a. *How* cruel!

b. *How* lovely! (ibid.)

(5) Manner adverbs used as amplifiers:

- a. New York's an *awfully* safe place.
- b. And Carl was *perfectly* awful. (ibid.)

Semantically, the use of amplifiers is generally restricted to gradable adjectives, i.e. to adjectives that "refer to a quality that is thought of as having values on a scale" (Quirk et al. 1985: 469). The adjective *English* in example (6) thus allows pre-modification by an amplifier only on condition that it refers to John's behavior, not to his nationality (ibid.).

(6) John is *very* English. (ibid.)

Amplifiers such as *very*, *quite* or *so* can pre-modify adjectives in the absolute degree (ex. 7), while both inflected and periphrastic comparative forms of adjectives can be pre-modified by amplifiers like *much* or *very much* (ibid: 472), as in (8).

(7) The job was *very* easy / difficult.

(8) The job was (*very*) *much* easier / more difficult. (ibid.)

The non-periphrastic superlative, on the other hand, allows pre-modification by the amplifier *very* (ex. 9) which must be accompanied by a determiner, the periphrastic superlative, on the other hand, does not allow the amplifier *very* but may be modified by other expressions (ibid: 474), as in (10).

(9) Anna is the *very* youngest.

(10) ...the most remarkable election *ever*. (ibid.)

The repetition of amplifiers is also restricted - it is "a type of coordination that is always asyndetic ... [and] is permissible only if the repeated items come first or follow *so*" (ibid: 473), as can be seen in examples (11) and (12).

(11) \**very and very* good

(12) *so very very* ... much better (ibid.)

Moreover, there is no restriction on pre-modification of both the *-ing*, (ex. 13), and *-ed* participle forms, (ex. 14), by the amplifier *very* which "is an explicit indication that the forms have achieved adjective status" (ibid: 414).

(13) Her views were *very* alarming.

(14) The man was *very* offended. (ibid.)

Furthermore, the choice of amplifiers is liable to be determined by register (Biber et al. 1999: 210). Informal amplifiers such as *really*, *totally* or *absolutely* are more likely to be found in speech, (as in 15), than in academic prose, in which, on the contrary, formal amplifiers such as *extremely*, *highly* or *entirely* (ex. 16) tend to be used. However, the amplifiers *so* and *very* are "the two most common amplifiers for both conversation and academic prose" (ibid: 211).

(15) He'll look *really* sweet.

(16) Indeed it is *extremely* difficult to establish any truly satisfactory system. (ibid.)

## 2.2 Intensifiers in informal spoken English

The chief aim of the present study is to give an overview on the use of intensifiers in today's spoken British English. For this purpose, relevant findings presented in previous research on the use of intensifiers in both scripted (Tagliamonte and Roberts 2005: 280-300) and unscripted conversation (Barnfield and Buchstaller 2010: 252-287, Ito and Tagliamonte 2003: 257-279, Pertejo and Martínez 2014: 210-237, Stenström, Andersen and Hasund 2002: 131-163) will be compared to the results collected in the present study. Moreover, the television series *Skins* will be used as the main source of material for a further study of intensification in informal spoken British English. It is necessary to determine to what extent the language of the series resembles authentic unscripted conversation. An overview of the characteristic features of the grammar of conversation presented by Biber et al. (1999: 1038-1052) in the *Longman Grammar of Spoken and Written English* will be thus used as a basic source of information, and for a later comparison of both sets of data.

### 2.2.1 Grammar of conversation

The *Longman Grammar of Spoken and Written English* (Biber et al. 1999) includes a chapter on the grammar of conversation in which conversation is treated as a separate register. Transcriptions taken from the LSWE Corpus of spoken language are used as the source material for the research.<sup>1</sup> Conversation is compared with three written registers, namely fiction, newspaper journalism and academic prose, in order to identify the characteristic features of conversational grammar (ibid: 1038). The focus is primarily on the features which differentiate the grammar of conversation from the aforementioned written registers, and which are almost exclusively found in conversation. For the purpose of their study, Biber et al. (ibid.) create a functional framework which incorporates a range of such traits, and thus enables them to analyze and systematically arrange their findings. The authors use the term “situational and functional determinants of conversation” (ibid.), which covers eight categories of distinctive features of everyday conversation.

First of all, conversation is defined as an activity which humans perform chiefly for the purpose of establishing and maintaining social interaction, although dialogue may also serve as a means to entertain, control the behavior or transmit information among its participants (ibid: 1041). Since conversation “takes place in the spoken medium” (ibid.), a potential orthographic inconsistency in the transcribed material, together with the lack of phonetic and prosodic data in the subcorpora, may slightly complicate interpretations of the findings. The lack of such pieces of information thus requires an approach which relies on the orthographic labeling provided by the transcribers, which is assumed to reflect the authenticity of the recorded conversation.

The act of conversation takes commonly place in shared context. The participants share the same space while communicating, and base the interaction on a large quantity of “specific social, cultural, and institutional knowledge” (ibid.). As a result, the speech becomes grammatically reduced, allowing the speakers to rely on the frequent use of pronouns, ellipses, substitute pro-forms, deictic expressions and various non-clausal elements. Personal pronouns, such as *you* and *I*, are often employed by speakers as a means to address one another, while other personal pronouns, such as *it*, are used to express some shared situational knowledge (ibid.). Situational ellipsis, ellipsis across turns and elliptical answers to questions constitute another characteristic feature of conversation (ibid: 1043). As to substitute pro-forms, the nominal phrase is most commonly replaced by the pronouns

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<sup>1</sup>Biber et al. use the American and British English conversation subcorpora of the LSWE Corpus – each of the corpora consists of approximately four million words.

*one/ones*, while the verbal phrase is most frequently substituted with the expressions *do it/do that* (ibid.). Deictic items, such as the demonstrative pronouns *this/that* or *these/those*, and the adverbs *there, now* and *then*, also tend to occur very often in conversation (ibid.). Moreover, a large number of non-clausal components repeatedly occur in conversation, e.g. the expressions *sorry, yeah* and *okay* (ibid.). These elements not only represent another distinctive feature of conversational grammar, but also contribute to the aforementioned difficulties since their interpretation may rely on non-verbal context which is not accessible in the corpus.

The dependence on context has yet another consequence for the grammar of conversation. Conversation “avoids elaboration or specification of meaning” (ibid: 1044), which, on the other hand, is characteristic of the written registers. The need for complex lexical and syntactic constructions is eliminated by implied meaning together with the dynamism and spontaneity intrinsic to conversation. The non-elaborative nature of conversation is reflected particularly in the structure of the noun phrase. Compared to the written registers, nouns occur less frequently in conversation, and are often neither pre-modified nor post-modified. Noun modifiers, attributive adjectives, relative clauses, genitives and possessives are thus relatively rare in conversation. The only exception is the frequent occurrence of possessive determiners, such as *your*, independent genitives, such as *mom’s*, and possessives that function as independent heads, such as *mine* (ibid.). As a result of the reduction and simplification of the noun phrase, verbs, adverbs, particles and inserts gain in frequency. The lack of lexical and syntactic elaboration invariably leads to vagueness of expression (ibid: 1045). Speakers often tend to avoid the specification of meaning and prefer to use hedges, such as *kind of*, the suffix *-ish*, or the coordination tags, such as *something like that*, instead (ibid.).

The fact that at least two speakers are required to take turns in speech in order to label their discourse as dialogue, implies the interactive nature of conversation. The term “adjacency pairs” is used for these turns, and two types of them are being distinguished – those that form an answer and those that elicit and answer (ibid.). Speakers commonly rely on various linguistic strategies which enable them to interact with one another in an effective manner. Imperatives and questions are therefore often found in conversation as sentence types that elicit an answer. Greetings, farewells, backchannels, such as *uh huh*, and response elicitors, such as *okay*, are also used to perform a similar function (ibid: 1046). Moreover, speakers make frequent use of questions in the form of non-clausal elements, such as *What for?*, question tags, vocatives and discourse markers, such as *you*

*know*, in order to engage in conversation (ibid.). Adverbials expressing stance and linking adverbials, such as *anyway* or *so*, have a high frequency in conversation as well (ibid.). The frequent occurrence of negation and the adversative conjunction *but* also arises from the interactive nature of dialogue (ibid.).

Furthermore, the phenomena discussed in the preceding paragraph affect conversation as an interactive activity in yet another way. Conversation generally displays a rather high degree of politeness, emotion and attitude (ibid: 1047). The expressive nature of the language of conversation becomes especially evident in exchanges such as requests, greetings, offers and apologies, which are usually realized by inserts, for instance *thanks*, *please*, *bye* or *sorry* (ibid.). The polite sentence openings *would you/could you*, the first person plural imperative *let's* and the second person imperative are also typical of dialogue (ibid.). To indicate the speaker's attitude and current emotional state, vocatives, interjections, evaluative adjectives and intensifiers are frequently employed (ibid: 1048).

The spontaneity of conversation usually forces speakers to adapt the discourse to momentary conversational circumstances, which often results in "normal dysfluency" (ibid.). When speakers need to gain more time to plan what they endeavor to say, they tend to make use of pauses, hesitations and repetitions, filling the speech with expressions such as *erm* or *um* (ibid.). On the other hand, if the speaker has already thought this through and knows exactly what they wish to say, they normally try to reduce the duration and the complexity of speech to a minimum. Apart from the above mentioned devices such as ellipsis, the participants rely on contracted forms of verbs and of the negative particle in order to make the least possible effort while speaking. Conversation is thus often composed of grammatically imperfect or incorrect utterances in which the subject or the operator is missing, as is the case in the sentence *Didn't know it was yours* (ibid.). Prefaces and tags, such as the expression *pretty really* added to the end of the simple clause *She's cute*, are likewise employed to remove overly complicated phrases that would slow the pace of conversation down (ibid: 1049).

Another prominent feature which distinguishes conversation and the written registers is its "restricted and repetitive repertoire" (ibid: 1049). The participants have a tendency to repeat what has already been said to relieve the time pressure under which the communication develops. Moreover, they frequently base the discourse on prefabricated word sequences which can be easily accessed from memory, such as the four-word lexical bundle *Do you know what* (ibid.). The type-token ratio of conversation is therefore rather low, showing a strong inclination of specific vocabulary to occur in a particular syntactic

environment. In general, conversation displays a high frequency of modal auxiliaries, however, only the verbs *will*, *can*, *could* and *would* can be considered as being representative of dialogue (ibid.). Similarly, the verb *want*, the adverbs *there*, *just*, *so*, *then* and *anyway*, and adverbial clauses introduced by *if*, *when* and *because*, are typically found in conversation (ibid: 1050).

Finally, conversation is discussed in relation to vernacular grammar, that is to say, from a perspective which looks at dialogue as being stylistically highly informal (ibid.). The informal nature of conversation is reflected both grammatically and in the speakers' choice of lexis. Regional dialect forms, such as *y'all*, therefore commonly occur in conversation (ibid.). Non-standard forms, such as *ain't* or *aren't I*, tend to occur at the morphological level, while other stigmatized features, such as the violation of the subject-verb concord of the existential construction *there is* followed by the plural form of a noun, frequently appear at the syntactic level of the language of conversation (ibid: 1051).

### **2.2.2 Intensifiers in conversation**

The manner in which intensifiers are being used in present-day English is considered as one of the most fascinating and most rapidly developing phenomena by some linguists (Quirk et al. 1985: 590, Ito and Tagliamonte 2003: 257). Of the extensive research on intensifiers that has been lately conducted in the sphere of corpus linguistics, four studies of how intensifiers are employed in everyday conversation (Barnfield and Buchstaller 2010: 252-287, Ito and Tagliamonte 2003: 257-279, Pertejo and Martínez 2014: 210-237, Stenström, Andersen and Hasund 2002: 131-163) are particularly relevant to the present study. The aforementioned articles provide a detailed insight into the use of intensifiers in today's British English, focusing specifically on three diverse and regionally determined speech communities in Tyneside, York and London.

#### **2.2.2.1 The English intensifier system – a diachronic survey**

The findings presented in the existing studies of the present-day English intensifier system show that the status of the individual intensifiers continuously changes as it is dependent on the present preferences of speakers. The unstable nature of intensifiers arises partly from the speakers' desire for originality and efficiency of expression. When the commonly used intensifiers begin to be felt as insufficient due to their overuse in conversation, the speakers tend to seek novel expressions which gradually replace the commonplace ones in order to enliven the communication (Ito and Tagliamonte 2003:

257). In order to comprehend the gradual changes in the intensifier system and the accompanying semantic shifts that are under way in present-day English, Ito and Tagliamonte give a brief diachronic overview on the use of intensifiers in the history of the language. Although regional differences in the preferred use of the individual intensifiers have always existed in the history of English, some universal tendencies indicating the change in popularity of intensifiers over time were traced by T. F. Mustanoja (1960: 319-328, cited in Ito and Tagliamonte 2003: 260).<sup>2</sup> Taking into consideration the fact that two or more popular intensifiers often compete with one another for a period of time, the most frequently occurring intensifiers in the history of English are as follows – *swithe* up to the 13<sup>th</sup> century, *well* during the 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> c., *full* from the middle of the 13<sup>th</sup> to the 15<sup>th</sup> c., *right* during the 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> c., *very* from the 16<sup>th</sup> to the 20<sup>th</sup> c., and *really* from the 18<sup>th</sup> c. onward (ibid.). The overlaps in the use of the aforementioned intensifiers demonstrate that a change in popularity is always a gradual process and may extend over decades or even centuries. Furthermore, such long-term transformations within the intensifier system are closely linked to the process of delexicalization, during which the independent lexical content of a word, an intensifier in this case, is reduced in order to fulfill a specific function (Partington 1993:183). The degree of delexicalization is then determined by the frequency of occurrence. As a rule, the most frequently used intensifiers are the most advanced in terms of delexicalization (ibid.). The extent to which an intensifier is delexicalized can be roughly assessed by a close examination of its collocation patterns – “the more delexicalized an intensifier is, the more widely it collocates” (ibid: 268).

#### 2.2.2.2 The most popular intensifiers

The data extracted from the diachronic survey suggest that *very* and *really* have gradually taken over the English intensifier system, making the outdated intensifiers decrease in popularity. These findings indeed correspond with the more recent research which also lists *very* and *really* as the most stable forms among intensifiers in present-day English. Ito and Tagliamonte (2003: 266), who base their study on the spoken part of a corpus which comprises data that were collected among the mostly native population of the city of York, show that *very* and *really* make up almost 69% of all the intensifiers of adjectives in the sub-corpus. The intensifier *so* then follows with the rate of just 10% (ibid.). Similarly, the research conducted by Stenström, Andersen and Hasund (2002: 140) indicates that *really* and *very* rank as the most frequently occurring intensifiers in the

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<sup>2</sup> Mustanoja, Tauno F. (1960). A Middle English syntax. Helsinki: Société Néophilologique.

London teenage vernacular as it is represented in The Bergen Corpus of London Teenage Language (COLT). Pertejo and Martínez (2014) come with slightly different results after expanding their study of intensifiers to cover both the COLT and the SCoSE corpus (Saarbrücken Corpus of Spoken English), which comprises yet another set of data representing the London teenage vernacular. The more recent data collected from the two corpora show that while *really* still remains in the leading position among intensifiers, *very* has already been replaced by *so* (ibid: 218). The research material that maps four generations of speakers from the Tyneside area in North-East England, thoroughly inspected by Barnfield and Buchstaller (2010: 273), displays a similar tendency of the intensifier *so* rising in popularity. While the oldest set of data collected in the 1960s clearly demonstrates the absolute prevalence of the intensifier *very*, with *really* and *rather* lagging behind, the more recent corpus from 1994 points out to the ascendance of *really*, and to *dead* as the most frequently occurring intensifier (ibid: 266). In the newest corpus which consists of data collected around the year 2007, however, the occurrence of *very* is nearly counterbalanced by *really*, while *so* slowly emerges as a ‘new’ widely favored intensifier (ibid: 273). The diverse sets of data collected in the aforementioned studies thus not only confirm the established position of *very* and *really* as the most stable and widely used intensifiers in today’s English, but also indicate potential rearrangements in the intensifier system caused by the rising popularity of *so*.

### 2.2.2.3 Social factors

Moreover, social variables, such as gender and age, have emerged as determinant factors for the use of intensifiers. The data extracted from the aforementioned corpora show that a growing generation gap divides the speakers whose reliance on intensifiers displays a general tendency to increase in frequency from the oldest to the youngest generations (Ito and Taglimonte 2003: 264). Apart from that, the two most frequently occurring intensifiers, *very* and *really*, seem to have taken on the function of generation markers. While the use of *very* is almost exclusively linked to the older speakers, the younger speakers are particularly fond of the intensifier *really* (Barnfield and Buchstaller 2010: 273, Ito and Taglimonte 2003: 267, Pertejo and Martínez 2014: 218, Stenström, Andersen and Hasund 2002: 140). The adults also tend to employ a high rate of various *-ly* forms, and thus intensifiers such as *awfully*, *absolutely*, *completely* appear in their discourse rather often, while the teenagers clearly give preference to taboo and swear words such as *fucking* and *bloody* (Pertejo and Martínez 2014: 230, Stenström, Andersen and Hasund 2002: 142).

Generally speaking, the language of teenagers tends to be more spontaneous and innovative, suggesting that the younger generations may actually lead the changes that are under way in the English intensifier system (Barnfield and Buchstaller 2010: 266). A further examination of the distribution of intensifiers in the language of male and female speakers indicates that the transformations in the use of intensifiers are specifically initiated by women, who commonly employ intensifiers more frequently than men (Barnfield and Buchstaller 2010: 266, T. F. Mustanoja 1960: 319-328, cited in Ito and Tagliamonte 2003: 260, Stenström, Andersen and Hasund 2002: 143).

#### **2.2.2.4 Recycling and regionally specific uses of intensifiers**

Since the circumstances under which the changes in the intensifier system take place are regionally and sociologically determined, the repertoire and the degree of delexicalization of intensifiers differ across varieties and various speech communities. As a result, regionally specific uses of intensifiers arise. Any deviations from the standard use of intensifiers in present-day English are then brought about by either recycling “forms that have been lurking around in the grammar for centuries” (Barnfield and Buchstaller 2010: 281), or bringing entirely ‘new’ intensifiers into being. Both tendencies can be observed in the language of the teenagers in COLT. An unusually high rate of the intensifiers *enough*, *right* and *well* functioning as premodifiers of adjectives occurs in the corpus (Stenström, Andersen and Hasund 2002: 142). The use of *enough* as a premodifying intensifier is one of the most striking features that were found in the corpus, and a wholly new phenomenon in the London teenage vernacular (ibid.). *Right* and *well*, on the other hand, had already undergone the process of delexicalization in the past and have only recently emerged as widely used intensifiers (ibid.). While *right* is likely to have originated under the influence of American English (ibid: 152), *well* seems to be gaining in popularity among the young as an equivalent expression for the intensifier *very* (ibid: 156). Similarly, the population of Tyneside rather abruptly picked up the already attested intensifier *dead*, only to drop it again a few years later (Barnfield and Buchstaller 2010: 273). The latest data suggest that *pure* is now enjoying a growing popularity in Tyneside, with the newly attested intensifier *canny* closely following (ibid.).

### **2.3 The language of television series**

Although various corpora of spoken English provide a fairly large amount of useful research material for linguists, many of them have decided to extend their research to the

sphere of television series. Generally speaking, the immense popularity of TV shows in contemporary society gives linguists an opportunity to further examine a wide range of tendencies that are dominant in a language at the moment. Moreover, owing to the great diversity and quantity of TV series that are originally broadcasted in English, the amount of the potential research material is far greater than the data that are collected in the corpora of spoken English. Since the manner in which language phenomena such as intensification behave in present-day English is continually changing and developing, the language of TV series is generally assumed to display this tendency as well (Tagliamonte and Roberts 2005: 296).

### **2.3.1 Conversation and TV language as separate registers**

In order to gain a greater insight into the use of intensifiers in scripted language it is necessary to determine the relationship between TV dialogue and natural conversation. For the lack of a fully comprehensive study that would focus on all aspects that typify TV language as such, several rather detailed studies (Bednarek 2011: 54-83, Piazza, Bednarek and Rossi 2011: 1-17, Quaglio 2009, Tagliamonte and Roberts 2005: 280-300) were chosen to summarize the main tendencies that are characteristic of TV dialogue, and thus give an overview on the nature and relationship between scripted and unscripted language. A thorough comparison of lexico-grammatical patterns that commonly occur in both natural conversation and the language of TV series points out to the necessity to treat scripted language as a separate register (Bednarek 2011: 62). As such, the language of TV shows displays some features that are unique to this register as well as a fairly large number of features that are typical of unscripted dialogue. The majority of the above mentioned characteristics which Biber et al. (1999: 1038-1052) use to define natural conversation thus also function as core features in TV dialogue. Furthermore, various genres might slightly differ from one another in this respect. The particular TV series are then always a product of their time and place and in most cases reflect to some extent, at least, the socio-cultural setting in which they are produced (Piazza, Bednarek and Rossi 2011: 9). Despite the aim to create a realistic representation of natural conversation, a certain amount of artificiality is required in order to adjust the language of TV shows to the viewers' expectations. One of the most striking features that mark the boundary between the two registers is the virtual absence of interruptions, overlaps and incomplete utterances in TV dialogue (Quaglio 2009: 3). Since the viewers are not able to engage in conversation that is taking place on the screen at the moment, they are forced to rely solely on the

information that can be obtained from the dialogue. To counterbalance this limitation on the part of the viewers, scripted dialogue is often unnaturally coherent (Piazza, Bednarek and Rossi 2011: 13) – it is less vague, more emotional and less narrative than unscripted conversation (Bednarek 2011: 71). These findings are not expected to impose any limitations on the present study of intensification in scripted dialogue as it will mostly benefit from the slightly higher occurrence of emotional language that is actually closely related to the use of intensifiers (Quaglio 2009: 91-94).

### **2.3.2 Intensifiers in TV language**

Since this research area still remains mostly unexplored by linguists, a detailed study conducted by Tagliamonte and Roberts (2005: 280-300) will be used as the basic source of data. Tagliamonte and Roberts have chosen to test their hypothesis that “media language does reflect what is going on in language and may even pave the way for innovation” (ibid: 280) on the immensely popular TV series *Friends*. The authors focus specifically on the use of intensifiers in the series since such research not only enables them to examine linguistic innovation in greater detail and in real time, but also provides an opportunity to study the extent to which the language of the series actually reflects “the real-world data” that had been previously collected by Ito and Tagliamonte (2003: 257-279) for the purpose of studying the phenomena of intensification in present-day spoken British English.

The most frequently occurring intensifiers in the *Friends* corpus are represented by the adverbs *so*, *really* and *very* (Tagliamonte and Roberts 2005: 287). The same intensifiers are predominant in the York data, however, the frequencies differ (Ito and Tagliamonte 2003: 296). *Very* emerged as the most general intensifier in the language of *Friends* since it collocates with the broadest range of adjectives and is used almost equally by both females and males (Tagliamonte and Roberts 2005: 291). *Really* and *so* are then favored by females, with *so* exhibiting some unusual patterns throughout the series (ibid: 289). The fact that *so* makes up 44% of all the intensification that occurs in the corpus makes the *Friends* data stand out among the other language material (ibid: 287). Moreover, the study shows that female characters use *so* more than twice as often as the males (ibid: 288), which may imply that *so* is on the rise as an intensifier in present-day spoken American English, since women have been generally regarded as innovators in linguistic change

(Labov 1990: 210-215, cited in Tagliamonte and Roberts 2005: 288). <sup>3</sup>An analysis of the distribution of *so* across the *Friends* corpus actually shows that *so* is slowly moving toward the last stage of delexicalization during which it may be expected to become a dominant intensifier in today's spoken American English (ibid: 295). Finally, the data collected in both the York and *Friends* corpora actually confirm the hypothesis that in most cases TV dialogue reflects the tendencies that are dominant in a language at the moment, at least with respect to the form, frequency, and patterning of intensifiers (ibid: 296).

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<sup>3</sup>Labov, William. 1990. "The Intersection of Sex and Social Class in the Course of Linguistic Change." *Language Variation and Change* 2: 205–54.

### **3 Material and method**

#### **3.1 Hypothesis**

The aim of the thesis is to examine the phenomenon of intensification in present-day British English. Since it is beyond the scope of the present study to deal with the processes of intensification in their entirety, the research will be limited to adverbial intensifiers of adjectives. This research area still remains largely unexplored and thus offers a great opportunity to address the many aspects of intensification from various points of view and contribute to the understanding of the behavior of intensifiers in today's English with plenty of interesting observations and findings. The highest rate of intensification generally occurs in informal conversation which makes it an optimal source of data for such investigation. For the lack of a corpus that would map present-day informal spoken British English, the language of television series will be used instead. Despite the fact that scripted dialogue constitutes a separate register, it still reflects the core features of authentic unscripted conversation<sup>4</sup> and is thus expected to display the tendencies that are prevalent in the behavior of intensifiers. The language of the TV series *Skins* will be assessed in relation to the criteria set by Biber et al.<sup>5</sup> in order to verify this hypothesis and to be certain that the series actually provides data that are suitable for such research.

#### **3.2 Material**

The British TV series *Skins* was selected as the source of material for the present research for its relevance to today's spoken informal British English and its established position as one of the most popular TV shows in the genre of the so-called 'teen drama'. The series was broadcasted during the years 2007 – 2013, amounting to 7 series consisting of 61 episodes in total. The cast was completely replaced every two seasons, with the exception of season 7 which features a number of characters from the previous episodes. The average age of each generation of characters thus remains approximately the same. The storyline of each generation takes place in Bristol and revolves around the lives of ordinary teenagers who attend the same high school. The series gives a lifelike portrayal of the ups and downs of adolescence. It is a jumble of conflicts and dramatic situations, wild parties resulting in alcohol and drug abuse, and desperate attempts to come to terms with one's own identity. All of this is reflected in the dialogues that are overflowing with emotions and strong language. The unscrupulous and emotionally loaded language of the

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<sup>4</sup> Chapter 2.3.1 deals with the discrepancies between scripted and unscripted dialogue.

<sup>5</sup> The core features of the grammar of conversation are discussed in chapter 2.2.1.

teenagers thus constitutes excellent material for the study of intensifiers that are a natural part of emotional language. Moreover, in order to ensure the authenticity of the dialogues, the writing team was composed of people who on average did not exceed the age of 21.<sup>6</sup>

### 3.3 The *Skins* corpus

Transcripts that were written down by fans and subsequently posted online<sup>7</sup> were used to create a corpus consisting of 206, 751 word tokens. The transcripts were converted to text files of which two subcorpora were eventually made. Each of the subcorpora was used for a different purpose – untagged text files provided the material necessary for the analysis of conversational features in the series, while text files tagged by a freeware Part-Of-Speech tagger TagAnt<sup>8</sup> were used for the analysis of intensifiers and their collocational behavior. The analyses were then conducted using a freeware corpus analysis toolkit for concordancing and text analysis AntConc.<sup>9</sup>

#### 3.3.1 Methodology – features of conversational grammar in *Skins*

For the purpose of examining the features of conversational grammar in the series, a word list was generated. The tokens were ranked by frequency and assigned to the categories defined in LGSWE.<sup>10</sup> The 100 most frequently occurring items were matched with their most frequent functions – e.g. the word *so* functions most frequently as a part of PWS, intensifier and a substitute pro-form. In case of functional ambiguity, concordances of the respective token were examined as well. Moreover, articles and prepositions were excluded from the list as they constitute an irreplaceable component in every sphere of language, and their presence thus does not play any significant role in the identification of the core features of conversational grammar.

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<sup>6</sup> The creator of the series talks about the writing process in an interview accessible at <https://www.theguardian.com/media/2009/may/11/branding-tv-shows>. Accessed on March 10, 2016.

<sup>7</sup> Available from [http://www.springfieldspringfield.co.uk/episode\\_scripts.php?tv-show=skins](http://www.springfieldspringfield.co.uk/episode_scripts.php?tv-show=skins). Accessed on May 3, 2016.

<sup>8</sup> Anthony, L. (2015). TagAnt (Version 1.2.0) [Computer Software]. Tokyo, Japan: Waseda University. Available from <http://www.laurenceanthony.net/>

<sup>9</sup> Anthony, L. (2014). AntConc (Version 3.4.4) [Computer Software]. Tokyo, Japan: Waseda University. Available from <http://www.laurenceanthony.net/>

<sup>10</sup> Discussed in chapter 2.2.1.

### 3.3.2 Methodology – intensifiers in *Skins*

In order to identify all of the adverbial intensifiers of adjectives and their collocational patterns, a set of queries with a span of one position to the left were successively entered in the collocates tab. Since the corpus was tagged by a program, the tags were not always accurate and a number of different queries had to be used to search for items with the same syntactic function. Table 1 and 2 show the queries and a few illustrative examples of the collocations that correspond to the tags used in the queries. While Table 1 shows the variation in the intensifier tags (e.g. both the adverbial tag and the tag for *-ing* forms are used for adverbial intensifiers in the corpus), Table 2 points out to the diverse means of tagging items that function syntactically as adjectives (e.g., *-ing* and *-ed* participial forms that function as adjectives are marked with different tags than the regular adjectives). Once the queries were applied, the collocate tokens were ranked by frequency and the findings collected for the subsequent analysis. After obtaining the required data, the syntactic environment of all the adverbial intensifiers that were found in the corpus was closely examined in order to eliminate any tokens that did not correspond to the category of adverbial intensifiers of adjectives. Furthermore, the collocational patterns were inspected and the respective adjectives assigned to the following categories – attributive / predicative adjectives and adjectives with positive / negative / neutral connotation.

Query	Intensifier
rb * jj	<i>so good, very nice, really bad</i>
jj * jj	<i>super bouncy, bloody hilarious</i>
vvg * jj	<i>fucking funny</i>

Table 1: The query – variation in intensifier tags

Query	Adjective
rb * vvn	<i>pretty fucked, so scared</i>
rb * vvd	<i>so relaxed</i>
rb * rbr	<i>much more resolute</i>
rb * jjr	<i>much better</i>

Table 2: The query – variation in adjective tags

### 3.3.2.1 Constraints and obstacles

Apart from the difficulties caused by the need to check the collocational patterns manually, a number of other obstacles have arisen during the analysis. Firstly, the evaluation of adjectives as having positive or negative connotation was rather problematic since the perception of such semantic properties is always subjective at least to some extent. Moreover, the connotation of the adjective is dependent on the context in which it appears – the same adjective can have both positive and negative connotation in different contexts. The adjectives were thus labeled as positive or negative with respect to their surroundings, not according to their types.

Secondly, a few instances of adjectives with other than attributive or predicative functions were found in the corpus.<sup>11</sup> Since these items do not occur very frequently, all such instances were excluded from the analysis.

Finally, the issue of multiple intensification had to be addressed since it proved to be one of the core features of the use of intensifiers in the corpus. All of the intensifiers that occurred in sequences were included in the overall statistics (see Table 4 in chapter 4.2.1). Sequences that were formed by two or more different intensifiers were included in the analysis of their collocational patterns – each of these intensifiers was then marked as a modifier of the respective adjective and regarded separately in relation to the adjective.<sup>12</sup> The repeated occurrence of a particular intensifier in a sequence, on the other hand, was included in the analysis of collocational patterns as one token regardless of the length of the sequence since the sole function of such sequences is to supplement an additional amount of emphasis. In other words, a sequence of one particular intensifier modifies one particular adjective – counting the sequence as more than one intensifier token would bring imbalance to the analysis and the overall results.

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<sup>11</sup> The adjective *bald* in the following sentence functions as object complement of the object *me*. *The point is the targeted radiotherapy which has actually made me completely fucking bald.*

<sup>12</sup> All of the intensifiers in the collocation *so utterly catastrophically terminally stupid* were examined separately in relation to the adjective *stupid*, i.e. each of them was labeled as an intensifier collocating with a predicative adjective with negative connotation.

## 4 Analysis

The following sub-chapter will look at the characteristic features of the grammar of conversation as represented in the language of *Skins*. The ensuing sub-chapters will then deal with the use of intensifiers in the series. The analysis will focus specifically on adverbial intensifiers of adjectives as it is beyond the scope of the present study to cover all types of intensification and examine them in greater detail. Thus, the frequency of occurrence and collocational patterns of the most frequently used intensifiers will be examined in relation to the process of delexicalization. Moreover, a brief summary of the use of the less frequently occurring intensifiers will be given in order to show the tendencies prevailing in the behavior of those marginal items.

### 4.1 Features of conversational grammar in *Skins*

The data presented in the aforementioned studies (Bednarek 2011: 54-83, Piazza, Bednarek and Rossi 2011: 1-17, Quaglio 2009, Tagliamonte and Roberts 2005: 280-300) suggest that regardless of the necessity to treat scripted and unscripted conversation as separate registers, the differences between the two registers are actually very subtle. The previously mentioned functional framework, which operates with both “situational and functional determinants of conversation” (Biber et al. 1999: 1038), while focusing mostly on lexico-grammatical patterns that typify the register, will be used to verify this hypothesis with respect to the language of *Skins*.

The highly informal dialogues in *Skins* indeed display a number of features that bear a striking resemblance to the findings collected in the LGSWE. However, the majority of the most frequently occurring items in the *Skins* corpus can carry multiple functions depending on the context in which they appear. Table 3 lists the 100 most frequent words in the *Skins* corpus and the most common functions that these items perform.<sup>13</sup>

The tendency to reduce the speech grammatically (Biber et al. 1999: 1042) results in the dominance of personal pronouns, such as *you* and *I*, contracted forms of verbs and the negative particle *not*, deictic items, such as *that*, *here* or *now*, and substitute pro-forms (ex. 1).<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> The noun *man*, for instance, is used as a common noun (e.g. *Better fix this young man a drink.*) and as a vocative (e.g. *That's cool, man.*) in the corpus – however, the number of the vocatives (316) exceeds that of the other uses (63).

<sup>14</sup> All the examples in Chapter 4 come from the *Skins* corpus.

(1) Speaker 1: *Liv's got you a practice girl.*

Speaker 2: *What? Like a real one?*

Moreover, elaborate language and specification of meaning (Biber et al. 1999: 1044) appear to be avoided in the *Skins* dialogues. As a result, the structure of the noun phrase remains rather simple. Hedges, especially *like*, and vague general extenders (*or something*), as can be seen in ex. (2), also display a high frequency of occurrence.

(2) *Guys, can we get going? Just in case Cassie's like dying or something.*

The interactive nature of conversation implies that speakers often rely on various means that elicit a response (Biber et al. 1999: 1045). The high frequency of questions in the *Skins* corpus is indicated by interrogative expressions, such as *what* or *why*. Non-clausal components, such as greetings, farewells, backchannels (ex. 3) and response elicitors (ex. 4), as well as negation and the adversative conjunction *but* are employed for the same reason.

(3) S1: *She's a bit upset.*

S2: *Yeah.*

S1: *College starts today.*

(4) S1: *You don't say it to me, ok?*

S2: *Ok, sorry.*

The high degree of emotion and attitude that is characteristic of conversation (Biber et al. 1999: 1047) is particularly evident in the language of *Skins*. Inserts, such as *sorry* and *please*, interjections, such as *oh*, the first person plural imperative *let's*, vocatives (ex. 5), evaluative adjectives (ex. 6) and especially intensifiers (S1 in ex. 7) and expletives (S2 in ex. 7) occur rather frequently in the corpus.

(5) *This is our house, Mum!*

(6) *Where do you think he'll be in five years' time? ...Jal? Playing the clarinet in some really good orchestra. Michelle? Working some slick jobs in some fine suits.*

- (7) S1: *First of all, I can't really swim very well any more and secondly ahh, boo-hoo!*  
 S2: *What the fuck?*  
 S1: *I told you, I can't I can't I can't swim...*  
 S2: *Oh, you're such a pussy.*

The circumstances under which most of dialogues take place often make speakers depend on restricted and repetitive means of expression (Biber et al. 1999: 1049). The *Skins* corpus contains most of these items that seem to be typical of natural conversation. In particular, the modal auxiliaries *can/could*, *will* and *would*, the adverbs *there*, *just*, *so* and *then*, and adverbial clauses introduced by *if* (ex. 8), *when* (ex. 9) and *because* (ex.10) appear rather often in the language of *Skins*. Moreover, verbs that are either part of prefabricated word sequences that are easily accessible from memory or constitute the core vocabulary of English dominate the corpus. Examples (11), (12) and (13) show some of the typical lexical bundles in which the verbs such as *to know*, *to come* and *to want* occur. The fact that the verb *to love* ranks among the most frequently used words in *Skins* is rather unusual in this respect, however, it again points to the highly emotional language of TV shows.

- (8) *If it's rubbish, we'll just go back to ours.*
- (9) *I know I was all right on Friday when I got up.*
- (10) *It didn't seem to matter because then everything got really fun.*
- (11) *There's nothing to be done, and you know what? It's good. It's a good thing.*
- (12) *You fuckers! Come on, come on! Come on, Franky, get in now!*
- (13) *Do you want to help me get dressed? You want me to look good, don't you?*

Finally, conversation is stylistically highly informal, which is commonly reflected both grammatically and lexically (Biber et al. 1999: 1050). The *Skins* dialogues reflect this tendency mostly in the excessive use of expletives, however, non-standard forms such as *gonna* are also commonly employed by the speakers.

The language of *Skins* reflects the overwhelming majority of the features that typify the grammar of conversation. The only aspect in which the *Skins* dialogues slightly diverge from the characteristics of conversation set by the functional framework is the lack of “normal dysfluency” (Biber et al. 1999: 1048). Pauses, hesitators and repetitions uttered for the purpose of escaping the pressure of time are hardly noticeable in the corpus. The data gathered from the *Skins* corpus thus correspond with the findings presented in the aforementioned studies (Bednarek 2011: 54-83, Piazza, Bednarek and Rossi 2011: 1-17, Quaglio 2009) – the language of the series indeed seems to be unnaturally coherent at times and more emotional than authentic unscripted conversation.

Rank	Word	Frequency	Function
1.	<i>you</i>	10,408	personal pronoun
2.	<i>I</i>	8,925	personal pronoun
3.	<i>'s</i>	5,244	contracted form
4.	<i>it</i>	4,362	personal pronoun
5.	<i>'t</i>	3,502	contracted form
6.	<i>that</i>	2,484	deictic item
7.	<i>what</i>	2,484	questions, part of PWS
8.	<i>me</i>	2,365	personal pronoun
9.	<i>'m</i>	1,898	contracted form
10.	<i>we</i>	1,898	personal pronoun
11.	<i>is</i>	1,675	auxiliary, lexical verb
12.	<i>'re</i>	1,672	contracted form
13.	<i>my</i>	1,577	possessive determiner
14.	<i>yeah</i>	1,540	non-clausal component - insert, response elicitor, backchannel
15.	<i>don''</i>	1,530	contracted form
16.	<i>no</i>	1,522	negation
17.	<i>do</i>	1,448	auxiliary, pro-form
18.	<i>just</i>	1,390	adverb
19.	<i>this</i>	1,379	deictic item
20.	<i>your</i>	1,326	possessive determiner
21.	<i>right</i>	1,271	non-clausal component - insert, response elicitor, backchannel
22.	<i>know</i>	1,262	core vocabulary, part of PWS, lexical verb
23.	<i>can</i>	1,250	modal verb
24.	<i>not</i>	1,240	negation
25.	<i>so</i>	1,201	part of PWS, intensifier, substitute pro-form
26.	<i>he</i>	1,194	personal pronoun
27.	<i>she</i>	1,183	personal pronoun
28.	<i>are</i>	1,182	auxiliary, lexical verb
29.	<i>fucking</i>	1,132	expletive, intensifier
30.	<i>oh</i>	1,124	non-clausal component – insert, backchannel
31.	<i>fuck</i>	1,065	expletive

32.	<i>be</i>	1,043	auxiliary, lexical verb
33.	<i>like</i>	1,023	hedge, preposition
34.	<i>have</i>	1,005	auxiliary, lexical verb
35.	<i>get</i>	960	core vocabulary, part of PWS, lexical verb
36.	<i>'ve</i>	957	contracted form
37.	<i>ok</i>	911	non-clausal component - insert, response elicitor, backchannel
38.	<i>got</i>	871	part of PWS, lexical verb
39.	<i>come</i>	861	core vocabulary, part of PWS, lexical verb
40.	<i>go</i>	852	core vocabulary, part of PWS, lexical verb
41.	<i>was</i>	849	auxiliary, lexical verb
42.	<i>but</i>	837	adversative conjunction
43.	<i>her</i>	813	personal pronoun, possessive determiner
44.	<i>here</i>	812	deictic item
45.	<i>'ll</i>	774	contracted form
46.	<i>there</i>	695	deictic item, adverb
47.	<i>want</i>	686	core vocabulary, part of PWS, lexical verb
48.	<i>going</i>	684	lexical verb, modal verb
49.	<i>now</i>	634	deictic item
50.	<i>they</i>	616	personal pronoun
51.	<i>think</i>	614	core vocabulary, part of PWS, lexical verb
52.	<i>well</i>	606	non-clausal element, intensifier
53.	<i>love</i>	570	lexical verb
54.	<i>see</i>	561	core vocabulary, part of PWS, lexical verb
55.	<i>if</i>	552	introduces adverbial clauses
56.	<i>why</i>	545	questions, part of PWS
57.	<i>one</i>	533	substitute pro-form, numeral
58.	<i>sorry</i>	528	non-clausal component - insert
59.	<i>let</i>	513	polite sentence opening
60.	<i>good</i>	500	evaluative adjective
61.	<i>look</i>	496	core vocabulary, part of PWS, lexical verb
62.	<i>how</i>	490	questions, part of PWS
63.	<i>really</i>	475	intensifier
64.	<i>then</i>	468	deictic item, adverb
65.	<i>him</i>	456	personal pronoun
66.	<i>yes</i>	453	non-clausal element, expresses stance
67.	<i>need</i>	446	core vocabulary, modal verb
68.	<i>did</i>	442	auxiliary, lexical verb
69.	<i>who</i>	432	questions, part of PWS
70.	<i>where</i>	419	questions, part of PWS
71.	<i>shit</i>	416	expletive
72.	<i>tell</i>	411	core vocabulary, lexical verb
73.	<i>man</i>	379	vocative
74.	<i>'d</i>	371	contracted form
75.	<i>mum</i>	361	vocative
76.	<i>gonna</i>	346	non-standard form
77.	<i>didn''</i>	339	contracted form
78.	<i>time</i>	337	noun, part of PWS

79.	<i>been</i>	336	auxiliary, lexical verb
80.	<i>doing</i>	333	lexical verb
81.	<i>hey</i>	332	non-clausal component - insert
82.	<i>when</i>	329	questions
83.	<i>dad</i>	328	vocative
84.	<i>please</i>	326	non-clausal component - insert
85.	<i>take</i>	303	core vocabulary, part of PWS, lexical verb
86.	<i>mean</i>	302	core vocabulary, part of PWS, lexical verb
87.	<i>them</i>	300	personal pronoun
88.	<i>say</i>	297	core vocabulary, lexical verb
89.	<i>never</i>	293	negation
90.	<i>will</i>	293	auxiliary, modal verb
91.	<i>hi</i>	284	non-clausal component - insert
92.	<i>Sid</i>	276	vocative
93.	<i>too</i>	274	intensifier, adverb
94.	<i>because</i>	272	conjunction, introduces adverbial clauses
95.	<i>could</i>	271	modal verb
96.	<i>us</i>	270	personal pronoun
97.	<i>were</i>	268	auxiliary, lexical verb
98.	<i>Cook</i>	267	vocative
99.	<i>fine</i>	260	evaluative adjective
100.	<i>bit</i>	258	adverb, noun

Table 3: Lexico-grammatical features in *Skins*: the 100 most frequent words in the *Skins* corpus and their most frequent functions

#### 4.2 Adverbial intensifiers of adjectives in *Skins*

A thorough analysis of the *Skins* corpus has shown that there are 55 different modifiers that function syntactically as adverbs that are used to “scale [the meaning of an adjective] upwards from an assumed norm” (Quirk et al. 1985: 445). The category of such intensifiers comprises typical specimens from the class of adverbs, such as *really* and *totally* (exx. 14 and 15), as well as intensifying adverbs homonymous with adjectives, such as *pretty* and *fucking* (ex. 16). Since both types of these modifiers share the same function, i.e. they intensify the meaning of an adjective, the term ‘adverbial intensifiers of adjectives’ will be applied to all such items.

(14) *We’ve had a really good morning.*

(15) *You’re totally old-fashioned.*

(16) *This had better be a pretty fucking decent party.*

### 4.2.1 Most frequently occurring intensifiers

Each of the intensifiers that appear at least 10 times in the *Skins* corpus will be subjected to a close analysis in the following sub-chapters. Table 4 lists all these intensifiers and gives their frequency of occurrence as a percentage of the total frequency of adverbial intensifiers of adjectives in the corpus. Even though the list consists of a wide range of items, the four top intensifiers *so*, *fucking*, *very* and *really* make up more than two thirds of the overall intensification. The rapid decrease in frequency of the other intensifiers points out to the speakers' inclination to rely on a small set of intensifiers most of the time.

Intensifier	%	N
<i>so</i>	26.1	266
<i>fucking</i>	16.5	168
<i>very</i>	13.4	137
<i>really</i>	12.1	124
<i>too</i>	7.8	80
<i>pretty</i>	4.8	49
<i>totally</i>	3.3	34
<i>that</i>	1.6	16
<i>much</i>	1.3	13
<i>completely</i>	1.2	12
<i>well</i>	1.2	12
<i>super</i>	1.1	11
<i>how</i>	1.1	10
All other items	8.7	89
total	100	1,021

Table 4: Frequency of adverbial intensifiers of adjectives in *Skins*

#### 4.2.1.1 Sequences of intensifiers

Moreover, the four most frequently used intensifiers also display the highest frequency of occurrence in sequences. The tendency of the speakers to rely on sequences of intensifiers, and the consequent addition of an even greater amount of emphasis, thus seems to be related to the overuse of certain intensifiers, which commonly results in the weakening of these items. In other words, if an intensifier acquires the status of a widely used item, its function, i.e. emphasis, tends to weaken over time, and the speakers seek to counterbalance the deficiency by creating sequences of sufficient intensity. Two basic types of such sequences can be found in the corpus – an intensifier is either used more than once (exx. 17 and 18) or it is accompanied by one or more other intensifying items (ex. 19). Even though both of the sequence types can freely co-occur and thus form strings that consist of three or more successive intensifiers, they are very rare and only a few of such

instances appear in the corpus (ex. 20). Figures 1-4 show the representation of intensifier sequences in which *fucking*, *so*, *really* and *very* occur in the corpus.

(17) *Let's get totally totallyfucked.*

(18) *She hated me though. For a very veryverylong time.*

(19) *Never in my years as a teacher have I come across a year so utterly catastrophically terminally stupid.*

(20) *You just know that something really really fucking bad is going down.*

### ***Fucking***

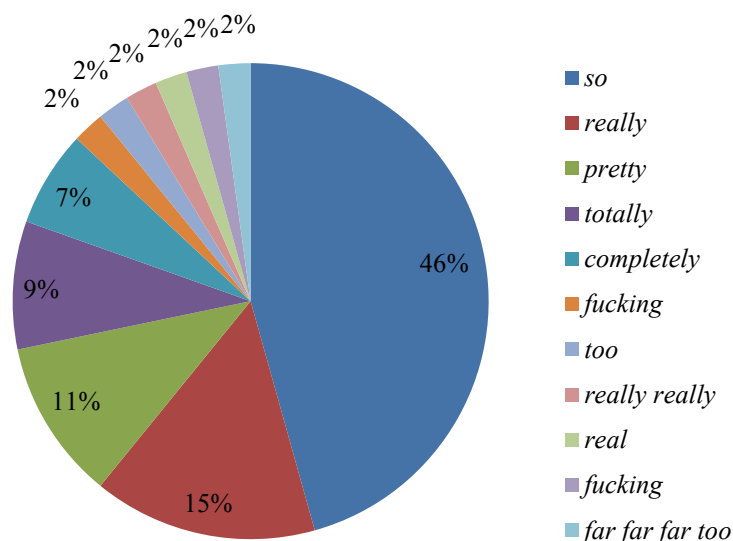


Figure 1: Distribution of the intensifier *fucking* in sequences formed by adverbial intensifiers of adjectives

## *So*

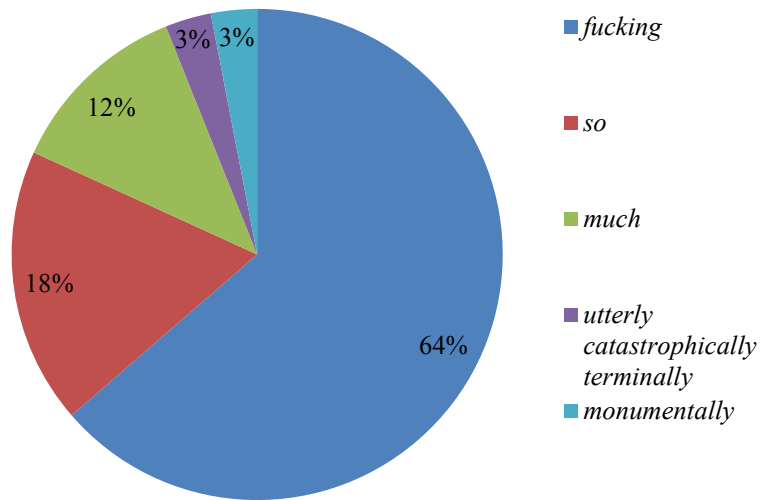


Figure 2: Distribution of the intensifier *so* in sequences formed by adverbial intensifiers of adjectives

## *Really*

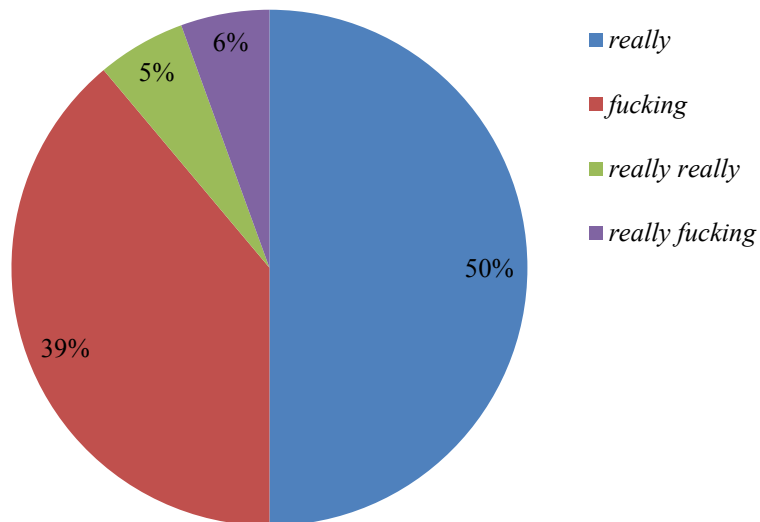


Figure 3: Distribution of the intensifier *really* in sequences formed by adverbial intensifiers of adjectives

## Very

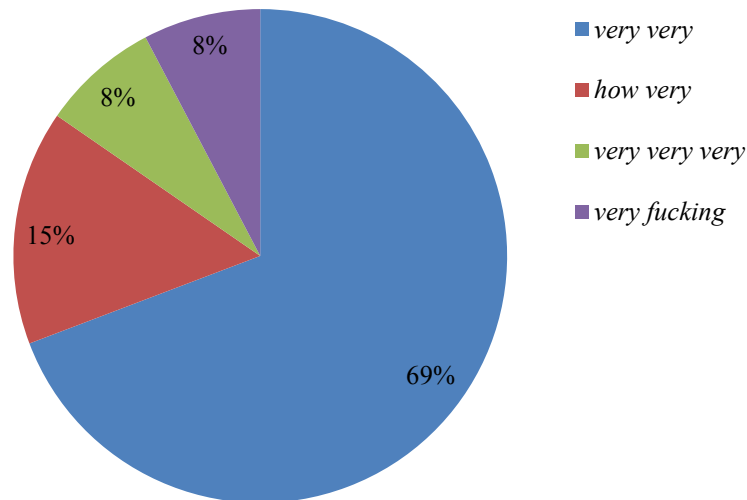


Figure 4: Distribution of the intensifier *very* in sequences formed by adverbial intensifiers of adjectives

With its ability to collocate with a wide range of other intensifying items, *fucking* emerges as the most universal intensifier. Despite this tendency, *fucking* shows a strong preference for the intensifier *so*. Unlike the other intensifiers, it does not tend to appear more than once in a sequence – only one such instance was found in the corpus (ex. 21). As can be seen in ex. (22), *fucking* can form sequences with other intensifiers solely on condition that it immediately precedes the adjective that is being modified.

(21) *You're always fucking fuckingright.*

(22) *... cos I'm a gullible soft touch who's far farfar too fucking nice for his own good.*

*So* and *really*, on the other hand, always stand at the beginning of an intensifier sequence regardless of the number of its constituents. Both *so* and *really* show a strong inclination to occur multiple times in a sequence (exx. 23 and 24). The unusually high rate of these *really* strings in the corpus is likely to be caused by the limited collocation preferences of the intensifier – the only other item with which it collocates is the intensifier *fucking* (Figure 3). *So* exhibits a slightly broader range of collocation patterns. Apart from

the above mentioned co-occurrence of *so* and *fucking*, the sequence *so much* was found in the corpus (ex. 25). Since this sequence can pre-modify only adjectives in the comparative form, just a few instances appear in the corpus.

(23) *We have to be so so careful with the pile.*

(24) *It's really really really important.*

(25) *Things are so much smoother when we lie.*

*Very* also displays a strong tendency to appear in a sequence more than once (ex. 26). The only exceptions to this behavior are the co-occurrence with the intensifiers *fucking* (ex. 27) and *how* (ex. 28). However, the use of this sequence is restricted solely to exclamatory sentences.

(26) *You are a very very lucky little boy.*

(27) Speaker 1: *How close are they?*

Speaker 2: *Very fucking close.*

(28) *Oh, how very exciting! You must bring them round.*

A number of intensifier sequences that are not included in Figures 1-4, such as *way too* (ex. 29), *totally totally* (ex. 30) and *far too* (ex. 31), were found in the corpus, however, they do not contribute to the findings presented in this study in any significant way as they seldom appear more than once.

(29) *You're way too cool to be her friend.*

(30) *You're like totally totally fit.*

(31) *You were far too busy all the while.*

#### 4.2.1.2 Restrictions on the use of intensifiers – syntactic and semantic constraints

Apart from the aforementioned restrictions concerning multiple intensification, there are also other syntactic and semantic constraints that prevent some intensifiers from occurring in certain contexts. Both *so* and *how* appear solely with predicative adjectives (exx. 31 and 32). There is no instance of the intensifier *how* modifying an attributive adjective in the corpus and even though *so* can occasionally occur as a modifier of attributive adjectives (Dušková et al. 2006: 3.31), the speakers in *Skins* actually prefer to replace it with *such*.

(31) *You're all so lovely to me.*

(32) *How perceptive you are!*

The tendency of the intensifier *much* to modify only comparatives has been already mentioned above, however, the sequence *too much* appears only with the inflected comparative in the corpus, while *much* as a single intensifier was found to modify both the inflected and the periphrastic comparative (ex. 33).

(33) *But this is much more interesting.*

Finally, the use of the intensifier *that* seems to be limited by an entirely different set of constraints. With the exception of one instance (ex. 34), it predominantly occurs in questions (ex. 35) and negative sentences (ex. 36).

(34) *I am that good.*

(35) *That bad, huh? Come in.*

(36) *It really wasn't that bad.*

#### 4.2.1.3 Delexicalization of intensifiers – range of collocation

With respect to what has already been said about the overuse and weakening of intensifiers, it seems appropriate to examine these processes in greater detail. They are both closely related to the phenomenon of delexicalization – a gradual process during which the

independent lexical content of a word is reduced in order to perform a specific function (Partington 1993: 183). Delexicalization of adverbial intensifiers occurs in several successive steps. The mechanisms of delexicalization are usually set in motion when an intensifier with semantic content begins to appear as a modifier of attributive adjectives (Mustanoja 1960: 326, cited in Ito and Tagliamonte 2003: 261).<sup>15</sup> When the intensifier becomes established in this syntactic position, it starts to occur “with predicative adjectives to convey simple intensification” (ibid.). As a result, the frequency of occurrence of such intensifiers rises and the scope of adjectives with which they collocate broadens. In other words, “the more delexicalized an intensifier is, the more widely it collocates” (Partington 1993: ibid.). Moreover, the more delexicalized intensifiers tend to modify adjectives with both positive and negative connotations (ibid.). In order to gain some insight into the mechanism of delexicalization and the behavior of intensifiers in the *Skins* corpus, collocational patterns of the most frequently occurring items will be examined in greater detail.

Table 5 shows the scope of collocation of the individual intensifiers. The adjective types / intensifier ratio <sup>16</sup> expresses the range of collocational behavior of each intensifier, i.e. the ratio of the total number of adjective types, with which the particular intensifier collocates, to the total number of tokens of such intensifier in the corpus. For instance, the intensifier *really* appears 112 times in the corpus and collocates with 50 different adjective types in total, while the frequency of occurrence of *completely* corresponds to the total number of adjective types with which it collocates. Some of the adjectives that are modified by *really* thus occur repeatedly with the intensifier. *Completely*, on the other hand, modifies a different adjective each time and does not collocate with any of them more than once. The degree of delexicalization of the individual intensifiers can thus be roughly assessed by comparing the ratio values – the more delexicalized an intensifier is the higher ratio it displays. However, the results presented in Table 5 are by no means

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<sup>15</sup>Mustanoja, Tauno F. (1960). *A Middle English syntax*. Helsinki: Société Néophilologique.

<sup>16</sup> The ratios were calculated in the following manner – the number of adjective types was divided by the number of intensifier tokens. The resulting value was multiplied by 100 in order to express it as a percentage. Moreover, multiple intensification by the same intensifier was counted as one token only - e.g. the ratio of the collocations *very beautiful* and *very very beautiful* was calculated as two tokens of the intensifier *very* collocating with one adjective type since the double intensification only strengthens the emphasis but does not influence the range of collocation of the respective intensifier. In case of multiple intensification carried out by two or more different intensifiers, each intensifying item was treated as one token modifying one adjective type - e.g. the adjective *good* in the collocation *so fucking good* was assigned as one adjective type to both *so* and *fucking* in the calculations, or in other words, *so* and *fucking* were treated as two different intensifier tokens collocating with the same adjective type.

conclusive as the degree of delexicalization cannot be precisely measured in any particular way. The data presented in the table mostly point out to some tendencies that determine the collocational behavior of the most frequently occurring intensifiers. For instance, the rather low number of adjective types that collocate with *really* and *so* might demonstrate a strong preference for a small set of adjectives. The fact that the collocation *so sorry* appears 27 times and the collocation *so glad* 14 times in the corpus indeed confirms this hypothesis. Similarly, the collocation *really good* occurs 22 times in the corpus, closely followed by *really sorry* with the frequency of 16 instances.

Intensifier	Frequency of intensifier (tokens)	Number of adjective types	Adjective types per intensifier ratio in %
<i>completely</i>	12	12	100
<i>how</i>	10	10	100
<i>well</i>	12	11	91.7
<i>super</i>	11	10	90.9
<i>totally</i>	34	29	85.3
<i>pretty</i>	49	34	69.4
<i>that</i>	16	10	62.5
<i>much</i>	13	8	61.5
<i>very</i>	126	77	61.1
<i>fucking</i>	167	99	59.2
<i>too</i>	80	47	58.8
<i>so</i>	260	127	48.8
<i>really</i>	112	50	44.6

Table 5: Range of collocation of adverbial intensifiers of adjectives: adjective types per intensifier ratio in the Skins corpus

#### 4.2.1.4 Collocational behavior of intensifiers - attributive and predicative adjectives

Another method that helps to assess how far advanced an intensifier is in terms of delexicalization, is to look into its collocational patterns with attributive and predicative adjectives. Figure 5 shows the most frequently occurring intensifiers and the token ratio of attributive to predicative adjectives with which they co-occur in the corpus.

The intensifiers *so* and *how* have to be excluded from this part of the analysis since their collocational behavior is limited to predicative adjectives only. Out of the other intensifiers, *fucking*, *very*, *really* and *pretty* display a rather high frequency of occurrence with attributive adjectives. The results thus suggest that those intensifiers still have not gone through all the stages of delexicalization. *Too*, *totally*, *that*, *much*, *completely*, *well*

and *super*, on the other hand, co-occur almost exclusively with predicative adjectives. This behavior suggests that these intensifiers are either further advanced in terms of delexicalization or have never collocated with attributive adjectives to a larger extent. Nevertheless, these findings actually roughly correspond with the degree of delexicalization indicated in Table 5.

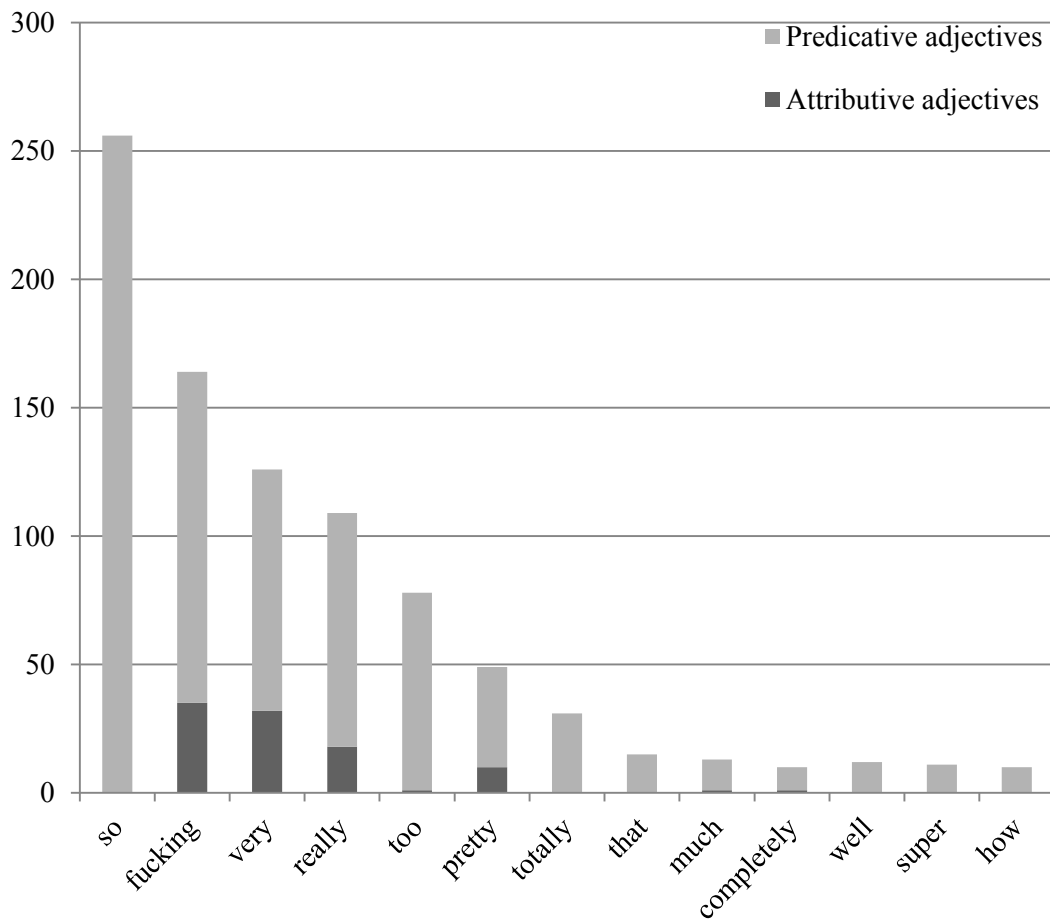


Figure 5: Collocational patterns of the most frequently occurring intensifiers – attributive and predicative adjectives token ratio

#### 4.2.1.5 Collocational behavior of intensifiers – adjectives with positive and negative connotation

Finally, semantic preferences of intensifiers should also be taken into consideration while examining their collocational behavior<sup>17</sup> and degree of delexicalization. Figure 6 indicates the preference of the most frequently occurring intensifiers for adjectives with positive or negative connotation, which is expressed as a positive (ex. 37) / negative (ex. 38) / neutral (ex. 39) adjective token ratio for each of the respective intensifiers. Even though adjectives with neutral connotation are also included in the results, the ratio of these items is of no particular importance for this part of the analysis.

(37) *Right now's not a very good time.*

(38) *And now really, really bad things are gonna happen.*

(39) *Your house is pretty empty at the moment.*

As can be seen in Figure 6, only the intensifiers *so*, *really* and *totally* display an almost equal token ratio of positive to negative adjectives, which is considered as one of the indications that an intensifier is far delexicalized (Partington 1993: 183). The preference for adjectives with negative connotation, as manifested by *very*, *pretty*, *much*, *well*, *super* and *how*, or positive connotation, linked to *fucking*, *too*, *that* and *completely*, suggests that the intensifiers are still far from being fully delexicalized.

Moreover, the results gathered in the parts of the analysis that focus on the process of delexicalization show that the mechanisms behind this semantic change are rather complex and hard to measure. The degree of delexicalization simply cannot be indicated by a value on a scale even though the data extracted from the corpus point out to the main tendencies that govern the behavior of the most frequently occurring intensifiers. *So*, *fucking*, *really*, *very* and *too* thus emerge as intensifiers that are used very frequently but are perhaps less advanced in terms of delexicalization than *pretty*, *totally*, *that*, *much*, *completely*, *well*, *super* and *how*. Such conclusion still contains a certain amount of

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<sup>17</sup> After the queries for adverbial intensifiers and intensifiers homonymous with adjectives were entered (see chapter 3.3.2), the syntactic environment immediately preceding the modified adjective was checked for any possible sequences of intensifiers. Every intensifying item in such sequence was then marked as a modifier of the respective adjective – e.g. every intensifier in the collocation *so utterly catastrophically terminally stupid* was marked as an intensifying item collocating with *stupid*, i.e. with an adjective with a negative connotation.

ambiguity since each of the examinations to which the individual intensifiers were subjected contributes to the overall interpretation of the data with slightly different results, at least with respect to the degree of delexicalization. Even though the interpretation of the results involves a number of difficulties, it is evident that all of the most frequently occurring intensifiers are fairly advanced in the process of delexicalization and may be expected to draw closer to complete delexicalization over time.

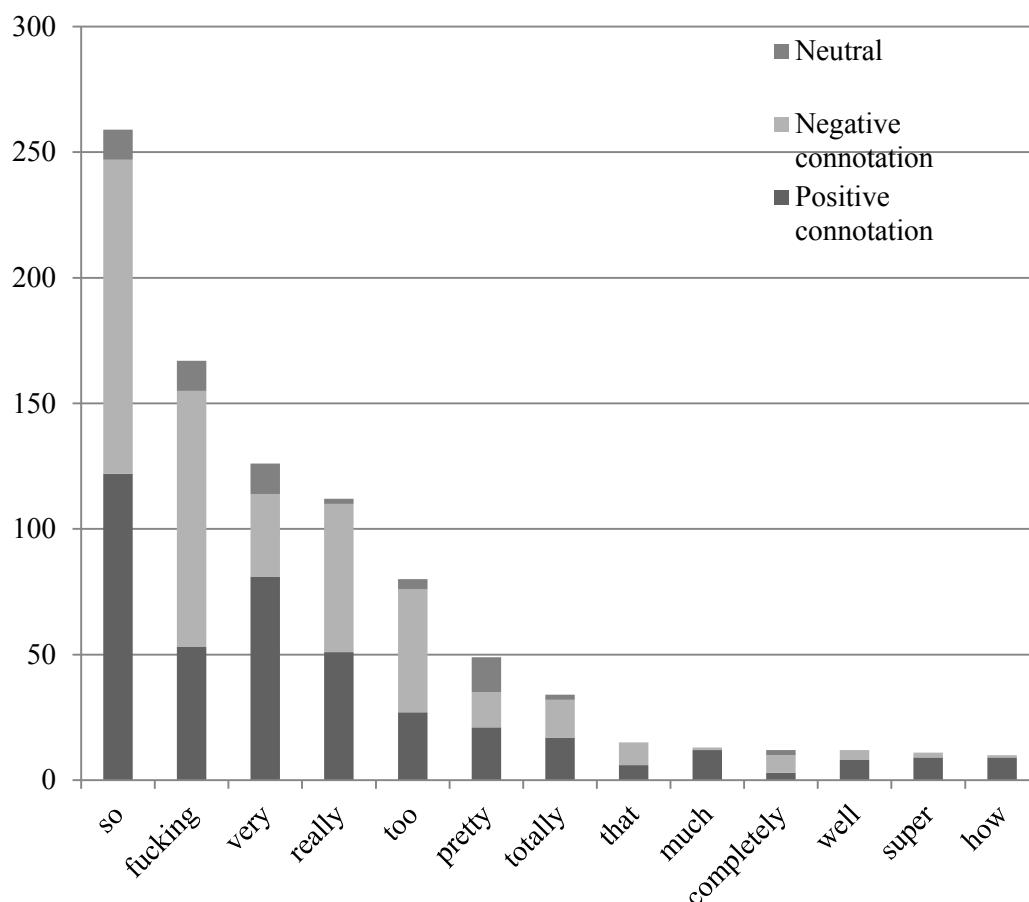


Figure 6: Collocational patterns of the most frequently occurring intensifiers – positive, negative and neutral adjectives token ratio

#### 4.2.1.6 Other collocational patterns

With regard to the aforementioned tendencies that shape the collocational patterns of the most frequently used intensifiers, two more trends in the collocational behavior of intensifiers are of particular interest for the present study.

Firstly, the intensifier *so* shows a deviation that has no parallel in the collocational behavior of any of the intensifying adverbs of adjectives that occur in the corpus. As can be seen in exx.(37), (38) and (39), the speakers violate the word order in the attempt to put more emphasis on a negative statement. Thus, the negative particle *not* stands between the intensifier *so* and the adjective that is being modified.<sup>18</sup> The standard use of intensifiers would not allow such formulation and would either force the intensifier to follow the negative particle (e.g. *This is not so funny*), which would noticeably lower the desired emphasis, or would rely on a different intensifying item (e.g. *This is not funny at all*) in order to retain it. Ex. (39) shows that not only intensifiers that appear singly, but also sequences of intensifiers can form this unusual collocation. Since only three instances of both variants were traced in the corpus, it is currently impossible to examine this phenomenon in greater detail. However, the fact that this uncommon behavior occurs with the intensifier *so*, which ranks as the most frequently used intensifier among the speakers in *Skins*, might indicate an oncoming change in the class of intensifiers.

(37) *That's so not true.*

(38) *This is so not funny.*

(39) *And by the way, that's so fucking not true.*

Secondly, the wide range of adjectives with which some of the most frequently used intensifiers collocate does not seem to eliminate the inclination to modify a particular set of adjectives. Table 6 shows the most frequently occurring collocations of adverbial intensifiers and adjectives. Only those collocations that occur five or more times in the corpus are shown in the table. Moreover, instances of multiple intensification by the same intensifier modifying a particular adjective were excluded from further examination. Thus, the collocation *so sorry* as it appears in ex. (40) was selected, while the collocation *so so sorry* (ex. 41) was excluded. Even though the scope of the modified adjectives differs from one intensifier to another, which is influenced by the frequency of occurrence of the particular intensifiers in the corpus, they all show a strong preference for items that are part

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<sup>18</sup>The same deviation from the standard use of the intensifier *so* was found in the language of the American TV series *Friends* (Quaglio 2009: 12). This deviation first appeared as an innovation in informal TV dialogue, but thanks to the immense popularity of the series it soon became a part of informal spoken American English.

of the core vocabulary of English. The most commonly used adjectives thus seem to require an additional amount of emphasis more often than adjectives that do not tend to be employed very frequently.

(40) *Sid, I'm so sorry*

(41) S1: *Turn around and look at me!*

S2: *I'm so so sorry.*

Intensifier	Adjective	Frequency of collocation
<i>so</i>	<i>sorry</i>	27
	<i>glad</i>	14
	<i>good</i>	10
	<i>lovely</i>	7
	<i>cool</i>	6
	<i>lonely</i>	6
	<i>nice</i>	6
	<i>happy</i>	5
<i>really</i>	<i>good</i>	23
	<i>sorry</i>	16
	<i>nice</i>	6
<i>very</i>	<i>nice</i>	12
	<i>good</i>	8
	<i>bad</i>	5
<i>fucking</i>	<i>good</i>	5
	<i>great</i>	5
	<i>late</i>	14
<i>too</i>	<i>late</i>	14
<i>pretty</i>	<i>sure</i>	8
<i>that</i>	<i>bad</i>	5

Table 6: *The most frequently occurring collocations of adverbial intensifiers and adjectives*

#### 4.2.2 Marginal intensifiers

42 out of the total 55 adverbial intensifiers of adjectives that appear in the *Skins* corpus display a frequency of less than 10 occurrences. Table 7 lists all of these marginal intensifiers and shows the contrast between their frequency of occurrence and the total number of hits that these items display in the corpus. In other words, the second column shows how many times the particular items appear as adverbial intensifiers of adjectives (ex. 42), while the third column refers to the overall frequency of these items regardless of their function. Any other types of intensification, such as intensification of verbs (ex. 43), are then included in the third column.

(42) *She's absolutely lovely.*

(43) *... you absolutely must not believe them.*

Looking at the marginal intensifiers from this point of view might help to assess their status among the other intensifiers. Even though their frequency of occurrence is rather low, it is evident which of these items function solely as intensifiers – this one to one correspondence seems to point out to their established position as intensifiers. For instance, most of the *-ly* items, such as *extremely* (ex. 44) and *tremendously* (ex. 45), do not have any other function apart from intensification. The fact that despite their established position the *-ly* intensifiers show a very low frequency of occurrence suggests that these items are not very popular among the predominantly teenage characters in *Skins*. However, it is unclear if these intensifiers are being employed by any of the teens at all, as there are a number of adult characters as well, and the transcripts do not indicate the age of the speakers. Other items, such as *all* (ex. 46), occur only a few times as intensifiers but display a high overall frequency of occurrence. Such intensifiers have thus not yet gained the reputation as common means of intensification and might be therefore expected to increase in frequency over time or disappear altogether. Intensifiers such as *right* (ex. 47), *real* (ex. 48), *proper* (ex. 49), *filthy* (ex. 50) or *pure* (ex. 51) also fall into this category.

(44) *Besides, my feet are extremely cold.*

(45) *Yes, that is tremendously amusing.*

(46) *My face is all puffy.*

(47) *But when he was your age, he was a right angry fucker.*

(48) *Ems and Naomi are real good friends.*

(49) *He looks proper lush.*

(50) *She's filthy rich, man.*

- (51) S1: *The doctors are shaking their heads. No idea.*  
 S2: *Pure phenomenal, Da.*

Moreover, about two thirds of the marginal intensifiers modify predicative adjectives. *Right* with its tendency to modify only attributive adjectives, as can be seen in ex. (47), stands out among these items. Apart from that, they show a slight preference for adjectives with positive connotation. These findings can hardly be used to estimate the degree of delexicalization of the intensifiers but they still point out to a certain balance in the class of marginal intensifiers.

As to sequences, most of the marginal intensifiers tend to occur singly. *Far* (ex. 52), *utterly*, *catastrophically* and *terminally* (ex. 53), on the other hand, appear only in sequences. Sequences formed by marginal intensifiers commonly contain at least one item of the more frequently occurring intensifiers (ex. 54).

- (52) *Those are all people who ... get married far too young.*
- (53) *Never in my years as a teacher have I come across a year so utterly catastrophically terminally stupid.*
- (54) *We lost our virginities, fell in love and actually had a pretty damn good time.*

The collocational behavior of marginal intensifiers is rather simple and therefore impossible to analyze more closely.

Item	Frequency as an intensifier of adjectives	Total frequency by item
<i>real</i>	8	65
<i>bloody</i>	6	35
<i>way</i>	6	217
<i>absolutely</i>	5	15
<i>far</i>	5	33
<i>extremely</i>	4	4
<i>terribly</i>	4	4
<i>awfully</i>	3	6
<i>jolly</i>	3	3
<i>perfectly</i>	3	4

<i>right</i>	3	1,271
<i>all</i>	2	1,245
<i>damn</i>	2	7
<i>dead</i>	2	63
<i>deeply</i>	2	3
<i>monumentally</i>	2	2
<i>properly</i>	2	13
<i>seriously</i>	2	23
<i>super-duper</i>	2	3
<i>amazingly</i>	1	2
<i>catastrophically</i>	1	1
<i>dreadfully</i>	1	1
<i>entirely</i>	1	1
<i>exceedingly</i>	1	1
<i>exceptionally</i>	1	1
<i>filthy</i>	1	17
<i>gloriously</i>	1	1
<i>horrifically</i>	1	1
<i>incredibly</i>	1	1
<i>inevitably</i>	1	1
<i>nicely</i>	1	5
<i>proper</i>	1	19
<i>pure</i>	1	11
<i>remarkably</i>	1	1
<i>shitting</i>	1	6
<i>terminally</i>	1	1
<i>thrillingly</i>	1	1
<i>thundering</i>	1	1
<i>tremendously</i>	1	1
<i>truly</i>	1	8
<i>utterly</i>	1	1
<i>wondrously</i>	1	1

*Table 7: Marginal intensifiers – frequency of occurrence*

## 5. Conclusion

The aim of the thesis was to examine the use of adverbial intensifiers of adjectives in present-day informal spoken British English. Since there are no freely accessible corpora that would comprise samples of informal spoken British English in its current shape, the language of the TV series *Skins* was selected as the most suitable research material. A corpus consisting of transcripts made by fans was created for this purpose. The analysis was conducted in two successive steps. First, a comparison of the *Skins* dialogues and authentic unscripted conversation was drawn in order to investigate to what degree the language of the series actually reflects natural conversation. An analysis of the use of intensifiers in *Skins* followed.

Despite the necessity to treat TV dialogue and unscripted conversation as separate registers, the language of *Skins* was expected to reflect most of the core grammatical features that typify natural conversation. Moreover, a stronger inclination toward emotionality and coherence was anticipated. A thorough examination of the 100 most frequent items in the *Skins* corpus and their most common functions confirmed the hypothesis (Table 3). The high frequency of personal pronouns, contracted forms, deictic items, substitute pro-forms, hedges and vague general extenders, and the simplification of the noun phrase reflect the tendency to engage in conversation with minimal effort. The fact that the speakers often employ various non-clausal components, such as greetings, farewells, backchannels and response elicitors, and questions denotes the interactive nature of conversation. The high degree of emotion and attitude is then especially evident in the wide range of expletives and intensifiers that are being used. Interjections, evaluative adjectives, vocatives, various inserts and the verb *to love* also play an important part in the language of the characters. Finally, the corpus displays a rather high degree of repetitive and restricted means of expression - modal auxiliaries, adverbs, adverbial clauses and prefabricated word sequences. The only deviation from the standard features of conversation is the unusually high degree of emotionality and the virtual absence of pauses, hesitators and repetitions which eventually makes the dialogues unnaturally coherent.

The second part of the analysis then focused on the behavior of intensifiers. 55 different intensifiers with a total frequency of 1,021 instances were traced in the corpus, out of which *so*, *fucking*, *very* and *really* display the highest frequency of occurrence (Table 4). These findings actually correspond to the results presented in the aforementioned studies of intensification in present-day English. The items *so*, *very* and *really* also ranked as the most frequently used intensifiers in the communities of York (Ito and Tagliamonte

2003: 266), Tyneside (Barnfield and Buchstaller 2010: 273) and London (Pertejo and Martínez 2014: 218), and among the characters in the TV series *Friends* (Tagliamonte and Roberts 2005: 287). None of these studies, with the exception of the research conducted by Pertejo and Martínez, actually pays attention to the intensifier *fucking*, however, it ranks as one of the most frequent intensifiers among the teenagers in COLT (Pertejo and Martínez *ibid*: 230, Stenström, Andersen and Hasund 2002: 142). Moreover, *so* emerged as the most progressive intensifier of all – this may be an indication of its future dominance over the class of intensifiers.

All of the frequently used intensifiers have a strong tendency to occur in sequences (Figures 1-4). This phenomenon seems to be closely related to the overuse of these items as well as the heightened degree of emotionality in the series. In other words, the frequent use of these items contributes to a gradual loss of emphasis, therefore the degree of emphasis has to be increased by other means, such as multiple intensification, in order to keep up with the highly emotional language. The ability to occur in sequences is often restricted. While *fucking* can freely form sequences with the majority of other intensifiers, *really* and *very* tend to occur singly in repetitive sequences. *So* displays both tendencies but has a strong preference for the intensifier *fucking*.

A few more restrictions on the use of intensifiers were found in the corpus. *How* and *so* occur only with predicative adjectives, *much* modifies only comparatives, and *that* commonly occurs in questions and negative sentences.

Furthermore, collocational patterns of the most frequently occurring intensifiers were examined in relation to the process of delexicalization. Three criteria were used to assess an advanced degree of delexicalization – a wide range of collocation with adjectives, preference for predicative adjectives and an equal distribution with positive / negative / neutral adjectives. The results have shown that the exact degree of delexicalization is impossible to indicate as a value on a scale or to be successfully determined in any other way. The findings presented in Table 5 and Figures 5-6 proved to be inconclusive, however, they still show the main tendencies that influence the behavior of intensifiers. *Really* and *so* display a strong preference for a small set of adjectives, which results in the frequent occurrence of the collocations *so sorry*, *so glad*, *so good*, *really good* and *really sorry* in the corpus. In addition to that, *fucking*, *very*, *really* and *pretty* were found to collocate with an usually high rate of attributive adjectives, while *too*, *totally*, *that*, *much*, *completely*, *well* and *super* clearly favor predicative adjectives. *So*, *really* and *totally* are the only intensifiers whose collocational patterns show an almost equal ratio of positive and

negative adjectives. If the three aforementioned criteria were considered, *so*, *fucking*, *really*, *very* and *too* would emerge as intensifiers that are used very frequently but are perhaps less advanced in terms of delexicalization than *pretty*, *totally*, *that*, *much*, *completely*, *well*, *super* and *how*. However, no sweeping generalizations based on the results can be made here except for the observation that all of the intensifiers are fairly advanced in the process of delexicalization.

Moreover, a rather fascinating tendency was discovered in the collocational behavior of the intensifier *so*. A few instances of the negative particle *not* standing between the intensifier *so* and the adjective that is being modified were found in the corpus. None of the other intensifiers shows a similar deviation, however, the same behavior was traced in the *Friends* corpus and subsequently observed to spread into informal American English (Quaglio 2009: 12). The occurrence of this phenomenon in the *Skins* corpus may be therefore an indication of the potential future spreading of this deviation among the native speakers of British English.

As to marginal intensifiers, the so-called *-ly* items, such as *absolutely* and *extremely*, show an unusually low frequency of occurrence. Even though these items dominate over the other marginal intensifiers, they do not seem to be particularly popular with the predominantly teenage characters in the series. The relation between the frequency of occurrence and the age of the speakers could not be determined as the *Skins* corpus lacks this kind of data, however, the low frequency of these items and the high rate of expletives suggest that the use of the *-ly* intensifiers may actually be linked to adult speakers who do not play an important role in the series. *All*, *right*, *real*, *proper*, *filth* and *pure*, on the other hand, seem to be gradually gaining in popularity in the language of the series – similarly as the intensifier *right* among the teenagers in COLT (Stenström, Andersen and Hasund 2002: 142) and *pure* in Tyneside (Barnfield and Buchstaller 2010: 273).

In conclusion, the intensifiers in *Skins* display similar tendencies that are dominant in present-day English. One of the most striking features in the corpus is probably the behavior of the intensifier *so* which appears to signal its future prevalence in the class of intensifiers in British English.

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## 7 Resumé

Cílem bakalářské práce je popsat výskyt a chování adverbálních intenzifikátorů adjektiv v současné neformální mluvené britské angličtině. Pro nedostatek volně dostupných korpusů je materiál čerpán z dialogů populárního televizního seriálu *Skins*. Transkripty uveřejněné fanoušky seriálu jsou použity jako pramen pro vytvoření korpusu, na kterém je provedena analýza intenzifikátorů.

Teoretická část práce stručně vymezuje výskyt intenzifikátorů na základě jejich elementárních syntaktických a sémantických funkcí, jak jsou popsány v mluvnicích angličtiny *Longman Grammar of Spoken and Written English* (Biber a kol. 1999) a *A Comprehensive Grammar of the English Language* (Quirk a kol. 1985). Intenzifikátory jsou adverbia, která slouží především jako prostředky zesílení významu členů, které modifikují (Quirk a kol. *ibid*: 445). S ohledem na sémantické vlastnosti adjektiv lze intenzifikovat pouze stupňovatelná adjektiva, včetně komparativu a superlativu. Výskyt několika intenzifikátorů v řadě je možný pouze v případě, že je asyndetický. Dále lze intenzifikovat i participiální formy *-ing* and *-ed* v případě, že se po syntaktické stránce chovají jako adjektiva (*ibid.*).

Další kapitola teoretické části práce se zabývá základními gramatickými rysy konverzace popsanými Biber a kol. v mluvnici *LGSWE* (1999: 1038-1052). Tato charakteristika slouží rovněž k identifikaci těchto rysů v jazyce seriálu *Skins*, u kterého se očekává, že bude obsahovat většinu rysů typických pro autentickou konverzaci. Jedním z hlavních znaků konverzace je snaha komunikovat co nejeefektivněji, což se projevuje především častým výskytem osobních zájmen, elips, stažených tvarů, deiktických výrazů, adverbii a sloves. Ze samotné povahy konverzace vyplývá i četný výskyt imperativů, otázek a pozdravů. Pokud chtějí mluvčí poukázat na svůj postoj v dané situaci, používají vokativ, citoslovce či intenzifikátory. Konverzace se dále vyznačuje ustálenými výrazy, ke kterým se mluvčí uchylují v případě, že potřebují získat čas a nebo naopak bezprostředně zareagovat. V konverzaci se také často objevují různé hovorové výrazy, které se projevují jak v lexikální, tak i gramatické rovině jazyka (*ibid.*).

Následující kapitola popisuje hlavní tendence, jež mají vliv na chování intenzifikátorů v současné hovorové angličtině. Informace jsou čerpány ze studií provedených autory Barnfield a Buchstaller (2010: 252-287), Ito a Tagliamonte (2003: 257-279), Pertejo a Martínez (2014: 210-237), a Stenström, Andersen a Hasund (2002: 131-163). Studie ukazují, že třídě intenzifikátorů jednoznačně dominují adverbia *really*, *very* a *so*. Rychle rostoucí popularita intenzifikátoru *so* navíc poukazuje na jeho možnou

budoucí převahu mezi ostatními intenzifikátory. Především mladší generace mají tendenci používat tento intenzifikátor stále častěji, zatímco starší generace oproti *so* preferují *very*. Intenzifikátory *really*, *fucking* nebo *bloody* jsou také velmi oblíbené mezi mladšími generacemi. Starší generace naopak preferují různé *-ly* intenzifikátory. Výsledky dále poukazují stále se zvyšující popularitu intenzifikátorů *right*, *well*, *pure* a *canny*.

Teoretická část práce dále popisuje rozdíly mezi autentickou konverzací a televizním dialogem. Podkapitola čerpá především ze studií Bednarek (2011: 54-83), Piazza, Bednarek a Rossi (2011: 1-17), Quaglio (2009), a Tagliamonte a Roberts (2005: 280-300). I přes to, že televizní dialog i autentická konverzace představují dva odlišné registry, porovnání lexikálně-gramatických vzorců ukazuje, že si jsou ve skutečnosti velice podobné. Jediný patrný rozdíl spočívá ve větší emocionalitě a menší vágnosti a narativnosti televizních dialogů.

Závěrem se teoretická část zabývá jazykem seriálu *Friends*, který z velké části odráží tendence, jež ovlivňují chování intenzifikátorů v běžné konverzaci. Tagliamonte a Roberts (2005: 280-300) poukazují na nejčastější výskyt intenzifikátorů *so*, *very* and *really*, a tendenci *so* vytěsnit další intenzifikátory do pozadí.

Metodologická část dále rozvíjí hypotézu bakalářské práce – pro nedostatek volně dostupných korpusů neformální mluvené britské angličtiny bude zkoumán jazyk seriálu *Skins*. Předpokládá se, že bude obsahovat většinu rysů typických pro autentickou konverzaci a bude tak i reflektovat tendence ve výskytu a chování intenzifikátorů. Korpus složený z transcriptů volně dostupných na internetu byl vytvořen pro tyto účely. Obě dvě části analýzy pak byly provedeny v programu AntConc.<sup>19</sup> Pro analýzu gramatických rysů konverzace bylo z korpusu excerpováno 100 nejčastěji se vyskytujících výrazů a jejich funkce popsány. Předložky a členy nebyly zařazeny. Pro samotnou analýzu intenzifikátorů byl vytvořen druhý korpus, který byl označován programem TagAnt.<sup>20</sup> Postupným zadáváním dotazů do programu (Table 1-2) byly identifikovány všechny adverbialní intenzifikátory adjektiv a jejich kolokace. Intenzifikátory byly dále rozříděny do kategorií podle toho, jestli mají tendenci kolokovat spíše s atributivními nebo predikativními adjektivy, a dále adjektivy s pozitivními, negativními nebo neutrálními konotacemi.

Analýza gramatických rysů konverzace v seriálu *Skins* potvrdila předpokládanou hypotézu – jazyk seriálu skutečně odráží tendence, jež převládají v autentické konverzaci.

<sup>19</sup> Anthony, L. (2014). AntConc (Version 3.4.4) [Computer Software]. Tokyo, Japan: Waseda University. Available from <http://www.laurenceanthony.net/>

<sup>20</sup> Anthony, L. (2015). TagAnt (Version 1.2.0) [Computer Software]. Tokyo, Japan: Waseda University. Available from <http://www.laurenceanthony.net/>

Jediný rozdíl mezi těmito dvěma registry byl zpozorován ve zvýšené míře emocionality a absenci pauz a přereků v jazyce seriálu.

Druhá rozsáhlejší část analýzy zkoumá četnost výskytu, stupeň delexicalizace a kolokace intenzifikátorů, které byly v korpusu nalezeny. Z 55 nalezených intenzifikátorů vykazují *so*, *fuckin*g, *very* a *really* nejvyšší frekvenci výskytu, což je zjištění, které víceméně koresponduje s výsledky z předchozích studií. Častý výskyt těchto intenzifikátorů má také z následek, že se tyto intenzifikátory poměrně často řetězí (Figures 1-4). Zbylé části analýzy se pokouší pomocí kolokačního chování intenzifikátorů zjistit, do jaké míry jsou jednotlivé intenzifikátory delexicalizované (Table 5, Figures 5-6). Detailní analýza kolokačních vzorců intenzifikátorů však ukázala, že přesný stupeň delexicalizace nelze nijak vyčíslit ani přesně zjistit. Analýza však poukazuje na několik tendencí, jež ovlivňují výskyt intenzifikátorů v jazyce *Skins*. Bylo zjištěno, že intenzifikátory *so*, *fuckin*g, *really*, *very* a *too* se sice vyskytují nejčastěji, ale jsou pravděpodobně méně delexicalizované než intenzifikátory *pretty*, *totally*, *that*, *much*, *completely*, *well*, *super* a *how*. Mimo jiné byla ještě v korpusu objevena tendence intenzifikátoru *so* tvořit kolokace, kdy mezi modifikovaným adjektivem a intenzifikátorem stojí negativní částice *not*. U marginálně se vyskytujících intenzifikátorů *All*, *right*, *real*, *proper*, *filth* a *pure* pak bylo vypořováno chování, které naznačuje možný budoucí větší výskyt těchto výrazů.

V jazyku *Skins* byly tedy objeveny podobné tendence, jež dominují třídě intenzifikátorů v současné neformální mluvené angličtině. Výsledky dale naznačují, že intenzifikátor *so* bude v budoucnu převládat mezi intenzifikátory v Britské angličtině.