

ABSTRACT

Adverbs *absolutely* and *totally* generally appear as adverbials of degree or as intensifiers, but they can also serve as discourse markers – “emphatic, affirmative response items” (Pertejo and Martínez 2014: 210). The distribution of the two adverbs differs in the individual functions (Gižová 2014) and differences can be expected also in the case of the same function expressed by different adverbs (e.g.: types of phrases intensified by the adverbs).

The thesis explores the functions of adverbs *absolutely* and *totally* in present-day informal spoken British English. 100 examples of each adverb were excerpted from Spoken BNC2014. The thesis will describe syntactic, semantic, pragmatic and sociolinguistic aspects and characteristics of both adverbs in relation to their functions. Quantitative analysis compares relative frequencies of both adverbs in the corpus. Qualitative analysis focuses on syntactic structures in which the adverbs appear, and on their collocations. The thesis also describes semantic preferences of the adverbs, especially in their intensifying function (relations with positive or negative evaluative adjectives, expression of the speaker’s attitude, relation with other intensifiers) and in the function of verb modifiers. The thesis also deals with the distribution and pragmatic functions of adverbs standing alone (e.g.: ‘backchannel’, ‘response’, ‘emphasis of positive or negative answer’ etc.). Sociolinguistic dimensions of the description include age and gender of the speakers.

Key words: adverbs, syntactic roles of adverbs, corpus linguistics, sociolinguistics, collocations