Variation, change, and grammaticalisation in Tyneside teen talk: a sociolinguistic study of intensification and emphasis

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Abstract

This project examines features of teenagers' spoken discourse in Tyneside (North East of England), using data from the *Diachronic Electronic Corpus of Tyneside English* (DECTE) (Corrigan et al. 2012a) and new sociolinguistic interviews with younger speakers (aged 12-18).

The study provides novel insights into two areas: (i) intensifiers, with a particular focus on pre-adjectival boosters (*really, so, very*, *proper*, *dead*, as well as other, less frequent variants); and (ii) emphasisers, including epistemic stance adverbs (*actually*, *really*, *definitely*, and *obviously*), style stance adverbs (*literally*, *genuinely*, *honestly*), intensifiers in non-pre-adjectival positions (*really*, *proper*, *absolutely*, *completely*, and *totally*), and other emphatic devices (clause-final *like* and right dislocation). The analysis of boosters uses quantitative methods and multivariate analysis, whereas emphasisers are studied qualitatively in terms of their frequency, position, and functions.

The project addresses the following research questions:

1. What is novel in the Tyneside teenagers' use of intensifiers and emphasisers in comparison with speakers analysed in previous studies and other locales?
2. What evidence, if any, is there of synchronic age-grading patterns during the period of adolescence —as defined in this project— or for diachronic language change with respect to previous studies in the same region?
3. What can the patterns in Tyneside teen talk tell us about the grammaticalisation patterns of intensifiers and emphasisers in the region?
4. What can the study of the spoken discourse of Tyneside teenagers reveal about teenage language in general?

Results generally concur with what has been found in teenage cohorts in London and studies of Scottish, American, and Canadian English varieties: *really* and *so* are the favourite boosters, *really* is also the most common emphasiser, and other emphasisers like *definitely*, *obviously*, and *literally* are gaining in frequency thanks to their new delexicalised discourse-pragmatic functions. Features that index local identity, such as *proper*, *canny*, clause-final *like*, and right dislocation, are rarer, as found in studies of dialect levelling, and only frequently used by male speakers, as attested in previous work on northern Englishes.

Findings suggest both age-grading and diachronic change. The range of boosting and emphatic resources is wider in the older cohort, with younger speakers having an almost exclusive predilection for *really*. On the other hand, change in Tyneside English is attested by the decline of *very*, *dead*, and clause-final *like*, and the rise of *really*, *so*, *proper*, *definitely*, *obviously*, and *literally*. The features on the rise also evidence advanced grammaticalisation. Girls generally lead in these changes. The teenagers' use of boosters and emphasisers suggests a conversational style that is highly expressive and cooperative. Also, the particular patterns of their discourse can be seen not only to reflect but also to drive processes of language change and grammaticalisation. These findings should help emphasise the uniqueness and value of teen talk more

generally, which can be used to challenge aspects of linguistic discrimination aimed at this particular social group amongst wider publics.

Resumen

Este proyecto examina rasgos del discurso oral de los adolescentes de Tyneside (noreste de Inglaterra), usando datos del *Diachronic Electronic Corpus of Tyneside English* (DECTE) (Corrigan et al. 2012a) junto a nuevas entrevistas sociolingüísticas con participantes más jóvenes (entre 12 y 18 años).

El estudio profundiza en dos áreas: (i) intensificadores, en particular el grupo de potenciadores de adjetivos (*really*, *so*, *very*, *proper*, *dead*, y otras variantes menos frecuentes); y (ii) enfatizadores: adverbios modales epistémicos (*actually*, *really*, *definitely*, y *obviously*), adverbios modales de estilo (*literally*, *genuinely*, *honestly*), intensificadores de clases de palabras distintas a adjetivos (*really*, *proper*, *absolutely*, *completely*, y *totally*), y otros medios de énfasis (*like* en posición final y dislocación final). El estudio de los potenciadores sigue métodos cuantitativos y se basa en un análisis estadístico multivariado, mientras que los enfatizadores se estudian cualitativamente respecto a su frecuencia, posición y funciones.

El proyecto responde las siguientes cuestiones:

1. ¿Qué es innovador en el uso que los adolescentes de Tyneside hacen de los intensificadores y enfatizadores en comparación con los hablantes de estudios previos y otras regiones?
2. ¿Qué evidencia hay de patrones de cambio lingüístico sincrónico durante el período de la adolescencia —tal y como se define en este proyecto— o de cambio diacrónico en la región?
3. ¿Qué relevancia tiene el análisis del habla de los adolescentes de Tyneside en el estudio de la gramaticalización de intensificadores y enfatizadores?
4. ¿Qué revela el estudio del discurso oral de los adolescentes de Tyneside sobre el lenguaje adolescente en general?

A grandes rasgos, los resultados de este estudio coinciden con los de otros grupos de adolescentes en otras variedades del inglés: *really* y *so* son los potenciadores más frecuentes, *really* es también el enfatizador más común, y otros enfatizadores como *definitely*, *obviously* y *literally* están ganando frecuencia gracias al desarrollo de nuevas funciones discurso-pragmáticas. Los rasgos lingüísticos unidos a la identidad local, como *proper*, *canny*, *like* final y dislocación final, son muy poco frecuentes, y solo los chicos los usan con cierta frecuencia. Estos resultados concuerdan con estudios previos sobre la nivelación de dialectos y las variedades de inglés del norte de Inglaterra.

Los resultados sugieren tanto tendencias exclusivas de la edad como cambio diacrónico. El repertorio de recursos para potenciar y enfatizar es más amplio en los grupos mayores, y los hablantes más jóvenes tienen una marcada predilección por *really*. Por otro lado, el inglés de Tyneside parece estar cambiando, dado el declive de *very*, *dead*, y *like* final, y el incremento en el uso de *really*, *so*, *proper*, *definitely*, *obviously* y *literally*. Los elementos en auge también presentan un estado avanzado de gramaticalización. Por lo general, las chicas lideran estos cambios. El uso que los adolescentes hacen de los potenciadores y enfatizadores sugiere un estilo conversacional expresivo y cooperativo. Las tendencias lingüísticas de su discurso no solo reflejan, sino que impulsan procesos de cambio lingüístico y gramaticalización. Estas

conclusiones ayudan a poner en valor las características del lenguaje adolescente, y así contrarrestar casos de discriminación lingüística contra este grupo de hablantes.

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Lo siento, traducir la tesis completa era ya mucho pedir.

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List of acronyms and abbreviations

BNC	*British National Corpus*
CGEL	*A Comprehensive Grammar of the English Language* (Quirk et al. 1985)
COHA	*Corpus of Historical American English*
COLAm	*Corpus Oral de Lenguaje Adolescente de Madrid*
COLT	*Bergen Corpus of London Teenage Language*
DECTE	*Diachronic Electronic Corpus of Tyneside English*
EDD	*English Dialect Dictionary*
LGSWE	*Longman Grammar of Spoken and Written English* (Biber et al. 1999)
LIC	*Linguistic Innovators Corpus*
LP	Left periphery
MEC	*Middle English Compendium*
MLE	Multicultural London English
MLEC	*Multicultural London English Corpus*
MUBE	Multicultural Urban British English
NECTE	*Newcastle Electronic Corpus of Tyneside English*
NECTE2	*Newcastle Electronic Corpus of Tyneside English 2* (Monitor corpus)
OED	*Oxford English Dictionary*
PVC	*Phonological Variation and Change*
RD	Right dislocation
RP	Right periphery
S-A	Stand-alone
SCoSE	*Saarbrücken Corpus of Spoken English*
TLS	*Tyneside Linguistic Survey*
TTC	*Toronto Teen Corpus*
TyTeC	*Tyneside Teenagers Corpus*
UrBEn-ID	*Urban British English and Identity*

Chapter 1
Introduction

This study explores the spoken discourse of Tyneside teenagers in the second decade of the 21st century. It relies partly on data from the *Diachronic Electronic Corpus of Tyneside English* (DECTE, Corrigan et al. 2012a), a database of interviews with Tynesiders and residents of other parts of the North East of England (mostly aged 18 and above) dating back to the 1970s. Data also comes from original recent sociolinguistic interviews with speakers aged 12 to 18, collected between 2018 and 2019. This second set of interviews (the *Tyneside Teenagers Corpus*, TyTeC) will be incorporated into DECTE after the project is completed, adding a new dimension to the corpus.

The focus of the study is on two different discourse-pragmatic features: intensifiers (specifically boosters) and emphasisers. Both intensifiers and emphasisers are conceptualised as discourse-pragmatic markers here, given their relevance not only in discourse management but most importantly in performing subjective and interpersonal functions in conversation (see Chapter 5 for a detailed explanation). They are both defined on a functional basis and are connected by a shared role as linguistic tools for expressivity. The delimitation of each variable is further expanded upon in Section 5.4. In essence, the definitions are as given below.

The definition of boosters in this study includes 'every option speakers have at their disposition to reinforce or boost the property denoted by the head they modify' (Rickford et al. 2007: 6–7). More specifically, the set of options here is restricted to adverbs in pre-modification position at the phrasal level. The variants found in the corpus are, in alphabetical order, *dead, incredibly*, *proper*, *pure*, *raw*, *real*, *really*, *ridiculously*, *right*, *so*, *stupidly*, *super*, *very*, *well*, and swearwords such as *fucking*.

Emphasisers are defined as discourse-pragmatic markers that 'have a reinforcing effect on the truth value of the clause or part of the clause to which they apply' (Quirk et al. 1985: 583) and 'add to the force (as distinct from the degree)' of the affected constituent (Quirk et al. 1985: 447). The forms studied in this thesis are restricted to stance adverbs and intensifiers. The single-adverb emphasisers found in this corpus are *absolutely*, *actually*, *completely*, *definitely*, *genuinely*, *honestly*, *literally*, *obviously*, *proper*, *really*, *totally*, and pre-modifying swearwords. Given their potential to express emphasis, the analysis also looks at the more localised phenomena of clause-final *like* and right dislocation of pronoun tags.

The analysis of boosters uses mainly quantitative methods and multivariate analysis, whereas emphasisers are primarily studied qualitatively in terms of their frequency, position, and functions. The analysis of these features provides answers to the following four research questions:

1. What is novel in the Tyneside teenagers' use of intensifiers and emphasisers in comparison with speakers analysed in previous studies and other locales?
2. What evidence, if any, is there of synchronic age-grading patterns during the period of adolescence —as defined in this project— or for diachronic language change with respect to previous studies in the same region?
3. What can the patterns in Tyneside teen talk tell us about the grammaticalisation patterns of intensifiers and emphasisers in the region?
4. What can the study of the spoken discourse of Tyneside teenagers reveal about teenage language in general?

Findings generally concur with what has been found in previous studies of teen talk across the English-speaking world. Although the use of regional features such as *proper, canny,* clause-final *like*, and right dislocation sets this cohort of teenagers apart from those in other regions, these features are rare in the sample, which accords with previous findings of dialect levelling and the development of supra-local forms. The ways in which the teenagers use boosters and emphasisers demonstrate patterns of language change and grammaticalisation that generally follow trends forecast by previous researchers. The participants' discourse strategies align with previous claims about teenage conversation: they are highly expressive, cooperative, and focused on social interaction. In contrast with other studies, results here support the idea of teenagers being linguistically polite, open to self-repair, and not particularly categorical in their claims. In terms of gender patterns, the results are generally in line with previously-identified trends: girls tend to lead change and grammaticalisation, boys are the more frequent users of local features, and there is little gender difference across conversational styles. The project serves to further our understanding of Tyneside English, linguistic mechanisms of variation and change, and the discourse-pragmatics of teen talk. It also counters aspects of linguistic discrimination amongst wider publics by highlighting the versatility and usefulness of discourse-pragmatic markers, the dynamism and innovation in teenagers' discourse, and the uniqueness of local identities and language.

The remainder of this chapter is structured as follows: Section 1.1 sets the scene for the study, giving a brief overview of Tyneside and previous linguistic work looking at the variety of English in the area; Section 1.2 highlights the originality of the project and its contribution to research; and finally, Section 1.3 explains the structure of the thesis.

1.1. Setting the scene: Tyneside and Tyneside English

Tyneside is the most northerly conurbation of England and stretches 'east and south of Newcastle along the valley of the River Tyne as far as the North Sea' (Watt and Allen 2003: 267), covering the administrative boroughs of Newcastle-upon-Tyne, Gateshead, North Tyneside, and South Tyneside and —in addition to Newcastle and Gateshead— incorporates towns such as Jarrow, North Shields, South Shields, Whitley Bay, and Tynemouth. The area is renowned for its rich history, marked regional identity, and language.

Figure 1. Map of the North East, including the Tyneside boroughs of Newcastle, Gateshead, North Tyneside and South Tyneside

Source: *Talk of the Toon* (Corrigan et al. 2012b)

Multiple historical accounts of Tyneside highlight the relevance of the region in British history and the various challenges, changes and hardships that Tynesiders have experienced and which have helped to forge a strong sense of local identity. The brief historic account presented here is based on a wide range of sources (Beal 2017; Burnett and MacRaild 2019; Ehland 2007;

Green and Pollard 2007; López-Pélaez Casellas 2006; Moffat and Rosie 2006; Wales 2006; Wrightson 2019 [2007]), as well as the websites of the British Library (Robinson 2019) and *The Talk of the Toon*, which is the interactive, public-facing website of the DECTE project (Corrigan et al. 2012b).

The development of communities along the Tyne during the Roman period is well recorded, and following the end of Roman occupation, Tyneside became part of the powerful Anglo-Saxon kingdom of Northumbria between the 5th and 10th centuries. The region resisted Norman invasion for longer than other parts of Britain, and suffered from sporadic conflict between the English and Scots throughout the Middle Ages. These, among other factors, meant that from the Middles Ages, the North was portrayed as alien, barbaric, and different from the rest of England (Wales 2006: 65, 115, 123; Wrightson 2019: 202–07). From the 17th to the 19th century, Tyneside and the wider regional economy boomed due to mining in the Great Northern Coalfield and its pivotal role in the Industrial Revolution (Beal 2017: 19; Wales 2006: 118; Wrightson 2019: 192–202). The 19th century witnessed the arrival of Irish and Scottish immigrants, who sought jobs in the growing industrial cities of northern England (Beal and Corrigan 2009; Burnett and MacRaild 2019; Wales 2006: 119). They had a cultural and linguistic influence in the region's identity that is still felt today. In the post war period, traditional industries declined and the region saw rising levels of unemployment and poverty. Tyneside recovered gradually from the late 1990s, with Newcastle benefitting from the regeneration of its historic city centre and quayside. Newcastle has retained its place as the putative capital of the North East and is renowned for its vibrant nightlife, one of the main pillars of its modern economy. This has also cultivated the less positive stereotypes of 'hyper-sexualised', 'hard-drinking' and 'flashy dressing' Geordies[1] — perpetuated by the infamous reality TV show *Geordie Shore* (Pearce 2015b: 83). Teenagers in this study are very much aware of these associations, as exemplified in (1), (2), and (3) below.

(1) **Interviewer**: So what do you think Geordie Shore ha- has it had a positive influence on Newcastle or what do you think?
Charlotte: Nah. No, it just makes us look like worse than we actually are, it's like… especially like drinking like and half of them are not even Geordies (Ben03f2).[2]

[1] 'Geordie' is the nickname (ethnonym) given to people from Newcastle and by extension, the variety of English they speak (Pearce 2015b). The geographical boundaries of the term are unclear and controversial, as people from other parts of Tyneside might identify as Geordies too, while people from other parts of the North East could be offended by being called Geordies (Pearce 2015b: 76–77). The term 'Geordie' remains a strong identity marker in Tyneside and particularly the city of Newcastle (Pearce 2015b: 83).

[2] Names have been pseudonymised in examples from the transcripts, as explained in Section 5.2. In quotes with only one speaker, the final brackets include age, sex, and code of the speaker. In quotes with more than one speaker, the bracketed code refers to the interview as a whole.

(2) I think if like someone knows that you're Geordie, the first thing they're gonna think of is like you're like everyone off Geordie Shore [**Interviewer**: Tsk okay]. And that's quite disgusting (laughs). […] Well, now obviously peopl- more people come here for a night out [**Interviewer**: Mmm], but I think it kind of does give you a bad reputation coz of the way they act (**Ellie**, F, 14, Ccc03f1_B).

(3) **Rebecca**: It's mainly like people think it's all drunk people and just stupid people, that's what they think of it, really.
Erin: (laughs) Yeah. Just the things they do in Geordie Shore is just not really what actually happens […] I think when you see like if you were talking to someone who's not from here and they see that you're from Newcastle I think they'd say like 'oh is that where Geordie Shore is from?' I think that's how most people recognise it (Ben01f2).

The North East has diversified over time and the regions of Tyneside, Wearside, and Teesside have rich, distinct identities (Beal et al. 2012; Corrigan et al. 2012b; Watt and Llamas 2017). This has translated into intense local pride, as well as rivalry between the region's towns and cities, especially noticeable in football. In addition to the industrial past, a strong identity marker of the Tyneside region is Newcastle United Football Club and its fandom, the steadfast Toon Army. Both the football rivalry with neighbouring Sunderland and the pride in the local football team are recurrent themes in the interviews collected for this project (e.g. (4), (5), and (6)).

(4) **Interviewer**: What are your thoughts about Sunderland as a city or as the people from there or?
Megan: Well, now I know they're scruffy.
Caroline: Yeah, well, I was at like this like summer school […] and there was like people there from like Sunderland and they were nice people (Ccc04f1).

(5) [Charlotte has recounted a story where a friend of her brother got beaten up in Sunderland for having a Geordie accent] He was just talking like normally and like obviously he talks like Geordie and like the way they talk is like different and obviously. Like I think they clicked on that he wasn't like from here (unclear), just jumped him (**Charlotte**, F, 18, Ben03f2).

(6) **Abbie**: Toon Army for life (laughs).
Interviewer: Toon Army.
Sarah: Don't know shit about football.
A: I don't even watch football but Toon Army for life.
I: That's like, yeah, I was talking to a friend from er from my course and I was like 'it's like ingrained into us' but (unclear).
A: Magpies, you have to support it.
I: You don't even have to watch football. If you're from Newcastle, you support the Toon (2017_SEL2091_078) [NB: The interviewer in this conversation is also from Newcastle].

Tyneside English

Language constitutes one of the key aspects of Tyneside identity (see e.g. Beal 2004c, 2009, 2017; Beal et al. 2012; Bueno-Amaro 2015; Corrigan et al. 2012b; Mearns 2015; Pearce 2017). Tynesiders have a distinctive accent, vocabulary, and set of morphosyntactic and discourse-pragmatic features.

In comparison with other dialects in the north of England, Tyneside English had lesser influence from the Scandinavians and Normans, whose impact was greater from Yorkshire southwards, and more influence from Scottish and Irish English (Beal and Corrigan 2009; Collins and Mees 2003: 153; Corrigan et al. 2012b; Moffat and Rosie 2006: 383; Robinson 2019; Wales 2006: 54–57). Although, some traditional Tyneside words do have their roots in Scandinavian languages, like *hyem* ('home') and *nay* ('no') (Burbano-Elizondo 2001; Corrigan et al. 2012b; McCrum et al. 1986: 71, cited in Wales 2006: 55).

With regards to phonetics and phonology, Tyneside English shares many features with other northern varieties. In the case of vowels, these pan-northern similarities are partly due to the fact that the Great Vowel Shift in the Middle English period developed differently in the north (see Prichard 2014: 88). The following is a list of traditional features of Tyneside vowels, which include both general northern and more localised traits (Beal 2004b: 121–26; Collins and Mees 2003: 154; Cruttenden 2001: 89; McArthur 2002: 76; Mearns 2015: 167–69; Watt and Allen 2003: 268–69).

- [uː] vowel in the MOUTH [aʊ] lexical set (e.g. *about/aboot*, *town/toon*, *down/doon*)
- Lack of the FOOT-STRUT split (e.g. *book* and *buck* are homophones, [bʊk])
- [iː] vowel in the PRICE [ai] set (e.g. *night/neet, all right/alreet*)
- Monophthongs [eː] and [ɔː] in FACE [ei] and GOAT [əu] (e.g. *race* [reːs], *away* [əˈweː], *snow* [snɔː], *so* [sɔː])[3]
- [ɐ] in final position or in NEAR [ia] and CURE [ua] (e.g. *better* [ˈbeʔɐ], *beer* [ˈbiɐ], and *sure* [ʃuɐ])

Regarding consonants, Tyneside English is non-rhotic and, in contrast with most other urban dialects, it traditionally does not feature H-dropping at the beginning of words (Beal 2004b: 127–29; Collins and Mees 2003: 154; McArthur 2002: 75; Mearns 2015: 167–69; Watt and Allen 2003: 268). Another traditional Tyneside consonant feature is the glottalisation of medial voiceless plosives, particularly [t] and [k] (e.g. in *butter* and *exactly*) (Beal 2004b: 128; Collins and Mees 2003: 146, 153). Tyneside English also has a particular intonation pattern of rise-plateau in statements that can sound tentative or questioning to speakers of other dialects (Beal 2004b: 130; Collins and Mees 2003: 154; McArthur 2002: 76; Wales 2006: 201–02).

[3] Centring dipthongs [ɪə] and [ʊə] are also used for the FACE and GOAT sets in Tyneside English, yet they appear to be more socially constrained to working-class males in the first case, and middle-class males and female speakers in the second case (Beal 2004b: 123; Watt 1998; Watt and Milroy 1999).

Some of these pronunciation traits have resulted in local spellings, particularly in the cases of the [u:] MOUTH variant, such as *toon* (as in Toon Army) and *broon* (as in Newcastle Broon Ale), and [i:] in PRICE, such as *neet* and *alreet*. Tyneside English has a rich dialectal vocabulary, which includes remnants of Old English as well as lexis from Scottish and Irish English. Examples include *bairn* ('child'), *bonny* ('fine, good-looking'), *gan* ('go'), *gob* ('mouth'), *larn* ('to teach'), and *polis* ('police') (McArthur 2002: 76; Mearns 2015: 176; Moffat and Rosie 2006: 383; Robinson 2019). *Canny* appears to be common across Tyneside and Scottish English, yet the meanings are different, with Tyneside *canny* also having a function of degree modification (*English Dialect Dictionary* 1898-1905 —EDD henceforth; *Oxford English Dictionary* 2018 —OED henceforth; Childs 2016; Griffiths 2004; Pearce 2013; see more on *canny* in §3.1.3 and Chapter 6). The terms *lads* and *lasses* for 'boys/men' and 'girls/women' are particularly salient in Tyneside English, for example featuring in local songs like *The Blaydon Races* (Beal and Burbano-Elizondo 2012).

The Tyneside/Geordie lexicon is extensively commodified in souvenir shops,[4] and presented in often light-hearted collections such as *Larn Yersel' Geordie* (Dobson 1986), *Todd's Geordie Words and Phrases. An Aid to Communication on Tyneside and Thereabouts* (Todd 1987), and *Aal Aboot Geordie* (Simpson 2012). However, many of these local terms appear to be declining in frequency in the speech of younger Tynesiders (Mearns 2015: 176), as attested by their scarcity in this project's interviews and by specific comments that highlight the generational gap in local language (e.g. (7) and (8) below). In a recent workshop with Tyneside adolescents (YMCA Walker, September 2018), I saw for myself how most of them were unfamiliar with dialectal words like *netty* ('toilet') or *clarty* ('muddy'). These are all signs of the dialect levelling situation extensively discussed in the literature (see e.g. Britain 2010; Kerswill 2003, and discussion in §2.3).

(7) Me [=my] granda that lives like local, he speaks more Geordie than me (laughs) (**Declan**, M, 12, Ccc05m1_A).

(8) [In comparison with his dad] I don't speak a lot of Geordie, really (**Tristan**, M, 17, Sc02m2_B).

Tyneside English also has some characteristic features at the morpho-syntactic level, most of which are pan-northern or common across Tyneside, Scottish and Irish English. Examples of their use in the interviews collected for the present project can be found in the discussion of local language use by adolescents in Section 2.2. Some of these features are:

[4] Commodification refers to the exploitation of culture as material goods, e.g. in the form of merchandise with local sayings or other dialectal features (Beal 2009, 2017: 35)

- A different paradigm of some irregular verbs, where there is one same form for the past tense and past participle (e.g. *break-broke-broke, do-done-done*, *take-took-took*) (Beal 2004a: 115–16)
- A distinctive set of pronouns (see Table 1) (Beal 2004a: 118–19; McArthur 2002: 76; Mearns 2015: 173)

Table 1. Pronoun forms particular to Tyneside English

Pronouns	Tyneside forms
1st person singular subject	*Ah / Aa*
1st person singular object	*us*
1st person singular possessive	*me*
1st person plural object	*we/wuh*
1st person plural possessive	*wor*
2nd person singular subject/object	*ye*
2nd person singular possessive	*yer*
2nd person plural subject	*youse*
3rd person reflexives	*hisself, theirselves*
Demonstrative	*them*

- The use of the forms *divn't* and *cannae* for *don't* and *can't* (McArthur 2002: 76; Mearns 2015: 173; Pearce 2012: 14; Rowe 2007)
- Patterns of subject-verb agreement typical of the Northern Subject Rule, by which the verb takes *-s* after any noun or noun phrase subject (Beal 2004a: 121–22; Beal and Corrigan 2000; Buchstaller et al. 2013)
- The almost categorical use of existential constructions in singular form (e.g. *there is/was/has been*) (Beal 2004a: 122; Beal and Corrigan 2000)
- The acceptance of double modals (e.g. *He wouldn't could've worked*) (Beal 2004a: 127; Corrigan 2006)
- The use of *must* for conclusions rather than obligations (Beal 2004a: 126–27; Mearns 2015: 175; Trousdale 2003)
- Preference for auxiliary contraction in negative constructions (e.g. *I'll not* versus *I won't*) (Beal 2004a: 123; Mearns 2015: 175)

Finally, there are particularities of Tyneside English at the level of discourse-pragmatics. The interjections *howay* 'come on' and *why aye* 'yes, of course' are particularly distinctive of Tyneside English (Mearns 2015: 177; Simpson 2012: 32, 55; see also Snell 2017 about *howay* in Teesside). Indeed, *Howay the lads!* is the chant for Newcastle United fans, and the expression *Why aye, man* features extensively in Geordie merchandise (see e.g. the Geordie Gifts website, https://geordiegifts.co.uk). Typical Tyneside vocatives include *love*, also present in other northern varieties, *pet,* and *man* (Beal et al. 2012: 94–95; Luckmann de López 2013; Mearns 2015: 177). According to this study's sample, these are rare in the current speech of Tyneside youngsters: there are very few tokens of *howay* (e.g. (9) and (10)), *why aye, man* is completely absent and commented on as stereotypical (see (11)), and out of the vocatives mentioned above, only *man* occurs in the sample (e.g. (12) and (13)).

(9) *Howay*, they were in like a terraced house as well, it was like packed (**Callum**, M, 19, 2017_SEL2091_043_B).

(10) [Speaking about the last time his mum told him off] She was just saying 'come on get your clothes on, *howay*, don't be like this', stuff like that (**Bryan**, M, 12, Ccc01m1_A).

(11) Other people think of the phrase 'why aye man' but nobody says that, like I've never heard anyone say that (**Ellie**, F, 14, Ccc03f1_B).

(12) [Talking about buses to go to Newcastle United away matches]
Tim: Have you seen the buses? The buses are shaking with people on them.
Tristan: Oh, it's quality, *man* (Sc02m2).

(13) We went like 'Here, *man*, will you shut up?' and she like she had this one (unclear) hate on us (**Charlotte**, F, 18, Ben03f2_B).

Previous research has reported intensification and emphatic patterns particular to Tyneside: *geet* and *canny* as intensifiers (Barnfield and Buchstaller 2010: 272; Beal et al. 2012: 91–92; Childs 2016; Pearce 2011, 2013), and clause-final *like* and right dislocation as emphatic strategies (Bartlett 2013; Beal et al. 2012: 93–94). These features are explored in greater detail in Chapter 3. The interviews collected for this project highlight some other notable examples, not previously discussed in the literature. For example, *proper* as a booster appears to correlate with users that display stronger local identities. Its distribution in the sample, together with the commodification of the form, indicate its local indexicality (see §3.1.3, and Chapter 6).

Regarding emphatic resources, the use of clause-final *like* in Tyneside has its origins in the Hiberno-English of 19th-century Irish migrants (see e.g. Corrigan 2010, 2015; Corrigan and Diskin 2019; Kallen 2006; Luckmann 2009; Schweinberger 2012, *inter alia*), while right dislocation is saliently present in Scotland and other parts of the north of England (Cheshire 2005; Durham

2011; Macaulay 1988, 2005; Moore 2003; Moore and Snell 2011; Snell 2008, 2018). In this project's data, they are both fairly infrequent and more commonly found in male speech.

Tyneside English is loaded with social meaning and stereotypes, both positive and negative. Beal (2017: 35–36) reflects on the evolution of the popular associations and enregisterment of Tyneside and Yorkshire dialects from the 17th century up to today:[5] from 'rough and outlandish', or working-class and Labour Party supporters, to images of the Geordie miner and Yorkshire weaver, and ideas of 'honesty, resilience and a sense of humour in the face of adversity'. In analysing the portrayal of Northern Englishes in literature and media, Schubert (2007: 87) notes that '[s]tereotypes can vary between the alien and rude Northerner on the one hand and the sympathetic and amiable one on the other' (see also Wales 2006: 166–67). Recently, northern dialects have been commodified as a token of local pride (Beal 2009, 2017: 35). The increasing acceptance of local varieties of speech in the media has given space in national television to celebrities with a marked use of the variety. In more recent times, some examples include TV hosts Ant and Dec, comedians Sarah Millican and Chris Ramsey, singers Cheryl and Little Mix members Jade Thirlwall and Perrie Edwards, and the cast of the TV show *Geordie Shore* (Bueno-Amaro 2015: 55).

In a previous project, I surveyed Tynesiders, British people from other parts of the UK, and non-British people about their views on Tyneside speech and the stereotypes associated with Geordies (Bueno-Amaro 2015). Positive connotations like 'friendly', 'funny' and 'witty' were the most common (Bueno-Amaro 2015: 46), yet results from Tynesiders' responses also showed they still felt discriminated against because of their accent at work and in the media (Bueno-Amaro 2015: 47, 49).[6] These ideas are reflected in the comments teenagers make in the sample analysed in the current project (see e.g. (14), (15), and (16)). Nonetheless, examples like (17) and others in Section 2.2 exemplify Snell's (2018: 686) idea that younger speakers recognise and exploit the value of stigmatised local features.

(14) **Tim**: I feel like Geordies don't have a great reputation.
Tristan: Geordies, I I… it's a funny one coz they love the accent, some of them.
Tim: Yeah, but like we've got, we've got Cheryl Cole and stuff, but then we've got like Geordie Shore, which probably doesn't give us a good reputation.

[5] Enregisterment is the process by which particular linguistic forms become part of the imagery of a local identity by virtue of being highlighted in dialect dictionaries and used by writers and entertainers (Beal 2009: 140).

[6] The negative stereotypes still attached to Tyneside speech are illustrated across entries in the blog of *The Accentism Project*, aimed at denouncing linguistic discrimination. For example, blogger Rob comments how he was mocked as an English teacher in Cumbria. His subject mentor commented 'Geordies don't do poetry, do they?' and some of the parents laughed at the irony of 'Geordies teaching English' (Rob 2020, at http://accentism.org/2020/10/07/art/).

Tristan: Yeah, the association with the Geordies is just like dumb big bumbling idiots, isn't it? (Sc02m1)

(15) [Jon and Declan are discussing whether Geordie is bad English]
Declan: I wouldn't say bad English, but it's like, it's not like it's not it's not good English but I wouldn't say bad English, it's just like… Well, I obviously wouldn't say that coz like that's how I speak. It's like… it's how I've been brought up but like for s- I think many people probably do think it is but personally I don't think it's…
Jon: I think it's just a matter of opinion, really (Ccc05m1).

(16) **Rebecca**: I think the same, like, I don't know, boys like put more of a Geordie accent on [**Erin**: Yeah] (laughs) I don't know why.
Erin: To sound more rough (laughs) [**Rebecca**: Yeah] (Ben01f2).

(17) **Megan**: I've got family who lives in Canada and they always say like they say I'm the most Geordie out of the whole family [**I**: Right] and I don't take offence to it […]. It doesn't really bother us [=me] like it doesn't bother them either, they love the way I speak.
Interviewer: Do *you* love the way you speak?
M: Well, yeah, that's where I'm from [**I**: Okay]. It's the only part of the place I can carry with us [=me], that I can control (Ccc04f1).

To a great extent, the compilation of the *Diachronic Electronic Corpus of Tyneside English* (DECTE, Corrigan et al. 2012a) is responsible for the advancement of sociolinguistic research on Tyneside (see §5.1 for a detailed description of the corpus).

The corpus has enabled research in a wide variety of areas of linguistics (e.g. Allen et al. 2007; Beal 2004a, 2004b; Beal et al. 2012; Beal and Corrigan 2011; Buchstaller and Corrigan 2011; Corrigan et al. 2012b; Mearns 2011, 2015). Works by Beal and Corrigan in particular focus on syntactic variables, such as modal verbs (Corrigan 2006), relativisation (Beal and Corrigan 2002, 2005, 2007), and negation (Beal and Corrigan 2005; see also Childs 2017a, 2017b). Other syntactic studies on DECTE include Rowe's (2007) exploration of *div* and *tiv*, Buchstaller's (2013) study of the Northern Subject Rule in the region, and Møller Jensen's (2013) socio-cognitive study of saliency of a range of syntactic features. The corpus has also been extensively mined to study the sociolinguistic distribution of Tyneside features at the levels of phonetics and phonology (Foulkes et al. 1999; Maguire 2007; Moisl and Maguire 2008; Pellowe et al. 1972; Watt 1998, 2000, 2002). More recently, Amand (2019) has focused on the FACE, GOAT, PRICE and MOUTH vowels in DECTE data, and Warburton (2021) has explored the GOAT-THOUGHT vowel merger from a combined production-perception perspective.

Discourse-pragmatic research using DECTE data is more limited: Buchstaller analysed quotatives (Buchstaller 2011, 2013) and intensifiers (Barnfield and Buchstaller 2010), Childs (2016) looked at the sociolinguistic distribution of *canny*, and Bartlett's (2013) work on Tyneside clause-final *like* is the only one focused on this feature in the region up to now. Although not directly

related to DECTE, Pearce's extensive work on perceptual dialectology and on different aspects of folk language (2011, 2012, 2013, 2015a, 2015b, 2017) has also furthered understanding of the variety and its speakers.

This project contributes to the wealth of DECTE-related research by pioneering the study of teen talk in the region, and contributing a new set of recent sociolinguistic interviews.

1.2. Originality and justification

There are three ways in which this project makes an original contribution to research: (i) it focuses specifically on discourse-pragmatics in Tyneside teen talk, (ii) it follows a methodology that provides a better understanding of the variables of intensification and emphasis, and (iii) the results provide evidence to challenge linguistic discrimination against teen talk, certain discourse-pragmatic markers, and local language.

This project fills the gap amongst discourse-pragmatic variation and change, the study of Tyneside English, and research on teen talk. It constitutes the second comprehensive study on intensifiers and clause-final *like* in the region (after Barnfield and Buchstaller 2010 and Bartlett 2013, respectively), and is the first one to consider right dislocation and emphasisers in general. DECTE data contains very few speech samples from speakers below the age of 18, preventing research on Tyneside teenage speech in that age range. Beal collected data in 1975 that was only partly exploited in her study of vicarious narratives (Beal 1990), Crinson studied formal styles of young speakers in North Tyneside (Crinson 1997), and other studies of teenage language in the surrounding area fall outside Tyneside (e.g. Burbano-Elizondo 2001, 2008, in Sunderland; and Roloff-El Kahli 1999 in Ponteland, Northumberland). The *Tyneside Teenagers Corpus* (TyTeC) collected for this project will form part of DECTE, opening new avenues of research in Tyneside English.

Discourse-pragmatics has been the focus of a great part of teen talk research across various varieties of English (see Chapter 2), mining data for example from London boroughs (e.g. Cheshire 2007; Cheshire et al. 2008; Kerswill et al. 2007; Núñez-Pertejo and Palacios-Martínez 2018; Stenström 2014), Middlesbrough (e.g. Snell 2008), Manchester and the region (e.g. Drummond 2018b; Moore 2003), Glasgow (e.g. Macaulay 2005, 2006), Toronto (e.g. Tagliamonte 2005, 2016; Tagliamonte and D'Arcy 2004), and different locales in the United States (e.g. Bucholtz et al. 2007; Eckert 2004, 2016). These studies tend to compare young and adult data but this project also compares across age groups (similar to Tagliamonte 2005).

In summary, the three areas addressed by this study have been previously researched in different pairings (Tyneside discourse, Tyneside teenagers, teenage discourse), but this is the first

project that specifically explores discourse-pragmatic variation and change in Tyneside teenagers and, therefore, contributes to the three fields simultaneously.

The originality of this thesis also lies in the linguistic features under study. Although intensifiers have been extensively researched across different demographics, time periods, varieties and languages (see §3.1), this project is original in at least two ways. First, it focuses on boosters, whereas previous work has tended to amalgamate them with maximisers. Second, the methodology allows for the comparison between the different approaches taken in previous work, particularly regarding the inclusion or exclusion of unmodified adjectives. By carrying out a dual analysis and following a staged process from less to more specific variables (degree modification → intensification → boosting), this project contributes to discussions of methodological approaches in the field, both specifically in the study of intensification and more broadly in discourse-pragmatic variation and change.

Emphasisers have been discussed sparsely in research, and taxonomies vary greatly across studies, resulting in considerable comparability issues (see §3.2). This project offers a more specific definition of this group of forms (based on Quirk et al. 1985), acknowledging similarities and differences across them. The function of emphasis is conceptualised as an overarching function that breaks down into other interpersonal and textual subfunctions. This project is one of the few that studies intensifiers in combination with emphasisers, and considers intensifiers as a type of emphasiser. This approach offers a more comprehensive view of the discourse-pragmatic devices used by Tyneside teenagers in oral discourse, and in turn, helps identify broader patterns of grammaticalisation, variation, and conversational styles.

The findings of this study readily contribute to aspects of language in society generally. The detailed study of the discourse patterns of Tyneside teenagers provides empirical evidence that teenage speech is not immature, inaccurate, vague, or lazy, as claimed by many (see §2.2). Teenagers epitomise linguistic innovation, and their speech reflects socially- and emotionally-involved styles. This also applies to the study of discourse-pragmatic markers in general. Often stigmatised as unnecessary fillers that give an impression of linguistic insecurity, findings from this project show that they play a crucial part in building rapport across conversation participants; they make language more social.

Finally, this study aims at neutralising stigmas and stereotypes surrounding northern dialects like Tyneside English (see §1.1 above). This project is one of the few that studies patterns of intensification in northern Englishes in the United Kingdom, as previous work is often focused on national corpora like the *British National Corpus* or data from southern regions and London in particular. Regarding emphasisers, this is the first project to study them in Tyneside English.

Previous work has looked at locally-indexed emphatic devices like right dislocation and clause-final *like* in other northern areas of the UK (Durham 2007, 2011; Macaulay 1988, 2005; Moore 2003; Moore and Snell 2011; Snell 2008, 2018). They have succeeded in providing a more accurate representation of the mechanisms behind local features, and, most importantly, highlighting their social value (e.g. Snell 2018; see also Moore and Podesva 2009). This project has a similar aim. By placing special focus on features with indexical value in Tyneside like *canny, proper*, clause-final *like* and right dislocation, this project explores the use of local language among Tyneside teenagers, evidences its social value, and attests wider processes of dialect levelling.

1.3. Structure of the thesis

The thesis is divided into eight chapters, with the first half reviewing the background literature which informs the analysis in this project, and the second half constituting the original analysis of this particular sample.

Following Chapter 1, Chapter 2 explores adolescence, the ways in which it has been conceptualised across time, space, and different research disciplines, and the particularities of adolescent language.

Chapter 3 provides a critical literature review of previous work on intensifiers and emphasisers. This sets the baseline with which the findings from this study are compared and contrasted.

Chapter 4 focuses on grammaticalisation, first giving an overview of the process and the mechanisms at play, and then exploring the specific grammaticalisation paths of intensifiers and emphasisers.

Chapter 5 sets out the methodology of this project, focusing on the nature of the dataset and providing details about the data collection process. It also describes the variables, sociolinguistic predictors, and methods of data extraction, coding, and analysis.

Chapter 6 presents and interprets the results of intensifiers, with a focus on boosters. Distributional figures and multivariate analyses across age, gender, and types of modified adjective support the discussion, revealing patterns of variation, change, and grammaticalisation both overall and in the four most frequent boosters: *really, so, very,* and *proper*.

Chapter 7 consists of a detailed qualitative analysis of the distribution of emphatic resources in the sample and of the functional range of each emphasiser individually. The results provide a finer understanding of the discourse-pragmatic mechanics of each device, their grammaticalisation paths, and the conversational styles of Tyneside teenagers.

Chapter 8 summarises the conclusions drawn from the study by answering the research questions identified at the beginning of this chapter, establishing connections between intensifiers and emphasisers, and reflecting on limitations and further avenues of research.

Chapter 2
Adolescence and adolescent language

Adolescence covers a relatively short period of time, but it is a significant life stage in social, psychological and linguistic terms. This chapter explores the notion of adolescence, by considering the definition of this life stage, and the nature of the psychological and sociological characteristics associated with it. It also reviews the linguistic features that have been discussed in academic literature as typical of teenagers and discusses the role of adolescents in language change, dialect levelling, and the development of supra-local features.

2.1. The concept of adolescence

The age span of adolescence has been defined and understood in different ways. As Ledford (2018: 430) puts it, adolescence takes place between 'the end of childhood and the beginning of adulthood' but 'with malleable borders'. Danesi (1994: 5–6) argues that the only biological subdivisions of the human lifespan are the pre-reproductive, reproductive, and post-reproductive stages of life. The only biological changes that overlap with adolescence are those related to puberty, which trigger the reproductive stage. Any other divisions, e.g. childhood, adolescence, and adulthood, are a matter of 'the ways in which cultures organize, and represent […] the life span of a human being' (Danesi 1994: 6). While the start of adolescence can be associated with the beginning of puberty, the end of it is often defined 'on the basis of social roles' (Ledford 2018: 431), which vary across societies and cultures (Cheshire 2005a: 1552; Danesi 1997: 13–14; Larson 2000: 171; Reuter 1937: 427).

It was probably not until the 20th century that adolescence was considered a discrete life stage in the Western world (Eckert 2008: 381; Tagliamonte 2016: 2). Nowadays, adult social roles like parenthood are increasingly being postponed until later life, while better nutrition and health conditions are bringing pubertal changes forward (Ledford 2018: 430; Patton et al. 2018: 458).

For this project, adolescence is defined as the period from 12 to 20 years old. This matches the age boundaries used in similar studies (e.g. Nippold and Martin 1989; Nippold 2000; Núñez-Pertejo and Palacios-Martínez 2018). As explored further in the Methodology (Chapter 5), the choice of this particular range is also motivated by the fact that it covers the period of secondary education and early adulthood in the United Kingdom, where this study is set.

A vast amount of research has been done on the psychological and sociological aspects of adolescence. Hall's (1904) work made adolescence a term relevant for psychologists. Erikson

(1950, 1968) studied the process of ego identity formation in pubescents, and Piaget (1969) proposed the three stages of cognitive and personal development —sensory-motor, concrete operations, and formal-thinking— the third of which was argued to start at early adolescence. Since then, there have been numerous studies analysing the psychological processes of adolescence, including the development of the areas in our brain in charge of social interaction (e.g. Blakemore 2008), changes in behaviour (e.g. Brechwald and Prinstein 2011), and an increase in the likelihood of suffering depression and anxiety (e.g. Allen and Kern 2017: 11; Smith 2018: 426). From a sociological point of view, adolescence is marked by a change in the nature of relationships with adults (Corsano et al. 2006: 349–50), an increase in the influence of peer networks (Kirkham and Moore 2013: 278), an urge to form an identity and find a place in the world (Brechwald and Prinstein 2011: 169–71), and increasing independence (Tagliamonte 2016: 3). As Tagliamonte (2016: 3) puts it, '[p]hysically, physiologically, socially, intellectually, teenagers are in a constant state of flux'.

The external changes in the adolescents' body and the internal changes in the adolescents' psychology are closely related to their social behaviour. Danesi (1994: 11–12) comments on how the novelty of new bodily appearance and functions causes teenagers to become more concerned with how they look (e.g. discussion between Laura and Ellie in (1) and (2) below).

(1) I'm very reliant on my make-up [**Interviewer**: Okay]. I I just… that's where I get my confidence from (**Laura**, F, 14, Ccc03f1_A).

(2) **Interviewer**: Do you think that boys have the same pressure? […]
Ellie: I think they do but not as much as us…
Laura: I think they do.
E: Because I think like we get the pressure off the boys. […] I don't know how to explain it. Like if boys like look at you, they won't be friends with you if you're looking a certain way, do you know what I mean, like? [**I**: Aw okay]. So like if you, if you have, if you're not skinny as the rest of them or if you have acne, they'll not be friends with you (Ccc03f1).

This pressure might develop into feelings of anxiety or awkwardness, and a heightened awareness of social roles and interactions. Adolescents find shelter in peer groups, as though blending in mitigates the psychological pressure of self-awareness. This is the 'sense of belonging' that Allen and Kern (2017) explore in their work. They explain that even if belonging is important at all stages in life, it is 'particularly salient during this period […], [when] teenagers are challenged with determining who they are, as separate identities from their parents and family, and how they fit amongst peers, classmates and others in their social context' (Allen and Kern 2017: 11). This sense of belonging directly benefits their well-being and facilitates easier transitions into adulthood (Allen and Kern 2017: 11; Corsano et al. 2006: 350; Tanti et al. 2011: 563–66).

The feeling of fitting in triggers a homophily effect, by which adolescents with similar likings and attitudes tend to group together (selection effects). At the same time their behaviours and attitude become more alike over time (socialisation effects) (Brechwald and Prinstein 2011: 166). Note for example the comments made by Dave and Melissa in the present project's interviews (see (3) and (4) below). Dave gives a glimpse of the social dynamics of school, while Melissa illustrates a clear case of engaging in behaviours of a desired social group.

(3) **Dave**: [If I do something naughty,] my reputation could get ruined, which I wouldn't want.
Interviewer: Yeah uh, so you mean reputation like among the teachers or reputation with the other students or?
D: Er the students y- you like to keep around like… Nobody really cares, everybo- at minute with the… reputation's for like kids. Everybody wants to be the top dog in essence like everybody wants to be the best (Ccc06m1).

(4) I was like kind of chums, I guess, with like a an American girl for the duration of my time there. And she would obviously have her mannerisms and I'd be like 'that's exactly what I wanna be' (laughs) so like I'd just pick it up (**Melissa**, F, 19, 2017_SEL2091_031_B).

Behaviours, attitudes, and features that are stereotyped as adolescent, such as rebellious gestures and reactions, emotional outbursts, concern about appearance, and distinctive language, 'in general can be said to be anchored in behavioural patterns that are both significant —socially meaningful— and signifying —meaning-making— to the peer group' (Danesi 1994: 14–15). Although the processes of selection and socialisation play an important role throughout adult life, it is in adolescence that they start gaining relevance. This is because peer-group membership plays a crucial role in the formation of identity and, in turn, the creation of identity is one of the principal psychosocial adjustments that teenagers make.

Adolescents undergo a process of integration into a social world of their own for the first time in their life. In this process, teenagers perform different social moves: first, detaching from their caregivers; second, liaising with their peers; and third, shaping their own identities (Andersen 2001: 4). Cheshire and Milroy (1993: 20–21) note how the influence of overt linguistic norms is 'relatively weak' on young people, whereas 'peer group pressure will be strong'.

Adolescence is also often portrayed as being problematic; Hall (1904) describes it as a period of 'storm and stress' throughout his work (e.g. Hall 1904: 306). This metaphor refers to the stereotypical adolescent 'rebelliousness, concern about identity and role, unstable moods, and unpredictable and highly mercurial behavior' (Levesque 2011: 70). All of these ideas are pejorative and there seems to be a negative image of teenagers in the public eye (Drummond 2016: 641–43).

While there is evidence that adolescence can be a tumultuous life stage,[7] recent studies have shown that many teenagers go through these years without significant turbulence (see e.g. Larson 2000: 170 on the importance of a supportive environment; Offer and Schonert-Reichl 1992 regarding myths of adolescence). In this project, the difficulties of adolescence are acknowledged as relevant factors that can influence teenage language, but the approach here follows a more positive outlook on how teenagers handle adolescence by adapting their behaviours, and their use of language.

As Eckert (2008: 382) observes, the behavior and culture of adolescents are not rooted in their 'raging hormones', but in the ways in which this age group can be isolated within normative institutions, such as their schools, where meaningful social contact with adults is unlikely or even undesirable (Kirkham and Moore 2013: 278). Schools, in Eckert's view, are a 'social hothouse' (2000: 16), which creates an array of opportunities and constraints that shape what can and cannot be done. Eckert's (2003: 112) opinion is that such artificial isolation could explain the turmoil mentioned above. This project adopts a more positive perspective of schools and the role they can play in the development of adolescents, in line with that expressed by Allen and Kern (2017) in their study of the well-being of teenagers: 'school belonging can provide a deep sense of connection that a young person carries with them into young adulthood and beyond' (Allen and Kern 2017: 12).

The 'storm and stress' misconception might also be reinforced by what Eckert (2008: 383) labels 'the adult gaze'. Many adults mistakenly believe that adolescence is a worry-free life stage, where parents provide for everything, there are minimal responsibilities, and the only considerations are having fun, 'until it's "time" to join the adult world' (Eckert 2008: 383). The evidence from mental health studies (Allen and McKenzie 2015; Larson and Ham 1993; Smith 2018) clearly indicates otherwise. In other words, '[t]he dominant adult view of adolescence is of an "unfinished" population' (Eckert 2008: 383). Far from seeing them as individuals in their own right, adults 'otherize' (Eckert 2003: 116) adolescents, amalgamating them into a homogenous age group. As Reuter aptly points out, 'the assumption creates the reality' (1937: 416) and 'adolescent behaviour is whatever the group decides adolescence should be' (1937: 423). These ideas leads to the conceptualisation of adolescence as we know it today.

[7] For example, Allen and McKenzie (2015) highlighted the higher risk for depression, anxiety and other mental health issues by mid-adolescence. Similarly, Smith (2018: 426) pointed at higher death rates among 15- to 19-year-olds worldwide compared to 10- to 14-year-olds, and Larson and Ham (1993: 138) attested how young adolescents are more susceptible to emotional distress after traumatic life events, compared to pre-adolescents.

The present project approaches this life stage not as a poor version of adulthood but instead as an advancement from childhood, as many researchers in linguistics have advocated (e.g. Cheshire et al. 2011; Drummond 2016, 2018b; Eckert 2003; Kirkham 2013; Kirkham and Moore 2013; Moore 2003; Stenström 2014; Tagliamonte 2016). The leap from childhood is handled by teenagers in interesting ways: through the formation of cliques and gangs, the restructuring of their relationships with adults, and the development of their own voices, to name but a few. All of these can have an important impact on their use of language.

2.2 Adolescent language

This section comments on the abundance and relevance of research on teenage language, touching on issues of linguistic discrimination. It also explores the connections between the psychosocial features of adolescence and the distinctive features of language associated with them. The linguistic features discussed in previous research are broken down into (i) vocabulary and syntax, and (ii) discourse-pragmatics and conversational styles. A note on the relationship of adolescents with local and non-standard language follows.

Youth language, and in particular that of adolescents, has been the subject of extensive scholarly interest since the mid-20th century due to adolescence becoming an 'increasingly culturally salient life stage' (Cheshire 2005a: 1554). It is also recognised that teenagers have a marked linguistic style that plays a crucial role in language innovation and change (Núñez-Pertejo and Palacios-Martínez 2018: 118). Both Cheshire (2005c: 479) and Barbieri (2008: 60) observe that research had previously been focused on morpho-phonological features due to the complexity of the social embedding of syntactic and discourse-pragmatic variation. More recent work, however, has delved into these aspects. Moore's (2003) work has advanced our understanding of the social meaning of nonstandard *were*, negative concord, tag questions, and right dislocation in this cohort (see also Moore and Podesva 2009; and Moore and Snell 2011). Similar advances have been made by recent work on quotatives (e.g. Lamerichs and Te Molder 2009; Macaulay 2001; Palacios Martínez 2014; Tagliamonte and D'Arcy 2004), discourse markers (e.g. Andersen 2001; Cheshire 2007; Erman 1997; Jørgensen 2009; Jørgensen and Stenström 2009; Palacios-Martínez 2011; Pichler 2020; Stenström 2006; Tagliamonte 2005; Torgersen et al. 2011), slang and swearwords (e.g. Green 2014; Rodríguez González and Stenström 2011; Stenström et al. 2002), non-standard grammar (e.g. Cheshire 2013; Cheshire et al. 2011; Cheshire and Fox 2009; Stenström et al. 2002; Stenström and Andersen 1996), and intensifiers (studies further discussed in §3.1).

Studying adolescent language can be valuable in at least two ways (Kirkham and Moore 2013: 280). First, adolescence provides the ideal context for studying the interrelation of social and

linguistic variables, given the 'social hothouse' effect (Eckert 2000: 16) associated with this life stage. Social meaning is a major factor in shaping how teenagers express themselves in language. Second, it has often been considered as 'the most uniform and characteristic variety' of vernacular English (Labov 1973: 81).[8] Therefore, studying teen talk can shed light on changes in progress (Palacios-Martínez 2011: 106), according to Labov's incrementation model (2001) and the innovation peaks attested in adolescence. Research into the mechanisms of teenage language can also challenge and provide counterarguments against 'unsavoury and unfair' (Drummond 2016: 658) language discrimination.

Negative evaluations of stereotypical adolescent behavioural traits are often also applied specifically to their ways of speaking: irresponsible, uncontrolled, sloppy, vague, or immature. Drummond (2016) comments on the popular representations and criticism of youth language in the media. Many journalists call it 'dumb', 'ridiculous', 'ghetto grammar', 'moronic', and an unavoidable catalyst for unemployment (Drummond 2016: 641). He argues that these comments ignore three research-attested facts: first, teenagers are capable of switching to more standard ways of speaking when necessary (Drummond 2016: 642) (see e.g. Lewis's comments in (5) below); second, their way of speaking is tightly connected to their individual and social identities (Drummond 2016: 643); and third, as demonstrated in the study of Multicultural London English (Cheshire et al. 2011), the new varieties of English used by younger speakers are a natural development of modern, multicultural, multiethnic, and multilingual urban centres.

(5) You can switch between them like when you're in lessons and stuff, you won't swear, but then when when you're out of it, you can. It'll be the same as when I'm older like if I'm at work or something, I won't be swearing, but like when I'm out with people again, I'd probably just start swearing again (**Lewis**, M, 17, Sc01m2_A).

Eckert (2003: 116) argues that the criticism of teen talk is 'seized upon, indeed manufactured, by media as mind candy for a hungry public'. There are cases of teachers banning 'incorrect' or 'slang' language in school (Furness 2013; Renaud-Komiya 2013). In response to this, Snell published an article in *The Independent* (Snell 2013) debating the linguistic restrictions imposed in a high school in Middlesbrough. Linguistic discrimination of this kind can also 'impinge on school performance' (Cheshire 2005a: 1561), as teachers and parents try to repress a way of speaking that is either temporary or innovative.

[8] Note, however, that the concept of the 'vernacular' is problematised in this project. The discussion in Section 5.2 concludes that the vernacular is understood as the most emotionally-loaded version of one's language, neither the most authentic or desirable to study.

There may be a variety typical of adolescents that criss-crosses geographical and linguistic boundaries. As Stenström (2014: 9) notes, there is an array of similarities in the way youth speaks across the globe. Stenström is not referring specifically to linguistic features but rather to how these relate to adolescent attitudes, behaviours, and negotiations of identity across languages and countries. In this sense, teen talk is portrayed as 'functional, socially valuable, and flexible' (Stenström 2014: 9; see also Drummond 2018b: 272).

Adolescents could be considered a subculture within the adult world, in the same way that different ethnic identities are. The way subcultures react to mainstream culture is by developing features that distinguish them. In the case of youngsters, the culture against which they might react is adult culture, and one of the distinguishing features can be language. As Kerswill and Williams (1997: 168) observe, this is not to say that teenagers are a 'linguistically homogenous group'. Geographical, contextual, and demographic factors, together with individual identities and life histories, all play a part in shaping the language of each teenager (Cheshire 2005a: 1557; Palacios-Martínez 2011: 107). A wealth of research demonstrates linguistic differences within groups of young speakers that are socially meaningful (see e.g. Eckert 1989 and Moore 2003). This project not only compares teen language in Tyneside with adult language in the area, but also compares genders, age groups, and individual speakers within the adolescent cohort.

Another relevant aspect of their language is that adolescents seek to create their own identities, which are distinct from those of adults, similar to some of their peers, and unique to them as individuals. This desire to be distinctive and original is behind the social value and indexicality of their linguistic behaviour (Stenström 2014: 8),[9] and often overrides other contextual constraints. Thus, their style could be less subject to stigmas in wider society than at other life stages (see the discussion towards the end of this section regarding local and non-standard language in adolescent speech). On the other hand, their innovations respond to the socialisation effects discussed by Brechwald and Prinstein (2011: 169–71) and end up constituting a social variety of their own. As such, teenagers may be using language to index their social affiliations to particular identities and communities of practice (Moore 2003: 211) or a whole lifestyle around the music they enjoy (Drummond 2018a: 192).

[9] Indexicality is the characteristic of a sign to gain associations with an idea due to their frequent co-occurrence (Johnstone 2016: 633). The concept originated in the field of linguistic anthropology through Michael Silverstein (1976). For example, the fact that *proper* in the current sample occurs more commonly in the speech of male speakers or speakers with a strong local identity could result in the form indexing masculinity or Geordieness/Tynesideness (see discussion in Chapter 6).

This project embraces the idea that language not only reflects identity but constructs it (Eckert 2016: 69), the main tenet behind third-wave variation studies. Finegan (1995: 6) notes that it is the particular feature of subjectivity in language that spurs the expression and creation of the self. Since the presentation and creation of self is so paramount in teenage years, discourse-pragmatic features with subjective value like boosters and emphasisers are expected to be frequent and prone to innovation in this life stage (see §3.1.1).

Another factor behind the idiosyncratic nature of teen talk is that adolescents do not necessarily follow the same socio-economic patterns of language variation as adults. As Eckert (2008: 391–92) puts it, 'adolescents are producing linguistic patterns that are no longer reflecting their family of origin, but that reflect their own search for a place in the peer social order'. Several studies have attested how teenage-specific social categories, such as gangs, cliques, or subgroups delimited by school performance or common interests, take over socio-economic class as a major factor correlating with language variation in this age group (e.g. Cheshire et al. 2008 in London; Drummond 2018a in Manchester; Eckert 2000 in Detroit; Moore 2003, Moore and Podesva 2009 in Bolton; Tagliamonte 2005 in Toronto). This should not be taken to imply that socio-economic background does not affect teenage language at all. In fact, several studies have produced significant results about this effect: for example, both Cheshire (1982) in Reading and Stenström (1997) in London reported the prevalence of non-standard forms in lower-working-class teenagers. The relevance of gender, ethnicity and peer group membership in their linguistic patterns has also been recently identified (Andersen 2001; Cheshire et al. 2011; Eckert 1997, 2011; Kerswill et al. 2007).

Group identity and membership are at the core of a teenager's life, as discussed above in relation to homophily effects (e.g. Brechwald and Prinstein 2011; Danesi 1994: 14–15). In asking teenagers directly about their view on group membership, Kerswill and Williams (1997) corroborated how crucial it is for teenagers to attain peer group conformity and distinctness from adults. Consequently, language becomes a powerful tool for teenagers to mark group boundaries and to affiliate to peer groups (Tagliamonte 2016: 3). In keeping with these studies, this project gathered friendship network information through questionnaires, although this data was not utilised eventually (see §5.2.2).

Teen talk is also influenced by the transitional nature of the age cohort, particularly with regards to their linguistic development. Although adolescents have completed the process of first language acquisition, they are still relatively linguistically inexperienced (Andersen 2001: 4). Grammatical and phonological rules, local and non-local, are fully developed by the age of five (Kerswill 1996). Nevertheless, language development continues through puberty and, contrary to

the rapidness attested in children, it 'unfolds in a slow and protracted manner' (Nippold and Martin 1989: 65). In this project, the study of patterns across different age groups within adolescence appears to support this idea (see especially §6.1.3.1 and the age-related results in §7.2).

Considering all these emotional and social influences, Danesi (1997) put together the definition of three mechanisms through which teenagers shape and manipulate the way they speak: Emotive, Connotative, and Clique-Coded Language Programming.

'Emotive Language Programming (ELP) has been coined with reference to the high emotive content that adolescent speech manifests' (Danesi 1997: 457). Some of the features Danesi (1997: 458) identifies as aspects of ELP are uptalk (pattern of rising intonational contours), the use of question tags, and the abundance of interjections and exclamations, swearwords, and discourse-pragmatic markers such as *like*. These all reflect how teenagers project their emotions through language and seek approval from and interaction with their interlocutors (Danesi 1997: 458). ELP is also frequent in adult speech, but '[t]he difference between ELP in adult and adolescent speech lies in the degree and extent to which it characterizes the programming of discourse' (Danesi 1997: 458). This mechanism could for example explain the abundance of expressive devices such as boosters and emphasisers in the interviews analysed for the project (see frequency indices of intensifiers in §6.1.1 and of emphasisers in §7.1).

Connotative Language Programming (CLP) is concerned with the teenagers' tendency to 'coin descriptive words, or to extend the meaning of existing words, in highly connotative ways' (Danesi 1997: 458). Many such terms have a short lifespan, and are often exclusively particular to the teenage group —note for example websites like *Jargon Buster* (Family Lives, n.d.), which intends to help parents understand 'Teenglish'. Psychologically, CLP plays on the previously mentioned inclination teenagers have for speaking about and mingling with peers to deflect attention from their heightened self-awareness (Danesi 1997: 460).

Clique-Coded Language Programming (CCLP) refers to how teenagers are very specific with regard to their choice of themes and topics depending on the cliques to which they belong (Danesi 1997: 460). 'Teenagers achieve relative status in the fluctuating hierarchy of their clique by learning how to advantageously manipulate their verbal interactions with peers' (Danesi 1997: 461).

The present study focuses on the peculiarities of teen talk in the area of discourse and pragmatics, which have been described as 'the domains in which language growth is most active during adolescence' (Nippold 2000: 15). Before analysing some overarching discourse-pragmatic features in adolescent language, however, it is worth looking at another two areas that have received particular attention, vocabulary and syntax.

Vocabulary and syntax

Adolescent vocabulary is characterised by rapid growth and creativity (Aitchison 1994: 16–19), as well as an abundance of taboo words, swearwords and slang (Núñez-Pertejo and Palacios-Martínez 2018: 118). Núñez-Pertejo and Palacios-Martínez (2018: 146) mention as well how it is common for teenagers to play with opposites (e.g. using *sick* or *wicked* to mean *good* or *cool*), which can be viewed as a kind of semantic-pragmatic game that is connected with the teenagers' tendency to 'go against the norms' and to reinforce 'their identity as a group distinct from adults'. Tyneside teenagers in this study seem to be particularly colourful with their adjectives, for example using local evaluative adjectives such as *class, mint, lush, minging, lifting, legend* or *belter*, and a wide range of adjectives to refer to being drunk (e.g. *bladdered, hammered, wrecked, wasted, obliterated*). It is also noted that in adolescence speakers start to use figurative language, metaphors, irony, and other linguistic features of certain abstraction and logical reasoning more creatively (Andersen 2001: 7).

Despite their impolite nature in adult speech, it has been suggested that taboo language and swearwords convey positive politeness among teenagers (Mateo and Yus 2000, cited in Stenström 2014: 14), thus expressing camaraderie and friendliness. In this study, however, swearwords are infrequent. They occur almost exclusively among the 19-20-year-olds, who were interviewed by friends or peers. It may well be that this is because younger speakers considered it inappropriate to swear in their conversations with me. Still, the few swearwords that do occur are used for expressive purposes, as in (6) and (7) below.

(6) I had every Tuesday off, it was *fucking* glorious, I went out every week (**Sarah**, F, 19, 2017_SEL2091_078_A).

(7) She was singing them when the announcement was going on so we couldn't hear what the *bloody hell* they were saying (**Claire**, F, 17, Ben03f2_B).

When it comes to defining and describing slang, a number of different perspectives have been adopted. One of these sees slang as a creative means for linguistic innovation that is usually short-lived and tied to a certain life-stage (Andersen 2001: 8; Stenström 2014: 13). With respect to this creative aspect, Mencken (1971: 365), for example, alludes to the wit of speakers in making language more expressive and vivid. Other views emphasise the social aspect of slang. Eble (1996) studied the slang of college students and defined the concept as '[a]n ever changing set of colloquial words and phrases that the speakers use to establish or reinforce social identity or cohesiveness within a group or with a trend or fashion in society at large' (Eble 1996: 11). Similarly, Tagliamonte (2016: 2) focuses on the semiotic value of slang as an expression of identity. Eckert (2003: 114)

expands the notion to cover a whole style typical of certain groups of speakers, one that is intelligible exclusively among group members, as if it were a type of jargon.

In the case of teenagers, slang may often originate in marginal groups of adolescents — working class, ethnic minorities, or speakers of a certain local variety, for example. Teens of other social groupings might subsequently adopt this slang to signal their distance from older generations and their membership of an over-arching youth culture, but not necessarily to signal alignment with the social groups where the slang originated. This has been attested, for instance, in studies of features associated with African American Vernacular English, which are used to signal 'coolness, toughness, or attitude' (Eckert 2003: 114), as well as in the extensive research done on Multicultural London English (e.g. Cheshire et al. 2008, 2011; Kerswill et al. 2007), where ethnolects of white, Jamaican, and Bangladeshi teenagers have conflated into a shared teenage feature pool.

As evidenced by the different definitions outlined above, the term 'slang' can be interpreted as extending beyond vocabulary, to include other areas of language such as discourse-pragmatic features. Even dictionaries offer conflicting and vague definitions (see e.g. definitions in *Macmillan* 2021, *Merriam-Webster* 2021, OED 1911). Given this vagueness, the term 'slang' will not be used in this project when discussing the kinds of features mentioned above. More narrowly defined terms, such as 'discourse-pragmatic markers', 'intensifiers' and 'emphasisers', will be preferred instead.

Moving on to syntactic features typical of teenagers, Andersen (2001: 6) comments that there is an increase in the length, complexity and informational density of constructions compared with previous life stages. As with other linguistic levels, adolescents might show greater adherence to local variants than adults, who would typically be more constrained by stigmas in mainstream society (Cheshire 1982, 1987, 2005; Romaine 1989). As such, there tends to be a higher number of local and generally non-standard syntactic features in adolescent speech (Palacios-Martínez 2011: 122; cf. Macaulay 2005: Ch.8 about social class differences in this respect), such as non-standard past participles (see (8)), preposition drop (see (9)), demonstrative *them* (see (10)), and right dislocation (see (11)).

(8) Non-standard past participles

a. [We] Possibly could have *went* up last time (**Jon**, M, 12, Ccc05m1_B)

b. A lot of people have told me that I should not have *came* last in that task (**Callum**, M, 19, 2017_SEL2091_043_B)

(9) Preposition drop

a. **Jane**: Where [are] you gonna live next year? Come live ∅ Jesmond.

Emily: Nah, I can't afford Jesmond, I'm gonna go ∅ Heaton I think (2017_SEL2091_080).

b. I've been ∅ places like I've been ∅ like France and I've been to Germany, been like ∅ Amsterdam, stuff like that (**Lewis**, M, 17, Sc01m2_A).

(10) Demonstrative *them*

a. My mates went in a cage with sharks like you know *them* shark cages where you can see the shark (**Phil**, M, 12, Ccc01m1_B).

b. I'll send them one of *them* photos as well (**Megan**, F, 14, Ccc04f1_A).

(11) Right dislocation

a. I couldn't go on holidays for three weeks, *me* (**Phil**, M, 12, Ccc01m1_B).

b. That reminds me of Miami, *that* (**Claire**, F, 17, Ben03f2_A).

Discourse-pragmatics and conversational styles

At the level of discourse, and in particular oral discourse, the interactional nature of teenage conversation has been defined as enacting a 'high-involvement style' (Tannen 1984: 30). This style is characterised by constant and abrupt changes of topics, fast rates of speech and turn taking, cooperative overlap, active listening, abundance of narratives, dramatisation of stories, and expressive changes in intonation, pitch, voice quality and pauses. In this respect, Danesi's (1997) theory of Emotive Language Programming revolves around the influence of emotions in teenage discourse. In comparing four same-sex, same-age conversations in COLT,[10] Stenström (2003) found that general features of teenage conversation generally overrode gender differences: for example, there was (i) a general proclivity for combining personal and worldly topics, though girls tended to be more open about their feelings, (ii) a propensity to use swearwords for expressive purposes, with slight differences in the choice and range of forms, and (iii) an inclination to adopt cooperative and highly-involved discourse styles, contrary to the idea that male conversation is more competitive (Stenström 2003: 106–12). Macaulay (2005) observed similar results in the speech of Glaswegian adolescents, although he noted that female speakers would much more frequently tell narratives, include dialogue, and speak about themselves and other people (Macaulay 2005: 169). Swearwords, questions, imperatives, teasing, affectionate insults, and supportive and cooperative remarks, were all more frequent in adolescent conversations than in adult ones (Macaulay 2005: 161–69).

[10] The *Bergen Corpus of London Teenage Language* (COLT, see e.g. Stenström et al. 2002) and the *Corpus Oral de Lenguaje Adolescente de Madrid* (COLAm, Jørgensen 2008) contain self-recordings of teenagers of London and Madrid respectively in a variety of speech situations. They were collected in 1993 and have been extensively mined for discourse-pragmatic research since. A larger exploration of the features of these corpora can be found in Section 5.2.

In a similar vein, Stenström and Jørgensen (2008) studied the prominence of phatic talk in the discourse of teenagers from Madrid and London (using the COLT and COLAm corpora). Phatic talk refers to talking for the sake of talking; that is, conversation in which the content is irrelevant compared to its interactional value, its purpose for bonding (Stenström 2014: 22–23). This ties in with Bauman's (1977: 11) understanding of performance as 'the way in which communication is carried out, above and beyond its referential content'. Stenström and Jørgensen's (2008) study revealed the high frequency of pragmatic markers performing this phatic function in the discourse of teenagers. As Jørgensen and Martínez (2010: 194) put it, 'teenage talk has been criticized for being peppered with unnecessary small words or pragmatic markers'. The following excerpt from one of the interviews carried out for this study illustrates the abundance of such items (italicised).

(12) Yeah, it was *just* PE *just* didn't like us [=me] (laughs) so *like* do you know *like* stupid little things *like* if I kicked out this ball *like just* across the field *like* not *like* proper kicking *just like* kick it a little bit I'd *be like* 'behavioural support for a week' (laughs) *like* he *just* hated us [=me] *like literally* hated us [=me] so I was never in PE but apart from that I was *like* getting on with me [=my] lessons (**Claire**, F, 17, Ben03f2_A).

Contrary to the view of them being fillers for time or signs of language incompetence, these are crucial in creating a feeling of rapport, or 'phatic communion' (Jørgensen and Martínez 2010: 194), and 'an intimate contact between speaker and hearer' (Stenström 2014: 14). The high frequency of these items in teen talk might be motivated by the great importance of social interaction in this life stage, on the one hand, and the teenagers' defiance of stigmas attached to pragmatic markers, on the other. Adolescents' discourse style in conversation fits into Biber and Finegan's (1989: 110) description of 'interactional evidentiality', that is an 'involved, intense conversational style' characterised by constant markers of certainty, hedging, and emphasis. If we take into consideration this group of speakers' tendency to innovate, it is no surprise that they have spearheaded the grammaticalisation of many discourse-pragmatic markers:

> [T]he use of *go* as a reporting verb (e.g. Butters 1980), *like* as a marker of reported speech (e.g. Romaine and Lange 1991), *just* as an emphasizer (Erman 1997, 1998), *well* as an intensifier (Stenström 2000) and the Swedish particle *ba* as a marker of reported speech (Eriksson 1997; Kotsinas 1994).
>
> (Andersen 2001: 9)

Teenagers do not necessarily use more discourse-pragmatic markers than other age groups. Instead they use different items and for different purposes. For example, studies on London teen talk show that teenagers favour items with markedly interactional functions, such as *right, really, you know, okay,* question tags, and familiarisers including *man*, *brother*, *mate* or *dude* (Andersen 2001: 307;

Núñez-Pertejo and Palacios-Martínez 2018: 118–22). Boosters and emphasisers, both of which are discussed in the literature as being linked to the expression of interactional meanings —for instance in relation to modality, stance, and subjectivity— are thus expected to be frequent in the speech of the teenagers in this study. In fact, in her comprehensive study of stance in American English, Barbieri (2008: 66) found that both intensifiers and stance adverbs —which in turn express emphasis— are devices particularly frequent among young speakers. She suggests that these two variables are ideal sites to study age-based linguistic variation (Barbieri 2008: 70). Findings from the current project readily contribute to this line of research.

Indeed, stance, in the wider sense that encompasses both social orientation and the expression of affect or personal alignment (Kirkham and Moore 2013: 288), has been a fruitful area of research in the study of teen talk. Moore and Podesva (2009) found that tag questions in a high school in Bolton were used to express not only different types of stance, but also the 'popular' persona and even the social type of being female. Similar findings came from the study of right-dislocated tags in the speech of primary and high school children in Middlesbrough and Bolton respectively (Moore and Snell 2011), where the form could take on different stance meanings depending on other features of the speakers' speech styles.

There has also been extensive research on how teenagers innovate in one of the most rapidly changing discourse-pragmatic systems: degree modification, and in particular, intensification (e.g. Ito and Tagliamonte 2003; Macaulay 2006; Núñez-Pertejo and Palacios-Martínez 2018; Palacios-Martínez and Núñez-Pertejo 2012; Tagliamonte 2008). While some COLT-based studies found adult speakers intensifying more frequently than younger ones (Núñez-Pertejo and Palacios-Martínez 2018: 127; Palacios-Martínez and Núñez-Pertejo 2012: 782; Paradis 2000: 154; Stenström et al. 2002: 162), the trend seems to be the opposite in every other study that compared rate of intensification across age groups (e.g. Barbieri 2008: 71; D'Arcy 2015: 481; Tagliamonte 2008: 367; Xiao and Tao 2007: 253). The latter trend appears to be more generalisable, since it has been attested in more corpora and across more varieties (British English, American English, Canadian English, New Zealand English). In summary, not only do teenagers appear to intensify more often, but also they tend to use more innovative variants (for a fuller discussion of these trends see §3.1). Although the teenagers analysed in the present study have not come up with any completely new variants, they do make considerable use of infrequent variants like *proper* and *dead*, especially boys (e.g. (13) and (14)) (see §6.1.3.1).

(13) We were *proper* scared for a while (**Jack**, M, 19, 2017_SEL2091_043_A).

(14) The floor was like *dead* sticky (**Tristan**, M, 17, Sc02m2_B).

Andersen (2001: 12–13) argues that adolescents have limited linguistic experience at the pragmatic level. He mentions, for example, how their use of conditional clauses might not have expanded yet to the epistemic conversational level (e.g. '*If that's a bear's footprint, than* [sic] *I'm King Kong!*') or the speech act level (e.g. '*If you don't mind my asking, when did you come home last night?*'). He also points out deficiencies in using discourse connectives, or dealing with Gricean implicatures, politeness, and cooperative behaviour. This lack of linguistic experience might be hypothesised to be balanced out in this life-stage by 'age-conditioned differences in type or in frequency of hesitational phenomena, hedges, metalinguistic cues, etc.' (Andersen 2001: 13). Adolescents might be less concerned about 'sounding too assertive, abrupt or direct', being 'interactionally cooperative', or dealing with 'face-saving and face-threat-mitigation' (Andersen 2001: 13). However, in her study of apology in London teenage talk, Aijmer (2019: 268) reflects on how adolescents are not any less cooperative or less concerned about communicative solidarity. Instead, mock politeness and impoliteness, banter and irony are exploited as solidarity strategies with their peers. Stenström (2003: 110–11) and Macaulay (2005: 165–68) also found cooperative styles in the teenage conversations in London and Glasgow respectively, and so did Aijmer (2008: 72–74) in her study of solidarity *obviously* in COLT. As in other areas of teenage language, what seems to be the case is that, in comparison with adults, teenagers simply perform politeness and linguistic solidarity by different means, and therefore this could give the impression that they do not perform them at all. Emphasisers in particular appear to be clear markers of solidarity in this project's sample, used for example to involve the interlocutors in a narrative, build common ground, or mitigate controversial or shocking comments (see Chapter 7).

Local language, standard ideology and adolescents

Language, as much for adolescents as for other age groups, serves a 'crucial stylistic function' in 'constructing social meaning' (Eckert 2003: 113). By this time in their lives, speakers are said to have acquired certain knowledge of adult linguistic behaviour, such as style-shifting (Cheshire 1982; Kerswill 1996: 197), as well as some awareness of differences between standard and non-standard forms (Romaine 1984). Thus, their choice of non-standard forms might be motivated by their social attitude and associated desire to be different and somehow bend the adult rules. Reinforced by the schooling system and teachers enforcing standard language, teenagers associate standard language with 'education, institutional affiliations, homogeneity, and conservatism' (Eckert 2003: 113), whereas the local or non-standard is associated with 'an anti-institutional stance, local orientation, diversity of contact, and local innovation' (Eckert 2003: 113). Thus, these features tend to be more prestigious and frequent among some younger speakers (Cheshire 2005a:

1555; Downes 1998: 224). Examples are non-standard forms in the speech of the Tyneside teenagers recorded for this study (see e.g. (15)-(21)).

(15) That's it, *aye, nowt* else really changes (**Lewis**, M, 17, Sc01m2_A).

(16) I hang out with friends. If I'm not, I'm just going out with *me mam* or family (**Rebecca**, F, 17, Ben01f2_B).

(17) My brother laughs *us* [=me] coz my fringe everyday (**Samantha**, F, 13, Ccc02f1_A).

(18) It takes like a mission for the metro to come, I'm standing, I'm just like 'oh *howay*' (**Charlotte**, F, 18, Ben03f2_B).

(19) That's *canny* funny, *like* (**Lewis**, M, 17, Sc01m2_A).

(20) *Ah divn't knaa* [=I don't know] like if I describe something it's like *mint* or something (**Tim**, M, 16, Sc02m2_A).

(21) *Ee* nah (laughs) you *cannae* [=cannot] say that (**Claire**, F, 17, Ben03f2_A).

The relationship teenagers have with standard language is a very interesting one. Gates and Ilbury (2019) analysed conversations with teenagers in London focusing on their experiences with standard language ideology. They demonstrated that (i) educational institutions reinforce the ideas of standard language as the desired variety to speak and the key to success in adult working life, and (ii) teenagers are well aware of the situation, even envisaging their way of speaking as a different language. This clashes with the increasing diversity of cultures and languages in urban centres, where speakers, particularly young ones, are innovating in their language, a move deemed by a large part of society as 'non-standard' and undesirable (Gates and Ilbury 2019: 122; see also the discussion at the beginning of §2.2 regarding multiethnolects and Multicultural London English). Adolescents in this project made similar comments in their conversations. There are comments on the unsuitability of Geordie features for a successful adult life (e.g. (22) and (23)) and on the connotations of politeness and formality attached to the standard (e.g. (23), (25) and (27)). At the same time, they highlight the difference between language and manners (e.g. (25)), the social value of the local variety (e.g. (22), (23), and (24)), and the tight links between local language and identity in the community (e.g. (26) and (27)).

(22) **Interviewer**: Do you think you need to switch to like Queen's English to get a job or something or?
Claire: I'm not sure, it depends. I like sometimes in the shop when I'm serving someone will speak like 'oh y'alreet?' (laughs) it depends who they are like like usually I would start off as standard English and then just […] coz usually <u>if you talk back to them how I'm talking to you they'd feel a bit more comfortable</u> so then <u>I was happier</u> (laughs) (**Claire**, F, 17, Ben03f2_A).

(23) **Interviewer**: So you don't believe in that Standard English gives you status? Do you believe in that? I mean do you think that happens?

Tim: I I do.
Tristan: It gives you the impression, doesn't it? […]
Tim: In both my interviews I've like tried to change the way I speak, well, not change the way I speak but speak in like a more formal way.
I: Right, like a job interview?
Tim: Yeah.
Tristan: Oh it definitely helps in that case. You got to like use it for that if you want to stand a chance of getting a job or like if you're like talking to someone important or something.
Tim: Coz then I feel like at the same time in a job interview it's also better to just be yourself and like speak like… coz some of them some of them like I've done different kinds, like there's ones like the one that I did at like TGI Friday's was like a more conversational like… so I was like happy to speak normally and just tell them about me but the one I've got now I was like quite formal about it (Sc02m2_A).

(24) **Interviewer**: Do you like it or hate it, the way you speak?
Ian: Yeah, it's like you can, you can recognise it anywhere, though [**Jeremy**: Mhmh], so it's like…
Jeremy: It's quite friendly as well, isn't it? like inviting, like [**Ian**: Yeah] more easy to have a conversation with, I think (2017_SEL2091_021).

(25) [After commenting on the fact that Queen's English sounds posh and Geordie sounds chavvy]
Jeremy: Some people are just less polite than others, aren't they? especially like…
Ian: Then that's like manners more than accent.
J: Yeah, fair (2017_SEL2091_021).

(26) **Interviewer**: So how do you feel about the Geordie accent or the Geordie way of speaking in general?
Anna: I quite like it, to be honest.
Scarlett: I quite like that there's like a…
A: It sounds a bit like rough but yeah… [**S**: Yeah, can do]. Then I also think like, you know, if you hear someone say you're like 'hey you're from home' (laughs).
S: Yeah, and I like that there's such like a big accent associated with where we live.
A: It's like, it's like the home accent (Jpa01f2).

(27) **Declan**: Aye, it's like everyone in the stadium, they will all speak the same it's just like… it's like our own communities language, really. It's like everyone knows it, everyone does. […]
I: And if there's any, can you think any situation where you would change and speak more like someone from London or? [Declan and Jon explain that they speak more Geordie to close family but more standard to relatives living in other cities].
J: I think she [=his grandma] just speaks formal to me so I feel polite to probably speak it back to her I think the only time I'd ever speak London is probably if I was an impressionist (everyone laughs) I just I couldn't bring meself [=myself] around to just speak like that forever (Ccc05m1).

In very general terms, teenagers tend not to avoid local features, and instead exploit them to create new complex styles which index social categories and particular stances. A single linguistic feature might be combined with an array of others to convey social meaning, with adolescent speakers making 'linguistic choices in the realms of voice quality and prosody; segmental phonology; morphology; syntax; discourse; lexicon; and speech acts, activities, and events' (Eckert 2003: 113). For example, Alderton (2020) studied the social meaning of T-glottaling as perceived

by teenagers in a private school in Hampshire. This is generally stigmatised as a non-standard working-class feature in British English. It coded, on the one hand, 'chavviness' and disengagement with school —in line with the general stigma—, and on the other hand, a 'cool' persona. Gender, prosodic features such as stuttering, and other variables including H-dropping and TH-fronting influenced the social meaning of T-glottaling in this group of speakers (Alderton 2020: 45). In reviewing the use of right-dislocation and the interjection *howay* among young speakers, Snell (2018: 686) concludes that they can exploit features that lack status in society (e.g. those that are stigmatised for being working-class or regional) to assert status in the local interactional environment. As such, local features remain strong because they are valuable in the local community (Snell 2018: 687).

The way adolescents speak is greatly influenced by the expression of emotions, the creation of their identities, and the marking of social affiliations. Teenagers have a particularly vibrant vocabulary, and they tend to use non-standard features at all levels more frequently than adults. In terms of their discourse-pragmatics, young speakers display a high-involvement style, using interactional markers with a higher frequency, in innovative ways, and for stance-marking purposes. These are all, however, general trends that are shaped by many other social and individual factors. The combination of these features mean that teen talk can deviate greatly from adult language, which in turn has ignited criticism in the media and educational authorities. As advocated by many scholars, research into the actual mechanisms behind teenage language can help challenge these cases of linguistic discrimination.

2.3 Adolescents, innovation, and language change

This section explores connections between innovation and change, followed by an introduction to Labov's (2001) incrementation model and how it can explain change in the longer term. Then, it will look at dialect levelling, the development of supra-local forms, and the interplay of other sociodemographic factors in the innovative linguistic behaviour of adolescents.

Adolescence has been described as 'the focal point for linguistic innovation and change' (Chambers 1995: 176). Their growing friendship networks, desire for a social identity, and tendency to deviate from adult language, all contribute to novelties in their language (Kerswill 1996: 196). These novelties, as mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, can generate or drive processes of grammaticalisation (Cheshire 2005a: 1554).

Innovation is a pre-requisite for change and grammaticalisation, yet innovation does not always cause them; it might mark social affiliations, non-adherence to the norms of other social groups, or particular developmental characteristics of the life stage (Andersen 2001: 302–03).

Adolescents have been shown to innovate at many linguistic levels, but it is still debated whether the innovations they produce are the trigger for language change. When these innovations only occur at the life stage where they originated, we speak of age-grading, that is temporary language characteristics that are particular to speakers of a specific age group (Cheshire 2005a: 1553; Hockett 1950; Labov 2001: 76). When speakers do not grow out of these features, they might be initiating changes in language or consolidating change in progress. Age-grading and long-lasting language change are not opposite concepts; at times innovation is linked to both. For example, Andersen (2001: 303–04) comments on the case of *like*: the higher frequency of its hedge function in youthspeak might be due to the lack of a fully internalised vocabulary or to a more general non-committal stance during this life stage (age-grading); and while the function of hedging is not new, *like* is indeed an innovative form for hedging (language change).

Aitchison (1981: 183–84) argues that teenagers as a social group are not influential enough to affect language change, while Romaine (1989: 213) claims that their innovations have a cumulative effect when maintained into adulthood. In support of Romaine's view, teenagers have been shown to initiate long-standing changes with innovative phonological variants (e.g. Horvath 1985), accelerate ongoing changes (e.g. Eckert 1988) and promote dialect levelling (e.g. Kerswill 1996; Kerswill and Williams 1997). Fox and Torgersen (2018: 209) argue that in London, the fact that innovation is more frequent among younger speakers shows that it is 'transmitted from older to younger siblings and through peer interactions rather than from their caregivers', which in turn makes teenagers 'the linguistic role models for the younger generations'.

Times of social upheaval, unrest and/or change have been demonstrated to be propitious contexts for linguistic change (Clermont and Cedergren 1979; Zhang 2001). Based on this premise, Eckert (2008: 390–91) believes that adolescence is a period of such individual revolution that it constitutes an ideal time for linguistic change to germinate. It has been argued that linguistic change is simply a matter of reinterpretation at the moment of acquisition (Romaine 1984: 214); but this would mean that it is children and not teenagers that are at the fore of linguistic change, which might not always be the case. Social change and linguistic change often go hand in hand and adolescents participate in both; it is their transitional place in the life-course that empowers them to 'bring about lasting social change' (Eckert 2008: 391). Thus adolescence 'provides the perfect context in which to adapt, resignify and reconstrue language variation' (Kirkham and Moore 2013: 280).

Eckert (1989, 2000) specified that it is not just adolescents as a whole who lead linguistic change, but rather certain groups of adolescents. In her Detroit study, the Burnouts (more rebellious against school and generally with a working-class background) led the Jocks (more

compliant with mainstream culture and normative institutions) in all three of the latest sound changes in the Northern Cities Shift (the backing of the DRESS vowel, the backing of STRUT, and the raising and backing of the nucleus of the PRICE diphthong). These results also indicate that adolescents want to differentiate themselves from each other, not just from adults. Language variation within the teenage sphere is subject to 'a complex interaction between class, gender and social practice' (Kirkham and Moore 2013: 284).

One of the first projects in studying London teen talk was the *Linguistics Innovators Corpus* (LIC, Kerswill et al. 2007), which aimed to find out more about the profile of linguistic innovators, including older speakers in the dataset. The *Multicultural London English* project (MLE, e.g. Cheshire et al. 2011) followed, although no longer with a focus on innovators, but on language contact and the development of multiethnolects among teenagers (discussed in more detail below). In East London, surveyed in LIC, the linguistic innovators were young speakers from a variety of ethnic backgrounds, but most importantly they were all part of dense multicultural friendship networks (Cheshire et al. 2008; Fox and Torgersen 2018: 209). In North London, surveyed in the MLE project, it was specifically non-Anglo teenagers that innovated the most (Cheshire et al. 2011; Fox and Torgersen 2018: 209). These findings demonstrate that there is not a single specific social characteristic defining linguistic innovators, but that it is highly dependent on context. In London, ethnicity seems to play an important role, either the speakers' own ethnic identity (MLE), or their connections with people from different ethnicities (LIC).

The present project aligns with the idea that teenagers are an essential part of language change. Even if speakers grow out of certain linguistic features as they transition into adulthood, the features that they do not drop do have a significant effect on language. This argument is based on the discussions above as well as Labov's (2001) incrementation model, in which peaks of innovation in adolescence play a major role in language change. Labov's theory underpins Eckert's (1997: 52) conception of teenagers as 'the linguistic movers and shakers […] and as such, a prime source of information about linguistic change'.

Labov's (2001: 447–49) theory of incrementation explores the connection between age and the development of innovative language variants. Putting it very succinctly, Labov hypothesised that the level of linguistic innovation increases from childhood through adolescence and reaches a peak point around 17, after which innovative variants become stabilised and there is less, if any, innovation taking place. The following generation of speakers will be using the innovative variants at roughly the same frequency as their caregivers did when becoming parents. The level of innovation of those children will in turn increase until they reach 17, when language stabilises and there is little innovation. In the third generation, the child will use the innovative variant at a level

that builds up on that of their parents' and their grandparents', and the occurrence of the innovative variant will increase further until they are 17, and so on. Incrementation, however, slows down as the linguistic change is close to completion with the passing of time: there is a point at which the innovative variant has become so frequent in adult speech (who had been innovative back in their teenage years) that it is no longer considered innovative by the newer generations of adolescents and thus other variants come into play.

Tagliamonte and D'Arcy (2009: 70) argue that the adolescent peak is the mere natural outcome of 'logistic incrementation of linguistic change': the teenagers' frequency of an innovative variant is higher than younger age groups simply because the younger speakers are still in the process of incrementation, and higher than older age groups simply because the older speakers' language use stabilised at a lower frequency. In other words, 'it looks like the peak is a consequence of a mechanical linguistic process, which concludes at the critical age of vernacular stabilisation' (Kirkham and Moore 2013: 279–80).

Labov (1990: 218–19, 2001: 284) further argued that the adolescent peak was almost exclusive to female speakers and that, as such, they lead linguistic change. However, other studies have shown different gender patterns regarding incrementation (e.g. Holmes-Elliott 2016: 88; Tagliamonte and D'Arcy 2009: 97). In her study of children and adolescents in a school in Hastings, Holmes-Elliot (2016: 84) found that TH-fronting was a male-led change. This was also shown in intensification studies, where some innovative variants are mainly present in the speech samples of male speakers, such as *pretty* in Toronto (Tagliamonte 2008: 389), *real, right,* and *bare* in London (Núñez-Pertejo and Palacios-Martínez 2018: 145; Stenström et al. 2002: 46), or *canny* in Tyneside (Barnfield and Buchstaller 2010) (fuller discussion in §3.1.2).

As these studies show, the incrementation model has been adopted beyond its original context as an explanation for the transmission of sound changes (e.g. Cheshire et al. 2011; Tagliamonte and D'Arcy 2009). Adolescents have also been argued to lead the grammaticalisation of forms taking on pragmatic and discoursal functions and innovate in the conventionalisation of implicatures (Andersen 2001: 13). This is exemplified in the present project's dataset by the multifunctional uses of emphasisers such as *obviously* and *literally* (see Chapter 7, particularly §7.2.4 and §7.2.5).

Studies of adolescents in the UK have linked them with dialect levelling. Dialect levelling is the process by which regional varieties become more and more similar, due to the slow disappearance of highly localised variants and/or the emergence of supra-local features that spread more widely geographically (Williams and Kerswill 1999: 149). Some of the adolescents in this study's dataset acknowledged how their older relatives speak 'more local' (Charlotte, F, 18) or how

in comparison to their parents, they 'do not speak a lot of Geordie really' (Tristan, M, 17). Danesi's (1997: 460) data of Italian adolescents also suggested 'that there is less dialectal-regional [differentiation] among adolescent speakers than there is (or perhaps was) among older speakers'.

In their Milton Keynes-based study, Williams and Kerswill (1999) found that the phonetic realisations in the speech of 12-year-olds were different from those in the speech of speakers younger and older. There was a set of consonantal features that was also present in other British urban dialects and had become a set of 'youth' norms (T-glottaling, TH/DH-fronting, labiodental /r/, and L-vocalisation) due to geographical diffusion (Kerswill 2003: 231). However, diffusion is difficult to explain given the 'social, linguistic and perceptual' north-south divide in England (Kirkham and Moore 2013: 281). This same idea led Britain (2010: 195) to argue that it might not be a case of diffusion, but rather that innovative variants had developed independently in different locations at a supra-local level and had simply replaced more conservative ones.

In their study of Glaswegian adolescents, Stuart-Smith and Timmins (2010: 44) suggest that supra-localisation is motivated by a complex set of social practices, identities, dialect contact situations, and attitudes. In particular, their research suggests that media influence and technology play a major role in the development of supra-local language.

Another influence is multiculturalism and communities consisting of people from different ethnic backgrounds. Multicultural cities have seen a rise in adolescent multiethnolects, which are varieties used by 'several minority groups […] collectively to express their minority status and/or as a reaction to that status to upgrade it' (Clyne 2000: 87). In their study of London English, Cheshire et al. (2008) found that adolescents use features typical of ethnic minorities even if they do not belong to that minority, not only in performance or stylised talk but also in everyday speech. They called this phenomenon Multicultural London English (MLE) and it refers to 'the overall range of distinctive language features used in multi-ethnic areas of London' (Cheshire et al. 2011: 154). MLE is understood as a feature pool rather than a variety or 'lect'. The features include particular phonological realisations of the PRICE and GOOSE vowels, DH and TH-stopping, the use of the pragmatic marker *you get me?* and examples of 'slang' vocabulary, among others (Drummond 2016: 644–45). MLE originated in inner London districts with high levels of young immigrants, in line with the idea that 'adolescence plus immigration [is] the perfect combination for language change and innovation' (Núñez-Pertejo and Palacios-Martínez 2018: 117; see also Kerswill et al. 2013). Given London's influence across the country, linguistic innovations attested in MLE seem to have spread to other big English cities, such as Manchester and Birmingham. Drummond (e.g. 2016, 2018b, 2018a, 2018c) has considered the possibility that there is a broader notion of a *Multicultural Urban British English* (MUBE) as a way of speaking across British urban

centres and most notably used by younger speakers. He concludes that the original associations linking MLE/MUBE features with certain ethnicities seem to have faded for the actual users of the 'variety', who simply use these features to enact youth identity or affiliations to certain social groups (Drummond 2016: 657).

Kirkham and Moore (2013: 282–83) argue that the use of supra-local forms might also be affected by local factors. For example, Watson's (2006) results reveal that in Liverpool adolescents would use the local variant [h] rather than the supra-local glottal realisations of /t/ for pre-pausal /t/. While Watson (2006) suggests that this preference could be caused by the teenagers' inclination to express regional identity, Beal (2010: 85), in reviewing this work, argues that the local variant already fulfils the social function of supra-local glottal /t/ and that Liverpudlians — teenagers or otherwise— would have no reason to target the supra-local variant. Beal's comment makes us wonder whether some of the variants considered part of supra-local youth talk might just coincide across regions due to chance. The increase in use of glottal stops for /t/ in Middlesbrough attested by Llamas (2007) might be motivated by a desire to mark a distinction with Tyneside's local glottalised /t/, rather than by willingness to align with a cross-regional youth culture (Kirkham and Moore 2013: 283). Similarly, TH-fronting in Glaswegian working-class teenagers (Stuart-Smith et al. 2007) might just be a mechanism for speakers to differentiate themselves from middle-class teenagers in the same city (Kirkham and Moore 2013: 283). Given the evidence from different studies, it seems that, even in contexts where supra-local forms occur, it is important to take account of how the nature of cross-regional youth variants may depend on the way they relate to the local variants of each city or region.

Teen talk is an extremely productive variety to study in terms of language variation and change. The teenagers' unique rate of innovative linguistic variants results from their transitional place in the language development process and in the social order. The next chapter explores more specifically the patterns of variation and change in intensifiers and emphasisers, as studied both in the teenage cohort and more broadly.

Chapter 3
Background on the linguistic variables

This chapter comprises a literature review of the two linguistic features studied in this project: intensifiers and emphasisers. It explores the findings of previous studies of the intensifier variable relating to age (§3.1.1) and gender (§3.1.2), as well as patterns of variation and change that have been identified in Tyneside (§3.1.3). Emphasisers have not been subject to variationist research in great depth, and so the bulk of the literature review on emphasisers focuses on descriptive studies run on each emphatic device (§3.2.1). There is also a review of findings from emphasiser studies relating to age (§3.2.2) and gender (§3.2.3).

3.1 Intensifiers

This section brings together previous works on intensification in the disciplines of corpus linguistics and variationist research, relevant to the constraints analysed in this project. First, intensification is defined. Second, the particularities of intensifiers are explored to establish why they inspire scholarly interest. Third, previous findings regarding intensifiers and (i) age (§3.1.1), (ii) gender (§3.1.2), and (iii) their use in Tyneside (§3.1.3) are reviewed. Change in intensifiers in terms of grammaticalisation is explored in Chapter 4.

This study defines intensification in the narrower sense, that is, the function used to scale the degree of the modified head upwards (Biber et al. 1999: chapter 7), or what Barbieri (2008: 71) calls 'true' intensification. Intensification is part of the wider system of degree modification, which includes all forms and functions that interact with the degree of the modified head (Paradis 1997: 13). Degree modification covers intensifiers ('reinforcers' in Paradis 1997; 'amplifiers' in Quirk et al. 1985; 'intensives' in Stoffel 1901) and downtoners ('diminishers' in Biber et al. 1999; 'attenuators' in Paradis 1997). Intensifiers are divided into 'boosters' and 'maximisers'. Boosters 'denote a high degree, a high point on the scale' (Quirk et al. 1985: 590) (e.g. *very, really, so*), whereas maximisers 'denote the upper extreme of the scale' (Quirk et al. 1985: 590) (e.g. *totally, completely, absolutely*). This study focuses on the subset of boosters.

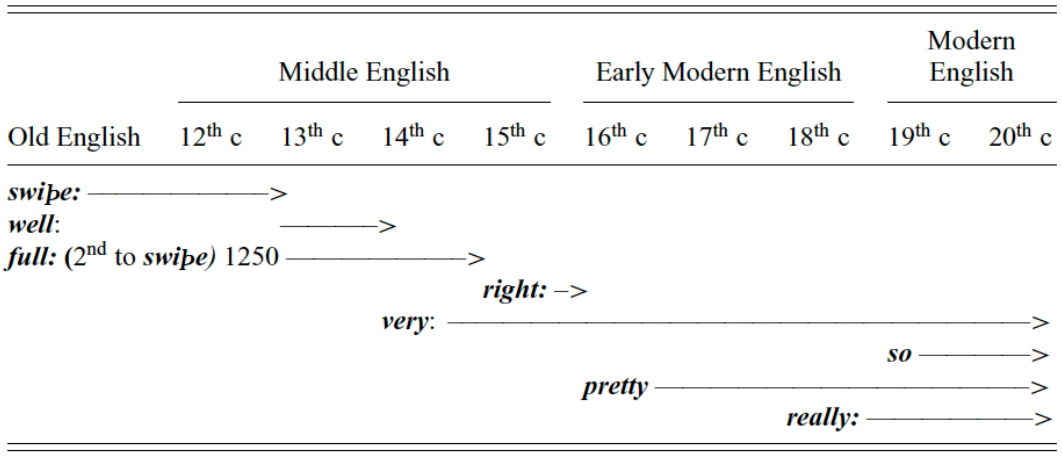
There have been few analyses specific to boosters (e.g. Bauer and Bauer 2002; Peters 1992), since most studies on intensification amalgamate them together with maximisers. The focus on boosters as a distinct set is justified because they behave differently in paradigmatic terms, as discussed in Section 5.4. Due to the dearth of research on boosters, this section discusses studies that focus on the whole system of intensification, including maximisers.

This project is focused on 'all adverbial strategies speakers have at their disposition to boost or reinforce the property denoted by their heads' (Rickford et al. 2007: 7), and in particular, adjectival heads. Other devices of intensification (e.g. adjectives, prosody) and other collocations (e.g. adverbs, verbs, prepositional phrases) are not discussed. This is the most common approach across studies in intensification (see §5.4 for a detailed justification). The intensification of non-adjectival heads is explored further in the study of emphasis (§7.2.6).

Intensifiers are a fruitful area of research for two key reasons: (i) their expressive value, and (ii) their tendency for constant change (Ito and Tagliamonte 2003: 258; Stoffel 1901: 2). Firstly, intensifiers not only express degree but also emphasis (Núñez-Pertejo and Palacios-Martínez 2018: 120; Partington 1993: 181; Peters 1992: 378; Stenström 2000: 178) and hyperbole (Aijmer 2018b: 63; Lorenz 2002: 143). At a broader level, intensifiers also convey emotion (Núñez-Pertejo and Palacios-Martínez 2018: 121), originality (Peters 1994: 271), in-group membership (Ito and Tagliamonte 2003: 261; Partington 1993: 180; Peters 1994: 271), speaker attitudes (Paradis 1997: 13), and a range of interpersonal functions (D'Arcy 2015: 483; Partington 1993: 178). These pragmatic and stylistic links to expressivity make intensifiers prone to a process of 'fevered invention' (Bolinger 1972: 18), as speakers are constantly looking for original forms to 'capture the attention of their audience' (Peters 1994: 271). This promotes 'robust competition and layering' (D'Arcy 2015: 485) in the system, which has ignited great interest among variationist scholars.

Secondly, the same features that make the system so varied synchronically make it interesting diachronically too. Intensifiers have been considered 'fashion-victims' (Blanco-Suárez 2010: 8) that die out as soon as their novelty fades away, resulting in their replacement by new, more expressive, forms (Lorenz 2002: 143; Núñez-Pertejo and Palacios-Martínez 2018: 121; Stoffel 1901: 2; Tagliamonte 2016: 92). Thus, they are constantly involved in processes of renewal, involving the inclusion of new forms for the same functions (Hopper and Traugott 2003: 122), and of recycling, with the re-emergence of old forms that had previously declined (Ito and Tagliamonte 2003: 277). Figure 2 gives a brief overview of the most frequent variants across time in English (see also Stratton fc., the first variationist study on the OE intensifier system).

Figure 2. Most common intensifier variants across the history of English



Source: Tagliamonte 2008: 390

There is always something for researchers to look for in the system of intensifiers, be it a newcomer or a resurgent form. The speed with which the repertoire of variants shifts is such that apparent-time studies of intensifiers seem to be enough to show patterns of change (Ito and Tagliamonte 2003: 277). [11] Variants have also been analysed diachronically to study their origins and their grammaticalisation paths (Barnfield and Buchstaller 2010; Blanco-Suárez 2014a, 2014b; Buchstaller and Traugott 2006; Calle-Martín 2014; González-Díaz 2008; Lorenz 2002; Macaulay 2006; Méndez-Naya 2003, 2008; Peters 1992, 1994; Rissanen 2008; Stratton 2020a, *inter alia*).

These trends of variation and change are best understood by analysing correlations with social and linguistic predictors. The findings derived from the analysis of the latter have more to do with grammaticalisation; which will be discussed in Chapter 4.

Intensifiers have been found to occur more frequently 'in spoken rather than written language [and] in informal rather than formal conversation' (Lorenz 2002: 143). They have also been associated with colloquial usage, nonstandard varieties, and emotional language (Fries 1940: 204–05; Peters 1994; Stoffel 1901: 122; Tagliamonte and Roberts 2005). When looking at social constraints, intensifiers have been heavily associated with younger speakers —especially teenagers— and women (Tagliamonte 2008: 362), both social groups being particularly innovative in their repertoires. What follows is a breakdown of findings related to the factors of age and gender.

[11] Apparent-time studies are synchronic: conclusions are drawn from the comparison of different generations in one single period of time. In contrast, real-time studies refer to diachronic research: the sample analysed covers multiple years.

Three caveats on comparability must be established before proceeding. First, the studies in this chapter include both maximisers and boosters in their analysis. When comparing against my own results on boosters specifically, figures of frequency and distribution need to be analysed more carefully. Second, the studies discussed here concern different varieties of English (British, American, Canadian, and New Zealander), which means the envelopes of variation are slightly different, affecting distribution patterns. Indeed, even results from other British English studies might be different from this project's findings, as most are based either on the *British National Corpus* (BNC) —with cross-dialectal data—, or on London-based datasets. Third, there are considerable differences in the time periods covered by these studies. With a highly changeable system, and a cohort as innovative as teenagers, data from the early 1990s (Ito and Tagliamonte 2003; COLT-based studies such as Stenström et al. 2002) may be incomparable with data from the early and mid-2000s (e.g. Aijmer 2018b; Macaulay 2006; Tagliamonte 2008). These differences influence not only the range of variants in the set, but also the effects that social constraints have on their distribution, since the social meaning of age and gender might have changed over time. On a positive note, these studies provide a solid basis for diachronic comparison.

3.1.1 Intensifiers and age

Age has often been operationalised as a relevant extralinguistic variable in studies of intensification. Generally, younger and adult speakers have been shown to have distinct patterns of use (e.g. Barbieri 2008; Bauer and Bauer 2002; Núñez-Pertejo and Palacios-Martínez 2018; Palacios-Martínez 2011; Palacios-Martínez and Núñez-Pertejo 2012, 2014a; Romero 2012; Stenström 2000; Stenström et al. 2002; Stenström 2014; Xiao and Tao 2007). The malleability and openness of the variable of intensifiers, in combination with the teenagers' tendency to innovate in their language use (see §2.3), result in colourful and dynamic repertoires. For this literature review, younger speakers are defined as being between 12 years old to early twenties; finer distinctions will be made when relating previous research to my own results in Chapter 6. The patterns that differentiate younger and adult speakers relate to frequencies of intensification, age-preferential variants, and trends of age-grading and language change.

There are contradictory results when comparing the frequency with which younger and older speakers use intensification: some studies found that younger speakers tend to intensify more frequently, while some others found the opposite trend.

The analysis of British English run by Xiao and Tao (2007: 253) revealed that in speech, speakers aged between 15 and 34 were the most frequent users of intensification. Barbieri (2008: 71) also found that intensifiers were more frequent among younger speakers of American English.

In Canadian English, Tagliamonte (2008: 367) found that younger speakers intensify with slightly higher frequency than older ones, but not significantly. D'Arcy (2015: 481) found a peak of intensification in adolescence among the speakers of New Zealand English.

Some studies have expected to find that younger speakers intensify more frequently, following the idea that they 'tend to exaggerate rather than modulate' (Paradis 2000: 147). However, every study using COLT data, including Paradis (2000), revealed the opposite trend: the adults intensify much more frequently than the younger speakers (Núñez-Pertejo and Palacios-Martínez 2018: 127; Palacios-Martínez and Núñez-Pertejo 2012: 782; Paradis 2000: 154; Stenström et al. 2002: 162). A suggested explanation for these unexpected results is that teenagers might not resort as often to degree adverbs for expressivity because they tend to use a wider range of means to be emphatic and reinforce their utterances, such as swearwords like *bloody*, emphasisers like *really*, and evaluative adjectives like *wicked* (Paradis 2000: 154). Another explanation is that frequency might not pattern exactly the same in every speech community. Younger speakers of *Multi-Cultural London English* in COLT data appear to intensify less frequently, but younger speakers of roughly the same variety were found to intensify more often in the LIC data (Núñez-Pertejo and Palacios-Martínez 2018: 127).

The trend of younger speakers displaying a higher frequency of intensification seems more generalisable than the opposite, since the former has been documented across a range of varieties of English whereas the latter is supported by only one dataset in London. Still, the contrast in results shows that different speaker communities might pattern differently.

The second aspect in which age groups differ is the choice of variants. The variants *really* and *so* have been widely attested as being preferred by younger speakers across communities, whereas the older variant *very* appears to be more frequent among older speakers (Barnfield and Buchstaller 2010: 267–71; Ito and Tagliamonte 2003: 276; Lorenz 2002: 153; Núñez-Pertejo and Palacios-Martínez 2018: 129; Palacios-Martínez and Núñez-Pertejo 2012: 782; Romero 2012: 64; Stenström et al. 2002: 142; Tagliamonte 2008: 372; Xiao and Tao 2007: 255).

Together with the booster *very,* maximisers *absolutely*, *completely*, *totally*, and *extremely* appear to occur more frequently in adult language (Núñez-Pertejo and Palacios-Martínez 2018: 130). In contrast, swearwords used as intensifiers (e.g. *fucking, bloody*) have also been shown to be overwhelmingly preferred by younger speakers (Aijmer 2018b: 91; Barbieri 2008: 64; Núñez-Pertejo and Palacios-Martínez 2018: 129; Palacios-Martínez and Núñez-Pertejo 2012: 782; Stenström et al. 2002: 161; Xiao and Tao 2007: 255). This is not surprising given that overt norms, in this case avoidance of taboo words, do not exert much influence in younger age groups (Cheshire 2005a: 1555; Cheshire and Milroy 1993: 20–21). Teenagers are also renowned for going

against norms (Núñez-Pertejo and Palacios-Martínez 2018: 146; see also the discussion in Chapter 2).

Non-standard intensifiers tend to pattern with youth language. In American English, two clear examples are *hella* (Bucholtz et al. 2007) and *all,* which 'occurs commonly in media representations of adolescents' speech' (Rickford et al. 2007). In London teenage speech, we find *bare, dead,* pre-modifying *enough*, *proper*, *real* and *well* (Aijmer 2018b: 91; Núñez-Pertejo and Palacios-Martínez 2018: 146). Among Glaswegian teenagers, *pure* is a frequent intensifier (Macaulay 2006). In Tyneside, the intensifier *dead* was popular with the young speakers in the 1990s (Barnfield and Buchstaller 2010: 271), and the modifier *canny*, which can serve as a booster or a moderator, seems to have recently seen a revival among youngsters (Barnfield and Buchstaller 2010; Childs 2016; Pearce 2013). By looking at this list of non-standard intensifiers, we can deduce that younger speakers have a particular inclination towards variants with certain local indexicality.

There are few examples of features that are completely age-exclusive. In New Zealand, the intensifying construction 'adj + *as*' appears to occur only among the younger speakers (Bauer and Bauer 2002: 256). In London teenage speech, Stenström et al. (2002: 142) report that *right*, *well*, and pre-modifying *enough* belong exclusively to teen talk —although *well* and *enough* have also been found in adult speech by other researchers (Aijmer 2018b: 91; Núñez-Pertejo and Palacios-Martínez 2018: 146).

This distribution of variants across age groups in the intensifier variable is so marked that researchers call it a 'linguistic reflection of a spectacular generation gap' (Tagliamonte 2008: 388). Across different studies, this distribution has been argued to be representative of age-grading, language change, or both.

Age-grading relies on the concept of generation-specific sets of linguistic features that speakers grow out of as they age (Cheshire 2005a: 1553; Hockett 1950; Labov 2001: 76). It might be the case that 'use of the intensifier *very* is a mark of being over 35, while favoring *really* should clearly mark one as much younger' (Ito and Tagliamonte 2003: 277). Therefore, younger speakers prefer *really* to mark their difference from the older group, but might develop a preference for *very* when they become adults —a process also called lifespan change (see e.g. Sankoff 2004).

Young speakers, and teenagers in particular, are involved in processes of language change (Chambers 1995: 176; Cheshire 2005a: 1554; Eckert 2003: 391). With intensifiers, not only are teenagers the prominent users of incoming variants, such as *really* and *so*, but they also participate in the process of recycling older variants. Recycling is exemplified by *all* in the United States (Buchstaller and Traugott 2006; Rickford et al. 2007), *well* and *enough* in London (Stenström et al.

2002: 163), and *canny* in Tyneside (Barnfield and Buchstaller 2010: 272; Childs 2016: 242; Pearce 2013: 576).

Speakers might use *really* as a shibboleth of youth while they are young (age-grading), but still not use *very* even when they are older, therefore making *very* less and less frequent overall and asserting the dominance of *really* (language change). This phenomenon is one of the reasons why Ito and Tagliamonte (2003: 364) argue that apparent-time studies can tap into diachronic change. They claim that 'if a form steadily increases from oldest to youngest speakers, this would be taken as evidence that the form is incoming' (Ito and Tagliamonte 2003: 364). However, Cheshire (2005a: 1560) expresses doubts as to whether generational change can reveal patterns of change in fields other than phonology. Although there is no clear reference to discourse-pragmatics, her argument is that lexical and syntactic changes spread differently: usually everyone in the community changes at the same time (Cheshire 2005a: 1560). Despite Ito and Tagliamonte's (2003) hypothesis being widely supported in the study of intensification (see e.g. Barnfield and Buchstaller 2010: 268), predictions based on apparent-time findings cannot be fully evidenced until a real-time study is carried out.

Age-related correlations and trends must be understood together with other sociodemographic factors, such as gender and region, and more specific information about the speakers' identities and biographies (Cheshire 2005a: 1557; Palacios-Martínez 2011: 107), which is only accessible through ethnographic work of the kind carried out by Eckert (1989), Moore (2003), Snell (2008), and Holmes-Elliott (2015). Age patterns may also be affected by the perception of certain features as associated with younger speakers, such as *totally*, as discussed in Beltrama and Staum Casasanto's (2017) work.

In summary, research has shown that age is extremely relevant in the study of intensifiers, in terms of variation and change. Generally, young speakers intensify more often than older speakers, so this project's dataset is rich ground for the analysis of this variable. Younger speakers favour incoming, non-standard, and local variants, and boosters over maximisers. The patterning of their preferences has been shown to correlate with broader phenomena of language change.

The review of intensifiers and age reveals an important gap in research that this project aims to fill. The study of age in the system of intensifiers is mainly focused on comparing adults with teenagers or, more broadly, young speakers. Little work has been done on patterns of intensifiers within the teenage years (but see Tagliamonte 2008). The present study compares the age groups 12-15, 16-18, and 19-20 against each other, and against the findings from the adult population in previous research. This provides a finer understanding of variation and change within the life stage of adolescence.

3.1.2. Intensifiers and gender

Since the early 1900s, studies of degree modification have focused on the effect of gender in the distribution of variants, particularly in the realm of intensification. The earlier works rely upon qualitative observations of gendered language use, whereas more recent variationist research provides quantitative evidence that either confirms or refutes significant gender differences in the system. The issues discussed in this section are (i) the comparison of earlier works with more recent quantitative work, (ii) the trends of gender-preferential uses of intensifiers, (iii) the role of gender in the process of grammaticalisation, and (iv) the role of gender in the renewal and recycling of intensifiers.

Intensification has been linked to women from at least the early 20th century, starting with Stoffel's (1901: 101) remarks that 'ladies are notoriously fond of hyperbole'. He attributes this preference not only to women, but also to children. Jespersen (1922: 250) also highlights the role of women in the process of language change in this particular variable.

These observations were explored further by Robin Lakoff (1973, 1975, 1990). She pioneered a tradition on the features of a powerless language style. This style is characterised by the use of 'amplifiers [i.e. intensifiers] and hedges, together with polite forms, hesitations, disclaimers, empty adjectives, tag questions, and hypercorrect grammar' (Xiao and Tao 2007: 252), all of them considered to signal tentativeness and hesitancy. These two qualities have arguably been considered representative of female speech. Regarding intensifiers in particular, Lakoff (1975) claims that women use them more frequently to intensify the force of their propositions, which would otherwise be overlooked in mixed-sex interactions. There is little quantitative support for such claims: Stenström et al. (2002: 143) note how girls intensify slightly more often than boys, but the differences are not statistically significant. In her comparison between American and British English, Romero (2012) found women use intensifiers more often across age groups in British English (Romero 2012: 57) but only in the 18-30 age group in American English (Romero 2012: 53).

Many researchers have found these remarks to be generalising and subjective and have strived to find quantitative evidence to support or falsify them. For instance, Xiao and Tao (2007), in their comprehensive study of intensifiers in the BNC, decided not to run judgments on the relation between intensifiers and powerless or powerful language styles. They base their decision on at least three different points.

First, they argue that studies like those above oversimplify the picture of linguistic variation and change, ignoring 'the indexical nature of language use, style, and social identity' (Xiao and Tao

2007: 242–43). Second, they comment on the lack of consideration given to the interplay of other factors, as revealed by other studies, such as socioemotional aspects of communication (Guiller and Durndell 2006), or the emotional load of the intensified adjectives (Tagliamonte and Roberts 2005). As Holmes (1995: 109–11) notes, the count of certain linguistic items in men's or women's language is not enough to explain gender-motivated differences; the gender of the addressees, the topic of conversation, the relation between speakers, and the overall pragmatic influence of such items on the speech act all need to be considered. Third, Xiao and Tao (2007: 243) believe that Jespersen, Lakoff, and Stoffel's ideas rely on subjective remarks about very specific communities, such as 'white middle-class women in the U.S.' in Lakoff's (1975) study. In a similar vein, Mizokami (2001: 144) criticises Lakoff's (1975) arguments for being built upon 'folk-linguistic stereotypes' and an 'androcentric ideology' that envisage male speech as the norm from which female speakers may deviate.

In reviewing work that connected intensifiers with powerless language and women, Xiao and Tao (2007: 266, 267) conclude that there is nothing intrinsically powerless about intensifiers, but that 'it may be the preference of certain groups that are socially described as powerful or powerless that makes amplifiers indexical of such notions'. Ochs (1992, 1996) explored this issue in her theory of 'culturally constructed valences' and argued that language has the power to connect and reinforce aspects of the sociocultural word, such as the link made between the apparent higher use of intensifiers by women and the social identity of women needing to assert their power in society. The fact that women use intensifiers more frequently and the fact that women are seen as powerless in society are connected in such a way that intensifiers are deemed characteristic of a powerless language style or social status. Holmes (1995: 111) states that 'women's societal status may account not so much for the way women talk, as for the way their talk is perceived and interpreted'.

Stoffel (1901), Jespersen (1922), and Lakoff (1975) point at specific intensifiers as being quintessentially feminine, particularly *so*, which has a semantic vagueness to it that allows women to 'weasel on' the intensity of their emotions (Lakoff 1975: 55). In this case, regardless of the rationale, gendered preferences for certain variants —or a certain category of variants— are indeed a frequently attested result in many studies. Looking particularly at the case of *so*, the linguistic analysis of the American sitcom *Friends* (Tagliamonte and Roberts 2005: 295) yielded significant correlations between the frequency of *so* and female speakers. Bradac et al. (1995: 106) report that Californian women use more common intensifiers such as *so* and *really*, whereas Californian men prefer rarer ones such as *pretty* and *completely*. In London teenage speech, Núñez-Pertejo and Palacios-Martínez (2018: 145) found a strong trend of *bare* being more frequent in male speech in

the *Multicultural London English Corpus*, albeit not statistically significant, while Stenström et al. (2002: 143) found male speakers preferring the use of stronger expletives like *fucking* in COLT. This latter result contrasts with Aijmer's (2018b: 91) findings from the spoken component of the BNC, where *fucking* was preferred by female speakers, together with *super*, *real*, and *well*. In Tyneside, the region that is the focus of this project, Barnfield and Buchstaller (2010) also found gender patterns: *really, so*, *dead*, and *pure*, which were innovative at different points in time (see §3.1.3 below), were always much more frequent in female speech. The only innovative variant in Tyneside that seemed to be male-led is *canny* (Barnfield and Buchstaller 2010: 272), which is strongly associated with Tyneside identity and potentially holds covert prestige for male speakers (Childs 2016: 250).

Xiao and Tao's (2007: 251) analysis produced a rather different list of preferred intensifiers. Their study suggested a general trend of men using more maximisers (e.g. *completely, entirely*) and women using more boosters (e.g. *bloody, jolly*). Other studies found similar preference trends in terms of types of modifiers, rather than specific variants. For example, in New Zealand English, D'Arcy (2015: 465) noted how men tend to moderate more than women, whereas there is no significant effect in intensification, which had traditionally been the type identified as being dominated by women (Jespersen 1922: 250; Stoffel 1901: 101).

Gender in degree modification has been tested together with other predictors to reveal possible correlations that would explain the causes of the differences. Tagliamonte and Roberts (2005: 296) found that emotional adjectives favoured the use of *so*, regardless of the gender of the speaker; therefore a higher rate of emotional adjectives in female speech would result in higher rates of *so*. Xiao and Tao (2007: 249) found that gender only became a significant factor in the written register.

Age at the time of recording also played a role in understanding gender differences. In Toronto English (Tagliamonte 2008: 385), there are big gender differences in the use of *very* but only in older generations, and *really* seems to be particular of one or the other gender depending on the age group of the speaker. In younger age groups there are starker gender differences in the choice of intensifiers and their distribution (Tagliamonte 2008: 385), which is also attested in American English (Barbieri 2008: 80; Romero 2012: 53). Hence, the teenage sample in this study could be a productive dataset to analyse gender differences.

Comparing gender differences in real time, Tagliamonte's (2008) findings in Toronto match the results of Tagliamonte and Roberts (2005) regarding the use of *so* in Friends, namely that gender differences in a particular variant tend to lessen over time. Tagliamonte and Roberts (2005: 295) hypothesise that this is part of the grammaticalisation process of intensifiers, in

particular *so* in their study. Incoming variants spread across both genders as they start collocating with adjectives in different syntactic positions and from a wider range of semantic categories, as attested by grammaticalisation studies such as Lorenz (2002: 144) and Ito and Tagliamonte (2003: 268). Ito and Tagliamonte (2003: 277) found that in the competition between *very* and *really* in York, 'women lead in the change from one intensifier to another […] at the point when the newcomer expands in function'. In Glasgow, Macaulay (2006: 279) discusses the sequential process of grammaticalisation of *pure* and comments that the main evidence for his findings is gender differences. Diachronically, girls were the ones who started to use *pure* with verbs and boys progressively adopted this broader use.

As theorised by Labov's (1990: 210–15) Principle II, changes from below, that is, at the lowest levels of social awareness, tend to occur first in female speech and then spread to male speech. This seems to be true of the variable of intensification: female speakers appear to be the pioneer users of innovative variants, such as *really* in York (Ito and Tagliamonte 2003), *so* in *Friends* (Tagliamonte and Roberts 2005), *pure* in Glasgow (Macaulay 2006), *really*, *dead*, *so*, and *pure* in Tyneside (Barnfield and Buchstaller 2010), and *super, real*, *dead*, and *well* in the BNC (Aijmer 2018b).

This trend is not always applicable, since male speakers are the pioneers for incoming variants *pretty* in Toronto (Tagliamonte 2008: 389), and *real, right,* and *bare* in London (Núñez-Pertejo and Palacios-Martínez 2018: 145; Stenström et al. 2002: 162). They are also responsible for the recycling of *well* and pre-modifying *enough* in London (Stenström et al. 2002: 162; cf. Aijmer 2018b: 91) and *canny* in Tyneside (Barnfield and Buchstaller 2010: 272).

Labov (2001: 321) observes that cases like these are rare and explains how women tend to be the initiators of language change by adopting prestige features and reacting against stigmatised forms. It may be that the male-dominated changes in intensifiers are better explained by the Conformity Paradox: 'Women deviate less than men from linguistic norms when the deviations are overtly proscribed, but more than men when the deviations are not proscribed' (Labov 1990: 367). *Real, right, bare, well, enough* and *canny* are all overtly proscribed variants, as suggested in the various studies that examine them. In the case of *pretty*, Tagliamonte (2008: 389) notes how male speakers are using it in contrast with *so*, which is socially marked as being a feminine intensifier. Comparing this with her results from *Friends* and York, we see that the gendered *pretty*/*so* split also occurs in North American English (Tagliamonte and Roberts 2005) but not in British English (Ito and Tagliamonte 2003).

Changes and innovations associated with the male gender do not tend to survive long, because children usually receive input from female caregivers first and follow female trajectories (Labov 2001: 462). Linguistic influence is exerted more strongly in early and middle adolescence

(Labov 2001: 502), which means that adolescent girls are an optimal reflection of what the system will look like in the future, since their linguistic behaviour is supposed to take over that of the adolescent boys in the development of language change.

Overall, gender has been shown to be a significant factor in the variation and change of intensifiers. There seem to be no clear patterns to confirm whether female speakers intensify more than male speakers. Male speakers show broader internal variation by using a wider variety of options to intensify and divert from the norm by favouring more proscribed variants. Women usually lead change by spearheading the use of incoming variants. Nevertheless, gender differences have to be understood in the complex constellation of other factors, such as the age of the speakers, co-occurrence with other discourse-pragmatic markers, the emotional load of the language used and topics discussed, the local prestige of the variants, and the stage of grammaticalisation. The present study tests gender differences in the cohort of Tyneside teenagers to assess how they relate to the findings from other time periods, age groups, and speech communities.

3.1.3. Intensifiers in Tyneside

The main work on the intensifier variable in Tyneside English thus far is the diachronic study carried out by Barnfield and Buchstaller (2010). They analysed the distribution of variants in the three subcomponents of the *Diachronic Electronic Corpus of Tyneside English* (DECTE): the *Tyneside Linguistic Survey* (TLS), from the 1960s-70s; the *Phonological Variation and Change* corpus (PVC), from 1994; and data from 2007 to 2009 from the growing *Newcastle Electronic Corpus of Tyneside English 2* (NECTE2). Their variable included both maximisers and boosters, and excluded null cases, that is, unmodified or unintensified adjectival heads, since their focus was 'to investigate the frequency of intensifier variants and their constraints relative to one another, not the frequency of intensification as a strategy in itself' (Barnfield and Buchstaller 2010: 262). In their study, they tested two extralinguistic constraints, age and gender, and two linguistic constraints, syntactic position and semantic category of the intensified adjective.

The following is a summary of the findings with regards to each of these predictors, and the repercussions for the study of innovative variants and language change in the region. The discussion closes with some notes on the local variant *canny*, and a comment on *proper*.

Age had a statistically significant effect on the variable in both the PVC (1990s interviews) and NECTE2 (early 2000s interviews) data, but not in the older data from the TLS (1960s-70s). This lack of an age effect in the TLS may be explained by the understanding of life stages today compared with when the TLS recordings took place, when younger speakers did not seem to

undergo 'the sort of cocooned transitional existence between childhood and adulthood that appears to provide nowadays such rich breeding grounds for stylistic extravagance' (Barnfield and Buchstaller 2010: 266). The more recent data shows that younger cohorts started to lead a move from *very* to *really* in frequency. This is first seen in the 1990s data, with *really* accounting for 31% of intensifiers in the speech of younger speakers (aged 17 to 30) compared with only 9% for older speakers. Still, older speakers did participate in this change too, using *really* more frequently than the age group they would have been part of in the 1960s-70s data (younger speakers), which suggests a case of lifespan change. The trend continues in the NECTE2 data, with more pronounced age differentials. Interestingly, the older speakers in NECTE2 are roughly part of the same generation as the younger speakers in PVC, but the variation patterns seem to have changed. From the 1990s to the early 2000s, this generation of speakers dropped their use of *dead* and *really* in favour of *very*.

With regards to gender, there were no significant differences in the TLS data, but there were in both PVC and NECTE2. In the 1990s data, female speakers had slightly higher rates of *really* than male speakers, but the most striking difference is seen when comparing *very* and *dead*: male speakers overwhelmingly preferred the former, more traditional variant, in comparison with female speakers who preferred the latter, innovative variant. In the NECTE2 data, this trend seems to continue, but with less dramatic differences: women use *very*, *really*, and *dead* more often than men, although the differences in the percentages of *very* are negligible (F 32.8% versus M 31.7%) (Barnfield and Buchstaller 2010: 270); and they are also the more prominent users of *so*, and exclusive users of *pure*, one of the innovative variants in the 2000s data. Male speakers, in comparison, seem to show broader internal variation, using generally infrequent variants like *bloody*, *deeply* and *highly* 32% of the times.

Barnfield and Buchstaller (2010: 268–69) suggest that *really* was a change in progress, judging by the 'incremental frequencies across real time, younger speakers favouring the variant in apparent time, [and] the female lead'. This change seems to be part of a longer-term process, as attested by Ito and Tagliamonte (2003) and Tagliamonte and Roberts (2005). With an updated corpus that covers even younger speakers in the same region, the present project contributes to tracking the progress of *really* and its distribution across genders.

Barnfield and Buchstaller's (2010: 270) study also revealed the quick turnaround in popularity of *dead*, which, led by female speakers, accounted for 51% of the entire variable in the 1990s but dropped by 28 points in the 2007/8 data. By that time, the two major innovations were *pure* and *canny* (*proper* having but marginal use). *Pure* was exclusively used by women in the NECTE2

data and its popularity, just like *dead* in the 1990s, seems to have been paralleled in Scotland (Macaulay 2006).

Canny, Barnfield and Buchstaller (2010: 272) say, 'may constitute the only true innovation in our data, and perhaps even one particular to Tyneside'. In the diachronic study of the different functions of *canny* by Childs (2016), results show how its use is on the rise, led by male speakers, and unlikely to head for the same fate as the fad *dead*. Child's (2016: 260) and Pearce's (2013: 576) research demonstrates, however, that intensifier *canny* has been in Tyneside English since at least the 19th century, and its resurgence might be better explained as a case of recycling rather than innovation.

According to the above, the use of *pure* and *canny* appeared to be gendered: women using *pure*, and men using *canny*. However, the data suggests that such patterns could be better explained through an ethnographic approach. One single female speaker produced most of the *pure* tokens, and she showed great affiliation with her North-East background. Since *pure* has been shown to be perceptually associated with Newcastle and Scotland (Barnfield 2008, cited in Barnfield and Buchstaller 2010: 272; cf. *pure* in Bolton high school data, where it indexes the anti-school persona —Moore 2003), this speaker's preference may indicate her strong identity as a north-easterner and her linguistic non-conformity (Barnfield and Buchstaller 2010: 272). In the case of *canny*, which is also strongly associated with Newcastle and Scotland (Pearce 2013: 562), Childs (2016: 250) suggests that it might hold covert prestige for male speakers. In the 2018/19 data used in this project, there is a negligible amount of *pure* and *canny*, and yet the gendered use of *canny* is apparent still.

Moving on to intralinguistic constraints, Barnfield and Buchstaller (2010) tested the significance of the syntactic position of the modified adjective.[12] Ito and Tagliamonte (2003) hypothesised that newer variants tend to collocate with attributive adjectives first and, therefore, that collocation with predicative adjectives implies collocation with attributive ones. Barnfield and Buchstaller (2010: 275–76) found that traditional variants *very* and *really* occurred slightly more frequently with adjectives in attributive position, whereas newer variants such as *proper*, *canny*, and *dead*, did so with predicative adjectives. This runs counter to Ito and Tagliamonte's (2003) intuitions from the York data. The teenage data from Tyneside analysed in this project provides updated evidence on the collocational patterns of intensifiers in the region, with every variant except *so* occurring in both positions at practically the same rate (see §6.1.3).

[12] According to syntactic position, adjectives are categorised as predicative or attributive. Predicative adjectives have a copular relationship with the head to which they refer, and follow it (e.g. *She is nice*), while attributive adjectives precede the modified head (e.g. *She is a nice person*) (Quirk et al. 1985: 417).

The other intralinguistic predictor tested on the DECTE data was the semantic category of the modified adjective (e.g. age, colour, human propensity, or value; see §5.5.1.1 for a detailed explanation of semantic categories). Barnfield and Buchstaller (2010: 280) found three different ways in which overall frequency of use patterned with spread across semantic categories. First, *really* showcased how incoming variants tend to spread across categories before growing numerically, dovetailing with Ito and Tagliamonte's (2003: 271) findings in York. Second, the case of *so* revealed another trajectory: the parallel increase in both frequency and breadth of categories. Third, the faddish popularity of *dead* in the 1990s exemplified the possibility of 'an explosive escalation across categories and frequencies' (Barnfield and Buchstaller 2010: 280). The analysis also revealed how variants that decrease in frequency, such as *dead* and *very*, do so without affecting the breadth of categories with which they collocate. In Barnfield and Buchstaller's study, *very* still occurred with several categories even if its frequency declined over the three datasets.

Barnfield and Buchstaller's (2010) study reveals a dynamic picture of the intensifier system in Tyneside. In general terms, *really* seems to be taking over from *very*: young Tynesiders and female ones prefer to use *really,* and the frequency of *very* dwindles across time. Men have broader variation within their system and show more conservative patterns, using *very* more frequently. In comparison, women lead the use of innovative variants *pure* and *dead*; although *dead* was a short-lived innovation and *pure* seemed to be particularly idiosyncratic of one speaker. *Canny*, in comparison, constitutes a case of recycling led by male speakers in the 2007/8 data. Regarding collocation patterns, innovative variants in the dataset occurred more often with predicative adjectives, the spread across semantic categories paralleled or preceded the increase in frequency, and the breadth of collocation was not affected by decreasing frequencies.

Canny

Canny is 'as "native" to North-East England as it is to Scotland' (Pearce 2013: 562), which is not surprising given the intertwined histories of the two areas. Childs (2016: 238) explores the possible functions of *canny*: an evaluative adjective meaning 'nice', 'attractive', 'good' (OED 2018 A.5.a) (e.g. (1)), an adverb with a meaning similar to *well* (Griffiths 2004: 4–5), a degree modifier — signalled by the OED as exclusively northern English (OED 2018 B.2) — (e.g. (2)) (Barnfield and Buchstaller 2010: 272), and a modifier in quantifying expressions (e.g. (3)) (Allen et al. 2007: 23).

(1) The teacher's kind of *canny* and sound (**Jon**, M, 12, Ccc05m1_B)

(2) Most of them are actually *canny* ugly who go on there (**Claire**, F, 17, Ben03f2_A)

(3) The amount of police they bring down to the derbies is ridiculous, yeah. They clo- they close a *canny* few streets as well, don't they? (**Tim**, M, 16, Sc02m2_A)

Degree modifier *canny* can ambiguously function as a booster (Allen et al. 2007: 23; Barnfield and Buchstaller 2010: 256; Upton et al. 1994: 66) or as a moderator (Childs 2016: 241; Pearce 2013: 576). This dual function is attested in its adverb entry 'very, considerably [booster]; quite, fairly [moderator]' (OED 2018 B.2). Context and intonation could help in teasing apart when it is acting as a booster or a moderator, but the distinction remains tricky (Pearce 2013: 576). The *English Dialect Dictionary Online* only lists its moderating function: 'fairly, tolerably' (Wright 1989-1905). With the purpose of clarifying this dual function, I designed an online survey and distributed it among Tyneside speakers (see Appendix X).[13] Results corroborate that *canny* is a multivalent degree modifier that can function as either a booster or moderator. Neither social factors nor linguistic context appear to constrain the choice of function, yet additional research could test this further.

Canny can be considered a 'cultural keyword' in the North East (Pearce 2013: 571–72). Its cultural salience dates back to the 19th century, but more recently it has undergone a process of enregisterment, gaining local value by being highlighted in dialect dictionaries and used by writers and entertainers (Pearce 2013: 563). *Canny* has also been commodified, appearing in local advertising and merchandising, and featuring on mugs, tea towels, and prints (see also Pearce 2017: 64 and Beal 2009 for more on the commodification of linguistic features in Newcastle).

Its local indexicality makes it prone to being used more frequently by younger and male speakers, as age and gender research have shown. This seemed to be the case in the studies of Barnfield and Buchstaller (2010) and Childs (2016). Results from this project's dataset show that *canny* is highly infrequent (only eight instances) and almost exclusively used by boys. The low token count prevents any conclusions being drawn on its linguistic distribution (see §6.1.4).

Proper

The intensifier *proper* has been under-researched. To date, only three studies address it: Barnfield and Buchstaller (2010) in Tyneside, Núñez-Pertejo and Palacios-Martínez (2018) in Multicultural London English (MLE), and Stratton (2020b) in the *British National Corpus* (BNC). In Tyneside, *proper* was shown to be a recent and infrequent variant, and it was not explored in detail (Barnfield and Buchstaller 2010: 272). Results from the MLE corpora (including LIC and COLT) (Núñez-Pertejo and Palacios-Martínez 2018) and the BNC (Stratton 2020b) coincide in showing that *proper*

[13] The methodologies followed for the design and distribution of the survey, as well as the analysis of responses are not detailed in this thesis.

is infrequent, particular to younger groups of speakers, and not significantly constrained by gender or ethnicity. It has also been shown to favour adjectives of negative prosody, and from the value, propensity, and physical property categories.

The diachronic comparison between BNC1994 and BNC2014 carried out by Stratton (2020b: 3–5) show that the frequency of *proper* had risen (from 0.06 per 100,000 words in the former to 0.7 in the latter), its collocational patterning had widened, and its syntactic position had gradually shifted from attributive to predicative position. The age groups that used it the most in the 2014 data were 19-29 and 30-39 (Stratton 2020b: 6). In comparison with results from MLE, where 16-19-year-olds used it the most (Núñez-Pertejo and Palacios-Martínez 2018: 131), this age distribution suggests language change rather than age-grading (Stratton 2020b: 6). In sum, diachronic evidence showed that *proper*, though infrequent, is grammaticalising and increasing in frequency in British English.

Núñez-Pertejo and Palacios-Martínez (2018) observed it in London, and in surveying the BNC, Stratton (2020b: 6) found intensifier *proper* in data from 'Leeds, Manchester, Birmingham, Liverpool, Cambridge, Milton Keynes, Essex, [and] Kent', while noting the dearth of data from the other nations of the United Kingdom. Tyneside, or more broadly the North East, does not feature in any of these studies. The *English Dialect Dictionary* (Wright 1898-1905) lists examples of intensifier *proper* from all across England, as noted by Stratton (2020b: 6), including Northumberland,[14] the county currently bordering Tyneside to the north. It was found to be an innovative yet infrequent variant in the 2007/8 Tyneside recordings (Barnfield and Buchstaller 2010: 272). *Proper* is frequent enough to make it into the top-four most frequent boosters among 2017-2019 Tyneside teenagers in this project (see Chapter 6). Although it is still infrequent —only 4.9% of the booster variable—, *proper* occurs at a normalised frequency of 20.5 per 100,000 words, which constitutes a sizeable increase from the 0.7 attested in BNC2014. This difference might not only be a case of language change, but of Tyneside being a locale where *proper* is particularly frequent. Still, note that the comparison of frequency tabulations is not always reliable (see discussion of this issue in §5.5.2.2; Pichler 2010: 595; Stratton 2020a: 24; Waters 2016: 43–44).

Given the results from research in areas outside of Tyneside, *proper* could not be considered an exclusively Tyneside booster. However, it does convey certain local prestige and indexicality that would explain its higher normalised frequency. The strongest piece of evidence for this

[14] Unfortunately, the example from Northumberland in the EDD is incomplete and it only shows the source: (R.O.H.), which likely refers to R. O. Heslop's (1892) glossary of Northumberland words.

argument is the commodification of the form. *Proper* features in Geordie merchandise including cards, mugs, clothes, and tea-towels, as exemplified below:

(4) Geordie Gifts (https://www.geordiegifts.co.uk):
a. *Proper* canny lad/lass.
b. *Proper* class fatha/mam/sista/bruva/teacha/etc.
c. Happy borfday to me *proper* lush wife. A bloody love yee.
d. Yi like a *proper* fatha to me, yi kna. Happy borfday.
e. Congratulations to a *proper* geet lush couple. Am deed happy for yis.
f. Am *proper* ganna miss yi. Aal the best for yi future, pet.

(5) North East Gifts (https://www.northeastgifts.co.uk):
a. For a *proper* lush dad/mam with love from the bairns.
b. Dad/Mam, well done, I'm *proper* mint!
c. Here, man, ya *proper* lush.

(6) Other online shops
a. A *proppa* Geordie brew (even the water's hard) (Zazzle, https://bit.ly/3h8tdFC)
b. To a *proper* canny family this Christmas. Have a merry one and a class New Year! (Amazon, https://amzn.to/2MB1EXI)
c. *Propa* radge m8 / *Propa* radgie (Redbubble, https://rdbl.co/2ziefMq)

Examples include uses of *proper* as an adjective (e.g. (4)d), an intensifier (most examples above), and even an emphasiser (e.g. (4)f). *Proper* here co-occurs with many other local linguistic features. Intensifier *proper* in particular is used to modify somewhat localised adjectives, like *belter*, *canny*, *class, lush* and *mint*. Another sign of its local indexicality is the fact that *proper* is often spelled <propa>, reflecting the Tyneside open [ɐ] for final schwa (Mearns 2015: 168; Watt and Allen 2003: 269). It is also worth noting that *proper/propa* is almost the only booster in these representations of Geordie speech, together with a few examples of *geet* (e.g. *Have a geet class/lush borfday, man*, from Geordie Gifts) and *deed/dead* (e.g. *Well done, ya deed cleva*, from North-East Gifts; *Well done, pet, am deed proud*, and *Yi deed canny as oot like*, from Geordie Gifts). This demonstrates that the connections between *proper* and Tyneside are clear for local speakers, yet these links have not been established in the academic literature. Interestingly, the first examples of the form in the DECTE data analysed by Barnfield and Buchstaller (2010: 272) are in the 2007/8 interviews, which suggests that its local value is only recent. Historical research on regional texts could help track down the emergence of *proper* pre-1970s (earliest evidence in DECTE), and test if its links to Tyneside are indeed recent.

Despite local ties, *proper* is still a very infrequent form in spoken data from the region, as attested by the fact that there were only eight instances in the sample of the 2007/8 data in

Tyneside analysed by Barnfield and Buchstaller (2010: 272), and that the BNC2014 data from the region does not contain any tokens (Stratton 2020b). Nonetheless, understanding that *proper* might hold local prestige in Tyneside can help explain why in this project's dataset (i) there is a higher frequency of the form, and (ii) its use is concentrated in the speech of male teenagers —and in particular, those with particular attachment to their local identity (see §6.2.4).

3.2. Emphasisers

The category of emphasisers in this study covers linguistic devices used to strengthen the force of an utterance or a subclausal item, with a focus on adverbs used for this function (Nevalainen and Rissanen 2002: 161; Quirk et al. 1985: 583). As explained in detail in the delimitation of the variable in Section 5.4.2, this includes stance adverbs (epistemic: *actually, really, definitely,* and *obviously*; and style: *literally, genuinely*, and *honestly*) and intensifiers (*really*, *proper, absolutely, completely, totally,* and swearwords). Other devices with a similar function in certain contexts are clause-final *like* and right dislocation of pronoun tags. Right dislocation is the use of a clause-final demonstrative or personal pronoun that is co-referential with the subject of the sentence (Moore and Snell 2011: 97).

Most of this literature review focuses on emphatic adverbs. While the functional similarity between these and other emphatic devices is acknowledged and explored, this project agrees with Cheshire (2005c: 97) that including all of them under the same analytic variable would lack credibility (given their formal and discourse-dependent differences) (see also Snell 2008: 208, 212). Still, the discussion will briefly look at variation and change studies of clause-final *like* and right dislocation. The studies carried out on these two features come closer to the idea of variationist research (or 'variational', see Corrigan and Diskin (2019: 9)) than those on emphatic adverbs, as discussed below.

Since Quirk et al.'s (1985) definition, emphasisers have rarely been studied as a category *per se*, as noted by Schweinberger (2020: 245) and Simon-Vandenbergen and Aijmer (2007b: 259). Still, the function of emphasis, as in strengthening the illocutionary force or truth value of an utterance, is often explicitly invoked in studies of stance adverbs (Aijmer 2002, 2008, 2016a; Biber 2006; Conrad and Biber 1999; Diani 2008; Guiller and Durndell 2006; Holmes 1995; Pérez-Paredes and Bueno-Alastuey 2019; Simon-Vandenbergen and Aijmer 2007a; Waters 2008) and intensifiers (Aijmer 2016b, 2018a, 2020; Cacchiani 2009; Carretero 2012; Lorenz 2002; Núñez-Pertejo and Palacios-Martínez 2018; Palacios-Martínez and Núñez-Pertejo 2014b; Partington 1993; Stenström 2000). This project unifies a group of adverbs that have been previously studied as performing the function of emphasis, independently of what other semantic meanings or pragmatic functions they

might also convey and perform. These pragmatic functions are not disregarded and are essential to understand the choice of form (see §3.2.1 below).

Bondi (2008) is among the few authors who studied a group of forms called 'emphatics'.[15] Her definition of the category, however, is almost equivalent to that of epistemic stance adverbs of certainty: 'expressions used to increment the degree of certainty and increase or strengthen the illocutionary force of the statement[, attributing] a truth value or importance to what is being emphasized' (Bondi 2008: 33). Other authors analyse a similar function of emphasis in a group that includes modal verbs like *must*, pragmatic particles like *of course*, modal adverbs like *certainly*, and intensifiers like *absolutely, totally* and *so* (see e.g. 'boosting devices' in Holmes 1995: 77; and 'stance markers' in Myers 2010: 269). This project's definition of the variable is most similar to those studies, although strictly focusing on adverbs as a form. This way, the category of emphasisers here acknowledges the similarities between stance markers and intensifiers (Aijmer 2020: 144; Bondi 2008: 39; Carretero 2012: 90; Lorenz 2002: 150–52; Quirk et al. 1985: 583): they both contribute to the expressivity and subjectivity of the message, add non-truth-conditional meaning, may perform textual and/or interpersonal functions beyond their meanings of degree and truth-attesting, and reinforce the truth-value and force of utterances. In fact, as noted by Cheshire (2005c: 97), the category of emphasis has also been analysed under the term 'intensity', which subsumes intensification and is 'at the heart of social and emotional expression' (Labov 1984: 43).

However, there are two problems with the overarching and rather simplistic definition of emphasis as a function (Moore and Snell 2011: 101–02; Pearce 2017: 78).[16] First, emphasis is argued to be 'under-specified', ignoring 'social and pragmatic effects' (Moore and Snell 2011: 102), and 'ill-defined', 'lacking theoretical rigour' and 'analytic value' (Cheshire 2005c: 97). Second, the consideration of these features as simply emphasisers or markers of 'intensity' (see Labov 1984) entails that they would be functionally equivalent to each other (Snell 2008: 208). Macaulay (1988, 2005) compared the distribution of five different intensity devices (left dislocation, right dislocation, NP-fronting, *it*-clefts, and demonstrative focusing), considering them to be ways of doing the same thing, that is, in complementary distribution. A blanket grouping of emphatic

[15] Other authors that also use the label 'emphatics' grouped forms that are some distance from this project's concept of emphasisers. For example, Biber and Finegan (1989: 122) have a very restricted list of emphatics: only intensifiers *so, real,* and *really*, emphatic operator DO, and other forms like *a lot, for sure, more, most* and *such a*. In comparison, Precht (2008: 92) has a long list of emphatics, which includes e.g. intensifiers such as *absolutely, so,* and *totally*, but also quantifiers such as *full, most, much*, *a lot*, linking adverbs such as *anyway*, and focus particles such as *just, only,* and *even*.

[16] These issues have mainly been discussed in studies of right dislocation, yet they apply to the study of emphasisers as a whole.

adverbs with, for example, the phenomenon of right dislocation would ignore the multifunctionality of each separate form and device, and the speaker's agency in choosing right dislocation over an emphatic adverb (Snell 2008: 209–12).

It is important to consider the scope and affective and evaluative load of different forms, and their social value (Snell 2018: 21) (see e.g. the end of §3.2.2 for a discussion of the social value of right dislocation among young speakers). Context, both in ethnographic (Moore 2003: 193) and discourse terms (Cheshire 2005c: 100, 102), is paramount in understanding any emphatic device —and in turn, any discourse-pragmatic feature. While an accurate analysis of social value and meaning requires ethnographic work (Snell 2008: 214), which is not part of this project, a breakdown of the functions for which emphasis is exploited helps us to understand the choice of different emphatic devices and adds a level of theoretical rigour to emphasis as an overarching function.

Together with the fact that adverbs in this group have rarely been studied together, the intrinsic multifunctionality and context-dependence that characterises them prevents a strict variationist study of their social and linguistic distribution (Carretero 2012: 69; Lewis 2006: 44; Pichler 2010: 589; Schiffrin 1987: 71; Waters 2016: 41; see also the discussion in §5.4). This means that, in contrast with the wealth of largely comparable variationist research on intensifiers, the type of analysis applied to emphasisers is (i) generally split into stance studies and intensification studies, and (ii) of a different nature to studies of variation and change.

There is a range of corpus-based studies that aim to provide a comprehensive description of the functions of emphasisers, by either tracking their development diachronically or surveying data in Present Day English. They tend to focus on only one or two forms at once: e.g. *actually* (Aijmer 2002, 2016a; Myers 2010; Oh 2000; Taglicht 2001; Waters 2008), *really* (Diani 2008; Myers 2010; Paradis 2003), *definitely* and *certainly* (Aijmer 2008; Simon-Vandenbergen and Aijmer 2007b, 2007a), *obviously* (Aijmer 2008; Simon-Vandenbergen and Aijmer 2007a; Tagliamonte and Smith 2018), and *absolutely* and *totally* (Aijmer 2016b, 2020; Carretero 2012; McManus 2012; Palacios-Martínez and Núñez-Pertejo 2014b; Tao 2007). There is also a selection of intensification studies that partly look at contexts of non-degree-marking emphasis (e.g. Macaulay 2006 for *pure*; Núñez-Pertejo and Palacios-Martínez 2018 for *proper*; and Tagliamonte and Roberts 2005, Zwicky 2011, and Kuha 2005 for *so*). Generally, most of these studies do not intend to compare the proportions of use of different emphasisers, but rather analyse their uses to check what functional niches each fills.

There are a small number of studies that have analysed the distribution and uses of emphasisers either across varieties of English (see e.g. Aijmer 2016a; Precht 2003; Tagliamonte

and Smith 2018) or across languages (see e.g. Beltrama and Staum Casasanto 2021; Carretero 2012; Hassler 2015). Contrastive studies are not as relevant for the purpose of this project, but they provide further evidence for the description of the functions of English emphasisers, such as *absolutely* in Carretero's (2012) study and *obviously* in Hassler's (2015). The cross-varietal differences found by Aijmer (2016a) and Precht (2003) serve to enrich the understanding of each form. For example, *absolutely, obviously* and *of course* have been found to be more common in British English and to carry an affective meaning absent in American English (Precht 2003: 253–54). Precht's results can provide an indication of the frequency, functions, and meanings we can expect to see in Tyneside English. Tagliamonte and Smith (2018) found a marked increase in the frequency of *obviously* in recent times both in British and Canadian English.

Another fruitful area of research in the analysis of emphasisers is academic discourse (e.g. Biber 2006; Bondi 2008; Diani 2008; Guiller and Durndell 2006). These studies focus on the differences between instructors' and learners' language, spoken and written discourse, and across academic fields. Again, their findings are only relevant here inasmuch as they provide a fuller picture of the functions of different forms and their establishment in the language.

Research on academic discourse and studies outside that field have come to similar findings regarding differences across registers. In general terms, stance adverbs, both epistemic stance adverbs and style stance adverbs, are more common in spoken language (Biber 2006: 106; Biber et al. 1999: 859–60; Conrad and Biber 1999: 67). More specifically, *really, actually, definitely, obviously*, and *absolutely* occur much more frequently in speech than in writing, while *certainly* shows the opposite trend (Aijmer 2020: 145; Carretero 2012: 74; Diani 2008: 303; Oh 2000: 249; Simon-Vandenbergen and Aijmer 2007b: 219, 2007a: 424; Taglicht 2001: 1). This pattern is replicated in the spoken dataset analysed in this project: there are zero occurrences of *certainly*, whereas all the others mentioned above are relatively frequent (see §7.1).

In terms of social predictors, there has not been as much work done on emphasisers and age as on intensifiers, yet there are interesting findings regarding teenage trends. In comparison, the study of stance and gender has been a fruitful area of research, mainly motivated by discussions of power and assertiveness.

Section 3.2.1 below summarises the functions discussed in different descriptive studies per emphasiser (adverbs, clause-final *like*, and right dislocation). Such taxonomies provide a framework for the qualitative analysis of functions in Chapter 7. Section 3.2.2. discusses the findings on emphasisers and age, while Section 3.2.3 focuses on gender.

Actually and *definitely* have been fully analysed in this project. However, neither the background literature nor the results in the sample are discussed in detail, for two main reasons.

First, *actually* carries a characteristic contrastive overtone that sets it apart from the other forms. Second, and most importantly, results from the studies of other emphasisers yield more novel and revealing findings: uses of *really* spill over the categories of boosting and emphasising; *obviously, literally, genuinely,* and *honestly* reflect patterns of grammaticalisation that have been largely unexplored in previous work; and clause-final *like* and right dislocation showcase both non-adverbial emphasis and localised emphatic devices. In comparison, the analysis of *actually* and *definitely* is consistent with previous trends that have been attested across different varieties, demographics, and corpora (for a brief summary of the findings, see Chapter 7 and Appendices XIV and XV).

3.2.1. Descriptive studies and overview of functions

This section aims to untangle the functions that emphasis has in the discourse-pragmatic dynamics of conversation, in order to offer a more precise understanding of what emphasis is and what it is used for (following on from Cheshire 2005c: 101). The descriptions that follow reflect a combination of the functions attested in previous studies, together with some that are found in this project's dataset but had not been specified in previous work. For each emphasiser, a small number of macro functions are presented, and these are further broken down into more specific functions. These categorisations are not meant to be hermetic. At times they blend into each other, and in some cases one particular token of an emphasiser could be analysed as performing more than one function. Examples from the dataset compiled for the present project will be provided for each function, although more detailed descriptions and analyses of these are provided in Chapter 7. At the end of each subsection there is a table summarising the functions for each emphasiser, for ease of reference.

Really

Really is an epistemic stance marker of reality and actuality (Biber et al. 1999: 854) which strengthens the force of a statement (Diani 2008: 297). *Really* might also carry a nuance of counter-expectation, like *actually* (Diani 2008: 317; OED 2008 adv.2 and adj A.1.a). *Really* is often discussed as a form that is difficult to analyse (Biber et al. 1999: 857–58; Stenström et al. 2002: 147–48), particularly in medial positions, where it has developed an intensifying meaning similar to *truly, indeed* and *very* (OED 2008 A.1.b). It is not clear whether medial *really* is used as an epistemic stance marker at a clausal level or an intensifier with local scope over the following item. Some authors have argued that the degree meaning is only possible when preceding gradable scalar heads (Biber et al. 1999: 857, 858; Lorenz 2002: 155; Paradis 2003: 216). Others consider that all pre-adjectival

instances of *really* are cases of intensification (Diani 2008: 301, 302, 316; Stenström 1986: 151; Stenström et al. 2002: 150). In this project, *really* is classed as a booster before any type of adjective (see §6.2.1 for a detailed discussion). Before describing the labels and functions of emphasiser *really* used here, it is important to review Paradis's (2003) taxonomy.

Paradis (2003) revisited Stenström's (1986) description of *really* and explained its multifunctionality in semantic-pragmatic terms, rather than position or intonation, which she considered formal clues rather than criteria. She identified three main functions of *really*: a truth-attesting function, subjective emphasis of the situation, and reinforcement of a scalar property (i.e. intensification). Truth-attesting *really* (i) conveys a purely objective lexical meaning, (ii) is prosodically and discoursively salient, (iii) acts over whole propositions, and (iv) can occur in any adverbial position in the clause, including the peripheries (Paradis 2003: 215) (see e.g. (7)). The other two uses of *really* are pragmatic: they convey meanings that are schematic and subjective, communicate speaker's involvement and expressivity, and are non-salient in prosodic and discourse terms. Emphasiser *really* has scope over situations as denoted by verbs and adjectives, and tends to appear pre-modifying either word class (Paradis 2003: 215) (see e.g. (8)). Intensifier *really* has scope over a scalar property, that is scalar adjectives, and thus it always pre-modifies them (Paradis 2003: 216) (see e.g. (9)).

(7) Paradis's (2003) truth-attester *really*
a. Everywhere's the same, *really* (**Rebecca**, F, 17, Ben01f2_B).
b. [Asked about how often he goes to the cinema] Only *really* when there's something like out that I want to see (**James**, M, 17, Sc01m2_B).

(8) Paradis's (2003) emphasiser *really*
a. I know teenage skin and your skin must be *really* suffering under all that make-up (**Melissa**, F, 19, 2017_SEL2091_031_B).
b. It did actually *really* help me (**Jane**, F, 19, 2017_SEL2091_080_A).

(9) Paradis's (2003) intensifier *really*
a. We were like *really* happy and stuff (**Declan**, M, 12, Ccc05m1_A).
b. We wore one of those *really* cringey, urgh, the *really* cringey brands where you'd walk around and you'd think 'I am cool' (**Beth**, F, 20, 2017_SEL2091_031_A).

Functions are interrelated in the sense that reinforcement implies emphasis, which in turn implies truth-attesting (Paradis 2003: 194). These connections make the truth-attesting and emphasising functions very difficult to tease apart, as illustrated in the examples above, since emphatic uses still carry traces of the reality meaning.

In order to offer a comprehensive account of *really*, the description of functions that follows is based on Paradis's (2003) taxonomy, but includes some modifications that account for meanings and functions attested in this study's sample and in other works (e.g. Biber et al. 1999; Coates 1996; Diani 2008; Myers 2010; OED 2008; Stenström et al. 2002). There are three macro-functions of *really*: reality-attester *really*, booster *really*, and question *really*. The latter two are more specific and have fewer functional layers than reality-attester *really*. As such, they will be described first.

Booster *really* covers the intensifier uses of *really*, used for degree-marking or simply emphasis, with no particular reference to reality. Contrary to Paradis's (2003) reinforcer *really* and similar definitions, booster *really* here includes the pre-modification of non-scalar heads. Also, in comparison with descriptions that focus on adjectival heads, booster *really* in this project also pre-modifies verbs and other items, in line with the definition in the OED (2008 A.1.b). The boosting of adjectives is analysed in depth in Chapter 6, and therefore the cases discussed in Chapter 7 will illustrate the boosting (and in turn, emphasis) of other parts of speech. Booster *really* always occurs in medial position and has local scope over the following item (e.g. (10)-(12)).

(10) I've only been to like two places like to Turkey and Spain [**Interviewer**: Oh]. I *really* enjoyed it, I like like going and exploring new things and stuff, so I enjoyed it (**Rebecca**, F, 17, Ben01f2_B).

(11) Sometimes I'm eating a Kitkat like a normal chocolate bar just to *really* hurt people's feelings (**Callum**, M, 19, 2017_SEL2091_043).

(12) My parents are *really* into hiking and stuff (**Matthew**, M, 17, Sc04m2_A).

Particularly in the pre-modification of verbs, booster *really* is at times ambiguous with reality-attester *really*. The main difference is that booster *really* is furthest from the reality meaning. As such, reality-attester *really* can often be paraphrased by *in reality* or *actually*, whereas booster *really* cannot —instead, it can usually be paraphrased by the phrases *a lot* or *very much* (particularly in the context of scalar verbs). Another difference is that booster *really* is never negated. In cases of post-negator *really,* we speak of either a moderator in contexts preceding scalar adjectives and verbs (excluded from analysis) or truth-insistent *really* in any other context (a subtype of reality-attester *really* presented below). Still, there is no clear-cut way of consistently telling these two uses apart, given that booster *really* has grammaticalised from reality-attester *really* and there are still ambiguous contexts (e.g. (13) —see Chapter 4 on grammaticalisation for a fuller discussion, and Chapter 7 for more examples).

(13) [Samantha is explaining why she wouldn't like to read people's minds] It's kind of hard to explain… Like… If someone *really* hates you… (**Samantha**, F, 13, Ccc02f1_A) [coded as both booster and truth-insistent *really*].

Question *really* is used as a reactive response that expresses mirativity (e.g. (14)). Mirativity is the semantic feature that marks the newness, unexpectedness, surprise or novelty of the information (Simon-Vandenbergen and Aijmer 2007b: 36). This may also come with a sceptical overtone, as a reality-checker (e.g. (15)) (Diani 2008: 317; Myers 2010: 269; Paradis 2003: 198–99; OED 2008 A.2.b).

(14) **Interviewer**: Would you say there's a favourite one [=soap opera] that you would…?
Lewis: Er probably Corrie.
I: Is Corrie Coronation Street?
L: Yeah.
I: Ah, okay, right, I had never heard it being called Corrie.
L: *Really?* I thought everyone called it Corrie (Sc01m2).

(15) **Interviewer**: Do you behave?
Bryan: Yeah.
Phil: *Really?*
B: I do, he doesn't (Ccc01m1).

Reality-attester *really* conveys the epistemic stance meaning of reality. It subsumes the truth-attester and emphasiser uses in Paradis's (2003) work, since there is much ambiguity involved in deciding whether the reality to which the speaker is appealing is objective or subjective. Whichever way it is, the mere reference to reality is considered an emphatic device. In some contexts, this use of *really* is the prime example of emphasisers used for hedging, in the sense that they emphasise reality or truth to soften the statement in some way (Coates 1996: 154; see also Coates 2003, and the discussion below in §3.2.3 regarding assertiveness and emphasis). Reality-attester *really* is highly mobile and may occur both peripherally and medially. It may make plain reference to reality, with no other clear interpersonal or textual functions (e.g. (16) and (17)).

(16) I don't speak a lot of Geordie, *really* (**Tristan**, M, 17, Sc02m2_B).

(17) It's up to me [=my] parents, *really* (**Charlie**, M, 12, Ccc06m1_B).

More commonly, it may have the following uses and meanings:

(18) Contrastive linking: [Declan is explaining that Newcastle United supporters can vote in some club decisions] But I I think it's just for like to make us feel like we're having an input when *really* it's like doesn't change anything (**Declan**, M, 12, Ccc05m1_A).

(19) Truth-insistent:

a. [Lewis is talking about some mock 'dad selfies' they pretend to take for fun] We just kind of like take the mick, so kind of take them, but people look at us as if like we're actually *really* taking them but really we're just like taking the mick out of them (**Lewis**, M, 17, Sc01m2_A).

b. I don't *really* argue with them (**Laura**, F, 14, Ccc03f1_A).

(20) Modesty: I don't *really* understand boxing (**Emily**, F, 19, 2017_SEL2091_080_B).

(21) Self-emphasis: It's entertaining, *really* (**Charlie**, M, 12, Ccc06m1_B).

(22) Restriction or simplification: I only *really* see my mam if I get home before she's went [=gone] to bed (**Jeremy**, M, 19, 2017_SEL2091_021_A).

(23) Closure: [When asked about her plans with friends] Just go out, *really*, listen to music, sit in someone's house. Nothing, *really* (**Erin**, F, 16, Ben01f2_A).

(24) Mirative question: [Tim and Tristan are speaking about a fight Tim had on the pitch, to which Tristan says:] Is that, is that *really* why you pushed him, just for that? (**Tristan**, M, 17, Sc02m2_B).

Table 2. Functions of *really* as identified in this project's corpus and previous research

Function	Description	Usual features
REALITY-ATTESTER	**Reference to reality. Least delexicalised use**	**Highly mobile**
Closure	Textual function. Marks the end of the turn of the speaker, and signals there is no more to say about a topic.	Usually final following non-committal expressions like *that's about it*, *not much, anything, same.*
Contrastive linking	Textual function. Expresses contrast with a previous statement or implied argument	Similar to mild/linking uses of *actually*
Mirative question	Reinforces mirativity in reactive questions to express surprise, unexpectedness, or scepticism	Medial. Occurs within a question.
Modesty	Admits lack of knowledge, or the speaker's wrongdoing or behaviour in hindsight	Lack of knowledge: usually around negated verbs of cognition
Restriction or simplification	Restriction: delimits the reality to which the statement applies. Simplification: marks there is a simple answer or justification for some situation.	Restriction: often together with *just* and *only*
Self-emphasis	Reinforces an opinion.	Peripheral position. Occurs in the actual opinion itself.
Truth-insistent	Emphasises how the reality fits into what has been said or the term used for it (metalinguistic)	Medial with local scope In positive utterances: contrastive nuance

		In negative utterances (including response *not really*): under scope of negation; reality does not meet what has been said or the term used for it
BOOSTER	**Degree-marking. No reference to reality**	**Medial with local scope over following item (scalar or non-scalar). Never negated (if negated, it's a moderator).**
STAND-ALONE QUESTION (*really?*)	**Reactive question to express surprise, unexpectedness, or scepticism.**	**Used independently, fully detached from the clause.**

Obviously

Obviously is an epistemic stance marker of evidentiality or source of knowledge (Biber et al. 1999: 855). Evidentiality is a stance category that signals the source of information for the content of a proposition, used to either reinforce an utterance (emphasis) or reduce the commitment to the utterance by passing on the 'regress obligation' to another instance (hedging) (Hassler 2015: 183, 204–05). Although the OED entry for *obviously* amalgamates all of its current uses under one meaning (OED 2004), there are differences between its manner and stance-marking uses. Manner *obviously*, which is always medial and often pre-modified, means 'in an obvious way', referring to how some action has taken place or the property of some entity. This meaning has naturally developed into a stance marker, in ambiguous contexts where what is done in a clear and perceptible way is understood to be obvious to the speaker and to others (Simon-Vandenbergen and Aijmer 2007a: 439–40). As such, stance-marking *obviously* not only marks the source of knowledge but also a sense of expectation (Hassler 2015: 204–05; Simon-Vandenbergen and Aijmer 2007b: 297).

The unmarked and most frequent position for *obviously* is medial, followed by initial position (see e.g. Tagliamonte and Smith 2018). Its scope is argued to be always global over the whole utterance, that is it behaves as a parenthetical when placed medially (Simon-Vandenbergen and Aijmer 2007b: 149–50). However, some examples in the current dataset indicate that there are contexts where *obviously* appears to have local scope over the following item (e.g. (25)).

(25) I can do oven stuff, *obviously* pasta, I actually love pasta, you know? I cook loads of pasta just for meself [=myself] (laughs) (**Tristan**, M, 17, Sc02m2_B).

The classification of occurrences of *obviously* has traditionally been done according to either the type of evidence they rely on or the rhetorical functions they perform. The one drawn out here

combines both criteria, since the type of evidence often dictates the rhetorical function. Three types of *obviously* are distinguished: manner, evidence-based, and assumptive. The manner use is to be excluded from the analysis as it adds propositional rather than pragmatic meaning (see (26), the only example of manner *obviously* in the data).

(26) [Jeremy is comparing the expectations of Liverpool Football Club and Newcastle United] I think the funny thing is, for all Liverpool are like *quite obviously* a better team, ah it's easier to wind me up because so much more is expected of Liverpool (**Jeremy**, M, 19, 2017_SEL2091_021_A).

Evidence-based and assumptive *obviously* are differentiated in terms of the type of evidence they rely on, which in turn shapes their rhetorical functions. The reference to a source of information is clearer in evidence-based uses, while assumptive *obviously* relies on subjective expectations. As such, assumptive *obviously* is considered a further grammaticalised use of *obviously* that has undergone subjectification (Aijmer 2008: 70–72). The reference to common sense and shared knowledge of the world is a grey area, since great part of common sense is largely subjective and based on assumptions. Several functions have been specified for each type of *obviously*. Here are some examples of each:

- Evidence-based *obviously*:

(27) Hearsay/Weak: A lot of people who don't, *obviously*, have a lot to give, they do very well to give a lot of money into put like charities like Catholic and things, which do give relief (**Matthew**, M, 17, Sc04m2_A).

(28) Context-related: [Jack is recounting a story from primary school. He and Callum had kicked some grass piles over that they shouldn't have. All the classmates had seen them do it, and Callum had admitted doing it, but Jack kept denying it] Everyone in the class was like 'well, you *obviously* did' (laughs) […] And I just (laughs) I just buckled and started absolutely wailing in her office just like 'I'm really sorry, I don't know why I've lied about it, I *obviously* have kicked the grass piles over' and then I got a big telling-off (**Jack**, M, 19, 2017_SEL2091_043_A).

(29) Concessive: You know, *obviously* no criticism to the to the Literature side, but I think that's a lot more, well, technically it is more flowery I guess (**Beth**, F, 20, 2017_SEL2091_031_A).

- Assumptive *obviously*:

(30) Authoritative: unattested in this project's sample.

(31) Solidarity: [Abbie, Sarah, and the interviewer are talking about a typical night out]
Interviewer: You don't care, you just don't care, do you? when you're drunk.
Abbie: Yeah, and *obviously* you go to Maccie's later (2017_SEL2091_078).

(32) Justification: Vietnam was good, it's just rubbish everywhere, coz er *obviously* not as rich country as Dubai (**Phil**, M, 12, Ccc01m1_B).

(33) Mitigation: I go to the match with me [=my] dad so I… every weekend it's me and him. And *obviously* he buys me beer a- at like before and after the game, so I think he's a pretty good dad, aye, I I get on I get on pretty well with him (**Tristan**, M, 17, Sc02m2_B).

In recent data from the UK and Canada, *obviously* appears to have overtaken any other evidential in speech, including *of course* (Tagliamonte and Smith 2018). It has been argued that the advanced grammaticalisation of *obviously* is a possible reason for its higher occurrence in conversation in comparison with other forms such as *clearly* (Simon-Vandenbergen and Aijmer 2007a: 423, 442, 2007b: 198).

Table 3. Functions of *obviously* as identified in this project's corpus and previous research

Function	Description	Usual features
MANNER	**Lexical, propositional meaning, appealing to how some action or property is evident and not hidden.**	**Can be paraphrased by 'in an obvious way'. Always medial and often pre-modified**
EVIDENCE-BASED	**Stance meaning. Reference to obviousness is based on evidence available to all interlocutors**	**Often in peripheral positions and with global scope**
Concessive	Buffers a face-threatening comment, a surprising remark, or contrast. Evidence for the concession is in common sense.	Often in the constructions *but obviously* or *obviously…but*
Context-related	Evidence for the claim is present in the physical or linguistic context	
Weak/Hearsay	Marks that the evidence is weak, based on hearsay	Can be paraphrased by 'apparently'. Rare use
ASSUMPTIVE	**Further delexicalised use. Reference to obviousness is based on subjective assumptions or one-sided evidence**	**Often in peripheral positions and with global scope**
Authority	Imposes and presupposes shared knowledge. Used as a rhetorical strategy to make claims difficult to contest with or introduce ideas that should be taken for granted.	
Justification	Reinforces the justification for some controversial or face-threatening remark.	Occurs in the justification to a controversial remark.
Mitigation	Softens a controversial or face-threatening remark by marking it as shared opinion by everyone	Occurs in the controversial remark itself.
Solidarity	Creates shared knowledge among interlocutors in narratives where	

knowledge is not shared, to narrow the distance between speakers. Reinforces the shared knowledge in close-knit groups of friends.

Literally*, *genuinely* and *honestly

Literally, *genuinely* and *honestly* are style stance markers (Biber et al. 1999: 857), also known as style disjuncts (Quirk et al. 1985: 615), manner-of-speaking markers (Fraser 1996: 181), or speech act-related adjuncts (Huddleston and Pullum 2002: 773). They frame and comment on the act of speaking rather than the content itself. In other words, they provide information at a discourse-pragmatic level. They are different from other style stance markers in that they have a core meaning of truthfulness, veracity, and reality, and are therefore closely related to *really*, *actually*, *definitely*, and *obviously* (Powell 1992: 90; Swan 1988: 3, 16). Biber and Finegan (1988: 13) grouped them together under the label 'honestly adverbials' (*sincerely* and *frankly* also belong here, but they are absent from the conversations with Tyneside teenagers analysed in this project).

These three forms have not been studied in depth, even though the meaning of truthfulness has been associated with pragmatic markedness and emphasis (see e.g. Powell 1992: 76). Therefore, the functions described here draw on isolated comments on the forms in previous literature —particularly in the case of *literally*— and my own findings after surveying the Tyneside teenager sample. *Genuinely* and *honestly* will be briefly described first, followed by *literally*.

Despite the obvious semantic closeness between *genuinely* and *honestly*, the former is only described as a manner adverb meaning 'in a genuine manner' by the OED (1898) (probably due to the entry being outdated), whereas the definition of the latter includes other stance-marking and discourse-pragmatic uses (OED 2014). Apart from the original manner meaning of 'in a dignified manner' (OED 2014 1 and 3.a), *honestly* is described as broadly synonymous with *genuinely*, *actually*, and *really* when it refers to thought, belief or intention, meaning 'in all seriousness' and expressing incredulity in some contexts (OED 2014 3.b). Used parenthetically or as a sentence adverb, *honestly* can also express asseveration (i.e. emphasis) (OED 2014 4.a) or exasperation (OED 2014 4.b). All of these uses are attested for both *genuinely* and *honestly* in this project's sample. Generally, they are used in initial or medial position, and their scope tends to be global.

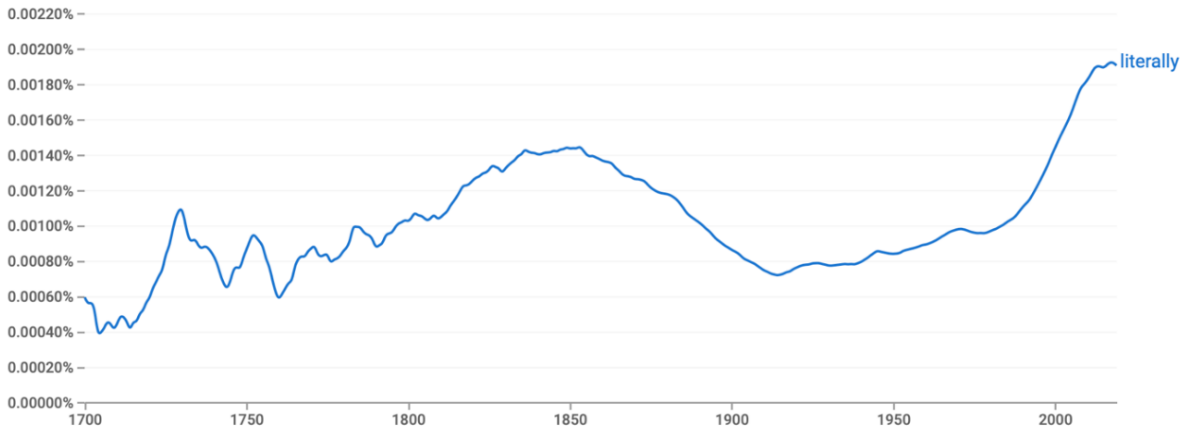
Literally is set apart from other style stance markers because of its metalinguistic import, that is, it emphasises that the term that follows is exactly what the speaker meant, not an exaggerated or metaphorical use (Huddleston and Pullum 2002: 775; OED 2011 I.1.b). Mirativity is also a core meaning of *literally*, as it is used with expressions that sound surprising or extreme.

This layer of meaning has developed into another use of *literally*, whereby it reinforces expressions that are either metaphorical, blatantly hyperbolic, or simply not open to second readings. The OED entry for *literally* describes this expressive use as colloquial and 'now one of the most common', and compares it with *virtually*, *completely*, *utterly*, and *absolutely* (OED 2011 I.1.c). Although this use of *literally* has been around since at least the 18th century (see e.g. (34) and (35), OED 2011 I.1.c), it could be behind the recent rise in frequency of the form in more recent times (see e.g. the rates of *literally* in Google NGrams, Figure 3).

(34) 1769: He is a fortunate man to be introduced to such a party of fine women at his arrival; it is *literally* to feed among the lilies (F. Brooke. *Hist. Emily Montague* IV. ccxvii. 83).

(35) 1825: Lady Kirkclaugh, who, *literally* worn to a shadow, died of a broken heart (J. Denniston *Legends Galloway* 99).

Figure 3. Frequency of *literally* in English across time (*y* axis shows raw frequency)



Source: Google NGrams

Given its apparent paradoxical nature, the new function of *literally* has been criticised as being 'literally absurd', typical of 'careless and informal speech' (Quirk et al. 1985: 619), misused and overused (see e.g. Boston.com 2011; Masters 2012; and the parody comic by Inman 2020 at *The Oatmeal* website), and generally wrong (see discussion in Merriam-Webster 2021). Against the definition of *literally* meaning *virtually*, and thus reversing the original sense (OED 2011 I.1.c), I argue that *literally* has not reversed its meaning. Simply, it has expanded its contexts of occurrence and now can function as an emphasiser of hyperbolic expressions as well, similar to what happens with intensifiers and non-scalar heads. The mirative meaning of its metalinguistic specification function has been reanalysed to be used with any type of hyperbolic expression, even when they are not to be understood in a literal sense. This use was in fact already noted by Bolinger (1972: 107) in his study of intensification, and by Powell (1992: 79), who used *literally* as an example of

semantic loss leading to subjectification and 'heightened expressive meaning'. Powell (1992: 101) argued that *literally* developed emphatic uses by virtue of its partial synonymy with *really* and *actually*. Similarly, Rhee (2016: 399–400, 409) groups it together with *genuinely, really* and *actually* as a marker of reality that has developed emphatic and intensification uses.

The emphatic uses of these forms identified in this project's sample are:

(36) Metalinguistic:

a. [Anna and Scarlett do not think the body type of Barbie dolls is relevant] Like with the body types, like it's *literally* a toy, it's like plastic, like, so why would you care if… […] when it's like when it's real life like that's understandable but when it's like *literally* a toy, then it's kind of… (**Scarlett**, F, 16, Jpa01f2_A).

b. Some of our players like wouldn't step back on the pitch coz like they were *genuinely* terrified that he was gonna do something to them (**Declan**, M, 12, Ccc05m1_A).

c. He's *honestly* great in it, like he plays a great character (**Tim**, M, 16, Sc02m2_A).

(37) Mirative reinforcer/Self-emphasis:

a. The cameras were *literally* bombarded around them (**Claire**, F, 17, Ben03f2_A).

b. I *genuinely* didn't, I don't really like the club (**Declan**, M, 12, Ccc05m1_A).

c. *Honestly*, they were some of my favourite days (**Tim**, M, 16, Sc02m2_A).

(38) Modesty: [Beth is explaining how she's always mispronounced 'tupper' as 'tapper'] *Literally* didn't know it was wrong and I only f- this was… *Literally,* I only discovered this last year (**Beth**, F, 20, 2017_SEL2091_031_A).

(39) Frustration:
Jane: And then he was nearly crying like he was literally kneeling on the pavement nearly crying.
Emily: Mmm *honestly*… (2017_SEL2091_080).

(40) Agreement/Confirmation: [Claire is explaining that she went to a beach in the Caribbean where planes flew very close down]
Interviewer: (laughs) You have to hold everything like 'yeah, there's a plane coming'.
Claire: *Literally*. Just like s- yeah, *literally* (laughs) it's so bad, so bad (Ben03f2).

Table 4. Functions of *literally*, *genuinely*, and *honestly*, as identified in this project's corpus and previous research

Function	Description	Usual features
Manner (*genuinely, honestly*)	Lexical, propositional meaning, appealing to the authenticity or honesty involved in a situation or property	Can be paraphrased by 'in a genuine or honest way'
Metalinguistic (*literally*)	Reinforces that the term that follows is exactly what was meant and is not exaggerated. Disambiguates metaphorical expressions. Least delexicalised stance meaning of *literally*	Can be paraphrased by 'in a literal way'. Always with local scope

Mirative reinforcer / Self-emphasis (*literally, genuinely*, *honestly*)	Reinforces the mirativity of an opinion, comment, or situation. Used for enhanced expressivity, not for disambiguation.	Used with hyperbolical expressions that do not need disambiguation or are not meant to be disambiguated. Can have global scope.
Modesty (*literally, genuinely*, *honestly*)	Admits lack of knowledge.	Usually around negated verbs of cognition
Frustration (*honestly*)	Emphatic reaction expressing annoyance or frustration. Most delexicalised use of *honestly*	Used either independently or in peripheral positions.
Response (*literally*)	Emphatic reaction to mark agreement or confirmation. Most delexicalised use of *literally*	Used independently, fully detached from the clause

Intensifiers

In this project, all intensifiers are considered emphasisers, as they not only mark degree, but highlight and reinforce the item they precede (Aijmer 2016b, 2018a, 2020; Cacchiani 2009; Carretero 2012; Lorenz 2002; Núñez-Pertejo and Palacios-Martínez 2018; Palacios-Martínez and Núñez-Pertejo 2014b; Partington 1993; Stenström 2000). By highlighting an item, they also mark the subjective stance of the speaker. Contrary to the other emphasisers in this project, the range of functions that intensifiers perform is more limited. At this point, it is worth distinguishing between boosters and maximisers.

The emphasis conveyed by boosters such as *really, so, proper*, and various swearwords is simply exploited for expressive and hyperbolic purposes. There are no further interpersonal or textual functions as is the case with the other emphasisers discussed in this project. Also, they are restricted to medial position with local scope. In comparison, maximisers such as *absolutely, completely* and *totally* have developed certainty and response-marker uses in a similar way to stance adverbs (see §4.5). The present section focuses on the uses of *proper, absolutely, completely,* and *totally* as described by previous work and attested in the data. Booster *really* has already been described at the beginning of this section, and there are no instances of other forms in contexts that have not already been explored in the study of intensification in Section 3.1 above or in Chapter 6. In the case of swearwords, what makes them different from other boosters is their potential to express annoyance in some contexts (e.g. (41) and (42)).

(41) He *fucking* drew the Sunderland jersey on my back (**Abbie**, F, 19, 2017_SEL2091_078_B).

(42) I *fucking* hate Bountys, the coconut bar (**Jack**, M, 19, 2017_SEL2091_043_A).

Proper occurs both as an adjective and as an adverb in the data. Its emphasiser uses are adverbial, although the only adverb meaning attested in its OED entry (OED 2007 C.2.a) is the degree-marking one, related to *thoroughly* and *extremely*. However, *proper* is also used in contexts where there is no degree marking involved, and it is used purely as a reinforcer of the item it precedes. Núñez-Pertejo and Palacios-Martínez (2018: 133–34) found this to be the case in MLE, where teenagers would use *proper* to modify non-scalar verbs (e.g. *hate*), non-gradable heads such as prepositional phrases (e.g. *proper out of her face*), and in quotative constructions (e.g. *She was proper like 'yeah, man'*). The diffusion of *proper* into non-degree-marking contexts could be related to the meanings of appropriateness and reality expressed by its adjectival uses (see §7.2.6). The exploration of the potential origins of its emphatic meaning helps relate *proper* to the other emphasisers in the set.

Previous studies found that *absolutely, completely* and *totally* have a wider range of uses, particularly in the case of *absolutely* (Aijmer 2020; Carretero 2012; McManus 2012; Palacios-Martínez and Núñez-Pertejo 2014b; Tao 2007). In line with previous findings, there are four main uses we distinguish here: manner, maximiser, certainty marker, and response marker. In their manner uses, these adverbs denote that an action has been carried out wholly or entirely (OED 2009 A.I.1.a for *absolutely*; OED 1989 for *completely*; OED 1989 sense a for *totally*). Those uses are attested in the data, but are not considered instances of emphasis because they add propositonal rather than pragmatic meaning.

As maximisers, *absolutely, completely* and *totally* mark that the meaning of a word should be understood in its highest degree. Often used with heads that already denote an extreme or categorical meaning, they add expressivity and liveliness to the message, rather than actual marking of degree (e.g. (43), (44), and (45)). As such, the label of 'maximiser' is argued to be redundant (McManus 2012: 75–76). The collocation with adjectives is briefly analysed in Section 6.1.2. In collocation with verbs, the maximiser use is differentiated from the manner one because the former always precedes the verb, whereas the latter most commonly follows it. There are ambiguous contexts in the case of *completely*, particularly in the idiomatic collocation with verbs like *forget, destroy,* and *plan. Absolutely* and *totally* can also be used to reinforce negation (e.g. (46) and (47)) (Aijmer 2016b: 86, 2020: 161–62; Palacios-Martínez 2016: 52).

(43) He took his gloves off and *absolutely* hammered the kid all over (**Declan**, M, 12, Ccc05m1_A).

(44) I don't want to not go out drinking and then wake up the next morning and find that one of my roommates just *completely* destroyed the toilet in the middle of the night (**Lizzie**, F, 17, Nsfc01f2_B).

(45) He's a he's like *totally* a granda, so like [**Interviewer**: Is he?] aye, he told us about the war but he just got anecdotes from Castle Leazes in the sixties (**Mick**, M, 20, 2017_SEL2091_032_A).

(46) There's *absolutely* no commitment whatso- to leave uni for the day (**Mick**, M, 20, 2017_SEL2091_032_A).

(47) [Charlotte is telling a story where she threw a chair at a teacher]
Charlotte: I got up the chair, threw it and she got in the way, I was like 'it was her fault for getting in the way like she shouldn't have moved' so…
Interviewer: Well, okay… (Claire laughs)
Ch: It was li- it wasn't like my fault (laughs).
Claire: Oh yeah, *totally* not your fault (in an ironic tone) (Ben03f2).

Absolutely has also developed a meaning of certainty, similar to *definitely* (Aijmer 2020: 155–58; Carretero 2012: 88–89; McManus 2012: 71). In this use, *absolutely* can act at a global level and moves more freely, gaining the ability to be used parenthetically. Although this meaning of *absolutely* is not attested in the dataset of Tyneside teenagers, the meaning of high certainty could be discerned from the token of *totally* in (48).

(48) [Melissa is reporting what was going through her head on her first day of university] Like 'oh first impressions mean everything, you have just *totally* made them think that you're a freak (laughs) because you can't speak loudly' (**Melissa**, F, 19, 2017_SEL2091_031_B).

Finally, *absolutely* and *totally* can also be used as emphatic response markers (Aijmer 2011: 222, 2016b: 89, 93; McManus 2012: 97, 206, 218; Tao 2007). Similar to *definitely*, they can mark either strong agreement/disagreement or affirmation/negation. In doing so, they combine with *yes/yeah* and *not*. These constitute heavily grammaticalised uses of the forms as independent discourse particles (e.g. (49), (50), and (51)).

(49) **Interviewer**: Would you feel like that has influenced your sort of northern English accent at all? Do you know what I mean?
Beth: *Absolutely yeah* (2017_SEL2091_031).

(50) **Beth**: We don't get taught a language to the extent that they do in terms of people who live in, I don't know, Spain.
Melissa: Mmm, *absolutely not* (2017_SEL2091_031).

(51) **Interviewer**: I'm just in the middle of organising it [=a trip to Australia] now. It's expensive, though, but (laughs)
Anna: Very.
Scarlett: *Totally*, especially the flights (Jpa01f2).

Clause-final *like*

The use of *like* as an emphatic device at the end of a clause has also been discussed, particularly in relation to northern Englishes in Britain, and Irish English (Beal 2008: 398; Beal et al. 2012: 92). The type of *like* discussed here (i.e. distinct from the lexical verb, conjunction, and preposition uses) has been classed as a discourse marker (e.g. Kallen 2006; Levey 2006; Schweinberger 2012), a discourse particle (e.g. Corrigan 2010), or a sentence adverb (e.g. D'Arcy 2005). More specifically, D'Arcy (2017: 14–15) defines *like* as a discourse marker in initial position —given its textual functions in discourse management— but as a discourse particle in medial or final positions —as it performs interpersonal functions. However, as demonstrated in several studies on the form, the textual and interpersonal meanings and functions are not always separate. With this in mind, this project follows Bartlett (2013) and Corrigan and Diskin (2019) in classifying *like* as a discourse-pragmatic marker, on the basis that this better accounts for its multifunctionality.

Initial and medial *like*, and the quotative construction *be like*, have been amply studied across varieties of English and different demographics (see e.g. Andersen 2001; Buchstaller and D'Arcy 2009; Dailey-O'Cain 2000; D'Arcy 2005, 2006, 2007, 2017; Ferrara and Bell 1995; Fuller 2003; Kallen 2006; Lamerichs and Te Molder 2009; Macaulay 2001; Romaine and Lange 1991; Schourup 1985; Schweinberger 2012; Tagliamonte 2005; Tagliamonte and D'Arcy 2004). In comparison, the literature focused on clause-final *like* is more limited. This is explained by the indications in previous work that clause-final *like* is (i) rare in English overall (Andersen 2001: 222; D'Arcy 2017: 13), (ii) a traditional British variant of the form that is in decline (Andersen 2001: 222; Levey 2006: 431; Romaine and Lange 1991: 249), and (iii) only saliently frequent in Irish English (see e.g. Corrigan 2010, 2015; Corrigan and Diskin 2019; Kallen 2006; Luckmann 2009; Schweinberger 2012) and northern varieties of British English (Bartlett 2013, Beal 2008: 398, Beal et al. 2012: 92, and Beal and Corrigan 2009 in Tyneside; Herat 2018 in Liverpool; Macaulay 2005, Miller and Weinert 1995, and Truesdale and Meyerhoff 2015 in Scotland). In fact, it has been argued that clause-final *like* in Tyneside might be a result of incoming Irish immigration in the 19th century (Beal and Corrigan 2009: 231–32). Bartlett's (2013) study of clause-final *like* in Tyneside is the only sociolinguistic analysis of the feature in the region where this project is set, and thus constitutes a valuable reference point.

Contrary to accounts of *like* being meaningless or a pause filler (see e.g. OED 2016 B.6.a, B.6.b; and the discussion in Miller and Weinert (1995: 367–68) regarding studies from the 1900s), it has been found to perform functions as a focus particle and introducer of new information, among others. Clause-final *like* in particular 'is a very unlikely candidate for a pause-filling or processing role' (Miller and Weinert 1995: 372); instead, it plays a key textual role in closing the speaker's narrative or turn (Corrigan 2010: 100, 2015: 50). In semantic-pragmatic terms, clause-

final *like* has wide (i.e. global) and backward scope (D'Arcy 2005: 69–71) and conveys a core meaning of anticipating objections and mitigation, derived from the approximation meaning of the form in other positions (Corrigan 2015: 51; Miller and Weinert 1995: 366). On the basis of those overarching features, clause-final *like* performs five main functions (based on Bartlett 2013; Corrigan 2010, 2015; Kallen 2006; Miller and Weinert 1995):

(52) Apologetic correction:
Bryan: I never get the chance to play his first team, I would smash them.
Phil: Yeah, you wouldn't, *like* (Ccc01m1).

(53) Mitigation of opinion: Aye, we love to sesh, *like* (**Tristan**, M, 17, Sc02m2_B).

(54) Closure: It [=London] is so iconic, though, like if you've ever been to Harrod's, it's like Fenwick's but prestige by a million and the things, the things they've got in there, like I was shocked there, *like* (**Jeremy**, M, 19, 2017_SEL2091_021_A).

(55) Emphasis on the need for information: I was like 'what the hell is he deeing [=doing], *like*?' (**Charlotte**, F, 18, Ben03f2_B)

(56) Asking for (dis)confirmation: You just get loads of different words used for different meanings [**Ian**: Yeah]. People just say what they want in a certain like tone of voice and you just, you you know what it means like do you know what I mean, *like*? (**Jeremy**, M, 19, 2017_SEL2091_021_A)

Table 5. Functions of clause-final *like* as identified in this project's corpus and previous research

Function	Description	Usual features
Apologetic correction	Softens a disagreement, counter-claim, objection or correction.	
Asking for (dis)confirmation	Reinforces the speaker's need for confirmation, due to either scepticism and surprise, or the need to clear misunderstandings. It may also be just phatic.	In *yes*/*no* questions
Closure	Textual function. Marks the end of the turn of the speaker, and signals there is no more to say about a topic.	
Emphasis on the need for information	Signals that the information sought by the question has not been provided yet or has not been elaborated enough.	In *wh*- questions
Mitigation of opinion	Softens a controversial or face-threatening remark.	Occurs in the controversial remark itself.

Right dislocation of pronoun tags

Right dislocation (RD) is the syntactic phenomenon whereby a clause is followed by a tag that is co-referential with the subject or object of the clause (Moore and Snell 2011: 97). This is a common construction in languages like French, where its functions have been amply studied (see e.g. Detges and Waltereit 2014). Following Durham (2007: 61–62, 2011: 261), there are three types of right dislocation in English: standard RD (examples from Durham's work, e.g. *I was a little angel*, *me*); expanded RD (e.g. *He stayed with this other woman, John did*); and reverse RD (e.g. *She got a great bargain, did her mum*). The type that has been identified as frequent in Tyneside is standard RD (Beal et al. 2012: 93; Pearce 2017: 77), so that type will be the focus of study here. Within standard RD (henceforth simply right dislocation or RD), the tag can be a noun phrase (e.g. (57) and (58)) or a personal or demonstrative pronoun (e.g. (59) and (60)).

(57) We just don't drink together, *me and my dad* (**Tim**, M, 16, Sc02m2_A).

(58) They call us [=me] the ringleader, *the teachers* (**Lewis**, M, 17, Sc01m2_A).

(59) I would annoy everyone, *me* (**Claire**, F, 17, Ben03f2_A).

(60) That's mad, *that* (**Mick**, M, 20, 2017_SEL2091_032_A).

Traditional grammars of English only illustrate this feature by referring to noun phrase tags (Huddleston and Pullum 2002: 1411; Quirk et al. 1985: 1310, 1417; Wales 1996: 43). They are presented as features typically found in colloquial spoken English in general, whereas pronoun tags, Snell (2008: 172) argues, are more subject to dialectal variation. Pronoun tags are also referred to as a colloquial feature in general (Biber et al. 1999: 957), but they are more common in the north of England (Pearce 2017: 77). Durham (2011: 277) even suggests that right-dislocated pronoun tags might have originated in the north. In fact, the little in-depth research that has been carried out on right-dislocated pronoun tags has been on northern varieties of British English (cf. Aijmer 1989 in London), from southernmost to northernmost: Moore in Bolton (Manchester) (Moore 2003; Moore and Snell 2011), Cheshire in Hull (Cheshire 2005c), Durham in York (Durham 2007, 2011), Snell in Teesside (Moore and Snell 2011; Snell 2008), and Macaulay in western Scotland (Macaulay 1988, 2005). Moore and Snell focus on the social meaning of these forms among teenage girls and young children, whereas Durham and Macaulay focus on their sociolinguistic distribution. Still, there is much to investigate about this feature (Durham 2011: 258). Right dislocation of pronoun tags is therefore the specific type of right dislocation phenomenon analysed in this project.

The works above provide enough evidence to form a comprehensive list of functions. As with the other emphatic features discussed in this project, pronoun tags do not add referential meaning to the main clause (Moore and Snell 2011: 101–02). The pronouns are discourse-old information and are, as such, propositionally redundant. This apparent redundancy, together with the end-focus principle (Quirk et al. 1985: 1356–57) and the use of the stronger object form (Macaulay 1988: 184), suggests that right-dislocated pronoun tags can be used for emphatic purposes (Petyt 1985, cited in Durham 2011; Shorrocks 1999: 87, cited in Moore 2003).

As a tool for text and discourse management, right-dislocated pronoun tags can perform the following two functions[17]:

(61) Phatic function: [Lewis is speaking about his English Language exams] Just descriptions and stuff, like in the exam it was 'describe like a bus journey'. That's just like boring, *that*. It's a bit like, it's like cliché and stuff (**Lewis**, M, 17, Sc01m2_A).

(62) Introduction of a new topic: [Jack, Callum, and the interviewer are discussing a nightclub that is now full of younger people] Seeing like me [=my] little sister's mates and stuff, like that's fucking lifting, what's, what's going on? […] Love downing a K-2, *me*, though (Callum, M, 19, 2017_SEL2091_043_B) [also coded as side-comment].

In the expression of subjectivity, right-dislocated pronoun tags can convey evaluative and affective stance. There are four main uses within this functional area:

(63) Self-emphasis: I couldn't believe when like Gaz's saying he's having a baby, I was like proper shocked, *me*. I'd never thought he'll settle down where he was (**Charlotte**, F, 18, Ben03f2_B).

(64) Choice-insistent:
James: Would you rather have amazingly fast typing or texting speed or be able to read ridiculously fast?
Lewis: Texting.
J: Would you?
L: Coz I don't read.
J: I'd rather read fast, *me* (Sc01m2).

(65) Reinforcer of commands: Unattested in the sample (e.g. *Get off, you*) (Snell 2008: 193–94).

(66) Side comment: I remember hearing some of the reasons why people had voted for Brexit and it was just utter nonsense, do you know what I mean, like? It really frustrated me, *that*. Coz I put a lot of work in making sure I knew what I was voting for (**Jeremy**, M, 19, 2017_SEL2091_021_A).

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[17] Aijmer (1989: 148) listed disambiguation as one of the textual functions performed by right-dislocated items. However, this seems to be a function performed by right-dislocated noun phrases, which disambiguate the meaning of non-specific pronouns in the main clause. For example: in *They got beat off Man United, Sunderland* (Phil, M, 12, Ccc01m1_B), right-dislocated *Sunderland* disambiguates *they*. The same applies to *me and my dad* in example (57) above, which disambiguates *we*; and to *the teachers* in (58), where the tag disambiguates *they*.

Table 6. Functions of the right dislocation of pronoun tags, as identified in this project's corpus and previous research

Function	Description	Usual features
TEXTUAL FUNCTIONS		**Usually paired with an evaluative function**
Introduction of a new topic	Marks a slight change of topic, usually in the speaker's interest.	
Phatic	Secures the attention of the addressee, marking the message as relevant.	
EVALUATIVE FUNCTIONS		
Choice-insistent	Reinforces the speaker's preferences and likings, possibly in contrast with their interlocutor's choice.	Tag is always *me*.
Reinforcer of commands	Strengthens a command, usually with a nuance of anger or annoyance.	Tag is always *you*.
Self-emphasis	Reinforces an opinion. This can mark shared opinion with interlocutor(s), present contrasting opinion, or emphasise a negative opinion about the interlocutor(s)	Occurs in the actual opinion itself. Tag is usually *me* or *that*. For negative opinions about the interlocutor(s), tag is *you* or *them*.
Side comment	Highlights a side comment in the middle of a narrative by emphasising the speaker's actions at the time or the speaker's stance towards the situation.	Often in narratives. Tag is usually *me* or *that*.

3.2.2. Emphasisers and age

Age has not often been a predictor tested by studies on emphasisers. However, the study of teenage conversation helps to hypothesise about the patterns of use of emphasisers in this age group. This section closes with a brief overview of the age distribution of clause-final *like* and right dislocation.

Conversation among adolescents has been characterised as an example of a high-involvement style, which includes dramatisation of narratives, abundance of expressive and emotional language, and attention to cooperative communication (Danesi 1997: 457–58; Macaulay 2005; Stenström 2003; Tannen 1984: 30). Previous studies have also found that teenagers are productive in their use of discourse-pragmatic markers, which accounts for their active

performance of interpersonal functions aimed at building rapport, expressing solidarity, and bonding with their interlocutors (Andersen 2001: 307; Barbieri 2008: 66; Jørgensen and Martínez 2010: 194; Moore and Podesva 2009; Moore and Snell 2011; Núñez-Pertejo and Palacios-Martínez 2018: 118–22; Stenström 2014: 14; Stenström and Jørgensen 2008). With these characteristics in mind, it would be reasonable to expect that emphasisers are particularly frequent in teenage speech.

On the other hand, teenagers have also been considered to be less concerned about politeness, solidarity, or linguistic cooperation (Andersen 2001: 13). Palacios-Martinez (2016: 71) suggests that teenagers 'tend to be more spontaneous, frank, direct and categorical in their statements' compared with adults. They may also mark reduced commitment to their utterances, which 'reflects [their] more general non-committal stance' (Andersen 2001: 304).

However, these two perspectives on the character of teenage speech are not complete opposites, and neither appears to be entirely generalisable. In the particular case of stance adverbs, quantitative research shows that they are not particularly frequent in teenage speech: for example Macaulay (2005: 117) found that Glaswegian adolescents use adverbs significantly less frequently than adults. Instead, there seem to be particular patterns of use and meanings associated with different age groups. In Barbieri's (2008) work, where she includes hedges such as *kind of* and intensifiers like *totally*, there seems to be a levelled frequency of stance adverbs across older and younger speakers of American English (Barbieri 2008: 73). Younger speakers use a smaller selection of adverbs, but the adverbs that they do use are 'highly frequent, multi-functional, informal, innovative, and fashionable' (Barbieri 2008: 74). These include items such as *kind of, sort of, really, definitely,* and *totally* (Barbieri 2008: 73). Her results tie in with both of the perspectives outlined above. First, teenagers tend to use hedges like *kind of* and *sort of* to mitigate their language (contrary to their apparent lack of politeness strategies). Biber and Finegan (1989: 10) also noted that the use of hedges signals that speakers are focused 'on involved interaction rather than precise semantic expression'. Second, their use of emphasisers such as *really, definitely* and *totally* contribute both to a higher commitment to their statements (in comparison with the alleged non-committal stance) and to a more categorical and direct way of speaking (which could be perceived as impolite and non-interactional, as Andersen (2001) and Palacios-Martínez (2016) suggest). By a similar token, Waters (2008: 35) found that *actually*, which is used for expressivity and discourse organisation, was favoured by younger speakers in Toronto.

Similar results can be seen in British English: particular forms and meanings are more common in teenage speech, and their use is linked to expressive and interactional patterns typical of adolescent conversation. In comparing COLT with adult corpora both in British (BNC and LOB) and New Zealand English (*Wellington Spoken Corpus* and *Wellington Corpus*), results show that

obviously and *definitely* are overwhelmingly favoured in the speech of London teenagers, whereas *certainly* and *clearly* are more commonly used by older speakers and in written language (Aijmer 2008: 66; Simon-Vandenbergen and Aijmer 2007a: 422, 2007b: 198). The higher frequency of *obviously* appears to rely on the particular use of the adverb to mark solidarity and common ground, which ties in with the importance of socialising in teenage years (Aijmer 2008: 72–73, 76). Peripheral positions of *obviously,* considered to be evidence of further grammaticalisation, are also more frequent among young speakers (Aijmer 2008: 66). In the case of *definitely*, COLT teenagers use the adverb mainly with emphatic and intensifying purposes, uses connected to 'positive politeness and adolescent speech' (Aijmer 2008: 80). In contrast, the frequency of *definitely* in contexts of negative intensification appears to be levelled across age groups (Palacios-Martínez 2016: 63), and its use as an emphatic response marker is more frequent among older speakers (Palacios-Martínez and Núñez-Pertejo 2014b: 222). The particular use of *definitely* as an adjective intensifier is argued to be innovative in teenage speech and could forecast the next step in the grammaticalisation path of the adverb (Aijmer 2008: 80).

The choice of corpora in these comparisons may provide a skewed representation of frequency patterns because the written language of teenagers and the spoken language of adults are both underrepresented. The frequencies of these forms in conversation could interfere with the age effect. Also, the data in these corpora represents different discourse situations and as such, invites the performance of different functions. The solidarity conveyed by *obviously* might not be as useful, and therefore the form might not be as frequent, in a written article as it is in a conversation with friends (see similar discussion in Pérez-Paredes and Bueno-Alastuey 2019: 29). These issues are in fact the limitations that are invoked as restricting the variationist study of discourse-pragmatic features (see e.g. Pichler 2010; Waters 2016; and the fuller discussion in §5.4). Nonetheless, the high frequency of *obviously* and *definitely* attested in COLT is mirrored in the sample of Tyneside teenagers analysed in this project (see §7.1).

On top of the trends noted in Section 3.1.1 regarding age preferential uses of intensifiers, the non-degree-marking emphatic uses of *so* and *proper* have also been found to be more frequent in teenage speech. The collocations of *so* with non-adjectival heads that has gained popularity in the last century is associated with colloquial and youth speech in American English (Kenter et al. 2007; Kuha 2005; OED 1989 adv and conj, 2005 Draft addition, sense a; Tagliamonte and Roberts 2005; Zwicky 2011). With regards to *proper* in British English, not only is it more frequent in any of its forms (including adjective *proper*) among COLT speakers (Núñez-Pertejo and Palacios-Martínez 2018: 131–32), but they use it frequently in innovative emphatic contexts like the pre-

modification of verbs and prepositional phrases, or as part of quotatives (Núñez-Pertejo and Palacios-Martínez 2018: 133–35).

Absolutely and *totally* pattern differently to *so* and *proper*. Adjective modifier is the most common function for both maximisers in COLT (Palacios-Martínez and Núñez-Pertejo 2014b: 222, 226). The uses of *absolutely* as an emphatic response marker, a verb modifier, a peripheral sentence adverb, or in contexts of negative intensification, were all found to be more frequent in adult data (Aijmer 2020: 146; Palacios-Martínez 2016: 63; Palacios-Martínez and Núñez-Pertejo 2014b: 222–23). The results are similar for *totally*: any use apart from adjective modification is rare in both adult and teenage data (Palacios-Martínez and Núñez-Pertejo 2014b: 226–27), even though emphatic response marker *totally* was found to be 'a salient feature of teenage talk' in American English (Aijmer 2011: 222). The patterns found in COLT are mirrored in the present project's sample (see §7.2.6).

Regarding non-adverbial emphatic devices, the study of *like* in general has found teenagers using it more frequently than adults (e.g. Andersen 2001: 289; Dailey-O'Cain 2000: 68; D'Arcy 2005: 85, 86; Romaine and Lange 1991: 251; Schourup 1985). More specifically, Miller and Weinert (1995: 380) found a noticeable increase of the frequency of the form from the speech of 8-year-olds to that of 13-year-olds, which suggested that the discourse-management functions performed by *like* were still undeveloped in the younger children. In contrast, Levey (2006: 430) found that the frequency of *like* was levelled across the younger and older pre-adolescents in Redbridge, with only some differences in the functions it performed, and similar results were attested in D'Arcy's (2017: 149) work with speakers between the ages of 10 and 12. In Liverpool, Herat (2018: 99) found both *like* in general and clause-final *like* in particular to be more frequent the younger the speaker.

Focusing on clause-final *like* in Tyneside, Bartlett (2013: 10) found that younger speakers use it more frequently than older ones. Her diachronic analysis across the 1970s and 1990s data in DECTE also showed that (i) clause-final *like* was subject to age-grading, since it was dropped as speakers aged, and (ii) it was in decline overall. The functions of clause-final *like* were also age-graded: younger speakers would use it more frequently to mitigate their opinions or reinforce their questions, which led Bartlett to suggest that younger speakers might hold 'greater levels of linguistic insecurity' (2013: 17). The issue with making a comparison between Bartlett's results and those of the current project is that the category of younger speakers in that study included any speaker below 41. The analysis of clause-final *like* in the particular cohort of teenagers here reveals a trend similar to the one Miller and Weinert (1995) found in Scotland: the older the speaker, the more frequent final *like* is, with no particular functional differences. Contrary to Miller and

Weinert's conclusions, however, this trend appears to be rather a case of younger speakers having a more limited range of emphatic resources in general (see Chapter 7 for a more detailed discussion).

Regarding right dislocation (RD), age as a social predictor has only been tested in Durham's (2011) study of the feature in York. She found no significant age differences in the choice of type of right dislocation: standard, extended, or reverse (see §3.2.1 above) (Durham 2011: 268–69). There were only two noticeable trends: (i) younger speakers used reverse right dislocation less frequently (Durham 2011: 269), and (ii) younger men in particular used it the most among all speakers (Durham 2011: 276). The first finding tied in with her hypothesis that local forms, as reverse RD is in York, may be disappearing in favour of supra-local variants (Durham 2011: 264; see also Britain 2010, Kerswill 2003; and the discussion in §2.3). The second finding shows that younger men appreciate and exploit the northern identity associations that reverse RD has in the area.

Cheshire (2005c), Moore (2003; Moore and Snell 2011), and Snell (2008, 2018; Moore and Snell 2011), all studied right dislocation in the particular age group of teenagers (the former two) and younger children (Snell), not testing age as a predictor, but rather analysing the social meaning it acquires in peer groups of younger speakers. Right-dislocated pronoun tags were more frequent among working-class speakers (also attested in Macaulay's (1988, 2005) studies in Ayr and Glasgow), more commonly used by 'outgoing and confident' speakers (Snell 2008, 2018: 686), and associated with anti-school stance (prevalent among 'Populars' and 'Townies' in Moore's (2003) study in Bolton). Given this evidence, Snell (2018: 686) demonstrated that features like right dislocation, which 'lacks status within the dominant sociolinguistic economy', are exploited by younger speakers to 'assert status in local interactional use'. Snell (2018) draws two important conclusions from the study of pronoun tags (and the local expression *howay*). First, class-differentiated uses are better explained by the local interactional patterns of groups of speakers, rather than age or geographical factors (Snell 2018: 686). Second, these dynamics might explain why local forms remain strong, as they 'fulfil important functions in a community' (Snell 2018: 687). In the current study, the features that have a certain level of local indexicality, namely *proper, canny,* clause final *like*, and right dislocation, are all used by the same group of speakers, among which there are more male speakers (see §6.1.4 for *canny*, §6.2.4 for booster *proper,* and §7.1.1 for emphasiser *proper*, clause-final *like*, and right dislocation). This ties in with Durham's (2011) findings, as well as with Snell's (2018) conclusions that local forms are exploited for different interactional purposes that overcome the social stigma attached to them.

3.2.3. Emphasisers and gender

The differences in the use of emphasisers and hedges across genders has prompted significant debate in scholarly research. The main point of contention relates to the connections made between the higher frequency of these forms in female speech and the sociocultural associations of powerlessness and tentativeness given to female speakers, as discussed in Section 3.2.2 in relation to intensification. In exploring this further, this section is divided into two parts. The first part acknowledges gender differences and focuses on the debate mentioned above. The second part discusses quantitative studies that found no significant gender differences in the frequency or uses of these forms. Finally, there are some notes on the gender distribution of clause-final *like* and right dislocation.

In connection with the remarks made by Jespersen (1922), Lakoff (1975), and Stoffel (1901) regarding intensification, other studies have commented on similar patterns in the realm of stance/modal marking, emphasis, hedging, and the assertiveness/tentativeness axis. Emphasisers such as *definitely, absolutely,* and *obviously* appear to be the exact opposite of hedges such as *probably, slightly*, and *apparently*. However, as demonstrated by the descriptive accounts above (§3.2.1), emphasisers can be used to mitigate comments and build bonds with interlocutors as much as hedges can. In this sense, emphasisers can express both assertiveness and tentativeness. They are assertive in the sense that they strengthen the force of an utterance, enrich expressivity, and contribute to a more categorical way of speaking. However, like hedges, emphasisers can also express tentativeness. As Halliday (2004: 625) puts it, 'we only say we are certain when we are not'. The fact that a speaker goes out of their way to emphasise their utterance means that they feel the need to reinforce what they are saying partly because they are not sure about it or they want to reassure the addressee of how confident they are. In the study of gender patterns, this apparent paradox has been used as the basis for classifying contexts of emphasisers and hedges into tentative and assertive ways of speaking. Good examples are the studies carried out by Lavandera (1982), Preisler (1986), Macaulay (1995, 2005), and more recently, Guiller and Durndell (2006).

Lavandera (1982) studied the social meaning and social significance of conditional *si* clauses in Buenos Aires Spanish. In her study, social meaning refers to the social connotations that 'can be related directly to semantic structure' (Milroy 1992: 173). For example, the irrealis nature of the imperfect subjunctive means that it is semantically more tentative than the present indicative (e.g. *Si tuviera tiempo, iría,* 'If I had time, I would go' versus *Si tengo tiempo, iría*, 'If I have time, I would go'). Social significance reflects the 'tendency of particular social groups to use relatively high frequencies of particular options' (Milroy 1992: 173) —similar to the idea of indexicality (see e.g. Johnstone 2016: 633; Moore and Podesva 2009; Silverstein 1976). The present indicative was

both the most assertive variant (social meaning) and the most frequent among —and thus associated with— male and young speakers (social significance). Assertiveness and maleness could then be interpreted in society as being connected (see also Ochs 1992, 1996).

Preisler (1986) analysed a sample of 48 speakers from the workforce of six Lancaster firms, looking at a range of linguistic devices that expressed tentativeness (e.g. modal verbs such as *may* and *might*, tag questions, hedges like *kind of* and *sort of*, and lexical constructions including *I think*). Tentative constructions were as common for both genders in higher status occupations, whereas they were notably more frequent in female speech in clerical posts. These results supported the idea that there is a tendency for women to adopt a socio-emotional or interpersonal orientation more frequently than men. As such, the female-specific trend to express tentativeness is understood as a 'positive, facilitative device' (Holmes 1995: 108) rather than a response to 'being cowed by male chauvinists who force them into a defensive position' (Preisler 1986: 288). However, Preisler also concluded that '[t]he female style of relative tentativeness is more likely to be the institutionalised reflection of the historical social insecurity of (lower middle-class) women' (Preisler 1986: 292). In this remark, the social meaning and social significance of tentative devices were tangled with sociocultural stereotypes of women, resulting in a rather unfair representation of both language and women (see Holmes 1995: 108).

Guiller and Durndell (2006) studied gender patterns in conversational styles in educational online discussion groups, looking at three different stylistic axes: (i) attenuated versus authoritative, (ii) male versus female versus mixed language, and (iii) positive versus negative language (see Guiller and Durndell 2006: 373 for a detailed description of the features of each style). Results showed that male students used more of the authoritative, typically-male, and negative language styles. They expressed explicit disagreement, included categorical remarks (e.g. by using *obviously* and *definitely*), used impersonal constructions, and avoided using intensifiers (Guiller and Durndell 2006: 374). In comparison, female speakers would use more attenuated and supportive contributions, by mitigating disagreement (e.g. *I am sorry but*…), expressing agreement explicitly and often intensified (e.g. *I totally agree*), using self-deprecating language (e.g. *I'm not an expert, but*…), and including personal remarks (e.g. *I think*) (Guiller and Durndell 2006: 375, 378). The authors comment that acknowledging different conversational styles is important from an educational point of view (Guiller and Durndell 2006: 380). However, their description of gendered styles appears to be similar to the descriptions offered by Stoffel (1901), Jespersen (1922), Lakoff (1975), and Preisler (1986). Female students are described as having a 'low-power role' and using less credible language. Their language reflects 'a need for affiliation', and they only dare challenge the posts of male students in discussions where women outnumber them (Guiller and Durndell 2006:

378–79). As positive as their final conclusions are, they could have discussed female conversational styles in a more positive way, rather than perpetuating the idea of powerless female language.

Highlighting the positives of typically-female discourse is exactly what the works of Holmes and Coates have done. In line with the ideas presented at the beginning of this section, Holmes (1995: 77) reflects on the fact that emphasisers (boosters in her study) do not express positive politeness or solidarity on their own. They may reinforce 'agreements, compliments, and greetings' as much as they could strengthen 'a disagreement, a criticism, or an insult' (positive versus negative politeness, following Brown and Levinson's (1987) Politeness Theory) (Holmes 1995: 77). The difference lies in the particular contextual uses to which these linguistic devices are put. By analysing a sample of New Zealand speakers, she noted that women's usage was focused on 'the interpersonal function of interaction', and 'the expression of positive politeness' (Holmes 1995: 113). For example, men and women used *you know* and *of course* at similar rates. However, women tended to use these forms to signal shared knowledge and build common ground, while men used them more often with a referential meaning, signalling epistemic certainty (Holmes 1995: 89–90, 96). The use of tag questions and hedges yielded similar findings. The analysis of functions in her study helps to provide a clearer picture of the positive aspects of women's speech (Holmes 1995: 111).

Coates (2003) analysed epistemic modality in conversations among women with ages ranging from 12 to mid-40s. She concluded that the expression of both doubt (e.g. modals *may* and *might*, markers *sort of* and *possibly*, or tag *you know*) and confidence (e.g. modals *will* and *must*, adverbs *actually* and *really*, or the phrase *I'm sure*) signal a lower commitment to the utterance in comparison with their unmodalised counterparts, and that they 'mitigate the force of what is said' (Coates 2003: 333–34). As such, she adopted a broad understanding of hedging. Her analysis showed that hedging performed different conversational functions in women's talk: expressing doubt and confidence (Coates 2003: 333–34), mitigating a controversial comment (Coates 2003: 335–37), searching for the right word (Coates 2003: 337), and avoiding playing the expert (Coates 2003: 338). These functions were frequent in women's speech because of the nature of their conversations. Generally, women tend to 'minimise social distance between conversational participants', are good at 'negotiating sensitive topics' and self-disclosure, and converse in a collaborative floor where 'speakers share in the construction of talk [and] avoid expressing themselves in a hard-and-fast way' (Coates 2003: 338–39, 342). Coates argues that there is nothing weak or unassertive about modulating our utterances. Instead, women's 'judicious use' and 'ability to exploit the multifunctional potential of epistemic modal forms' should be considered 'a strength

not a weakness, and arises from women's sensitivity to interpersonal aspects of talk' (Coates 2003: 344, 346).

The studies of Coates and Holmes celebrate not only women and women's language, but also the value of emphasisers and related forms. As Coates (2003: 346–47) puts it, 'epistemic modal forms are a resource for doing friendship' and are valuable for conversation regardless of the gender of the speakers. Given the controversy of categorising functions as assertive or the opposite, those terms are rarely used in the analysis of emphasisers in this project. Instead, what is valued is the potential of these forms to contribute to subjective, expressive, and interpersonal styles of speaking.

Other researchers have found that there are no significant gender differences in the use of stance. Precht (2008) analysed 100 conversations from the *Longman Corpus of Spoken and Written English*, sampling men and women, three different contexts (adult-only, family, work), and a broad range of ages (from under 25 to over 50). *Actually*, *definitely*, and *totally* were more frequent in male speech, while women expressed those stance meanings through different means (e.g. evidentiality and certainty through the constructions '*I know/thought/wonder* + clause', and quantification/emphasis with the intensifier *so*) (Precht 2008: 99). Similarly, men used expletives much more frequently than women but the functions these performed in the speech of either gender were the same: exclamative affective meaning and emphasis (Precht 2008: 102). As such, she concluded that 'there is no significant difference between men and women's stance use' (Precht 2008: 100–02).

Closer to the line of research in this project, Stenström (2003) analysed four same-sex, same-age conversations from COLT to study how teenagers enacted gender identities through their discourse. Stenström expected to find girls' talk to be more cooperative and less competitive than boys' talk, yet her analysis of the sample showed that there were no great differences in the choice of topic, choice of vocabulary, or interactional patterns. In terms of vocabulary, she found that there were no gender differences in the use of: (i) slang and swearwords (both genders exploited their expressive and interactional value), or (ii) epistemic modal forms in the context of personal and sensitive matters (Stenström 2003: 109–10). With regards to interactional patterns, there was '[n]o clear indication in the material that hedging is typical of female behaviour' (Stenström 2003: 112). Conversations among both girls and boys were cooperative, and showed high involvement. The use of cooperative devices such as hedges (e.g. *sort of, just, like*), empathisers (e.g. *you know, you see*), appealers (e.g. *yeah, innit*), and minimal responses (e.g. *mhmh, yeah*), varied according to social class or individual speakers rather than gender (similar to Macaulay's (1995, 2005) findings in western Scotland). Although she did not specifically mention emphasisers, what

Stenström's findings suggest is that girls and boys display similar interactional and involved styles, and thus that there is probably not a big difference in their rate of use of these forms.

In terms of gender patterns for the use of *like*, D'Arcy (2005: 135) and Levey (2006: 435) found in their datasets that what varied the most was the functions it performed: female speakers used it more frequently clause-initially as a discourse marker, while male speakers would use it clause-medially preceding noun phrases. In contrast, Andersen (2001: 287) in London and Tagliamonte (2005: 1903) in Toronto found *like* to be predominant among female speakers. More specifically, Tagliamonte (2005) found that gender interacted with age in her sample: the gender difference was more noticeable in the 15-to-16 age cohort.[18] In Tyneside, male speakers were the most frequent users of clause-final *like* in the TLS data from the 1970s (frequency index of 0.86/1,000 words in female speech versus 4.81 in male speech) (Bartlett 2013: 9). The drop in male usage of the form in the 1990s (M 1.67) was part of an overall dip in frequency. Herat (2018: 101) attested similar gender patterns of clause-final *like* in Liverpool. Clause-final *like*, in comparison with other types of *like*, is associated with regional identity. As such, Bartlett's results add support to the argument that male speakers tend to be more frequent users of local features than girls, and these findings are replicated in the current dataset (see §7.2.7).

When it comes to studies on right-dislocation, gender has only been tackled directly by Durham (2011) in York, since Moore's (2003) study was focused only on girls, and Snell (2008) found social meaning and stance to be more relevant predictors. In York, Durham (2011: 267) did not find significant gender differences with respect to the type of right dislocation used, despite the hypothesis that women might shy away from regional variants (i.e. reverse RD) (Durham 2011: 264). The only gender effect was attested in combination with age: younger men were the most frequent users of both right dislocation in general and reverse RD in particular. This finding, in need of being tested against other datasets and regions (Durham 2011: 277), points at RD and the local variant being 'associated with Northern identity for the young men in York' (Durham 2011: 276). Male teenagers in Tyneside are the most frequent users of right-dislocated pronoun tags in this study (see §7.2.7), which would support Durham's ideas.

[18] The rates for that particular age group could be distorted by the fact that there was one 16-year-old girl with unusually high rates of *like*.

Chapter 4
Grammaticalisation

Intensifiers and emphasisers are defined on the basis of their discourse-pragmatic functions and meanings. These grammatical features have developed historically through grammaticalisation. In Section 4.1, grammaticalisation will be defined, including a comparison with the concept of pragmaticalisation. Section 4.2 is a review of some of the most relevant mechanisms, processes, and effects that are involved in grammaticalisation. Section 4.3 focuses on metaphor, metonymy, and subjectification, as they are particularly relevant to the features in this study. Finally, the development of intensifiers and emphasisers is discussed more closely in Sections 4.4 and 4.5 respectively. Grammaticalisation is relevant to this work in two ways: (i) distributional results can provide evidence of the grammaticalisation status of different forms within each variable, and (ii) knowing more about the development paths followed by different variants helps understand their linguistic distribution in the sample.

4.1. Concept of grammaticalisation

Grammaticalisation is the dynamic and unidirectional process by which lexical items acquire a new status as grammatical forms, by losing concrete lexical meanings and gaining abstract grammatical meanings and functions (Heine 2008: 575–78; Hopper and Traugott 2003: 2; Lehmann 1985: 1; Traugott 1988: 406). It is the change that occurs when a lexical item starts being used so often in 'highly constrained pragmatic and morphosyntactic contexts' that it is 'assigned functional category status' (Traugott and Dasher 2001: 81). The development of new grammatical items tends to stem from communicative pragmatic motivations and the desire to be creative, rather than there being a dearth of resources for expressing certain meanings (Hopper and Traugott 2003: 74–75; Traugott 1995: 49).

Grammaticalisation is chiefly studied diachronically, and is used in reconstruction models (Hopper and Traugott 2003: 2). However, grammaticalisation can also be studied synchronically by comparing more and less grammaticalised variants within a set, or forms that display several uses which are at different points in the grammaticalisation scale (Hopper and Traugott 2003: 2). In my project, the analysis of grammaticalisation will combine both approaches. Since the data in this project only compares across three years (2017 to 2019), substantive claims can only be made in relation to synchronic grammaticalisation patterns, that is, by comparing the grammatical status of different forms in the speech of Tyneside teenagers at this particular time. As such, the

comparison of this project's results with previous research in the region and elsewhere is the main foundation for the findings regarding diachronic patterns of grammaticalisation.

Grammaticalisation is unidirectional and gradual. Unidirectionality refers to the idea that lexical items may become grammatical forms and these, in turn, could grammaticalise even further, while change in the opposite direction is rare and exceptional (see e.g. Lass 2000: 207–08).[19] 'Gradual' refers to the idea that small structural changes emerge slowly over time and that their frequency increases progressively across styles, genres, and speakers (Hopper and Traugott 2003: 230).[20] Both unidirectionality and gradualness are expressed in terms of clines. Historically, clines are understood as pathways through which lexical forms evolve into more grammaticalised units (Hopper and Traugott 2003: 6). Synchronically, clines are imaginary continua along which different forms or different uses of the same form sit at a particular time, with lexical forms or uses at one end of the scale and grammatical forms or uses at the other (Hopper and Traugott 2003: 6).

Lehmann (1985) sets out a series of parameters that help place items in the grammaticalisation scale. In his work, advanced grammaticalisation is characterised by (i) reduced scope, phonological and semantic substance, (ii) integration into smaller word classes and loss of autonomy, and (iii) fixed position and function —often making the form obligatory for its function. The exploration of these parameters is not directly applicable to the study of the trajectories followed by intensifiers and emphasisers, which is the focus of this project, since for example they do not tend to lose phonological substance, become obligatory, or fuse with surrounding items.

Pragmaticalisation

Pragmaticalisation is argued to be a more accurate concept for the development of discourse-pragmatic markers. While grammaticalisation relates to any grammatical form, pragmaticalisation explains specifically how lexical items develop into discourse markers. What is contested is whether discourse-pragmatic markers are considered part of the grammar or not. Norde (2009: 22) considers them to be outside grammar and argues that grammaticalisation and pragmaticalisation are different processes. Her stance relies on the argument that discourse-pragmatic markers do

[19] However, note that the hypothesis of unidirectionality has been subject to debate (see e.g. discussions in D'Arcy 2015: 485; Heine 2008: 583, and Hopper and Traugott 2003, as well as the study of degrammaticalisation in Norde 2009).

[20] The development of some discourse-pragmatic features is not necessarily gradual. Lexical replacement reflects the rapid emergence of a new form with the whole gamut of functions that older forms performed, without the need for a gradual process (D'Arcy 2006, 2015; Denis and Tagliamonte 2016; Tagliamonte and Denis 2010). This theory is not applicable to the study here, since all of the forms contemplated have been attested to have undergone grammaticalisation over time, i.e. gradually.

not undergo the chief processes of grammaticalisation outlined by Lehmann (1985): paradigmaticisation, obligatorification, condensation, coalescence, or fixation. Alternatively, pragmaticalisation has been considered as either a subtype of grammaticalisation focused on text and discourse-level phenomena, or an unnecessary term because it is not different from grammaticalisation. Advocates of the latter opinion argue that (i) scope and mobility reduction (=condensation and fixation) are not essential processes of grammaticalisation (Heine 2013: 1220), (ii) canonical grammatical categories may also develop non-truth-conditional pragmatic meanings and functions (Brinton 1996: 274), and (iii) discourse-pragmatic markers are indeed part of grammar, since they acquire adverbial-like functions (see e.g. Traugott 1995: 36).

The approach taken in this study is that the term pragmaticalisation may be redundant. As shown in the following sections, discourse-pragmatic markers undergo some of the processes associated with grammaticalisation (e.g. desemanticisation, extension, decategorialisation, layering, divergence, and persistence), while the change towards less truth-conditional and less referential meanings that characterises pragmaticalisation can be explained though subjectification (Traugott and Dasher 2001: 31). Consequently, the term grammaticalisation will here be understood to encompass processes that could otherwise be viewed as pragmaticalisation.

4.2. Mechanisms and processes of grammaticalisation

The major mechanisms of change involved in grammaticalisation are reanalysis and analogy at the morphosyntactic level, and metaphor and metonymy at the semantic level, all of them driven by pragmatic inferencing (Hopper and Traugott 2003: 231). The former two will be discussed first, while the processes of metaphor and metonymy are explored further in Section 4.3.

Reanalysis is the phenomenon by which hearers grasp a meaning different from the one intended by the speaker in contexts where both interpretations are possible (Hopper and Traugott 2003: 50). Thus, the item acquires different morphological, syntactic, or semantic features in the mind of the hearer, but there are no changes in form yet (Hopper and Traugott 2003: 39). Analogy occurs when that individual uses the reinterpreted item or structure in their discourse, modifying surface representations and spreading it to other contexts (Hopper and Traugott 2003: 39). A clear example is the development of the form *be going to* (see Table 7, with information from Hopper and Traugott 2003: 69). Reanalysis and analogy can be cyclical, as exemplified by the development of the French negator *pas* (see more regarding *pas* in Hopper and Traugott 2003: 65–66).

Table 7. Development of *be going to*, illustrating the processes of reanalysis and analogy

I	*am* (progressive aux)	*going* (main verb, motion)	*to do some gardening* (purpose clause)
↓ Reanalysis ↓			
I	*[am going to]* (future + purpose aux)	*do some gardening* (main verb, active)	
↓ Analogy ↓			
I	*[am going to]* (future + purpose aux)	*be nice* (main verb, stative)	

In the case of intensifiers, they tend to derive from stance adverbs or affective adjectives that were reanalysed with a meaning of degree when modifying a gradable adjective. By analogy then they extend to modifying a wider variety of adjectives (see §4.4). As for emphasisers, stance adverbs and degree modifiers develop emphatic functions in contexts where the truth-attesting meanings or emotional value is reanalysed as emphasis. Once they gain this function, they might extend to further contexts by analogy (see §4.5).

Reanalysis and analogy are two overarching mechanisms of grammaticalisation, yet there are more specific processes taking place. There are at least four initial processes involved: delexicalisation, extension, decategorialisation, and erosion. As argued by Traugott (1988), another initial process involves pragmatic strengthening through subjectification. These five processes are defined as follows.

- Delexicalisation, desemanticisation, or semantic attrition, is the gradual loss of lexical and specific meaning in a form (Lehmann 1985: 4). A complete loss is also referred to as semantic bleaching (e.g. the original lexical meaning of *very* 'true, truly' has been completely lost in its function as an intensifier) (Méndez-Naya 2003: 375).
- Extension or generalisation is the process by which forms start to be used in a wider range of contexts (Hopper and Traugott 2003: 101). This results in a higher frequency of use (Bybee 2008: 605). The grammaticalisation of intensifiers is evidenced by the expansion across different modifiable heads or, more particularly, different types of adjectives (see e.g. Peters 1994: 269–70). For example, booster *proper* was constrained to modifying propensity and value adjectives in Tyneside and London at the beginning of the century (e.g. *proper serious*, *proper bad*) (Barnfield and Buchstaller 2010: 272; Núñez-Pertejo and Palacios-Martínez 2018: 136), but in this project's dataset, it modifies adjectives of at least

four more categories (e.g. *proper drunk, proper blue*, *proper cliché*, *proper Geordie*), which demonstrates its establishment as an intensifier with weaker collocational restrictions (see more in §6.2.4).

- Decategorialisation refers to the loss of characteristics typical of the lexical part of speech from which the grammaticalizing item originated (Hopper 1991: 30–31). For example, adverb-derived intensifiers and emphasisers cannot be modified freely as adverbs (e.g. compare *incredibly quickly* with ?*incredibly very quickly*; or *really well* with ?*really literally*); nor can they be used in comparative and superlative form (e.g. *quick* > *quicker* > *quickest* versus **very* > *verier* > *veriest*, or **literally* > *more literally* > *most literally*). This should not be understood as a decay of the form, but rather as a functional shift to characteristics of a different part of speech (Hopper and Traugott 2003: 108).
- Erosion or phonological attrition is the gradual loss of phonological substance (Lehmann 1985: 4). For example, more grammaticalised uses of *just* are characterised by reduced phonological realisations, as in the following cline [dʒst], [dʒəs], [ʒst] > [dʒs] > [dʒ], [ʒs] > [ʒ], [s] (Woolford 2018: 32–33).
- Finally, pragmatic strengthening refers to the gain of pragmatic meaning concomitant to the loss of lexical meaning, and subjectification in particular is the process by which the meaning of forms become increasingly based on the speaker's subjective knowledge, perspective, attitude, and stance (Traugott 1988, 1989, 1995). For example, the deontic meaning of *must* —*We must stay home*— is based on a viewpoint based in external laws, whereas the epistemic meaning that developed later —*That must be wrong*— is based on the subjective laws, rules, and intuitions of the speaker. Subjectification is discussed in detail in Section 4.3 as a major semantic change relevant to the study of discourse-pragmatic markers.

The definitions above show that extension, decategorialisation, and erosion, all seem to be consequences of delexicalisation (Heine 2008: 580). In other words, the loss of lexical specific meaning allows the grammaticalising form to extend to more contexts (extension) and lose features typical of their lexical sources (decategorialisation). Due to its resulting increased frequency, the form tends to erode phonologically (Heine 2008: 580). Earlier works have understood grammaticalisation as a process of inevitable semantic bleaching (see Lehmann 1985). However, Traugott (1988: 407) argues that it can be more a case of shift of meaning through pragmatic strengthening, that is an increase in the pragmatic value of an expression (see also Heine 2008: 591; Hopper and Traugott 2003: 94–96). Traugott (1988: 407) comments that pragmatic

strengthening might even occur earlier than attrition or bleaching, in which case it is because there is a new pragmatic meaning that the lexical meaning is reduced or lost (see more below, in §4.3).

Subsequently, these changes have a bearing on the structure of the language. The changes at this level were largely discussed by Lehmann (1985): paradigmaticisation, obligatorification, coalescence, fixation, and condensation. All of these could be considered logical consequences of decategorialisation (Heine 2008: 588). Only fixation and condensation are of interest in the development of intensifiers and emphasisers. They are defined as follows:

- Fixation is the reduction of mobility of a form in the syntax of the sentence. For example, the auxiliary verb *haber* 'have' in Spanish could originally precede or follow the main verb, and there could be pronouns or clitics in between (e.g. *hasme engañado, engañado me has* 'you have fooled me'). When it fully grammaticalised by around the 17th century, its position got fixed preceding the main verb and any pronouns would have to be placed outside of the verbal phrase (e.g. nowadays, only *me has engañado* is grammatical) (Girón Alconchel 1997: 24; de Toledo y Huerta 2018: 83–84). Similarly, English intensifiers are fixed to modifying positions (often preceding the item).
- Condensation is the reduction of the scope of the form (e.g. *terribly* and *very* were adjuncts of manner with scope over the whole clause, whereas now as intensifiers they only cover the adjective or adverb phrase). Condensation is also understood by some authors as the shortening of forms (e.g. *obviously* > *obvs*) (Heine 2008: 588). In that case, it would be a direct consequence of, if not equivalent process to, erosion, instead of decategorialisation.

All of the changes mentioned thus far trigger more general effects on the language system, which Hopper (1991) defined as principles of grammaticalisation. They are layering, divergence, specialisation, and persistence.[21]

Layering, or renewal, is the process by which existing meanings are expressed by new forms (Hopper 1991: 22; Hopper and Traugott 2003: 122). It is the logical result of the successive grammaticalisation of newer forms for the same functional domain, with old and newer forms co-existing (Hopper and Traugott 2003: 125). For example, references to the future can be expressed through different means, such as the modals *will* and *shall*, the construction *be going to*, and the progressive aspect. Intensifiers and emphasisers also illustrate layering, with newer forms emerging and co-existing with older ones (intensifiers being a prime example of it). The idea of 'layering'

[21] Hopper (1991: 22) also included decategorialisation as a principle of grammaticalisation, but it is not included here because it was already discussed earlier as an initial process of change.

places the focus on the fact that co-existing layers differ pragmatically, and that such differences constrain the choice of variants. Uncovering these differences is the aim of many studies on language variation. 'Renewal', by contrast, simply refers to the emergence of new forms over time.

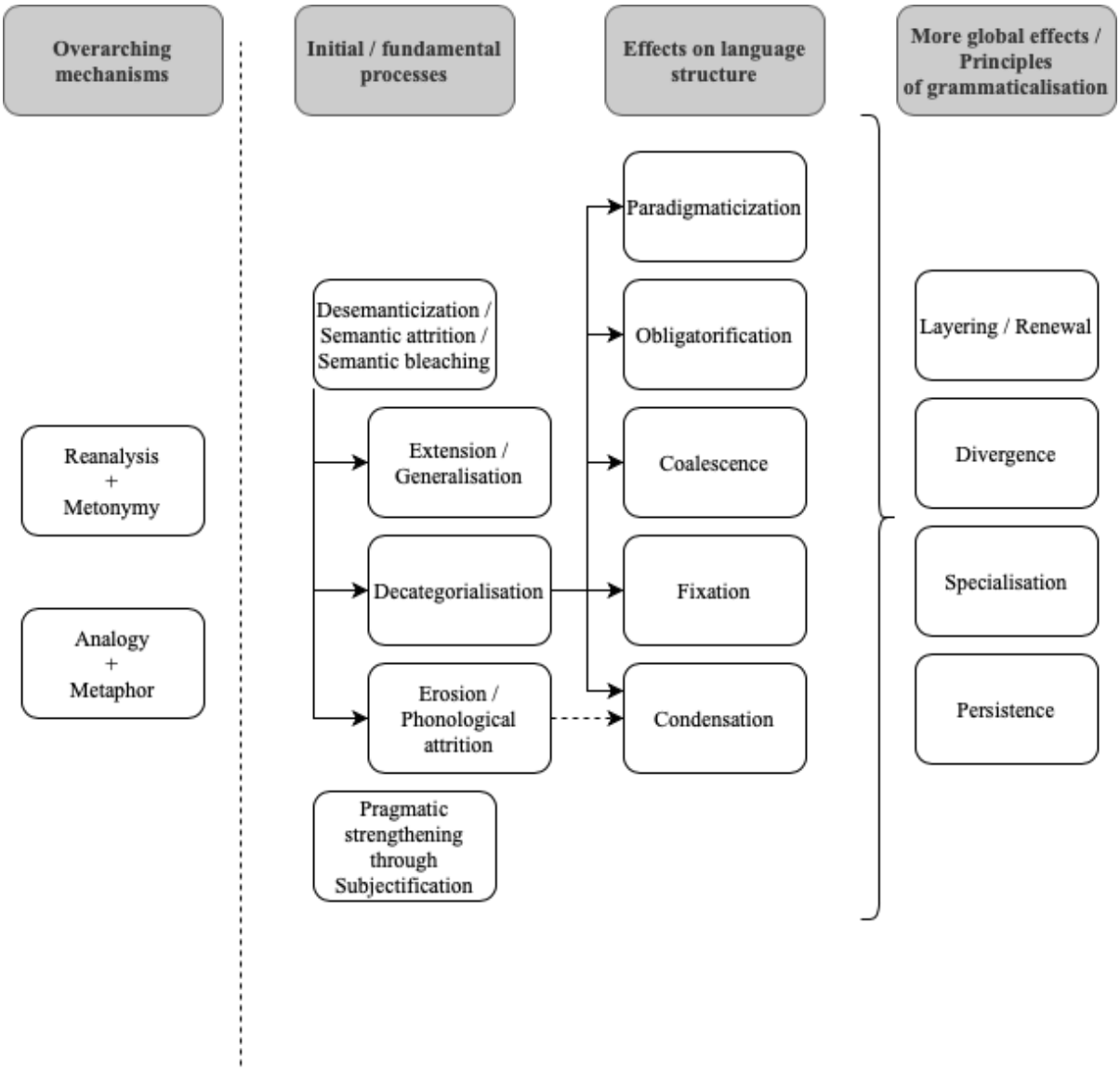
Divergence refers to the split of items into grammatical and lexical uses, which results in the co-existence of grammatical forms and their original lexical sources (Hopper 1991: 24–25). For example, both lexical *be going to* (progressive + motion verb) and grammatical *be going to* (future auxiliary) co-exist in Present Day English, both lexical and grammatical *pas* co-exist in French ('step' and negator), and intensifiers *dead*, *proper* and *pure* co-exist with their related adjectives.

Specialisation tends to co-occur with the loosening of collocability restrictions (=extension). For example, the fact that *very* had specialised as a degree modifier was accompanied by a widening in the class of adjectives that could be reinforced by it (see e.g. Breban and Davidse 2016; Méndez-Naya 2003). Advanced stages of specialisation may in turn trigger paradigmaticisation (Lehmann 1985: 4), that is the creation of more specific paradigms for each form within the same functional domain. For example, emphasiser *really* is attested in this project's sample to be particularly frequent in post-negator contexts, with a particular function of truth-insistence (see §7.2.2). If this collocational behaviour continues in time, *really* might specialise in that function, and thus form a paradigm distinct of other similar emphasisers like *actually* or *literally*.

Finally, persistence is the principle by which grammaticalised forms tend to retain some traces from their original lexical meaning, which constrain their grammatical distribution (Hopper 1991: 28–30; Hopper and Traugott 2003: 16). For example, intensifier *so*, coming from a comparative adverb, is still constrained to predicative contexts (e.g. *The food is so good*, but **This is so good food*; cf. *This is very good food*). Similarly, degree modifiers acting as emphatic sentence adverbs (e.g. *absolutely*, *totally*, *proper*, and *so*) do not have as much mobility as other emphasisers, probably due to their origin as degree modifiers (see §7.1.2 and 7.2.6 for further discussion of this point).

Below, Figure 4 summarises the relations between the different grammaticalisation mechanisms, processes, and effects that have been outlined above.

Figure 4. Summary of mechanisms, processes, and effects of grammaticalisation



Increases in frequency are crucial to the whole process of grammaticalisation (Bybee 2008: 603). Reanalysis and analogy result in a form increasing its frequency; in other words, they lead to routinisation or habituation through frequent use. This increased frequency means that the grammaticalised constructions become more automatised and, as such, tend to be uttered more quickly, with their phonological prominence reduced (i.e. erosion and coalescence) (Hopper and Traugott 2003: 127). At the same time, automatisation results in the semantic lexical content becoming vaguer (delexicalisation) and original lexical features fading (decategorialisation). This enables the development of new pragmatic meanings (pragmatic strengthening) and, in turn, wider applicability through different contexts (extension). The widening of contexts entails higher

frequency of use, which feeds grammaticalisation even further, possibly triggering all the other processes over time.[22]

4.3. Semantic changes: metaphor, metonymy, and subjectification

Metaphor and metonymy, the main mechanisms behind semantic-pragmatic shifts (Hopper and Traugott 2003: 231), will be explored first in this section, together with the influence and effects of pragmatic inferencing. Afterwards, Traugott's (1988, 1989, 1995) three tendencies of semantic-pragmatic change will be presented and discussed. This will then lead to a more detailed discussion of the process of subjectification.

Semantic changes of a metaphorical nature involve 'shifts from meanings situated in the external described situation to meanings situated in the internal evaluative, perceptual, cognitive situation, and in the textual situation' (Traugott 1988: 414). Speakers rely on simpler external concepts to express more complex internal ones (Hopper and Traugott 2003: 93). Metonymic semantic change involves 'shifts to meanings situated in the subjective belief-state or attitude toward the situation, including the linguistic one' (Traugott 1988: 414). Metonymic changes go from less to more informative, making explicit a meaning that is otherwise covertly implied (Hopper and Traugott 2003: 93). Metonymy is therefore a natural part of conversational practice (Hopper and Traugott 2003: 92).

Metaphor and metonymy, together with the counterpart processes at the morpho-syntactic level (i.e. reanalysis and analogy) take place through pragmatic inferencing. This interplay of mechanisms was explained in detail in Traugott and Dasher's (2001) Theory of Semantic Change. In a nutshell, this theory states that the process of semantic change entails the intermediate pragmatic intervention of Invited Inferences —one-time reinterpretations of a meaning— and General Invited Inferences —conventionalised reinterpretations. Méndez-Naya (2008) used this model to explain the grammaticalisation of the intensifier *downright*, summarised in Table 8.

[22] Higher frequency may also trigger a conservation or entrenchment effect: irregular infrequent forms will assimilate to the regular paradigm, whereas irregular frequent forms might not (Bybee 2008: 619; Hopper and Traugott 2003: 128).

Table 8. Grammaticalisation of *downright* explained in terms of Invited Inferencing Theory of Semantic Change (adapted from Méndez-Naya 2008).

Example sentence	Meaning evolution	Syntactic status and time
fall down right /downright/right down	'down to the ground' (spatial meaning)	Place adjunct (up to c. mid-18th C.)
smite downright *slay* (=hit) *downright*	'down to the ground' 'from top to bottom' **Invited Inference**: 'absolutely, out and out' (degree meaning)	
hew downright to the ground	presence of 'to the ground' suggests 'absolutely, out and out' is now a **Generalised Invited Inference**	
slay downright (=to kill) *smite downright* (=to inflict serious injury or death)	'absolutely, out and out' is foregrounded, which is evidence that it is now a **new coded meaning**. +Subjectification	Degree adjunct (15th C. up to now)
downright detestable *downright delicious*	'out and out' meaning is **applied to adjectives** and also becomes 'extremely' (+ Possible intersubjectification because of contrastive nuance)	Degree modifier / Maximiser ('out and out' + adj 15th C. up to the present, 'extremely' + adj mid-18th C. up to the present)

Since this process is based on the (re-)negotiation of meaning, the active role of language production is foregrounded over passive perception (Traugott and Dasher 2001: 38). Consequently, adults —starting from adolescence— might be as important or indeed more important than children in the consolidation of semantic change (Traugott and Dasher 2001: 41–42).

The exploration of metaphorical and metonymic changes underpin Traugott's (1988, 1989, 1995) three tendencies of semantic-pragmatic change, which are essential for an understanding of the development of intensifiers and emphasisers. The first tendency is best exemplified by metaphorical changes: 'meanings based in the external described situation > meanings based in the internal (evaluative/perceptual/cognitive) described situation' (Traugott 1989: 34). This could be the case in the development of boosters, which have been argued to originate through a process of scale transfer (Peters 1994: 269).[23] The second tendency relies on metonymy: 'meanings based in the external or internal described situation > meanings based in the textual and metalinguistic

[23] This involves the shift from marking a high point in certain scale to marking it in the degree scale (e.g. *highly* shifted from a dimensional physical scale, *The skyscraper rose highly above us*, to the abstract scale of degree, *This is highly amusing*).

situation' (Traugott 1989: 35). Metonymy is exemplified in the formation of the suffix *mente* '-ly' for the formation of adverbs in most Romance languages (Norde 2009: 41–46). Argued to come from Latin *mens* 'mind', the form might have reanalysed in contexts like ablative *mente placida* 'with a quiet mind' and developed as follows: 'mental state of the participant in the event' > 'way in which the event is perceived' > 'manner in which the event takes place'. In Spanish, for example, *mente* was then applied to other heads to form manner adverbs (e.g. *lentamente* 'slowly'), sentence adverbs (e.g. *sinceramente* 'sincerely, honestly'), and even intensifiers (e.g. *absolutamente* 'absolutely').[24]

The third tendency explained by Traugott relates to subjectification: 'meanings tend to become increasingly based in the speaker's subjective belief state/attitude toward the proposition' (Traugott 1989: 35). Subjectification is a gradient phenomenon by which items expressing 'concrete, lexical, and objective meanings' (Traugott 1995: 32) are used repeatedly in local syntactic contexts and begin to perform 'increasingly abstract, pragmatic, interpersonal, and speaker-based functions' (Traugott 1995: 32). The meanings developed through subjectification are used in the expression of perspective, affect, and modality (Finegan 1995: 4).

The concepts of affect and modality are fundamental for an understanding of how degree modifiers are used to 'achieve expressivity' (Lorenz 2002: 143), 'convey emotion' (Núñez-Pertejo and Palacios-Martínez 2018: 121), 'encode speaker attitude' (D'Arcy 2015: 483), and 'strengthen the speaker's views and their attitudes towards what they are saying' (Núñez-Pertejo and Palacios-Martínez 2018: 120). For example, the development of *very* from an adjective to an intensifier involved a shift from deeming something as objectively true (particularly in the context of Christian faith) to qualifying the degree of a feature as high from the speaker's point of view (e.g *the very God* > *very faithful*) (see §4.4 for more on *very*).

The development of stance adverbs, a category of the emphasisers studied in this project, has been explained in terms of an increase in subjectivity and in the expression of affect and modality (Powell 1992). Stance adverbs code an epistemic meaning that cannot be traced back to a metaphorical or metonymical mapping from a similar conceptual domain (Traugott 1988: 411, 1989: 50). For example, the original manner meaning of *honestly* 'in an honourable manner' (Rhee 2016: 407) has undergone subjectification into the function of signalling that the speaker is being honest when uttering a message —in other words its role as a style stance marker (e.g. *Honestly, I don't know what happened*). Subjectivity is further enhanced when the speaker simply reinforces their personal opinion by using *honestly* (e.g. *I honestly hate him*). Lastly, the use of *honestly* as a marker of

[24] For a more detailed explanation of the development of *-mente* and shortcomings in research related to it, see Norde (2009: 41-46).

frustration in example (1) below illustrates the shift to subjective meaning over objective propositional meanings (see Chapter 7 and particularly §7.2.5 for a detailed analysis).

(1) I'm living in the absolute pits, man, *honestly* (**Emily**, F, 19, 2017_SEL2091_080_B).

The development of interpersonal functions is labelled intersubjectification, a subtype of subjectification (Traugott and Dasher 2001: 31). Nonetheless, the development of speaker-based (subjectification) meanings or functions is often intertwined with the development of those that are interpersonal (intersubjectification), as noted by Beeching and Detges (2014: 8). For example, the development of epistemic stance meaning in *obviously* not only involves the strengthening of the subjectivity of the speaker, in referring to something they themselves consider evident, but also of the expectation that the hearer shares this knowledge (intersubjectivity) (Simon-Vandenbergen and Aijmer 2007: 262).

An increase in subjectivity is also reflected in the position of discourse-pragmatic markers. Traditionally, markers in the left periphery of the clause (LP), that is, those that are situated clause-initially, tend to perform textual functions related to the structuring of information and discourse (e.g. *Well, that's not what I said*; *However, she might change her mind*). Items in the right periphery (RP) comment on what has been uttered, often performing attitudinal and interactional functions (e.g. *That's stupid, really*; *He seems tired, right?*) (Beeching and Detges 2014: 11; Cheshire 2016: 257). Therefore, subjectification might motivate a move to the right periphery of the clause.

However, this may not always be the case. Pichler (2016) studies the non-canonical positions of *innit* (stand-alone and left periphery) in the *Linguistic Innovators Corpus* and concludes that LP *innit* performs the same interactional functions of seeking corroboration and involving the hearer as canonical RP *innit*. The difference lay in the fact that LP *innit* is also used as a way of securing the floor and capturing the hearer's attention, especially in rapid and lively conversations such as those among adolescents in her dataset. This might be the case for emphasisers in this study such as *literally*, which can be placed in either periphery with little difference in terms of semantics or pragmatics. In comparison, *really* performs distinct functions depending on whether it is placed clause-initially or clause-finally (as previously discussed in §3.2.1, and illustrated in §7.2.2).

In the study of intensifiers, it is leftward movement in the noun phrase structure that has been found to correlate with grammaticalisation and subjectification (Adamson 2000). Breban and Davidse (2016) demonstrated that *very* is a paradigmatic example of this, as detailed at the end of the following section.

4.4. Development of intensifiers

The expression of degree is a grammatical function that has developed from lexical sources. As such, intensification is a lexico-grammatical category and it includes both closed-class items such as *very* and open-class items such as *terribly* (Bolinger 1972: 22; Lorenz 2002: 143–44; Méndez-Naya 2003: 374). The difference between the closed- and open-class intensifiers is the level of grammaticalisation they have reached. This section starts with a general description of the changes undergone in the development of the intensifying function, and of the evidence for these changes. Then, the lexical sources for intensifiers are explored. The section closes by showcasing the development of *very*.

D'Arcy (2015) explores the development of degree modifiers to illustrate that grammaticalisation is not always continuous. First, periods of dynamic variation in the system alternate with periods of stability where grammaticalisation processes might not advance (D'Arcy 2015: 485). Second, collocability patterns do not always constitute stable evidence of grammaticalisation: different boosters might favour different collocates at different points in time for reasons other than grammaticalisation, such as changes in frequency (D'Arcy 2015: 485). D'Arcy (2015: 274–75) exemplifies this latter point by looking at the diachronic evolution of *very* in New Zealand English: *very* specialised as a collocate for emotion and human propensity adjectives in the 1940s, then the syntactic position of the adjective (favouring attributive position) neutralised the semantic effect in its peak of use in the 90s, while the type of gradability of the adjective was the major constraint in the use of *very* in the early 2000s. These observations highlight the fact that the intensifier system is an extremely interesting one to analyse from a grammaticalisation perspective.

From the point of view of lexical semantics, the grammaticalisation path followed by intensifiers is the same as by any other grammaticalising form: first, a monosemic item becomes polysemic (two meanings for one lexeme) with the degree meaning being optional; and then, the polysemic item becomes monosemic again because the degree meaning takes over and the lexical one is reduced or lost (Peters 1994: 269–70). As such, the grammaticalisation of intensifiers includes processes of delexicalisation, or semantic loss, together with decategorialisation, that is the loss of features of the original part of speech (Partington 1993: 183). As suggested earlier, these losses are parallel to gaining the pragmatic meaning of degree, in particular through subjectification.

While the intensifier is still polysemic (i.e. in 'bridging contexts', Breban and Davidse 2016: 228), both the linguistic and the situational contexts need to be considered for disambiguation. The change is complete when the degree-modifying function is unambiguous regardless of the

collocational sphere or situational context (Peters 1994: 240). For example, there are still contexts where *really*, even in pre-modification of adjectives, can be ambiguously interpreted as a reality-attester (i.e. 'in reality') rather than intensifier (e.g. *I find that really fascinating*; *Are you really sad?*). This ambiguity is evidence that *really* is not fully grammaticalised yet (Lorenz 2002: 157; Paradis 2003: 203).

From a cognitive point of view, less grammaticalised intensifiers demand higher cognitive effort on the part of the hearer. The inference process carried out by the hearer will have to rely on extra-linguistic cues and/or lexical properties of the modifier to interpret the degree-modifying function (Peters 1994: 270). This ties in with the idea that the grammaticalisation of pragmatic items involves the conventionalisation of conversational implicatures (Traugott 1988: 411). It also supports the argument that unexpected collocations convey higher expressivity (Aijmer 2018a: 113): the higher cognitive effort demanded in *well true,* for example, where a less conventionalised booster is modifying a limit adjective, makes the construction more expressive than *very true*, where the boosting function of *very* has already expanded to a wide range of different adjectival contexts.

All these changes affect collocation patterns and frequency. In the case of the intensifiers discussed in this project, collocation patterns refer to the range of adjectives they modify, from the point of view of both syntax (attributive and predicative position/function) and semantics (semantic categories, emotional value, type of gradability, and evaluative prosody). As a general premise, the more frequently and wider the intensifier collocates, the more grammaticalised it is (Ito and Tagliamonte 2003: 271; Partington 1993: 183; Tagliamonte 2008: 373–75; Tagliamonte and Roberts 2005: 285).

The theory is that new intensifiers will first tend to collocate with attributive adjectives and will then extend to collocating with predicative adjectives as they grammaticalise (Ito and Tagliamonte 2003: 271). However, this does not seem to be the case in my data, where the more recent variants (i.e. *canny*, *proper,* and *dead*) appear to collocate almost exclusively with adjectives in predicative position. As discussed in Chapter 6, this may not contradict Ito and Tagliamonte's (2003) theory. Since both *canny* and *dead* appear to be cases of recycled forms, it might be the case that they did indeed start by collocating with attributive adjectives and then spread to predicative contexts later on. In the case of *proper*, there has indeed been a shift from attributive to predicative contexts throughout its history (Stratton 2020b: 5).

In terms of semantic categories and evaluative prosody (positive/negative/neutral evaluation), the more recognisable the original lexical meaning is in the intensifier, the more it will influence the adjectives with which it collocates. Evidence of grammaticalisation is seen when intensifiers collocate with adjectives of a semantic category or an evaluative prosody that differs

from the original meaning or prosody of the forms from which they derived (Lorenz 2002: 144–45; Partington 1993: 183–84; Tagliamonte 2008: 375–76). For example, the fact that *proper*, which derives from a positive adjective, can collocate with negative adjectives suggests an advanced stage in grammaticalisation. Other examples include *pure* and *dead* in Glasgow (Macaulay 2006): they also widened their collocability in terms of the prosody of the adjectives, which supported Macaulay's (2006: 271) argument that they had grammaticalised.

Regarding the emotional value of the adjective, Peters (1994: 274) states that less grammaticalised intensifiers tend to collocate more frequently with emotional adjectives, while older, more grammaticalised, variants either collocate with both emotional and non-emotional, or favour non-emotional adjectives. This is not supported in the current dataset, since less-grammaticalised *proper* and *dead* favour emotional adjectives, and so does the more-grammaticalised *very*, at rates similar to the other variants —a finding also attested in Aijmer (2018a: 122). What seems to be the case here is that teenagers tend to boost emotional adjectives overall, regardless of the variant. Peters's (1994: 274) observation could be tested in larger corpora.

Grammaticalisation also affects the expressive value of intensifiers: it has been argued that intensifiers lose expressivity as they grammaticalise (Aijmer 2018a: 114), which triggers the speakers' need to find newer more expressive variants. This has been the case for *very*, the only fully grammaticalised intensifier and the least expressive (Aijmer 2018a: 116; Cacchiani 2009: 235). *Very* still remains a frequent variant in intensifier repertoires across English varieties. Méndez-Naya (2003: 389) argues that the completion of the grammaticalisation process in this case might explain why *very* is still a prominent variant —in comparison with *swipe,* which died out by the 14th century, partly because it had not fully grammaticalised. Nonetheless, the lower expressivity of *very* might explain its low occurrence among Tyneside teenagers in this study (see §6.1.3 and §6.2.3).

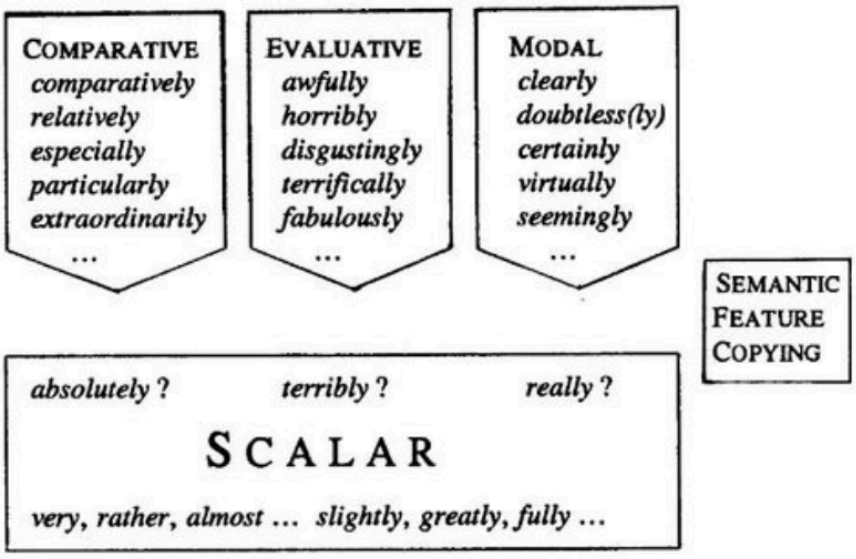
Still, there seems to be conflicting evidence regarding the links between collocation patterns, expressivity, and grammaticalisation. On the one hand, non-harmonic intensifier-adjective collocations, such as the association of *proper* with negative adjectives or, more generally speaking, boosters with extreme or limit adjectives (e.g. *very true*), are evidence of advanced grammaticalisation. In turn, advanced grammaticalisation entails lower expressivity. On the other hand, these types of unexpected collocations have also been identified as strategies for enhancing expressivity, relying on hyperbole and exaggeration (Aijmer 2018a: 113). The extra-expressive effect of non-harmonic collocations might only occur when the intensifier variant involved is in the early stages of grammaticalisation (Partington 1993: 188). This is because intensifiers that are more grammaticalised have already expanded to contexts different from what their lexical meanings might suggest, whereas the use of newer variants in unexpected contexts is more

innovative and shocking, as Peters (1994: 270) observes in relation to cognitive effort, and as illustrated above by the comparison of *very true* with *well true*.

Lexical sources for intensifiers

Following the theory of unidirectionality, all degree modifiers are recruited in the lexis. Lorenz (2002: 148) classifies intensifiers into five semantic categories according to their lexical traces (see Figure 5). Note that his concept of intensifiers is broader and that only one of the categories specifically refers to degree modifiers. [25, 26]

Figure 5. Semantic classification of intensifiers



Source: Lorenz 2002: 148

Scalar intensifiers are the most delexicalised set of intensifiers, the ones in which there are no recognisable lexical traces that constrain their collocability. Comparative, evaluative and modal intensifiers, in comparison, still carry lexical traces that influence their usage. Lorenz's (2002: 147) argument is that intensifiers in these three categories eventually become scalar when they complete

[25] Lorenz's (2002: 158) concept of intensifiers involves all pre-modifiers of adjectives performing a pragmatic function of intensification above and beyond degree. Modal intensifiers, in his classification, seem closer to this project's idea of emphasisers with local scope.

[26] The category of 'semantic-feature copying' refers to particular intensifier-adjective collocations in which the intensifier copies a significant part of the adjective's meaning or even duplicates it completely (e.g. *acutely aware, clearly visible, grossly insensitive*) (Lorenz 2002: 148). They do not participate in grammaticalisation in the same way as the other categories, since their path often leads to co-lexicalisation rather than delexicalisation.

the process of delexicalisation and in turn, grammaticalisation. Intensifiers that Lorenz (2002: 148) identifies as advanced in this process include *absolutely* (originally comparative, though cf. McManus (2012: 58–73)), *terribly* (originally evaluative), and *really* (originally modal).

Adverbs are the major source of intensifiers recognised by Lorenz (2002: 148) in his taxonomy. More specifically, the evaluative and modal categories of adverbs are considered to be the most productive sources of innovation. This seems to be the consensus across similar studies. In the particular case of boosters, Peters (1994: 269) lists the following adverbial categories as being possible sources: 'a) local/dimensional adverbs (*highly, extremely*), b) quantitative adverbs (*much, vastly*), c) qualitative adverbs (*terribly, violently*), d) emphasisers (*really*), e) taboo/swear words (*damned*, etc.)'. Categories (c) and (d) relate to Lorenz's (2002: 148) evaluative and modal categories respectively.

Evaluative adverbs are, according to Lorenz (2002: 149), 'the most powerful resource of innovation' (e.g. *incredibly, awfully, fabulously*). They rely on speakers associating certain qualitative traits with a degree of intensification, as in 'to a degree/extent that I consider X' (e.g. *ridiculously low* = 'low to a degree that I consider ridiculous'). Adverbs denoting epistemic stance (also known as truth intensifiers, emphasisers, and modal adverbs) are also a rich source for degree modifiers (e.g. *actually, definitely, really*).[27] Their function of reinforcing or attesting the truth of a proposition can be reanalysed as denoting degree when used with an adjective (Ito and Tagliamonte 2003: 262; Lorenz 2002: 151–52; Peters 1992: 379). This semantic similarity has been noted before in traditional grammars (see e.g. Allerton 1987: 27; Partington 1993: 181f; Quirk et al. 1985: 586), but only Partington (1993: 181) and Bolinger (1972: 94–95) considered epistemic stance/modal adverbs as both a diachronic and synchronic source for intensification.

A clear example of a modal-to-intensifier shift is *really* (Paradis 2003; Partington 1993: 182): its modal meaning, pragmatically emphatic, is more noticeable when it occurs as a sentence adverb (see e.g. (2) and (3) below), whereas its intensifying function is foregrounded when it pre-modifies an adjective or an adverb (see e.g. (4) and (5) below). This project follows the idea that there is no hierarchy of functions and in that sense, the emphatic function is performed in both contexts (see §3.2.1 and §5.4.2 for more on this idea); in the second case, there is an added meaning of degree. *Really* illustrates how different meanings, at different points in the cline of grammaticalisation, co-exist and influence each other (see e.g. Traugott 1989: 33). *Truly, simply, just,* and *literally* are used as examples of similar development paths by Bolinger (1972: 94–95, 107). He comments on how the

[27] The opposite direction, intensifier to modal/stance adverb is also attested (Swan 1988: 13) —see for example the development of *absolutely,* explored below in Section 4.5.

expression of certainty or truthfulness is inevitably linked to emphasis (as discussed in §4.5 below), and it only takes a context where the adverb precedes an adjective for it to gain degree modification meaning.

(2) Don't be mean, you love him, *really* (**Sarah**, F, 19, 2017_SEL2091_078_A).

(3) I *really* don't know how Trump got in (**Jeremy**, M , 19, 2017_SEL2091_021_A).

(4) The Mauritian people that were tagged in the photo got *really* confused (**Jack**, M, 19, 2017_SEL2091_043_A).

(5) I get *really* bored *really* easily if I don't have my phone (**Ellie**, F, 14, Ccc03f1_B).

Some intensifiers also develop from affective adjectives:[28] for example *very*, *good*, *dirty*, *bloody, jolly, pretty, dead, proper,* and *canny*. They are interpreted as adjectives if they pre-modify a noun and as degree modifiers if they pre-modify an adjective (Adamson 2000: 54). They all undergo semantic attrition to some extent: for example *dirty* and *bloody* have lost the negative nuance, *jolly* and *pretty* have lost the positive nuance, and *good* and *nice* seem to keep some of the positive nuance. For all these intensifiers (except *very*) the category shift is reversible and they can be interpreted as adjectives if positioned differently: *good long road* versus *long good road; jolly small woman* versus *small jolly woman; canny young lad* versus *young canny lad.* The movement to the left periphery of the noun phrase (NP) occurs in parallel to, and participates in, the subjectification of the form. Adamson (2000: 55) proposes the following cline:

Table 9. Grammaticalisation cline in the NP proposed by Adamson (2000: 55), showcasing leftward movement and subjectification

Subjective meaning	←			Objective meaning
Intensifier	Movement to the left periphery of the phrase	Affective/Descriptive adjective	Development of affective meaning	Classifier adjective

Case study: the development of *very*

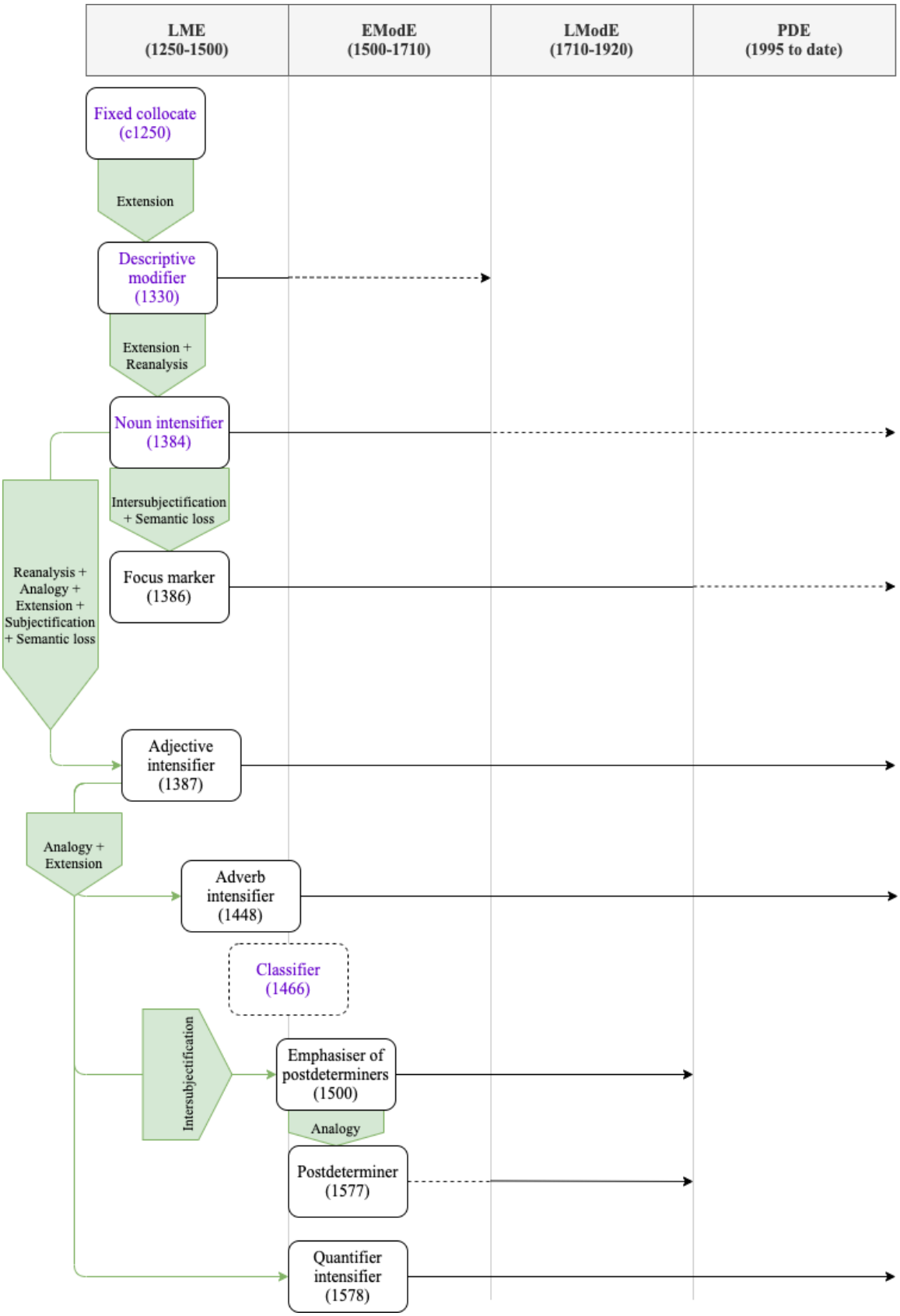
Breban and Davidse (2016) base their exploration of the historical development of intensifier *very* on Adamson's (2000) theory. They argue that *very* moved towards the left periphery of the NP

[28] Affective adjectives are considered a subtype of evaluative adjectives (see e.g. Aijmer 2018a: 114), which are also understood as a proxy for emotional adjectives in this project.

structure as it gained more subjective and grammatical functions over a period of roughly 330 years.

The development of functions of *very* attested in Breban and Davidse (2016) showcases many of the changes discussed thus far. It is summarised below in Figure 6. Horizontal lines represent the lifespan of the form across the different stages of the English language. Dashed lines refer to the function being rare or only surviving in lexicalised expressions. Green lines and boxes illustrate the processes involved in the grammaticalisation of *very*. Finally, text in purple represents *very* being used as an adjective, while text in black represents adverb *very*.

Figure 6. Summary of the historical trajectory of *very*



Source: based on Breban and Davidse (2016)

Very entered English from Latin (*verus,* 'true') via Old French in around 1250 (all information and examples about *very* come from Breban and Davidse (2016)). It was an adjective in fixed collocations related to the Christian faith (see (6) below). OED written attestations from the late 14th century show that *very* had gained three new functions that were more grammatical and subjective: noun intensifier (see (7)), focus marker (see (8)), and adjective intensifier (see (9)). As a noun intensifier, *very* still worked as an adjective but it no longer added lexical meaning. Rather, it conveyed the speaker's assessment of the degree of the noun in a scale. In its focus marker uses, *very* performed functions similar to *even*, *only*, and *just* and started to behave like an adverb. *Very* underwent subjectification when it started to work as a noun intensifier and intersubjectification when it gained the function of focus marker. These uses only remain as lexicalised fixed expressions in Present-Day English (PDE), such as *the very truth*, *the very end* and *the very beginning* (noun intensifier), and *the very idea* or *the very thought* (focus marker).

(6) Fixed collocate
 a. c1250: A clude bar him vp.. *Warrai* man and god *warrai* (OED, *Cursor Mundi*).

(7) Noun intensifier
 a. c1386: This is a *verray* sooth with outen glose (OED, Chaucer).
 b. 1484: He.. is a *very* fole (OED, Caxton).

(8) Focus marker
 a. c1386: Ran cow and calf, and eek the *verray* hogges Sore fered were for berkyng of dogges (OED, Chaucer).

(9) Adjective intensifier
 a. a1387: But for he was *verray* repentaunt he was exciled for fle fey (OED, Trevisa).
 b. 1420-1500: My *veray* ffei3theffull ('faithful') Cossen, I trust to you þat.. (PPCME2[29], Stonor).
 c. 1486: The hawke will be *very* eegre and gleetous ('affected with phlegm') of the sekenes (OED, *Bk St Albans*).
 d. 1732: How then should the *very* Best of us..expect..to be free from them? (OED, Atterbury).
 e. 1849: Three of the *very* richest subjects in England (OED, Macaulay).

(10) Adverb intensifier:
 a. 1448: *Veré* hartely your, Molyns (OED, *Paston Letters*).

Around the same time, *very* acquired a modal meaning qualifying adjectives, which was reanalysed as an intensifier of adjectives. As discussed above, modal adverbs attesting the truthfulness of a quality can commonly be reinterpreted as expressing subjective degree in a scale (Lorenz 2002: 151–52; Partington 1993: 183). Another bridging context where *very* could have

[29] *Penn-Helsinki Parsed Corpus of Middle English* (PPCME2, Kroch and Taylor 2000)

been reinterpreted as an intensifier is in collocations with other adjectives that already conveyed the meanings of the original adjective *very,* namely truthfulness, veracity or faithfulness (see (9)b above). In these contexts, the second adjective was interpreted as the carrier of lexical meaning and the first one, *very*, as an intensifier. These contexts were both evidence and trigger of further semantic loss and subjectification. In comparison with the noun intensifier and focus marker uses, intensifier *very* narrowed its scope (condensation). While the other two uses acted over the group of the noun head and any classifiers and descriptive modifiers, intensifier *very* only acted upon the descriptive adjective. By the 16th century, *very* had unambiguously become a bleached intensifier of adjectives, which allowed the extension to further contexts, such as adjectives of negative prosody (see (9)c), superlatives (see (9)d and (9)e), and adverbs (see (10)).

The historical development of intensifier *very* illustrates the processes of reanalysis, analogy, leftward movement, semantic loss, extension to new contexts, and (inter)subjectification, over a long period of time. It originally derived from an adjective that is no longer used, and of which there are no lexical traces left. Among the current variants in the intensifier variable, *very* is the most grammaticalised, and has become the prototypical booster of adjectives and adverbs (Breban and Davidse 2016: 240; D'Arcy 2015: 485; Lorenz 2002: 145–46). Grammaticalisation has also caused an erosion of its expressivity, and has therefore made it more likely to be replaced by newer variants (Aijmer 2018a: 113; D'Arcy 2015: 483–44; Lorenz 2002: 146; Tagliamonte 2016: 92).

In sum, the system of intensifiers is built upon the grammaticalisation of mainly modal and evaluative adverbs, and affective adjectives. These undergo semantic loss that allows them to modify a wider range of heads and gain pragmatic functions through subjectification. The study of collocates reveals the grammaticalisation status of intensifiers: the more widely the intensifier collocates and the less recognisable its lexical traces are, the more grammaticalised it is. The development of *very* illustrates all these trends. Since grammaticalisation is slow and gradual, intensifiers that are advanced in the process are also old, and in turn, lose expressivity. In a system that is so dependent on innovation and fashion, the more grammaticalised intensifiers are subject to decline in frequency in favour of newer, more expressive options.

4.5. Development of emphasisers

Emphasisers are markers that strengthen the force of an utterance or a subclausal item (Quirk et al. 1985: 385), thus conveying discourse-pragmatic meaning. In this project, the group of emphasisers includes stance adverbs (*actually, really, definitely, obviously, literally, genuinely*, and *honestly*), intensifiers (*really*, *proper, absolutely, completely, totally,* and swearwords), and other devices, for reasons explored in detail in Section 5.4.2. All these forms share the ability to express emphasis, regardless

of the other layers of semantic or pragmatic meanings they may convey. Despite their similarities, the paths they have followed in developing emphatic functions are slightly different, and are therefore explored separately in this section: first, intensifiers (exemplified by the development of *so, pure* in Glasgow, and *absolutely*), and second, stance adverbs (illustrated by *actually,* the adverbs of certainty *definitely* and *certainly*, and the evidential *obviously*).

Intensifiers as emphasisers

Intensifiers scale degree upwards, and are used for emphatic purposes, to convey emotion and speaker involvement (Aijmer 2020: 144; D'Arcy 2015: 483–84; Lorenz 2002: 143; Núñez-Pertejo and Palacios-Martínez 2018: 120–21; Partington 1993: 181; Peters 1992: 378; Stenström 2000: 178). In fact, Holmes (1995: 77) groups forms like *absolutely*, *incredibly*, and *so* together with *definitely*, *certainly*, and *of course*, under their common function 'to intensify the illocutionary force of any utterance in which they are used'. Emphasis appears to be intrinsically linked to intensification, and, as such it could be said that when a form becomes an intensifier (by means of the processes explored in the previous section) it immediately becomes an emphasiser as defined in this study.

Still, there are contexts where the emphatic and degree-marking functions diverge: collocations with non-scalar (bounded) heads (e.g. *really huge, so dead, so in fashion, I proper love it*) and free-standing or stand-alone uses (e.g. *-Do you think things can get worse? -Absolutely.*). The occurrence of intensifiers in these contexts illustrates extension following their establishment as degree modifiers: the emphatic function is carried over to contexts where there is no possible marking of degree (i.e. *huge* is already 'very big', *dead* and *in fashion* cannot be measured on a scale, *to love* is already 'to like very much', and the 'yes' that *absolutely* substitutes is not being scaled).

Some authors argue that intensifiers in collocation with non-scalar heads should not be considered intensifiers at all (see e.g. Paradis 2003: 216 for a narrow definition of reinforcer *really*), and call for a clearer distinction between intensifiers and emphasisers that accounts for these contexts (Carretero 2012: 90; McManus 2012: 75–76). This project adopts the idea that these uses are strategies for heightened expressivity (Aijmer 2018a: 113; Partington 1993: 188): emphasis is present in any context of intensification, and more notably in contexts where there is no clear degree meaning. As Aijmer (2020: 153) puts it, the occurrences of intensifiers with verbs in particular 'illustrate that intensification does not always involve degree'. With this in mind, the boosting of adjectives studied in Chapter 6 includes scalar and non-scalar adjectives, and the analysis of emphasisers in Chapter 7 covers the use of intensifiers (boosters and maximisers) with all other heads. This approach provides a comprehensive view of the emphatic value of these

forms. *So, pure,* and *absolutely* are three good examples of how intensifiers have expanded to contexts where the emphatic function remains but degree-marking is redundant.

So is the oldest intensifier in the current set of variants, being attested as a booster as far back as Old English, although it is only in the 20th century that it has become predominant (Bolinger 1972: 176–89; Mustanoja 1960: 324; Stoffel 1901; Stratton fc.; Tagliamonte and Roberts 2005). Attestations from the OED (1989 III) show that *so* seems to have started pre-modifying adverbs (e.g. (11)a and b), and then extended to quantifiers (e.g. (11)c), adjectives (e.g. (11)d), and other contexts like prepositional phrases (e.g. (11)e). Its intensification function has also been applied to verbs for centuries, both following them (e.g. (11)f and (11)g), and in pre-modifier position (e.g. (11)h and (11)i).

(11) Intensifier *so*

a. c888: Ne gelyfe ic no þæt hit geweorþan meahte *swa* endebyrdlice (Ælfred tr. Boethius *De Consol. Philos.* v §3).

b. c888: Nu ðu þæt *swa* openlice ongiten hæfst, ne ðearfe ic nu..ymb ðæt (Ælfred tr. Boethius *De Consol. Philos.* xxxv §3)

c. a1225: Godes sune, þet *se* muche godlec cudde us alle on eorde (*Leg. Kath.* 1345)

d. 1340: Þe empire, þat was *swa* myghty, Es now destruyed a grete party (R. Rolle *Pricke of Conscience* 4073).

e. 1853: A man is *so* in the way in the house (E. C. Gaskell *Cranford* i).

f. a1400 [a1325]: He haþ delyuered me of my woo And put me to welþe no mon *so* (*Cursor Mundi* l. 5290).

g. 1884: I held back because I loved you *so* (C. Gibbon *Fancy Free* xiv).

h. 1579: What payne doth thee *so* appall? (E. Spenser *Shepheardes Cal.* Aug. 15)

i. 1615: Celebrated for quarries of excellent marble, which do *so* adorne the Venetian palaces (G. Sandys *Relation of Journey* 1).

Most recently, in the 20th century, *so* has started to modify nouns (see (12)a and (12)b), and non-scalar adjectives and adverbs (see (12)c and (12)d). It has also developed a meaning of certainty in the pre-modification of verbs (see (12)e and (12)f), and is used to emphasise operator *not* (see (12)g and (12)h). Zwicky (2011) refers to this group of innovative uses of *so* as 'GenX *so*', in reference to the generation he argues started popularising the innovation, speakers born in the 1960s and 1970s (see also Kuha 2005).

(12) GenX *so* (examples from Draft additions of December 2005 to OED entry)

a. 1923: What can you see in her…? She's *so housemaid* (R. Firbank *Flower beneath Foot* i.16).

b. 1988: Grow up, Heather. Bulimia's *so '86* (D. Waters *Heathers* 14).

c. 2001: Got ya, sucker! You are *so dead*! (*Toronto Star* 7 Apr. M2/3)

d. 2001: Don't be expecting it to be cosy… The kid gloves are *so off* (*Heat* 28 Apr. 81/2).

e. 1994: Oh thank you Josh, I *so need* lessons from you on how to be cool (A. Heckerling *Clueless* p.14)

f. 2004: I am *so getting* the milkshake (*NY Times* 26 Dec. v. 8/3).

g. 1997: Napoleons are *so not* fun to eat (*NY Mag.* 25 Aug. 152/3).

h. 2005: You've seen the carousel and it's *so not* cool to be seen here if you're over nine years old (J. M. Czech *Grace Happens* xi.62)

The pragmatic meanings of GenX *so* do not seem to differ much from examples such as (11)e above, *so in the way*, from the 19th century. Rather than strict innovation, GenX *so* could be a case of recycling of a dormant function (Tagliamonte 2008: 391). This project aimed to analyse these expressive uses as cases of emphasiser *so*, in comparison with other similar forms such as emphasisers *really, proper* or *absolutely*. Unfortunately, there were no tokens in the sample. This is not surprising, since the 2005 draft additions included in its OED entry (1989) describe emphasiser *so* as 'chiefly US', and most work on it surveys American English data (see e.g. Kenter et al. 2007). These uses of *so* exemplify a further stage of grammaticalisation where the degree meaning has given way to a purely emphatic function.

Pure was attested to have similar emphatic uses in the speech of Glaswegian teenagers at the beginning of the 2000s (Macaulay 2006). In addition to being used with scalar adjectives (see (13), examples from Macaulay 2006), *pure* was used with non-scalar adjectives (e.g. (14)), verbs (e.g. (15)), adverbial and prepositional phrases (e.g. (16)), and even as part of quotative constructions (e.g. (17)).

(13) He's *pure* good actually.

(14) *Pure* terrible

(15) *Pure* with verbs:

a. I *pure* like her trainers.

b. It's *pure* running all oer this chair.

c. He *pure* grabbed my jacket.

d. I *pure* shouted at him.

e. I couldnae *pure* hold it in.

f. You can *pure* sing.

(16) *Pure* with adverbial and prepositional phrases:

a. His wee lassie's *pure* up at the window.

b. He's *pure* intae Amy in't he?

(17) *Pure* as part of a quotative construction:

a. I was *pure* 'Naw'.

b. I'm *pure* like that 'Scobie hey what are you doing?'

In the pre-modification of verbs, Macaulay (2006: 273–74) compares *pure* with *really*, but without the ambiguity of scope that the latter may have. For example, *I pure like her trainers* is unambiguously understood as 'I like her trainers very much', whereas *I really like her trainers* could be understood as either 'I like her trainers very much' or 'In reality, I like her trainers'. In addition to scalar verbs such as *like* (see (15)a) and *run* (see (15)b), *pure* also intensifies verbs that either cannot vary in terms of degree, like *grab* (see (15)c), or already express a maximal degree, like *shout* (see (15)d). In these cases, *pure* has the effect of 'highlighting the event' (Macaulay 2006: 273), that is, emphasis. *Pure* was also found both before and after modal verbs (see (15)e and (15)f), and in the second case, Macaulay (2006: 274) argues that *pure* can be as ambiguous as *really*. *You can pure sing* could mean 'You can sing very well' (emphatic evaluative meaning), or 'It is really the case that you can sing' (stance meaning of reality). Macaulay (2006: 278) concludes by classifying pre-verbal *pure* as a 'focus particle', on the basis that *pure* has local scope over the following item. The label 'focus particle', however, is not used in this project, where the concept of 'emphasiser with local scope' is preferred. This is because the label 'focus particle' is traditionally used to refer to additive particles like *also* and *even*, and restrictive particles like *just* and *only* (König 1991: 1–6), which have different semantic and pragmatic readings to the emphasisers studied here.

These examples show that in the speech of Glaswegian teenagers, *pure* has completely delexicalised and 'its function is mainly pragmatic' (Macaulay 2006: 278–79). While the use of *pure* is marginal in the present sample of Tyneside teenagers (contrary to Barnfield and Buchstaller's (2010: 271–72) previous findings), *proper* appears to display similar uses. These were in fact already noted in MLE (Núñez-Pertejo and Palacios-Martínez 2018: 133–34), where *proper* occurred as a modifier of verbs (see (18)a and (18)b below, examples from Núñez-Pertejo and Palacios-Martínez (2018)) and prepositional phrases (e.g. (18)c), and as part of quotatives (e.g. (18)d). *Proper* conveys a manner meaning similar to *properly* in the post-modification of verbs (e.g. (18)a), but its intensifying and emphatic meaning is clear in the other examples. In fact, *hate* can be considered a semantically extreme verb, similar to *love* or *shout* above, and in no need of further degree-marking. Similar to *so* and *pure*, the context expansion of *proper* is evidence of grammaticalisation. As noted in Section 3.2.1 and further explored in Section 7.2.6, this context expansion is likely to be related to its adjectival meanings.

(18) *Proper* in non-degree-marking contexts:

a. I can't extend my arm *proper*.

b. She *proper* hates him now.

c. My mate was *proper* out of her face.

d. And then she was *proper* like 'yeah, man, yeah, you know, you get this and that'.

Maximisers like *absolutely*, *completely*, and *totally* are particularly salient in their emphatic function. They tend to occur with extreme and limit heads (e.g. *gorgeous* instead of *beautiful*, *reek* instead of *smell*, *ages* instead of *years*) (Paradis 2001: 4–6), where the maximum degree is already intrinsic. McManus (2012: 75–76) questions whether there is a difference between maximisers and emphasisers at all, and whether maximiser is a label that should only apply to collocations of these forms with scalar heads. As discussed earlier in this section, this project endorses the idea that all intensifiers should be considered emphasisers. The label 'intensifier' or 'maximiser' is used when focusing on (i) their degree-marking function or (ii) the semantic and formal differences they have in comparison with other emphasisers (e.g. stance adverbs or clause-final *like*), while the label 'emphasiser' helps to group these forms together with others that perform a similar function of highlighting the force of the utterance or a subclausal item.

Absolutely is a case in point of an intensifier which, by means of collocating frequently in contexts where only the emphatic reading is possible, has developed into an emphatic, stand-alone response marker. McManus's (2012) work serves to explore and illustrate the evolution of *absolutely* across time.

Derived from Latin, *absolutely* started to be used in the Middle English period with the manner meaning 'freely, without physical/mental restrictions or constraints'. By early Modern English (17th-18th C.), *absolutely* could have been reinterpreted as meaning 'to a complete degree', in other words, with a maximiser meaning, in ambiguous contexts like (19) and (20) (McManus 2012: 62). McManus's (2012: 63) data shows how from that moment on, the parts of speech that *absolutely* collocated with expanded, with adjectives becoming the most frequent context (Early Modern English 59% > Late Modern English 74% > Present-Day English 87%). This process consolidated its maximiser meaning.

(19) 1603: If I knew any of these things, I would *absolutely* confess the Indictment (HELSINKI Corpus: The Trial of Sir Walter Raleigh, 1603).

(20) 1735-1748: He has no principles himself, and those no principles of his are governed *absolutely* by hers, which are no-issimes (CLMETEV: Walpole, H. 1735-48. Letters, Vol. 1.).

Around the 17th century, *absolutely* is also found in collocations with non-gradable (e.g. (21) below) and 'absolute' heads (e.g. (22)) (McManus 2012: 69–70). Given that the marking of maximum degree in these contexts was redundant, the only possible function of *absolutely* was 'emphasizing the maximum degree that is already denoted inherently' (McManus 2012: 70). A similar context is the emphatic use of *absolutely* with negative pronouns and determiners (e.g. *absolutely nothing*; *I have absolutely no idea*) (Aijmer 2016b: 86).

(21) 1642: Shee saith you write that you are sorie to heare that I have *absolutelie* declared my self against the parliament, which I wonder at this time to heare, when all the gentlemen of this countie complaine of me to the King for being to affectionate to the parliament (CEECS, WESA, Lord Thomas Savile to Lady Temple).

(22) 1859/60: I heard his sympathetic voice travelling away from me by degrees —but, large as he was, I never heard him. He had the negative merit of being *absolutely* noiseless. I don't know when he opened the door, or when he shut it (CLMETEV: Collins, W. W. *The Woman in White*).

Absolutely seemed to have shifted from having local scope to clausal scope, in the same way that pre-verbal stance adverbs act over the whole clause (e.g. *I absolutely must talk to someone* = 'It is absolutely the case that I must talk to someone') (Aijmer 2020: 154–55; see also Carretero 2012: 83). The reanalysis of pre-verbal emphasiser *absolutely* as having clausal scope led to the development of epistemic stance meaning of certainty (e.g. (23) and (24)) (McManus 2012: 71).

(23) 1735-48: I come now to speak to you of the affair of the Duke of Newcastle; but *absolutely*, on considering it much myself, and on talking of it with your brother, we both are against your attempting any such thing (CLMETEV: Walpole, H. Letters, Vol. 1.).

(24) 1893: He had done nothing for which this woman could justly reproach him; marvellous--so he considered--had been his self-restraint; *absolutely*, he had behaved like a gentleman (CLMETEV: Gissing, G. The Odd Woman.).

In this function, *absolutely* gained peripheral positioning by analogy with similar epistemic stance adverbs such as *definitely*, a placement in the clause that is not possible for degree modifiers (in fact, to this day *so* or *proper* do not permit that position in their intensification/emphatic roles). With these changes *absolutely* has come closer to the discourse-pragmatic functions performed by *definitely* or *certainly* (Carretero 2012: 88–89).

In more recent times, *absolutely* has begun to be used as an emphatic response marker — first attestation is in 1898, but it has only been used in that context with considerable frequency since the 1990s (McManus 2012: 218). There were at least three triggers for this development. First, the emphasis of affirmative polarity in response contexts like *I absolutely do*, together with its strong tendency to collocate with positive adjectives and affirmative tokens, could have been the

origin for the use of free-standing *absolutely* as a marker of emphatic affirmation or agreement (McManus 2012: 73; Tao 2007: 17). Second, having developed epistemic stance meaning, *absolutely* was already syntactically detached from the sentence, and had become almost synonymous with other emphatic response markers such as *definitely* and *certainly*, so it could have changed by analogy (McManus 2012: 73; Tao 2007: 14). Third, given the interpersonal value of the left periphery, the use of turn-initial *absolutely* in its epistemic meaning could have given it the interactional and solidarity value of a response marker (Tao 2007: 20). In this use, *absolutely* has gained expressive and subjective value (subjectification, i.e. Traugott's third tendency of semantic change, see §4.3 above), as well as discourse-organising functions such as agreement, response to thanking and apologising, and closing a conversation (Traugott's second tendency of semantic change) (Aijmer 2016b: 89, 93).

As such, *absolutely* exemplifies the semantic-pragmatic pathway: 'manner meaning > degree meaning > strict emphasis > epistemic stance > response marker'. Aijmer (2020: 150) found an increase in frequency of response marker and pre-verbal *absolutely* (18.4% to 29.4%, and 6.6.% to 12.2%, respectively) to the detriment of adjective modifier *absolutely* (45.8% to 29.2%) in BNC. This ties in with the idea presented earlier in this chapter that grammaticalising forms increase in frequency over time (see e.g. Bybee 2008), which in turn allows further reanalysis, and the development of more grammatical uses. However, both Aijmer's (2020: 155) results and those from Palacios-Martínez and Núñez-Pertejo (2014b: 222) in their study of COLT show that neither peripheral nor response marker *absolutely* are common in the speech of young people in Britain. This is corroborated in the sample of young Tynesiders in this study, where there are no tokens of *absolutely* in peripheral positions and only two used as an emphatic response.

Completely and *totally* developed maximiser functions by analogy with *absolutely*; *completely* also developed purely emphatic meanings in collocations with non-scalar or non-gradable heads, and *totally* is also used nowadays as an emphatic response marker (McManus 2012: 97, 206). Emphasiser *completely* and response marker *totally* are rare in British English (McManus 2012: 87, 209; Palacios-Martínez and Núñez-Pertejo 2014b: 226), and they are both marginally represented in this project's sample (see §7.2.6).

Stance adverbs as emphasisers

The epistemic meanings of stance adverbs have developed from their original manner meanings (Simon-Vandenbergen and Aijmer 2007: 256; Traugott 1989: 46). The formation of stance adverbs is a syntactic-pragmatic change, with the position and scope shifting from clause-internal and local to peripheral and global (Swan 1988: 9) and the meaning of the form changing from concrete to

abstract (see e.g. Simon-Vandenbergen and Aijmer 2007b: 51), and from objective to subjective (i.e. subjectification) .

The particular development of emphasis is specific to a subgroup of stance adverbs. On the basis of semantic nuances (Biber et al. 1999: 854–56), emphasisers include epistemic stance adverbs of reality (e.g. *actually, really, truly*), certainty (e.g. *definitely*, *certainly*, *surely*), and evidentiality (e.g. *obviously, clearly, evidently*), and style stance adverbs that relate to the speaker's truthfulness (e.g. *literally, genuinely, honestly, frankly*). On the basis of the strength of the modality/stance meaning (Huddleston and Pullum 2002: 768), the development of emphasis might only occur in strong modals. For example, adverbs such as *probably* or *apparently*, which express weak certainty and evidence respectively are unlikely to strengthen the force of the utterance in the same way as *definitely* or *obviously*. Therefore, what follows explores how strong stance adverbs of the selected semantic groups develop the emphatic function. *Actually* will serve to exemplify the strong adverbs of reality (and show how their development connects to *literally*), *definitely* and *certainly* will illustrate those of certainty, and *obviously* will represent strong evidentials.

Markers of certainty and reality are used to demonstrate the speaker's 'adherence to the obligatory sincerity condition' (Peters 1992: 378). Since this demonstration might be redundant, assuming that the hearer/reader will always expect the speaker/writer to be certain and truthful (Grice 1975), 'markers of certainty flag something special' (Simon-Vandenbergen and Aijmer 2007b: 33). The apparently superfluous conveyance of certainty and reality meanings might call for pragmatic markedness (cf. Traugott and Dasher 2001: 19). The relevance of these markers may then 'be found in a reinforcement of the speaker's illocutionary point' (Peters 1992: 379), that is to say, emphasis (Simon-Vandenbergen 2008: 1531). As Bolinger (1972: 94) puts it, '[a]dding such a word as *truly* does not make [statements] more true, but it does emphasize the truth feature of the sentence'. In his study of spoken and written academic language, Biber (2006: 106) suggests that the emphatic function of certainty adverbs has taken over their epistemic meaning, expressing 'high personal involvement' and 'emphasising the attitudes and expected activities of the instructor'.

Halliday (2004: 625) proposed the paradox that 'we only say we are certain when we are not'. The use of certainty markers and the subsequent expression of emphasis can be considered a response to the speaker's need to reinforce their message due, for example, to a lack of confidence in its certainty or truthfulness, or a need to protect against disagreement (Coates 2003: 331; Preisler 1986: 93, 104–05; Simon-Vandenbergen and Aijmer 2007: 284). This stems from the argument that an unmodalised/unmarked statement such as *Joe has left* is more assertive and less tentative than *Joe has definitely left*, which is in turn less tentative than *Joe has probably left*. The explicit

semantic expression of certainty is linked to emphasis in pragmatic terms, and in turn, the expression of emphasis might be a conversational strategy to hedge. Hedging here needs to be understood in a broad sense, as encompassing a range of interpersonal functions dealing with rapport and solidarity, such as mitigating a controversial comment, facilitating open discussion, or avoiding an assertive tone (Coates 2003: 334–38). These are the discourse-pragmatic functions that were explored in Section 3.2.1, and will be analysed qualitatively in Chapter 7.

Actually has often been studied from a grammaticalisation perspective (Aijmer 2016a: 124–41; Powell 1992: 85–86; Traugott and Dasher 2001: 169–70; Waters 2008: 14–16). Traugott and Dasher (2001: 169–70) explain the development of *actually* in three stages. Borrowed from French in the 15th century, *actually* originally conveyed the lexical meaning 'actively, effectively' (e.g. (25) below, examples taken from Traugott and Dasher (2001)). At a second stage, *actually* was reanalysed in some contexts as meaning 'really' (e.g. (26)), that is, conveying epistemic certainty against expectations or introducing surprising information. Finally, in the early 19th century, *actually* developed a discourse particle use that performed functions beyond the conveyance of contrastive epistemicity, such as elaborating on a previous point (see (27) and (28)).

(25) 1425: To cure it *actuale* whilez it is introduct but ys not confermed (Chauliac 1, IIIb).

(26) 1816: Mr. Perry had been to Mrs. Goddard's to attend a sick child, and . . . found to his great surprise that Mr. Elton was *actually* on his road to London, and not meaning to return till the morrow (J. Austen, *Emma*, vol. I, chapter 8, p.68).

(27) 1818: It was now his object to marry. He was rich, and being turned on shore, fully intended to settle as soon as he could be properly tempted; *actually* looking around, ready to fall in love with all the speed which a clear head and quick taste could allow (J. Austen, *Persuasion*, vol. I, chapter 7, p. 61).

(28) 1993: In the middle of the complaint I started to worry that maybe I shouldn't be saying anything. And *actually* I said to myself, "boy, I sound like a complainer." You know, when a person complains a lot, that bothers me. When I'm down I tend to complain more. But I said, "I'm really tired of working with these people." *Actually* I even embellished the complaint (Boxer, p. 123; transcript).

The grammaticalisation of *actually* was attested for example in Waters's (2008) study of the form in the *Toronto English Archive* (2003-2004), where it had increased in frequency and had specialised in peripheral positions and positive utterances (Waters 2008: 43). Although Waters (2008: 15) argues that position does not seem to constrain the meanings of *actually* to a great extent, other authors have indeed found a connection between position and semantic-pragmatic change (Aijmer 2002, 2016; Oh 2000; Taglicht 2001).

Research on *actually* illustrates the chain development of subjective and intersubjective functions once the epistemic stance meaning emerges. *Actually* and *really* are often studied together, since they share not only the actuality and reality meanings but also emphatic, contrastive and other intersubjective functions (see e.g. Aijmer 2002; Andersen 2001; Biber and Finegan 1988; Powell 1992; Waters 2008). By analysing dictionary entries for different stance adverbs, Powell (1992: 101–02) demonstrated that there is a strong analogy effect between adverbs that are synonymically related. *Actually* and *really* are used nowadays in highly similar ways, and *literally*, which is partially related to both, seems to have followed suit in developing emphatic and mirative uses. Despite the resounding evidence that *literally* has grammaticalised in ways similar to *actually* and *really* (see e.g. Bolinger 1972: 107; OED 2011; Powell 1992: 101–02), its development has received very little scholarly attention. This project aims to fill that gap. A diachronic study of its grammaticalisation is not possible here, given this project's objectives and data, but the examples of *literally* in the speech of Tyneside teenagers constitute solid evidence that it has diverged from the original lexical meaning 'in a literal sense' (see §7.2.5).

Let us now turn to adverbs of certainty. They have been extensively studied by Simon-Vandenbergen and Aijmer (2007) and include adverbs such as *definitely* and *certainly*, and evidentials like *obviously* and *clearly*. There are three main conclusions derived from their work in relation to the development of emphasis. First, this group shares a core meaning of epistemic certainty, but they have diachronically developed a set of 'specific overtones' related to their original lexical meanings (Simon-Vandenbergen and Aijmer 2007b: 284). In their work, these 'overtones' are explored as heteroglossic functions: concurrence (building common ground for the purpose of solidarity or establishing authority), pronouncement (intensification or emphasis for authority), endorsement (agreeing with/confirming some external source), concession (agreeing to disagree), and counter-expectation (Simon-Vandenbergen and Aijmer 2007b: 304–07).

Second, the development of certainty adverbs into emphasisers is an extremely common phenomenon. They move from expressing the speakers' certainty regarding the proposition to simply strengthening the force of the proposition (Simon-Vandenbergen and Aijmer 2007b: 259). The expression of emphasis sometimes bleaches out the epistemic meaning. Simon-Vandenbergen and Aijmer (2007b: 300) exemplify this idea with the utterance *I certainly do*, where the speaker might not mean 'I am certain that I do' but simply wants to reinforce their statement. Third, when the epistemic meaning of certainty erodes and the adverb is used purely for emphasis, another common step that follows is the development of the form into an emphatic response marker (Simon-Vandenbergen and Aijmer 2007b: 301–02). This ties in with Traugott's (1995) cline that results in items becoming discourse particles.

Evidentials such as *obviously* follow similar patterns to certainty adverbs (see e.g. Chafe 1986; Hassler 2015; Ochs 1996; Simon-Vandenbergen and Aijmer 2007b). *Obviously* comes from Latin, meaning 'lying or standing in the way; placed in front of, or over against', out of which the manner meaning 'evidently, plainly, manifestly' derived (Simon-Vandenbergen and Aijmer 2007b: 147–48). This meaning then turned into a subjective meaning of expressing what is obvious for the speaker, and in turn, into the intersubjective meaning of expressing what is or should be obvious for everyone (Simon-Vandenbergen and Aijmer 2007b: 150). At this point, *obviously* started acquiring a wide array of discourse-pragmatic functions (Hassler 2015: 183).

The particular use of *obviously* as an emphasiser can serve two functions that have to do with authority or solidarity, both of which are heavily delexicalised uses of the form. The authoritative use of obviously serves as a conversational strategy to presuppose and impose an argument based on a high degree of certainty (Aijmer 2008: 72). The solidarity use serves to bring the hearer closer to the speaker by assuming common ground (Aijmer 2008: 72–73). While the use of *obviously* for authoritative purposes is common in political discourse (Simon-Vandenbergen et al. 2007; Simon-Vandenbergen and Aijmer 2007b: 440–41; see also Bueno-Amaro 2017: 33–37), solidarity *obviously* has been attested as particularly frequent in teenage speech, either among friends (Aijmer 2008: 72–74) or with outsiders (e.g. conversations with me, the interviewer, for this project, see §7.2.4). Given its high frequency in COLT data, Aijmer (2008: 81–82) comments on solidarity *obviously* as an example of grammaticalisation pushed forward by younger speakers.

Emphasisers as they are conceptualised in this project appear to have developed the emphatic function through different means: intensifiers through expansion (followed by reanalysis), and stance adverbs through conversational reanalysis and subsequent analogy. Intensifiers are intrinsically emphatic, yet they may become detached from their strict degree-marking function when they expand to contexts where there is no possible degree-marking interpretation. Emphasis conveyed by intensifiers is often used only for expressive and hyperbolic purposes. Alternatively, the meaning of stance adverbs that relate to reality, certainty, and evidentiality tends to be reanalysed as emphasis. In comparison with intensifiers, the emphasis conveyed by stance adverbs often entails a wide range of functions that relate to the discourse situation and aspects of solidarity and hedging, which result from processes of subjectification and intersubjectification.

Chapter 5
Data and methodology

This chapter provides an overview of the data and variables studied in this project, and the methods of data collection and analysis. Section 5.1 elaborates on the characteristics of the *Diachronic Electronic Corpus of Tyneside English* (DECTE). Part of the data for this study is extracted from DECTE and the newly collected data will be integrated into it once the project is finished. Section 5.2 covers the data collection method, with a focus on the sociolinguistic interviews carried out specifically for this project, that is, the *Tyneside Teenagers Corpus* (TyTeC) (§5.2.1.), and the associated ethical considerations (§5.2.2.). The sample of the entire dataset (TyTeC + NECTE2 from DECTE) is described in Section 5.3, exploring the social constraints that stratify it: age (§5.3.1) and gender (§5.3.2). Section 5.4 concerns the definition and delimitation of the linguistic variables that are the focus of the study: boosters (§5.4.1) and emphasisers (§5.4.2). Finally, Section 5.5 elaborates on the data analysis methods that have been used. For each variable, there is a detailed explanation of the processes of token extraction and coding (§5.5.1.1 for boosters and §5.5.2.1 for emphasisers) and the analytical tools employed (§5.5.1.2 and §5.5.2.2 respectively).

5.1. DECTE and TyTeC

The present study examines discourse-pragmatic features in teenagers' language in the region of Tyneside, by combining data from the *Diachronic Electronic Corpus of Tyneside English* (DECTE, Corrigan et al. 2012a) and new interviews with younger speakers (aged 12-18) conducted specifically for this project.

DECTE is a corpus of sociolinguistic interviews conducted in the North East region from the 1970s up to the present day, consisting of three subcorpora (Mearns 2015: 164–67). The first of these consists of interviews conducted for the *Tyneside Linguistic Survey* (TLS) project which began in the 1960s with the aim of studying the covariation of accent features and the social attributes of speakers. Although the TLS team's original plan involved recording hundreds of speakers in both Newcastle and Gateshead, only interviews from the Gateshead sample survived the passing of time in a state that allowed them to be fully incorporated into DECTE.

The second subcorpus of DECTE is a set of interviews recorded in 1994 for *The Phonological Variation and Change in Contemporary Spoken British English* (PVC) project (1994-1997) (Mearns 2015: 165), which focused on phonological variables that were undergoing change in the accents of Newcastle and Derby. In the case of Newcastle, 18 one-hour interviews were conducted

in two residential estates close to the city centre: Chapel House and Newbiggin Hall (Milroy et al. 1999: 37; Watt 2002: 46).

Between 2001 and 2005, the TLS and PVC datasets were amalgamated to create the *Newcastle Electronic Corpus of Tyneside English* (NECTE, Corrigan et al. 2005) between 2001 and 2005. This is an electronic corpus with four time-aligned levels of representation: digital audio, orthographic transcription, grammatical mark-up and partial phonetic transcription (Mearns 2015: 165; Allen et al. 2007: 21–35). The corpus included 37 of the Gateshead TLS interviews and all 18 of the PVC interviews from Newcastle (Mearns 2015: 165).

In 2012, NECTE became DECTE, with the addition of interviews from the third subcorpus: the monitor corpus NECTE2 (https://research.ncl.ac.uk/decte/necte2) (Mearns 2015: 165–66). The NECTE2 project started in 2007 and contains 'digital audio recordings and orthographic transcriptions of dyadic interviews, reading passage and word list recordings, as well as detailed records of the social background of informants' (Mearns 2015: 166). Data collection in this case has been undertaken by undergraduate and postgraduate students at Newcastle University as part of courses in sociolinguistics and other related subjects. NECTE2 has a broader geographical reach than the earlier TLS and PVC collections, with the result that the collection now also covers the other areas of the North East of England —Northumberland, County Durham, Wearside and Teesside— though the majority of informants still come from the Tyneside boroughs (Mearns 2015: 161).

Table 10. Composition of DECTE

	DECTE	Components		
		TLS	PVC	NECTE2
Recording dates	1971-2019	1971-1972	1994	2007-2019
	XML-encoded corpus			
Interviews	99	37	18	44
Words	804,266	229,909	208,295	366,062
Audio (hrs:min:sec)	71: 45: 43	22: 53: 55	17: 34: 25	31: 17: 23
Informants	160	37	35	88
Female	87	20	18	49
Male	73	17	17	39
	Full Collections			
Interviews	c. 1016	88	as above	c. 910
Words	c. 7.4 million	c. 584,000		c. 6.6 million
Audio	c. 920 hours	c. 60 hours		c. 843 hours

Sources: Mearns (2015: 166), DECTE website, and personal communications with the project team

The present study analyses samples of speech from males and females in three age groups: 12-15, 16-18, and 19-20 (see §5.3.1 for a discussion of these divisions). Recordings for the 19-20 age cohort were already available in the NECTE2 subcorpus of DECTE. However, due to the lack of younger teenage informants in DECTE, it was necessary to record new semi-structured sociolinguistic interviews with Tyneside speakers for the 12-15 and 16-18 age groups. To ensure the highest possible degree of comparability between the new subcorpus and the existing DECTE materials, the interview method was based on the approach previously used in DECTE, particularly in the PVC and NECTE2 subsets. The name of the new component is the *Tyneside Teenagers Corpus* (TyTeC).

In sum, the corpus used for this project consists of 18 interviews distributed in same gender and age-group dyads, totalling 36 participants and 3 pairs per combination of external variables, as shown in Table 11.

Table 11. Distribution of the sample in the corpus according to age and gender, combining the TyTeC and NECTE2 interviews

	12-15 (TyTeC)	**16-18 (TyTeC)**	**19-20 (NECTE2)**	**Total per gender**
Female	6	6	6	18
Male	6	6	6	18
Total per age	12	12	12	**Total sample**: 36

The criteria that determined the selection of interviews from NECTE2 were the age of the informants (19-20), their place of residence in the North East (Tyneside boroughs), and comparability of the interviews with the TyTeC interviews (close in time —they were collected in 2017—, length of recordings and interview protocol). TyTeC interviews were conducted in the spring of 2018, September 2018, and June 2019 in different schools and other educational institutions in Newcastle-upon-Tyne. Details of the data collection process are given in Section 5.2 below.

The six NECTE2 interviews average 61 minutes, totalling 6 hours and 65,841 words. Interviews in TyTeC lasted for an average of 67 minutes each, totalling 15 hours of recordings and 114,494 words. Overall, the whole dataset consists of approximately 21 hours and 180,335 words. Table 12 shows a breakdown of number of words per age group and gender.

Table 12. Word count per age group and gender

Social category	**Number of words**
Age group	
12-15	53,775

16-18	60,719
19-20	65,841
Gender	
Female	83,939
Male	96,396

5.2. Data collection method for TyTeC

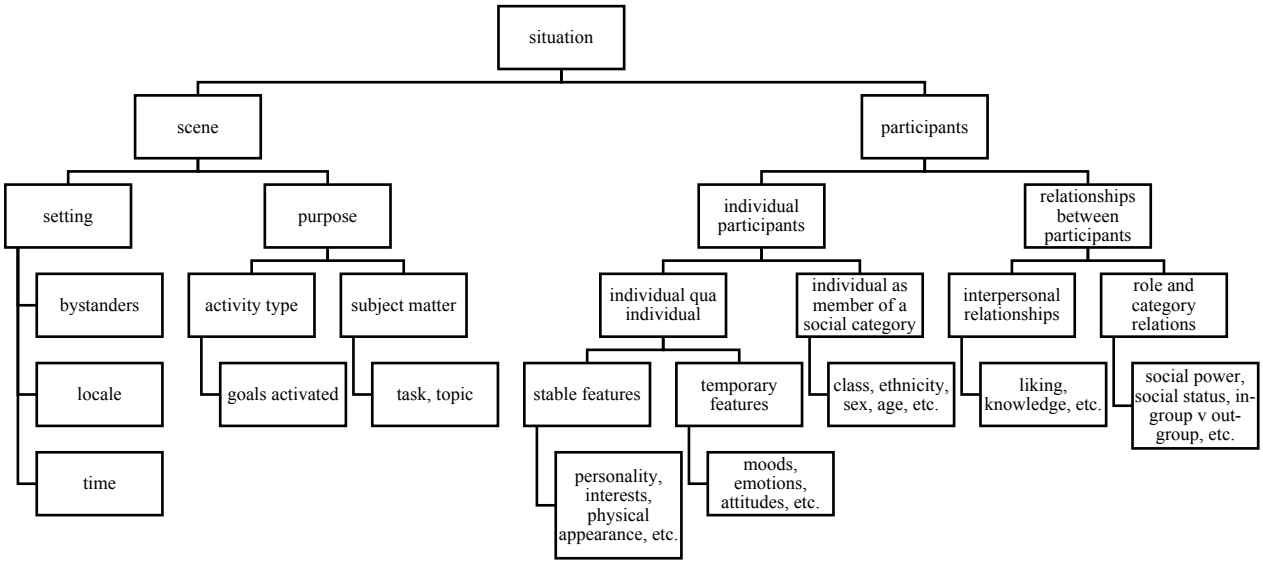
Since the focus of this study is discourse-pragmatics, the data collection method needed to address two key issues. First, it was essential that what came out of the data collection was language that was as near to the vernacular as possible. Note, however, that the notion of the 'vernacular' in this project is linked to spontaneity and emotional load, rather than to the idea of capturing the most authentic or accurate representation of a speaker's language (further justified below). Second, recordings had to be conversational, since the linguistic items under analysis are discourse-pragmatic markers, more frequent and varied in conversation. Therefore, dyadic sociolinguistic interviews were considered most appropriate for the purposes of this project. Each of these aspects is explored in the current section.

Accessing the vernacular has been identified as the ultimate goal in many areas of sociolinguistic research. Described by Labov (1972: 69) as 'the language used by ordinary people in everyday affairs', the vernacular falls into the category of informal speech. Also in Labov's words, it is 'the style in which the minimum attention is given to the monitoring of speech' (1972: 208), so that it is considered the most authentic version of an individual's speech. The vernacular occurs when speakers are in the most natural and comfortable situations, speaking to peers, family, and close friends from the same speech community, or when there is a relevant emotional load (Becker 2013: 95; Tagliamonte 2006: 8). The concept 'emotional load' refers to the involvement of emotions in the speech situation, such as surprise, anger or excitement. The argument is that the more emotionally involved speakers feel about what they are saying, the less attention they pay to monitoring their speech (see e.g. Schilling 2013: 108).

The value of the vernacular as an object of sociolinguistic study also arises from its systematicity: the vernacular is thought to be the first style we acquire and therefore the one that is most ingrained in our consciousness and least subject to contextual influences (Labov 1972: 112; Tagliamonte 2006: 8). The authenticity attributed to the vernacular led Labov (1972: 112) to state 'The Vernacular Principle', pointing to it as the style that is most structurally regular and most reliable for studying language change. The concept, however, has its limitations (see the following for a detailed discussion: Becker 2013: 95; Levey 2007: 37; Milroy and Gordon 2003: 50; Rickford 2014; Schilling-Estes 1998).

From conversational topic and purpose to the relation between interlocutors and the physical setting, there are myriad factors that affect every style and aspect of our language (see Figure 7 below). From this perspective, and inspired by the third wave of variationist research (Eckert 2012, 2016), Drummond (2018b: 62) notes that the vernacular is simply a particular style in a particular context, neither less nor more authentic than other speech styles, and therefore 'an extremely narrow snapshot of a person's linguistic and social reality'. In this sense, Eckert (2000, 2008) emphasises the importance of authentic speakers, rather than authentic language, for accurate sociolinguistic descriptions. In light of these limitations, the vernacular is conceptualised in this project as the most emotionally-loaded variety of language, but without any claim that it is more authentic or more desirable to study. Given the possible confusion or unintended implications of the term, it will not be invoked frequently in the discussion.

Figure 7. Diagram of pragmatic constraints in interview situations



Source: Brown and Fraser (1979, cited in Crinson 1999: 147)

This project is particularly interested in the study of discourse-pragmatic markers. Despite a multitude of definitions, most scholars agree that discourse-pragmatic markers are the linguistic items that help to structure discourse, be it written or spoken, and often simultaneously contribute to livelier interactions by building rapport among interlocutors in different ways, while still complying with discursive politeness (Andersen 2001; Brinton 1996, 2017; Fraser 1996; Östman 1981, 1982; Pichler 2013; Portolés 1998; Schiffrin 1987; Schourup 1999; Stenström 2014, among others). Because of the interpersonal aspect of their function, the emotional load of an interaction is also a motivation for their occurrence.

The mode of discourse is also relevant. Several researchers note that the use of discourse-pragmatic markers —including those studied in this project— is a characteristic feature of oral discourse and conversation specifically (e.g. Biber et al. 1999: 1046; Brinton 2017: 3). Intensifiers have been found to be much more frequent in speech (see e.g. D'Arcy 2015: 451; Lorenz 2002: 143; Xiao and Tao 2007: 265), while results from the *Longman Spoken and Written English Corpus* show that stance adverbials, one of the types of emphasisers studied here, are 'exceptionally frequent' in conversation (Biber et al. 1999: 1046; Conrad and Biber 1999: 64). Therefore, for the purposes of this research, it made sense that the method focused on recording speech, rather than collecting responses through surveys or questionnaires, and that the speech was specifically conversational, rather than captured in recordings of word lists or reading passages.

Given these factors, the data collection method chosen for this project was sociolinguistic interviews where the language output was speech and the situation was as amenable as possible in order to elicit a spontaneous style.

The method of sociolinguistic interviews emerged from Labov's (1972) approach to the study of phonetic features and their variation according to different contextual styles. In the data collection phase of his study, Labov (1972) structured the interviews to collect four styles: casual (A), careful (B), reading (C), and word list and minimal pair (D and D'). The first two are accessed through conversation with the interviewer, first gathering demographic information and afterwards using topic modules (i.e. broad categories of discussion, such as 'family', 'work' or 'holidays'). Styles C, D, and D' are elicited by asking the informant to read prepared texts. As Schilling (2013: 108) notes, sociolinguistic interviewing 'allows us to gather a maximal quantity of naturalistic speech data in a relatively short amount of time', which explains its pervasiveness as a data collection tool across variationist research.

Still, Labov's approach does not necessarily have to be applied with the stylistic structure he first developed. Its value also lies in the flexibility of its structure. In discourse studies, material collected through reading passages, word lists, and minimal pairs has little, if any, relevance. Sociolinguistic interviews are very versatile in the sense that they 'can provide valuable evidence not only of phonetic or phonological features but also syntactic and discourse features' (Macaulay 2009: 32).

No method is perfect, however. Sociolinguistic interviews are to a great extent an artificial situation for the interviewees, and this affects the naturalness that the researcher is trying to capture. Interviewing sets up a conversation between strangers that has no conversational purpose (whether the interaction involves only one interviewee and an interviewer or more interviewees than interviewers, there is often a barrier of unfamiliarity between speakers). Also, roles are clearly

defined in this kind of interview and there is some power asymmetry (Milroy and Gordon 2003: 61–62; Schilling 2013: 110). This power asymmetry is reflected in Labov's (1972: 209) 'Observer's Paradox': the idea that the presence of an interviewer who is aiming to 'observe' natural language makes it more difficult to collect natural 'unobserved' language. Macaulay (2009: 26) also highlights the fact that not all genres and styles can be recorded, because of the practical constraints of the interview situation and because the speakers may unknowingly be using a forced style. In this sense, it is important to keep in mind that sociolinguistic interviews provide a limited sample of the participants' language. As Rickford (2014: 590) puts it, it is 'a fisherman's net cast into a river' that does not fully catch 'what lies beneath'. All these shortcomings have been acknowledged and addressed with some success by various sociolinguists over the years, as explained below in Section 5.2.1.

Before detailing the procedure used in this project's sociolinguistic interviews, let us look at the two main data collection methodologies that have been adopted in previous research on teenage language. The London corpora (COLT, see e.g. Stenström et al. 2002; LIC, Kerswill et al. 2007; MLEC, see e.g. Cheshire et al. 2011) and the *Toronto Teen Corpus* (TTC, see e.g. Tagliamonte 2016) are examples of large-scale corpora. Studies like Eckert's (1989) in Detroit and Moore's (2003) in Bolton illustrate ethnographic approaches with smaller samples. More recently, Dray and Drummond's work (UrBEn-ID, see e.g. Drummond 2016) illustrates the combination of both approaches. Still, as explained in the following section, the procedure followed in NECTE2 was the main benchmark of reference for the data collection method of TyTeC, to ensure comparability.

The *Bergen Corpus of London Teenage Language* (COLT, see e.g. Stenström et al. 2002) and its Spanish counterpart, the *Corpus Oral de Lenguaje Adolescente de Madrid* (COLAm, Jørgensen 2008), were collected by the participants themselves in 1993. For the collection of COLT, a cohort of 32 teenagers aged 13 to 17 carried a tape recorder for three to five days and recorded conversations with their friends and family. The method seems ideal to capture spontaneous speech, although it has limitations (low volume, background noise, variable amount of speech across participants, sometimes orchestrated speech events; see Macaulay (2009: 34) for a detailed discussion). COLT and COLAm are benchmarks in the field of teenage language and their data have been extensively mined, particularly in terms of discourse-pragmatic analysis (e.g. Andersen 2001; Jørgensen and Stenström 2009; Martínez López 2009; Palacios-Martínez 2011; Palacios-Martínez and Núñez-Pertejo 2014a, 2014b; Stenström 2006, 2009, 2014; Stenström et al. 2002; Stenström and Andersen 1996; Stenström and Jørgensen 2008). The emphasis which COLT placed on teenagers as the main producers of the material and drivers of the conversation is something the data collection for this

project has emulated. It was the unstructured and uncontrolled nature of their interviews that contributed to a dataset rich in discourse-pragmatic features.

The *Linguistic Innovators* (LIC, Kerswill et al. 2007) and *Multicultural London English* (MLEC, see e.g. Cheshire et al. 2011) corpora have become reference points in the study of language contact, transmission, and multiethnolects. Both corpora contain speech recordings from sociolinguistic interviews in pairs, and some self-recordings, which total almost 3 million words, from the early 2000s (LIC; 2004-7, MLE: 2007-10). The main categorisation of speakers related to their ethnicity: 'Anglos' (white British) and 'non-Anglos' (any other ethnicity). LIC contains speech samples from 114 speakers, with 98 aged between 17 and 19 and the rest between 70 and 86. MLEC has a narrower focus on young speech, with 127 speakers in the age groups 4-5, 12-13, and 16-19. Together the LIC and MLEC aim to present a picture of the linguistic innovation going on in different London boroughs. Given their informative size, ethnic diversity, and ample geographical coverage of London, LIC and MLEC have been, and continue to be, fruitful sources for variationist research of phonological variables (vowels, H-dropping, DH/TH-stopping, K-backing, prosody; Cheshire et al. 2008, 2011; Drummond 2018a; Fox and Torgersen 2018; Torgersen and Szakay 2012), morphosyntactic variables (*was/were*, *a/an*, pronoun *man*; Cheshire 2013; Cheshire et al. 2011; Cheshire and Fox 2009), discourse-pragmatic variables (quotatives, intensifiers, utterance-final tags, and other pragmatic markers; Cheshire et al. 2011; Kerswill et al. 2013; Núñez-Pertejo and Palacios-Martínez 2018; Pichler 2020; Torgersen et al. 2011), and lexis (Green 2014). All of these studies have made significant progress in the understanding of the mechanisms behind innovation and change in multicultural and multi-ethnic locales. Equally, these projects have been crucial in demonstrating the effect of friendship networks in the language of young people.

The *Toronto Teen Corpus* (TTC) was compiled yearly between 2002 and 2006 as part of an undergraduate programme at the University of Toronto (Tagliamonte 2016: 12–15). The data was collected by undergraduate students who interviewed the teenagers themselves. They made use of the snowballing technique to recruit participants, that is, their interviews involved relatives and friends, which increased the chance of capturing more natural conversations. The interviewers followed an interview schedule (Tagliamonte 2006: Appendix B), but the fact that they knew the interviewees well allowed them to select topics from the schedule that were relevant to the participants. The resulting dataset contains around 1 million words from 90 participants stratified by age groups (9-12, 13-16, 17-19, and 20-22) and sex (male and female).

COLT differs greatly from LIC, MLE, and TTC. Even if the unstructured method for collecting data proved successful in COLT, too many ethical issues could have been raised had

this been the method used for this project. Cheshire and Fox (2016: 277) discuss how ethical research practices are not standard across time periods, research groups, or academics. In contrast with COLT, Tagliamonte's methodology was more structured. Although the TTC conversations are not as spontaneous as those captured in COLT, the snowballing technique compensated to some extent. The interview schedules used in both NECTE2 and the TyTeC recordings made specifically for this project are based on that of Tagliamonte (2006: Appendix B), as it proved to be highly effective for sociolinguistic interviews with younger participants. This results in a high degree of comparability between TTC and the present project.

Eckert (1989) and Moore (2003) illustrate ethnographic approaches to capturing the language of younger speakers. Eckert (1989) carried out ethnographic fieldwork in a high school in Detroit between 1980 and 1984. Her data consisted of ethnographic observations of the teenagers' social practices, informal discussions about these, and tape-recorded interviews with 118 students. Her findings about how friendship groups and networks within the high school could cut across the socioeconomic classes that existed outside the school setting have set a standard for understanding adolescent social life and behaviours. Moore (2003) carried out her ethnographic study in a high school in Bolton, Greater Manchester. For two years, she spent the lunch hour with a group of teenage girls that were 12-13 years old at the beginning of the project and 13-14 by the end of it. Her method allowed her to recognise four communities of practice, characterised by different degrees of affiliation with the school, hobbies, and socio-economic backgrounds. She found that these communities of practice correlated with patterns of language use, and in turn highlighted the social meaning of syntactic variation. Snell (2008), Kirkham (2013) and Holmes-Elliott (2015) carried out similar ethnographic work in Middlesbrough, Sheffield, and Hastings respectively.

Halfway between the variationist approaches and the ethnographic methods sits the more recent collaborative project of Dray and Drummond in Manchester (Drummond 2018b). Inspired by the work carried out in London, Drummond set out to determine whether there was an MLE-equivalent in Manchester (*Multicultural Urban British English*, MUBE) and started a collaborative project with Dray, a linguistic ethnographer, called *Urban British English and Identity* (UrBEn-ID, see e.g. Drummond 2016). Their sample includes 22 teenagers aged 14 to 16 from two learning centres in Manchester. Between July 2014 and July 2016, the researchers visited the centres almost daily and collected data in the form of observation diaries and recordings from group situations, one-on-one interviews, and peer conversations (Drummond 2018b: 81–83). The Manchester data has been compiled recently and has not been extensively exploited yet (see e.g. Drummond 2016, 2018a, 2018b), so it may be premature to theorise about whether there is an identifiable MUBE

variety (Drummond 2018b: 13). Nonetheless, it constitutes a formidable step forward in revealing patterns of variation, change, and identity-creation in the speech of teenagers in British urban centres beyond London. Findings from the present project could also readily contribute to this research. Other relevant recent research that combines quantitative and qualitative methods and analyses includes, for example, Lawson (2009) in Glasgow, Kirkham (2015) in Sheffield, and Fox (2015), Gates (2018), and Ilbury (2019) in London.

In contrast with the larger scale corpora, the researchers in the ethnographic studies described above became active participants in the daily routines of the teenagers. Consequently, their research revealed patterns of social meaning in language that would otherwise be difficult to study. Eckert, Moore, Dray and Drummond managed to lessen their positions of authority to some extent by spending longer time with the participants. For the purpose of this project, the nature of the data collected by ethnographically-oriented methods would have been too dissimilar from that of the existing DECTE interviews that were also part of the analysis. However, the experience of these ethnographic studies demonstrates how paramount it is for us to seek to place ourselves at the level of our informants and not to judge them by the standards of a different life stage; as well as to focus on the individual rather than on pre-defined macro-categories such as age and gender.

5.2.1. Sociolinguistic interviews for TyTeC

I conducted 12 interviews in same-gender and same-age-group self-selected pairs, each of them lasting for an average of 67 minutes. This section begins by discussing the rationale for each aspect of the data collection method, and ends by noting some technical details of the interviews.

I decided to conduct the interviews in pairs to give more room for peer interaction and to lessen the authority or power-motivated influence that I could otherwise have had on the interviewees' language. This peer interaction could have also been achieved by setting up group interviews, as Labov (1972) did in Harlem or Milroy (1987) did in Belfast. However, there were at least three drawbacks in considering larger group interviews for the current project. First, group interviews would be more difficult to set up, not only logistically, but also in terms of sampling. Second, since I wanted the interviews to be as comfortable as possible, all group members would have had to share some friendship bonds (see also Macaulay 2009: 33). Third, the methodology would have been different from previous DECTE interviews, resulting in comparability issues. Interviews in pairs seemed to be a viable middle ground between the formality of one-to-one interviews and the more informal, but imperfect, group interviews; their viability is reflected in their extensive use in sociolinguistic studies.

I asked prospective participants in my study to choose their own interview partner. The fact that there were more interviewees than interviewers was complemented by the relationship and intimacy bonds between participants, with both of these factors serving to lessen the Observer's Paradox (see comments in Burbano-Elizondo 2008: 67). Previous studies have demonstrated that allowing participants to select their conversation partner can be an advantageous method of participant selection (see e.g. Milroy 1987). This has been the case for interviews in DECTE since the PVC subset of the 1990s (see e.g. Amand 2019: 254–78). In the particular case of my project, we also have to consider the paramount role of friendship networks in adolescence (Eckert 1989, 1997) and how their camaraderie can override the perceived formality of speaking with an adult. Allowing participants to select their interview partner worked well for the collection of COLT data and many other projects focused on younger cohorts (Atkinson 2011; Beal 1990, p.c.; Levey 2007; Roloff-El Kahli 1999).

Members of each pair identified with the same gender and belonged to the same age group. The great majority of sociolinguistic fieldwork follows this pattern. This has benefits for managing the resulting data, and most importantly, it lessens the possibility of speech accommodation between genders or different ages (Giles 1973; Giles and Powesland 1997, and subsequent work on Communication Accommodation Theory). Whether the language used in same-gender and same-age-group interactions is closer to spontaneous and relaxed speech than that in opposite-gender or different-age interactions is debatable, since emotional bonds might have a greater influence on language than the gender or age of the interlocutors. Still, if we want to ascertain linguistic differences motivated by these extra-linguistic constraints, pairing informants who share them renders results more reliable and transparent in that respect. This project specifically studies teenagers' language in interactions with friends of the same gender and similar age, as the full repertoire of their linguistic expression (i.e. interacting with their relatives, with teachers, or speakers of a different gender) is not represented. This broader representation of a participant's linguistic behaviour is better achieved in more extensive projects where the features of recorded interactions are less constrained, such as COLT or the *Toronto Teen Corpus* (see e.g. Tagliamonte 2016: 12–15), and where participants are recorded across more speech events (e.g. Drummond 2018b; Eckert 1989).

I piloted my methodology with a dyad of teenage girls. This experience allowed me to test the interview schedule and showed me the importance of leaving silence to let informants speak (see e.g. Tagliamonte 2006: 46). The next stage was to recruit informants from schools and other educational institutions. Despite the influence that normative institutions like schools might have on the study of language (Eckert 2000: 70), Levey (2007: 29) notes that 'they also compensate by

allowing relatively easy access to age-stratified cohorts of children within a restricted geographical space'. The original plan was to recruit all participants from the same school. However, it became clear that no single school could provide all 24 participants or participants from both age groups (12-15 and 16-18) for logistic reasons. In the end, five different institutions participated in my project, which contributed to a richer dataset and a stronger case to justify that my findings could apply to Tyneside more broadly. In addition to age group, I set other criteria that participants needed to meet: (i) they must have been born and raised in the North East and lived in the area for at least 95% of their lives; (ii) they must have been living somewhere in the Tyneside boroughs at the time of the interview; (iii) their first language must be English; and (iv) they must not have had a speech impediment or suffer from any disability or social anxiety limitation that would have made an interview uncomfortable or problematic for them (see more in §5.2.2 regarding ethical considerations in the process).

The TyTeC sociolinguistic interviews were semi-structured, that is, the range of topics and questions were based on an interview schedule that served as guidance (Appendix I). The schedule was divided into modules or topics that were broken down into themes and potential conversation triggers. Following Tagliamonte (2006) and Becker (2013), the modules at the beginning were more general and served as ice-breakers (e.g. topics related to home and neighbourhood, family, holidays, free time), and the list progressed into more personal issues (e.g. attitudes towards school, relationship with friends, uncommon experiences, or dreams). The last module concerned perceptions and opinions about language, which would always be tackled at the end of the interview (if at all), in order to avoid making the participants self-conscious about their own usage during the process. Guidelines for NECTE2 interviews also advocate using a version of Tagliamonte's (2006) protocol.

Themes were focused on eliciting narratives, which encouraged participants to feel more emotionally involved and to pay less attention to their speech, thus increasing the chances that spontaneous speech would occur (Schilling 2013: 108). These narratives would take the form either of anecdotes and stories or summaries of the plots of films, TV programmes, books, or games. As Beal (1990, p.c.) had previously found in her 1970s recordings, discussion of films and TV series was the most productive topic in most of the TyTeC interviews. Exchanges of opinions also proved effective in engaging the interviewees emotionally. The schedule also included Labov's (1972) well-known questions about 'danger of death' and 'being blamed for something you did not do', which did not prove as productive in my experience. In addition, I made various references to local cultural facts and events (e.g. Newcastle United football team, the *Geordie Shore* TV show, or the relationship with neighbouring Sunderland), which encouraged interviewees to explain what

the events were or what experiences they had with them. My status as a non-native speaker of English and a cultural outsider was beneficial in this respect, as detailed further at the end of this section. The phrasing of questions was pitched at adolescents and I benefited from having considerable previous experience working with teenagers, both in high schools and summer schools in England.

The schedule was complemented by a set of 'Would you rather?' cards (Appendix II). This game was typically introduced towards the end of the interview, when conversational topics had run dry. Informants were given a small deck of cards with fun and unusual questions that they would ask each other (e.g. 'Would you rather never use social media sites/apps again or never watch another movie or TV show?'). The game did not resemble a real-life situation, yet it had valuable benefits. First and foremost, the game was fun and introduced a twist to the dynamics of the interview, making room for a more relaxed and comfortable atmosphere, often with laughter, giggles, or gasps of surprise. Second, the interviewer was fully backgrounded, as informants were in charge of reading out and answering the questions. Third, the unusual nature of the questions often triggered a rich array of responses and reactions, which were ideal for the elicitation of discourse-pragmatic markers and spontaneous language, and often led to the teenagers opening up about their thoughts and feelings. Fourth, the game allowed for the introduction of topics in a spontaneous manner.

All interviews were conducted at the participants' educational institution, except for one carried out in an office on the Newcastle University campus. I recorded interviews in rooms that were less connected to the students' academic life, such as a common room. We were sitting in chairs and there would not be any physical barrier (e.g. tables) between the interviewees and me. The school setting was familiar to them and unfamiliar to me, which meant they felt more comfortable on their own 'turf'. I also provided sweets during the interviews, but to avoid noise disruptions, these were not crunchy or wrapped.

As pointed out by Macaulay (2009: 32), rapport with interviewees can be decisive in the quality of the recording. The interviewer should be an in-group member or have some affiliation with the community, because teenagers interact differently with adults or figures of authority (Tagliamonte 2016: 9–10). Dray and Drummond (Drummond 2018b), Eckert (1989) and Moore (2003) immersed themselves in the adolescents' social networks, and the interviewers in the *Toronto Teen Corpus* were friends or relatives of the participants (Tagliamonte 2016: 13). In my case, I was a complete stranger to all participants and all rapport had to be built during the interview itself. I played the role of a receptive and sympathetic listener (Macaulay 2002: 288), allowing the teenagers to take the spotlight and maximise their input. I shared stories of myself too to lessen the

observer's effect. It was crucial to show interest in what they had to say, to seem suitably engaged in their stories, and to refer back to narratives recounted earlier in the same interview. I presented myself as a learner, as a person willing to gain knowledge from the participants (Schilling 2013: 111). This attitude proved very successful; as Eckert (1989: 34) notes: '[a] non-judgmental and confidential adult looking for people to tell her all about themselves is a rare and seductive thing in a school'. This idea of naivety could be exploited further thanks to the fact that I am not a native speaker of English and have not lived in the area for long. They were more eager to explain things about their area that I did not know about. Both Burbano-Elizondo (2001: 46) and Pichler (2013: 23–24) recount how being an apparently unknowing outsider also benefitted their data collection strategies. Also, this learner position contributed to a more ethical way of conducting research: research on, for, and with human subjects (Cameron et al. 1992) (see §5.2.2 below). In a further attempt to lessen the impression of authority, I wore jeans, trainers, and casual shirts.

In summary, my efforts to overcome the Observer's Paradox included letting participants select their interview partner, choosing a setting familiar to them, playing with the 'Would you rather' cards, adapting my language, positioning myself as a learner, and letting their interests guide the conversation. This does not mean that all the artificiality of the interview situation was fully removed. I cannot, for example, state that the girls' speech was not affected by the fact that I was a male interviewer. I considered recruiting a female interviewer, but that could have entailed inconsistency in interview styles and approaches to the data collection process which would likely have proved more problematic.

I used a Tascam DR-07MKII digital recorder, always on top of a soft surface such as a cloth on a small table to avoid reverberation. I used the *ELAN* (2019) annotation programme for transcription, followed by the POS-tagging software *TagAnt* (Anthony 2014) and the corpus concordancer *AntConc* (Anthony 2019). *R Studio* (R Development Core Team 2018) was subsequently employed to run data analysis.

For the transcription, I followed an adapted version of the conventions established for NECTE2, used by student interviewers. I used capital letters only for proper names (and the first-person subject pronoun) and the only punctuation marks in the transcriptions are question marks and single speech marks for reported speech. With respect to initial tagging and annotation, I focused on discourse-pragmatic markers. At the transcription stage, annotations had to be general and I did not distinguish linguistic constraints, which were represented in the later coding stage. Other annotations included non-lexical vocal and non-vocal sounds, unclear speech, and *nota bene* comments on body language. Milestone comments were used to mark reference points in the interview, such as the time at which the 'Would you rather?' game started or the number of the

question that was being read out. Two locals proofread the transcriptions to ensure accuracy and I am very much indebted to their work (Alice White and James Fryatt).

5.2.2. Ethical considerations

Prior to the collection of any data, this project underwent a meticulous process of ethical approval both in the School of English Literature, Language, and Linguistics and the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences at Newcastle University.

Having decided to recruit the teenagers from schools, I had to work with the relevant authorities in each school, for example the headteacher, head of department, or a teacher contact, at each stage of the process (contact, inform, recruit). I contacted a range of schools in Tyneside with which I, my supervisors, or other members of the School of English had previously collaborated. In the information sheet provided to gatekeepers I explained the aim of the project, what participation involved, the voluntary nature of participation, and key aspects regarding anonymity, confidentiality, risks, and data management (see Appendix III). I also provided information about myself as a DBS-Checked researcher who had worked as a teacher in English Secondary Education before.

Once headteachers provided their consent, I sent information sheets for parents or guardians (Appendix IV) and participants (Appendix V), as well as separate consent forms for each. The information on these forms was presented more plainly and concisely. Nevertheless, they still presented all the information that appeared on the forms for gatekeepers, so that prospective participants and their parents/guardians would be fully aware of the nature of the project, and of my efforts to ensure fair treatment of human subjects, honesty, and no anticipated harm (Trechter 2013: 42).

In order to ensure authenticity, I did not disclose details of the specific linguistic features under study, as per standard practices in sociolinguistic interviewing. With the way I approached informants and their language I wanted to make them feel that they were 'champions of the local way of speaking' (Eckert 2013: 15). This also empowered them and thus lessened the Observer's Paradox during the interviews.

I required three consent forms per participant before conducting interviews. The only exception was in the case of 18-year-olds, for whom parental consent was not required. This procedure ensured a well-rounded three-tier recruitment process to guarantee everyone involved —gatekeepers, parents/guardians and participants— could make an informed decision. If any of the tiers declined or withdrew their consent at any point, the potential participant would not be

recruited. This empowered minors, who had a say in their participation, bypassing sources of coercion (Eckert 2013: 16–17).

Before the recording started, informants filled in a demographic information form (Appendix VI). These demographic sheets had no information that could in any way link the participants to the audio files or to their pseudonyms.[30] The interviews were conducted following a flexible interview schedule, as noted above (Appendix I). Topic modules were carefully designed to avoid subjects that were sensitive or inappropriate for the age group (e.g. family bereavements, bullying, or sex). Gatekeepers were invited to comment on the interview schedule and suggest revisions, but eventually no suggestions were made. The main aim of the interviews was to encourage the teenage participants to talk freely with each other. Nevertheless, I was in charge of steering the conversation at all times. This allowed me to deviate from topics that could lead to uncomfortable situations, as well as to promote topics that were more likely to elicit discourse-pragmatic markers, such as narratives. At the end of each interview, I debriefed the participants reiterating my appreciation for their time, the value of their participation, and the fact that they could still withdraw consent. As I had already done through the three information sheets, I informed them that their interviews, following a process of anonymisation, would become part of DECTE. It is vital for participants in any project to know about the fate of their output and agree to it (Eckert 2013: 24).

Demographic information was always kept separately from the recordings. In the process of transcription, participants' names were replaced with pseudonyms, as was any other identifying information, such as references to their school, neighbourhood, or addresses (see Cheshire and Fox 2016: 273–74 for a discussion of the process of anonymisation and its importance). All of this identifying information was also deleted from the corresponding audio files. It is right for the community to be able to benefit from findings derived from their participation (Principle of Debt Incurred, in Labov 1982: 173; Principle of Gratuity, in Wolfram 1993: 227), and making data available through DECTE is a pay-back to the community. As Cameron et al. (1992: 24) put it, 'if knowledge is worth having, it is worth sharing'.

I considered three possible risks to participants and identified appropriate responses or solutions before the data collection process started: disclosure of bullying or child abuse testimonials, emergence of sensitive topics, and data theft or loss (see Appendix VII for more information). None of these situations arose and the process of data collection ran smoothly.

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[30] At this stage I also gathered information about the participants' friendship networks through a questionnaire. In the end, this information was not included in the analysis due to its relative unreliability (in comparison e.g. with an ethnographic observation of social practices).

5.3. Sampling and social constraints

As indicated in Section 5.1, the corpus under investigation in this project consists of a random stratified sample of 36 participants (see Table 13). They are equally distributed by gender (18 male and 18 female) and age group (12 in each of the three age groups). Effectively, this means that the sample includes 6 boys and 6 girls per age group. As interviews were carried out in pairs, this sample was collected by means of 3 interviews per cell, totalling 18 interviews.

Table 13. Distribution of the sample in the corpus according to age and gender, combining TyTeC and NECTE2 data (repeated from Table 11)

	12-15 (TyTeC)	**16-18 (TyTeC)**	**19-20 (NECTE2)**	**Total per gender**
Female	6	6	6	18
Male	6	6	6	18
Total per age	12	12	12	**Total sample**: 36

The selection of participants was random within schools, based on a few key criteria and the willingness of students to participate. These criteria ensured that the sampled population matched the object of study (Tynesiders with English as L1 and with no speech impediments) and that they felt comfortable in the interview situation (no social anxiety or similar concerns). The choice of schools and institutions did not follow any specific criteria apart from location in the Tyneside region. The random selection of participants was stratified by social factors, as is common practice in sociolinguistics (see Tagliamonte 2006: 23). This meant that each cell or stratum in the sampling chart covers a range of informants restricted by the combination of independent variables, and there is a sampling quota fixed for each (Sankoff 2005: 1001). This method is disproportionate with respect to the general population, but still, 'the stratified sample is more informative than a completely random one would be' (Sankoff 2005: 1001). Previous variationist studies have usually considered the correlation between the linguistic variables being analysed and three social categories: age, gender, and social class (see Buchstaller and Khattab 2013: 78; Tagliamonte 2006: 23). Other studies include other factors such as ethnicity or, in the case of adolescents, attainment (Crinson 1997). In this project, the sample was stratified only by age and gender.

Ethnicity and social class could potentially have been stratified, but this was not feasible given the time constraints. Nevertheless these additional background details are recorded in the demographic forms of each participant. Different ethnicities and social classes are not well represented in the sample, since they were not originally conceived as stratifying criteria. Only two

speakers had an ethnicity different from white British (see also Mearns 2015: 162–63 on the lack of ethnic diversity in the North East). With respect to social class, participants were asked to provide information about their parents' jobs and education level, which could have been used to estimate social class. However, the majority of teenagers I interviewed could not describe what their parents did or what educational qualifications they held. Therefore, social class is not operationalised as an extralinguistic variable in this study.

The number of participants is not large, but the amount of material retrieved from each of them is substantial —as opposed to the practice of having less material from more participants in the other social sciences (Buchstaller and Khattab 2013: 83). Tagliamonte (2016: 14) argues that even as few as two participants per cell would suffice to make statistically sound generalisations, particularly in research in teen talk, where age groups cover only a small number of years. Studies of teenage language have been successfully carried out on samples both smaller and bigger than the one in this project (see Table 14).

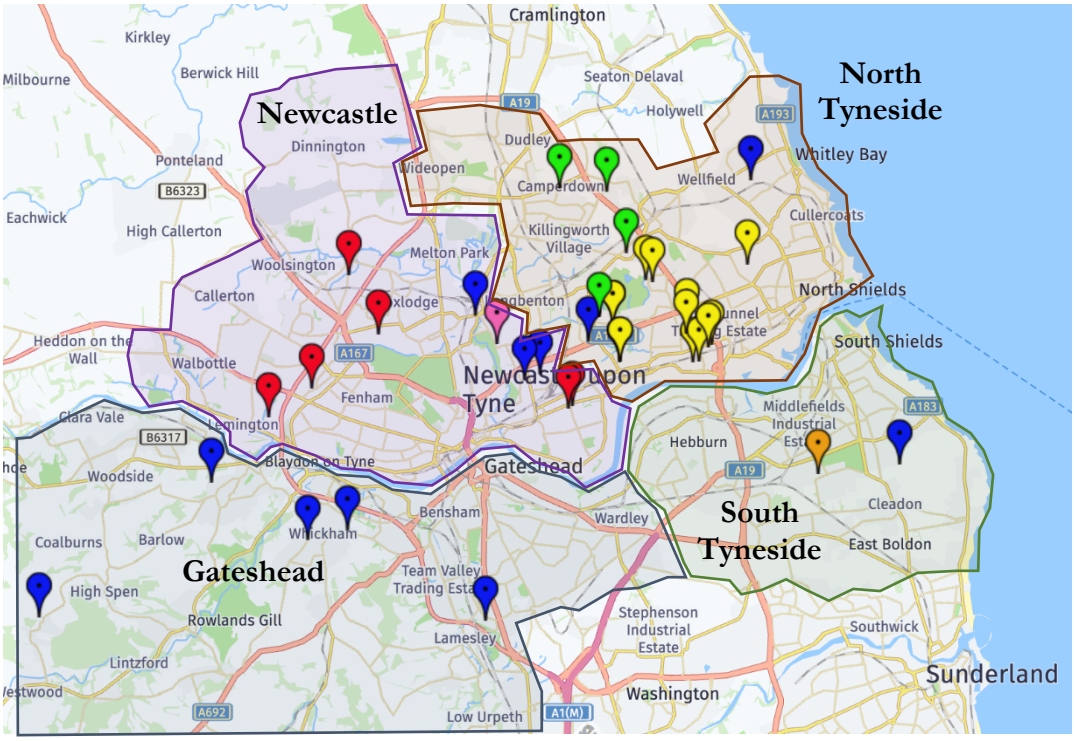
Table 14. Comparison of sample sizes in similar studies of variation in teenage language

Smaller samples			**Bigger samples**		
Research	**No. participants**	**Area**	**Research**	**No. participants**	**Area**
Roloff-El Kahli (1999)	6	Ponteland	Moore (2003)	39	Bolton
Crinson (1997)	24	Tyneside	Kirkham (2013)	43	Sheffield
Cheshire (1982)	26	Reading	Burbano-Elizondo (2001)	60	Sunderland
COLT (e.g. Stenström et al. 2002)	31	London	*Toronto Teen Corpus* (e.g. Tagliamonte 2016)	90	Toronto
Stuart-Smith (1999) and Stuart-Smith et al. (2007)	16 → 36	Glasgow	Cheshire et al. (1999)	96	Hull, Milton Keynes and Reading
			Linguistic Innovators Corpus (Kerswill et al. 2007)	98 (+16 adults)	Havering and Hackney
			Multicultural London English (e.g. Cheshire et al. 2011)	127	Islinton, Haringey, and Hackney

However, some of the projects with larger samples have used methods other than sociolinguistic interviewing and were conducted by teams of researchers. For this project, 36 is a reasonable figure for drawing statistically significant conclusions regarding age and gender, considering the logistical constraints. The key issue is 'not that the sample be a miniature version of the population, but only that we have the possibility of making inferences about the population based on the sample' (Sankoff 2005: 1000).

TyTeC participants were recruited from five institutions, the names of which will remain confidential to ensure the teenagers' anonymity —pseudonyms are used instead. This was agreed with the schools beforehand. The map in Figure 8 shows the geographical distribution of the participants by area of residence, where blue markers represent NECTE2 participants and the others represent TyTeC participants (colours other than blue group together individuals who were members of the same educational institutions).

Figure 8. Geographical distribution of the sample. Blue markers are NECTE2 participants, and the rest are TyTeC (different colours mark different educational institutions). Map created using the batch geocoding tool at https://bit.ly/3206FAL



As mentioned earlier, the geographical distribution of participants was not considered as a stratifying criterion, as long as they had been living in one of the four Tyneside boroughs

(Newcastle, Gateshead, North Tyneside, or South Tyneside) for at least 95% of their lives. [31] Table 15 displays demographic information and the place of residence of the participants at the time of the interviews.

Table 15. Demographic details and geographical distribution of the sample (sorted by age group, and alphabetically by pseudonym)

Participant (pseudonym)	Age group	Gender	Postcode district	Area	Tyneside borough
Amber	12-15	Female	NE28	Howdon	North Tyneside
Bryan	12-15	Male	NE28	Howdon	North Tyneside
Caroline	12-15	Female	NE28	Wallsend	North Tyneside
Charlie	12-15	Male	NE28	Howdon	North Tyneside
Dave	12-15	Male	NE28	Howdon	North Tyneside
Declan	12-15	Male	NE28	Wallsend	North Tyneside
Ellie	12-15	Female	NE28	Howdon	North Tyneside
Jon	12-15	Male	NE28	Hadrian Park	North Tyneside
Laura	12-15	Female	NE28	Hadrian Park	North Tyneside
Megan	12-15	Female	NE28	Howdon	North Tyneside
Phil	12-15	Male	NE28	Wallsend	North Tyneside
Samantha	12-15	Female	NE29	North Shields	North Tyneside
Charlotte	16-18	Female	NE27	Backworth	North Tyneside
Claire	16-18	Female	NE12	Killingworth	North Tyneside
Connor	16-18	Male	NE6	Walkergate	Newcastle
Erin	16-18	Female	NE12	Holystone	North Tyneside
James	16-18	Male	NE5	Denton	Newcastle
Lewis	16-18	Male	NE6	Walkergate	Newcastle
Lizzie	16-18	Female	NE34	South Shields	South Tyneside
Matthew	16-18	Male	NE15	Lemington	Newcastle
Rebecca	16-18	Female	NE28	Wallsend	North Tyneside
Scarlett	16-18	Female	NE7	Heaton	Newcastle
Tim	16-18	Male	NE3	Brunton Bridge	Newcastle
Tristan	16-18	Male	NE3	Kenton	Newcastle
Abbie	19-20	Female	NE16	Whickham	Gateshead
Beth	19-20	Female	NE25	Whitley Bay	North Tyneside
Callum	19-20	Male	NE6	Heaton	Newcastle
Chris	19-20	Male	NE9	Lowfell	Gateshead
Emily	19-20	Female	NE3	Gosforth	Newcastle
Ian	19-20	Male	NE28	Wallsend	North Tyneside
Jack	19-20	Male	NE6	Heaton	Newcastle

[31] Note that Tyneside is not a linguistically homogenous area and there might be differences between boroughs. See for example the study by Moisl and Maguire (2008), where they identified phonetic differences between Newcastle and Gateshead. Still, differences at the discourse-pragmatic level have not been identified in previous literature.

Jane	19-20	Female	NE34	Cleadon Park	South Tyneside
Jeremy	19-20	Male	NE28	Wallsend	North Tyneside
Melissa	19-20	Female	NE21	Blaydon	Gateshead
Mick	19-20	Male	NE16	Whickham	Gateshead
Sarah	19-20	Female	NE17	Chopwell	Gateshead

5.3.1. Age

This project places special emphasis on age, since its object of study is a group of speakers delimited by age —teenagers— within the Tyneside speech community.

The issue with defining age groups has always been where to set boundaries, since age is a continuum variable (Macaulay 2009: 2–5). Age cohorts in this project have been defined emically. An emic division of age is based not on the number of years covered by each group but on the social, cognitive and associated linguistic distinctness of each cohort (Eckert 1997). In contrast with etically-defined age groups or generations, these emically-defined groupings do not cover equal age spans. In this project, the first group (12-15) covers four years, the second group (16-18) covers three years, and the third group (19-20) two years.

Eckert (1997) is seen as the leading exponent of the life-stage approach to age. She argued that age is not 'a homogeneous continuum based on calendar time, [but] is imbued with meaning by a variety of life landmarks, which are not necessarily evenly distributed over the life course' (1997: 155). This has been followed in many sociolinguistic studies since, though different researchers have interpreted these kinds of age groups according to different life landmarks. For example, the *Toronto Teen Corpus* age groups were defined on the basis of education levels in Canada: 'primary school (grades 1-5), middle school (grades 6-8), and secondary school (grades 9-12)' (Tagliamonte 2016: 14–15). On the other hand, with a sample covering a much wider range of ages, Pichler (2013: 26) defines the age groups in her study this way:

> teenagers and young adults in short-term unsalaried employment or full-time education and co-habiting with their parents (ages 17 to 23); adults in full-time salaried employment with dependent children and their own household (ages 27 to 48); retired people with no dependent children (ages 60 to 81).

In delimiting age groups in this project, there was a combination of the approaches above with Labov's (2001) distribution of life stages and his 'incrementation model' (detailed in Chapter 2). Labov (2001: 101) also considered life histories as the main criteria for delimiting age cohorts. His proposal, based mainly on white communities in the United States, was the following:

> [P]re-adolescent peer group (8-9), membership in the pre-adolescent peer group (10-12), involvement in heterosexual relations and the adolescent group (13-16), completion of secondary schooling and orientation to the wider world of work and/or college (17-19), the beginning of

regular employment and family life (20-29), full engagement in the work force and family responsibilities (30-59), and retirement (60s).

All these considerations led me to define the following age groups for my data: 12-15, 16-18, and 19-20.[32] The first group represents early adolescence, corresponding with the beginning of Secondary Education in the British system and with the early and mid-stages of puberty. Linguistically, individuals in this group have typically already started to detach from caregivers' language and assimilate to that of peers for social purposes (see §2.2). The second group, 16-18, represents late adolescence. By this time, teenagers will typically have developed almost fully in terms of sexuality and puberty-related changes, and they will have diversified in their paths of education, either doing vocational courses, starting part-time jobs or enrolled at Sixth Form. According to Labov's (2001) model, this group would be at the end of the incrementation process and the beginning of stabilisation. The ages of 19 and 20 represent early adulthood. At this stage, people in the United Kingdom would have started working or entered Higher Education, among other possibilities. Their life route is not as 'scripted' as in previous life stages. They might have left the family household and live independently. Biologically and legally, they are considered adults. Peer pressure is felt differently and they have a relatively well-formed linguistic identity, less subject to innovation, at least in comparison with younger speakers.

Other studies in teenage language have studied only one age group. Crinson (1997) sampled only 15-16 year-olds, Stuart-Smith (1999) worked with teenagers aged 13 and 14, and Kerswill et al. (2007) studied the 16 to 19 age bracket. However, I agree with Tagliamonte (2016: 23) that 'observations of teen language use can only be fully understood in conjunction and in comparison with individuals spanning the entire age range'. For this project to claim that it has studied teenagers in Tyneside, the sample has to cover the whole age range, from those who have just entered adolescence (12 year-olds) to those who are finishing that period and entering adulthood (19 and 20 year-olds).

5.3.2. Gender

Gender is the second social constraint used to analyse variation and change in the oral discourse of Tyneside teenagers.

In reference to this study's sample, I consistently refer to gender rather than sex. Sex is determined biologically whereas gender is determined socially. Gender is therefore conceived as a social construct, involving a wider range of psychological, social, and cultural characteristics

[32] Although three age groups were used, a record of the exact age of each informant was also kept, so that there is always the flexibility for future research to re-arrange groups or pinpoint phenomena at certain ages in particular.

(Wardhaugh 1998: 309). Gender differences in language are heavily grounded in the social roles of men and women in society and the way they are perceived, rather than an intrinsic biological tendency to speak in certain ways (Holmes 1995: 111; Trudgill 2000: 79; Xiao and Tao 2007: 266–67). Both terms have been used across sociolinguistic studies, but often gender is actually modelled on the binary conception of biological sex (Atkinson 2011: 12). Labov (2001: 263) acknowledges the social nature of gender in comparison with the category of sex, yet he argues that 'the attribution of gender is quite simple and straightforward in field work'. In his view, 'all analyses of gender differentiation begin by dividing the population into males and females' (Labov 2001: 263). A binary approach that assumes the gender of speakers by their biological features seems to defy the point of using the concept of 'gender' at all.

This study's demographic information form used the term 'gender'. Informants were welcome to write out their own interpretation of their gender identities, rather than being restricted to checkboxes of 'male' and 'female'. The resulting information resulted in a binary classification of 'male' and 'female', but that was always a categorisation made by the informant and not assumed. Still, the particular social affiliations of speakers with groups of boys or girls (see e.g. (1) and (2)) can be more influential in their linguistic behaviour than their own gender (as pointed out by Charlotte in (3)).

(1) It's just like we're like lads' lads (**Declan**, M, 12, Ccc05m1_A).

(2) I'm like one of the lads I would say (**Megan**, F, 14, Ccc04f1_A).

(3) [Charlotte believes there are no great language differences between boys and girls] It's just who you hang around with, really (**Charlotte**, F, 18, Ben03f2_A).

5.4. Linguistic variables and linguistic constraints

This section discusses the methodological issues surrounding discourse-pragmatic variation and describes how boosters and emphasisers have been operationalised for this study and how their variable contexts have been delimited.

Variationist sociolinguistics started with the works of Labov (1963, 1966) and for a long time the field was almost exclusively focused on the study of phonological variables, since they were considered to be more frequent and stable. Sankoff (1972: 58) argued that applying the principles of phonological variation to other levels of the language was 'not a conceptually difficult jump'. However, researchers in the area of discourse-pragmatics, the discipline pertinent to this study, have expressed their reservations (see e.g. Aijmer 2018b; Buchstaller 2009; Corrigan and Diskin 2019; Pichler 2010; Waters 2016). There are at least two issues in which the concept of the linguistic variable cannot be applied straightforwardly to the study of discourse-pragmatic features:

(i) the idea that variants within a variable have semantic equivalence, and (ii) the requirement to circumscribe a closed set of variants for quantitative analysis (Pichler 2010: 583).

The original concept of a sociolinguistic variant was defined as 'alternate ways of saying the same thing' (Labov 1978: 2). This meant that variants within a variable context would be 'identical in reference or truth value, but opposed in their social and/or stylistic significance' (Labov 1972: 271). Problems arise, Buchstaller (2009: 1014) argues, in the case of polysemous items such as discourse-pragmatic features, which, while undergoing a process of delexicalisation, might still carry some of their linguistic meaning into their new uses at the pragmatic level. In this sense, each option to 'say the same thing' would be to a certain extent semantically different. The usage of discourse-pragmatic features is not fully motivated by the expression of referential or lexical content (Pichler 2010: 588), which would seem to be central to the notion of semantic equivalence. That is why many variationists studying higher-level features started to rely on other ways of defining the linguistic variable for their projects, based on function, form, position, or a combination of these characteristics (Waters 2016: 44–47).

Lavandera (1978: 181) suggested shifting to the idea of 'functional comparability' across variants, and Dines (1980) was among the first to apply this concept to her study of general extenders, arguing that the equivalence across the variants *and things (like that)*, *and everything*, or *and stuff* relied on their shared function (cues to the listener to understand that what came before them was part of a more general set) (Dines 1980: 22). Delimiting the discourse-pragmatic variable according to function has been the general trend since then: for example, boosting meaning in studies of intensifiers (see e.g. Aijmer 2018a, 2018b; Ito and Tagliamonte 2003; Macaulay 2006; Núñez-Pertejo and Palacios-Martínez 2018; Rickford et al. 2007) or mimesis in studies of quotatives (see e.g. Buchstaller and D'Arcy 2009; Levey 2016; Rodríguez Louro 2016).

Functional comparability is not a perfect approach, as noted by Pichler (2010) and Waters (2016), since function is an open category and discourse-pragmatic features are intrinsically multifunctional, that is, their functions vary according to context and usage and they stack together. This means both that the researcher might never be sure of having accounted for all possible variants available to perform the same function (Pichler 2010: 589) and that even when performing the same function each variant could be simultaneously performing others (Pichler 2010: 589; Waters 2016: 41). This is certainly the case with the emphasisers in this study: although they all reinforce the utterance, they also perform other textual and interpersonal functions (recall the overview of functions in §3.2.1). Pichler (2010: 589) warns that studies with function-based variables might have limited diachronic comparability, because over time the functions of

discourse-pragmatic features change and new items might enter the functional variable (Brinton 1996; Traugott 1995).

Form has also been used as a criterion to group discourse-pragmatic variants together (e.g. the derivational approach taken by D'Arcy (2017) in her study of *like*; *I don't know* in Pichler (2013); general extenders in Pichler and Levey (2011)). This way, multifunctionality is not disregarded, while the comparison is still focused on variants that '*are in some way the same*' (Dines 1980: 18, emphasis in the original). Function can then be included as a linguistic constraint, allowing for an analysis of how 'functional variation and change impact on the distribution of variants' (Pichler 2010: 590). This approach facilitates delimitation of the set of variants (Pichler 2010: 591). However, not all variables are easily defined by form. For example, the set of emphasisers could include adverbs such as *literally*, phrases like *to be honest*, as well as right dislocation or other syntactic patterns.

Some studies have also considered position in the sentence as a criterion for defining the set of variants, such as Tagliamonte's (2016: 95–120) work on sentence starters. The fact that discourse-pragmatic features are highly mobile, and that their functions could vary according to the different positions, means that position is not a suitable criterion for all studies (Pichler 2010: 588).

Buchstaller (2009: 1015) notes that many studies simply 'refrain from explicitly defining a variable (see for example Macaulay 1988, 1995; Nagy et al. 1999; Nagy and Blondeau 1999; Tagliamonte 1998)' while others disregard the complexities of polysemy and multifunctionality and circumvent the context according to function. It is the particular feature under study that should motivate which criterion to use (Waters 2016: 47). What matters is that research on the same feature is consistent in the approach taken in defining the variable and delimiting the context, for comparability reasons (Pichler 2010: 591). It is usually the case that function, form, and position are combined in the definition and delimitation of the variables.

For this study, the variables are primarily defined and delimited in terms of function; in other words, variants will be those items that perform the functions of boosting and/or emphasising, respectively. Simultaneous multifunctionality is still acknowledged. Hence, in this study it cannot be claimed that all variants are like-for-like options to do or say the same thing. Rather, the argument is that the variants perform the boosting or emphasising functions as one of their functions, possibly together with others. Particularly in the case of emphasisers, the items under study are selected on the basis of the overarching function of emphasis. A breakdown of their discourse-pragmatic values shows how functionally different they are. Formal restrictions are also applied. For boosters, only adverbs modifying adjectives are considered part of the variable.

With regards to emphasisers, the focus is also on adverbs, yet other emphatic devices are also considered (clause-final *like* and right dislocation). In terms of position, the set of boosters examined in this study is restricted to those in pre-modifying position (excluding, for example, boosting constructions such as post-modifying *indeed*), whereas the set of emphasisers includes those in all positions. All these decisions are explained in detail in the sections below (§5.4.1 on boosters and §5.4.2 on emphasisers).

The next issue discourse-pragmatic variationists face is closing the set of variants in a way that complies with the Principle of Accountability (Labov 1972: 72). According to this principle, the analysis should consider not only the times when the variant under study has occurred but also the times when it could have occurred but did not, be it because a different variant was used or none at all. Given the optional nature of discourse-pragmatic features (Brinton 1996: 34) and their flexibility in function, form, and position, it is very difficult, if not impossible, to close a set of variants in this way (Lewis 2006: 44; Schiffrin 1987: 71). Nonetheless, even if all possible contexts of occurrence were included, the data would become cumbersome and difficult to manage, as noted by Corrigan and Diskin (2019: 10) in their study of clause-final *like*, or by Durham (2011: 266) in the analysis of right dislocation in York. A good strategy is narrowing down the envelope of variation through different justified restrictions based on function, form, and position, yet researchers should still be careful in claiming they have considered all variants that do or say the same thing. In this project, the booster variable is relatively easier to delimit, compared with the emphasisers. Also, variants of the emphasiser variable differ largely in terms of semantic-pragmatic nuances, scope, and position, as explained in Section 5.4.2. Consequently, boosters are analysed through quantitative methods of token count and multivariate analysis (closer to variationist work), whereas the study of emphasisers relies on frequency tabulations and qualitative observations of their use (more similar to corpus-based research).

It is not clear whether the variable context of boosters, or degree modifiers more generally, should include null cases (i.e. unmodified heads), to comply with the Principle of Accountability. D'Arcy (2015), in her study of all degree modifiers, justifies the inclusion of null cases on the grounds that lack of modification represents neutral degree. Her analysis concerns downscale degree (pre-modification by a downtoner, as in *a bit tired*) and upscale degree (pre-modification by an intensifier, as in *very tired*), so it makes sense that neutral degree (e.g. simply *tired*) is also considered. Ito and Tagliamonte (2003) also included null cases, even though they were only looking at intensifiers. Their methodology was replicated for example by Tagliamonte and Roberts (2005), Tagliamonte (2008), D'Arcy (2015), and Stratton (fc., 2020a, 2020b).

Other studies on degree modification have not included null cases (e.g. Aijmer 2018a, 2018b; Barnfield and Buchstaller 2010; Bauer and Bauer 2002; Núñez-Pertejo and Palacios-Martínez 2018; Palacios-Martínez and Núñez-Pertejo 2014a; Rickford et al. 2007; Xiao and Tao 2007). Only Barnfield and Buchstaller (2010: 262) have justified their decision, on the basis that they were interested in investigating 'the frequency of intensifier variants and their constraints relative to one another, not the frequency of intensification as a strategy in itself'. Counting unintensified heads is only relevant in the comparison with intensified heads in general, so as to test claims that certain social groups intensify more often than others (e.g. women more than men, Lakoff 1973, 1975, 1990). However, the choice of intensifying or not might not be down to stylistic or social reasons, as the choice of [r] or [Ø] was in Labov's (1963) work in New York City, whereas choosing the form *really* over *proper* is. It could be argued that what motivates the choice between using any intensifier or none is the illocutionary force the speaker wants to use in expressing the adjective in upscale degree or in neutral degree. As this study focuses on the subset of boosters, which express upscale degree, it makes sense that the variable context is restricted to those alternatives that perform the same function —formal and positional restrictions considered. It does not include alternatives expressing downscale degree (downtoners) or neutral degree (unmodified, unintensified heads). Nevertheless, in order to compare analyses and assess whether a difference in the approach affects the interpretation or significance of the results, the analysis for this project was conducted both ways: counting null cases as a variant and excluding them.[33]

D'Arcy (2015: 457) defines the two approaches above in terms of the field of sociolinguistics to which they belong. The exclusion of null cases is said to be closer to corpus linguistics, whereas their inclusion is a variationist approach. The exclusion of null cases in the study of the distribution of booster variants is argued here to be as variationist an approach as the inclusion. Even studies that include null cases exclude them when it comes to comparing the distribution of variants across social categories (D'Arcy 2015; Ito and Tagliamonte 2003; Tagliamonte 2008; Tagliamonte and Roberts 2005). By reporting how many times booster *really* occurs, we are reporting how many times *very* could have occurred but did not. This indeed complies with the Principle of Accountability.

[33] Stratton (2020a) carried out a dual analysis similar to this project's in his diachronic study of *well*. His comparison of methods focused on the reliability of normalised frequencies for cross-corpora comparisons (Stratton 2020a: 24), rather than on the issue of accountability. He concluded that the fact that corpora of different sizes set different baselines for frequency indices impacts the reliability of the measure.

The difference between approaches seems to rely on different ways of circumscribing the variable. Excluding null cases is an approach more appropriate for the study of a function-based variable of boosting. However, including zero as a variant yields findings relevant to a syntactically-defined variable. Accountability can be achieved by comparing variants that perform the same function in every context where that function was actually performed. Alternatively, we can comply with accountability by comparing the distribution of everything that could have filled the syntactic slot of degree modification before an adjectival head, including zero. Both methods are viable and valuable but answer different questions. A fuller discussion of these ideas can be found in Chapter 6.

5.4.1. Boosters

The booster variable in this study follows the definition of Rickford et al. (2007: 6–7) and includes 'every option speakers have at their disposition to reinforce or boost the property denoted by the head they modify'. More specifically, the set of options here is restricted to adverbs in pre-modification position at the phrasal level.

There have been different taxonomies and terminologies of items performing degree modification functions (Allerton 1987; Bäcklund 1973; Bolinger 1972; Paradis 1997; Quirk et al. 1985; Stoffel 1901). In this project, 'degree modifiers' is used as an umbrella term to cover all forms and functions that interact with the degree of the modified head (Paradis 1997: 13). They are split into 'intensifiers' and 'downtoners'. The term 'intensifier' will be used in the strict sense of any degree modifier that scales the degree of the modified head upwards ('reinforcers' in Paradis 1997; 'amplifiers' in Quirk et al. 1985; 'intensives' in Stoffel 1901). This includes 'maximisers', 'which can denote the upper extreme of the scale' (Quirk et al. 1985: 590), and 'boosters', 'which denote a high degree, a high point on the scale' (Quirk et al. 1985: 590). The term 'downtoners' will be used to refer to those items that 'have a generally lowering effect, usually scaling downwards from an assumed norm' (Quirk et al. 1985: 445; 'attenuators' in Paradis 1997). These are divided into 'approximators', 'moderators', and 'diminishers' (Paradis 1997).

The taxonomy in this project also considers the cognitive approach that scaffolds the classification set out by Paradis (1997), which was in turn motivated by Allerton's (1987) theory of bidirectional semantic pressure between adjectives and degree modifiers. For this study, maximisers are understood as totality modifiers, whereas boosters are scalar.[34] The totality

[34] The distinction between totality and scalarity is only fully understood in relation to the semantic classification of gradable adjectives into scalar, extreme, and limit (Paradis 1997: 48–58). Scalar and extreme adjectives (bounded adjectives) tend to collocate with scalar modifiers (boosters, moderators, and diminishers), while limit adjectives

dimension works on an 'either-or' basis and totality modifiers tend to collocate with bounded adjectives (e.g. *completely* + *false*). The scalar dimension works on a 'more-or-less' basis and scalar modifiers collocate more frequently with nonbounded adjectives (e.g. *very* + *nice*). Still, Buchstaller and Traugott (2006: 348) and Paradis (2001: 10) comment that these degree modifier-adjective collocations are just general tendencies, since it is not uncommon for bounded adjectives to become conceptualised as nonbounded, and therefore collocate with scalar modifiers too, as in example (4), with *right* acting as a booster of *alcoholic*.

(4) That sounded like *right alcoholic* stuff (**Lewis**, M, 17, Sc01m2_A)

Another fundamental aspect is that the variable of boosting is defined on a functional basis. As Paradis (1997: 13) defines it, degree is 'a non-numerical specification of quantity/degree which potentially encompasses modality'. This is a crucial definition for this project, since boosting here is considered as a pragmatic function and, as such, items performing it might perform other functions simultaneously (Pichler 2008, 2013: 47). Consistent with the idea that degree modifiers originate through a process of delexicalisation (Lorenz 2002: 144), by which a content word gradually loses its referential meaning (Partington 1993: 183), speakers may use the remnants of such connotative meaning to perform other pragmatic functions besides boosting (Peters 1992: 378). Therefore, simultaneous or concurrent multifunctionality is acknowledged in this study, and any variant is considered part of the booster variable as long as at least one of its functions in the corpus is boosting. Individual tokens are only counted as instances of the variable in those contexts in which they perform their boosting function. Understandably, this selection entails an analysis of those boosters that have been defined in the literature as having overlapping functions, such as *really* and *so*.

The relation between degree modification and emphasising is so close that it has been argued that the boosting function of many modifiers stems from the reanalysis of emphasis on a gradable property (Peters 1992: 379). Traditional classifications of degree modifiers (Paradis 1997; Quirk et al. 1985) do not include multifunctional items like *really* or *so* because their main function was not considered to be boosting (even if Paradis (1997: 69) includes downtoners despite them also performing a hedging function, and asserts that '[m]odality modifiers and degree modifiers shade into one another' (Paradis 1997: 19)). Most subsequent variationist studies have included both variants and so does this study.

(nonbounded adjectives) collocate better with totality modifiers (maximisers, approximators). The classification of adjectives is further detailed below when explaining the token coding process (§5.5.1.1).

With regard to position, this study focuses on pre-modification, for comparability purposes with all other research in the matter. This contrasts with the study of constructions such as *sweet as* in Bauer and Bauer (2002) or the booster noted by one of the participants of this study in example (5).

(5) I remember one of the things that came on which was like 'latest tunes late *AF*' and she looked at us [=me] and went 'Lizzie, what's *AF*?' […] I was like 'it's a bit of like a bit of a "really" like "oh it's really good" "it's something *AF*"' (**Lizzie**, F, 17, Nsfc01f2_B).

Degree modifiers can collocate with adjectives, verbs, nouns, adverbs, or past participles. Only adjectival heads will be considered in this part of the study since they have been shown to be the most frequent context for degree modification (Bäcklund 1973: 279; Lorenz 2002: 144) and have been the most widely researched (e.g. Aijmer 2018a, 2018b; Barnfield and Buchstaller 2010; Bauer and Bauer 2002; Ito and Tagliamonte 2003; Núñez-Pertejo and Palacios-Martínez 2018; Palacios-Martínez and Núñez-Pertejo 2014a; Rickford et al. 2007; Stenström 2000; Tagliamonte 2008; Tagliamonte and Roberts 2005). Other heads are interesting to study in the context of emphasis (see §5.2.2).

Even though the focus is on boosters, the analysis in this thesis considers the distribution of all degree modifiers, both intensifiers and downtoners, as other researchers have done before (see D'Arcy 2015; Xiao and Tao 2007). Initially, degree modifiers of any form are included, not only adverbs (e.g. the phrase *a bit* as a downtoner). This step gives a comprehensive view of the degree modification context as a whole. Subsequently, downtoners are excluded and only intensifiers are analysed. This selection of variants ensures comparability with much of the research in intensification (e.g. Barnfield and Buchstaller 2010; Biber et al. 1999; Ito and Tagliamonte 2003; Paradis 2000; Stenström 2000; Xiao and Tao 2007). The consideration of maximisers and boosters as part of the same variable context is justified by Xiao and Tao (2007: 244–45) on the basis that distinctions have traditionally not been clear-cut, with *extremely*, for example, being classified as a maximiser by Quirk et al. (1985: 590) while Kennedy (2003: 472) classifies it as a booster. Barnfield and Buchstaller (2010: 256) argue that making a distinction according to whether the item collocates with gradable/non-gradable adjectives, as Quirk et al. (1985) do, is an oversimplification. Consequently, they prefer the concept of boundedness and, in that case, both maximisers and boosters have been shown to collocate both with bounded (e.g. *completely*, *so* + *true*) and nonbounded (e.g. *totally*, *very* + *good*) adjectives.

In an attempt to close the set of variants even further, analysis here focuses on the more strictly defined group of boosters. While maximisers and boosters behave similarly in syntagmatic

terms (Barnfield and Buchstaller 2010: 256; cf. Schweinberger 2020: 230–31), the argument in this study is that they do not do so in paradigmatic terms. When a speaker wants to raise the degree of an adjective, they may not want to raise it to the extreme end of the scale. The choice between *totally* and *very* is not down to linguistic variation, but down to the speaker's illocutionary force, that is the pragmatic function they want to perform: boosting or maximising. This is the same rationale presented above to justify why the inclusion of null cases might not be the most appropriate approach for function-based variables.

All booster variants present in the data (and meeting the criteria for inclusion) are considered part of the variable, amalgamating those that account for less than 3% of occurrences under the category 'other'. The consideration of all adjectival contexts, modified or not, helps in this process: by combing through all possible contexts, we encounter boosters that we might not have considered at first. The selection of variants is partly informed by the corpus itself, in a bottom-up approach, as advocated by Pichler (2010: 598). All this considered, the booster variants analysed in this study are: *dead, incredibly*, *proper*, *pure*, *raw*, *real*, *really*, *ridiculously*, *right*, *so*, *stupidly*, *super*, *very*, *well*, and swearwords like *fucking*.

5.4.2. Emphasisers

Emphasisers are conceived as discourse-pragmatic markers that 'have a reinforcing effect on the truth value of the clause or part of the clause to which they apply' (Quirk et al. 1985: 583) and 'add to the force (as distinct from the degree)' of the affected constituent (Quirk et al. 1985: 447). The defining criterion for this variable is functional in nature, and it is therefore very difficult to have a fully closed set of variants. That is the reason why the envelope of variation in this study is further constrained by form, in the sense that only a subset of stance adverbs and intensifiers conveying emphasis will be considered, together with local means of emphasis (clause-final *like* and right dislocation).

Emphasisers have not frequently been studied as one distinct category. The multifunctionality and different lexical origins of the forms (explored in Chapter 3) explain this situation. One of the innovations in this project lies in grouping together forms that have been discussed in previous literature as conveying emphasis, paying special attention to the fact that they can perform different discourse-pragmatic functions. This project aims to illustrate what emphasis is used for, ranging from mere expressivity to textual and interpersonal functions, in response to the need for a clearer definition of emphasis (Cheshire 2005c: 97; Moore and Snell 2011: 102). As such, the variable of emphasisers here includes epistemic stance markers (*actually*, *really*, *definitely* and *obviously*), style stance markers (*literally*, *genuinely*, and *honestly*), and intensifiers.

Clause-final *like* and right dislocation are also explored for comparison, yet they are not the focus of the analysis here.

Some definitions make a distinction between intensifiers and emphasisers on the basis of their scope, with the former having narrower scope and the latter clausal (see e.g. Bondi 2008: 39; Tao 2007: 25). In contrast, the approach adopted here includes both global and local scope, following the view presented by Quirk et al. (1985: 586) and Nevalainen and Risannen (2002: 161). The distinction between intensifiers (and particularly boosters) and emphasisers in this project is based on what function delimits each variable. The group of emphasising adverbs covers a wider range of forms that strengthen the force of the utterance and enrich its expressivity, but might do so through different means. Intensifiers such as *totally* add to the expressivity of the message and emphasise the modified item by virtue of pointing upwards in the degree scale of meaning (see e.g. Aijmer 2020: 144), while certainty stance adverbs such as *definitely* perform the function of emphasis by explicitly marking the speaker's certainty with respect to a whole utterance or a subclausal item (see e.g. Simon-Vandenbergen and Aijmer 2007: 97–101). Therefore, all boosters are considered part of the variable of emphasisers as it is understood in this study, but not all emphasisers are boosters/intensifiers. Since the context of boosters premodifying adjectival heads is the main focus of Chapter 6, the intensifiers explored here premodify other heads —particularly interesting is the intensification and emphasis of verbs— or are used as emphatic responses (e.g. *absolutely*).

Stance markers

Stance is the expression of 'personal feelings, attitudes, value judgments, or assessments' (Biber et al. 1999: 966) on top of the propositional content of an utterance. The same set of meanings and functions has been described and studied under the label of modality (Coates 1983, 1987; Huddleston and Pullum 2002; Lyons 1977; Palmer 2001, 2003; Simon-Vandenbergen and Aijmer 2007, among others). However, stance covers a wider range of meanings that are of interest to this study. First, modality has traditionally been strongly focused on the study of modal verbs, with adverbs such as *certainly, really* and *definitely* at times considered outside of its scope as words that signal degree of confidence (Palmer 2003: 2; Simon-Vandenbergen and Aijmer 2007: 2). Second, the stance category includes markers such as *honestly*, which are relevant in the study of emphasis as justified below, though they are not included in the study of modality, where they are classed, for example, as speech act-related adjuncts (Huddleston and Pullum 2002: 773). Third, stance is generally defined as a semantic-pragmatic meaning that can subsume semantic concepts of 'modality, evaluation, [and] evidentiality', as well as pragmatic ideas of 'hedging, politeness and

metadiscourse' (Myers 2010: 264; see also Gray and Biber 2014: 219, and Hassler 2015: 185). By adopting the concept of stance, the focus is not so much on the syntactic-semantic modalisation of language, but on the discourse-pragmatic functions derived from it, such as emphasis (Hassler 2015: 183; Powell 1992: 76), metalinguistic commentary (Powell 1992: 76), the display of the speaker's commitment to the utterance (Hassler 2015: 183), the expression of subjectivity (Barbieri 2008: 66), and other interpersonal functions such as hedging and building solidarity and rapport (Barbieri 2008: 66; see also Coates 2003: 346–67, although she uses the term 'modal forms'). Still, the difference between stance and modality is often reduced to a matter of terminology. The results from the study of emphasisers in this project are compared with previous research on both stance and modality research regardless of the labels used.

In this study, the *Longman Grammar of Spoken and Written English* (LGSWE, Biber et al. 1999) is used as a reference in defining stance because of its comprehensiveness, applicability, and comparability —it is the theoretical framework followed in similar studies (Barbieri 2008; Biber 2006; Bondi 2008; Carretero 2012; Conrad and Biber 1999; Diani 2008; Myers 2010; Pérez-Paredes and Bueno-Alastuey 2019; Precht 2003, 2008; Simon-Vandenbergen 2008; Simon-Vandenbergen and Aijmer 2007; Waters 2008). In addition, the LGSWE taxonomy is function-based, which is the focus in this project. In contrast, *A Comprehensive Grammar of the English Language* (CGEL, Quirk et al. 1985) explores stance functions —without labelling them 'stance'— in syntactic terms as subjuncts and disjuncts. Still, the taxonomy in LGSWE is not without its limitations. The concepts of modal and speech act-related adjuncts from Huddleston and Pullum (2002), together with ideas from other studies of stance, help to build a comprehensive theoretical framework for this project. Also, the fact that this project's data is regional, conversational, and from a very specific group of speakers (i.e. teenagers), means that some of Biber et al.'s (1999) categories do not fully apply here. For example, the emphatic use of *literally* is ignored in their work, while it is notably prevalent in this study. This use is classed as colloquial (OED 2011 I.1.c; Quirk et al. 1985: 619), and might not have been present in the corpus that informed Biber et al's (1999) taxonomy.

Out of the major grammatical devices used to express stance (Biber et al. 1999: 969–70), this study will be focusing particularly on stance adverbials realised by single adverbs. In comparison with other realisations, such as modal verbs, stance adverbials have not been studied as much in depth (Simon-Vandenbergen and Aijmer 2007b: 2). Within stance adverbials, single adverbs are the most frequent both across registers (Biber et al. 1999: 862), and particularly in conversation (Conrad and Biber 1999: 56; Simon-Vandenbergen and Aijmer 2007: 424).

There are three semantic categories of stance: epistemic, attitude, and style. Epistemic stance refers to 'the speaker's judgment about the certainty, reliability, and limitations of the

proposition' (Biber et al. 1999: 854) or the source of the information. Attitude stance is the expression of 'the writer's or speaker's attitude toward the proposition typically conveying an evaluation, value judgment, or assessment of expectation' (Biber et al. 1999: 856). Lastly, style stance concerns comments 'on the manner of conveying the message' (Biber et al. 1999: 857).

Theoretically, only markers of epistemic stance seem to have the potential to express emphasis. Attitude stance markers —also known as value content disjuncts (Quirk et al. 1985), evaluative adverbs (Swan 1988) or evaluation adjuncts (Huddleston and Pullum 2002)— are purely evaluative and only add meaning to the propositional content of the utterance (e.g. *(un)fortunately, most surprising of all, wisely*). Style stance markers can perform a textual function in discourse but, generally, not emphasis (e.g. *confidentially, briefly, frankly*) (Huddleston and Pullum 2002: 773). These are the style disjuncts expressing modality, manner, and respect in the CGEL (Quirk et al. 1985), and the speech act-related adjuncts in *The Cambridge Grammar of the English Language* (Huddleston and Pullum 2002). However, *literally*, *genuinely*, and *honestly* are exceptions within this group, as explained below.

There are six categories of epistemic meaning. Doubt and certainty markers 'show the speaker's certainty or doubt about the proposition in the clause' (Biber et al. 1999: 854), either absolutely (e.g. *certainly, undoubtedly, definitely*) or on a scale of probability (e.g. *arguably, probably, maybe, most likely*). Actuality and reality markers 'comment on the status of the proposition as real-life fact' (Biber et al. 1999: 854), appealing to the reality of the proposition (e.g. *really, actually, truly*). Source of knowledge markers allude to the source or evidence of the information expressed in the proposition (Biber et al. 1999: 855) (e.g. *evidently, obviously, apparently, according to X*). Limitation markers delimit the boundaries in which the proposition needs to be understood (Biber et al. 1999: 855) (e.g. *in most cases, mainly, generally*). Viewpoint or perspective markers express 'the viewpoint or perspective from which the proposition is true' (Biber et al. 1999: 855) (e.g. *in X view, from X perspective, in X opinion*). Finally, markers of imprecision, also called hedges, show 'that the proposition being conveyed is somehow imprecise' (Biber et al. 1999: 856) (e.g. *like, sort of, roughly, so to speak*).

Most of these are modal adjuncts in Huddleston and Pullum's (2002) grammar. Contrary to Biber et al. (1999), Huddleston and Pullum (2002: 768) subclassify these forms in relation to the strength of modality (e.g. *certainly* > *apparently* > *arguably* > *maybe*) rather than meaning nuances — such as evidentiality (e.g. *obviously*) versus certainty (e.g. *undoubtedly*), which are both classified as 'strong modals'. The combination of both classifications is ideal for understanding their connection with emphasis. While it is relevant to consider the semantic differences between forms, it is also important to note that for example *obviously* and *apparently* (both evidentials) are different

in terms of strength. The strong one, *obviously*, 'emphasises the commitment [to the proposition] or makes it more explicit' (Huddleston and Pullum 2002: 768), while the weaker one, *apparently*, does not.

Therefore, the pragmatic function of emphasis may only be performed by strong markers. Out of the six categories of epistemic meaning, certainty, reality, and evidentiality are closer to the expression of emphasis (see e.g. (6)-(10) below). Most of the constructions listed as emphasiser subjuncts by Quirk et al. (1985: 583) are, in Biber et al.'s (1999) terms, epistemic stance markers of these three semantic categories (*actually, definitely, really, surely, for certain, for sure, obviously, clearly,* and *of course*).

(6) Like *definitely* it has to be scripted, they like pick the winner right from the start (**Connor**, M, 17, Sc04m2_B).

(7) If he's on the team he'd *surely* be on the bench coz everyone else is (**Emily**, F, 19, 2017_SEL2091_080_B).

(8) He's *actually* afraid of going back to Sunderland, so… (**Charlotte**, F, 18, Ben03f2_B)

(9) I don't know. I *really* don't know (**Caroline**, F, 15, Ccc04f1_B).

(10) I think granted you're gonna get… *obviously* horrible people's *obviously* out there and you're gonna get them, you can't take them away (**Jon**, M, 12. Ccc05m1_B).

The discussion of the grammaticalisation process involved in developing emphatic functions in Section 4.5 explains why epistemic stance markers are included in the group of emphasisers in this project. The meanings of certainty and reality associated with *actually, really,* and *definitely* can appear to be propositionally and communicatively redundant and are naturally reanalysed as the speaker's effort to reinforce the utterance. Markers of certainty have also been referred to as 'truth intensifiers' (Swan 1988) and have explicitly been discussed as developing an emphasiser function (Simon-Vandenbergen and Aijmer 2007: 259).

Other epistemic stance markers in Quirk et al.'s (1985: 583) list of emphasiser subjuncts include *clearly, obviously*, and *of course*, which signal source of knowledge or evidentiality. Case studies on each of these markers have shown how in some contexts the expression of evidentiality is unnecessary or weak in favour of the subjective expression of emphasis and the performance of interpersonal functions of hedging, establishing solidarity, and building common ground (Aijmer 2008: 72–74; Hassler 2015: 204–05; Simon-Vandenbergen and Aijmer 2007: 273, 440–41). They are, therefore, included in the analysis.

Finally, the style stance markers *literally, genuinely,* and *honestly* are also part of Quirk et al.'s (1985: 583) list of emphasiser subjuncts. Few authors (Conrad and Biber 1999; Powell 1992) have included these forms in the study of stance marking or emphasis, often focused only on adverbs

of certainty. There are at least three arguments for including them in this project.[35] First, in contrast with other style stance markers, such as *briefly* or *confidentially*,[36] the three mentioned above appeal to the truthfulness and reality of the proposition or phrase they accompany. They convey epistemic meaning that is propositionally superfluous but pragmatically relevant, just like adverbs of certainty, reality, and evidentiality. Second, *literally* and *honestly* are explicitly mentioned as being synonymically related to other emphasisers in the set. In the OED*, honestly* is defined in relation to *really* and *actually* (OED 2014 3.b), while *literally* is compared with *completely* and *absolutely* (OED 2011 I.1.c). Powell (1992: 101) also comments on *literally* as a partial synonym of *really* and *actually*. *Genuinely* is connected semantically with *literally* and *honestly* in the sense of truthfulness, exactitude, and sincerity, yet it does not appear to have developed the same pragmatic versatility as the other two (OED 1898), and as such, might be further from other emphasisers. Third, and most tellingly, the OED makes explicit reference to the emphatic, often colloquial, use of *literally* (OED 2011 I.1.c), as do Quirk et al. (1985: 619), who evaluate this use as 'literally absurd'.

The fact that *literally, genuinely,* and *honestly* are considered markers of stance but not of epistemic modality further justifies the adherence to stance rather than modality terminology. The study of *literally* shows that Biber et al.'s (1999) taxonomy has limitations. They do not draw any connection between epistemic and style stance markers. In comparison, Quirk et al. (1985: 619) comment on the emphatic and hyperbolic use of *literally*, Huddleston and Pullum (2002: 775) make a useful distinction between metalinguistic adjuncts and the broader category of speech act-related adjuncts that sets *literally* apart from *genuinely, honestly, confidentially* and others, and Simon-Vandenbergen and Aijmer (2007: 84) include a set of speech act adjuncts in their study of adverbs of certainty (although they do not specifically refer to *literally*, *genuinely*, and *honestly*). By and large, *literally, genuinely,* and *honestly* are not that dissimilar from epistemic stance markers, and can indeed convey emphasis.

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[35] *Sincerely* and *frankly* would also be included for the same reasons as *literally, genuinely,* and *honestly*, yet there are no occurrences of these two forms in this project's data.

[36] *Seriously* is another style stance marker that appears to have developed a set of emphatic discourse-pragmatic functions similar to *literally, genuinely,* and *honestly*, as attested by the one example in this sample (e.g. (1)). Other tokens are manner uses of the form (e.g. (2)).

(1) Maybe she [=his little sister] wants to interact a bit more or like, I don't know, so… whereas I don't interact as much [**Interviewer**: aw], *seriously* (**Jon**, M, 12, Ccc05m1_B).

(2) Most of wuh [=us] take it *seriously* (**Declan**, M, 13, Ccc05m1_A).

Intensifiers

All intensifiers could be included in the analysis of emphasisers, since intensifiers are generally used with emphatic purposes, to convey expressivity and to strengthen the speaker's views (Aijmer 2020: 144; D'Arcy 2015: 483–84; Lorenz 2002: 143; Núñez-Pertejo and Palacios-Martínez 2018: 120–21). However, since boosters that pre-modify adjectives are analysed as a separate variable in this project, the study of emphasisers will focus on intensifiers (both boosters and maximisers) that modify other parts of speech.

The intensification of verbs is of particular relevance here for two reasons: (i) it has been argued that intensifiers lose degree meaning in favour of purely emphatic meaning in those contexts (Aijmer 2016b: 85, 2020: 153–55; Nevalainen and Rissanen 2002: 361), and (ii) the pre-modification of verbs is considered to entail scope over the whole clause and thus add to the force of the whole utterance (Halliday 2004: 115; Simon-Vandenbergen and Aijmer 2007: 86). That constraint includes *really*, *so*, *proper*, *absolutely, completely*, *totally*, and swearwords; and excludes degree modifiers restricted to non-verbal heads such as *very* or *dead* (see e.g. (11)).

(11) They all like *absolutely* hated me (**Lizzie**, F, 17, Nsfc01f2_B),
a. They *really* hated me.
b. They *proper* hated me.
c. They *completely* hated me.
d. They *totally* hated me.
e. They *fucking* hated me.
f. *They *very* hated me.
g. *They *dead* hated me.

The emphatic function of maximisers in particular is more salient than in boosters, because, like epistemic stance adverbs, they denote redundant meaning. As explored in Section 4.5, *absolutely, completely* and *totally* have developed discourse-pragmatic functions that bring them very close in meaning to *definitely, certainly*, *truly* or *literally* (though not identical) (Aijmer 2020: 155; Carretero 2012: 90; Tao 2007: 25–26) (see e.g. (12)).

(12) I was *absolutely* foaming about it (**Jeremy**, M, 19, 2017_SEL2091_021_A),
a. I was *completely/totally* foaming about it.
b. I was *definitely* foaming about it.
c. I was *truly* foaming about it.
d. I was *literally/genuinely* foaming about it.

In the case of boosters, the variants *really, so, proper,* and swearwords seem to be the most flexible in their collocations, and most relevantly for the study of emphasis, they also occur with verbs. It is not entirely clear whether pre-verbal *really* is a case of a verb intensifier or a clausal

epistemic stance adverb (e.g. *I really like what you are wearing* = 'I like what you are wearing very much' / 'In reality, I like what you are wearing') (Biber et al. 1999: 857–58; see also Paradis 2003). The distinction between the two is often dependent on surrounding discourse. Still, *really* performs a clear emphatic function in both cases, which is the focus here. In the case of *so*, the intensification of verbs and other non-adjectival heads such as nouns and prepositional phrases is an old use of the form that seems to have gained popularity in recent times (e.g. *He so lied to you*; *That's so 90s; I feel so out of place*) (see the 2005 draft addition to the OED entry for *so*, 1989; Kuha 2005; Zwicky 2011). This trendy and colloquial use of *so,* labelled GenX *so* by Zwicky (2011), would have been extremely interesting to analyse in comparison with other emphasisers, but there are no tokens in this sample —most probably because it seems to be mainly used in American English still (Kenter et al. 2007; Kuha 2005; OED 1989; Schweinberger 2020: 245; Zwicky 2011).

Proper has also been attested in collocation with a variety of heads (Núñez-Pertejo and Palacios-Martínez 2018: 131–34). In the pre-modification of nouns (e.g. *He is a proper Geordie*), *proper* is more likely to function as the original evaluative adjective, rather than the intensifying adverb (Adamson 2000: 54). As such, those cases are not included in the analysis. However, pre-verbal *proper* performs an emphatic function similar to any other pre-verbal emphasiser in this project, and is therefore interesting to analyse (see e.g. (13) and (14)). Finally, swearwords, with their strong emphatic force and great mobility in the sentence, are also included in this variable (see e.g. (15) and (16)). It is important to note that the current sample might not provide a faithful representation of the distribution of swearwords in teen talk: they are virtually exclusive to the conversations of the older participants, most likely due to an interviewer's effect —or location of the recordings, in the educational institution.

(13) I called me [=my] mam 'ma' once and she like *proper* kicked off, she's like 'ma? ma? who am I?' (laughs) (**Ian**, M, 19, 2017_SEL2091_021_B).

(14) Have they [=piercings] *proper* healed up now? (**Beth**, F, 20, 2017_SEL2091_031_A)

(15) I'll live for the rest of my life on cheese scones. I *fucking* love cheese scones (**Jack**, M, 19, 2017_SEL2091_043_A).

(16) I have a nine a.m. [lecture] literally all year, all *fucking* year (**Sarah**, F, 19, 2017_SEL2091_078_A).

Together with the more paradigmatic list of intensifiers discussed above, *indeed* is an intensifier that is categorically defined on the basis of its emphatic function, and is included in Quirk et al.'s (1985) list of emphasisers (see e.g. Ranger 2018 for a detailed breakdown of the functions of *indeed*). There is only one single token of *indeed* in this sample (see (17)). *Indeed* is included in the variable of emphasisers in this project, yet its rare occurrence prevents an in-depth analysis of its functions.

(17) Very strange. Very strange *indeed* (**Melissa**, F, 19, 2017_SEL2091_031_B).

Other emphatic devices

The analysis also includes another two linguistic features that have been discussed in the literature as emphatic: clause-final *like*, and right dislocation of pronoun tags (see the end of §3.2.1). Their frequency and social distribution will also be briefly analysed.

Clause-final *like* 'scopes backward over the proposition' (D'Arcy 2017: 13) and is viewed as a sentence adverb, performing an emphatic function similar to the stance and degree adverbs discussed above (Beal 2008: 398; Beal et al. 2012: 92). Considered to be a rare use of *like* in English overall (D'Arcy 2017: 13), it is particularly salient in Irish English (Corrigan 2015: 49–51; Corrigan and Diskin 2019: 4) and also frequent in Tyneside by influence of Irish immigration to the North East of England in the 19th century (Andersen 2001: 222; Bartlett 2013; Beal 2008: 398; Beal et al. 2012: 92; Beal and Corrigan 2009: 231–32; Corrigan and Diskin 2019: 4). Examples (18) and (19) below illustrate their use in the sample.

(18) We went to Menorca and it was so hot, *like* (**Sarah**, F, 19, 2017_SEL2091_078_A).

(19) I bet you won't get this one, *like*. Fifty-two times zero? (**Bryan**, M, 12, Ccc01m1_A)

Right dislocation of pronouns and demonstratives 'refers to the phenomenon whereby a clause is followed by a tag which is co-referential with the preceding subject' (Moore and Snell 2011: 97) (e.g. (20) and (21)). Right dislocation is noted as a feature used throughout the North East of England and has also been described in terms of emphasis (Beal et al. 2012: 93; Durham 2011; Moore and Snell 2011; Pearce 2017: 77; Snell 2008).

(20) I love the Geordie language, *me* (**Declan**, M, 12, Ccc05m1_A).

(21) I was like 'yeah that is weird, *that'* (**Matthew**, M, 17, Sc04m2_B).

The variable of emphasisers in this analysis comprises:[37]

(a.) Epistemic stance adverbs that convey meanings of certainty, reality, and evidentiality
actually, really, definitely, obviously, (*certainly, surely, truly, clearly*)

(b.) Style stance adverbs:
literally, genuinely, honestly, (*frankly, sincerely*)

[37] Adverbs in brackets in the list are either extremely infrequent (*surely, clearly, indeed*) or completely absent in this project's sample (*certainly, truly, frankly, sincerely,* and non-pre-adjectival booster *so*). Strictly speaking, they are part of the variable of emphasisers as it is defined here but they will not be analysed in any depth throughout this project because of the dearth of examples.

(c.) Intensifiers of non-adjectival heads, with a focus on verbal heads:

really, proper, absolutely, completely, totally, swearwords, (*so, indeed*)

(d.) Other emphatic devices:

Clause-final *like,* and right dislocation of pronoun tags.

5.5. Data analysis method

This section details the coding protocol for each variable and the statistical procedures carried out to yield the results. Coding for social constraints was the same across both variables. Regarding internal constraints, each of the variables in the study followed a different coding protocol, since they are affected by different linguistic factors. The statistical tools are also different, since the variable of boosters comprises a more restricted set of variants, while the variable of emphasisers does not have a strictly circumscribed variable context that complies with the Principle of Accountability. The statistical significance and correlations of the booster variable were tested through multivariate analysis, whereas emphasisers were analysed using frequency tabulations.

This study relies on mixed methods. Token counts, statistical significance, and frequencies are calculated quantitatively using methods that are common practice in the field. This ensures replicability and refutability (Macaulay 2002: 287). Discourse-pragmatic functions are interpreted through qualitative methods; in other words, functions are described in relation to linguistic and contextual factors that are not quantifiable. The methods feed into each other. Quantitative methods can provide numerical results for qualitative interpretation and the refinement of the taxonomies. At the same time, the qualitative interpretation of the different functions is required for the accurate coding of tokens and subsequent quantitative analysis.

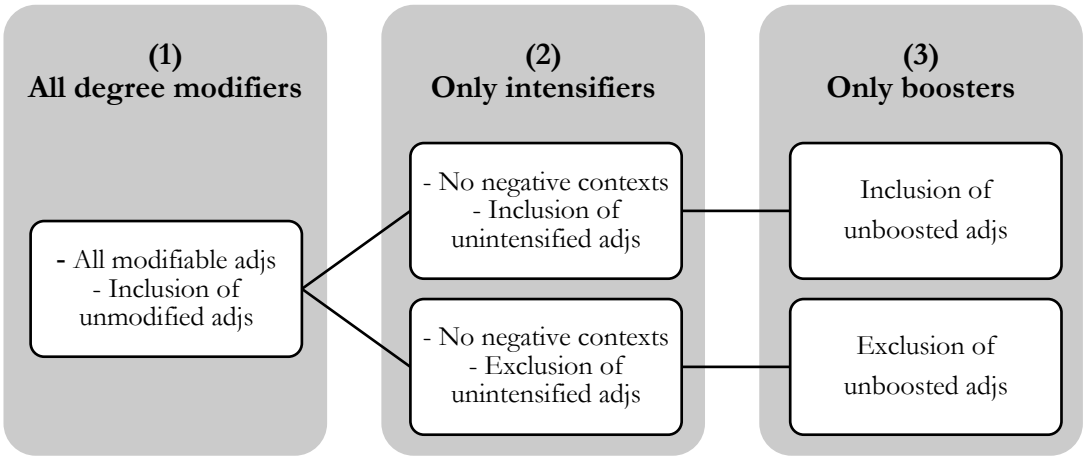
It has been suggested that qualitative methods are subject to 'the accuracy of the investigator's observations and interpretations' (Macaulay 2002: 287) and have the 'potential to reinforce myths and stereotypes' (Buchstaller 2009: 1017). In the field of discourse-pragmatics, Pichler (2010: 598–99) argues that there are too many different qualitative descriptions of meanings and functions, and proposes several ways to try to achieve qualitative consistency across studies. With her suggestions in mind, this study follows two principles. First, multifunctionality is understood as being simultaneous. This way, subjectivity is reduced, since there is no interpretative effort in selecting what function is primary or secondary. Second, the analysis follows to an extent a bottom-up approach by which the extraction of variants and the functional taxonomies are partly informed by the corpus itself.

5.5.1. Boosters

5.5.1.1. Token extraction and coding

The token extraction of boosters was carried out in three stages: (1) all degree modifiers, (2) all intensifiers, and (3) only boosters. The stages follow a progression from the broader variable context to the most restricted one (see Figure 9). The social predictors considered are age and gender, and the linguistic predictors relate to the type of boosted adjective. This section provides detailed descriptions of the token extraction process and the coding for linguistic constraints.

Figure 9. Stages of the token extraction process for the analysis of boosters



The first step involved extracting all adjectival heads that would accept degree modification. Transcriptions were run through *TagAnt* (Anthony 2014), an automated part-of-speech tagger. Despite its high effectiveness and reliability, the resulting tagged transcriptions had to be further refined by manually checking that all forms tagged as adjectives were indeed adjectives, and that all adjectives were correctly tagged. This was a time-consuming process that involved checking context by context in many cases (e.g. *-ed* and *-ing* forms).[38] Special attention was also paid to make sure that local or colloquial adjectives were correctly tagged, such as *belter, class, legend, lifting, lush, minging,* or *mint*. Nevertheless, *TagAnt* was highly accurate and reliable overall.

Once the tags were checked, I ran a concordance in *AntConc* (Anthony 2019) searching for the adjective tag. The resulting list included the relevant speaker code for each adjective token, so

[38] In the case of *-ed* forms, distinctions have been drawn between participial adjectives and past participles, following Stenström's (2000) methodology, based on the criteria set out by Quirk et al. (1985). Hence, the *-ed* forms that were considered adjectives in this study had to meet the following criteria: (i) they accepted premodification by *very* and (ii) they could freely occur in both attributive and predicative contexts. Other criteria were also considered but were not central to the distinction: lack of a corresponding verb with same semantic meaning, non-allowance of a *by* Agent, and allowance of comparative and superlative forms.

the rest of the demographic information could easily be merged into the list. Each extracted token was therefore associated with all the following demographic information: speaker, gender, age group, specific age, date of birth, postcode of residence, and educational institution.

Out of the final list of adjectives, I excluded those that would not accept degree modification:

- all non-gradable adjectives (e.g. *linguistic, national, middle, great* in *great grandma*, *social* in *social media/action/impact*)
- comparatives and superlatives, and in turn, the construction *so…that*, and adjectives modified by *this* and *that* (e.g. (22)-(25)), which convey comparative meaning and neither perform nor permit degree modification;

  (22) I'd rather sit there with my family in like a *more* comfortable setting (**Connor**, M, 17, Sc04m2_B).

  (23) He's the *most* funny one (**Charlie**, M, 12, Ccc06m1_B).

  (24) I didn't know it was *that* fake (**Charlotte**, F, 18, Ben03f2_B).

  (25) Most people aren't *this* lucky (**Erin**, F, 16, Ben01f2_A).

- adjectives modified by *too*, which permits a very restricted and different set of modifiers (e.g (26) and (27));

  (26) That's a bit *too* clever for me (**Jane**, F, 19, 2017_SEL2091_080_A).

  (27) I'm *too* close to my dad (**Ellie**, F, 14, Ccc03f1_B).

- adjectives that functioned as sentence adverbials, often as responses (e.g. *fine, sure, damn, cool*);
- adjectives as part of proper names (e.g. *Newcastle United, Dumb and Dumber, Democratic Party*, nicknames *Greedy* and *Heady*);
- adjectives in the 'Would you rather' questions, since they were not naturally produced by the speakers (e.g. *alone* and *annoying* in 'Would you rather be *alone* for the rest of your life or always be surrounded by *annoying* people?')

For the exclusion of non-gradable adjectives, I followed Paradis's (2001: 4) narrow understanding of the set (e.g. *daily, classical, pictorial*). This way, adjectives that are traditionally understood as non-gradable (Quirk et al. 1985) were included as extreme or limit adjectives (e.g. *brilliant, true, dead*). This accounts for expressive uses of degree modifiers with these adjectives, which do indeed occur as in (28), (29), and (30)

(28) Yeah, he's *proper* legend (**Mick**, M, 20, 2017_SEL2091_032_A)

(29) I also kept thinking 'this is a *really* perfect place to be murdered' (**Sarah**, F, 20, 2017_SEL2091_078_A)

(30) It's *so* fake, like the cameras were literally bombarded around them (**Claire**, F, 17, Ben03f2_A).

There were some adjectives that, depending on the context, could be considered gradable —usually of the limit type— or non-gradable (Paradis 2001: 10). Consider, for example, adjectives of origin like *English, Geordie*, or *Caribbean*. They were typified as non-gradable in the majority of instances (e.g. (31)), and therefore excluded. However, when they potentially referred to a degree of e.g. Englishness or Geordieness, they were considered gradable of the limit type (e.g. (32)). Instances where the origin adjective was already modified were also coded as gradable (e.g. (33)).

(31) Non-gradable instances of adjectives of origin

a. Their father was a *Czechoslovakian* wolf (**Abbie**, F, 19, 2017_SEL2091_078_B).

b. It's the fact that you speak to people who are actually like *English*, you know what I mean? (**Tristan**, M, 17, Sc02m2_B)

c. I think it was like my great-great-grandparents were gypsies, erm like *Irish* gypsies (**Matthew**, M, 17, Sc04m2_A).

(32) Gradable instances of adjectives of origin

a. She has *Geordie* mannerisms, *Scouse* mannerisms (**Jeremy**, M, 19, 2017_SEL2091_021_A).

b. Some people have a twang as in an *English* twang when they speak (**Beth**, F, 20, 2017_SEL2091_032_A).

(33) Modified adjectives of origin

a. My dad's quite *Geordie* (**Jeremy**, M, 19, 2017_SEL2091_021_A).

b. But my great grandma, incredibly *Irish* (**Melissa**, F, 19, 2017_SEL2091_021_B).

c. Some of the other ones were like very *Caribbean* (**Claire**, F, 17, Ben03f2_A).

The resulting list of tokens included unmodified heads, as well as adjectives modified by intensifiers, downtoners and *canny* (deemed ambiguous in function). Sorting the list of adjectives by preceding context allowed for spotting all adjectives that were modified. Each modifiable adjective in this dataset was coded for three major categories regarding their modification status, as shown in Table 16.

Table 16. Major categories used for the coding of modifiable adjectives in the dataset

Modification status	Type of modifier	Subtype of modifier
modified	intensifier	booster
		maximiser
	downtoner	approximator
		moderator
		diminisher
	ambiguous (*canny*)	ambiguous (*canny*)
unmodified	zero	zero

This arrangement allowed for filtering the token list according to the different levels of analysis. At the first stage, both the status and type of degree modification could be studied, since all three degrees were considered (neutral degree as lack of modification, upscale degree with intensifiers, and downscale degree with downtoners).

The second stage focused on intensifiers. The analysis separates for the first time. There is one analysis considering unintensified adjectives as a variant (i.e. including all adjectives that were either unmodified or modified by downtoners or *canny*) and a parallel one excluding them. Following some elements of the methodology used by Ito and Tagliamonte (2003: 263–64), two further exclusions applied at this point:

- negative contexts, since boosters become moderators in these contexts (e.g. (34), (35), and (36))

  (34) I'm not *so* sure about… yeah (laughs) that's a hard question (**Tristan**, M, 17, Sc02m2_B).

  (35) I'm not *really* bothered about the weather, to be honest (**Lewis**, M, 17, Sc01m2_A).

  (36) That's not *very* fair (**Lizzie**, F, 17, Nsfc01f2_B).

- intensifiers in the 'Would you rather' questions (e.g. boosters like *amazingly* in 'Would you rather have *amazingly* fast typing or be able to read ridiculously fast?')[39]

Finally, the list of tokens was restricted to boosters and unboosted heads (i.e. unmodified, or modified by degree modifiers other than boosters). Again, the analysis of predictors on variation is twofold: (i) counting null cases as a variant alongside the other boosting variants, and (ii) excluding null cases.

[39] *Fast* is an adverb in this second instance in the sentence, and *ridiculously* modifies it, so it would have been excluded anyway.

Only the restricted list of intensified adjectives (boosters and maximisers) were coded for linguistic predictors. Each intensified adjective was coded for syntactic position, semantic category, emotional value, type of gradability, and evaluative prosody. Let us detail the coding process for each of these linguistic predictors.

The first constraint is the syntactic position of the adjective in the sentence: predicative or attributive. Position here involves syntactic function. Adjectives are predicative when there is a copular relationship between subject/object and subject complement/object complement; the modified noun or pronoun precedes the adjective (Quirk et al. 1985: 417). Adjectives are attributive when they pre-modify the head (Quirk et al. 1985: 417). Consider the examples in (37) and (38).

(37) Predicative:

a. It's canny *windy* the other day, weren't it? (**Tim**, M, 16, Sc02m2_A).

b. My first experience with whiskey was me as an eleven-year-old thinking 'this is absolutely *vile*' (**Jack**, M, 19, 2017_SEL2091_043_A).

(38) Attributive:

a. I'm like a very *socially-awkward* person when it like comes to like… actually speaking so like… up (**Caroline**, F, 15, Ccc04f1_B).

b. It was just like this really *messy* like super variety show and like none of the numbers fit together (**Connor**, M, 17, Sc04m2_B).

Semantically, each intensified adjective was coded for four different predictors: semantic category, emotional value, type of gradability, and evaluative prosody.

The classification into semantic types is informed by the seven groups defined by Dixon (1982: 16, see below), including some revisions introduced by variationist scholars who have used this taxonomy before, as explained below. These seven groups are as follows:

1. DIMENSION - *big*, *large*, *little*, *small*; *long*, *short*; *wide*, *narrow*; *thick*, *fat*, *thin*, and just a few more items.

2. PHYSICAL PROPERTY - *hard*, *soft*; *heavy*, *light*; *rough*, *smooth*; *hot*, *cold*; *sweet*, *sour* and many more items.

3. COLOUR - *black*, *white*, *red*, and so on.

4. HUMAN PROPENSITY - *jealous*, *happy*, *kind*, *clever*, *generous*, *gay*, *cruel*, *rude*, *proud*, *wicked*, and very many more items.

5. AGE - *new*, *young*, *old*.

6. VALUE - *good*, *bad* and a few more items (including *proper*, *perfect* and perhaps *pure*, in addition to hyponyms of *good* and *bad* such as *excellent*, *fine*, *delicious*, *atrocious*, *poor*, etc.).

7. SPEED - *fast*, *quick*, *slow* and just a few more items.

Dixon (1982) excludes the semantic type 'position', which had been included in earlier taxonomies (Dixon 1977), on the basis that it is not a categorisation applicable to adjectives across languages. As this project deals with English, 'position' is also included as a type. Barnfield and Buchstaller (2010: 276) expands the dimension category, relabelling it as 'measurement' to reflect the fact that they were including adjectives referring to frequencies and amounts, such as *rare*. They also noted that human propensity adjectives can be applicable to animals when anthropomorphised, which is a remark Dixon (1982: 14) also makes. For this project, it was useful to include a category that was not initially considered: origin. Similar to the category of 'nation' in Aijmer (2018a), adjectives in this category refer to demonyms, at a broad level (e.g. *European, Caribbean*) or national (e.g. *English, French*) and local level (e.g. *Geordie, Glaswegian*). Finally, Rickford et al. (2007) uses a ninth type, 'other', to include adjectives such as *different*, *mixed*, *standard*, and *random*. In this study, the 'other' category also includes adjectives that Dixon (1982: 16) found difficult to classify, such as *familiar*, *strange*, *curious*, *important*, *easy*, and *difficult,* because they would have otherwise been left uncoded.

After these adjustments, the semantic types into which intensified adjectives in this corpus are classified are: measurement, physical property, colour, propensity, age, value, speed, position, origin, and other. Although this seems like a straightforward taxonomy, the coding process was difficult, since many adjectives are polysemous and may mean different things in different contexts (as noted e.g. by D'Arcy (2015: 471) when she comments on the meanings of *neat* and *cool*). For example, in this study, *bad* was primarily coded for a value meaning (see (39)) but there were also instances where it was coded as physical property (see (40)), or an emotion or trait, that is, propensity (see (41) and (42)).

(39) The way she talks is really *bad* (**Ellie**, F, 14, Ccc03f1_B).

(40) When I was like fourteen, fifteen, I had really *bad* acne (**Lizzie**, F, 17, Nsfc01f2_B).

(41) I like English, I like Maths, I like Science. It feels really *bad* because like most people only like one of the three but I like all of them (**Amber**, F, 13, Ccc02f1_B).

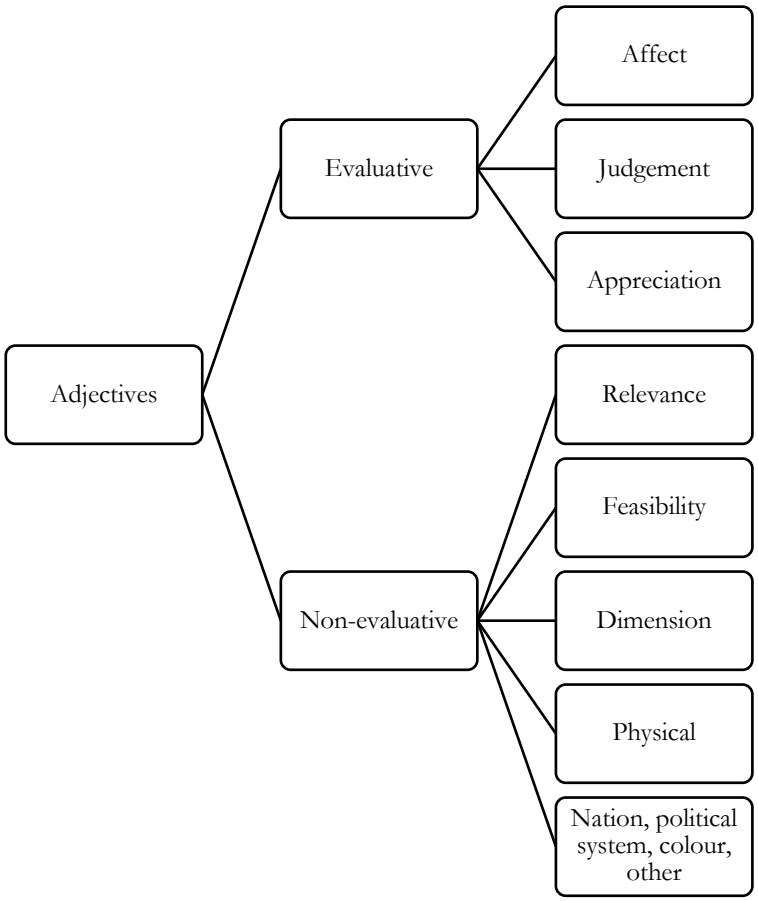
(42) I would fail miserably because I'm usually very *bad* at accents (**Scarlett**, F, 16, Jpa01f2_A).

There is some subjectivity involved in the coding of semantic categories of adjectives, which might result in inconsistencies across research. There is no way to know if the criteria above match the ones followed by other researchers in studies of degree modification, as they are not always explicit in their explanations.

The second semantic predictor is the emotional value of the intensified adjective. Intensified adjectives in this dataset were coded as either emotional or non-emotional. This is again

a subjective predictor to code, yet Aijmer (2018a) provides a clearly defined taxonomy to follow. Based on the semantic theories of Hunston and Sinclair (2000) and Martin's Theory of Appraisal (Martin 2000; Martin and White 2005), Aijmer (2018a) classified the adjectives in her dataset into evaluative and non-evaluative, and used these categories as proxies for emotional and non-emotional. As shown in Figure 10, each of these types was also broken down into finer semantic categories.

Figure 10. Classification of adjectives



Source: Aijmer (2018a: 114–15)

Evaluative adjectives encompass affect, judgment, and appreciation adjectives (Aijmer 2018a: 114). Affect adjectives refer to feelings and emotions (e.g. *happy*, *sad*, *interested*, *bored*, *confident*). Judgement adjectives refer to human traits (e.g. *clever*, *lucky*, *honest*). Appreciation adjectives convey subjective evaluations of others (e.g. *funny*, *nice*). All other categories are considered non-evaluative and in turn non-emotional.

To apply this classification to this study, the semantic categories of Dixon's (1982) taxonomy were compared with the ones in Aijmer's (2018a) work. Affect adjectives clearly overlap

with the category of propensity, which includes adjectives explicitly referring to emotions and feelings (e.g. *happy*, *bored*, *annoyed*); and appreciation adjectives match the definition of value adjectives (e.g. *good*, *cool*, *nice*). In turn, judgment adjectives would cover adjectives in both the propensity and value categories (e.g. *strict*, *wrong*, *vile*, *cool*). Semantic types of non-evaluative adjectives roughly match the rest of categories (e.g. relevance and feasibility = other; dimension = measurement; physical = physical property; nation = origin). In sum, propensity and value adjectives in this study were coded as emotional, and the rest were coded as non-emotional.

Thirdly, each adjective was classified according to the type of gradability they convey. After excluding non-gradable adjectives, intensified adjectives were coded as scalar, extreme or limit, following Paradis's (1997, 2001) classification. In brief, the definitions of each are as follows.

Scalar ('more-or-less' category) adjectives are comparable, can occur in 'how' questions and exclamatory expressions, and have antonyms (e.g. *good*, *long*, *nasty*, *interesting*). Extreme ('more-or-less' category) adjectives represent the outer part of the meaning scale (implicit superlatives), are not comparable, do not fit well in 'how' questions but may in exclamatory expressions, and do not have typical antonyms (e.g. *excellent*, *huge*, *minute*). Limit ('either-or' category) adjectives express a meaning that is not subject to evaluations of the speaker, they are not comparable, and cannot occur in 'how' questions or exclamatory expressions. Their opposites represent complementarity and an incompatible relationship rather than an antonymic one. Examples of limit adjectives are *true*, *sober*, *dead*, and *claustrophobic*. Boosters are expected to collocate more frequently with scalar adjectives (nonbounded adjectives) (Paradis 2001: 4–6), and collocations with extreme or limit adjectives are understood as strategies for heightened expressivity (Aijmer 2018a: 113; Partington 1993: 188).

Finally, in terms of evaluative prosody, adjectives were classified as positive, neutral, or negative. In simple terms, this categorisation represents the speaker's bi-dimensional use of a linguistic feature, in this case an adjective, as judging something as good or bad (Partington 2014: 279).[40] In this study, all non-evaluative adjectives are considered neutral in their prosody, since the whole idea refers to evaluative meanings. As explained above, non-evaluative and therefore neutral adjectives are all adjectives in categories other than propensity and value. By contrast, propensity and value adjectives were coded as either neutral (e.g. *sure*, *odd*), positive (e.g. *honest*, *lit*), or negative (e.g. *sad*, *appalling*). Together with these, there were adjectives of physical property in the data that were also coded as either positive (e.g. *clean*, *pretty*) or negative (e.g. *packed*, *ugly*) because they are understood to convey some level of evaluation.

[40] This feature is also known as semantic prosody (Louw 1993; Sinclair 1987) or emotive prosody (Bublitz 2003).

5.5.1.2. Analytical tools

Three different analytical tools were employed to test the statistical significance of external and internal constraints affecting the variation in boosters.

Distribution and significance of predictors were studied first through proportions within the variables of interest and chi-square tests. The rates of intensification and downtoning were also calculated in terms of frequency indices (normalised frequency per 1,000 words). These results provide information about the distribution of types of modification, intensification strategies, and booster and maximiser variants. They are presented in Section 6.1. As previously discussed, two parallel analyses were carried out, one including null cases as a variant and another excluding them. This project contributes to methodological discussions by comparing both approaches and sets of results.

Two further statistical tests were run per variant for a fine-grained understanding of the effect of predictors in each variant: random forests and multivariate analysis. Together with the results from the distributional analysis explained above, these results are the foundation for the discussion in Section 6.2.

The results from random forest tests provide a picture of the importance of each independent variable (i.e. predictor, constraint) on the distribution of each individual variant (for more on this test, see Tagliamonte and Baayen 2012: 161–65). These tests provide valuable results to guide the analysis of the most relevant constraints per variant. To run the model, I introduced all predictors (social and linguistic) and the random variable of speaker, using the *party* (Hothorn et al. 2006; Strobl et al. 2007, 2008) and *rms* (Harrell Jr 2019) packages in *R Studio* (R Development Core Team 2018). By including speaker as a variable, this model is able to check the importance of differences at the individual level in comparison with all the other constraints.

Finally, multivariate analysis was run through mixed-effects models per variant, as is common and advised practice in the field (Pichler 2010: 591–93). Tests were run using the *lme4* package (Bates et al. 2015) in *R Studio* (R Development Core Team 2018), following the example of other recent discourse-pragmatic works such as Denis (2015) and Woolford (2018). Age group, gender, and all linguistic predictors were included as fixed effects, and speaker was included as a random effect (which neutralises outlier results).

5.5.2. Emphasisers

5.5.2.1. Token extraction and coding

The extraction of emphasiser tokens involved running a concordance search for the keywords identified in Section 5.4.2 using *AntConc* (Anthony 2019):

(a.) Epistemic stance adverbs:

actually, really, definitely, obviously, (*certainly, surely, truly, clearly*)

(b.) Style stance adverbs:

literally, genuinely, honestly, (*frankly, sincerely*)

(c.) Intensifiers of non-adjectival heads, with a focus on verbal heads:

really, proper, absolutely, completely, totally, swearwords, (*so, indeed*)

(d.) Other emphatic devices:

Clause-final *like* and right dislocation of pronoun tags. [41]

The following exclusions applied to the list of contexts generated by the search:

- instances where the utterance was either truncated or unclear, since they prevented for a reliable coding of position and function.
- intensifiers modifying adjectival heads, as they are studied in the more restricted analysis of intensifiers.
- post-negator intensifiers, for the same reasons that they were omitted in the analysis of boosters: they behave like moderators in these contexts.
- uses of adjective *proper* (e.g. (43), (44), and (45))

(43) I don't like share *proper* clothes (**Megan**, F, 14, Ccc04f1_A).

(44) There was a *proper* hot tub in the room (**Claire**, F, 17, Ben03f2_A).

(45) That's a *proper* trek to go to the Metro Centre (**Mick**, M, 20, 2017_SEL2091_032_A).

- manner uses of adverbs (e.g. (46), (47), and (48))

(46) I mean, I'm not gonna blame it *completely* on him coz I was lazy (**Jack**, M, 19, 2017_SEL2091_043_A).

(47) I've got to speak *proper* to them (**Declan**, M, 12, Ccc05m1_A).

(48) Brexit I remember more *clearly* (**Jeremy**, M, 19, 2017_SEL2091_021_A).

[41] Both clause-final *like* and right dislocation were originally annotated in the transcription process, so the search extracted these labels.

In the context of negation, only post-negator intensifiers were excluded because their function turned into moderation, a situation that does not apply to other emphasisers (including non-booster *really*). Following ideas from Diani (2008: 302) and Swales and Burke (2003: 16), the meaning of a sentence such as *He's not really/very nice* is along the lines of 'He's nice to some extent but not much', where the booster meaning is directly affected by the negation; yet post-negator *really* in a truth-insistent use (e.g. in (49) and (50)) means something similar to 'To be honest, I haven't seen Infinity War', or 'The truth is I don't know every street'. While *really* above moderates the meaning of *nice*, in the other two examples it compares the situation uttered against reality or truth. The same applies to the use of *actually* in example (51).

(49) I haven't *really* seen Infinity War but I've seen Endgame (**Charlie**, M, 12, Ccc06m1_B).

(50) Me [=my] mam goes 'do a paper round', but like me [=my] bike's too big for us [=me] and I don't *really* know like I don't know every street (**Megan**, F, 14, Ccc04f1_A).

(51) She [=her dog] gets skitsy about loud noises now. […] Even if it's not *actually* a gunshot, like if it's someone putting down like a plank of wood and it goes "dunkf!" then she'll be like (screams) (**Abbie**, F, 19, 2017_SEL2091_078_B).

(52) Pugs can't *fucking* breathe (**Sarah**, F, 19, 2017_SEL2091_078_A).

(53) A lot of people who don't *obviously* have a lot to give, they do very well to give a lot of money into put like charities like Catholic and things, which do give relief (**Matthew**, M, 17, Sc04m2_B).

Another example is swearwords, which appear to act above negation even if they immediately follow the negator (see Palacios-Martínez 2016: 64–65). As such, *fucking* in example (52) emphasises the negation and the overall force of the utterance, and is not negated. Also, examples such as (53) show that the emphasiser might be placed after the negator by mistake or disfluency —what Huddleston and Pullum (2002: 783) call an incongruent position. Indeed, the intended meaning is 'a lot of people who obviously don't have a lot to give, they do very well', which is an emphatic use.

After exclusions, each token was coded for the demographic information of each individual speaker, and the linguistic constraints of type of utterance, position, and discourse-pragmatic functions.

The types of utterances found in the coding of the data are declaratives (e.g. (54)), questions (e.g. (55)), short responses (e.g. (56)), stranded phrases (e.g. (57)), non-finite clauses (e.g. (58)), and imperatives (e.g. (59)). Declaratives are further subdivided according to polarity into positive (see e.g. (54)a) and negative (e.g. (54)b). The label 'short response' includes both actual responses to questions (e.g. (56)a) as well as reactions in the form of agreement (e.g. (56)b) or surprise (e.g. (56)c).

(54) Declaratives

a. He took his gloves off and *absolutely* hammered the kid all over (**Declan**, M, 12, Ccc05m1_A).

b. We *definitely* weren't as bad as them (**Jeremy**, M, 19, 2017_SEL2091_021_A).

(55) Questions

a. Where are you *actually* from? (**Charlotte**, F, 18, Ben03f2_B)

b. Do they all *proper* dress up? (**Tristan**, M, 17, Sc02m2_B)

(56) Short responses

a. **Interviewer**: What is scripted? Ru Paul's?
Connor: *Definitely* (laughs) (Sc04m2).

b. **Charlotte**: And then you can't put the heating on and you're like freezing.
Claire: *Literally* (laughs) (Ben03f2).

c. **Chris**: We're allowed to go out on Wednesdays and maybe on the weekend if we're lucky.
Mick: *Really?* That's mad, that (2017_SEL2091_032).

(57) Stranded phrases

a. **Interviewer**: Have you tried her experiments?
Scarlett: A few of them, *actually* (Jpa01f2).

b. **Interviewer**: Right, so what do you do with your friends when you go out?
Erin: Just go out, really, sit in someone's house. Nothing, *really* (Ben01f2).

(58) Non-finite clauses

a. [When asked why they would change their accent in some situations] Just to fit in, *really* (**Scarlett**, F, 16, Jpa01f2_A).

b. Er well, like, there's ten leagues and then er like, top *obviously* being like the best, and then then like the worst (**Charlie**, M, 12, Ccc06m1_B).

(59) Imperatives

a. Just do it once, *really* go for it (**Emily**, F, 19, 2017_SEL2091_080_B).

b. Maybe don't try Super Noodle sandwich, but *definitely* try stottie (**Jack**, M, 19, 2017_SEL2091_043_A).

Next, emphasisers were coded for position: left periphery (LP), right periphery (RP), medial position, or stand-alone.

LP and RP refer to clause-initial and clause-final positions respectively, that is, either before any other clause element or after all of them (see e.g. (60) and (61)). LP includes instances where another discourse-pragmatic marker is placed before it (e.g. (60)b). Both clause-initial and clause-final emphasisers are prosodically separate from the main clause, which in writing is marked with a comma. Emphasisers in either position have global scope, that is, scope over the whole clause. However, they differ in terms of the discourse-pragmatic functions they perform (Beeching and Detges 2014: 1, 11), as explored in more detail in the analysis of position in Chapter 7.

(60) Left Periphery

a. *Obviously*, since we are like his mates and his teammates and that, we had his back (**Declan**, M, 12, Ccc05m1_A).

b. But *honestly*, I think he's one of the be- like, my personal opinion, I think he's class, me (**Tim**, M, 16, Sc02m2_A).

(61) Right Periphery

a. It's just a matter of opinion, *really* (**Jon**, M, 12, Ccc05m1_B).

b. You're always early, *literally* (**Claire**, F, 17, Ben03f2_A).

Medial position covers any position from after the subject to before the final clausal element. Medial emphasisers are therefore also coded according to the part of speech or phrase they precede, such as pre-noun (e.g. (62)a), pre-adjective (e.g. (62)b), or pre-pronoun (e.g. (62)c).

(62) Medial position

a. It took *absolutely* ages (**Chris**, M, 19, 2017_SEL2091_032_B).

b. I was *honestly* star-struck (**Jeremy**, M, 19, 2017_SEL2091_021_A).

c. It could be like *literally* anything (**Emily**, F, 19, 2017_SEL2091_080_B).

d. They're *actually* like nice people (**Ellie**, F, 14, Ccc03f1_B).

e. I'm *definitely* more feminine (**Melissa**, F, 19, 2017_SEL2091_031_B).

f. Pre-verbal

   i. I *actually* hate it, it's so annoying (**Claire**, F, 17, Ben03f2_A).

   ii. It *clearly* must have been passed their bedtime (**Jane**, F, 19, 2017_SEL2091_080_A).

   iii. They can *really* like hide themselves (**Rebecca**, F, 17, Ben01f2_B).

   iv. My mam's [English] *definitely* is like a lot more like standard English than what I would speak (**Tim**, M, 16, Sc02m2_A).

Attributive adjectives are considered to be embedded within the noun phrase, so emphasisers preceding them were coded as pre-noun phrase (e.g. (62)d), as much as emphasisers preceding modified adjectives were coded as pre-adjective phrase (e.g. (62)e). Pre-verbal position includes positions between subject and main verb in simple verbal constructions (see e.g. (62)f.i), but also both pre- and post-auxiliary positions in complex ones (see e.g. (62)f.ii and (62)f.iii). While it is relevant to distinguish between pre- and post-auxiliary positions in studies of syntactic variation (e.g. Waters 2013), there are no differences in scope and function (which in fact explains why they could be compared from a variationist perspective in Waters (2013)). Generally, pre-verbal emphasisers are considered to have global scope, while emphasisers preceding any other part of speech have local scope over the particular element they precede (Conrad and Biber 1999: 62; Quirk et al. 1985: 583). However, exceptions apply.

As explained in Section 5.4.2, the understanding of pre-verbal emphasisers as having global scope is based on the idea that the finite verb is the 'hub of the proposition' (Halliday 2004: 115; Simon-Vandenbergen and Aijmer 2007: 86). In semantic terms, emphasising the verb phrase usually means emphasising the situation, which in turn refers to the whole proposition. An example such as *I actually hate it* ((62)f.i above) is considered identical in scope to *Actually, I hate it* (LP), and *I hate it, actually* (RP), though they may still differ in the discourse-pragmatic functions performed (e.g. peripheral *actually* links to previous discourse and may convey correction). However, not all pre-verbal emphasisers can be read as having global scope. For example, compare *I really love sweet food* (Amber, F, 13, Ccc02f1_B) with the alternatives *Really, I love sweet food* (LP) and *I love sweet food, really* (RP). In peripheral positions *really* has an emphatic truth-attesting meaning that acts over the whole clause (global scope), whereas pre-verbal *really* appears to emphasise in particular the verb *love* (local scope). These examples show the need for a close case-by-case analysis in the study of discourse-pragmatic markers of this kind.

In the case of emphasisers preceding other parts of speech, the blanket classification of all cases as having local scope is too sweeping. For example, it is unclear whether *honestly* in *I was honestly star-struck* ((62)b above) acts locally over *star-struck* or rather has global scope like the alternative positions *Honestly, I was star-struck* (LP), *I was star-struck, honestly* (RP), and *I honestly was star-struck* (pre-verbal). These are cases of parenthetical uses.

A particular situation is the use of emphasisers with copular *be*. The tendency is for adverbs to follow the copula (Huddleston and Pullum 2002: 780) even when the emphasis might scope over the verb. Given the difficulty and subjectivity involved in distinguishing between what could be considered a post-copula position (i.e. the emphasis scopes backward) and a position preceding whatever follows in the utterance (i.e. local scope over the following element), all instances preceding *be* were coded as pre-verbal (e.g. (62)f.iv above, *My mam's English definitely is more standard*), while those following it were coded according to the phrase or part of speech that follows (e.g. pre-adjective in (62)b, pre-pronoun in (62)c, pre-noun phrase in (62)d, and pre-adjective phrase in (62)e).

Returning to the different codes for positions, the label 'stand-alone' refers to short responses and tag questions in reaction to statements in the surrounding discourse (e.g. (63)). They constitute a unit of their own, syntactically independent of any clause. Their emphatic function could be understood to have scope over the discourse that they refer to (e.g. Melissa's *deffo* emphasises Beth's statement in (63)a), but a more accurate interpretation is that the emphasis is self-contained within the unit (i.e. Melisa's *deffo* emphasises the agreement in itself, rather than Beth's preceding statement).

(63) Stand-alone emphasisers

a. **Beth**: But like now you know, you draw your eyebrows, you, you draw you-
Melissa: *Deffo* (2017_SEL2091_031).

b. **Jeremy**: But I wouldn't say I get a hard time for it, the way I speak.
Ian: No, *definitely not* (2017_SEL2091_021).

c. **Amber**: Oh I've always loved The Great Showman, like always, but…
Interviewer: You know? I haven't watched it.
A: *Really?*
Samantha: *Really?*
A: Oh my God, it's so good (Ccc02f1).

The coding for position highlights the unsuitability of a strict variationist approach in comparing the use of different emphasisers, since not every item included in the analysis can move as freely (Huddleston and Pullum 2002: 578). For example, emphasiser *proper* only occurs in pre-verbal position, whereas *absolutely, completely,* and *totally* can also constitute stand-alone responses; style stance markers have a predilection for peripheral positions, yet *literally* often occurs in medial positions and stand-alone contexts too; and epistemic stance markers can occur in practically any position, yet *actually* could never act as a response marker like *really?, definitely,* or *obviously*.

In addition to the more straightforward coding of type of utterance and position, emphasisers in this study are coded for discourse-pragmatic functions. This study follows the idea of multifunctionality and polysemy, that is, discourse-pragmatic markers can perform multiple functions and convey multiple meanings both in different contexts and simultaneously (Brinton 2017: 7; Degand et al. 2013: 5; Pichler 2010: 589, 2013: 47; Stenström 2014: 15; Waters 2016: 41). As explained at the beginning of this chapter, the acknowledgment of polysemy and multifunctionality lessens the subjectivity involved in the qualitative analysis of discourse-pragmatic markers. The constellation of meanings and functions of markers are difficult to tease apart, as Simon-Vandenbergen (2008: 1532) noted when trying to differentiate the functions of *certainly* and *definitely* as hermetic categories. For example, the semantic-pragmatic maps and networks devised by Simon-Vandenbergen and Aijmer (2007: Chapter 10) in their study of adverbs of certainty show how different items cover different meaning and functional areas, even though they all share a core meaning of certainty.

The range of discourse-pragmatic functions that emphasisers might perform is 'almost infinite' (Aijmer and Simon-Vandenbergen 2011: 229). Nevertheless, the coding in this project follows a delimited classification of functions per emphatic device, as laid out in Section 3.2.1. These taxonomies are informed by the functions noted in previous similar studies and by this

project's corpus in particular. These functions help provide a finer picture of emphasis (as called for in Cheshire 2005c: 101, and Moore and Snell 2011: 102).

Prosody was also considered in the coding process, especially in ambiguous cases, by listening to the recordings instead of relying only on the transcripts. Coding also entailed incorporating a version of inter-coder agreement by consulting a native speaker of a north-eastern variety of British English. The taxonomies, the recordings, and assistance from a native speaker helped to mitigate the subjectivity of the coding process. The coding process of functions was purely qualitative. The resulting discussion in Chapter 7 also needs to be understood in these terms.

5.5.2.2. Analytical tools

Results were quantitatively analysed using the *tidyverse* package (Wickham 2017) in *R Studio* (R Development Core Team 2018). In the analysis of emphasisers, token count is not sufficient for tests of statistical significance like those carried out for the analysis of boosters. Also, the intrinsic multifunctionality of emphasisers and the qualitative nature of their coding process complicate an accountable report of their distribution, as discussed above in Section 5.4.

Instead, frequency tabulation was carried out, as is common practice in similar studies (Aijmer 2008; Biber 2006; Conrad and Biber 1999; Myers 2010; Pérez-Paredes and Bueno-Alastuey 2019; Simon-Vandenbergen 2008; Simon-Vandenbergen and Aijmer 2007a, 2007b; Waters 2008). The number of tokens of each variant is presented as a raw count and standard measure (relative frequency calculated per 1,000 words). The analysis of frequency per predictor is complemented with an exhaustive qualitative study of the discourse-pragmatic functions that the different emphasisers perform in the sample, in an attempt to identify similarities and differences between the forms in the set, and qualitatively describe the conversational styles of teenagers in the sample.

It is acknowledged that frequency tabulation cannot be understood as definitive evidence for patterns of variation and change when comparing either across different corpora or within the same corpus. Pichler (2010: 595) and Waters (2016: 43–44) argue that frequency analyses largely ignore social and internal mechanisms, including factors involved in the interview situation, relationships between speakers, or the diachronic development of features. Also, Stratton (2020a: 24) demonstrated that the normalisation of frequencies (i.e. standard measure) can yield skewed results because different corpus sizes provide different sample baselines for the calculation of the standard measure. The shortcomings of the quantitative study of emphasisers are described in more detail in Appendix XII.

A way to improve the comparability of frequency results is by specifying the calculation of words in the sample (Pichler 2010: 594–95). In this project, word-count has been carried out considering the following details:

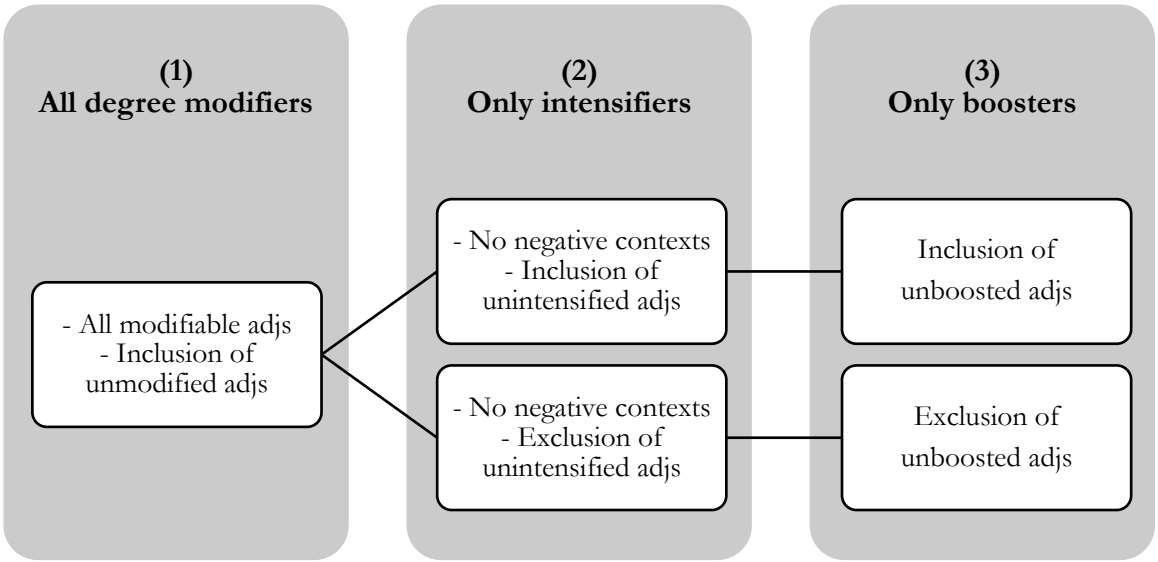
- Instances of disfluency in the conversation, such as repeated words, false starts, and truncated words were all included in the count.
- Filled pauses such as *er* and *erm* and minimal responses such as *mhmh* and *uh-huh* were all included in the count.
- Contracted forms were counted as one word (e.g. *isn't, you've, Claire's*).
- Discourse-pragmatic markers consisting of more than one word were counted as one word (e.g. *I mean, you know, you know what I mean, to be honest*).
- Numbers consisting of more than one word were counted as one word (e.g. *forty-five*, *one hundred and sixty*).
- Proper names of places, people, and the like were counted as one word (e.g. *Whitley Bay, Adam Sandler, Sixth Form, The Beauty and the Beast*).

Chapter 6

Degree modification, with a focus on boosters

This chapter will display, interpret, and discuss the results derived from the analysis of degree modifiers in the speech of Tyneside teenagers. Section 6.1 includes the presentation and interpretation of results. The tokens used for the analysis were extracted in three steps, as explained in Section 5.5.1.1 and shown in Figure 11, and the results are presented in three different sections (§6.1.1, §6.1.2, and §6.1.3). Social predictors are analysed at every stage, whereas linguistic predictors are only analysed in the more restricted sets of boosters and maximisers. The degree modifier *canny* is analysed separately in Section 6.1.4 because it can function as both a booster and a moderator. Section 6.2 discusses the results in more detail, connecting them with previous research, theories of grammaticalisation and language change, and the historical development of each variant.

Figure 11. Stages of the token extraction process for the analysis of boosters



6.1. Descriptive results

Significance was tested by running chi-square tests. Multivariate analyses were carried out per booster variant. The results of these latter tests are discussed in depth in Section 6.2.

6.1.1. First stage: rate and type of modification

The first stage in the analysis of degree modification looks at the differences in rates between modified (e.g. (1)) and unmodified adjectives (Ø) ((2)).

(1) Modified

a. I'd be like *proper* stressed, like (**Caroline**, F, 15, Ccc04f1_B).

b. He turned out to be *completely* bonkers (**Lizzie**, F, 17, Nsfc01f2_B).

c. It was *almost* dead (**Chris**, M, 19, 2017_SEL2091_032_B).

d. It's just *a bit* shitty (**Lewis**, M, 17, Sc01m2_A).

e. It was like *quite* awkward, to be honest (**Ian**, M, 19, 2017_SEL2091_021_B).

f. The ref, he was *canny* good that game (**Tristan**, M, 17, Sc02m2_B).

(2) Unmodified

a. You've got Ø small foot, feet (**Phil**, M, 12, Ccc01m1_B).

b. She's just Ø addicted to her Xbox (**Erin**, F, 16, Ben01f2_A).

c. I just thought it was Ø funny (**Jane**, F, 19, 2017_SEL2091_080_A).

Out of 5869 modifiable adjectival heads, less than a fifth were modified (see Table 17 below). The differential between modified and unmodified adjectives is replicated almost identically per age group (Figure 12) and per gender (Figure 13): close to 20% of the adjectives were modified, and around 80% were not. Both social predictors are extremely significant in the rate of modification (age: $X^2 = 10.519$, df = 2, $p < 0.01$; gender: $X^2 = 18.557$, df = 1, $p < 0.00001$). In this sample, older speakers as well as female speakers tend to use degree modifiers slightly more often than younger or male speakers do, although the differences are minimal.

Table 17. Raw count and proportion of modification or lack of it

Modifiable adjectives	N	Proportion
modified	1156	19.7%
unmodified	4713	80.3%
Total	5869	100%

Figure 12. Distribution of modification or lack of it across age groups

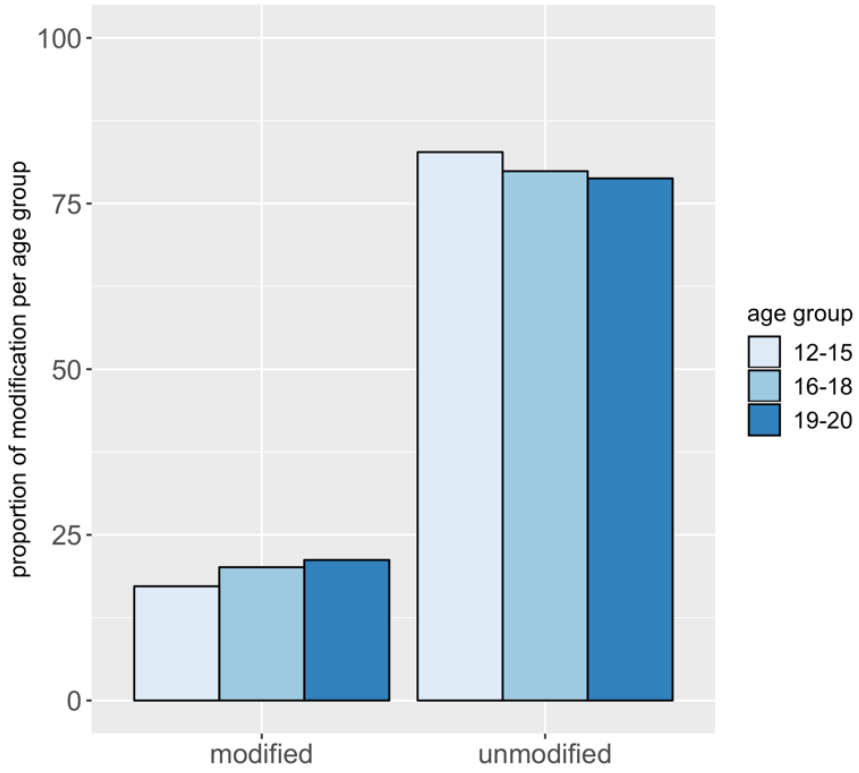


Figure 13. Distribution of modification or lack of it across genders

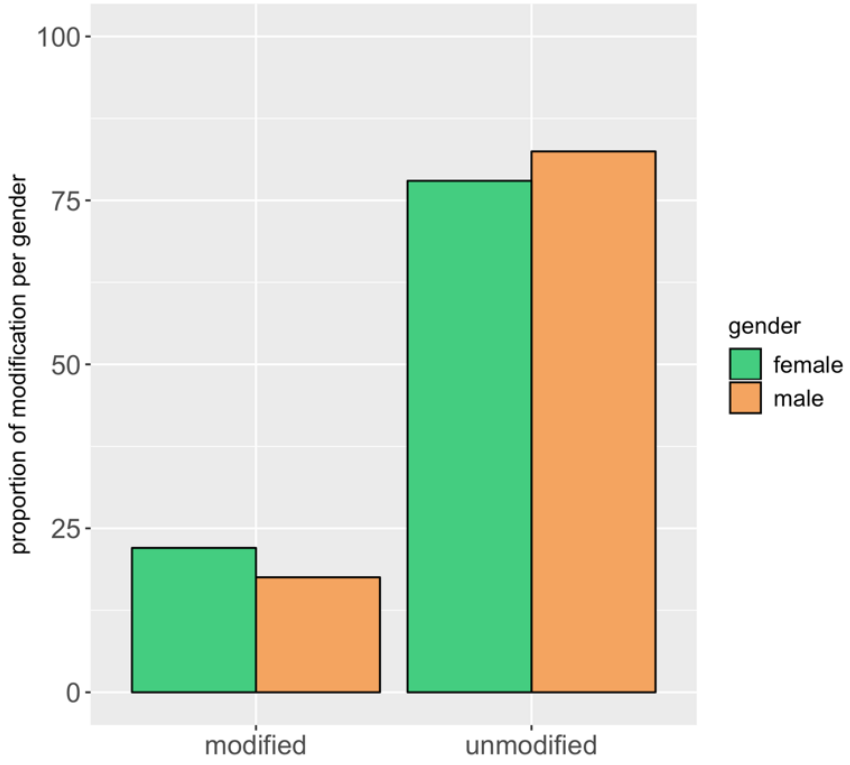


Table 18. Raw count, proportion, and frequency indices of types of modification

Type of modifier	N	Proportion	Frequency index per 1,000 words
ambiguous (canny)	8	0.1%	0.04
downtoner	351	6.0%	1.95
intensifier	797	13.6%	4.43
zero	4713	80.3%	26.13
Total	5869	100%	

Table 18 above shows the figures for the type of modification or lack of it in the entire sample. Intensification is more than twice as frequent as downtoning, and both are far less frequent than lack of modification. This is the trend found across previous research (D'Arcy 2015: 460; Mustanoja 1960: 316). In Tyneside, Barnfield and Buchstaller (2010: 261) reported a steady diachronic increase in the frequency of intensification. Their results show a frequency index per 1,000 words of 2.62 in the TLS corpus (1970s), which increased to 3.06 in the PVC (1990s) and up to 3.85 in NECTE2 (2007/8). The trend continues in this more recent dataset, with intensification having a frequency index of 4.43, although the difference in age range between this project and Barnfield and Buchstaller's (2010) has to be acknowledged. D'Arcy (2015: 461), Ito and Tagliamonte (2003: 265), and Tagliamonte (2008: 367) reported a similar increase in apparent time in New Zealand, York and Toronto, respectively. In American English, Romero (2012: 43) also found that younger speakers use intensifiers more often than older ones, but her results for British English did not show a clear age trend (Romero 2012: 48).

However, the comparability of my results with those above is limited, due to both differences in the features of the corpora (as discussed in §3.1) and the potential unreliability of frequency tabulations (Pichler 2010: 595; Stratton 2020a: 24; Waters 2016: 43–44; and discussion in §5.5.2.2). Acknowledging these limitations, my results suggest that the upward trend of intensification reported in previous research might have continued its course. Future research with larger corpora could test this further and make more far-reaching claims.

Both age and gender have high statistical significance regarding the type of modifier used (age: $X^2 = 54.356$, df = 6, $p < 0.00001$; gender: $X^2 = 91.776$, df = 3, $p < 0.00001$) (see Figure 14 and Figure 15 below).

Figure 14. Distribution of modifier type across age groups

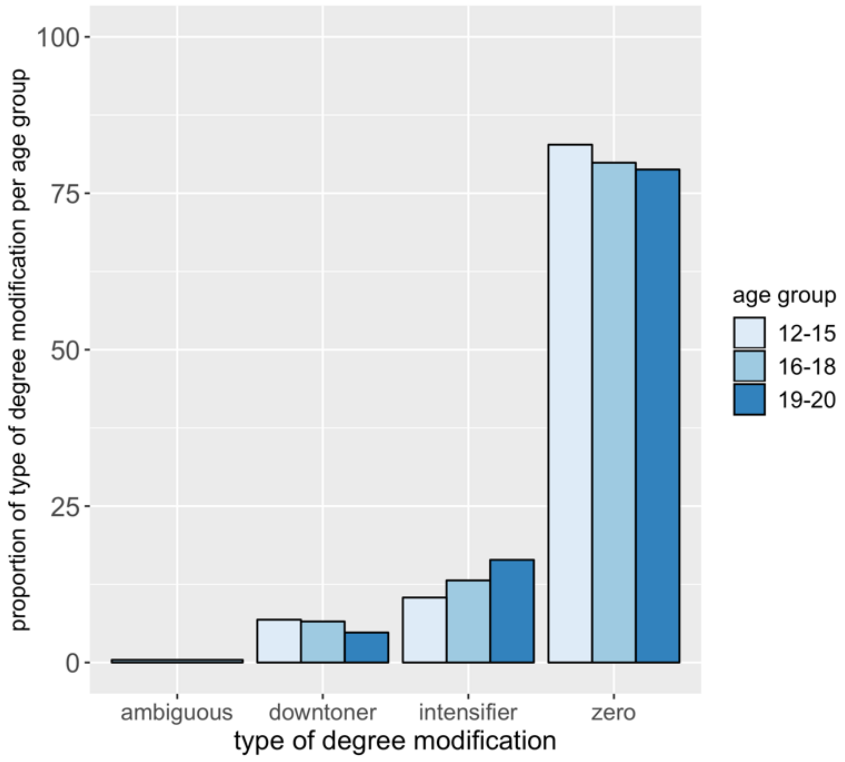
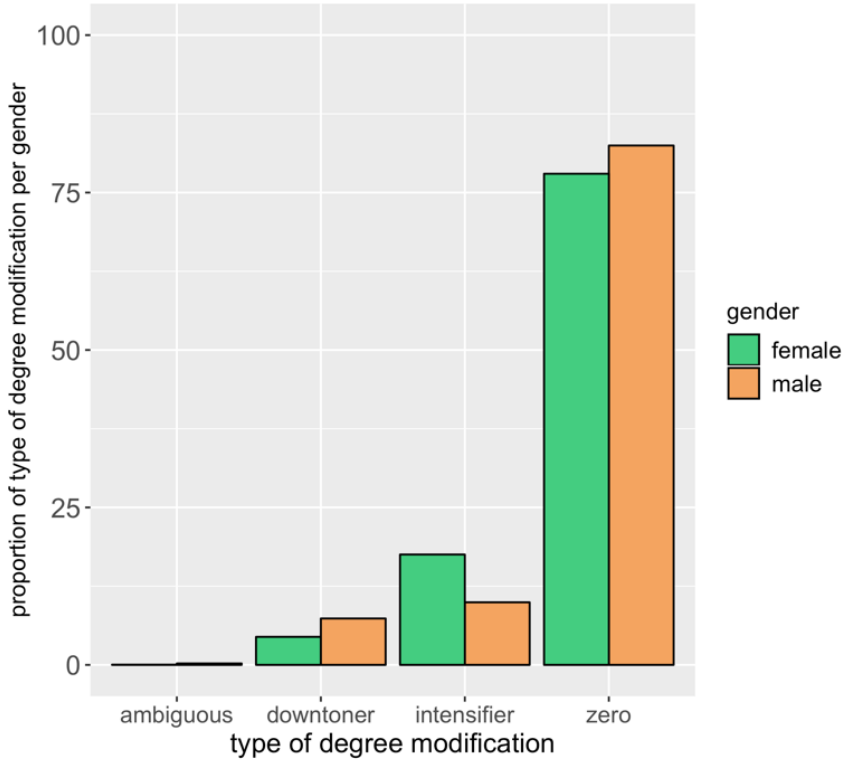


Figure 15. Distribution of modifier type across genders



Speakers in the 19-20 year old age group use intensifiers more frequently than those in the 12-15 and 16-18 cohorts. Moreover, girls use intensifiers considerably more often than boys (17.5% v 9.9%, indices: 5.91 v 3.13). This finding aligns with the intuitions expressed by Jespersen (1922: 250) and Stoffel (1901: 101) and mirrors the slight gender differences attested by Stenström et al. (2002: 143) among London teenagers in the early 1990s. Romero (2012: 53, 57) also found a similar trend in American and British English. The use of downtoners is slightly more frequent among boys in this sample, which echoes the results for New Zealand English in D'Arcy (2015: 465).

6.1.2. Second stage: type of intensification

At the second stage of analysis, the dataset focuses on the types of intensifiers used by speakers in the sample. There are two types of intensifiers: boosters (*very, really, so, dead,* as in (3)) and maximisers (*totally, completely, fully*, as in (4)). Negative contexts (*n*=261) have been excluded at this stage because they affect the pragmatic force of intensifiers.

(3) Boosters
a. Sometimes she's *dead annoying* (James, M, 17, Sc01m2_B).
b. It just seems *so amazing* compared to England (Amber, F, 13, Ccc02f1_B).
c. Oh my God, that's *so true* (Abbie, F, 19, 2017_SEL2091_078_B).

(4) Maximisers
a. I just got to be *perfectly honest* (Matthew, M, 17, Sc04m2_A).
b. The biggest thing I've ever seen in my life, *absolutely massive* (Jack, M, 19, 2017_SEL2091_043_A).
c. My mate Sean, who is like *completely gay*, was just staring at er this girl (Abbie, F, 19, 2017_SEL2091_078_B).

At this point, the analysis is split for the first time. First, the contexts of intensification are analysed exclusively, leaving aside unintensified adjectives. This is the approach followed by most works in the field (as discussed in §5.4) (e.g. Aijmer 2018a, 2018b; Barbieri 2008; Barnfield and Buchstaller 2010; Núñez-Pertejo and Palacios-Martínez 2018; Palacios-Martínez and Núñez-Pertejo 2012, 2014; Rickford et al. 2007; Romero 2012). Second, the analysis includes null cases, that is, adjectives modified by *canny* and downtoners or not modified at all (following e.g. D'Arcy 2015; Ito and Tagliamonte 2003; Tagliamonte 2008; Tagliamonte and Roberts 2005).

Table 19. Raw count and proportions of intensifier types

Type of intensifier	N	Proportion
maximiser	43	5.4%

booster	754	94.6%
Total	798	100%

Table 20. Raw count and proportions of intensifier type or lack of it

Type of intensifier / lack of intensifier	N	Proportion
maximiser	43	0.8%
booster	754	13.4%
unintensified	4811	85.8%
Total	5608	100%

Figures in Table 19 show that when speakers in this sample want to intensify their adjectives, they overwhelmingly favour the use of boosters over maximisers. The low frequency of maximisers matches results from MLE studies, where maximisers have been shown to be more frequent in the speech of adult speakers (Núñez-Pertejo and Palacios-Martínez 2018: 130; Palacios-Martínez and Núñez-Pertejo 2014b: 222, 226).

The percentage difference between boosters and maximisers is much less stark in Table 20, because cases of downtoning or lack of modification take part of the share. The variants we are comparing in Table 20 somehow belong to different levels. The comparison is drawn between boosters, maximisers —i.e. types of intensification— and other types of degree modification or lack of it. Given the high frequencies of zero modification in the sample, the percentages of each type of intensifier are understandably much lower. This contrast also arises in the analyses per social predictor. Chi-square tests reveal that neither age nor gender are significant when exclusively comparing boosters versus maximisers (age: $X^2 = 4.7475$, df = 2, $p = 0.09313$; gender: $X^2 = 0.0060067$, df = 1, $p = 0.9382$) but they become significant when null cases are included (age: $X^2 = 34.981$, df = 4, $p < 0.00001$; gender: $X^2 = 74.999$, df = 3, $p < 0.00001$).

The strict comparison between types of intensifiers (Figure 16 and Figure 18) shows that boosters are, in fact, preferred by all groups at practically the same rate. Maximisers are infrequent in the data from all cohorts but this trend is particularly marked amongst the 12-to-15-year-olds However, Figure 17 and Figure 19 provide a different picture: older and female speakers are the most frequent users of boosters, and the differences in this case were deemed statistically significant.

Figure 16. Distribution of intensifier type per age group

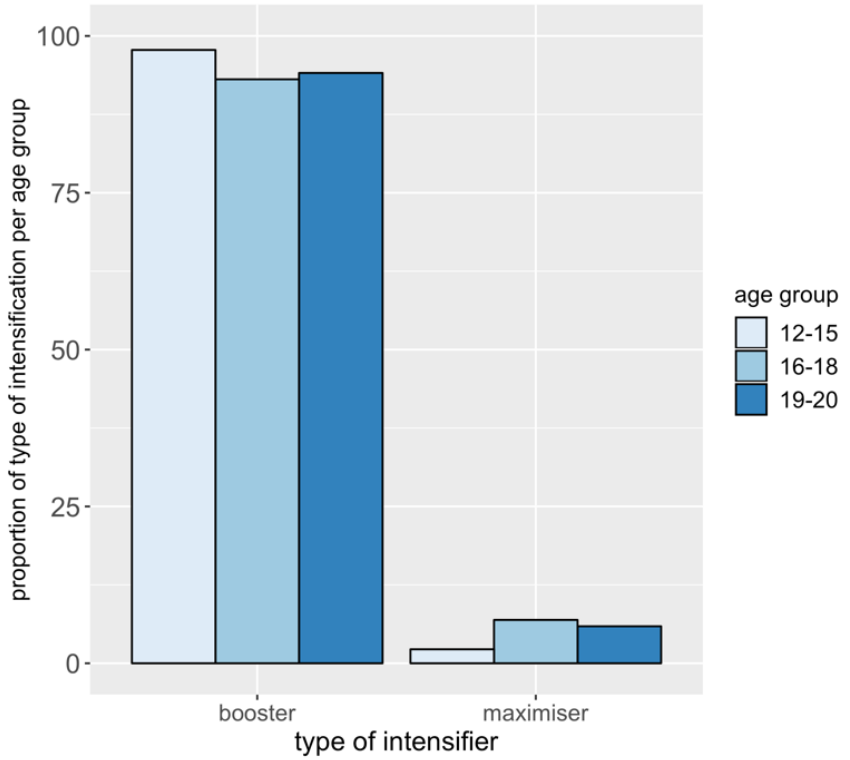


Figure 17. Distribution of intensifier type or lack of it per age group

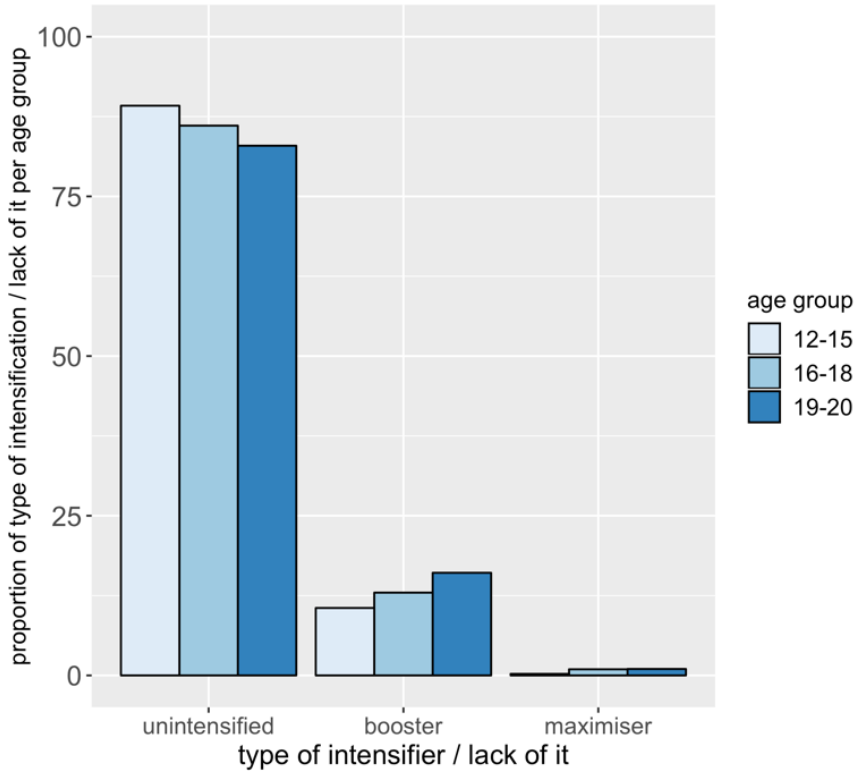


Figure 18. Distribution of intensifier type per gender category

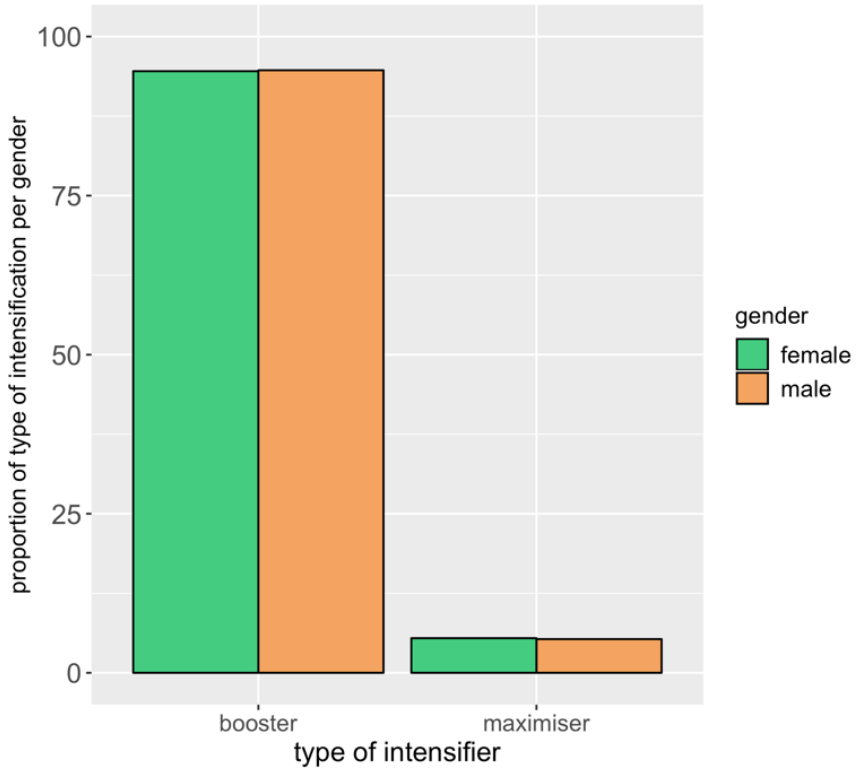
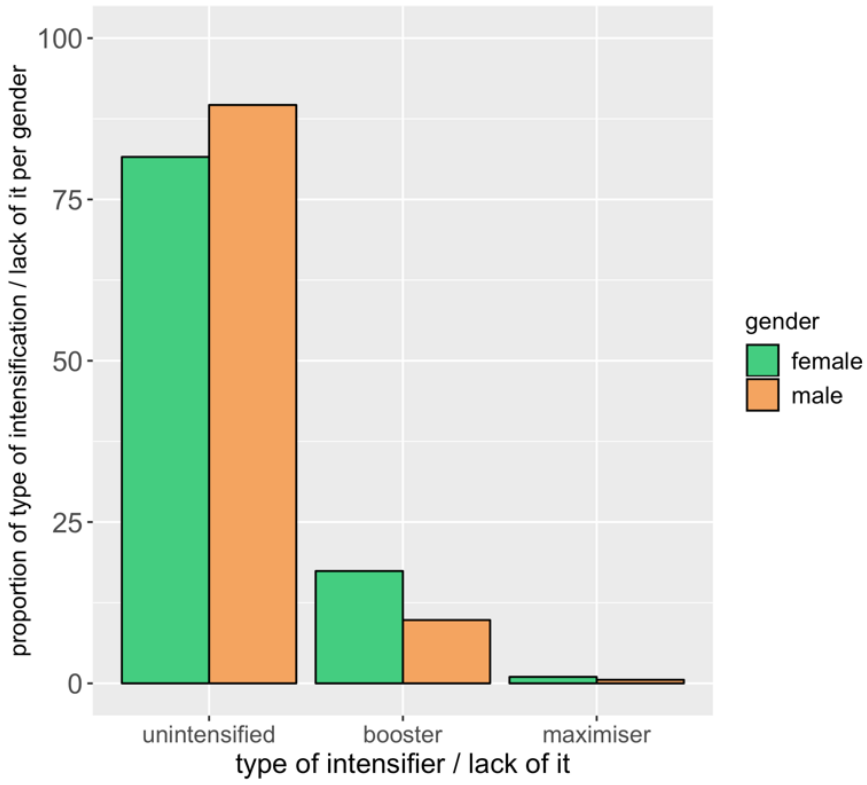


Figure 19. Distribution of intensifier type or lack of it per gender category



Both the inclusion and the exclusion of null cases are equally valuable but they reveal different findings. The exclusion of null cases seems to be a more accurate approach if we are interested in knowing what type of intensifier Tyneside teenagers in this dataset prefer when intensifying adjectives. According to this analysis, there are no significant age or gender effects. The only reason why older and female speakers use boosters significantly more frequently than younger ones or males (as shown in Figure 17 and Figure 19) is simply because older and female speakers intensify more often. Therefore, the inclusion of unintensified adjectives seems to show what we already knew and provides a distorted picture of the system of intensification in particular.

Distribution of maximiser variants

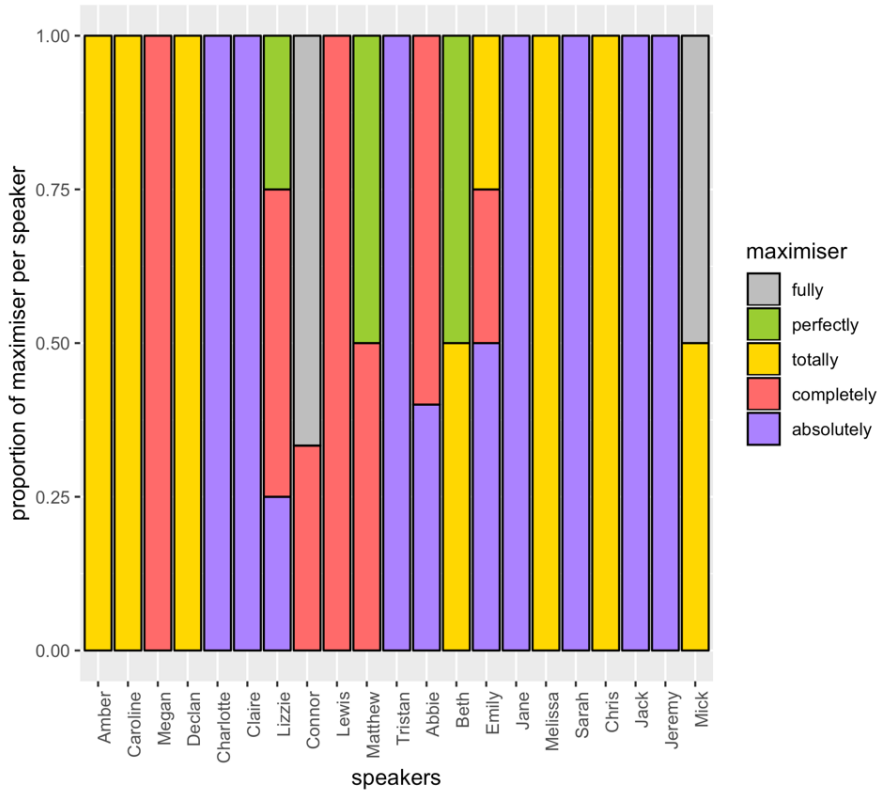
There are few tokens of maximisers modifying adjectival heads in this sample (*n*=43). As such, the results discussed here are acknowledged to be insufficient for any solid claims on their social or linguistic distribution, and it is not worthwhile therefore applying significance tests on the resulting patterns.

Table 21. Raw count and proportions of maximiser variants

Maximiser variant	N	Proportion
fully	3	7.0%
perfectly	4	9.3%
totally	8	18.6%
completely	12	27.9%
absolutely	16	37.2%
Total	43	100%

The overall results present a clearly differentiated rank of variants, with *absolutely* being the most frequent and *fully* the least (see Table 21). As Figure 20 below shows, the occurrence of some variants appears to be idiolectal, as it is restricted to very few speakers, particularly in the cases of *fully* and *perfectly*. There is also very little internal speaker variation, that is, most speakers use either one or two different variants consistently.

Figure 20. Proportion of maximiser variants per speaker



Unsurprisingly, the analysis of maximiser variants by age and gender does not show any clear patterns (see tables in Appendix VIII), apart from the higher frequency of *completely* amongst girls. In terms of collocations, every maximiser variant in this dataset except *absolutely* favours predicative scalar adjectives (see the only collocations with attributive adjectives in (5)). The higher frequency of *absolutely* and its patterns of collocation with extreme and colloquial adjectives (see (6)) suggest a correlation with the higher expressivity expected from the speech of younger speakers (see e.g. Cacchiani 2009: 239; Danesi 1997: 458; Jørgensen and Martínez 2010: 194; Tannen 1984: 30).

(5) Maximisers in attributive contexts

a. It's a *completely different* person (**Lewis**, M, 17, Sc01m2_A).

b. It'll be like a *totally different* culture (**Amber**, F, 13, Ccc02f1_B).

(6) *Absolutely* modifying extreme adjectives

a. It's amazing, it's *absolutely lit* [=very good] (**Sarah**, F, 19, 2017_SEL2091_078_A).

b. There's a crazy, really angry Spanish man in front of us […] *absolutely mental* [=very crazy], gesticulating like you've never even seen (**Jack**, M, 19, 2017_SEL2091_078_A).

c. We were getting *absolutely obliterated* [=very drunk] (**Jane**, F, 19, 2017_SEL2091_080_A).

6.1.3. Third stage: distribution of booster variants

At the third stage of analysis, boosters became the focus. This section begins by presenting an overview of how variants are distributed in this sample, looking at the linguistic predictor of syntactic position. Then, the analysis narrows further to boosters modifying predicative adjectives exclusively, because that proved to be the most frequent context, and it provides more accurate information about the distribution of *so* (as explained below). The selection of booster tokens in predicative contexts will be analysed in terms of age and gender in Section 6.1.3.1. The next section focuses on how the type of boosted adjective conditions the choice of variant. Since the tokens are filtered by predicative contexts at this point, syntactic position is not explored further. The linguistic predictors consist of different classifications of adjectives according to semantic categories, emotional value, type of gradability, and their evaluative prosody.

Results including null cases as a variant will be compared with those excluding it. Null cases in this section refer to all unboosted adjectives in the sample (adjectives that have not been modified, and adjectives that are modified by downtoners, maximisers or *canny*). The comparison with results excluding null cases can only be made in the overall distribution of variants, independently of any constraints, for two reasons. First, only intensified adjectives have been coded for linguistic constraints, since the comprehensive coding of all adjectives would have extended the project's scope and timing beyond what was originally planned. This hinders the analysis of results per linguistic predictor and the narrowing of unboosted adjectives to predicative contexts. Second, as shown in the study of intensification strategies above (§6.1.2), the inclusion of null cases in the analysis per social predictor could yield misleading results. The rates of modification, intensification, and boosting per gender and age group would interfere with the proportions of the booster variants. In other words, groups of speakers that modify, intensify, or boost more often would logically have higher rates of every booster variant. Restricting the variable to the contexts where speakers did actually boost their adjectives provides clearer results as to what booster variant each social group favours. This is the approach taken by researchers that included null cases at some stage in their study of intensification (Ito and Tagliamonte 2003; Tagliamonte 2008; Tagliamonte and Roberts 2005).

Overall results and syntactic position

Table 22. Raw count and proportion of all boosters, regardless of any constraints, including and excluding null cases

Boosters	N	Proportion	Proportion including unboosted adjectives (*n*=4853, 86.6%)
raw	1	0.1%	<0.1%
ridiculously	1	0.1%	<0.1%
right	1	0.1%	<0.1%
well	1	0.1%	<0.1%
stupidly	2	0.3%	<0.1%
pure	3	0.4%	0.1%
super	3	0.4%	0.1%
real	4	0.5%	0.1%
incredibly	6	0.8%	0.1%
dead	9	1.2%	0.2%
swearword	12	1.6%	0.2%
proper	37	4.9%	0.7%
very	98	13.0%	1.7%
so	196	26.0%	3.5%
really	380	50.4%	6.8%
Total	754	100%	100%

Table 22 shows the raw count and distribution of all boosters in the data, independently of the linguistic contexts in which they occur and the social features of the speakers. Focusing on the proportions of boosted adjectives exclusively, *really* accounts for more than half of the variable count, followed by *so* (26%), *very* (13%) and *proper* (4.9%). There are very few tokens of *dead* and swearwords (*fucking* and its euphemisms in this sample *ficking* and *fricking*). Other boosters occur infrequently in this dataset.

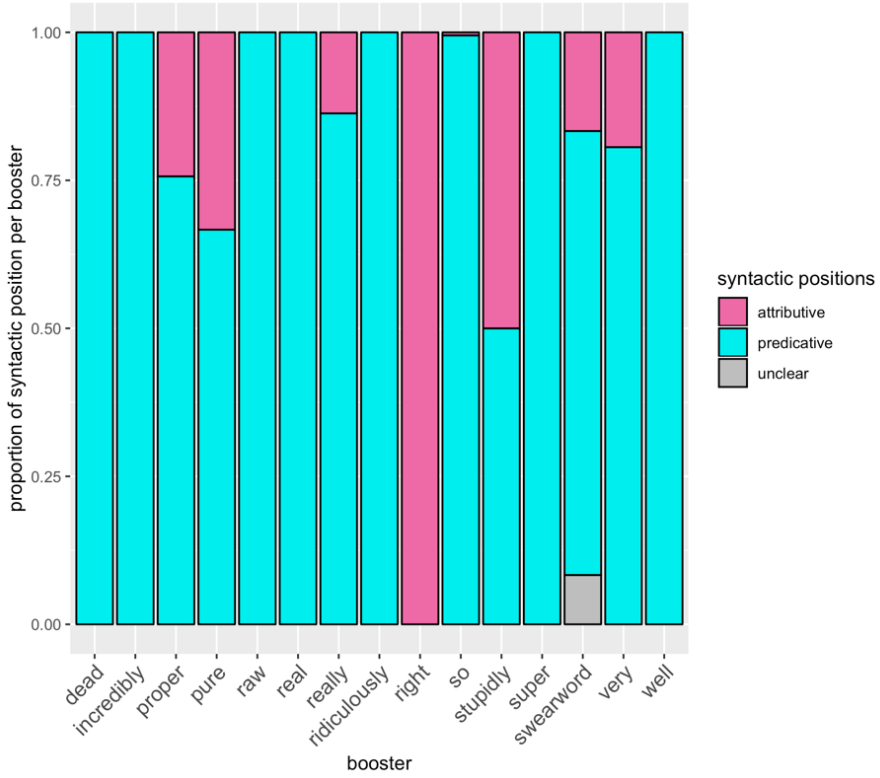
The proportions per booster are much lower when unboosted adjectives are included as a variant. Here, what percentages per variant account for is the frequency with which each variant occupies the syntactic slot reserved for the pre-modification of the degree of adjectives. Out of all the possible options (including zero) that could have pre-modified the degree of adjectives, *really* was chosen 6.8% of the times, *so* 3.5% of the times, *very* 1.7%, and so on. With this explanation in mind, the proportion of *really* is considerably high —albeit still lower than the 13% attested in data from speakers in Toronto (Tagliamonte 2008: 368).

There is no strong difference in the distribution of variants whether null cases are included or not. As noted earlier, these approaches answer different questions. The inclusion of unboosted

adjectives provides more revealing results for the analysis of the syntactic slot preceding adjectives, regardless of the functions performed. As already noted, the boosters variable is defined in this study according to function and as such, the restriction to boosting contexts seems more appropriate.

These results represent a very broad-brushed picture of the distribution of booster variants. The main issue with the table above is that it does not consider differences according to syntactic position of the modified adjective. Figure 21 below shows the syntactic position of the adjectives modified by each booster variant.

Figure 21. Distribution of syntactic positions of the modified adjective across boosters



The majority of boosters in this study modify both attributive and predicative adjectives. *Dead* and a group of infrequent variants only occur in either one context or the other. In the case of *so*, there is only one case of attributive use:

(7) It's just like *so* nice campsite (**Matthew**, M, 17, Sc04m2_A).

There is systemic impossibility of *so* occuring in attributive contexts, possibly due to its origin as a comparative form (Tagliamonte 2008: 374). *So* constitutes an exception to the assumption that 'use in predicative position implies use in attributive position' (Barnfield and Buchstaller 2010: 253). Therefore, the instance above could be considered a case of disfluency or

re-planning. In comparison, *dead, incredibly, real,* and *super* could occur in attributive contexts but they simply do not do so in this sample. The same applies to *raw*, *ridiculously*, *right*, and *well*, which are only used once each. There are only two tokens of *stupidly*, one in each syntactic context.

For a more accurate representation of the distribution of variants, the analysis that follows is divided. On the one hand, there is a set of booster variants that can occur in both contexts, which is essentially every variant other than *so*. Only in this case can we include null cases, because they encompass both attributive and predicative adjectives. On the other hand, the analysis focuses on boosters in predicative contexts for a more reliable representation of the weight of *so*. When it comes to analysing age and gender effects, only boosters in predicative contexts will be considered because (i) predicative contexts are preferred by boosters both generally (see e.g. Ito and Tagliamonte 2003: 276; and Stratton fc. for similar results in Old English intensifiers), and in this dataset in particular (see Table 23); and (ii) it would seem that this constraint provides more accurate information about the status of *so*. This was the approach taken by Tagliamonte in her studies of American (Tagliamonte and Roberts 2005) and Toronto English (Tagliamonte 2008). The interpretation of differences in distributions across contexts will thus only be relevant in the discussion of the grammaticalisation of *proper* (§6.2.4).

Table 23. Raw count and proportion of syntactic positions of adjectives modified by boosters

Syntactic position	N	Proportion
attributive	86	11.4%
predicative	667	88.5%
unclear[42]	1	<0.01%
Total	754	100%

Table 24 and Table 25 below are re-interpretations of Table 22, now differentiating between syntactic positions and focusing on the top four variants only. When comparing boosters that can occur in both contexts (Table 24), *really* accounts for close to three quarters of the variable, with *very* and *proper* having very low frequencies in comparison. The inclusion of unboosted adjectives yields similar results to Table 22: out of all options to pre-modify the degree of adjectives, *really* only occurs 7% of the time, which is still more than three times higher than *very*. By delimiting the variable to predicative contexts (Table 25), *so* has a higher proportion than originally observed (29.2% v 26%), while the rest of the variants have slightly lower percentages.

[42] There is a swearword token —in the form of a euphemism— (*ficking grounded*, Charlotte (F, 18)), in which the surrounding linguistic context is unclear in the recording and was therefore not classed as either attributive or predicative.

The differences in proportions between Table 22, considering all contexts together, and Table 25, only considering predicative contexts, are minimal. Nevertheless, I would argue that Table 25 is actually a more accurate representation.

Table 24. Raw count and proportion of boosters that can occur in both attributive and predicative contexts including and excluding null cases

Top boosters in pred. and att. contexts	N	Proportion	Proportion including unboosted adjectives (*n*=4853, 90%)
swearword	11	2.0%	<0.1%
proper	37	6.6%	1%
very	98	17.6%	2%
really	380	68.2%	7%
Total	557	100%	100%

Table 25. Raw count and proportion of boosters occurring in predicative contexts only

Top boosters in predicative contexts only	N	Proportion
proper	28	4.2%
very	79	11.8%
so	195	29.2%
really	328	49.2%
Total	667	100%

The rank of the top-three variants (*really* > *so* > *very*) is attested in most studies of intensification in the speech of youngsters (see e.g. Barbieri 2008; Núñez-Pertejo and Palacios-Martínez 2018; Rickford et al. 2007; Stenström et al. 2002; Tagliamonte 2008). However, the rank order is different for studies in regions closer to Tyneside, such as York (*very* > *really* > *so*, Ito and Tagliamonte 2003) and Glasgow (*pure* > *dead* > *so*, Macaulay 2006), or within Tyneside (*really* > *dead* > *very* and *so*, Barnfield and Buchstaller 2010). Apart from regional variation, the differences between the current dataset and those three might reflect language change over time, as their data is from the late 1990s and early 2000s, although this claim would require the analysis of a bigger sample. Focusing on Tyneside, the data for the most recent young cohort in Barnfield and Buchstaller's (2010) study comes from interviews collected between 2007 and 2008 for the NECTE2 corpus. They preferred *really* (40.1%), followed by *dead* (13.4%), *very* and *so* (both 8.3%) (Barnfield and Buchstaller 2010: 270). Their results are, however, hardly comparable with the ones from the teenage data of this study.

First, their analysis includes both attributive and predicative contexts, which, as shown above, does have an impact in the distribution of variants. Second, the younger sample they selected from NECTE2 comprises people born between 1967 and 1990 who were recorded between 2007 and 2008, that is, it includes speakers aged between 17 and 42 at the time of the recordings.

Through personal communications, Buchstaller kindly granted me access to their dataset. Filtering the data allowed for the analysis of boosters in predicative contexts in the most recent dataset of their study (NECTE2, 2007/8 interviews) —this process also filtered out *canny* tokens, as *canny* is not categorically considered a booster in this study.[43] Counting the number of speakers per age group in NECTE2 showed that teenagers aged between 12 and 17 are actually not represented in their dataset at all. The youngest speakers in their dataset were aged between 18 and 20 at the time of the recording and account for only 42% of the younger sample.

The rank order for booster variants in predicative contexts in this sub-group of their dataset is: *really* (48.1%) > *dead* (17.6%) > *so* (11.1%) > *very* (8.3%). *Dead* was indeed frequent in the speech of speakers in the 18-20 age group in the 2007/8 data. The rates of *really, so, proper*, and even *very* have increased in this project's dataset, and the use of *dead* has decreased —a demotion already attested in the comparison between the 1990s and 2000s data in Barnfield and Buchstaller (2010: 271).

The results above are only an introduction to the distribution of booster variants in this sample. They show that *really* and *so* are the preferred variants, *very* has very low frequencies, *proper* is making its way in, and other boosters are marginally used. These differences need to be explored further in terms of age, gender, and collocation patterns.

6.1.3.1. Social predictors: age and gender

Age effect in predicative contexts

Overall, age is an extremely significant factor ($X^2 = 70.676$, df = 26, $p < 0.00001$) in the choice of variants for this sample.

As Figure 22 below shows, the order in frequency *really* > *so* > *very* > *proper* applies to every age group, but the proportions vary. Note that booster variants in the group 'other'[44] are those with a proportion of usage lower than 3% (in the overall results, these are *incredibly, dead, pure, raw,*

[43] For the sake of comparability, other variants that were filtered out in their dataset were: *especially, just, particularly, rather,* and *that*. They were not considered boosters in this study for different reasons.
[44] The classification of 'other' changes depending on whether we are looking at overall results or results per gender or age group. The variants included in the 'other' category will be listed in each case.

real, ridiculously, right, stupidly, super, swearwords, and *well*). *So* usage grows in frequency as age increases, whereas *really* shows the opposite trend: the younger the speaker, the more frequently they use *really*. *Very* and *proper* have consistently low frequencies across all age groups.

Figure 22. Distribution of boosters in predicative contexts across age groups

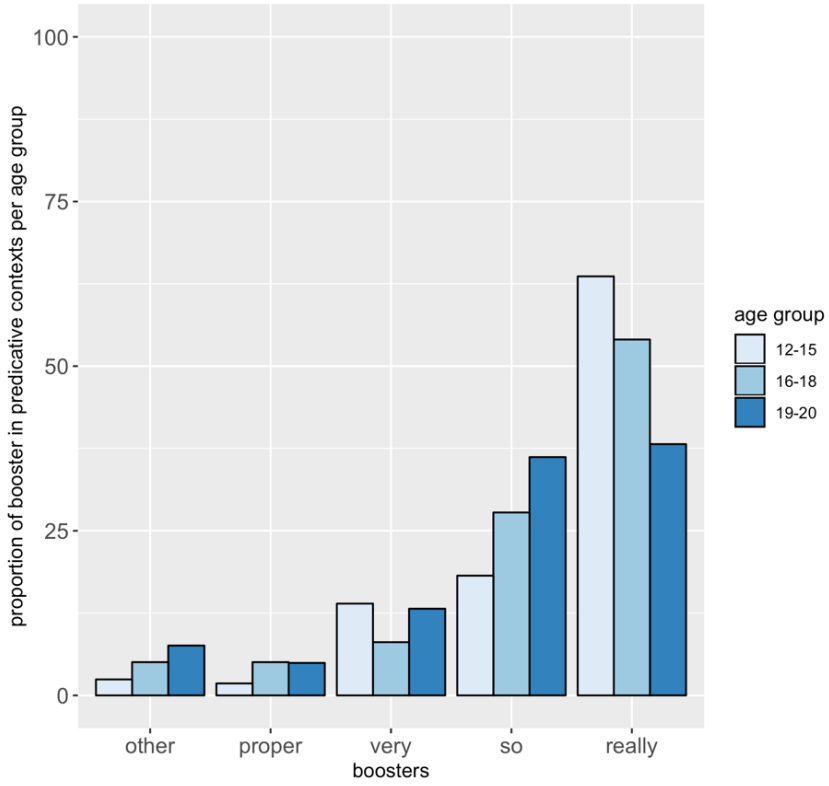


Figure 23. Distribution of boosters in predicative contexts per speaker in the 12-15 age group

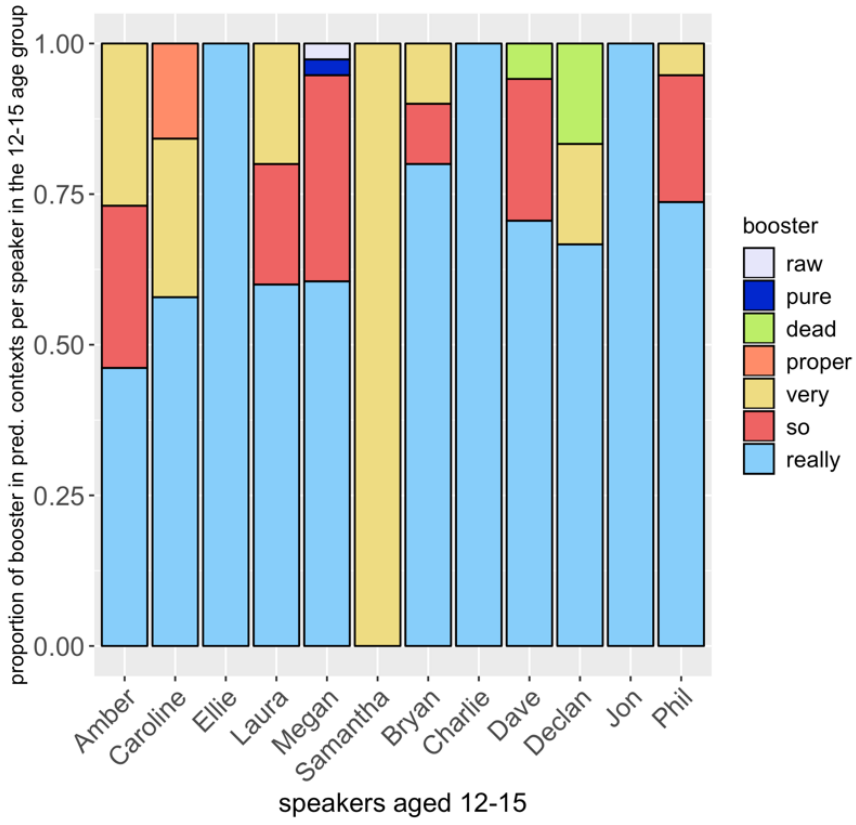


Figure 24. Distribution of boosters in predicative contexts per speaker in the 16-18 age group

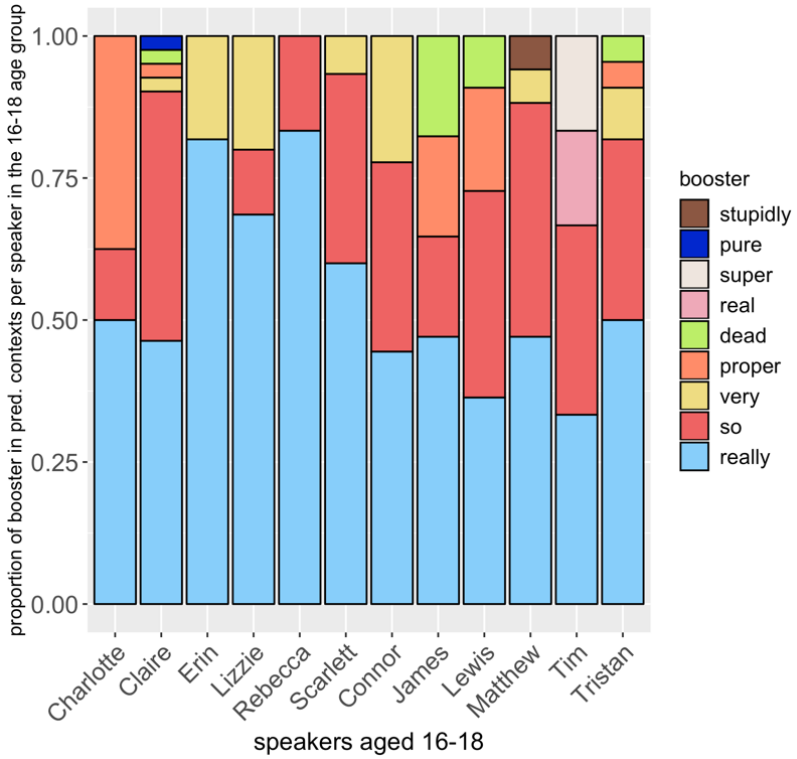


Figure 25. Distribution of boosters in predicative contexts per speaker in the 19-20 age group

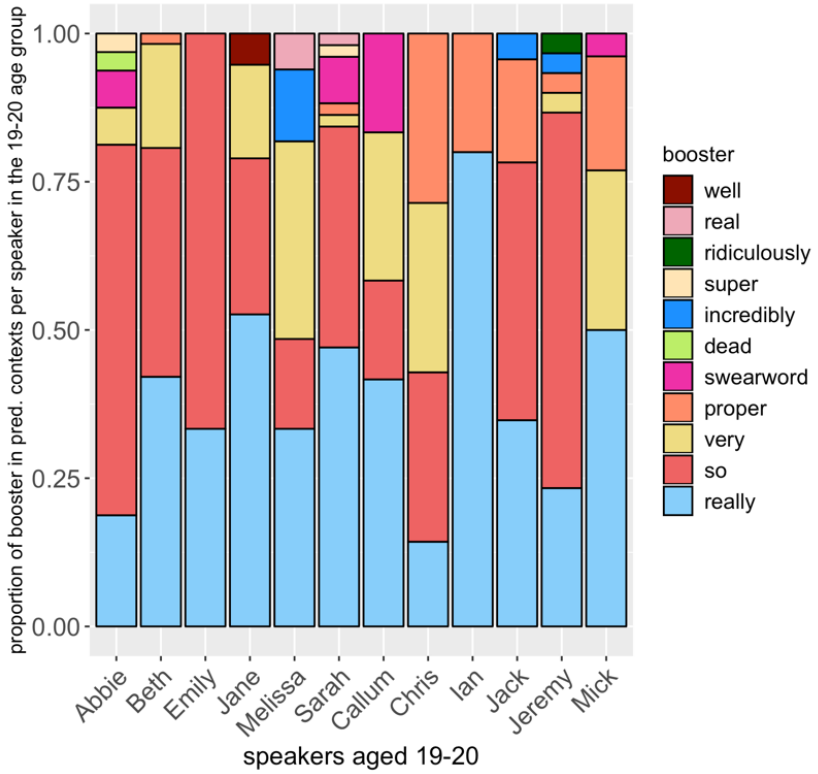


Figure 23, Figure 24 and Figure 25 show the full repertoire of boosters in predicative contexts per speaker in each age group. The youngest teenagers in this sample have more limited resources to boost meaning, whereas the middle group introduces rarer variants like *proper*, *dead*, *incredibly, real*, and *super* (albeit at low frequencies). In the 19-20 group, there is much more internal booster variation per speaker. In fact, all speakers whose repertoire is limited to one variant belong to the 12-15 group —Samantha (F, 13) only uses *very*, and Ellie (F, 14), Charlie (M, 12), and Jon (M, 12) only use *really*. These striking differences evidence rapid growth in vocabulary and discourse-pragmatic resources during adolescence, as attested in previous research (see e.g. Aitchison 1994: 16–9; Nippold 2000: 15).

Swearwords are highly infrequent in this dataset (n=9, 1.3%, 'other' category), even though they have been strongly associated with teenagers across research (Aijmer 2018b: 91; Barbieri 2008: 64; Corrigan 2020: 191; Núñez-Pertejo and Palacios-Martínez 2018: 129; Palacios-Martínez and Núñez-Pertejo 2012: 782; Stenström et al. 2002: 161; Xiao and Tao 2007: 255). All nine instances are produced by speakers in the 19-20 group.[45] This is better explained by an interviewer effect. The interviews for the 19-20 group were carried out by friends of the participants, a situation more

[45] As already noted, there is one example of a boosting swearword in the speech of Charlotte (F, 18): *fcking grounded*, but the syntactic position of the adjective was coded as unclear.

prone to the use of taboo and swearwords than the interviews carried out by myself (with the 12-15 and 16-18 groups).

Figure 26. Distribution of boosters in predicative contexts across age groups (from older to younger)

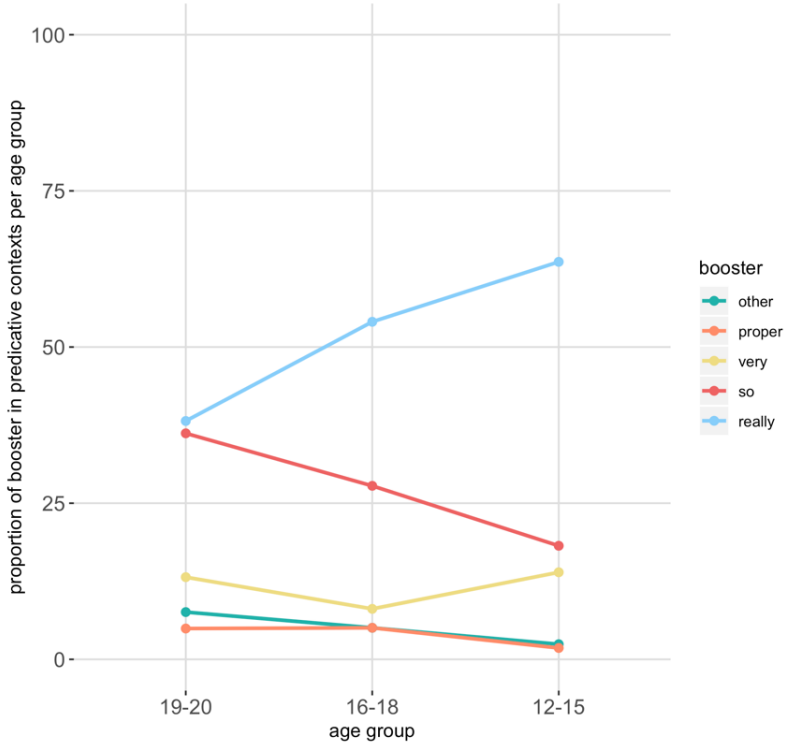


Figure 26 orders age groups from older to younger simulating a timeline. This representation is useful if we understand apparent-time differences as evidence for language change, that is, if we consider the speech of teenagers aged between 12 and 15 a possible representation of the distribution of variants in the future. The trends shown here support claims in previous research that *really* is taking over as the major booster variant (Lorenz 2002: 153), while *so* is decreasing among younger speakers. In American English, Romero (2012) and Tagliamonte and Roberts (2005) class *so* as a booster on the rise, particularly frequent among younger speakers (see also Schweinberger (2020) on American fiction). However, Barbieri's (2008) analysis showed a trend of older speakers using *so* more frequently. The latter trend seems to be the case in the cohort of Tyneside teenagers, with older teenagers favouring its use.

In Tyneside, Barnfield and Buchstaller (2010: 270) reported a moderate increase of *really* and *so* across corpora from the 1970s up to the early 2000s. *So* in my dataset has slightly higher percentages in all of the groups compared to the results in Barnfield and Buchstaller (2010: 269), and the growth in frequencies of *really* has accelerated. The differences between *really* and *so* widen across apparent time: while they are close competitors in the 19-20 group, younger teenagers in Tyneside favour the use of *really* to the detriment of *so*. *Dead* and *pure* are highly infrequent in every

age group and are grouped together in the 'other' category. This demonstrates that the decrease in their use reported in Barnfield and Buchstaller (2010: 270) has continued its course. *Proper* makes an appearance as a major variant in the teenage dataset, which shows that there must have been an increase in use from the 2007/8 interviews, although there are little differences across age groups and it is least frequent among the youngest.

The following step in the analysis of age concerns testing it per gender group. Age is a very significant predictor for both genders (female: $X^2 = 48.438$, df = 22, $p < 0.001$, male: $X^2 = 43.625$, df = 20, $p < 0.01$). The following graphs show the distribution of variant per age group of girls (Figure 27) and boys (Figure 28). This breakdown allows for a closer analysis of age distribution in the sample, while differences between male and female speakers are explored in more detail in the analysis of the gender effect further below.

Figure 27. Distribution of boosters in predicative contexts per age group of girls (from older to younger)

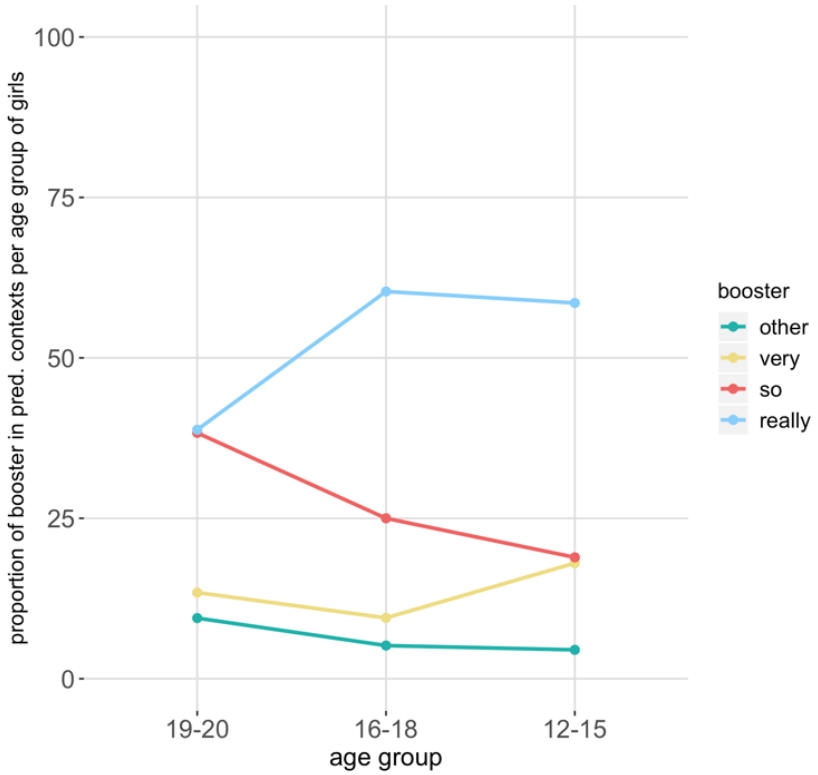
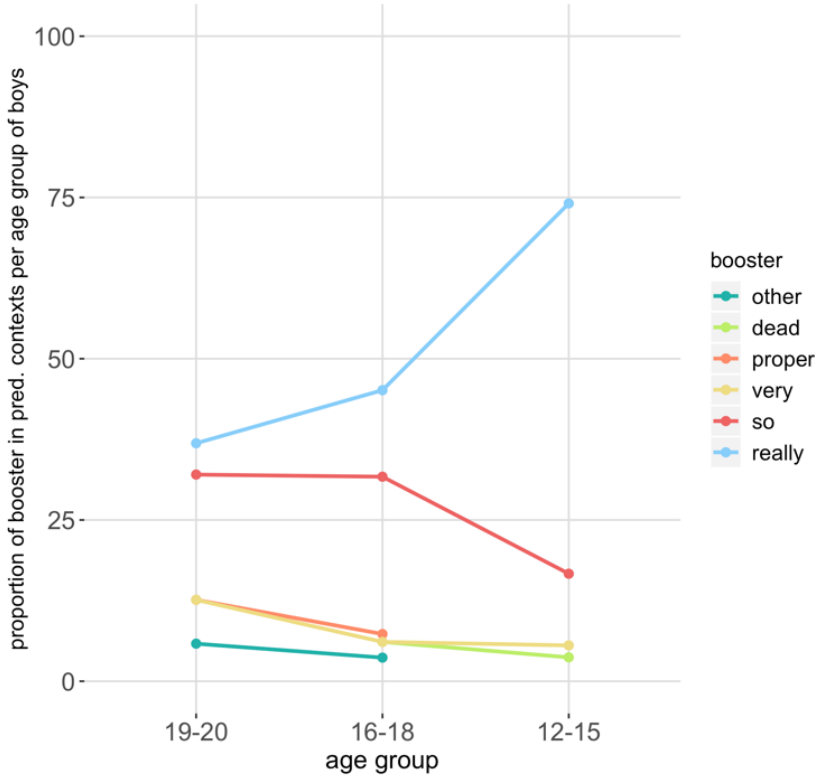


Figure 28. Distribution of boosters in predicative contexts per age group of boys (from older to younger)



Younger girls (12-15) have very similar percentages for *so* and *very*, and older ones (19-20) use *really* and *so* at exactly the same rate. If younger girls are understood as the best reflection of the future state of the variable (Labov 2001: 462, 502), the pattern suggests that the rank *really* > *so* > *very* is here to stay, with differences between the first two widening over time. The difference between *really* and *so* is only neutralised in the older group of girls, while boys in the middle group already use them at a similar rate (this is further explored in the discussion of *really* in §6.2.1).

Among male speakers, *dead* only occurs in the speech of the two younger groups (12-15 and 16-18), and *proper* in the two older groups (16-18 and 19-20). The rank also varies. While boys in the 12-15 cohort show the more widespread pattern *really* > *so* > *very* > *dead*, male speakers in the middle and older groups use *proper* at the same rate as *very* (and *dead* in the case of 16-to-18-year-old boys). The absence of *proper* tokens in 12-to-15-year-old boys could forecast a decline of *proper* in Tyneside's intensifier system overall. However, given the age-graded trend discussed above of broader internal variation as speakers age, it might also be the case that teenagers in the 12-15 group are simply too young to have broader repertoires.

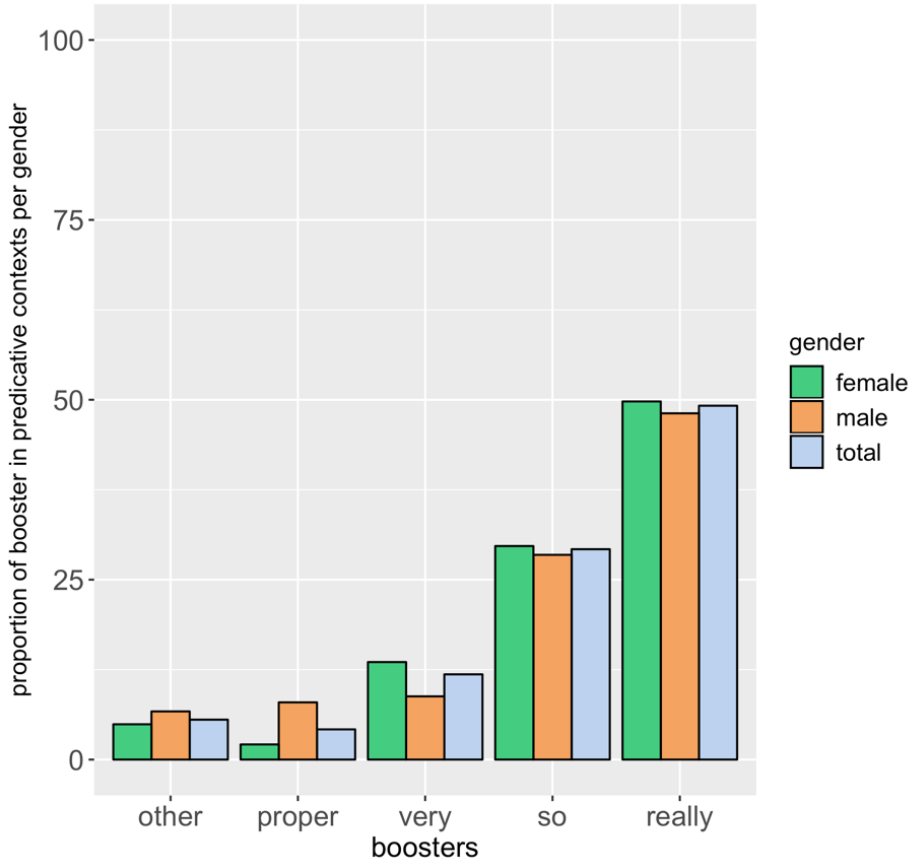
Age patterns can be summarised as follows. First, younger speakers use a narrower range of booster variants. Second, the rank *really* > *so* > *very* is consistent across age groups. Only in the older groups of boys is *proper* used as frequently as *very*. Third, *really* is used more frequently by

younger speakers, whereas *so* occurs more often in the speech of older ones. The differences between these two variants widen across apparent time. Fourth, *dead* and *proper* only make it past the 3% threshold for male speakers, among whom *dead* is used by younger ones and *proper* by older cohorts. Finally, the linguistic behaviour of younger girls suggests (i) the continuity of the rank noticed overall; (ii) the widening between *really* and *so*, and (iii) the decrease in use of all other variants. In addition, *proper* appears to be going into decline as evidenced by its absence in the speech of younger male speakers.

Gender effect in predicative contexts

Gender is a significant factor ($X^2 = 28.548$, df = 13, $p < 0.01$) in the distribution of booster variants in this sample overall. When checked against age groups, it has only been shown to be significant in the oldest cohort (19-20).

Figure 29. Distribution of boosters in predicative contexts per gender



As Figure 29 shows, the distribution of booster variants is very similar when comparing male and female speakers. *Really* and *so* are the top choice for both genders. Results from the speech of girls in this sample show a stepped rank in the other variants: *very* > *other* > *proper*. In

their case, *proper* would be infrequent enough to be included in the 'other' category. Boys, on the contrary, use *very* and *proper* at a very similar rate. Since they use *really* and *so* at practically the same rate as girls, what their results suggest is that *very* has lost ground to *proper*. This pattern mirrors what has been shown in previous studies of gender differences: female speakers favour standard and older variants (*very*) over non-standard newer variants with potential local prestige (*proper*) (see e.g. Aijmer 2018; Ito and Tagliamonte 2003; Labov 1990: 367; Núñez-Pertejo and Palacios-Martínez 2018; Stenström et al. 2002; Tagliamonte and Roberts 2005).

This contrasts with Barnfield and Buchstaller's (2010: 268) findings. The waxing and waning of gender-preferential use of *very* in Tyneside suggests that its use is highly dependent on newer variants (see Table 26), whereas rates of *really* and *so* seem unaffected by them. In the 1990s, *dead* was a marker of female speech, which could have made men use *very* more. In the early 2000s, *very* started to be used more frequently by women, as *proper* and *canny* started to become commonly male-associated. In the current dataset, *proper*, overwhelmingly used by boys, might have triggered girls to use *very* more. This hypothesis is explored further in the more comprehensive discussion of results in Section 6.2.

Table 26. Trajectories of gender-preferential uses of *very* and incoming variants in Tyneside

	1990s (Barnfield and Buchstaller 2010)	**2007/8** (Barnfield and Buchstaller 2010)	**2017-19 teenagers**
Female speakers	*dead*	*dead* *pure* *very*	*very*
Male speakers	*very*	*proper* *(canny)*	*proper* *dead* *(canny)*

Since girls are argued to be the forerunners in the use of incoming variants (Labov 1990: 210–15), it could have been predicted that *really* and *so* would be more frequent in their speech than in that of boys. This was the pattern attested previously in Tyneside (Barnfield and Buchstaller 2010: 268, 270). This is not case for the current dataset: gender differences for these two variants are negligible (*really*: F 49.8% v M 48.1%; *so*: F 29.7% v M 28.5%). We could then argue that in the case of Tyneside teenagers, *really* and *so* are extremely advanced in their grammaticalisation processes, since their use has already fully spread to male speech and there are barely no gender differences (similar to what happened to *pure* in Glasgow, Macaulay 2006: 279). This situation seems to be the end result of the narrowing of gender differences in the use of *really* attested in Tyneside when comparing the 1990s data with that of the 2000s (Barnfield and Buchstaller 2010:

268–69). These results confirm the hypothesis that *really* was a change in progress in the region, at least among teenagers.

The following two graphs show the distribution of variants per speaker (girls in Figure 30 and boys in Figure 31).

Figure 30. Distribution of boosters in predicative contexts per female speaker

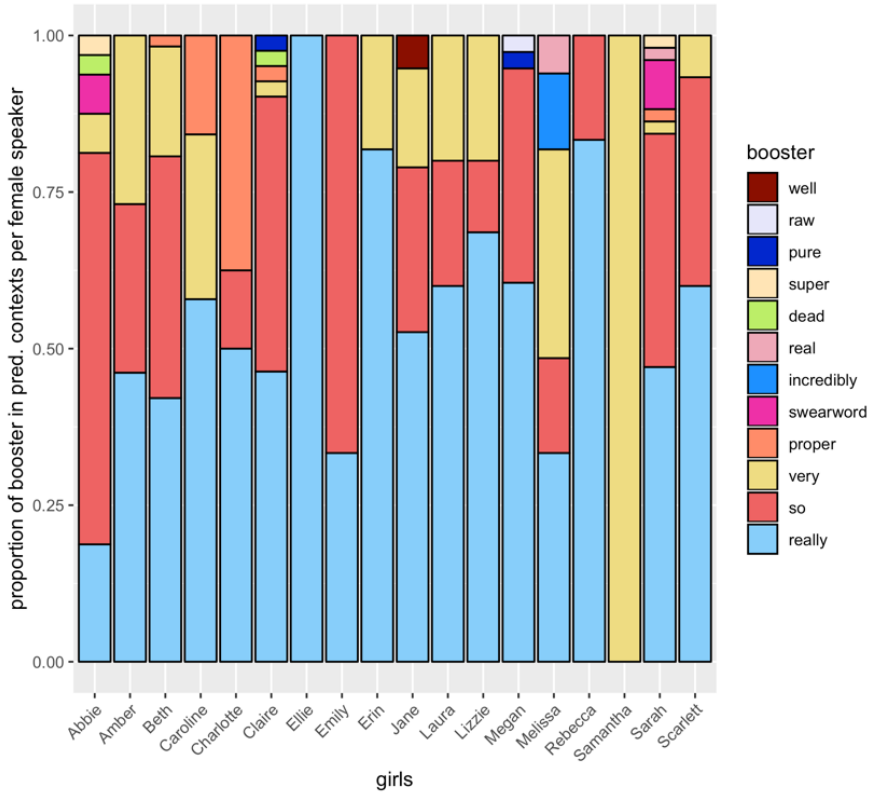
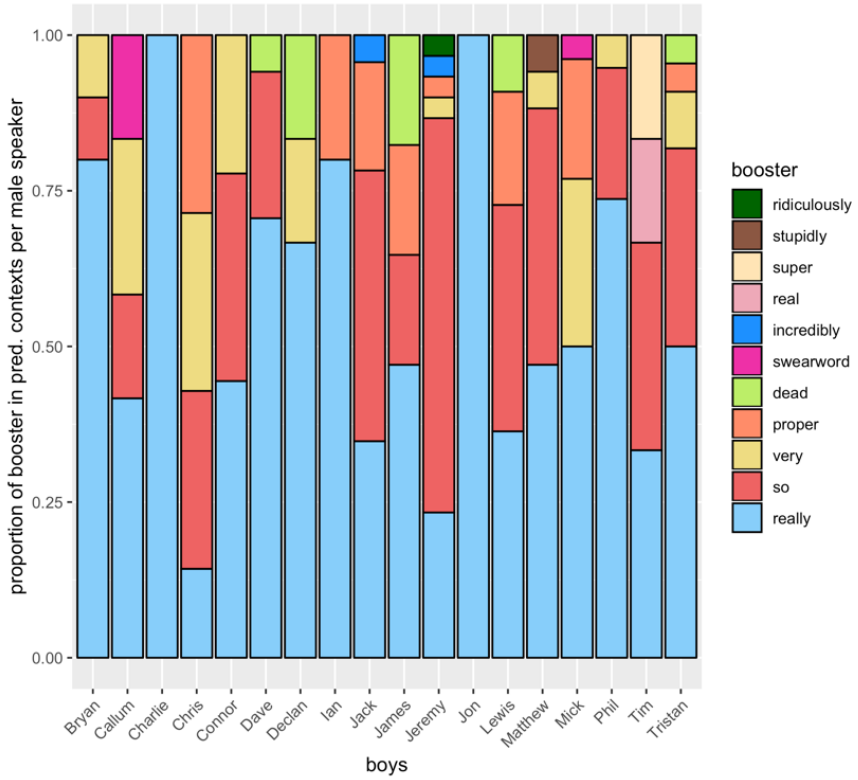


Figure 31. Distribution of boosters in predicative contexts per male speaker



Boys tend to show more internal variation, and rarer variants *proper* and *dead* are used at considerable rates. The girls tend to stick to the most frequent intensifiers *really, so*, and *very*. Leaving aside swearwords (concentrated in the 19-20 group most probably due to an interviewer effect, as already noted), the use of any other variants is exceptional in the speech of females. In this generation of young speakers, girls are not using any innovative variants, contrary to what is usually the case.

Dead occurs almost exclusively in the speech of boys in this dataset, even though it was an overwhelmingly feminine booster in its heyday in the 90s (Barnfield and Buchstaller 2010: 269; Macaulay 2006: 271). The demotion of *dead* attested in Tyneside in the early 2000s also narrowed gender differences in its use (Barnfield and Buchstaller 2010: 270). *Dead* might have lost gender associations by the time the teenagers in this dataset started using it. The variant then happened to resurge more frequently in the speech of boys, independently of its gender-preferential use in the 1990s.

Proper is a frequent variant in the speech of most of the Tyneside boys and it is rare among girls. Charlotte (F, 18) is an exception in this case: almost half of her booster variable consists of *proper*. Interestingly enough, she displays closer social affiliation with boys than with girls throughout her interview. This is best illustrated by extract (8).

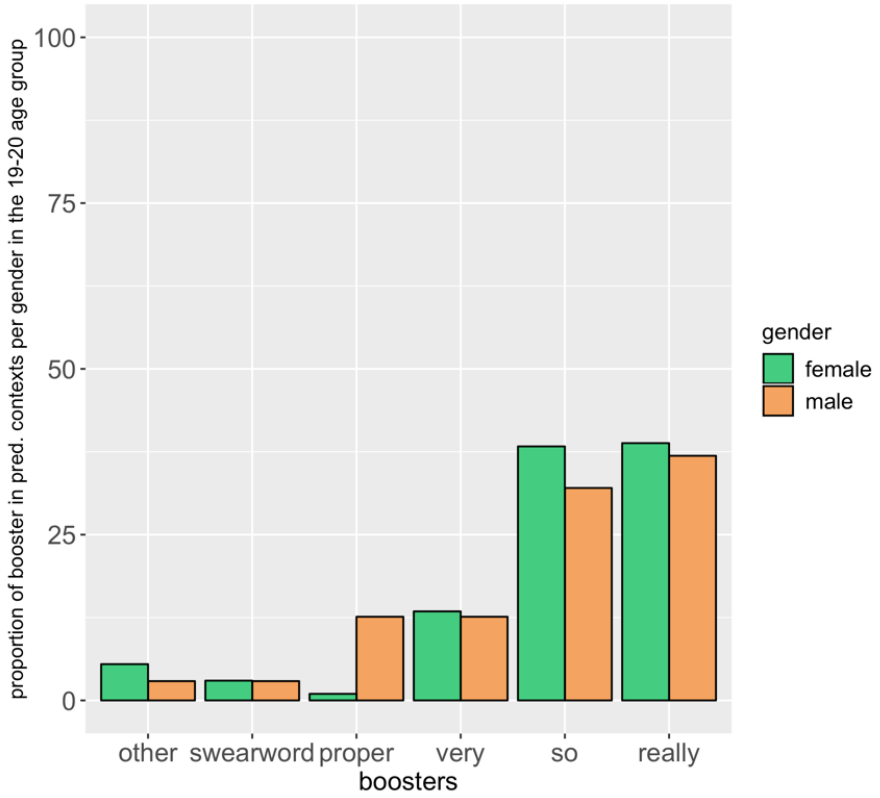
(8) **Interviewer**: Do you get along better with boys or girls in general?
Charlotte: Boys
I: Yeah? How come?
Ch: Ah (points at her Painting and Decorating overalls) howay (laughs)
I: All right, well
Claire: (laughs) I mean, P and D
Ch: (laughs) Painting and Decorating (unclear) I rather go with the boys. I- I didn't grow up with like any girls in the family. I just grew up with boys and then they finally got girls and like yeah (Ben03f2).

Charlotte has grown up surrounded by boys, now is the only girl in her Painting and Decorating class, and generally prefers hanging out with them. Her linguistic behaviour is clearly influenced by her social circles. There appears to be a relation between *proper* and male speech in this dataset. Caroline (F, 15) also uses *proper,* but only in 3 instances. Two of these refer to the behaviour of boys trying to sound Geordie to look tougher (see (9)).

(9) **Caroline**: Some boys are like *proper* like *Geordie* Geordie coz they want to be like tough and…
Megan: Yeah
Interviewer: Okay
C: Like act like *proper Geordie* so…(Ccc04f1)

Checking gender differences in age subsets, gender only reaches statistical significance in the group of speakers aged 19 or 20 ($X^2 = 25.036$, df = 10, $p < 0.01$). However, differences are concentrated on *proper*, almost exclusive to male speakers, who use it as frequently as *very* (see Figure 32 below).

Figure 32. Distribution of boosters in predicative contexts per gender in the 19-20 age group



The results show clear gender patterns in the variation of boosters in the speech of Tyneside teenagers, particularly in the use of infrequent variants. First, gender differences in the use of *really* and *so* are minimal, which points at the variants having spread to both genders. This is evidence of advanced stages of grammaticalisation. Second, *proper* has strong links to social practices associated with male speakers. This is illustrated by the almost exclusive use of the variant by boys, and by the case of Charlotte, the only girl who uses it at a considerable rate. Third, *dead* is also predominantly a male booster. This contrasts with the strong female associations of the variant around 20 years ago in the region, and suggests some sort of renewal of gender preferences. Fourth, *very* is slightly less common in the speech of boys. Given the percentages of infrequent variants like *proper* and *dead* in their speech, this suggests that *very* is in competition with them rather than with *really* or *so*.

6.1.3.2. Linguistic predictors: type of boosted adjective

This section presents and interprets the distribution of booster variants according to the type of adjectives they modify. Adjectives have been coded according to four different criteria: semantic category, emotional value, type of gradability, and evaluative prosody. All but emotional value are statistically significant in the choice of variant in this sample. These linguistic predictors have also been tested against the social categories of age and gender and none reached statistical significance.

In other words, different age or gender groups have no predilection for particular types of adjectives according to any of the criteria. This means that the particular correlations between types of adjective and booster variants are not greatly affected by the preference of certain social groups for certain variants. Table 62 in Appendix VIII presents the results for all linguistic predictors.

Semantic category of boosted adjectives in predicative contexts

The semantic category of the modified adjective is a significant factor ($X^2 = 73.067$, df = 28, $p < 0.00001$) in the choice of booster variants. Propensity is by far the most common category of boosted adjectives, followed by value.[46]

Figure 33. Distribution of boosters across semantic categories of predicative adjectives

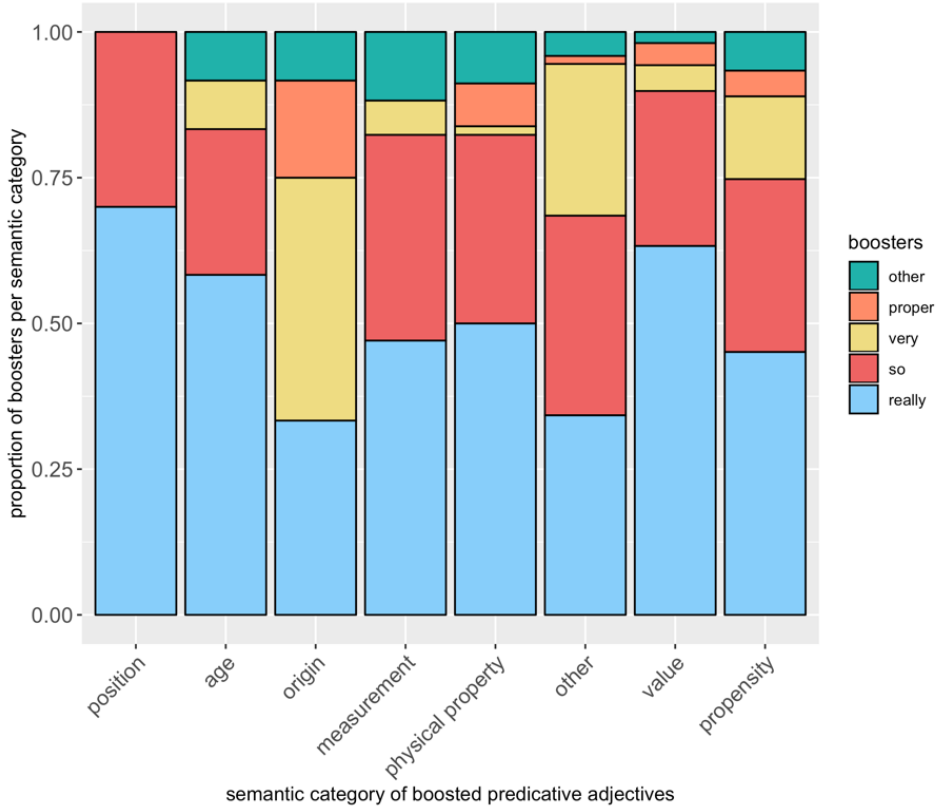


Figure 33 shows the proportion of boosters that modify each semantic category. *Really* is the most frequent booster for every category, and *so* is the second-most frequent —except in the

[46] One of the reasons behind these big differences might be the fact that the propensity category encompasses more meanings, since it includes adjectives that can refer to feelings and emotions (e.g. *sorry*, *pleased, annoyed*) as well as qualities and features (e.g. *stupid*, *tacky*, *touristy*).

categories of origin (e.g. *American, Geordie, Caribbean*) and 'other' (e.g. *different, difficult, important*). The favouring of *really* in almost every category can be considered to be one of the factors behind its high frequency overall.

Figure 34. Distribution of semantic categories across boosters in predicative contexts

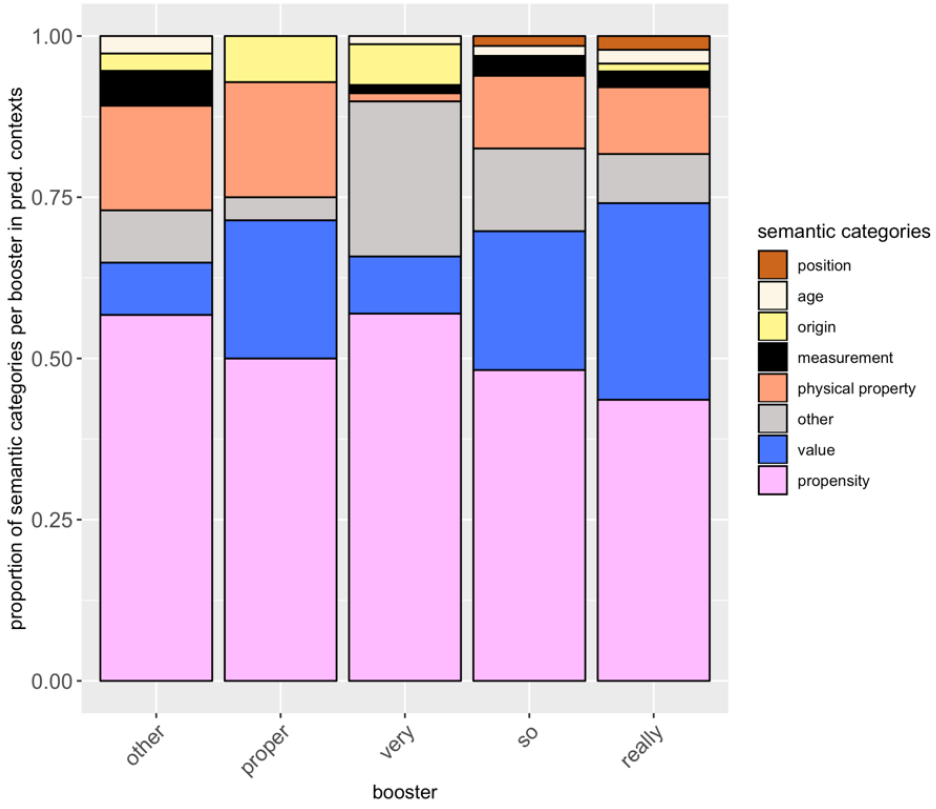


Figure 34 allows for a better understanding of the categories that are modified by each booster. There are two details in the semantic distribution that are worth noting. First, *very* collocates with every category except position, but with a very uneven distribution. The lower number of age and measurement adjectives can explain the low proportions of collocations of *very* with those types. However, the low frequency in collocations with adjectives of value and physical property, which are the second and fourth most common categories respectively, is better explained by other variants taking over. A decrease in frequency does not usually entail a narrowing in semantic collocability (Barnfield and Buchstaller 2010: 281). However, the patterns in this sample show how *very* seems to be becoming entrenched in the categories of propensity and 'other' as it loses ground overall.

Second, *proper* occurs with adjectives in six out of nine categories —including colour, in attributive example (10).

(10) It was *proper blue* seas (**Melissa**, F, 19, 2017_SEL2091_031_B).

Flexibility in collocations across semantic types has been argued to evidence an advanced stage in the grammaticalisation of intensifiers (Himmelmann 2004: 31–32; Ito and Tagliamonte 2003: 271; Peters 1994: 270; Tagliamonte 2008: 373–75; Tagliamonte and Roberts 2005: 285). Since *proper* is an incoming variant in the region (Barnfield and Buchstaller 2010: 272), its wide collocability in this dataset could demonstrate its establishment as a booster in the repertoire of young Tynesiders. There are similar trends in the cases of *really* and *so*, which have also expanded their collocation patterns since Barnfield and Buchstaller's (2010) study. The status and development of each variant are discussed further in Section 6.2.

Emotional value of boosted adjectives in predicative contexts

Previous research has shown this parameter to be a significant constraint in the choice of booster variants (Aijmer 2018a; Ito and Tagliamonte 2003; Tagliamonte 2008; Tagliamonte and Roberts 2005), yet it is not statistically significant in this dataset ($X^2 = 3.3732$, df = 4, $p = 0.4974$). In this project, the coding for emotional value is based on Aijmer's (2018a) taxonomy, which includes adjectives of affect (e.g. (11)), judgement (e.g. (12)) and appreciation (e.g. (13)) (see §5.5.1.1).

(11) Affect
a. We were too late and so I got *really angry* (**Emily**, F, 19, 2017_SEL2091_080_B).
b. Yeah like, if it was a relative, you'd be, you'd be *so emotional* if it was a rel- like a relative of yours (**Megan**, F, 14, Ccc04f1_A).

(12) Judgment
a. We lost six of them [=games] in a row and then we drew but then we drew one and that's *really embarrassing* (**Tristan**, M, 17, Sc02m2_B).
b. I was howling, like that was *proper hilarious* (**Claire**, F, 17, Ben03f2_B).

(13) Appreciation
a. We're both *very good* sides (**Declan**, M, 12, Ccc05m1_A).
b. Their manager was running the line and he was shouting abuse to us, like like *proper bad* stuff as well (**Tim**, M, 16, Sc02m2_A).

Figure 35. Distribution of type of adjective according to emotional value per booster variant in predicative contexts

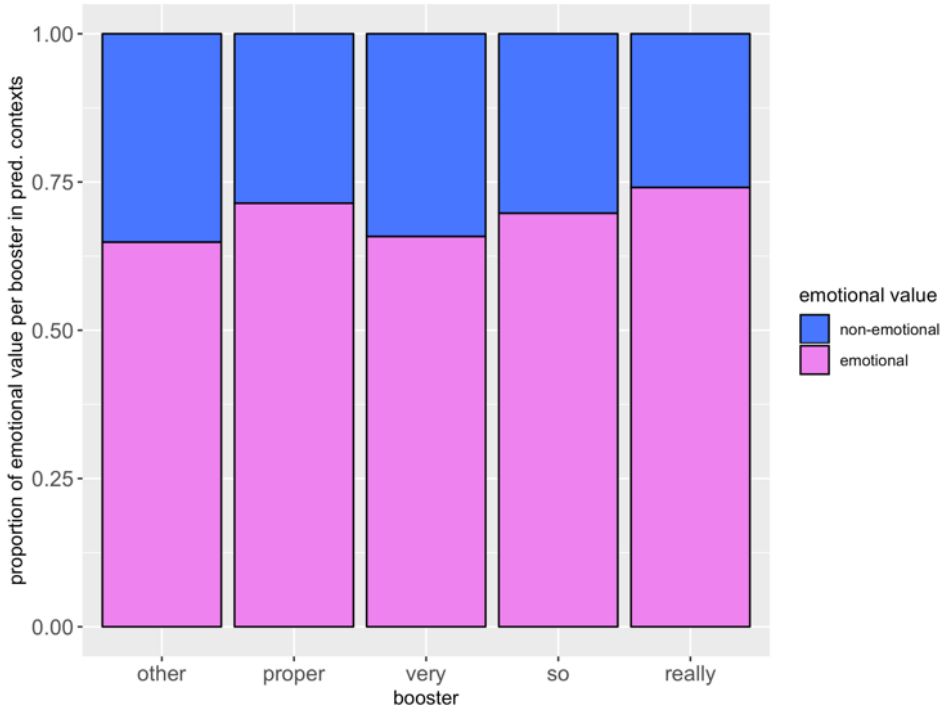


Figure 35 shows that every variant favours emotional adjectives at almost the same rate. This is expected since the use of intensifiers is linked to the expression of emotion (Fries 1940: 204–05; Peters 1994; Stoffel 1901: 122; Tagliamonte and Roberts 2005). *Really* and *proper* have the highest percentage of collocations with emotional adjectives, but the differences are minimal across variants. This lack of differentiation contrasts with previous research that had analysed the constraint of emotional value. First, *so* has been shown to have strong correlations with emotional adjectives (Aijmer 2018a: 134; Tagliamonte 2008: 383; Tagliamonte and Roberts 2005: 295). While this is still the case in this dataset, all variants favour emotional adjectives at almost the same rates.

Second, *very*, being the oldest intensifier, has been argued to be the least expressive variant (Aijmer 2018a: 116; Cacchiani 2009: 235) and as such, it has been shown to be favoured by non-emotional adjectives (Tagliamonte 2008: 383; cf. however Aijmer 2018a: 122). However, in this dataset, *very* occurs more frequently with emotional adjectives, and again, all other variants show the same pattern at very similar rates. Third, Peters (1994: 274) argues that newer intensifiers tend to collocate with emotional adjectives first. As much as *proper* has higher percentages of collocations with emotional adjectives, the distribution of collocates is not, however, radically different from the distribution in the cases of other boosters.

In the cohort of Tyneside teenagers, emotional adjectives are overwhelmingly favoured as the targets of boosting, regardless of variant choice. The trend to use more emotional language in

youth language (discussed in §2.2) overrides the patterns that certain booster variants might show in this respect in samples of adult speakers.

Type of gradability of boosted adjectives in predicative contexts

For this predictor, adjectives are divided into scalar (see (14)), extreme (see (15)), and limit (see (16)), following Paradis's (1997) taxonomy (see §5.5.1.1 for a fuller explanation). The type of gradability is statistically significant in the choice of variants in this dataset ($X^2 = 25.259$, df = 8, $p < 0.01$).

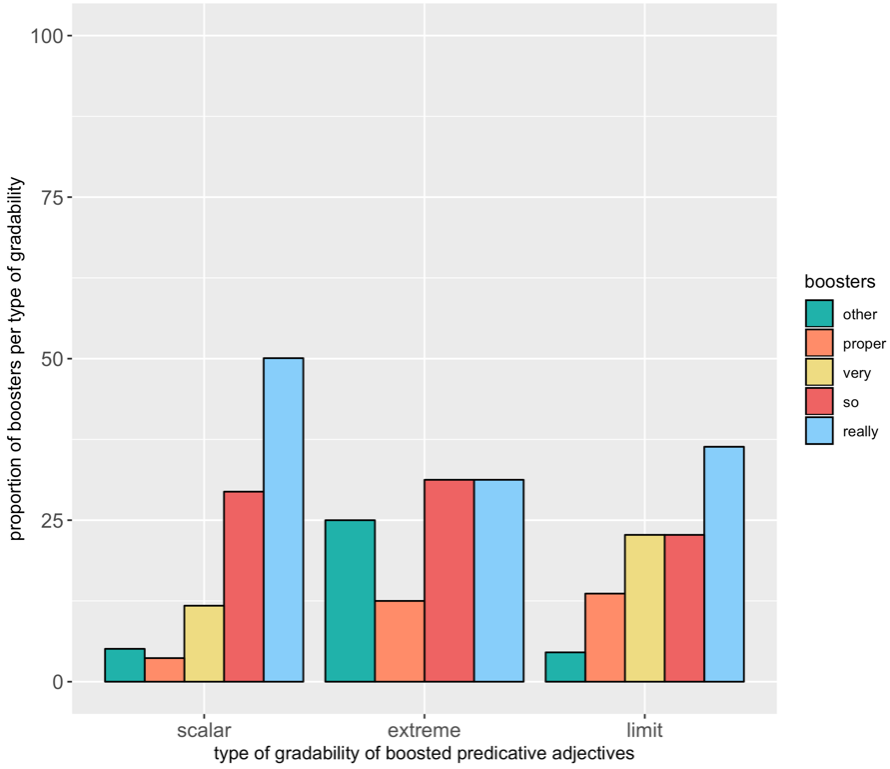
(14) Scalar
a. The floor was like *dead sticky* (**James**, M, 17, Sc01m2_B).
b. They kept wanting to go on Fortnite, which is *really annoying* (**Phil**, M, 12, Ccc01m1_B).

(15) Extreme
a. It's got Zendaya in and she's *so gorgeous* (**Amber**, F, 13, Ccc02f1_B).
b. The only thing I'd say I'm *proper terrified* of is… yeah, any dogs (**Lewis**, M, 17, Sc01m2_A).

(16) Limit
a. We've got *really* like *iconic* picture spots (**Jeremy**, M, 19, 2017_SEL2091_021_A).
b. My dad is like *very Geordie* (**Erin**, F, 17, Ben01f2_A).

Boosters are scalar modifiers that collocate better with nonbounded adjectives (i.e. scalar adjectives) than with bounded adjectives (i.e. extreme or limit adjectives) (Paradis 2001: 4–6). That is the trend in this dataset: scalar adjectives are by far the most common type modified by every booster. More than 90% of the adjectives boosted by *really*, *so*, and *very* are scalar, and they represent 82.1% and 86.5% of those boosted by *proper* and the group of infrequent variants, respectively. There does not seem to be much of a difference in this respect across variants. More relevant findings come from the analysis of distribution of variants per type of adjective according to their gradability (see Figure 36 below).

Figure 36. Distribution of booster variants across types of adjective according to their gradability



Really is used half of the times when a scalar adjective is being boosted, almost twice as often as *so* is. *Very* and *proper*, shown to be comparatively infrequent overall, account for lower proportions here too. Extreme adjectives are boosted exactly at the same frequency by *really* and *so*, and *very* never collocates with them in this sample. The 'other' boosters that modify extreme adjectives are *fucking* and its euphemism *fricking* (*fucking glorious/lifting* [=disgusting]/*mental* and *fricking huge*). In the case of limit adjectives, *really* is the most frequent variant, while *very* and *so* modify five adjectives of this type each.

Even though we are working with very low token counts of bounded adjectives (extreme and limit), these results still corroborate that there is not a steadfast restriction in boosters modifying them (Paradis 2001: 10). The non-harmonic collocation of scalar modifiers like boosters with extreme or limit adjectives is argued to be a strategy for higher expressivity and speaker's involvement (Aijmer 2018a: 113).

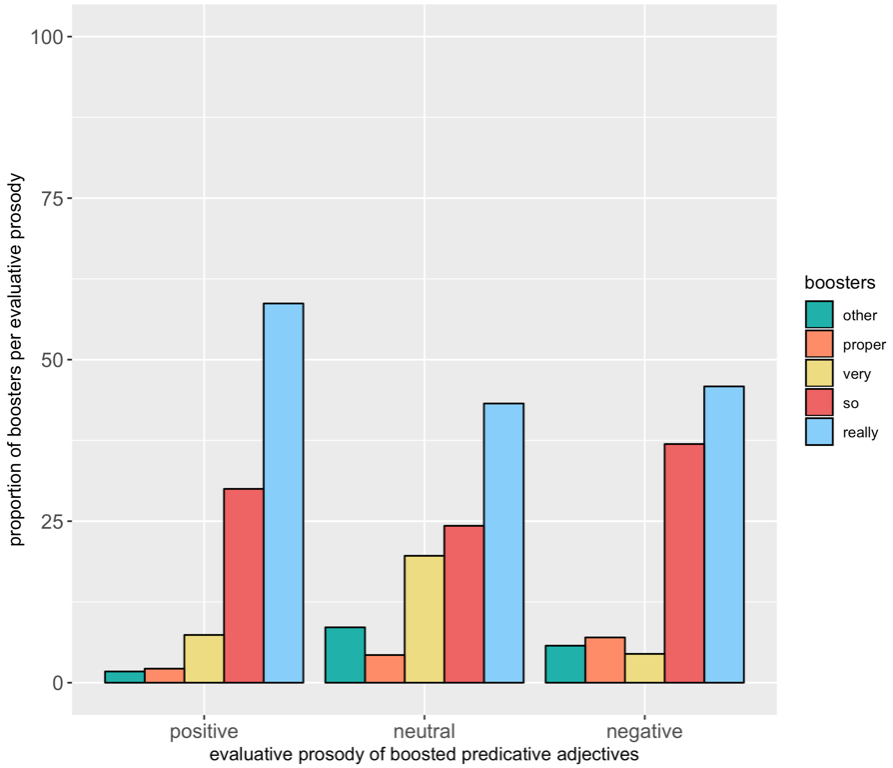
In this study, Tyneside teenagers seem to prefer *really* and *so* in these more emphatic collocations with extreme adjectives, whereas *really* is favoured in those with limit adjectives. *Very* is barely exploited for this strategy, particularly in collocations with extreme adjectives (e.g. *very gorgeous, very amazing*). Out of the four top boosters in this sample, *very* is the only one that does not collocate with all three types of adjective according to their gradability, which is another example

of its narrower collocability. This result supports the idea that *very* is used for expressive purposes less often than the other variants.

Evaluative prosody of boosted adjectives in predicative contexts

Evaluative prosody refers to whether adjectives convey a positive, neutral, or negative evaluation (Partington 2014). In this sense, all non-evaluative adjectives in this study are considered neutral, while evaluative adjectives (i.e. those in the categories of propensity and value) could also be deemed positive (e.g. *happy, cool, fascinating*) or negative (e.g. *shady, upsetting, horrible*). In addition, some adjectives in the category of physical property were also understood as conveying either a positive (e.g. *gorgeous, cute*) or negative (e.g. *packed, bad* (*skin*)) evaluation. The evaluative prosody of the boosted predicative adjectives is an extremely significant factor (X^2 = 53.493, df = 8, p < 0.00001) in the choice of variants in this sample.

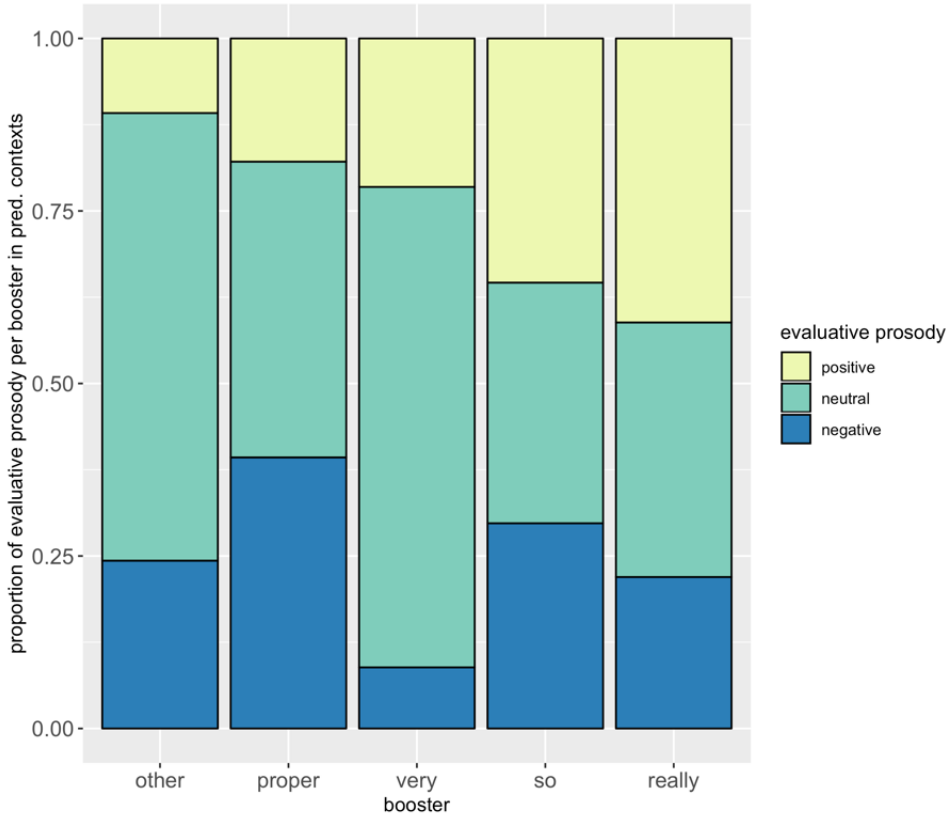
Figure 37. Distribution of booster variants across types of adjective according to their evaluative prosody



As shown in Figure 37, the great majority of positive adjectives are boosted by *really*, while only above a quarter of them are modified by *so*, and the rest of boosters modify them much less frequently. The differences are subtler in the case of neutral adjectives: *very* is used almost as often as *so*. In the case of negative adjectives, *so* takes a bigger share than in the other two contexts, to

the detriment of all the other variants. *Proper* is slightly more frequent in the collocation with negative adjectives. The preference of each booster variant for a particular prosody is better represented in Figure 38 where we can see the proportion of each type of adjective according to their prosody per booster.

Figure 38. Distribution of types of adjective according to their evaluative prosody per booster variant



Booster variants in this sample are clearly differentiated in terms of what type of evaluative prosody they tend to co-occur with and therefore convey. Results match what previous research has shown: generally, *really, so, very*, and *proper* modify all three types of adjectives (Aijmer 2018a: 115; Cacchiani 2009: 234; Núñez-Pertejo and Palacios-Martínez 2018: 146). Wide collocability has been argued to be an evidence for delexicalisation and, in turn, grammaticalisation (Lorenz 2002: 144–45; Partington 1993: 183–84; Tagliamonte 2008: 375–76). Therefore, the results above show that all four top boosters in this sample seem to be fairly advanced in the grammaticalisation process with respect to evaluative prosody.

Really modifies all three types at almost the same rate, and *so* has an even distribution of collocations. Although they are both fairly established variants and these collocation patterns seem predictable, Aijmer (2018a) found in her cross-varietal study of *really*, *so*, and *very* that there were

indeed preferences in terms of evaluative prosody and that these vary across dialects of English. Out of the trends she found, only the more frequent collocation of *so* with negative adjectives is replicated in this study (see Aijmer 2018a: 134).

In the case of *very*, Aijmer (2018a: 122) found a strong trend of it modifying positive adjectives in American and British English. However, Tyneside teenagers seem to use *very* with neutral adjectives (see (17), (18), and (19)) much more frequently than with either positive or negative ones.

(17) Coz me [=my] dad's a *very passionate* man (**Callum**, M, 19, 2017_SEL2091_043_B).

(18) They just feel like *very body-conscious* (**Amber**, F, 13, Ccc02f1_B).

(19) Gosh, she's *very posh* (**Connor**, M, 17, Sc04m2_B).

This finding is evidence of two ideas that have already been discussed. First, its collocability seems to again be entrenched in particular types of adjective. Second, *very* appears to be much less expressive and conveys speaker's involvement or subjective stance more infrequently than the other variants. When teenagers in this sample want to express either a positive or negative evaluation, they resort to other boosters more readily.

Looking at *proper*, we would expect it to collocate more frequently with positive adjectives, since it derives from an adjective with positive prosody —meaning 'correct', 'right', 'fitting', 'respectable', 'decent' (OED 2007 A). However, not only does *proper* collocate with all three types, but it favours negative (39.3%, e.g. (20)) over positive (18%, e.g. (21)) adjectives.

(20) Negative adjectives

a. He's got a *proper scary* look (**Emily**, F, 19, 2017_SEL2091_080_B).

b. I'd be like *proper stressed*, like (**Caroline**, F, 15, Ccc04f1_B).

(21) Positive adjectives

a. It had a *proper good* slide (**Jack**, M, 19, 2017_SEL2091_043_A).

b. The guy's *proper funny* (**Mick**, M, 20, 2017_SEL2091_032_A).

Proper might have followed a grammaticalisation route similar to *pure* and *dead* in Glasgow, which went from collocating mainly with only positive or negative, respectively, in the late 1990s, to collocate with both types by 2004 (Macaulay 2006: 271). The slight preference for *proper* in negative adjective contexts was also attested in the analysis of teenage MLE speech (Núñez-Pertejo and Palacios-Martínez 2018: 146) and in Stratton's study of this form in the *British National Corpus* (2020b: 3–4). One of the explanations the researchers gave was the teenagers' tendency to play

with opposites in an attempt to reinforce their identity in comparison with adults and be more expressive and creative (Núñez-Pertejo and Palacios-Martínez 2018: 146). These cases could then be understood as tokens of unexpected intensifier-adjective collocations that reinforce expressivity and involvement (Aijmer 2018a: 113).

In summary, the type of adjective modified by boosters has an extremely relevant effect on variant choice. The cohort of Tyneside teenagers in this sample boost adjectives from a wide variety of semantic categories, and the great majority of boosted adjectives are emotional and scalar. Each booster variant has distinctive distributions that have an impact on broader aspects of the system. First, for higher expressivity and involvement, speakers in this sample seem to resort to unexpected collocations, such as *really* and *so* with extreme and limit adjectives, or *proper* with negative adjectives. Second, the wide collocability of all four top variants evidences advanced stages of grammaticalisation. This is particularly noticeable in the case of *proper*, which modifies a broad selection of semantic categories, and adjectives of whichever type of gradability or evaluative prosody. The study of semantic category also suggests that *very* is narrowing its collocability as *really*, *so* and *proper* are broadening it.

Third, results corroborate previous claims that *very* does not have as much expressive value as the other intensifiers, possibly due to having grammaticalised the most. This lack of expressivity could explain why teenagers disfavour the variant overall and particularly in collocations with extreme, limit, positive or negative adjectives. Fourth, out of the top four variants in this dataset, *very* has the narrowest collocability in terms of semantic categories and type of gradability. This might suggest that the decrease in use overall goes hand in hand with a narrowing of collocation patterns.

6.1.4. *Canny*

Canny is a salient linguistic feature in Tyneside (Barnfield and Buchstaller 2010; Childs 2016; Pearce 2013). It has not been included in the analyses above given that there is no clear-cut distinction of its functions as a booster or a moderator. However, its cultural salience and local relevance make it worthy of investigation.

The interviews in this project contain only 12 *canny* occurrences, out of which two are adjectives (see (22)), two are modifiers of the quantifier *a few* (see (23)) and eight are degree

modifiers (e.g. (24)). There are no examples of manner adverb *canny*, which seems to be more common in Scottish English (Griffiths 2004: 25; OED 1911 B.1).[47]

(22) Adjective
a. They [=some girls] like take a bit of banter and they give banter and sort of… and like they're just generally *canny* (**Declan**, M, 12, Ccc05m1_A).
b. The teacher's kind of *canny* and sound (**Jon**, M, 12, Ccc05m1_B).

(23) Modifier of *a few*
a. You get a *canny* few holidays and that, don't you? (**Ian**, M, 19, 2017_SEL2091_021_B)
b. They close a *canny* few streets as well, don't they? (**Tim**, M, 16, Sc02m2_A)

(24) Degree modifier
a. That's *canny* funny, like (**Lewis**, M, 17, Sc01m2_B).
b. It's *canny* mad how easy it is (**James**, M, 17, Sc01m2_A).
c. It's *canny* windy the other day, weren't it? (**Tim**, M, 16, Sc02m2_A)

Degree modifier *canny* can ambiguously function as a booster or a moderator. The distinction between these uses is not clear-cut and is often reliant on context or intonation. A brief online survey showed that *canny* can function as either, and there are no clear sociolinguistic constraints on this variability (see Appendix X).

The social distribution of *canny* in this sample is not presented from a strictly quantificational perspective given the low number of tokens, yet its analysis still reveals interesting patterns. I will look at social predictors first and then comment on linguistic constraints.

Every instance of *canny* in the sample comes from a male speaker, except for one use of degree modifier *canny* by Claire (F, 17). These results confirm the trend attested in Barnfield and Buchstaller (2010: 272) of *canny* being a preferentially male modifier. Its low frequency demonstrates that *canny* was a short-lived innovation among the young speakers in the 2007/8 NECTE2 interviews (Barnfield and Buchstaller 2010: 272). *Canny* might no longer be considered a marker of youth or innovation, yet there are other reasons to motivate its use, which instead rely on qualitative observations.

Every male speaker that uses degree modifier *canny* comes from the same school, Hadrian High (pseudonym). This is a single-sex institution for boys, which means that most of the daily interactions of these teenagers are amongst other males, a situation that could reinforce the need to express some degree of masculinity through language. The four users of modifier *canny*, James,

[47] The entry for adverb *canny* in the EDD lists a couple of examples from the dialect area of Northumberland, yet most of the examples come from different areas in Scotland (Wright, 1898-1905).

Lewis, Tim, and Tristan, are close friends, as it transpires from their interviews, where they often mention each other and recall anecdotes together. They speak a lot about typically male-stereotyped activities like playing football, binge drinking, and anecdotes of mischief (see e.g. (25), (26), and (27).

(25) I can handle it [=alcohol] you'd say. Yeah, like I don't be sick but like I drink quite a bit but I've not been sick off it before, so I kind of know me [=my] limits (**James**, M 17, Sc01m2_A).

(26) **Tim**: Loads of teachers say that our year was like the worst behaved year they've ever had.
Tristan: That's true (Sc02m2).

(27) We just have a thing with like annoying people like security and that (**Lewis**, M, 17, Sc01m2_B).

The interviews show that James, Lewis, Tim, and Tristan tend to display a strongly masculine image and this could indicate that the masculine associations of *canny* are exploited to reinforce this aspect of their identity. They are also part of the few users of *proper* in the sample, which has also been shown to correlate with masculinity and local identity.

Let us look at linguistic predictors. Below are the eight instances of degree modifier *canny* in the sample.

(28) That's *canny* funny, like (**Lewis**, M, 17, Sc01m2_B).

(29) On Mondays it's only like four pounds or something, so yeah, it's *canny* good (**James**, M, 17, Sc01m2_A).

(30) It's *canny* mad how easy it is (**James**, M, 17, Sc01m2_A).

(31) It's *canny* hard [=difficult] actually (**James**, M, 17, Sc01m2_A).

(32) It's *canny* windy the other day, weren't it? (**Tim**, M, 16, Sc02m2_A).

(33) The ref, he was *canny* good that game (**Tristan**, M, 17, Sc02m2_B).

(34) They were *canny* good, like (**Tristan**, M, 17, Sc02m2_B).

(35) Most of them are actually *canny* ugly who go on there (**Claire**, F, 17, Ben03f2_A).

All instances of degree modifier *canny* occur in predicative contexts. As already noted by Barnfield and Buchstaller (2010: 275), this seems to contrast with Ito and Tagliamonte's (2003) hypothesis that newer variants collocate with attributive adjectives first and then extend to both contexts. However, there is not necessarily a contradiction here. Childs (2016: 242) and Pearce (2013: 576) comment that modifier *canny* is not an innovation, as Barnfield and Buchstaller (2010: 272) suggested. Therefore, in its origins, *canny* might have only collocated with attributive adjectives. Speakers in the 2007/8 data might have recycled a form that had already extended to predicative adjectives. These are all assumptions that cannot be confirmed or refuted by this study due to the dearth of examples, but are worth exploring in a larger sample.

The adjectives modified belong to different categories: propensity (*funny, mad*), physical property (*ugly, windy*), value (*good*), and other (*hard*). There is not enough data in this corpus to test Pearce's (2011: 8) comment that there are 'no apparent restrictions on the semantic domains of the adjectives it collocates with'. Nonetheless, even in such a small list of results, *canny* collocates with *good* three out of eight times, which suggests that *canny good* is more idiomatic than the rest of its collocations. All of the adjectives that *canny* modifies are scalar.

Regarding evaluative prosody, there is only one example of an adjective with a negative connotation, *ugly*. Since the lexical meaning from which modifier *canny* derived has positive prosody, its collocation with negative adjectives would point to an advanced stage in delexicalisation. Both Childs (2016) and Pearce (2013) attested examples of these in their studies. They also noted that *canny* retains the positive prosody in collocations with negative adjectives, making negative meanings more positive (e.g. from less to more negative: *canny bad* > *bad* > *really bad*) (Childs 2016: 239; Pearce 2013: 576). This assumption means two things: (i) there are lexical traces in modifier *canny*, and (ii) *canny* tends to moderate negative adjectives, rather than boost them.

This is not the case in example (35) above. Claire is calling the people who go on the Jeremy Kyle Show *canny ugly*. Her comment is part of a long discussion with her friend Charlotte and me, where both girls clearly dislike the participants (as shown in the extract below, (36)). Claire seems not to have any intention of making *ugly* less negative. Again, since there is only one case to analyse, it could not be claimed that *canny* is now fully delexicalised or that it could not function as a booster with negative adjectives.

(36) **Charlotte**: Half of them got like no hair, got no teeth, they, they just look absolutely stupid. […] Like 'how are you sitting here when you look like that?' […]
Claire: (laughs) Most of them are actually *canny ugly* who go on there.
Ch: Er, to be fair, I think they go on there because they're ugly as well, like to get noticed (Ben03f2).

Overall, *canny* appears to be slipping into disuse. It seems to have lived a period of revival in the 2000s among speakers below 40, but this has not carried through to the younger speakers in this dataset. The use of modifier *canny* is almost exclusively restricted to a group of four boys and it is argued to convey masculinity and local identity. In this dataset, *canny* only appears in predicative contexts, and collocates more frequently with *good* and other positive adjectives. The low frequency of the form hinders the interpretation of patterns with respect to linguistic predictors.

6.2. Discussion of results

This section provides a more fine-grained analysis of the results above, focusing on each of the top four variants individually: *really* (§6.2.1), *so* (§6.2.2), *very* (§6.2.3), and *proper* (§6.2.4). This discussion relies on the distributions and significance tests presented above, complemented by results from (i) random forest tests and (ii) mixed-effects models. The former provides a rank of each constraint's relevance on the distribution of the variant (Tagliamonte and Baayen 2012: 161–65), while the latter constitutes the most accurate way of analysing the significance of different constraints when they are all considered together (Pichler 2010: 591–93).

Both the random-forest tests and mixed-effects models require the variable to be binary. Therefore, the analyses are run per variant on binary comparisons: the variant under analysis versus anything else (e.g. for the tests on *really*, the variable is simplified to *really* versus anything else). In random forest tests, the variables affecting the choice of the variant are age, gender, the linguistic predictor, and speaker. This way, the model checks not only the importance of each independent variable but also how much of the variant's frequency is due to individual speaker preferences not explainable by the other macro-categories.

For the multivariate analysis, I ran a mixed-effects model that included age, gender, and the linguistic predictors as fixed effects, and speaker as a random effect. This allowed for a more transparent picture of the significance of each factor since it acknowledged the possibility of outliers: the fact that one particular speaker uses a certain variant with a particular frequency does not necessarily mean that all members of their age or gender group do so as well. As such, the results from multivariate analysis are more accurate than univariate results (e.g. through the chi-square test). Only when a factor reaches significance in the latter can we infer an effect on the variable. Moreover, the mixed-effects model also tests the interaction between age and gender, that is, it tests whether the difference between the age differential of the two genders is significant.

Both models were run in *R Studio* (R Development Core Team 2018). For the random forest tests, the packages were *party* (Hothorn et al. 2006; Strobl et al. 2007, 2008) and *rms* (Harrell Jr 2019). For the mixed-effects model, the package used was *lme4* (Bates et al. 2015).

Results from the multivariate analysis are presented in Appendix XI and they will be referenced throughout the section. Results from the random forests tests guide what constraints are worthy of exploration per variant, and are presented below in Table 27 (see Appendix XI for the graphs of the random forests). It is important to note that these ranks do not refer to significance, which is measured instead by the mixed-effects model.

Table 27. Results from random forest tests

Variant	Rank of constraints by importance (according to random forest test)
really	age > speaker > evaluative prosody > semantic category > gender > emotional value > type of gradability
so	speaker > age > evaluative prosody > semantic category > emotional value > gender > type of gradability
very	speaker > evaluative prosody > semantic category > age > gender > emotional value > type of gradability
proper	speaker > gender > age > semantic category > evaluative prosody > emotional value > type of gradability

The discussion of results per variant starts with an introductory historical background of each. Then, supported by the statistical results explained above, I will discuss the effects of age, gender, and the linguistic predictors per variant. Results always refer to boosters in predicative contexts only. The contrast between syntactic positions will only be mentioned when discussing the grammaticalisation of *proper*.

6.2.1. *Really*

Data from the OED (2008) shows that *really* entered the English language around 1425, in its purely lexical meaning of 'in reality' (e.g. (37)a and (37)b). This meaning broadened to more contexts and became the more generally-used epistemic stance meaning of reality and contrast as a synonym of 'in fact' and 'actually' (e.g. (37)c and (37)d). The second adverbial definition of *really* subsumes its intensifier and emphasiser functions, meaning 'truly, indeed' as well as 'very, thoroughly'. The intensifier meaning appears to be older, from 1561 (see (38)a). The emphasiser meaning is first attested in 1687 (see (38)b), yet it is more clearly detached from the original lexical meaning of 'in reality' halfway through the 18th century (see (38)c and (38)d). Other definitions in the OED entry for *really* include parenthetical uses that express 'asseveration, protest, or dismay' (2008 A.2.a) and 'surprise or doubt' in questions and exclamations (2008 A.2.b). These will be discussed in the qualitative analysis of the pragmatic functions of emphasiser *really* in Chapter 7.

(37) 'In reality, in a real manner. Also: in fact, actually' (OED 2008 A.1.a)

a. ?a1425: þof al it be one bone *realy* [?*c*1425 *Paris* substancially; L. *realiter*], neþerlez it haþ 3 nominacions, And for þi of som men þai bene seid 3 bonez (tr. Guy de Chauliac, *Grande Chirurgie*).

b. 1528-37: My dysfortune hathe byn..not only with yntellectyon to have thought yt, btut extervally and *really* I have fulfyllyd the same (T. Wright, *Three Chapters Lett. Suppression Monast.* 161).

c. 1934: He *really* is going to direct the picture and is leaving immediately for Hollywood (F. S. Fitzgerald, *Tender is the Night* 1. xxi 123).

d. 2000: Brently was reported dead… Brently is not *really* dead (*Amer. Educ. Res. Jrnl.* 37: 935).

(38) 'Truly, indeed; positively. In later use also as an intensifier: very, thoroughly' (OED 2008 A.1.b)

a. 1561: That God should breathe his ryghteousnesse into vs, wherby we maye be *really* righteous with him (T. Norton, tr. J. Calvin, *Inst. Christian Relig.* xi. f. 176).

b. 1687: The Janizaries..seem to be sacred; and *really* I know no Order of Militia in the Wolrd, that is so much respected (A. Lovell, tr. J. de Thévenot, *Trav. into Levant* I 70).

c. 1751: You have *really* told a very pretty Story (F. Coventry, *Hist. Pompey the Little* I iv 34).

d. 1772: He was *really* very useful, perfectly commode (*Test Filial Duty* II 180).

Quirk et al. (1985: 447) designated *really* as an adjective emphasiser, rather than as a degree modifier, and Paradis (1997) did not include it as a variant in her study of degree modification in British English at all. However, the earlier work by Bolinger (1972: 22) had already included it as a less grammaticalised intensifier. In fact, Biber et al. (1999: 565), Huddleston and Pullum (2002: 583), and almost every study on variation and change in the intensifier system in the last two centuries considers *really* as an intensifier when pre-modifying adjectives.

In Paradis's (2003) taxonomy of the functions of *really* (fleshed out in detail in §3.2.1), the intensification function is very specific to *really* pre-modifying scalar adjectives in affirmative statements. If *really* pre-modifies an extreme or limit adjective (e.g. (39)), it is considered an emphasiser (Paradis 2003: 201), whereas if it occurs in a question (e.g. (40)), it is studied as a truth-attester (Paradis 2003: 201). Lorenz (2002: 155) also followed this rationale, and as such, excluded *really* in contexts where it pre-modified non-scalar adjectives.

(39) *Really* with extreme or limit adjectives:

a. I find that *really* fascinating (**Megan**, F, 14, Ccc04f1_A).

b. I also kept thinking 'this is a *really* perfect place to get murdered' (**Sarah**, F, 19, 2017_SEL2091_078_A).

(40) *Really* pre-modifying an adjective in questions:

a. But what if your future self is *really* dumb? (**Amber**, F, 13, Ccc02f1_B)

b. Do you know what's *really* good? The Crown (**Sarah**, F, 19, 2017_SEL2091_078_A).

In this study, *really* has been counted as a booster in all affirmative contexts where it pre-modifies an adjective —negated *really* behaves as a moderator (see e.g. Aijmer 2018a: 124). This is the approach taken by virtually all studies on intensification (see comments in this sense in Aijmer 2018a: 127). If there were a distinction between the meanings of *really* in the pre-modification of extreme or limit adjectives, it would be rather subjective (Biber et al. 1999: 858; Palacios-Martínez and Núñez-Pertejo 2012: 779, 2014: 217). There are only five tokens of *really* modifying extreme adjectives (1.5%), and eight in collocation with limit (2.4%) in this dataset. Excluding or including them would not have affected results greatly.

The different readings of *really* respond to its ongoing grammaticalisation; persistence of previous lexical or less grammaticalised meanings make some contexts slightly ambiguous and still subject to reanalysis (Lorenz 2002: 157). In comparison with *very*, Paradis (2003: 203) argues that *really* is not a fully-fledged degree modifier since e.g. it conveys a truth-attesting meaning in questions (e.g. compare 'Are you *very* sad? Yes, *very*' with 'Are you *really* sad? Yes, I am'). Ito and Tagliamonte (2003: 273) also comment that as much as both *very* and *really* are advanced in the process, *very* is further ahead. However, Aijmer (2018a: 123) discusses *really* as a form that has delexicalised so much that it is now a like-for-like alternative to *very*. In the process, *really* has also lost expressivity and no longer adds a subjective tinge (see also Cacchiani 2009: 237). Aijmer (2018a: 126) also comments that *really* often compensates its inherent lack of expressivity by means of pragmatic intensification, e.g. reduplication or combination with other intensifiers.

Nonetheless, *really* is considered to be advanced in grammaticalisation in all accounts. For example, in reference to Paradis's example above, questions like 'Are you *really* sad?' could be replied with 'Yes, *really*' as much as it happens with *very*; and in this dataset, *really* is the most common booster in intensifier duplets (see Appendix IX), in reference to Aijmer's claims regarding pragmatic intensification. Frequency and collocability also attest its advanced grammaticalisation.

Frequency is to be broached first in the discussion of results for *really*. The random forest results guide the rest of the section. The first aspect to explore is the effect of age and its interaction with gender in this dataset, which are also the only two factors (age and age-gender interaction) found to be statistically significant in the multivariate analysis. Then, there will be some discussion on speaker distribution, since it is the second most important factor according to the random forest test. Finally, the distribution of *really* in the sample according to the evaluative prosody and semantic category of its collocates evidences wide collocability and advanced grammaticalisation.

Really has been steadily gaining territory in the intensifier system since around the 18th century (Tagliamonte and Roberts 2005: 283).[48] Variationist and corpus research has consistently reported *really* to be among the top boosters in every variety of English and, most importantly, to be overwhelmingly favoured by younger speakers. Already towards the end of the 20th century, Labov (1984: 44) observed that *really* was the most frequent intensifier in colloquial conversation in American English. Results vary in this variety, however. It has been found to be the most

[48] *Really* is often studied together with the adjectival form *real*, which is argued to be an unambiguous bleached intensifier in comparison (Biber et al. 1999: 543–44; Palacios-Martínez and Núñez-Pertejo 2012: 779–80; Romero 2012: 35–36; Stenström et al. 2002: 150–51, see also Barnfield and Buchstaller 2010; Tagliamonte 2008; Tagliamonte and Roberts 2005). Despite the claim that *real* might be becoming more frequent in the speech of British teenagers (Palacios-Martínez and Núñez-Pertejo 2012: 781; Stenström et al. 2002: 151), there are only four tokens in this dataset. They have been counted separately.

frequent booster (Barbieri 2008: 72; Rickford et al. 2007: 10), on a par with *so* (Tagliamonte and Roberts 2005: 287), or behind *very* and *so* (Aijmer 2018a: 112; Biber et al. 1999: 565; Romero 2012: 34). In British English, *really* has taken longer to rise to the top spots and still competes with *very* (Biber et al. 1999: 565; Ito and Tagliamonte 2003: 276; Romero 2012: 32; Xiao and Tao 2007: 255), yet it tends to be the preferred variant in teenage speech (Núñez-Pertejo and Palacios-Martínez 2018: 128; Palacios-Martínez 2011: 122; Palacios-Martínez and Núñez-Pertejo 2012: 779; Stenström et al. 2002: 142; cf. however Macaulay 2006: 270 in Glasgow). Particularly in British English, the use of *really* appears to correlate with female speech (Romero 2012: 61; Stenström et al. 2002: 143; Xiao and Tao 2007: 250; see also Tagliamonte and Roberts 2005: 289 in American English). The steady increase of *really* and its high frequency among younger speakers has also been attested in Toronto English (Tagliamonte 2008: 368) and New Zealand English (Aijmer 2018a: 128; D'Arcy 2015: 168).

Lorenz (2002) studied *really* across synchronic and diachronic spoken data in British English. He found intensifier *really* to be stable across time (Lorenz 2002: 157), and much more frequent in spoken, 'young, informal, and hence dynamic usage' (Lorenz 2002: 153). These findings led him to predict that *really* is to succeed *very* as the next top and fully grammaticalised intensifier in English (Lorenz 2002: 157). Similarly, Schweinberger (2020: 244) Tagliamonte and Roberts (2005: 289) forecast that the intensifier change in the 20th and 21st century would be *very* → *really* → *so*.

The same patterns arose in the data analysed by Barnfield and Buchstaller (2010) in Tyneside. *Really* was the second most frequent variant in all three time slices: the 70s (TLS data), the 90s (PVC data), and the early 2000s (NECTE2 data). The form steadily rose in frequency across time. In the 90s, *really* accounted for 31.4% of the variable in the speech of younger speakers (Barnfield and Buchstaller 2010: 268), and by 2007/8 it had become the most frequent variant in that age group (40.1%) (Barnfield and Buchstaller 2010: 270). A slight female preference for *really* was also found in the two most recent datasets in their study (Barnfield and Buchstaller 2010: 268, 270). Supported by this evidence, the authors suggested that *really* was a change in progress in the region (Barnfield and Buchstaller 2010: 268). In the specific sample of 2007/8 participants aged between 18 and 20, *really* accounted for 48% of boosters in predicative contexts. Results from the 2017-19 dataset analysed in the current project show that the rate of *really* has slightly increased in Tyneside teen talk (n=328, 49.2%).

The high frequency of *really* in the current teenage sample was therefore expected. However, given young speakers' preferences for the form and the change in progress attested in previous research in the region, the increase would actually have been expected to be much greater.

It appears as if the growth of *really* has been hindered by the increase in the rate of *so* (further analysed below in §6.2.2). Contrary to what has been found in previous studies on British English, the competition is no longer with *very,* but with *so*, as suggested by Romero (2012: 32) in her study of the ICE-GB and Schweinberger (2020: 244) in his study of American fiction in COHA. This competition is not often noted probably because most studies have analysed boosters in both attributive and predicative contexts, which provides an unclear picture of the weight of *so* (cf. Tagliamonte 2008; Tagliamonte and Roberts 2005). Another reason why *really* has not increased in frequency as much, might be that it needed to first spread across semantic categories. This argument will be discussed in the analysis of its collocational patterns towards the end of this section.

Age is considered the most important constraint to analyse in the distribution of *really* in this study according to the random forest test. *Really* is much more frequently used by the youngest speakers of this cohort (12-15), and its rate of use decreases steadily across age groups (63.6% > 54% > 38.2%), as that of *so* increases in parallel. The contrast in the proportion of *really* between the speech of younger adolescents and that of the oldest in this sample is extremely significant ($p < 0.00001$) according to the mixed-effects model. This pattern can be argued to be evidence of at least three factors. First, the preference of *really* in the speech of younger speakers can be considered apparent-time evidence that *really* is becoming the most common booster in the system in Tyneside. Secondly, the trend demonstrates that the competition *really-so* is: (i) age-graded, and (ii) almost completely independent from the rates of other variants. *Really* is overwhelmingly favoured in the 12-15 group (63.6% v 18.2% *so*), and the difference narrows up to the point that *really* and *so* are used at almost the same rate by the speakers aged 19 or 20 (38.2% *really* v 36.2% *so*). The fact that the decrease of *really* from younger to older is exactly parallel to the increase of *so* in the same direction evidences that they are in competition with each other rather than with any other variant. Thirdly, the strong dominance of *really* in the speech of the youngest cohort of speakers (12-15), and its waning across age groups in apparent time corroborates the idea that younger speakers have the narrowest internal booster variation: they use fewer variants, and they tend to concentrate on using one in particular —in this case *really*, which is the most frequent choice for all the 12-to-15-year-old speakers except Samantha (F, 13).

The second and third points raised here conflict with the first one. Following the idea that apparent-time differences can tell us more about the future of the system, it would make sense to suggest that *really* is to be preferred over *so* in the long run. However, the pattern is rather evidence of age-grading in the short period of time from the start to the end of adolescence. As they age into adolescence, these speakers seem to develop more strategies to enhance their expressivity,

and, in doing so, drop *really* and favour *so*. A longitudinal panel study could shed more light on this suggestion.

Gender ranks fifth as per the importance it has on the distribution of *really* (according to the random forest test), and is not statistically significant in the multivariate analysis. However, the interaction of age and gender reaches statistical significance in the contrast between the 12-15 and 16-18 age groups. Below, Table 28 reproduces the proportions presented in Section 6.1 to ease the interpretation of the statistical results.

Table 28. Proportion of *really* across genders and the two youngest age groups

Gender	Age group		Age differential
	12-15	16-18	
female	58.6%	60.3%	+1.7%
male	74.1%	45.1%	-29%

The slight increase of *really* from 12-15 to 16-18 girls (+1.7%) and the strong decrease in the same direction among boys (-29%) is statistically significant ($p < 0.05$). In the group of girls, *really* remains stable between the two youngest groups and only decreases more starkly from the middle to the oldest group. Male speakers in the two oldest groups have very similar rates of *really* and the age difference is at its most notable between those aged 12 to 15 and those aged 16 to 18. The difference between *really* and *so* is at its widest in the speech of the youngest boys and drastically narrows across age groups, whereas in the case of girls, the roughly 15-point difference between *really* and *so* remains stable in the two youngest groups and equalises in the 19-20 group.

These findings are as interesting as they are difficult to interpret. They point at the fact that girls join in the use of *so* at a later age, which impacts their higher frequencies of *really* and starker age differences. It could be the case that the same wide difference between *really* and *so* could be found in the speech of girls below 12, and that the decrease of use between them and girls in the 12-15 age bracket is as steep as the one we find here between 12-15 and 16-18 boys. Since that younger age group is not included in this dataset, this argument has to remain untested.

Either way, the fact that gender was not found to be statistically significant in the distribution of *really* is very revealing. In contrast with previous studies in British and more particularly Tyneside English that found *really* to be associated with female speech, the disappearance of a gender difference in this dataset suggests that *really* is fairly established in the system of Tyneside teenagers. This argument is based on the idea that newer forms tend to be introduced by female speakers and progressively extend across genders as they grammaticalise and

become more frequent (Ito and Tagliamonte 2003: 277; Labov 1990: 210–15; Macaulay 2006: 279; Tagliamonte and Roberts 2005: 295).

After age, the factor that the random forest test yielded as most relevant in the study of *really* is individual speaker preferences. This means that, apart from age, there are few if any generalisable trends in the use of *really* in this dataset. *Really* is present in the speech of every speaker except Samantha, but with differences that do not respond to macro-categories. It is the most frequent variant in the speech of almost every speaker below 19. However, in the 16-18 age group, it shares the first place with *so* in the speech of Claire, Lewis, and Tim, and with *proper* in the speech of Charlotte. In the 19-20 age group, inter-speaker differences are starker. *Really* is the most frequent variant in the speech of seven out of 12 speakers in that group, while *so, very,* and even *proper* are more frequent in the speech of the other five. *Really* is in competition with more variants in the speech of older speakers. Even so, speakers of the same age or gender group differ considerably, which explains why neither social predictor have been shown to be statistically significant in the multivariate analysis.

Let us now look at the features of the collocates of *really* in this dataset. *Really* is more frequently found in collocations with predicative, emotional, scalar, and positive adjectives. It modifies adjectives of all semantic categories and tokens with propensity (n=143, 43.6%) and value adjectives (n=100, 30.5%) are the most frequent. The preference for predicative, emotional, and scalar adjectives is found across variants and will not be explored further here. In contrast, evaluative prosody and semantic category rank as even more important than gender in the distribution of *really* in this study. Still, neither have been found to be statistically significant.

Really is the most frequent booster for all types of adjective according to their evaluative prosody. However, the dominance of *really* is most notable in the realm of positive adjectives (58.7% of all positive adjectives are boosted by *really*). Looking at the internal distribution of adjectives in the collocations of *really*, it occurs with positive adjectives (n=135, 41.2%) more frequently than with neutral or negative ones (36.9% and 22% respectively). Although this pattern is not significant, it does show that there is a strong trend of positive adjectives correlating with *really*. This is a crucial aspect in understanding how the rest of the system behaves, since *very* is shown to favour neutral adjectives, *proper* negative adjectives, and *so* has an even spread.

Really also dominates every semantic category except origin (one token fewer than *very*), and this situation is most evident in the categories of value (63.3% of all value adjectives are

boosted by *really*), physical property (50%), and propensity (45.1%).[49] More importantly, *really* is widely spread across categories. Previous research on the form has shown that it had widened its collocability before increasing in frequency (D'Arcy 2015: 474; Tagliamonte 2008: 388). The same distributional pattern was found in Tyneside (Barnfield and Buchstaller 2010: 278–79). *Really* diffused over categories as it increased in frequency from the 70s to the 90s. From that time to the early 2000s, its frequency barely grew, yet it spread to even more categories and for the first time dominated three of them (although the ones in which it became most frequent were categories with very low counts). Results from this more recent dataset dovetail those trends. The increase in frequency from the 2007/8 youngest speakers (18-20) to the teenagers in 2017-19 is not as prominent as its diffusion across categories. In sum, the ubiquitous use of *really* for any semantic type of adjective, together with its dominance in virtually all categories —including the most frequent ones, i.e. propensity and value— are solid evidence of advanced grammaticalisation of the form in the region (Lorenz 2002: 144–45; Partington 1993: 183–84; Tagliamonte 2008: 375–76). Future studies on Tyneside English could test if *really* grows in frequency more drastically now that it is fully spread across collocates.

Overall, the analysis and discussion of results for *really* in this dataset corroborates trends found in previous research. First, *really* is the most frequent variant among the teenagers in this study, and more frequent than it was in earlier time periods in Tyneside. This ties in with the general trend of *really* being favoured in youth talk and becoming more frequent across time. Second, *really* appears to have grammaticalised further in comparison with previous results in the region. This is attested by a lack of gender differences and a wide diffusion across semantic categories. Third, in this cohort, *really* is in competition with *so*, as *really* is at its peak of frequency when *so* is at its lowest, and vice versa. The fact that speakers in the 12-15 age group favour *really* is argued to be a consequence of more restricted booster repertoires in the speech of younger speakers, rather than apparent-time evidence of the establishment of *really* as the top booster in this speech community.

Really could be following in the footsteps of *very*. Its frequency has risen radically in the last century, and with it, its grammaticalisation has advanced. It is and will continue to be the top booster in many varieties of English. However, just like *very*, it has been argued to have lost expressivity, and the rise of *so* to the detriment of *really* in this dataset appears to support this idea. However, contrary to *very*, *really* has not yet reached full grammaticalisation, and its truth-attesting

[49]Although the proportions of *really* are also considerably high in the categories of measurement, age, and position, the low count of boosted adjectives from those categories makes the results less meaningful. In the category of 'other', there is an equal number of *really* and *so* collocations (n=25, 34.2%).

meaning is still used, particularly noticeable in its emphasiser function. Persistence of lexical meanings might play against it just as was the case with *swipe*: as popular as it was in Old and Middle English, it fell into disuse when the more expressive, rapidly grammaticalizing *very* came around (Méndez-Naya 2003).

6.2.2. *So*

So is the oldest form in the boosters variable, although it has almost always been eclipsed by its competitors *very* and *really*. Derived from Germanic *swa*, *so* is also the only variant not borrowed from another language (OED 1989). The first attestation of its use comes from around 825, as a pro-form similar to *that* (see (41)). In around 888, it was recorded with the meaning 'in the way or manner described' (see (42)), a comparative particle denoting similarity (see (43)), and as an intensifier (see (44)). As such, booster *so* dates from Old English (Mustanoja 1960: 324; Stoffel 1901: 72; Stratton fc.: 33–34).

(41) c825: Ne dyde *swe* ylcre cneorisse (*Vesp. Psalter* cxlvii 20)

(42) c888: Gelefst ðu þæt..auht godes *swa* geweorðan mæge butan thae m wyrhtan (Ælfred tr. Boethius *De Consol. Philos.* v §3)

(43) c888: *Swa* doð eac wudufuglas (Ælfred tr. Boethius *De Consol. Philos.* xxv).

(44) c888: Ne gelyfe ic no þæt hit geweorþan meahte *swa* endebyrdlice (Ælfred tr. Boethius *De Consol. Philos.* v §3).

The *Oxford English Dictionary* lists at least 40 different meanings that *so* has developed across its history. Bolinger (1972: 176–89) provides a detailed historical account of the form. As illustrated in Section 4.5, *so* has collocated with adverbs, quantifiers, adjectives, and verbs for centuries. Mainly in the contexts of adjectives and adverbs, intensifier *so* retained comparative meaning in the construction *so…that,* which dates all the way back to Old English, yet became more frequent from the 13th century onwards (see (45)). More recent uses of *so* suggest that it has gained a nuance of certainty and non-degree-marking emphasis in a variety of contexts (see GenX *so* examples in (46)) (e.g. the 2005 draft included in its OED entry; Kenter et al. 2007; Kuha 2005; Tagliamonte 2008; Zwicky 2011).

(45) <u>*So…that*, comparative construction</u>

a. OE: Hio þonne æfter him ece stondað simle singales *swa beclysed þæt* nænigh oþer nymðe nergend god, hy æfre ma eft onluceð (*Crist I* 323).

b. *a*1240: [Thou art] *swo* leoflic and *swa lufsum þet* te engles a biholdeþ þe (*Ureisun* in Old Eng. Hom. I. 183).

(46) GenX *so*

a. 1988: Grow up, Heather. Bulimia's *so '86* (D. Waters *Heathers* 14).

b. 1994: Oh thank you Josh, I *so need* lessons from you on how to be cool (A. Heckerling *Clueless* p.14)

The analysis in this project focuses on adjectival heads, both scalar and non-scalar. Collocations with the latter are included as the more innovative and recent ways of using *so* (see 2005 draft in the OED entry of *so*). In this sample, *so* only collocates five times with extreme adjectives (e.g. (47)) and five with limit ones (e.g. (48)). Note the co-occurrence with other expressive devices like *oh my God*, and *I can't even* (see Zwicky 2015 for a discussion on the expressive value of *I can't even*). These examples, albeit scarce, demonstrate the heightened expressivity achieved by non-harmonic collocations of boosters with non-scalar adjectives (Aijmer 2018a: 113).

(47) *So* with extreme adjectives:

a. It just seems *so amazing* compared to England (**Amber**, F, 13, Ccc02f1_B).

b. Oh, it's *so shit*, oh my God, I can't even (**Sarah**, F, 19, 2017_SEL2091_078_A).

(48) *So* with limit adjectives:

a. It is *so iconic*, though (**Jeremy**, M, 19, 2017_SEL2091_021_A).

b. Oh my God, that's *so true* (**Abbie**, F, 19, 2017_SEL2091_078_B).

Despite the historical evidence, *so* is not often recognised as either the oldest booster variant nor the most multifunctional of the set —the first label often given to *very* (see §6.2.3 below), and the second to *really* (see §6.2.1 above). As noted by Tagliamonte and Roberts (2005: 293) and attested by Stratton (fc.: 22), booster *so* is indeed over a thousand years old, yet it is only in the 20th century that it has become one of the most frequently used variants, Stoffel (1901) being the first author to comment on it that I am aware of.

I will start the discussion of *so* by looking at its frequency across previous research and comparing the findings with its occurrence in the speech of contemporary Tyneside teenagers. The random forest test revealed that individual speaker preferences are the most important constraint in its distribution in this dataset. After speaker, the three factors that are most relevant are age, evaluative prosody and the semantic category of its collocates. All three were flagged as statistically significant in the multivariate analysis.

Biber et al. (1999: 565) found *so* to be the second most frequent intensifier in British English conversation, and the most frequent in American English conversation. Its top spot in the American English system of intensification has been well attested across research (Aijmer 2018a: 112; Barbieri 2008: 71; Romero 2012: 34; Schweinberger 2020: 235; Tagliamonte and Roberts

2005: 289; cf. however Rickford et al. 2007: 10). In British, Toronto, and New Zealand English, *so* tends to rank behind *very* and/or *really* (Aijmer 2018a: 111; D'Arcy 2015: 469; Ito and Tagliamonte 2003: 266; Romero 2012: 32; Tagliamonte 2008: 368). In all varieties, *so* has strong correlations with demographic factors. On the one hand, the qualitative observations that linked *so* with female speech (Lakoff 1973: 15; Stoffel 1901: 101–02) have been corroborated in subsequent variationist work (Precht 2008: 99; Tagliamonte and Roberts 2005: 293). In the TV series *Friends*, the gender effect faded in later seasons, proving its establishment in the system across time (Tagliamonte and Roberts 2005: 293). A similar result came from Tagliamonte's (2005: 1911) study of Toronto English. The gender difference in the use of *so* present in the speech of younger speakers was levelled in the group of 20-to-22-year-olds.[50]

The high frequency of *so* is consistently reported as particular to the speech of younger speakers (Aijmer 2018a: 134; Romero 2012: 44; Tagliamonte 2008: 372; Tagliamonte and Roberts 2005: 289; cf. however D'Arcy 2015: 469). The frequency results in Barbieri's (2008: 71–73) study of American English show that *so* is more frequent in youth data, yet less than *really*. The associations of *so* with young female speakers made Tagliamonte and Roberts (2005: 289) predict that it would be the next favourite intensifier in English.

The age pattern is particularly noticeable in British English. Romero (2012: 32) noted how *so* is strongly favoured by younger speakers in the ICE-GB, and Macaulay (2006: 270) found a gradual diachronic increase of *so* in the speech of Glaswegian teenagers. In London teen talk, *so* is the preferred variant in the COLT (early 90s) and LIC corpora (2004-2007). It also turned out to be nearly as frequent as *really* among the young speakers of the MLE corpus (2007-2010) (being not this prominent only in the smaller SCoSE corpus (2008)) (Núñez-Pertejo and Palacios-Martínez 2018: 128–29; Palacios-Martínez and Núñez-Pertejo 2012: 780). Despite these results, the discussion of change in British English intensifiers is overwhelmingly focused on the competition between *very* and *really*.

So has also been found to have a statistically significant link with emotional adjectives in previous research, and in turn, it has been argued to enhance the emotional nature, expressivity, and degree of speakers' involvement in conversation (Aijmer 2018a: 130, 134; Schweinberger 2020: 243; Tagliamonte and Roberts 2005: 289–90). The preference of young speakers for the form might be justified to some extent by their preference for emotional and expressive language (Danesi 1997: 457; Tannen 1984: 30).

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[50] Note, however, that her conclusion is not supported by figures available to the reader (see Tagliamonte 2005: 1909).

In Tyneside, *so* has been reported to be slightly more frequent in female speech, but in contrast with the general age trend, *so* has not been associated with any particular age group, which has allowed it to enjoy a steady yet slow increase over time (Barnfield and Buchstaller 2010: 274). This ties in with the idea that what hinders the growth of *so* in some varieties is its association with adolescent speech (Romero 2012: 64; see also Kenter et al. 2007 on GenX *so*). Barnfield and Buchstaller (2010: 282) commented that '*so* is not a very vivid trend in Tyneside', based on the fact that its growth was slow and constrained, and not as drastic as reported in North America. Instead they forecast that *canny* and *pure* were the variants to watch for, unless 'speakers in Tyneside […] start to feel the transatlantic pressure and start jumping on the intensifier bandwagon' (Barnfield and Buchstaller 2010: 282). At least in the cohort of Tyneside teenagers sampled for this study, *canny* and *pure* are far from being vivid or becoming fashionable (eight tokens of *canny*, and only three of *pure*). The constant growth of *so* across time, in contrast, points to it becoming more popular. This pattern appears to confirm previous findings that teenagers tend to favour supra-local forms (like *so*) over local ones (like *pure* and *canny*) (see e.g. Britain 2010: 94; Kerswill and Williams 2000: 94; Stuart-Smith and Timmins 2010: 44).

The pattern of increased *so* usage in Tyneside is the following: 2.9% (TLS, 1970s) > 7.5% (PVC, 1990s) > 9.1% (11% in youngest speakers) (NECTE2, 2007/8) > 29.2% (NECTE2 + TyTeC, 2017-19). The growth from the 2007/8 dataset to the current one is the largest, and could be explained by two non-exclusive factors: collocability and age. In Barnfield and Buchstaller's (2010) study, *so* was an example of slow frequency increase parallel to slow diffusion across semantic categories (Barnfield and Buchstaller 2010: 280). Since *so* already displayed wide collocability in the 2007/8 data, it might be the case that it was ready for a burst in frequency. The higher proportion of *so* in this dataset could be attributable to the sample exclusively comprising young speakers, who, at least in other varieties of English, have consistently favoured the form. That conclusion would assume that *so* is associated with youth talk in Tyneside, contrary to what has been found before in the region. If the independence from a particular age group has carried on, the present results would evidence a clear narrowing in the differences between *really* and *so* in the speech community of Tyneside.

Booster *so* displays a frequency index of 1.09 per 1,000 words in the present dataset, which is slightly lower than in any of the London teenage corpora (Núñez-Pertejo and Palacios-Martínez 2018: 128; Palacios-Martínez and Núñez-Pertejo 2012: 780), but higher than the indices reported by Romero (2012: 32, 34) for both British and American English. *So* is the second most frequent variant among Tyneside teenagers (n=195, 29.2%), although still relatively far behind *really*. It is used more frequently by speakers aged 19 or 20 (n=110, 36.2%), and there are no meaningful

gender differences in its distribution (F 29.7% v M 28.5%). *So* exclusively modifies predicative adjectives, and it is overwhelmingly favoured in collocations with scalar and emotional adjectives, like all other variants. It shows a diffused distribution across semantic categories and an even spread across types of adjective according to their prosody, although it does not dominate any type for either parameter.

Individual speaker preferences rank the highest in importance in the random forest test. In other words, great part of the distribution of *so* largely responds to idiolectal speaker choices. The speakers who use *so* the most are Emily (F, 19, 66%), Jeremy (M, 19, 63.3%), and Abbie (F, 19, 63%). The three of them are among the speakers with the lowest rates of *really*. Claire (F, 17), the fourth most frequent user of *so* (45%), uses *really* at exactly the same rate as *so*; and the fifth most frequent user, Jack (M, 19), also has a slightly higher proportion of *so* over *really* (43.4% v 34.8%). All of these speakers have characteristically low rates of *very*, just one or two tokens, and indeed neither Emily nor Jack use it at all. Given what we know about the expressive value of *so* and lack thereof in *very*, these results suggest that these five speakers might have a more expressive style of speaking, or at least achieve expressivity more often by means of boosters. In doing so, they also prefer using *so* over *really*. These individual preferences corroborate what was suggested earlier in the discussion of *really*. *So* and *really* do not appear to be in competition with *very* because of its lower expressive value, and when speakers do actually have a more emotional or speaker-involved style of speaking, *so* gains territory over *really*.

Similar conclusions can be drawn from the study of the age effect. *So* increases in frequency from younger to older teenagers (18.2% > 27.8% > 36.8%). The difference between the youngest and the oldest group of speakers is deemed significant by the mixed-effects model at $p < 0.05$. While *so* does not overcome *really* in any age group, the increase of the former is directly parallel to the decrease of the latter. As argued in Section 6.2.1 above, the pattern suggests (i) that *so* grows at the expense of *really*, and (ii) that one of the reasons why *really* is preferred in the younger group might be because of their more limited repertoire and tendency to stick to more standard variants. This age distribution says little about language change, although it is a starting point for future research to look into the behaviour of these two variants.

Since *so* correlates with emotional language, there may also be an interview effect in its age distribution. The recordings for the two younger groups were carried out by myself, an adult stranger in the eyes of the interviewees, whereas the interviewer for the 19-20 age group was often a friend of the participants. Younger participants could have felt more inhibited in their way of speaking, toning down their expressivity. This would also explain the slightly lower frequencies of

so in this dataset compared to the results from COLT (10.81 v 14.04), where teenagers self-recorded themselves in a variety of everyday situations with friends and family.

Turning now to linguistic predictors, let us look at the distribution of *so* collocates according to their evaluative prosody. Out of all adjectives boosted by *so*, there is an even distribution in terms of their prosody (negative n=58, 29.7%; positive n=69, 35.4%; neutral n=68, 34.9%). However, what is more telling is checking how often *so* was chosen as the booster to modify each type of adjective. Out of all positive adjectives, *so* is the selected booster 30% of the times; and, out of all negative adjectives, *so* accounts for 36.9% of the variable. The contrast between these proportions and its weight in collocations with neutral adjectives (24.3%) is significant ($p < 0.01$ in the case of positive adjectives, and $p < 0.0005$ in the case of negative adjectives). While *really* still dominates collocations with any prosody, *so* accounts for statistically significant higher proportions in the contexts of positive and, most notably, negative adjectives (as Aijmer 2018a: 134 also finds).

These results suggest that *so*, albeit fairly flexible in its collocations, is highly favoured as a booster of polarised adjectives (i.e. positive or negative). This would tie in with the idea that *so* is more commonly used with emotional language (Aijmer 2018a: 130, 134; Tagliamonte and Roberts 2005: 289–90). In this study, the predictor that tested the emotional load of adjectives simply showed that all boosters favour emotional adjectives over non-emotional, and that the preference occurs at similar rates across variants. However, the study of evaluative prosody suggests that *so* is frequently used in collocation with adjectives that express subjective stance more strongly. This contrasts with *very*, which, as discussed below in Section 6.2.3, tends to favour neutral, less speaker-involved adjectives.

In this dataset, *so* boosts adjectives of any semantic category except origin, and it consistently accounts for roughly 30% of the variable in each. The difference between the weight of *so* in collocations with measurement adjectives (35.3%) and its proportion in the context of value and propensity adjectives (26.6% and 29.7%) is small yet statistically significant at $p < 0.05$. These two latter categories happen to be the ones where *really* truly shines, accounting for 63.3% and 45.1% of the variable respectively. Since they are also the two types of adjective that are most commonly boosted in this dataset, the strong presence of *really* in those collocations could be argued to interfere with the overall frequency of *so* (see Schweinberger 2020: 244, where the author reflects on how 'the frequency of the amplifier piggybacks on the frequency of the adjective').

So was already widespread across semantic categories in the 2007/8 Tyneside data (Barnfield and Buchstaller 2010: 280), and the 2017-19 results show that *so* has not expanded further, but has grown in frequency. *So* appears to be one step ahead of *really* in this sense: since

its collocability was already wide by the beginning of the century, it is now steadily growing in frequency.

It is worth noting that *so* has a limitation that other variants do not have: it does not boost attributive adjectives. However, predicative contexts favour boosting both generally (see e.g. Ito and Tagliamonte 2003: 276) and particularly in this dataset, as shown earlier. Therefore, this limitation does not impact its rates greatly, and indeed, *so* remains the second most frequent booster in this study even when both contexts are taken into consideration.

The study of *so* in the speech of Tyneside teenagers has emphasised the need to focus more on the *really-so* competition, now that *very*, at least among young speakers, is practically out of the game. The high frequency of *so* in this dataset is unlikely to be age-graded as in other regions, since *so* has not shown age-preferential use before in Tyneside. It is very telling that speakers with more expressive styles of speaking and a more assorted intensifier variable are the ones who favour *so* the most. *So* has shown to be: (i) flexible in its collocations, in terms of semantic category and evaluative prosody, and (ii) favoured in boosting polarised and therefore more subjective adjectives. The lack of gender differences, its wide collocability, and its intact expressive value make *so* a variant to look out for in future research.

6.2.3. *Very*

Very is the only fully grammaticalised variant of this set. Borrowed from Latin *verus* 'true' via Old French around 1250, *very* went from being an adjective in fixed collocations in the strict context of the Christian faith (e.g. *warrai man and god warrai* (OED 1989 A.I.1.a, *Cursor Mundi*, c1250)), to developing at least eight other different —and gradually more grammatical— functions in the span of a couple of centuries (see §4.3 for an overview of its historical trajectory, based on Breban and Davidse (2016)). The acquisition of new grammatical functions was a result of the gradual loss of the original lexical meaning 'tru(ly)', which allowed *very* to gain pragmatic meanings of emphasis, modal evaluation, and intensification, and in doing so, extend to a wider variety of contexts. Its now most-common function, intensifier of adjectives, was first attested in 1387 (*he was verray repentaunt* (OED 1989 B.1.b, Trevisa, a1387)).

Very became a common intensifier during the first half of the 16th century and by the end of it, it had already eclipsed other popular intensifiers of the time (e.g. *full*, *right*, and *much*) (Mustanoja 1960: 327). Subsequently, *very* grew in frequency and popularity, as attested by the study of boosters in 18th century Early Modern English letters (Peters 1994: 286), which spurred the process of grammaticalisation further. In Present-Day English, *very* is described as the 'prototypical booster of adjectives' (Lorenz 2002: 146). It has undergone full delexicalisation and it currently

carries no lexical traces that constrain its collocability. With grammaticalisation and century-long history comes loss of expressivity (Aijmer 2018a: 113–14; Partington 1993: 188; Tagliamonte 2016: 92). In New Zealand English, for example, D'Arcy (2015: 483–84) comments that the pragmatic force of *very* had weakened by the early 20th century, which favoured the rise to popularity of *really*. In comparison with *really*, *so*, and *proper*, *very* simply denotes an upward degree in a scale, with no added expressivity or social meaning (Aijmer 2018a: 121), key features to stay afloat in the dynamic competition in the intensifier system (Lorenz 2002: 143; Núñez-Pertejo and Palacios-Martínez 2018: 121; Stoffel 1901: 2; Tagliamonte 2016: 92). Unsurprisingly, this has caused the frequency of *very* to dwindle in recent times.

The decrease in frequency of *very* across varieties of English will be the first point of discussion in this section, followed by a description of the *very's* distribution in the sample. The random forest test on *very* revealed that individual speaker preferences, the evaluative prosody and semantic category of adjectives are the most relevant constraints to analyse. The latter two are the only constraints found to be statistically significant according to the multivariate analysis. There will only be brief comments on age and gender patterns.

In American English, *very* tends to rank behind *really* and *so*, accounting for less than a 15% share of the variable (Barbieri 2008: 72; Rickford et al. 2007: 11; Tagliamonte and Roberts 2005: 287). However, in analysing data from the *Santa Barbara Corpus of American English* (SBCAE), both Aijmer (2018a: 112) and Romero (2012: 40) found *very* to be more frequent than *really*, but less prominent than *so*. In Toronto English, *very* competes with *so* (6.6% v 6.1%) but is nonetheless not as frequent as *really* (Tagliamonte 2008: 368). British English studies have found *very* to be the predominant variant (Aijmer 2018a: 111; Ito and Tagliamonte 2003: 266; Romero 2012: 61; Xiao and Tao 2007: 255).

There is a strong generational gap in all varieties: *very* is favoured by adults and strongly disfavoured by younger speakers (Barbieri 2008: 72; Ito and Tagliamonte 2003: 277; Núñez-Pertejo and Palacios-Martínez 2018: 129; Palacios-Martínez 2011: 122; Romero 2012: 64; Tagliamonte 2008: 372). In the speech of Glaswegian adolescents at the beginning of the 2000s, Macaulay (2006: 270) reported an incredibly low frequency index for *very* of 0.06 per 1,000 words. Apparent-time differences of this kind often forecast a decrease in the use of the form longer-term (Ito and Tagliamonte 2003: 277).

In Tyneside, *very* was the most frequent intensifier in the *Tyneside Linguistic Survey* (TLS) data from the 1970s (Barnfield and Buchstaller 2010: 263). In the 90s, *very* went from accounting for 65% of the variable to only 18%, affected by the rise of *really* (25.1%) and *dead* (35.9%) (Barnfield and Buchstaller 2010: 267). Gender played a role in the frequency of *very* in the 90s, with men

strongly favouring it (F 8% v M 42%) (Barnfield and Buchstaller 2010: 268). What took most of the share from the use of *very* in female speech was the innovative variant *dead* (F 48.3% v M 5.8%). In the NECTE2 data from 2007 and 2008, *very* regained the first position (32.4%), closely followed by *really* (26.7%) (Barnfield and Buchstaller 2010: 269). This time period also witnessed the demotion of *dead*; and the argument is that speakers who at a younger age used *dead* in the 90s grew out of using it and turned back to using *very* in the 2000s, rather than *really* (Barnfield and Buchstaller 2010: 271). Most importantly, both in the 90s and the 2000s, there was a statistically significant age effect: younger speakers were starting to use *really* much more frequently, while older ones stuck to *very* —and in fact the age differential was wider in the most recent data (Barnfield and Buchstaller 2010: 268, 270).

Based on all the evidence from previous research both in Tyneside and outside of it, *very* was expected to be infrequent in the teenage cohort recorded for this project. *Very* is the third most frequent variant (*n*=98, 13%), precipitating the downward trend found in Tyneside: 65% in the 70s, 18% in the 90s, 32.4% in the 2000s, and 13% in 2017-19.

Very is more frequently used by the youngest group, 12-15, and by girls in this cohort. However, the higher rates in the 12-15 and female groups might be largely due to the outlier results of Samantha (F, 13), who exclusively uses *very*. In terms of linguistic predictors, *very* collocates more often with predicative, emotional, neutral, and scalar adjectives. Although it collocates with adjectives from a range of semantic categories, *very* is much more commonly found modifying propensity adjectives (*n*=45, 56.7%). The mixed-effects model, which includes the random effect of speaker, only found the evaluative prosody and semantic category of adjectives to be statistically significant predictors of usage. This points at the fact that variant choice in this case is not affected by the social macro-categories of age and gender but instead by individual speaker preferences and linguistic collocations.

Very is absent in the repertoire of 13 out of 36 speakers in the sample. Since it is considered to be the least expressive variant, this distribution responds to the general tendency of teenagers of having more hyperbolic, expressive, and innovative styles of speaking (Danesi 1997: 457; Tannen 1984: 30). By contrast, not participating in this tendency might motivate some speakers to use *very* over other variants. This could be the case for Samantha (F, 13), the only participant who uses *very* exclusively. She is generally quieter (word count of 1745 words in comparison with the 4225 words of her interview partner, Amber), and is one of the participants who boosts the least often in her interview: only seven tokens of boosters, and all of them are *very*. On top of these quantitative results, Samantha considers herself to be not as sociable as other kids in the school, calls herself 'depressing', and does not spend much time out socialising (see e.g. (49), (50), and

(51)). These are qualitative observations that could potentially evidence that Samantha, as an individual, has a less expressive or hyperbolic style of speaking, and thus favours the more muted variant *very*.

(49) **Interviewer**: Do you think you're very different from your brothers then?
Samantha: Yes. […] I'm very emo, they aren't.
I: What do you mean that you are very emo?
S: I'm very depressing (Ccc02f1).

(50) **Interviewer**: Right, do you like The Sims a lot? like why do you like it?
Samantha: It just gives us [=me] a break from reality.

(51) **Interviewer**: what do you do when you hang out?
Samantha: I don't go outside my house. […] Every time I go outside people look at us [=me]. Maybe it's the fact I've got bright red hair or maybe it's not (laughs) (Ccc02f1).

This does not mean that every user of *very* is less chatty, sociable, or expressive. Melissa uses *very* at the same rate as *really* and is the speaker after Samantha in which *very* accounts for the highest proportion of tokens. There are no reasons for which her style of speaking could be considered less expressive: she has a word count of 6203 and boosts a total of 33 times, which is roughly the average rate of intensification across the sample. It is difficult if not impossible to find out exactly what motivates the use of *very* per speaker. First, it can rely on the type of adjectives each speaker uses. Testing this would require a comprehensive analysis of all adjectives per speaker (not only the boosted ones). Second, the rate of *very* might be down to personal preferences that are not discernible through a qualitative interpretation of a one-hour conversation. Third, there might be a myriad of factors in the discourse situation that favour its use. For example, it might be the case that some of the participants felt the artificiality of the sociolinguistic interview more strongly, and consciously or unconsciously felt more inhibited to use more expressive variants, as suggested in the discussion of *so* above.

Moving on to the linguistic distribution of *very* in the sample, the results from the multivariate analyses found the evaluative prosody and semantic category of adjectives to be statistically significant. In contrast with *really*, *so,* and *proper*, where differences in linguistic predictors tend to evidence a widening of collocations, the results for *very* suggest specialisation. This process refers to the entrenchment of a variant in certain linguistic contexts and it often occurs at a late stage of grammaticalisation (Hopper 1991: 25). Let us explore each parameter one at a time.

Very collocates much more frequently with adjectives with neutral prosody (n=55, 69.6%), than with positive (n=17, 21.5%) or negative (n=7, 8.9%). The contrast between neutral and

positive adjectives is significant at $p < 0.05$, and the contrast between neutral and negative is extremely significant at $p < 0.0005$. The collocation with neutral adjectives is understood as evidence for the reduced expressivity and speaker involvement when using *very*. The subjective stance expressed by positive or negative adjectives (e.g. *funny, beautiful*, *nice*, *annoying, boring, pathetic*) is stronger than by neutral adjectives (e.g. *simple, small, long, different*), which are almost simply descriptive.

Tyneside teenagers in this sample favour other variants to boost polarised adjectives (i.e. positive or negative). Even though *really* is still the preferred variant for all three prosodies, *very* accounts for its highest proportion in the neutral adjectives (19.6% of all neutral adjectives are modified by *very*). A more reliable way of looking at this distribution is checking the proportions of adjective types per variant. *Really* tends to modify positive adjectives, *proper* specialises in negative ones, and *so* shows an even spread over the three categories. This leaves *very* room to specialise in boosting neutral adjectives.

A similar trend of specialisation seems to transpire from the semantic category results. While it still collocates with adjectives from every semantic category except position, the token count and proportion for each type are minimal. The mixed-effects model marks the strong disfavouring of physical property adjectives as statistically significant ($p < 0.05$). *Very* tends to modify propensity (n=45, 56.7%) and 'other' adjectives (n=19, 24.1%). The specialisation of *very* in the 'other' category was also attested both among Californian teenagers (Rickford et al. 2007: 11) and in Toronto English (Tagliamonte 2008: 386). By contrast, *very* remained widespread across categories in Tyneside English in the 70s all the way through to the 2000s despite the waxing and waning of its frequency (Barnfield and Buchstaller 2010: 277–79).

I analysed the dataset provided by Buchstaller focusing on the boosters in predicative contexts in the speech of young speakers (18-20) from the 2007/8 NECTE2 interviews. *Very* did not dominate any category, only occurred in three categories, and strongly favoured propensity adjectives (seven out of nine adjectives boosted by *very* conveyed a propensity meaning). In sum, *very* is infrequent and has specialised in the speech of young Tyneside speakers both in 2007/8 and a decade later.

The specialisation of *very* could point at three different outcomes for the variant in the region. First, it could constitute evidence concomitant with the frequency decrease to suggest a gradual disappearance of the form. Although it has been argued that intensifiers decrease in frequency uniformly across semantic categories (Barnfield and Buchstaller 2010: 281; Tagliamonte 2008: 380), results from previous studies and this one suggest that a shrinkage in overall frequency may be accompanied by specialisation (Méndez-Naya 2003: 377). As hypothesised by Hopper and

Traugott (2003: 122), even the dynamic and well-assorted system of intensifiers could thin due to the specialisation of some variants.

Second, the fact that *very* specialises for neutral, propensity, and 'other' adjectives could help it remain strong in the system. In other words, *very* might be deemed necessary to boost certain types of adjective if the other variants continue to favour other categories. The specialisation of *very* in collocations with different types of adjective across time and varieties relies on its adaptability, which is only possible thanks to its full delexicalisation. This hypothesis would support Méndez-Naya's (2003: 389) idea that *very* remains as a strong intensifier variant mainly because of the fact that it is fully grammaticalised, and is, as such, very adaptable and versatile.

Third, the specialisation of *very* in this dataset might not be evidence of either of those outcomes. In New Zealand English, D'Arcy (2015: 485) noted how *very* specialised according to different linguistic constraints in different time periods —mainly thanks to the flexibility granted by full grammaticalisation. The current linguistic distribution of *very* could be either age-graded, and therefore characteristic of teenagers, or specific to the particular time period of 2017 to 2019.

Although the discussion might remain inconclusive in this respect, the disappearance of the form might be the most likely consequence. *Very* is not dominant in either of the types in which it has specialised. Both neutral and propensity adjectives are modified at sizeable rates by all the other variants. It is unlikely that *very* will become so frequent in collocations with these that it is deemed completely necessary. In the case of 'other' adjectives, Tagliamonte (2008: 387) argues that the collocation with this 'mixbag of adjectives' is actually evidence of wide collocability. While this situation is motivated by a full delexicalisation of the form, what the collocation with 'other' adjectives rather suggests is that *very* is used for a mishmash of adjectives that do not fit in any other semantic category —similar to the fact that it collocates with the bigger less-specific group of neutral adjectives rather than with the polarised, more subjective ones. In other words, neither the category of neutral nor 'other' adjectives in which *very* has specialised are clearly distinct ones, and as such, they are unlikely to help secure the position of *very*. The linguistic distribution of *very* in this dataset might be age-graded and/or period-specific, although it seems to follow the trends found in previous research.

As discussed above, none of the social variables are statistically significant with regard to the distribution of *very*. It is slightly more frequent in the 12-15 age group, followed by the 19-20 and the 16-18 groups, in that order. This is, however, the general pattern for *really*, *so,* and *proper* as well, and seems to be motivated by the fact that younger speakers tend to use a smaller selection of booster variants and stick to more standard ones (Aitchison 1994: 16–19; Nippold 2000: 15; Xiao and Tao 2007: 255). *Very* occurs more frequently in the speech of female Tyneside teenagers

in this cohort, and this gender difference is most noticeable in the 19-20 age group. It was suggested earlier that the gender preferences in the use of *very* in Tyneside seem to rely on the distribution of rarer variants like *proper* and *dead*.

The main piece of evidence for this hypothesis is that in the region *very* has consistently been favoured by the gender that did not use a particularly gendered booster variant. *Very* was strongly favoured by male speakers in the 90s in contrast with the high rates of female *dead*. Then, the slight preference of *very* by female speakers in the 2007/8 data coincided with (i) the demotion of *dead* in female speech, and (ii) the emergence of *proper* and *canny* in male speech. In the current dataset, the establishment of *proper*, *canny,* and even *dead* as male boosters is parallel to a stronger female preference for *very*. In contrast, *really* and *so* have continued their course throughout time largely unaffected by the emergence of these incoming variants. In fact, in the BNC, *proper* was found to grow in frequency at the expense of infrequent variants (such as *very* in this dataset) rather than of *really* and *so* (Stratton 2020b: 4). As clear as the trend appears to be, it cannot be fully confirmed in this study for at least two reasons.

First, the gender pattern for *very* in this dataset is not significant, mainly because the exclusive use of *very* by Samantha might be responsible for the higher frequencies. Also, if *proper* were to account for the gender-preferential use of *very* and its waning frequency, we would expect users of *proper* to not use *very* much, yet this is not the case. By looking at the two speakers in which *proper* accounts for a higher proportion of tokens, we can see that Chris (M, 19) uses *very* at the same rate as *proper* (28.6%), and Mick (M, 20) uses it even more frequently (27% versus *proper* 19.2%). Therefore, the hypothesis must remain untested. Current results suggest the trend, but the data is not rich enough to confirm it. A larger diachronic study could shed light on this situation.

The distribution of *very* in the current dataset appears to confirm the patterns identified in previous studies within and outside Tyneside, which forecast an overall decrease in frequency of the form. This is attested by its low frequency among younger speakers in this study, mainly due to *very* being less expressive than its more recent competitors. Another piece of supporting evidence is that *very* shows the narrowest collocability out of the four top booster variants. It seems to have specialised in modifying neutral, propensity, and 'other' adjectives. While specialisation could be argued to either secure the place of *very* in the system or be specific to this cohort, the argument here is that the specialisation of *very* is connected to its decreasing frequency. This does not deny that the versatility of *very* helps it stay in the system. In fact, *very* seems to modify almost every type of head that even the newest uses of *so* would, can collocate with both predicative and attributive adjectives (contrary to *so*) and functions unambiguously as an intensifier in every context

(contrary to *really*). Finally, the use of *very* is determined by individual speaker preferences. There is no particular social group pushing for it, at least among Tyneside teenagers currently.

6.2.4. *Proper*

According to the OED (2007), *proper* entered the English language partly as a borrowing from French (*propre*) and partly as a borrowing from Latin (*proprius*). Its first attested use is around 1225 in its adverbial *-ly* form (see (52)), and in 1340 in its adjectival form (see (53)). Its intensifier use is fairly recent. The first attested use in the OED (2007 C.2.a) is from 1508 (see (54)).

(52) c1225: Lokið hu *propreliche* þe lauedi in canticis..leareð ow bi hire saȝe hu ȝe schule seggen (*Ancrene Riwle* (Cleo. C.vi) 78).

(53) 1340: Ich am þet am..amang alle þe heȝe names of oure lhorde, þis is þe uerste and þe mest *propre* (*Ayenbite of Inwyt* 103).

(54) Intensifier *proper* in the OED

a. 1508: *Propir* schene schane y^e^ son. (*Golagros & Gawane* (Chepman & Myllar) sig. av^v^ 103)

b. 1525: He lukit to his lykame..So *propir* plesand of prent (R. Holland *Bk. Howlat* l. 901 in W. A. Craigie *Asloan MS* (1925) II 123.)

In Present-Day English, it can function as an adjective, with meanings related to appropriateness and aptness, possession, and accuracy (see e.g. (55)). As an adverb, *proper* functions primarily as an intensifier meaning 'thoroughly; extremely; correctly' (see e.g. (56)),[51] but can also be interpreted with a manner meaning referring to 'using correct, approved, or refined language, pronunciation'. Both adverbial uses are labelled 'colloquial' in the dictionary entry. Surprisingly, its emphasiser use (see e.g. (57)), further studied in Chapter 7, does not feature in the OED at all.

(55) Adjective *proper*

a. He was like a *proper* championship striker (**Tim**, M, 16, Sc02m2_A).

b. So there's a big, it's a big ar-, not a *proper* argument but you know what I mean (Sarah, F, 19, 2017_SEL2091_078_A).

c. Maybes, maybes saying it's not *proper* English is a bit unfair (**Jon**, M, 12, Ccc05m1_B).

d. She'll tell us [=me] that I speak like a *proper* Geordie (**Laura**, F, 14, Ccc03f1_A).

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[51] Its cognate in Italian *proprio* is used as: (i) an intensifier (e.g. *Mi ha fatto proprio piacere incontrarti* ('It's been *great* pleasure to meet you'); *È stata proprio brava* ('She's been *really* great'); *È un lavoro fatto proprio bene* ('It's a job that has been done *very* well')); (ii) an emphatic response (e.g. *-Siete stati voi? -Proprio* ('-Have you been there? -*Definitely*')) and (iii) and emphasiser in other contexts (e.g. *Non mi è proprio piaciuto* ('I haven't liked it *at all*')) (examples from *Dizionario Il Corriere* 2018, *Dizionario Internazionale* 2020, *Dizionario La Repubblica* 2018, and *Garzanti Linguistica* 2020). This suggests one possible grammaticalisation pathway for *proper* in English.

(56) Booster *proper*

a. She was *proper* hungover (**Jeremy**, M, 19, 2017_SEL2091_021_A).

b. I was howling, like that was *proper* hilarious (**Claire**, F, 17, Ben03f2_A).

c. I was a *proper* shy kid (**Tim**, M, 16, Sc02m2_A).

d. I'm *proper* paranoid coz you know how I'm very forgetful (**Mick**, M, 20, 2017_SEl2091_032_A).

(57) Emphasiser *proper*

a. I think it's hilarious sometimes like when they *proper* argue with each other (**Claire**, F, 16, Ben03f2_A).

b. I got like *proper* bullied off them, to be honest (**Ian**, M, 19, 2017_SEL2091_021_B).

Proper does not feature in Mustanoja's (1960: 316–30) study of degree adverbs in Middle English and its intensifier meaning is not included in the *Middle English Compendium* (MEC Online, 2019). Regarding the regional distribution of *proper* in English, the *English Dialect Dictionary* entry (Wright 1989-1905) shows that it is exclusive to British English and that it is spread across different regions in England, such as Northumberland, Lancashire, Nottingham, Gloucestershire, Oxfordshire, Somerset, or Essex. Results from the BNC depict the same spread (Stratton 2020b: 6), and Núñez-Pertejo and Palacios-Martínez (2018) studied it as a variant particular to young speakers of Multicultural London English.

Tyneside is not explicitly mentioned in any of those studies. However, it was found to be an emerging variant in the region in the 2000s (Barnfield and Buchstaller 2010: 272) and it constitutes 4.9% of the boosters variable in this project's interviews. As argued in Section 3.1.3, *proper* seems to have developed local ties with the area and has become a prominent linguistic feature in Geordie imagery. Based on the available data, it appears that *proper* might have developed this local value recently, since it was not a variant in the 1970s or 90s in Tyneside. The argument here is not that *proper* is a booster unique to Tyneside but that it holds certain degree of local prestige that might motivate its more frequent use in Tyneside data. This is a crucial point that might help explain the social distribution of the variant in the sample.

Proper is an infrequent booster in all surveyed regions. However, Stratton (2020b: 3, 7) reported a statistically significant increase in frequency between 1994 and 2014 in the BNC data. *Proper* had a frequency index of 0.06 per 100,000 words in 1994 that went up to 0.70 in 2014. In this project's dataset, *proper* shows a frequency index of 20.52 per 100,000 words. Although frequency comparisons across corpora are not fully reliable mainly because of differing word-count methods, there is quite a notable increase. In the Tyneside data from 2007/8, *proper* accounts for 2.6% of boosters in predicative contexts, whereas the proportion of *proper* in the same delimited variable in the 2017-19 sample of teenagers is 4.2%. There are three possible explanations for this

increase in frequency that are not mutually exclusive: (a) the form has gained popularity in the last decade; (b) Tyneside speakers have a higher rate of *proper*, and (c) there are other reasons that make teenagers in particular use this form more frequently.

Support for the first explanation simply transpires from the diachronic comparison of figures. The second explanation could be supported by the idea that *proper* is tightly linked to local identity in Tyneside. Finally, exploring the third option is one of the main aims of this section, that is, analysing what motivates its use in this dataset. The explanation for the frequency increase might be most likely a combination of those three factors.

The discussion of results is structured as follows. First, there will be a brief summary of the trends presented in Section 6.1 regarding the distribution of *proper*. Second, there will be a discussion of the results for each constraint, based on the rank provided by the random forest test and supported by the significance results from the multivariate analysis. Individual speakers, gender, and age will be explored, and their discussions are largely intertwined. Third, there will be a discussion of the linguistic distribution of *proper* according to the type of adjective with which it collocates in this sample. All of the claims here are to be interpreted with caution since the token count is very low (n=28 in predicative contexts).

Proper is the fourth most frequent booster variant in the speech of Tyneside teenagers in this study. Its use is heavily concentrated in the speech of male speakers, who use it at the same rate as *very*. *Proper* is practically exclusive to participants in the 16-18 and 19-20 age groups, and gender differences in its use are starker in the oldest group. In terms of linguistic constraints, *proper* modifies adjectives in both predicative and attributive positions, yet it favours the former. It collocates with adjectives in six out of nine categories, in the order: propensity > value > physical property > origin > 'other' > colour. Regarding evaluative prosody, *proper* favours negative adjectives, although it collocates with all three types. Similar to the other booster variants, it collocates with emotional scalar adjectives much more frequently than with non-emotional, extreme, or limit adjectives.

Despite these trends and the significance of the constraints on the variable overall, none of the predictors reach statistical significance for the distribution of *proper* in particular, according to the mixed-effects model. This dovetails with the results from the random forest test, which ranked individual speaker preferences as a more relevant constraint than any other factors. In other words, *proper* cannot be considered to be a booster strongly associated with male or older teenagers, but rather characteristic of certain speakers, which are in the majority male and older. This leads to discuss what makes users of *proper* in the sample different from the others. A qualitative analysis of the comments and attitudes expressed in the interviews suggests that *proper* strongly correlates

with the expression of masculinity —similar to the case of utterance-final tags in London teen talk (Pichler 2020)— and with a more local way of speaking. Let us unravel these hypotheses.

Very few girls in the sample use the booster *proper* and only Charlotte (F, 18) uses it at a considerable rate.[52] For example, Caroline (F, 15) only uses the form to refer to boys trying to look tough by being or acting 'proper Geordie'. The use of *proper* does not actually characterise the way she talks or behaves. Instead, it illustrates a three-way connection between *proper*, toughness (or masculinity), and 'Geordieness'. Charlotte, on the other hand, is a girl that identifies as being closer to boys, because, among other things, she has grown up surrounded by them, and is in a class that she considers to be typically male-focused, Painting and Decorating. There are other girls in the sample who explicitly mention closer social affiliation to boys than to girls (e.g. Megan, Beth, and Melissa), yet they do not use *proper* (except for the one token in Beth's interview). Charlotte also uses more local forms than other female participants (see (58)-(62)), which reflects both a more local way of speaking and in part, some degree of masculinity, since the use of local features has been typically associated with male speech in previous research and, as such, argued to be more masculine-sounding (Eckert 2011: 387; Labov 1990: 367).

(58) She's like… looked to *wuh* [=us], it's like w- we're here and this man just sitting there that kept singing, the kids behind… I was like 'oh *howay* my head's killing me already, like stop it'.

(59) *Ah knaa* [=I know], we went 'shut up, *man*' [to a woman].

(60) *Ee*, I like this one, this one, this one, this one.

(61) I couldn't believe when like Gaz's saying he's having a baby. I was like *proper* shocked, *me*.

(62) When he sort of click the thing I was like 'w- what the hell is he *deeing, like*?'

The other nine users of *proper* in the sample are boys. Four of them belong to the 16-18 age group: Lewis, James, Tim, and Tristan. They are also the only users of *canny*, another degree modifier with strong links to masculinity and local identity. The comments and topics in their interviews point at masculine-acting attitudes and behaviours. Tim and Tristan's conversation revolves around Newcastle United for quite a while, reflecting strong bonds with their local identity. They explicitly comment on their pride of speaking Geordie, and Tristan in particular comments on gender differences in the use of local forms (see (63)). Similarly, Lewis and James note that girls 'try to be good with their language' and speak more standard in comparison with

[52] Beth, Caroline, Claire, and Sarah also use *proper*, although it constitutes minimal proportions of their systems of boosters (1.7%, 15.8%, 2.4%, and 1.9% respectively) in comparison with Charlotte's (37.5%). Although Caroline and Charlotte have the same token count of *proper* (*n*=3), Caroline uses it in a very specific context, while for Charlotte it constitutes 37.5% of her whole variable.

boys (see (64)). In their speech, the expressions of masculinity and Geordieness seem to feed into each other, and, in turn, might explain the use of *proper*.

(63) **Tristan**: Well, my mam hates it when I say words like 'aye' or 'divn't knaa' or whatever. She goes, she goes 'don't say that' and then I say 'well, mam you know, I'm from here' but she hates it and she's from here as well so I really don't understand that. I think she's like try- I think she's a firm believer in this whole like 'standard English gives you like a better status' so she's like 'oh we don't say that, Tristan, we say (mimics posh accent) "yes" or "I do not know"' or whatever. Yeah and I'm like 'no I don't want to say that'. Even though I wanted to, I couldn't help it sometimes, they just come out, you know what I mean? […] Then with me [=my] dad, I'm allowed to say it, me [=my] dad's fine, me [=my] dad's a Geordie […]
Tim: It's not like even you do it on purpose, it's like you'll just say it and it comes out natural, isn't it?
Tristan: It's just instinct, isn't it? (Sc02m2)

(64) **Lewis**: I'd say they're [=girls] more like trying to trying to be good with their language.
James: […] Like girls try to be… stick more standard I'd say […] like girls try to stick more to standard whereas boys all like swear and that, more that's like I'd say that's true I think (Sc01m2).

The trends are replicated in the qualitative analysis of the interviews of the 19-20 boys who use *proper*: Mick, Chris, Jeremy, Ian, and Jack. Mick and Chris were interviewed together, and so were Jeremy and Ian.

The expression of masculinity and toughness is especially noticeable in Mick's conversation with Chris. They make constant references to the concepts of 'top boys' and 'top dogs' as in young men who are known for their 'laddish' behaviour, including casual sex, binge drinking, taking drugs, or completing eating and drinking challenges. Their use of language when talking about women and their sexual experiences with them is disrespectful. There is a sense in their conversation that the boys want to appear as masculine as possible when talking to their peers, and even the interviewer (a friend of theirs) is drawn into this. It is not coincidental that this attitude correlates with the use, albeit minimal, of *proper*. The following excerpts exemplify these observations.

(65) **Mick**: Warren was like 'oh Alan I've brought her back for you, you should shag her', and so, it was whiteying [=being sick off alcohol or drugs] everywhere. […]
Chris: But er I was like hugging into Cecil, and we were like 'oh Cecil are you gonna shag her tonight?' […]
Mick: Probably could've to be fair, she was… Warren could've shagged her if he wanted (2017_SEL2091_032).

(66) The whole way through I was dipping myself like, calling dips on like two females, coz apparently of course two females are gonna shag someone sometime who are related (**Mick**, M, 20, 2017_SEL2091_032_A).

(67) When I went to (unclear), I done [=did] two bottles, back to back, and I whiteyed everywhere and just passed out (Mick laughs) (**Chris**, 2017_SEL2091_032_B).

(68) **Mick**: Strawpedoing's my forte, I would say.
Chris: Strawpedoing WKDs in Flares.
M: Oh, being a top boy, downing WKDs (2017_SEL2091_032).

(69) **Mick**: So are you going to do a challenge? (laugh)
Chris: Right, I might, I'm with the lads so I'll have to step up, do you know what I mean? (2017_SEL2091_032_A)

In the case of Jeremy, Ian, and Jack, it is their local pride rather than their expression of masculinity that transpires more evidently from the interviews. Jeremy and Ian explain at length why they like Newcastle so much, and agree that Newcastle is a 'pretty good place to live'. They describe the Geordie accent as 'friendly' and 'inviting', and Jeremy criticises his sisters for having picked up Americanisms. Ian laughs at his sister for trying to put on 'a posh voice'. Jack and his friend Callum also express their liking for the city and spend a great part of the conversation speaking about their bond with Newcastle United. Their local pride shows through when they explain with great detail to the interviewer how good stotties are.[53] It could also be argued that there is a strong masculine norm-enforcing character to Jack and Callum's description of the challenges they set each other in their 'only-lads' holidays in Scotland, which includes e.g. testing who would last the longest neck deep in sea water in winter. Similar to all the other users of *proper*, Jeremy, Ian, and Jack also make abundant use of other local words like *aye*, *class*, *lifting*, *lush*, *mint*, and local features like vocative *man*, right dislocation, and final *like*. The following excerpts illustrate some of these observations:

(70) I love Newcastle. I honestly think it's the best city in England, you know? (**Jeremy**, M, 19, SEL2091_021_A)

(71) There's a few like photo albums of that, *like* (**Ian**, M, 19, SEL2091_021_B)

(72) I think it's a *class* number, *me* (**Jeremy**, M, 19, SEL2091_021_A)

(73) *Aye*, you can, you can like other teams but you've got to to actually support them, it's got to be where you're from (**Jack**, M, 19, SEL2091_043_A).

(74) *Man*, not a chance (**Jack**, M, 19, SEL2091_043_A).

The qualitative analysis of speakers has shown that *proper* is characteristic of either girls that have had strong masculine influences in their upbringing (like Charlotte) or boys who tend to portray an image of masculinity and toughness. In all cases, and most notably, *proper* correlates

[53] A round bread typical of the area.

with a strong local identity and the occurrence of other local features. Let us now look at how these observations connect with the gender and age distribution of the form.

Proper is predominantly used by male speakers, with the exception of Charlotte. Overall, gender differences in booster variation in this sample are starker in the 19-20 age group. Since the proportions of *really* and *so* are almost identical across genders in that age group, what explains the gender effect is the use of *proper* by the 19-20 boys. As strong as this association is here, this project is the first of the main studies on the variant that attests it. Gender differences were minimal in both MLE (Núñez-Pertejo and Palacios-Martínez 2018: 138) and the BNC (Stratton 2020b: 6). In Tyneside, the analysis of the dataset provided by Buchstaller shows that six out of eight tokens of *proper* actually occurred in female speech. While the low token count in the 2007/8 Tyneside data prevents one from drawing solid conclusions, it would not be too much of a stretch to suggest that the rise in frequency of the form was accompanied by a development of local indexicality, and this, in turn, might have motivated an association with masculinity or toughness, whether conscious or not.

In terms of age, *proper* is exclusive to the two older groups in the sample: 16-18 and 19-20. The absence of *proper* in the repertoire of boys aged 12 to 15 can correspond with two different phenomena. On the one hand, it can be a case of age-grading, whereby the variant is not present in their system simply because younger speakers have more limited repertoires (see e.g. Aitchison 1994: 16–19; Nippold 2000: 15). When they grow up, their use of the form might increase. On the other hand, the fact that younger speakers do not use *proper* could be evidence of language change in apparent-time, forecasting a decrease or even the disappearance of the form's use.

As plausible as both hypotheses are, there is more evidence to support the age-grading idea. First, in this dataset, younger participants tend to intensify slightly less often and they generally show narrower internal variation in terms of boosters. Second, a diachronic comparison of studies has shown a steady increase in the frequency of *proper,* particularly among the young. It would not be too strange for the trend to continue its course since no other fashionable variants have arisen lately to take its spot. Third, it might be the case that speakers in the 16-20 age bracket are more concerned with the expression of masculinity than those aged 15 or below, which in turn might motivate the use of *proper*. This idea is based on the argument that older teenagers, who would have completed the process of puberty, have a heightened sense of maleness, both biologically and culturally (see Eckert 2008, 2011 for a detailed description of the development of gender roles and identities in adolescence).

The linguistic distribution of booster *proper* points at a fairly advanced stage of grammaticalisation of the form. Semantic category, evaluative prosody, and syntactic position are

here the most relevant factors to discuss. First, the fact that *proper* modifies adjectives of six out of nine different semantic categories is very telling *per se*, as wide collocability is often evidence of grammaticalisation. Also, the range of collocations has increased from previous studies. Propensity and value adjectives were the main ones intensified by *proper* in the speech of young speakers in London (Núñez-Pertejo and Palacios-Martínez 2018: 136), and the only ones in the 2007/8 Tyneside data. Stratton (2020b: 5) found an increase in the frequency of physical property collocates from 1994 to 2014, together with a spread over more categories. The speech of Tyneside teenagers demonstrates that this trend has carried on, and that it constitutes a clear case of generalisation, that is, extension to more contexts, possibly triggered by further loss of semantic meaning.

Second, *proper* in this study collocates with all three types of evaluative prosody, yet it is more commonly found in collocations with negative adjectives (39% of the times), as also found in previous research (Núñez-Pertejo and Palacios-Martínez 2018: 146; Stratton 2020b: 3). While Núñez-Pertejo and Palacios-Martínez (2018: 146) suggested that this might have been an example of teenagers playing with opposites, this is unlikely to be the case, since the BNC data reported the same pattern in speakers between 19 and 39 years old. It was earlier suggested in this study that the non-harmonic collocation of *proper* with negative adjectives could be a strategy for heightened expressivity, yet this claim is likewise difficult to sustain. The preference for negative adjectives is simply another example and consequence of semantic attrition, as the adjective from which the intensifier derived has positive prosody. Were this trend to continue in the future, *proper* could end up specialising in boosting negative adjectives.

Third, *proper* occurs much more frequently with predicative adjectives (75.7% of the times). It has been hypothesised that newer and less grammaticalised variants tend to occur with attributive adjectives first and then expand to predicative ones (Ito and Tagliamonte 2003: 271). The distribution attested in this dataset follows on the shift from attributive to predicative positions documented in the BNC (Stratton 2020b: 5). Again, this demonstrates extension, and the establishment of *proper* as an intensifier.

The data from the interviews with Tyneside teenagers has yielded very relevant findings regarding *proper*. The importance of individual speaker preferences highlighted that *proper* might be a marker of masculinity and Geordieness. The commodification of the form and its distribution in this dataset constitute solid evidence that *proper*, albeit not unique to Tyneside, holds local prestige in the region. In sum, *proper* appears to index an attitude rather than a social category. This extra-linguistic connotation explains the gender and age distribution of the variant in the sample. The form is infrequent, yet it has become more and more frequent in the last twenty years. The

increase in frequency of *proper* goes hand in hand with an advancement in the grammaticalisation path, as attested by the diachronic (i) widening of its collocability, (ii) loss of original positive prosody and (iii) shift to predicative position.

Chapter 7
Emphasisers

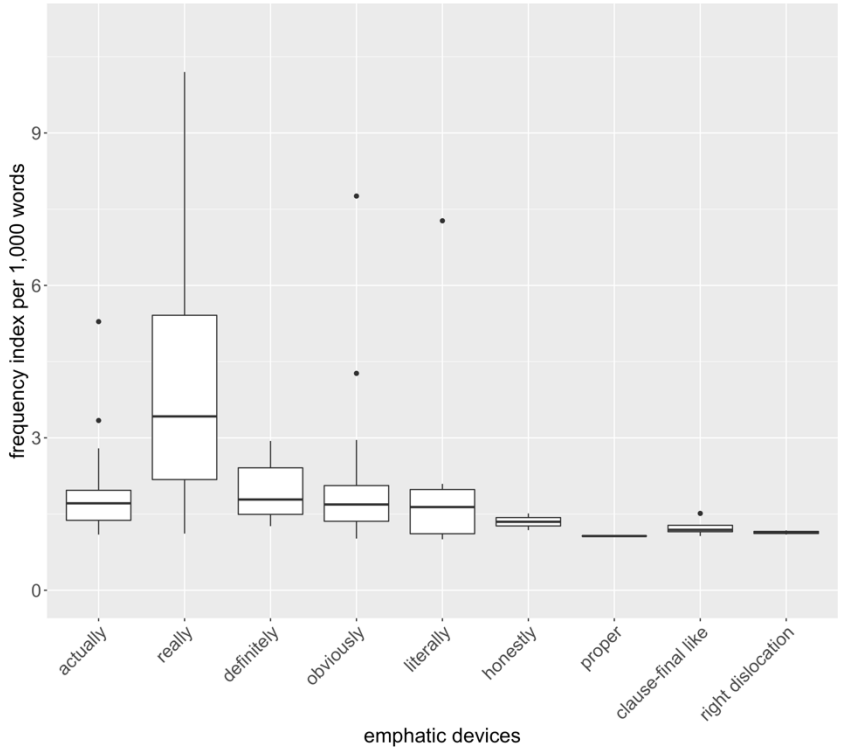
Chapter 7 concerns the presentation and discussion of the emphasiser results. Section 7.1 presents the general distribution of the different emphatic devices considered in this project. In Section 7.2, frequency indices are presented and interpreted per emphasiser, which allows for a finer analysis of the distribution of their positions, the type of utterance in which they occur, and, most importantly, the discourse-pragmatic functions they perform. In all cases, results are taken to be most reliable when excluding outliers. Nevertheless, the ways in which outlier speakers use the emphasisers in question are also briefly discussed (Jon and Ian for *obviously*, and Claire for *literally*). Section 7.3 provides a qualitative analysis of the results presented in the first two sections. Although all forms and features here have a core shared function of emphasis, they are fulfilling different sub-functions. For this reason, this section is organised by themes, so that emphasisers performing similar contextual functions can be compared against each other. This helps in understanding what emphatic functions are associated with the discourse-pragmatic styles of different social categories or individual speakers in this sample of Tyneside teenagers.

7.1. Descriptive frequencies of general form distribution

The first set of results that will be presented and interpreted is the general frequency of each emphasiser in the sample. It is important to first analyse frequencies across individual speakers, which accounts for the particularities of individual speech styles that might not conform to the general trends (i.e. outliers). Outliers are data points, in this case speakers, with unusual frequencies of use of certain forms. Figure 39 plots the speaker distribution of each emphatic device. [54]

[54] Frequency indices lower than 1 have been omitted from this plot, since they account for token counts of 3 or lower and can blur the distribution of forms across speakers. This omission also means that infrequent emphasisers are not displayed (*surely, clearly, genuinely, indeed, absolutely, completely* and *totally*). If these lower frequencies are included, the boxplot displays several more outliers in addition to the ones shown in the plot. However, when looking at raw figures, these speakers do not vary much from other speakers. This demonstrates the inadequacy of a strictly quantitative approach to the study of emphasisers, especially when applied to small speaker samples. The speakers that have been considered outliers here are those that are displayed as such both when frequency indices below 1 are omitted (as in Figure 39) and included.

Figure 39. Distribution of emphatic devices across speakers (see tables of all graphs in this Chapter in Appendix XIII)



There are two speakers who use *actually* with an unusually high frequency: Claire (3.34) and Abbie (5.28). The same applies in the case of *obviously*: Ian uses it at a rate of 4.27 per 1,000 words, and Jon, 7.75. Claire also uses *literally* with a saliently high frequency (7.27). Finally, the dot above clause-final *like* represents Emily, who uses this feature at a frequency of 1.51.

These speakers stand out from the general trend of the sample by using particular emphasisers much more frequently. When grouped together in their respective age and gender groups, they might skew results (e.g. *literally* might display a very high frequency in the female cohort and 16-18 age group because Claire (F, 17) in particular uses it very often). In the analysis of boosters in Chapter 6, outliers are accounted for by means of statistical tests, the mixed-effects model being the most accurate one. Since there are no statistical tests run on the emphasiser data, the most reliable way of presenting results is by excluding outliers from the respective frequency counts. Frequency indices in graphs will be presented excluding outliers per emphasiser, and

indices including them are bracketed in tables.[55,56] The use that outliers make of the respective emphasisers is analysed in more detail in the sections devoted specifically to each form.

Let us now look at the general distribution of emphatic devices in the sample of Tyneside teenagers, displayed below in Table 29. The possible reasons that explain the high or low frequency per emphasiser are explored in their respective sections later in this chapter.

Table 29. Frequency indices per 1,000 words of emphatic devices in the sample (from least to most frequent)

Emphatic device	N[57]	Frequency index[58]
indeed	1	0.01
surely	2	0.01
clearly	3	0.02
genuinely	6	0.03
totally	6	0.03
completely	8	0.04
absolutely	13	0.07
swearword	14	0.08
proper	17	0.09
honestly	42	0.23
right dislocation	42	0.23
clause-final like	70	0.39
literally	123	0.49 (0.68)
definitely	106	0.59
obviously	225	0.92 (1.25)
actually	246	1.17 (1.36)
really	666	3.69

Really (3.69, *n*=666) is by far the most frequent emphasiser in this dataset. The frequency of its occurrence in any non-adjectival context mirror those of pre-adjectival booster *really*,

[55] The only exception is Emily, the outlier for clause-final *like*. Omitting her could indeed skew results the other way around, given the low frequency of the feature overall and the fact that Emily's index is not that far off the rest of the speakers (1.51 for Emily compared with 1.20 for Tristan, the second-most frequent user).

[56] High-frequency speakers are only excluded from the indices of the emphasiser(s) they use with unusual frequency and from their respective social and functional categories. In order to calculate frequency indices without outliers, both the token count and word count of the speakers were deducted from the original calculation. The same applies per age group, gender, and linguistic predictor: all word and token counts are adjusted.

[57] In this table and any following ones, N displays the total number of tokens, including outliers.

[58] Bracketed figures in *actually, obviously* and *literally* show the frequency index including outliers.

analysed in Chapter 6. *Actually* (1.17, *n*=246) is the second most-frequent emphasiser. The high frequency of both *actually* and *really* among young speakers has been attested in other studies (e.g. Barbieri 2008: 74; Waters 2008: 35).

Obviously (0.92, *n*=225) is third in the rank, far ahead of the other evidential in the list, *clearly* (0.02, *n*=3), which ties in with previous research attesting the rise in frequency of the form (Tagliamonte and Smith 2018). *Definitely* ranks fourth at a rate of 0.59 (*n*=106). This is a relatively high frequency, which matches what has been found in other similar cohorts of young speakers (Aijmer 2008: 66; Barbieri 2008: 73; Simon-Vandenbergen and Aijmer 2007a: 422, 2007b: 198). *Definitely* is the only marker of certainty in the list, apart from the highly infrequent *surely* (0.01, *n*=2). *Certainly* does not occur even once, which matches the trends in previous studies of it being more frequent among older speakers and in written discourse (Aijmer 2008: 66; Simon-Vandenbergen and Aijmer 2007a: 422, 2007b: 198). The attrition of the certainty meaning of *definitely* might explain this difference in frequency.

Literally (0.49, *n*=123) is the fifth most-frequent emphasiser. Claire's token count alone accounts for 30% of the total occurrences of *literally* (37 out of 123 tokens), so the frequency index that excludes her is a more accurate representation of its distribution in the sample overall. Excluding Claire, *literally* has a much higher frequency index than the other two style stance markers *honestly* and *genuinely* (0.49 versus 0.23 and 0.03), which could be partly due to the fact that *literally* has developed functions and uses that make it more versatile and multifunctional (e.g. as a marker of agreement), and that these uses are more established than in the cases of *honestly* and *genuinely*.

Moving on to the least frequent emphatic devices, we find the non-adverbial emphatic strategies of clause-final *like* (0.39, *n*=70) and right dislocation (0.23, *n*=42), *honestly*, the group of intensifiers, and other items with marginal frequencies. Clause-final *like* and right dislocation have similar frequencies, yet the former is used slightly more frequently (0.39 v 0.23). Both emphatic devices have ties to the local variety (see §3.2.1), and their relatively low frequencies suggest that these Tyneside teenagers might not be frequent users of local features. This ties in with the argument that the speech of younger speakers shows evidence of dialect levelling and the development of supra-local forms (Durham 2011: 264; see also Britain 2010, Kerswill 2003, and discussion in §2.2). *Honestly* is used at exactly the same rate as right dislocation (0.23). In comparison with *literally*, its local emphatic uses are rare, and it is only set apart by its potential to convey frustration.

Intensifiers in non-adjectival contexts are extremely infrequent. Their function is limited to expressive reinforcement and degree-marking, in which case *really* is preferred. Although there

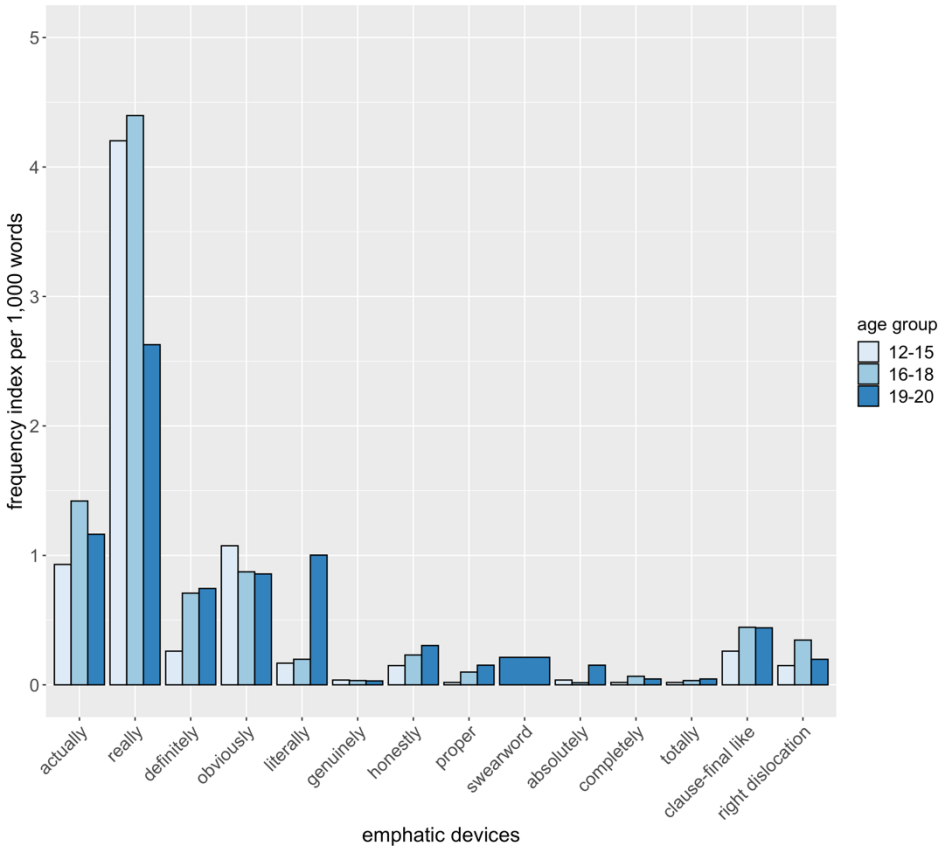
are only 17 tokens of *proper* in non-adjectival contexts, its use as a non-degree-marking emphasiser already sets it apart from other intensifiers that simply cannot perform that function (e.g. *very*) or do not do so in this sample (e.g. *so*). *Clearly, surely,* and *indeed* are extremely infrequent forms and will be omitted in the rest of the frequency results. However, they serve to showcase the frequency differences with items in the same semantic field that have developed further grammaticalised uses (e.g. *clearly* versus *obviously, surely* versus *definitely*, *indeed* versus intensifiers, including *really*). The following section examines frequencies per age group and gender.

7.1.1. Social predictors: age and gender

Emphatic devices and age

As Figure 40 shows, *really* and *actually* are the two most frequent emphasisers for all age groups and *obviously* is the third most frequent for the two younger age groups (see frequency indices in Appendix XIII). *Really* is overwhelmingly more frequent in the speech of the two younger age groups, mirroring the trend found in booster distribution. The 19-to-20-year-old speakers use *obviously* and *literally* at similar rates, although *literally* is more frequent.

Figure 40. Comparison of frequency indices of emphatic devices per age group



Older speakers in the sample seem to use a wider range of emphatic devices, with seven different forms displaying indices of around 0.5 or more. In comparison, teenagers in the 12-15 bracket only use *really, actually* and *obviously* above that threshold, and a similar pattern is found in the 16-18 group. As was found in the study of boosters (see §6.1.3.1), younger teenagers use a more limited repertoire of emphatic resources.

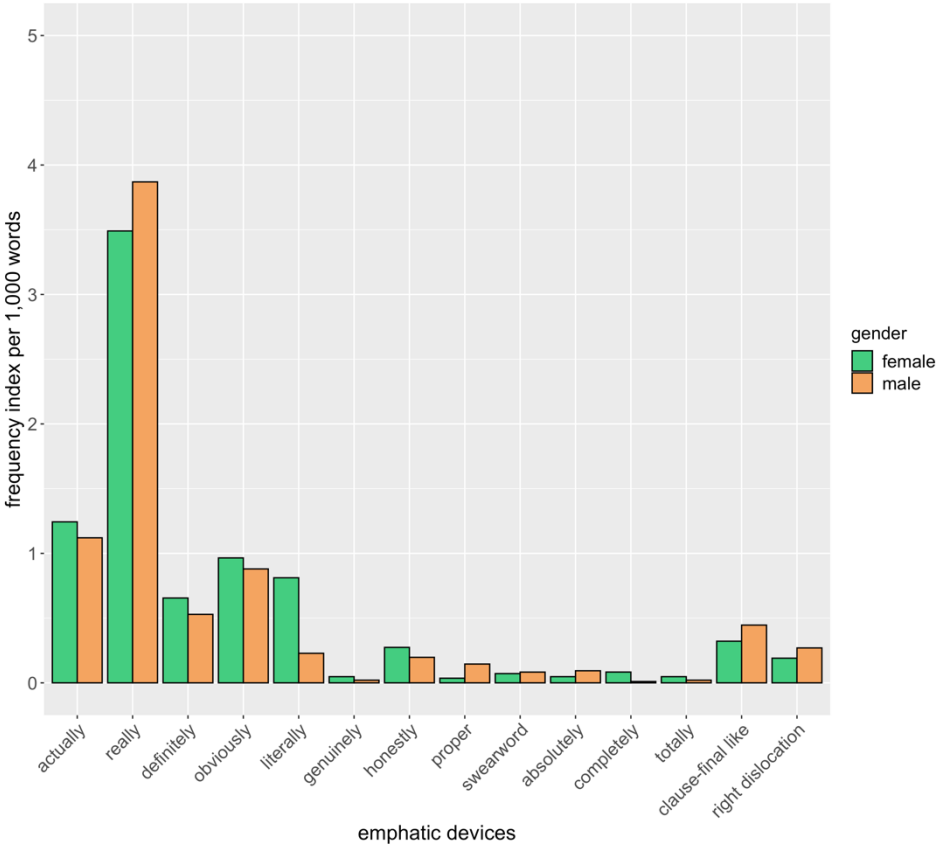
Definitely is markedly more frequent among the two older groups, as are clause-final *like* and *proper*. The pattern of these two latter devices, which carry certain local indexical value (§3.2.1), could suggest that the youngest group of speakers shy away from markedly local emphasisers (in addition to the fact that they use a narrower range of resources). This was indeed found for booster *proper* and modifier *canny* in Sections 6.1.4 and 6.2.4. *Literally* is clearly much more frequent in the speech of speakers aged 19 or 20 (index of 1 versus 0.20 and 0.17). These results suggest that older speakers in the sample are better acquainted and make more use of the grammaticalised meanings of *literally* that make it more frequent overall (see §7.2.5). *Honestly* is also more frequent the older the speaker. Finally, as previously shown in Section 6.1.3.1, swearwords used as emphasisers are specific to the third age group of speakers, who were interviewed by friends.

Three main findings can be derived from the frequency figures of emphasisers for each age group: (i) older speakers use a wider range of emphatic resources; (ii) *really* and *obviously* are more frequent among younger speakers; and (iii) *literally* is markedly more frequent in the 19-20 age group, as are *definitely, honestly* and clause-final *like*, though with less marked differences.

Emphatic devices and gender

Figure 41 shows that both female and male speakers use *really* much more frequently than any other device, followed by *actually* and *obviously*. *Really* is slightly more frequent among the boys in the sample (F 3.49 versus M 3.87), while *actually* is slightly more frequent among girls (F 1.24 versus M 1.12).

Figure 41. Comparison of frequency indices of emphatic devices per gender



Obviously is also more frequent among girls, yet we have to consider that the index for *obviously* in male speech is omitting two speakers, the outliers Ian and Jon. While their inclusion would indeed skew results, the fact that the two speakers that use *obviously* with unusual frequency are male weakens the gender trend. This does not occur in the case of *literally*, which is markedly more frequent among girls in this sample, whether the outlier Claire is included or not (F 0.83 (1.20) v M 0.20). If Claire was included, *literally* would rank higher than *obviously* in female speech, and closer to *actually*.

Tyneside boys use *proper*, clause-final *like*, and right dislocation more frequently than girls. This result replicates previous findings in this same project and other studies on the same features regarding the connections between male speech and local language (e.g. Bartlett 2013: 9; Durham 2011: 276). The gender differences in the use of clause-final *like* are not as big as what Bartlett (2013) found in Tyneside data from the 70s (TLS) and 90s (PVC).

In summary, the rank of top emphasisers (*really* > *actually* > *obviously*) is replicated across genders, with the only difference being that *really* is more frequent among boys and *actually* among girls. *Literally* is unarguably a female emphasiser in this sample, and *obviously* shows a similar yet less strong trend. Emphatic devices that index Tyneside discourse are preferred by male speakers, as expected on the basis of previous research.

7.1.2. Linguistic predictors: type of utterance and position

The results here focus on emphatic adverbs. There are limitations on what they reveal, since they are affected by (i) the number of such utterances in each interview, and (ii) the role that type of utterance and position play in the functions that are performed. For those two reasons as well, the results are presented as raw numbers, since indices calculated with the total word count do not represent accurately the frequency of each form in the different types of utterances and positions. The frequency of occurrence of emphasisers per utterance and position are only relevant when they are matched with the study of functions per form, explored in Section 7.2 below. Table 30 displays the results per type of utterance.

Table 30. Raw count of emphatic devices per type of utterance

Emphasisers	Type of utterance							
	PD	**ND**	**Q**	**R**	**Ph**	**PhN**	**NFC**	**I**
actually	188	36	19	/	2	/	1	/
really	212	322	5	103	14	4	5	1
definitely	49	2	/	45	8	1	/	1
obviously	186	21	/	4	9	4	1	/
literally	101	6	/	10	3	/	1	1
genuinely	3	2	/	1	/	/	/	/
honestly	25	8	1	5	2	/	1	/
proper	14	1	2	/	/	/	/	/
swearwords	12	2	/	/	/	/	/	/
absolutely	10	1	/	2	/	/	/	/
completely	8	/	/	/	/	/	/	/
totally	4	/	/	1	/	1	/	/

(PD = positive declarative, ND = negative declarative, Q = question, R = response, Ph = phrase, PhN = negated phrase, NFC = non-finite clause, I = imperative)

Positive declaratives are the most frequent context for emphasisers to occur, and in most cases the most common context for each individual emphasiser. This is particularly apparent when comparing the frequencies of *actually, definitely, obviously,* and *literally* in positive declaratives against any other context. In contrast, *really* is considerably more frequent in negative declaratives, where no other emphasiser is used with notable frequency. This pattern is tightly linked to the most common function of *really* in this dataset, truth-insistent, as explored in Section 7.2.2. *Really* is also the most frequent emphasiser in almost every other context, and is indeed the only emphasiser that occurs in every type of utterance. Understandably, this flexibility plays a major role in its higher frequency overall, and demonstrates advanced grammaticalisation —(i) more grammaticalised units collocate more widely (Hopper and Traugott 2003: 101), and (ii) the wider a unit collocates, the more frequent it will be (Bybee 2008: 605). Only in questions does *actually* occur more frequently than *really*, a context where both emphasisers convey very similar meanings (mirativity, scepticism).

As a response, *really* is only used in its stand-alone interrogative form *really?* or the fixed construction *not really* (except (1) below). The surprise reaction that *really?* conveys is an exclusive feature of *really*, with only the medial use of *actually* in questions being similar. This exclusivity is again behind its higher frequency.

(1) **Jane**: I wanna do that (laughs) can you…
Interviewer: go to a rugby match?
Emily: come with us next time we go to the rugby.
J: I actually will.
E: Yeah. *Really*. I'll let you know (2017_SEL2091_080).

The other response markers signal either agreement or confirmation. In that sense, *definitely* appears to be much more frequent than any other emphasiser. The index of response *literally*, albeit low, evidences advanced grammaticalization (see §7.2.5) The other types of utterances are extremely rare contexts for emphasisers: phrases, negated phrases, non-finite clauses, and imperatives. Table 31 displays the results for position.

Table 31. Raw count of emphatic devices per position

Emphasisers	Position				
	LP	**Medial**	**RP**	**S-A**	**Other**
actually	32	181	29	/	4
really	6	398	150	103	9
definitely	3	46	6	44	7
obviously	149	52	9	4	11

literally	25	71	16	10	1
genuinely	/	5	/	1	/
honestly	24	9	3	5	1
proper	/	17	/	/	/
swearwords	/	14	/	/	/
absolutely	/	11	/	2	/
completely	/	8	/	/	/
totally	/	4	/	1	1

(LP = left periphery; RP = right periphery; S-A = stand-alone; Other = other positions, particularly in phrasal contexts).

Although sentence adverbs are traditionally characterised as occurring in the peripheries (see §3.2), medial position seems to be the most common locus in this sample. It is also the only position where all emphasisers are found. *Proper* and swearwords only occur in medial position, and, although the group of maximisers can be used as stand-alone responses, their occurrence in non-medial contexts is marginal. Medial position is also greatly favoured by *actually, really,* and *literally*. In contrast, *definitely* is used almost at the same rate as a stand-alone item (i.e. responses) and *obviously* and *honestly* occur more than twice as often in the left periphery. This distribution suggests that *actually, really, definitely* and *literally* tend to have local scope, whereas *obviously* and *honestly* behave more like prototypical sentence adverbs, that is, with global scope.

Speakers in the sample show a notable predilection for using *obviously* in clause-initial position (LP, *n*=149), which is associated with textual and subjective uses of the form (Beeching and Detges 2014: 11; Cheshire 2016: 257). The move of *obviously* from clause-internal positions as a manner adverb to peripheral position is evidence of grammaticalisation (see Swan 1988: 8, and discussion in §4.5). In fact, LP *obviously* was also found to be notably frequent among COLT teenagers (Aijmer 2008: 80).

7.2. Descriptive frequencies and functions per emphatic device

The results regarding both social and linguistic predictors are better understood by exploring the distribution of functions per emphatic device. The results consider the simultaneous multifunctionality of some devices. In some cases, one single token has been coded as performing two or even three functions, either because it was ambiguous or because it could be understood as performing several functions at the same time. Thus, there will appear to be a higher total number of tokens per emphasiser, simply because there are tokens that are counted twice or three times if they are considered to be multifunctional. As in previous sections, frequency indices are reported without outliers, and outlier results are explored separately. Note that *actually* and *definitely*

are not explored in depth here due to the characteristic contrastive overtone of *actually*, and the lack of revealing findings in their study. Nevertheless, further details of these forms can be consulted in Appendices XIV and XV respectively.

7.2.1. *Actually*

Actually is the second most common emphasiser in the set and its medial, non-linking, use is the most commonly exploited. *Actually* is mainly used as a mirative emphasiser with local scope, a function that has also delexicalised in some very particular contexts into a reinforcer with no contrastive overtone (e.g. (2), (3), and (4)). This use is largely present in the speech of both genders and all age groups, but it is even more frequent among girls, and speakers aged 16 to 18. It demonstrates a conversational style rich in expressivity and speaker's involvement.

(2) I *actually* really like gin and tonic now (**Jane**, F, 19, 2017_SEL2091_080_A).

(3) I was howling, like that was proper hilarious. He was like *actually* like traumatised (laughs) (**Claire**, F, 17, Ben03f2_A).

(4) [Phil is speaking about a Sunderland match]
Phil: Chris Maguire scored an own goal (laughs) [**Interviewer**: Oh (laughs)]. Still won two one, though [**I**: Okay] and stunk.
I: What stunk? The stadium? The match?
P: Like the stadium (I and P laugh). It *actually* did, you know? (Ccc01m1).

The second most common function of *actually* is that of introducing a reformulation or admitting lack of knowledge (e.g. (5) and (6)). This shows an inclination of this cohort to commit to the accuracy of their statements in terms of truthfulness and adjustment to reality, contrary to claims that teenagers are not entirely concerned about conversational politeness (Andersen 2001: 13). Self-repair/modesty *actually* is more frequent the older the speaker, and slightly more common among boys.

(5) [Beth and Melissa are talking about how they feel embarrassed looking at their high school pictures] I looked like I had, I didn't know what waxing was. *Actually,* no, wait, we used to erm, we would, we would wax erm which is probably too much information (**Beth**, F, 20, 2017_SEL2091_031_A).

(6) [When asked about his favourite TV shows] Peaky Blinders is good, Stranger Things erm… it's hard to name them like on top of my head, *actually*. I don't know why (**James**, M, 17, Sc01m2_B).

Actually is used by both girls and boys in this sample to reinforce their opinions, although they do it by different means: elaboration in the case of girls (e.g. (7)), and self-emphasis in the case of boys (e.g. (8)). The remaining functions are infrequent.

(7) [Samantha and Amber are talking about a classmate who they don't like]
Interviewer: Is that a very annoying classmate?
Samantha: Yeah.
Amber: He's okay. *Actually*, he's okay when you get to know him (Ccc02f1)

(8) **Interviewer**: When was the last time you went camping?
Matthew: Last year. [unclear] this place called Pickering [**I**: Mmm]. That was, that was quite nice, *actually*. It was like good weather (Sc04m2).

7.2.2. *Really*

Type of utterance, position, and breakdown of medial positions

Really is the most frequent emphasiser among the teenager cohort in this project (3.69), more than three times as frequent as the second one, *actually*. It is the only form that occurs in any type of utterance and any position. However, it is markedly more frequent in declaratives, particularly negative ones (negative 1.79 versus positive 1.18), and in medial position (2.21 versus LP 0.03 and RP 0.83). *Really* also occurs with relative frequency as a stand-alone response marker, mainly as question *really?* or the negative answer *not really*.

Table 32. Frequency indices per 1,000 words of *really* per medial position (from least to most frequent)

Medial positions	N	Freq. index
pre-gerund	1	0.01
pre-comparative adjective	2	0.01
pre-pronoun	2	0.01
pre-quantifier	2	0.01
pre-not	2	0.01
pre-noun phrase	7	0.04
pre-prepositional phrase	9	0.05
pre-clause	9	0.05
pre-adjective phrase	10	0.06
pre-adverb	19	0.11
pre-noun	20	0.11
pre-verb	321	1.78
pre-adjective	380	2.11

Table 32 displays the frequency of *really* per medial position. The boosting of adjectives is its most common function and thus position (2.11) (analysed in Chapter 6), which demonstrates an advanced stage of grammaticalisation as a booster. The use of *really* with verbs does not rank too far behind (1.78), and constitutes the most common medial position for the types of functions analysed in this section. As highlighted earlier, post-negator *really* accounts for 235 of the 321 pre-verbal tokens (e.g. (9) and (10)), where it performs a truth-insistent function, as explored below.

(9) I wouldn't *really* bring up inside jokes with me [=my] parents (**Ian**, M, 19, 2017_SEL2091_021_B).

(10) I just divn't [=don't] *really* like him (**Charlotte**, F, 18, Ben03f2_B).

Overview of functions and general distribution

Three overarching types of *really* were identified in Section 3.2.1: reality-attester, booster, and mirative question. Reality-attester *really* has a clear stance meaning of reality that is exploited for at least seven different functions, explored below. Booster *really* is furthest from this reality meaning and simply reinforces the following item, sometimes with scalar meaning if the modified head is gradable. Mirative question *really* refers to the stand-alone use of the form *really?* to express surprise or scepticism. Table 33 reports the frequency of each function.

Table 33. Frequency indices per 1,000 words of the functions of *really* (from least to most frequent)

Functions of ***really***	N	Freq. index
reality (mirative q)	5	0.03
reality (contrastive linking)	19	0.11
stand-alone mirative question	25	0.14
reality[59]	27	0.15
reality (modesty)	33	0.18
reality (closure)	38	0.21
reality (self-emphasis)	57	0.32
reality (restriction/simplification)	58	0.32
booster	102	0.57
reality (truth-insistent/metalinguistic)	349	1.94

In its most common function, really can act locally over the following item to denote how the reality fits into expectations (truth-insistent) or into what the term means or implies (metalinguistic use). In positive utterances, *really* tends to gain a slight contrastive nuance, and can be similar to *literally* and *exactly* (e.g. (11), (12), and (13)).

(11) We used to squabble quite a bit, me and Jason [=his brother], but we're sound now. I'd say that for for the only times he *really* ever embarrassed me was just when we were talking about… and he was just, just a little lad, really (**Callum**, M, 19, 2017_SEL2091_043_B).

[59] These tokens account for cases of reality-attester *really* that could not be classified as performing any of the other sub-functions. For example: *Really*, it depends where you wanna go (**Charlotte**, F, 18, Ben03f2_B).

(12) [Sarah is agreeing with Abbie's comments on wolf packs] They *really* just function in like families (**Sarah**, F, 19, 2017_SEL2091_078_A).

(13) [Megan is talking about a trip to Turkey] I was just like, I was like, six or seven, so I *really* didn't know their religion and I asked for bacon (**Megan**, F, 14, Ccc04f1_A) [also coded as booster *really*].

In negative utterances, truth-insistent *really* falls under the scope of negation and implies that the reality does not quite conform to expectations or to the meaning of the item (metalinguistic).[60] The negative contexts here are specific to (i) *really* between a negated auxiliary and a verb (e.g. (14)), (ii) pre- or post-verbal *really* in clauses with negative forms such as *nobody* or *never* (e.g. (15) and (16)), (iii) pre-verbal *really* in clauses subordinated to negative main clauses (e.g. (17)), and (iv) *really* between negated copular *be* and any other head apart from single adjectives and adverbs (where it is considered a moderator) (e.g. (18) and (19)). Negated *actually* performs a similar function but it occurs much less frequently (only 18 tokens, at a rate of 0.1 per 1,000 words).

(14) I've always taken the mick out of how Americans speak, so it's just weird like actually listening to them and that's how they normally speak. And you can't *really* take the mick out of them when you're there coz if they hear you and then it's like… it gets a bit awkward (**Jon**, M, 12, Ccc05m1_B).

(15) Nobody came *really* from my school, just me (**Dave**, M, 13, Ccc06m1_A).

(16) [Connor is explaining what you learn about in his scouts group] Er, well, it teaches like loads coz you don't in school, so like first aid, coz I've never *really* done that here (**Connor**, M, 17, Sc04m2_B).

(17) People can't understand what I'm saying which I don't think it's *really* that hard (laughs) but… (**Erin**, F, 16, Ben01f2_A).

(18) I guess it's not *really* about popularity, it's just like how confident you are (**Scarlett**, F, 16, Jpa01f2_A).

(19) My little brother, he's only young, he hasn't like… my- my mam and his dad split up but it wasn't *really* like as bad as what happened between my mam and my dad (**Megan**, F, 14, Ccc04f1_A).

The stand-alone response *not really* is included in this function, although this has to be problematised. It can be understood as the hedged counterpart to emphatic negative responses such as *definitely not* or *absolutely not*, and therefore placed at the opposite extreme of emphasis, that is, *not really* is a mitigated response rather than a reinforced one. It could also be argued that the speaker is doing the same as with post-negator *really*: emphasising how reality is not quite what has been said or implied (contrastive meaning) (e.g. (20)). *Not really* may also mark an apologetic

[60] See Diani (2008: 302), Paradis (2003: 202), and Swales and Burke (2003: 16) for a discussion on the possible interpretations of post-negator *really*.

disagreement or correction similar to what *actually* does in some contexts (e.g. (21)). In light of these similarities, *not really* has been included in the analysis and coded as truth-insistent, yet its blurry status as a mitigated response is acknowledged. *Not really* is fairly frequent; used at a rate of 0.42, it would be the third most common function of *really* in this sample if it was to be analysed separately.

(20) **Interviewer**: Have you ever had to change the way you speak?
Ian: No.
Jeremy: No, *not really*. I've er I've never really felt the need to and I wouldn't really know how to (2017_SEL2091_021).

(21) **Interviewer**: Erm how did you get into football?
Jack: He got into it through wanting to have friends (Interviewer laughs).
Callum: Well, no, *not really* [=Well, *actually* that's not how I got into it] (2017_SEL2091_043).

Booster *really* is the second most frequent function in this sample (0.57). Note that this figure does not include pre-adjectival cases for reasons explained previously: if they were included, the total frequency of booster *really* per 1,000 words is 2.67. The index that accounts for the boosting of other parts of speech is 0.57 (e.g. (22)-(25)). Pre-verbal *really* is at times ambiguous between the truth-insistent and booster functions (e.g. (24) and (25)), most likely because one function grammaticalised from the other. Two main differences can be identified: (i) booster *really* has either faint or no links to reality and truthfulness, and (ii) negated *really* is always a case of truth-insistent use (except in pre-adjectival contexts, where it is a moderator, outside this project's object of study). It is not entirely clear whether pre-verbal booster *really* is a bleached version of truth-insistent *really* in the same position or the result of pre-adjectival booster *really* extending to more contexts. The high frequency of both truth-insistent and booster *really* in this sample reflects the emotionally-involved and expressive discourse styles of teenagers (Biber and Finegan 1989: 110; Danesi 1997: 458; Macaulay 2005: 161–69; Stenström 2003: 110–12; Tannen 1984: 30).

(22) I *really* want to go to the Isle of Wight (**Amber**, F, 13, Ccc02f1_B).

(23) My sister, she's *really* into make-up (**Beth**, F, 20, 2017_SEL2091_031_A).

(24) They were on the settee and they were like, they like… he threw him on it and like jumped on him, and the settee, like the back of it was *really* quite hard and it just threw into the wall like that and there was just a massive dint in the wall (**Jeremy**, M, 19, 2017_SEL2091_021_A) [coded as both booster and truth-insistent *really*].

(25) [Dave is recounting a New Zealand v England rugby match]
Dave: Like you know how the New Zealand do the haka do the dance?
Interviewer: Mhmh yeah.

D: They were trying to wash them out by singing songs, like England were trying to like wash them out singing songs, which you are *really* not supposed to do, but they were doing it anyways (Ccc06m1) [coded as both booster and truth-insistent *really*].

The joint third most frequent functions of *really* are self-emphasis, and restriction and simplification. Self-emphatic *really* reinforces an opinion (e.g. (26), (27), and (28)). The reference to reality is purely subjective, and thus *really* adds to the expressivity and the marking of subjective stance in discourse. At a rate of 0.32, *really* is exploited for this function much more frequently than *actually* (0.06), probably because *really* is devoid of the contrastive meaning that characterises *actually*.

(26) *Really*, like honestly, the holidays were expensive (**Declan**, M, 12, Ccc05m1_A).

(27) Nobody messes with me and me [=my] mam, *really* (**Dave**, M, 13, Ccc06m1_A).

(28) She [=her sister] recently got Instagram and she's like a nana on it, *really* (**Lizzie**, F, 17, Nsfc01f2_B).

As a marker of restriction and simplification, speakers in this sample use *really* to delimit the reality to which the statement applies, usually in combination with the restrictive focus particles *just* and *only* (e.g. (29) and (30)) or to mark that the reality is simpler than one might think, that there is a simple answer or justification for some situation (e.g. (31) and (32)). Compared to the uses explained above, this type of *really* simply plays a discourse-management role in setting the context to which statements apply or avoiding unnecessary convoluted answers.

(29) [When asked whether he goes often to the cinema] Only *really* when there's something like out that I like (**James**, M, 17, Sc01m2_B).

(30) In primary the only thing you had to prepare for, *really*, was SATs (**Charlie**, M, 12, Ccc06m1_B).

(31) [When asked about what plans he makes with his family] Go out to the town, it's just anything, *really*, that we can do that w- w- we would find out, then we'll do (**Jon**, M, 12, Ccc05m1_B).

(32) [Tristan is explaining why he doesn't go to school by bike anymore] I just I just felt kind of like dangerous, *really*, like erm I fell off that many times (**Tristan**, M, 17, Sc02m2_B).

Linked to the notion of simplification, closure *really* can mark the end of the turn of the speaker, often implying there is not much else to say about a topic (e.g. (33)-(36)). This use meets a clear textual function and occurs at a rate of 0.21. The reality meaning expressed by closure *really* is faint. It tends to occur following constructions like *that's about it* or non-committal expressions like *not much*, *anything* or *same*.

(33) [James is recounting the time he couldn't use his phone for a month] I know, I just think like 'ah I wish I could message them right now and speak to them' like if I'm not out with them, but that was it, *really* (**James**, M, 17, Sc01m2_B).

(34) [Melissa has been explaining for a while what modules she likes from her English course and why. Her final comment on the topic is the following] If we're going to understand why babies speak a certain way [**Beth**: Yeah], you've got to know what limitations are put there [**B**: Yeah], and that's kind of what it is, *really*, isn't it? (**Melissa**, F, 19, 2017_SEL2091_031_B)

(35) I got used to it and I got like a bit of the accent, but that's it, *really*, just the accents and stuff (**Rebecca**, F, 17, Ben01f2_B).

(36) **Interviewer**: When you go in town, what do you do? where do you go to?
Erin: Eldon Square, go shopping [**I**: Mhmh]. Erm, go for food, I went to Pizza Hut and sometimes the cinema.
I: Right, what about you?
Rebecca: Same, *really*, like shopping and food and stuff (Ben01f2).

Unexplored in previous research on *really*, the relatively high frequency of this use in the current sample (0.21) could tie in with the idea of teenagers being a bit vaguer than adults in their answers (Andersen 2001: 304). This is suggested by the co-occurrence with general extenders such as *and stuff* (e.g. in (35) and (36)), which have been attested to be more frequent in the speech of younger speakers (Pichler and Levey 2011: 454, in Tyneside; Denis 2011: 63; Palacios-Martínez 2011: 2460; Tagliamonte and Denis 2010: 349). However, more often than not, the speakers do give a full answer and closure *really* only marks the end of their turn (e.g. in (33) and (34)).

Modesty-marking (i.e. admitting lack of knowledge) is the next most frequent function at a rate of 0.18 per 1,000 words (e.g. (37) and (38)). Although verbs of cognition are the most common context, modesty *really* also signals a hint of remorse when the speaker admits some wrongdoing or a behaviour that in hindsight they do not deem acceptable (e.g. (39) and (40)).

(37) Dad's got a Welsh background [**Interviewer**: Okay], but I don't really see me [=my] dad, so that's what me [=my] mam said [**I**: Mmm], so I don't, I don't *really* know like I don't *really* know how I s- like… (**Dave**, M, 13, Ccc06m1_A).

(38) [Caroline is talking about what food to take for her camping night out and Megan suggests pot noodles] Erm, I don't know, I *really* don't know, or just a sandwich, I don't know (**Caroline**, F, 15, Ccc04f1_B) [also coded as booster *really*].

(39) I got stung by a bee when I was little but then I'm not scared of them coz they don't do it like intentionally. I was waving a tennis like bat at it so that was my fault, *really* (**James**, M, 17, Sc01m2_B).

(40) When I was like fourteen, fifteen, I had really bad acne and it's just every single person was like 'oh don't squeeze your spots' while I would be just sitting there in class and going pff pff and I shouldn't have, *really*. And I've faced the consequences now of having like scarred skin (**Lizzie**, F, 17, Nsfc01f2_B).

By emphasising a lack of knowledge, *really* can be considered a solidarity marker and a propositional hedge. Modesty *really* and *actually* have very similar rates of occurrence in this sample: 0.18 for *really*, and 0.19 for *actually*. However, they differ slightly in the sense that *really* can also be used to admit wrongdoings (*actually* would not fit in (39) and (40) with the same meaning), while *actually* can introduce self-repair (which *really* cannot).

The two least frequent functions of *really* are the most similar to those of *actually*: *really* for sceptical or surprise questions, and *really* to mark contrastive linking. Both *really* in questions (e.g. (41) and (42)) and the self-contained form *really?* (e.g. (43) and (44)) have a clear mirative meaning. While *really?* is used at a rate of 0.14, *really* in mirative questions is only used at 0.03, slightly lower than *actually* in the same context (0.04).

(41) **Interviewer**: I'm Spanish and I speak Spanish [**Tim**: Oh] so when Ayoze Perez signed in, he didn't know a word of English [**Tristan**: Oh aye], so I was the interpreter.
Tim: You got to meet Pérez?
Tristan: Were you *really*? You met Pérez, did you? (Sc02m2)

(42) [Talking about moving away when they become adults] I'm not sure, really. Coz there's that moving away from family which is like 'do you *really* want to go that far? (**Connor**, M, 17, Sc04m2_B).

(43) **Interviewer**: Do you hang out out- af- erm outside the school?
Amber: Yeah
Samantha: *Really?*
A: Well, once (laughs) (Ccc02f1).

(44) [Callum has just explained that the Pope had visited Whitby]
Jack: So you're, you're telling me the Pope has rocked up to Whitby Abbey and gone 'shall we call it Friday, shall we?' and then just nashed off, gone for fish and chips.
Callum: I'm fairly sure or one of, one of his representatives at least. One of his representatives at least. There was a big thing.
J: *Really?*
C: It was big (2017_SEL2091_043).

Lastly, *really* can express contrast with a previous statement or implied argument (contrastive linking). In this case, *really* serves a textual function and is very similar to mild/linking uses of *actually* (e.g. (45) and (46)).

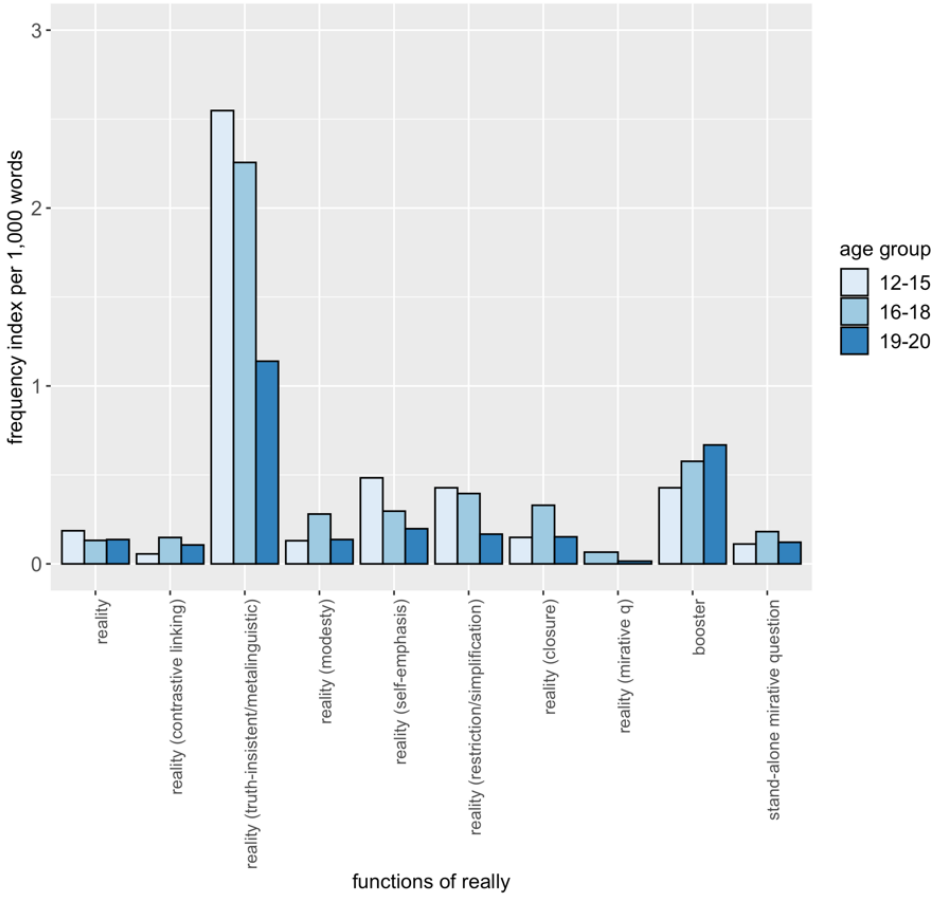
(45) My, my parents aren't that strict, *really*. They just let me get on with things (**Scarlett**, F, 16, Jpa01f2_A) [also coded as self-emphasis].

(46) I thought about going somewhere else for uni and it literally came down to the decision of 'I wanna keep my season ticket', so it's the only reason like why I'm here. I preferred the courses, *really*, at other unis (**Callum**, M, 19, 2017_SEL2091_043_B).

Functions of *really* and age

Really is notably more frequent in the two younger age groups in this sample, mirroring the trend of pre-adjectival booster *really* found in Section 6.2.1. A breakdown of the functions for which each age group uses *really* sheds some light on these results.

Figure 42. Comparison of frequency indices of the functions of *really* per age group



As attested by Figure 42, the truth-insistent and booster uses of *really* are the two most frequent for all age groups. However, truth-insistent *really* is much more frequent in the speech of younger speakers, and the opposite pattern is true of booster *really*. This latter finding is surprising, given the elevated preference that speakers aged 12 to 15 had for pre-adjectival booster *really* in Chapter 6 in comparison with older speakers. This pattern suggests that in the strict context of boosters with predicative adjectives, the variant preferred by the youngest speakers is *really*, whereas the frequency of the form falls behind when other heads are considered.

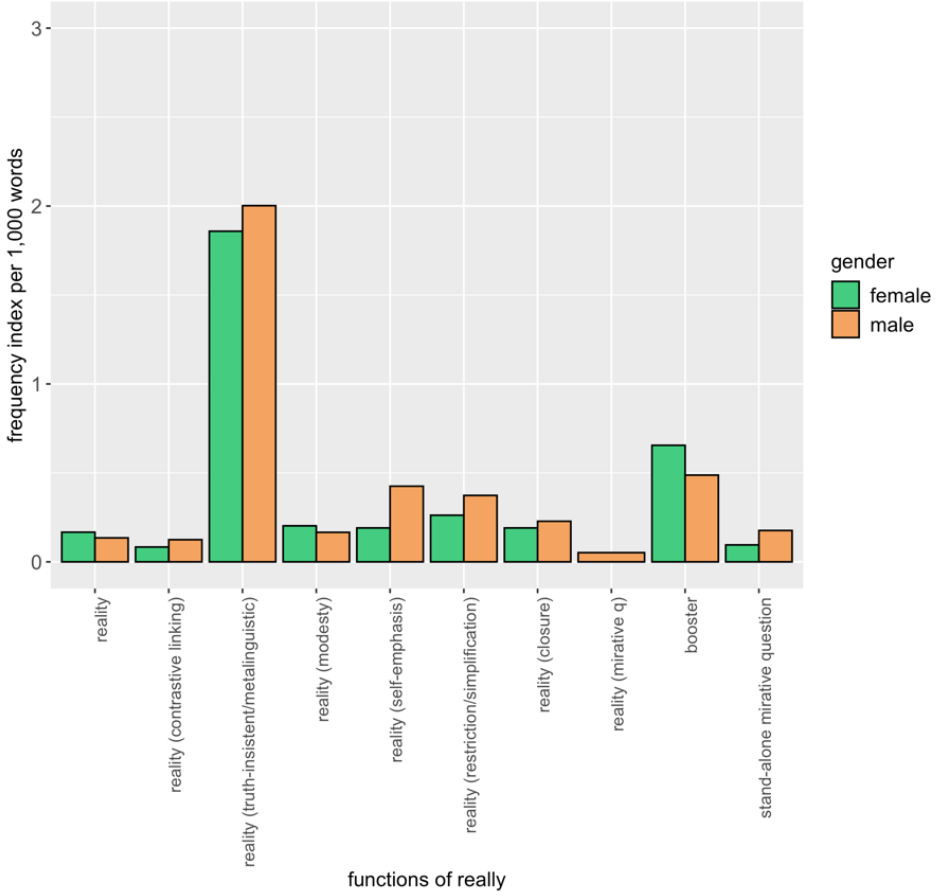
Younger speakers use self-emphatic *really* slightly more frequently than booster *really* (0.48 versus 0.43), and use it with a restriction/simplification function as frequently (0.43). As already noted in Section 7.1.1, teenagers in the 12-15 group appear to favour *really* overall, while speakers in the oldest group use a wider variety of emphatic devices. The *really* of youngest speakers performs more functions, which are fulfilled by other devices in other age groups (e.g. self-

emphasis can also be performed by *actually*, *literally*, *honestly*, or right dislocation, all of which are more frequent in the older groups).

Functions of *really* and gender

Although *really* is the most common emphatic device for either gender, male speakers appear to use it more frequently than female speakers (F 3.49 versus M 3.87). Figure 43 reports how girls and boys in this sample differ in their use of the form.

Figure 43. Comparison of frequency indices of the functions of *really* per gender



Truth-insistent and booster *really* are the two most frequent functions for either gender. The differences are minimal, yet the former appears to be more typical of male speech in this sample and the latter is more common among girls. Although the use of pre-adjectival booster *really* was shown to be levelled across genders in Section 6.1.3.1, *really* boosting other heads is more frequent in female speech here. This shows that either (i) girls in this sample are more prone than boys to boosting non-adjectival heads —particularly verbs—, or (ii) the collocability of *really* is wider among female speakers, or (iii) both of these conditions apply.

Even though the frequency indices of *really* overall are not that dissimilar across genders, boys show notably higher frequencies for self-emphatic and restriction/simplification uses than girls. Particularly in the case of self-emphasis, these results would clash with the traditional view of women having to reinforce their opinions more frequently due to a perceived sense of social inferiority or insecurity (see e.g. Preisler 1986: 292, and the discussion in §3.2.3). If this kind of emphasis is understood as a sign of lack of confidence, then boys here are apparently less confident. However, it is probably more accurate to understand these trends simply as different ways to reinforce subjectivity. *Literally*, for example, is markedly more frequent among girls and could be considered to perform a similar role in strengthening opinions.

The analysis of the usage of *really* in the cohort of Tyneside teenagers yields at least three relevant findings. First, the form is highly favoured by speakers in the sample, particularly among younger and male speakers. Although its multifunctionality and flexibility play a part, the main reason behind this result is the practical exclusivity in its role as a post-negator truth-insistent, including the use of response marker *not really*. Second, the expressive uses of the form as a truth-insistent and a booster take over the functional range, with other textual, reality-attesting, and mirative functions only being relatively frequent among younger teenagers. Also, boys exploit *really* to emphasise their opinions more frequently than girls do. Third, booster *really* in pre-adjectival position is more frequent than any other use, and, as explored in Chapter 6, prevalent among the 12-15 age group and levelled across genders. In contrast, pre-verbal booster *really* (and in the less frequent premodification of other heads) is more frequent among older and female speakers, which suggests that the form in the speech of these speakers has a wider collocability.

7.2.3. *Definitely*

The cohort of Tyneside teenagers sampled here use *definitely* with considerably lower frequency than *really, actually,* and *obviously* (as shown earlier in §7.1). Aijmer (2008: 80–81) noted a high use of pre-adjectival *definitely* in COLT, leading her to suggest a possible avenue of grammaticalisation into becoming an intensifier. However, with only 4 tokens of that kind and a rate of 0.02, this does not seem to be the case in this sample. Still, the emphatic function that *definitely* performs locally over verbs and nouns resembles that of pre-verbal intensifiers, as the meaning of extreme certainty appears to be bleached (e.g. (47), (48), and (49)) (Simon-Vandenbergen and Aijmer 2007: 100, 438). This grammaticalisation might explain the fact that *definitely* is used at a rate of 0.59 while similar adverbs like *certainly* and *surely* are absent or minimally used. As Simon-Vandenbergen and Aijmer (2007b: 100) discussed, *definitely* can be paraphrased both by *I am certain that* (certainty) and

very much (emphasis/intensification). Overall, *definitely* marks involvement, exaggeration, and hyperbole, which are associated with positive politeness, adolescent speech, and intensifiers (Aijmer 2008: 80).

(47) *Definitely* try stottie, coz they're fucking lush (**Jack**, M, 19, 2017_SEL2091_043_A).

(48) I just *definitely* could see myself doing something like that, I think (**Jeremy**, M, 19, 2017_SEL2091_021_A).

(49) It was fun, it was fun, it was *definitely* a really really enlightening experience to be in the water that cold (**Beth**, F, 20, 2017_SEL2091_031_A).

Another result of grammaticalisation is its use as a response marker, which is relatively more frequent among older speakers, but much more clearly so among female speakers (e.g. (50) and (51)) (see results in Appendix XV). This social distribution suggests that these groups lead the way in this change, and reflects their enhanced tendency to express interpersonal positive politeness. *Definitely* is indeed the most common emphasiser in this function (in comparison with e.g. *absolutely* and *totally*).

(50) [In response to a 'Would you rather?' card about time travelling]
Tim: Yeah, I'd probably think 500 years in the future then.
Tristan: *Definitely*, a hundred percent (Sc02m2).

(51) **Interviewer**: Do you think there's a lot of influence from American culture in British culture?
Anna: *Definitely*.
Scarlett: *Definitely* (Jpa01f2).

7.2.4. *Obviously*

Type of utterance, position, and breakdown of medial positions

Obviously is the third most frequent emphasiser in the sample. At a rate of 0.92 (1.25 if outliers are included), it is used almost as frequently as *actually* (1.17), and considerably more than *definitely* (0.59).

It is overwhelmingly favoured in the context of positive declaratives (0.72) and in the left periphery (0.56). The position result clashes with the idea that the unmarked and most frequent position for *obviously* is medial (Simon-Vandenbergen and Aijmer 2007: 149–50). The move to the periphery is proof of advanced grammaticalisation as a sentence adverb (see e.g. Swan 1988: 9). Still, even within medial position, the fact that *obviously* premodifies verbs much more frequently (see Table 34 below) shows that *obviously* tends to have global scope over the whole situation/utterance.

Table 34. Frequency indices per 1,000 words of *obviously* per medial position (from least to most frequent)

Medial positions	N	Freq. index
pre-noun phrase	1	0.01
pre-not	1	0.01
pre-adjective	3	0.02
pre-noun	18	0.06 (0.10)
pre-verb	33	0.17 (0.18)

The premodification of other parts of speech is rare. In the case of pre-noun position, roughly half of the cases could be considered to be parentheticals (e.g. (52)), that is, the meaning would still apply to the whole utterance and would not change if placed peripherally. There are some cases where *obviously* has clear local scope (e.g. (53), (54), and (55)), which clashes with the general assumption that *obviously* always has global scope (Simon-Vandenbergen and Aijmer 2007b: 149–50).

(52) There are *obviously* some things that you can't remember (**Amber**, F, 13, Ccc02f1_B).

(53) [When asked whether she would like to be famous] It depends what I'm famous for. If it's like a bad thing, then *obviously* not (**Ellie**, F, 14, Ccc03f1_B).

(54) We've sort of kept the same friend group. Like *obviously* me and Jon, and like *obviously* a couple of others (**Declan**, M, 12, Ccc05m1_A).

(55) We had like *obviously* the jeep, which was the pinnacle of playing out (**Melissa**, F, 19, 2017_SEL2091_031_B).

Overview of functions and general distribution

As explored in Section 3.2.1, *obviously* is an epistemic stance marker of evidentiality and expectation. Apart from its manner meaning, two types of *obviously* were identified in that section: evidence-based and assumptive. The former type makes reference to evidence that is either hearsay (weak), present in the linguistic or situational context (context-related), or common sense (exploited in concessive *obviously*). Assumptive *obviously*, however, fully relies on the personal and subjective knowledge of the speaker, who assumes or expects shared knowledge and views across the conversation participants. As such, assumptive *obviously* has shifted away from the marking of evidentiality by means of intersubjectification.

Table 35. Frequency indices per 1,000 words of the functions of *obviously* (from least to most frequent)

Functions of ***obviously***	N	Freq. index
evidence (weak)	1	0.01

assumptive (mitigation)	13	0.05 (0.07)
assumptive (justification)	48	0.17 (0.27)
evidence (concessive)	47	0.22 (0.26)
evidence (context-related)	47	0.22 (0.26)
assumptive (solidarity)	109	0.42 (0.60)

Solidarity *obviously* is by far the most common use of this emphasiser in the sample, which matches Aijmer's (2008) findings in COLT. The concessive and context-related uses are used at exactly the same frequency, followed closely by the function of justification. Overall, the use of *obviously* by this group of speakers is heavily concentrated on non-evidential, heavily delexicalised functions.

Authoritative *obviously* is unattested in this dataset.[61] The absence of this function, together with the high frequency of solidarity *obviously*, suggests that this group of teenagers is concerned with communicative politeness. Let us now look at the functions attested in the sample, in the order from most to least frequent.

Solidarity *obviously* can serve to create bonds between speaker and hearer(s) by building common ground (the information about this function is largely based on Aijmer (2008: 72–74) and Simon-Vandenbergen and Aijmer (2007: 154–55)). It is particularly frequent in closely-knit groups of speakers like friendship groups where shared values and background information are emphasised (e.g. (56) and (57)), but it can also be used to liaise with an outsider. Often used in narratives, the speaker knows for certain that the outsider hearer is not necessarily knowledgeable about the 'obvious' information, despite it being presented as common sense. However, by marking it as obvious, they create a shared world of knowledge from which other statements or parts of the narrative can be understood (e.g. (58) and (59)). Another common context of solidarity *obviously* is with 1st person pronouns: the speaker clearly does not need to evidence what they claim about themselves, so what *obviously* does in those cases is turn a personal statement into shared knowledge (e.g. (60) and (61)).

(56) [Abbie is talking about her dogs. Sarah knows them, but the interviewer doesn't]
Abbie: She literally like cha- I've chased her around a field before trying to get this dead rabbit out of her mouth and she's like 'it's gone ha' [**Sarah**: Ugh].
Interviewer: (laughs) Which one, which one is this?

[61] Authoritative *obviously* is a type of assumptive *obviously* that can serve as a rhetorical strategy to make claims difficult to contest or to introduce ideas that the audience should take for granted, i.e. imposition and presupposition. Authoritative *obviously* is a common resource in political discourse (see Bueno-Amaro 2017: 33–37 for an analysis of similar resources in Brexit-supporting discourse; and Simon-Vandenbergen et al. 2007 for a more general study of presupposition in political argumentation).

A: Mimi.
S: *Obviously* Mimi (2017_SEL2091_078_B).

(57) [Jeremy and Ian have been friends since school, and the interviewer has just asked whether they keep in touch with friends from school or college] *Obviously* you [=Ian] and Sean had went [=gone] off to college, but we never lost touch (**Jeremy**, M, 19, 2017_SEL2091_021_A).

(58) My mam and dad are quite, quite Geordies, the- like *obviously* they were born in like the centre of Newcastle (**Jon**, M, 12, Ccc05m1_B).

(59) [Charlotte is telling the story of a friend who was catfished by his stepsister] He didn't know it was her coz like, *obviously* he didn't know she's like his stepsister and then er then hi-… *Obviously*, his dad married hi- her mam (**Charlotte**, F, 18, Ben03f2_B).

(60) *Obviously*, you know, I I I do- I am a lot more girly I would say than I used to be (**Beth**, F, 20, 2017_SEL2091_031_A).

(61) It's like three-bedroom semi-detached er… field's near to walk the dog and *obviously* I'm close to the bus stop to get into town, so… (**Ian**, M, 19, 2017_SEL2091_021_B).

Solidarity *obviously* has been described as pleasing, amiable, complimentary, and polite (Aijmer 2008: 72–74). Its frequency in COLT has been explained in terms of the close links and shared values of teenage friendship groups. While this is true in some instances in this dataset, *obviously* here is also exploited to make a topic of conversation either livelier or more approachable to people outside the speakers' close groups. The high frequency of this use in the cohort sampled here (0.42) highlights the teenagers' enhanced sense of positive politeness and their particular way of demonstrating friendship through language. It also demonstrates the intersubjectification undergone by the form.

Context-related and concessive *obviously*, both functions of evidence-based *obviously*, are the two most common functions after solidarity, each with a frequency index of 0.22 per 1,000 words. Context-related *obviously* refers to evidence present in the context, be it linguistic (surrounding discourse) or extra-linguistic (physical world). In discourse, the evidence can simply be a comment made earlier in the conversation, or a nearby clause that provides the information (e.g. (62) and (63)). In the physical world, we talk about perceptual evidence, that is things we can hear, see, or feel (e.g. (64) and (65)). This use of *obviously* represents its core meaning of evidentiality. Speakers strengthen the force of the utterance by providing evidence to support it.

(62) [James is talking with me, the interviewer, about a TV show, to which Lewis says] *Obviously*, I was outside the conversation coz I didn't know what the hell he's on about (**Lewis**, M, 17, Sc01m2_A).

(63) [Rebecca explained at the beginning of the conversation that her family comes from Nottingham. When asked about what places in the UK she's visited, this is her response] Erm, I've *obviously* been to Nottingham [**Interviewer**: Yeah]. I've been to like Manchester, Liverpool, all different places, really (**Rebecca**, F, 17, Ben01f2_B).

(64) [Beth is explaining how her accent sounds] Ariella and I picked it up from what we heard around us and then with a mixture of what we heard at home. But *obviously*, we don't produce the words as much with a, with a Greek accent (**Beth**, F, 20, 2017_SEL2091_031_A).

(65) [Jon and Declan were interviewed in their school, so I, the interviewer, could see the size of the school when Jon made this comment] To settle in er *obviously* a- like a massive school sort of caught over awe some people a little bit, erm but I think just once you know your way around… (**Jon**, M, 12, Ccc05m1_B).

In its concessive role, *obviously* can refer to common sense in order to buffer a face-threatening comment, a surprising remark, or simply contrast (e.g. (66)-(69)). This use commonly occurs in combination with *but* (e.g. (66), (67), (68)). It may appear with generic 2nd person pronouns, appealing to a general pool of shared expectations. Again, *obviously* emphasises common ground and bolsters interpersonal solidarity (e.g. (68) and (69)). In comparison with context-related *obviously*, the source of evidence is shared knowledge of the world rather than something in the context. Due to its reliance on common sense, it could also be included under the category of assumptive *obviously*.

(66) They [=the police] do a good job like with separating but *obviously* like everyone's still there just kicking and screaming and shouting and everything, but like no one's actually fighting (**Tristan**, M, 17, Sc02m2_B) [also coded as solidarity *obviously*].

(67) When I was younger, *obviously* I used to get like toys and stuff, but I think my mam finds it hard to find things now coz I'm older (**Erin**, F, 16, Ben01f2_A).

(68) Well, me [=my] mam has really, really like non-accent at all, […] you *obviously* know she's from England but she has like, she has Geordie mannerisms, she has Scouse mannerisms, and overall, she just sort of has a like a really normal in-the-middle accent (**Jeremy**, M, 19, 2017_SEL2091_021_A).

(69) You just don't get stretch marks from being pregnant, you can get them from like hitting puberty, it's when your body just like… *Obviously* your body changes, but I'm lucky I don't have stretch marks (laughs) (**Amber**, F, 13, Ccc02f1_B).

The last three functions of *obviously* are justification, mitigation, and weak evidence. The latter one is a use only noted in Aijmer (2008: 69–70) in which *obviously* is close in meaning to *apparently*, relying on and signalling weak perceptual evidence and in turn weak certainty. Only one token was found in the dataset (see (70)), probably because these cases were identified as examples of assumptive *obviously*.

(70) In terms of charity they do a lot of good stuff but like from someone who does it like, you know, like a lot of people who don't, *obviously*, have a lot to give, they do very well to give a lot of money into put like charities like Catholic and things, which do give relief (**Matthew**, M, 17, Sc04m2_A).

Justification *obviously* is used at a frequency of 0.17, which makes it the fourth most frequent function in the sample. Here *obviously* relies on fully subjective evidence, in the borderline between common sense and assumption, but presents the information as obvious to everyone (e.g. (71) and (72)).

(71) Sometimes I say they've [=his parents] got a little bit high expectations for us [=me] but I understand like… coz *obviously* when you're littler it's hard to understand, but obviously as I'm getting older now I understand what they mean and stuff (**Jon**, M, 12, Ccc05m1_B).

(72) [Chris is telling the story of a friend who was over eighteen but his girlfriend was fifteen, and so they could not have sexual relations] Yeah, she wanted to sleep with him and he said 'no', coz *obviously* he didn't want to break the law (**Chris**, M, 19, 2017_SEL2091_032_B).

Finally, mitigation *obviously* can soften a controversial or face-threatening remark. By marking the comment as obvious to everyone, the speaker distances themselves from the negative connotations of their statement, and therefore mitigates the negative impact it might have (e.g. (73), (74), and (75)). Similar to both authoritative and solidarity *obviously*, the speaker uses the emphasiser to mark their personal subjective opinion as shared knowledge and a shared view.

(73) [Jon is talking about his trip to America] You feel weird because you're quite naturally skinny and then there's *obviously* a load of obese people around there (**Jon**, M, 12, Ccc05m1_B).

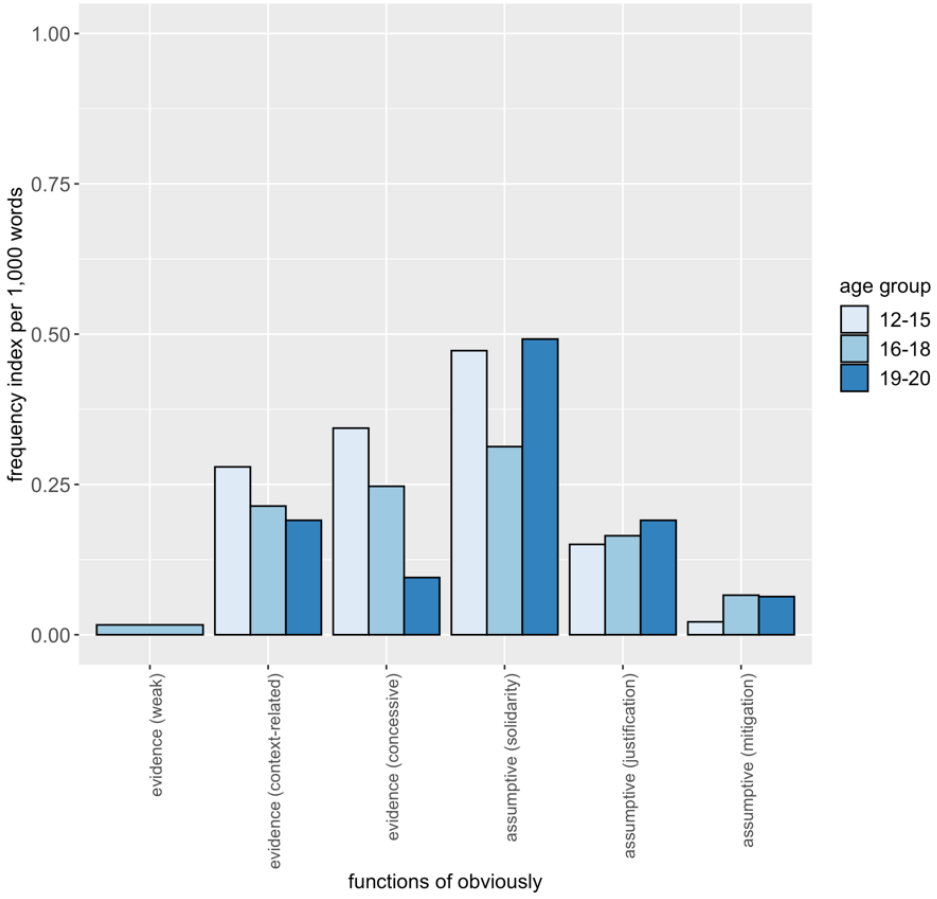
(74) [Tim is recounting a time when the police came into one of their house parties] They went 'all right, can you just keep it down?' like 'yeah, yeah, yeah', so then they left. *Obviously*, people, people didn't keep it down (**Tim**, M, 16, Sc02m2_A).

(75) **Jane**: He had a drink first, he pours it into a cup and he's like 'drink it', so *obviously* I just drank it.
Emily: (in mock tone) *Obviously* (Interviewer and Emily laugh)
J: (laughs) *Obviously* (2017_SEL2091_080).

Functions of *obviously* and age

Results in Section 7.1.1 above showed that *obviously* was used almost at the same rate by the middle and older groups of speakers (0.87 and 0.86). In comparison, the youngest set of speakers used it at a rate of 1.07, even more frequently than *actually* (0.93).

Figure 44. Comparison of frequency indices of the functions of *obviously* per age group

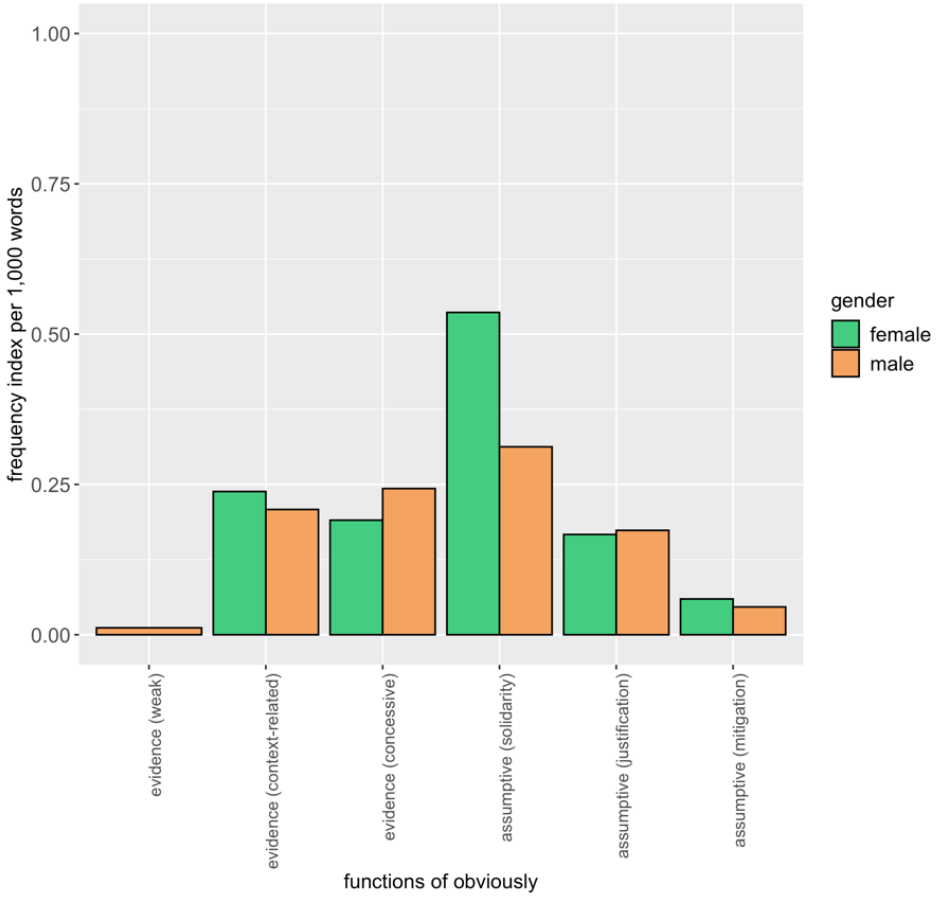


As Figure 44 shows, the most common function of *obviously* in every age group is the marking of solidarity. However, the distribution of other functions is slightly different. The trend appears to be that the more lexical uses of the form as evidence-based (context-related and concessive) give way to other delexicalised uses in the older groups of speakers (particularly justification). The data here, however, is too scarce and limited for a strong conclusion in that respect. Most likely, factors specific to the discourse situation and individual conversational styles play a major role in the age distribution of solidarity *obviously*.

Functions of *obviously* and gender

Results showed that *obviously* was more frequent among female speakers in this sample, yet the difference with male speakers was small (F 0.96; M 0.88). Given that the two outliers for *obviously* were boys, it was argued that *obviously* was not associated with a particular gender (see gender results in §7.1.1). This indeed matches Tagliamonte and Smith's (2018) findings that the frequency rise of *obviously* was levelled across genders.

Figure 45. Comparison of frequency indices of the functions of *obviously* per gender



The functions fulfilled by *obviously* barely vary across genders (see Figure 45). The only (and greatest) difference is found in solidarity *obviously*. The general rate among girls is 0.54, whereas the general, no-outlier, trend among boys is much lower (0.31). This again supports the idea that female speakers pay more attention to interactional functions of language, such as building common ground and being cooperative. It also suggests that the use that Jon and Ian make of *obviously*, concentrated in its solidarity function, is closer to how girls would use it. They also make frequent use of concessive *obviously*, which, according to the figures above, is slightly more frequent among boys generally. These two speakers are explored in more detail below.

The outliers Jon and Ian and their use of *obviously*

Jon (M, 12) and Ian (M, 19) use *obviously* with unusual high rates of frequency. While the indices for other speakers in the sample range from below 1 to close to 3, Jon uses *obviously* at a rate of 7.75 per 1,000 words and Ian at 4.27. More specifically, 56 out of 225 tokens come from Jon, which means a quarter of all instances of *obviously* in the dataset come from one single speaker. Both Jon's and Ian's uses are concentrated in solidarity *obviously*. Although it has been argued that

frequency indices largely ignore discourse factors (Pichler 2010: 595; Waters 2016: 43–44), the use of solidarity *obviously* can occur any time speakers tell narratives or express opinions on which to build common ground. This is found across interviews, and is not specific to Jon's and Ian's conversations. Instead, what outlier frequencies show here is that Jon and Ian, as individuals, have a predilection for the form and for the interpersonal amiable function it can perform. This is common within their respective age groups but not as male speakers, as explored above. This section will illustrate their conversational styles, looking first at Jon's speech and then Ian's.

The range of Jon's *obviously* covers all functions, yet solidarity and justification are by far the most common (n=27, and n=16, respectively). He uses solidarity *obviously* primarily in narratives. On the one hand, he signals common ground by marking as obvious details that are clearly unknown to me, the interviewer, and possibly Declan, his interview partner. This move aims at making the narrative more approachable and easier to follow. On the other hand, Jon interjects opinions in his narratives, and accompanies them with *obviously* to either mitigate and justify them or build a shared view among conversation participants. Again, this aims at bringing people together and avoiding conflict. There are two main topics where Jon's *obviously* tokens occur: his experience in sports, and Newcastle United Football Club.

Jon plays football and competes in athletic running. It is all about personal experience and opinions, yet he introduces *obviously* to make it a shared experience. This is particularly clear in excerpt (76), where Jon assumes I know that it was his first time in an athletic competition, reinforces his feelings of aching after exercise, and strengthens his belief that sport makes you feel better. As is common in the use of solidarity *obviously*, the first two uses co-occur with 1st person pronouns and the third one with a generic 2nd person pronoun.

(76) It was a weird experience again, coz *obviously* I've never been to anything like that before, *obviously*. I would have like maybes been to like a final in football or something, but for finals of running athletics, I've never ever been to that. And *obviously* I'm still aching off it erm even though it's almost been a week [**Interviewer**: Mmm], er I I've still recovering a little bit but [**I**: Yeah, yeah] once you recover and then *obviously* you just feel like good about yourself (**Jon**, M, 12, Ccc05m1_B).

Jon and Declan also speak at length of abuse and violence in the kids' football league (e.g. (77) and (78)). The use of *obviously* here fully relies on expectation and common sense. These are again opinions and remarks of his own that, by using *obviously*, become a shared pool of views and assumptions. My and Declan's phatic responses confirm we are all on the same page.

(77) I think granted you're gonna get, *obviously*, horrible people's *obviously* out there and you're gonna get them, you can't take them away, and maybes you can't change them but then it's about

changing like for the future [**Declan**: Mhmh] [**Interviewer**: Yeah], so maybes if there's one bad p- or if there's three bad people now, and then in the future ta- take it down to two or one, and then eventually it'll *obviously* gradually like die out (**Jon**, M, 12, Ccc05m1_B).

(78) There is a reason behind it all the time, and it's just finding the reason. And then coz *obviously* if one person has got a problem, and then because that problem then causes someone else to have a problem, it's *obviously*, it's just getting to the root and finding the problem, coz *obviously*, if you're like naturally like a bully or if you're naturally like someone like who's got like hard or something… It's like they won't usually admit the thing coz it's sound like soft (**Jon**, M, 12, Ccc05m1_B).

Jon is a passionate Newcastle United supporter and frequently attends matches. He demonstrates great insider knowledge of the fandom of the club and holds very specific opinions about Mike Ashley, the club's owner at the time. Excerpts below illustrate this.

(79) Coz *obviously* it's like I remember like the first match experience like it was yesterday and stuff, so… and then *obviously,* I've been going ever since then with him, so *obviously* me and him just like, have like little chats about this sort of stuff, like football and that (**Jon**, M, 12, Ccc05m1_B).

(80) They [=supporters] might be drunk or something, and then *obviously* they're starting fights [**Interviewer**: Oh] and that is quite wild around Newcastle sometimes anyway (**Jon**, M, 12, Ccc05m1_B).

(81) I think it's just the a- atmosphere, really. The atmosphere's, there's *obviously* a lot of chants and stuff, like, you know, it's like gets to the stadium bouncing and stuff. And *obviously* with the owner at the minute it's a little bit flat, and last season at s- some parts, it was a little bit flat. But I think *obviously*, everyone still goes. It's like a sort of community and it's… [**Interviewer**: Yeah] so get togethers [**I**: Mmm]. I mean, I still enjoy it, like, don't really take notice of him, erm… but *obviously* at the minute it's hot news so… (**Jon**, M, 12, Ccc05m1_B).

(82) [Jon is speaking about Rafa Benítez, who everyone liked but had recently been made redundant] And then *obviously* his contract runs out on the 30th of June, erm… and they basically came out and just said: 'we're not going to be signing the deal' (**Jon**, M, 12, Ccc05m1_B).

(83) [Jon is criticising Mike Ashley, the owner of Newcastle United at the time] *Obviously* he's sort of ruining it a bit. […] Newcastle have got like one of the best fan bases in like the whole Premier League but it's it's getting ruined by Ashley, like (**Jon**, M, 12, Ccc05m1_B).

(84) The away one was er was a weird experience coz it was, it was the first ever derby away from home and *obviously* the travelling on the bus, it's only an hour, but it's, with all the chanting and stuff, it gets you like ready for it (**Jon**, M, 12, Ccc05m1_B).

By using *obviously,* Jon narrows the gap between him and me —the interviewer—, not particularly knowledgeable about the club, and makes his personal experience and knowledge sound like common ground. He also voices the opinion about the club management as though he is stating the obvious. *Obviously* not only mitigates and introduces concession, but also provides a framework from which I can understand his annoyance with the situation.

Ian's high frequency index comes from the fact that he is not as wordy a speaker (wordcount of 2811 versus Jon's 7218). There are only 12 tokens of the form in his speech sample,

but they account for an unusual rate of 4.27 per 1,000 words, only less frequent than *really*. He uses either 1 or 2 instances of other emphasisers. Considering the multifunctionality of *actually*, for example, and the general trend of using it with high frequencies, Ian's use of *obviously* understandably stands out.

The interviewer in Ian's (and Jeremy's) recording is a student who is not originally from the north and is thus partly an outsider. Like Jon, Ian speaks about Newcastle United in a way that includes her (e.g. (85)).

(85) *Obviously*, Newcastle's like a one-city club, isn't it? so *obviously* all me [=my] family support them (**Ian**, M, 19, 2017_SEL2091_021_B).

What is more common in Ian's use of *obviously* is its occurrence with 1st person remarks that are possibly known to Jeremy because they are friends, but not to the interviewer. Examples below illustrate this idea.

(86) [When asked about what sports they like to play] I'm pretty much the same, really. *Obviously* golf every now and again, snooker, I used to play eleven-a-side like Sunday league but I don't anymore (**Ian**, M, 19, 2017_SEL2091_021_B).

(87) [When asked about what being the youngest in his family is like] She sorta like lets us [=me] away with a bit more than she let them get away with, to be honest, like (Jeremy and Interviewer laugh). *Obviously*, like they're both moved out now, so… (**Ian**, M, 19, 2017_SEL2091_021_B).

(88) [After saying he wants to be a wind turbine technician]
Interviewer: What made you want to do that?
Ian: Well, like, *obviously* when I left school, I knew I didn't wanna go to like do A levels, so I was just… I wanted to go into engineering (2017_SEL2091_021).

(89) *Obviously* I was 18 on August (**Ian**, M, 19, 2017_SEL2091_021_B).

(90) **Ian**: I just got to like ask me [=my] mam and sister who they were voting for and I was like 'if it's good enough for you, it's good enough for me' (laughs).
Interviewer: Fair enough, I know quite a few people who did the same (laughs) [**Jeremy**: Oh].
Ian: But *obviously* our area is like predominantly Labour, isn't it? (2017_SEL2091_021_B).

(91) If I go to the pub I'll just drink lager or something but like… *Obviously* in town there's like offers on every night (**Ian**, M, 19, 2017_SEL2091_021_B).

There is no evidence to suggest that the interviewer knows about Ian's sport preferences (e.g. (86)), his family (e.g. (87)), his choices after Sixth Form (e.g. (88)) or the month of his birthday (e.g. (89)). These examples appear to be more a case of Ian relying on the shared knowledge between Jeremy and himself, rather than an attempt to narrow the distance with the interviewer. Examples (90) and (91) are different. In (90), marking as obvious that Newcastle is generally a Labour-voting area helps him justify voting for that party despite saying earlier that he is not

interested in politics. In (91), the reference to drink deals in town is likely known to the interviewer, also a university student in Newcastle, and therefore signals common ground.

In general, Jon's use of *obviously* epitomises the potential of the form as a resource to make friendship, narrow the distance between interlocutors, and in sum, express interpersonal solidarity. Examples in Ian's speech illustrate a similar situation. In his case, however, he uses *obviously* more frequently to appeal to common ground with the other interview participant, his friend Jeremy.

The analysis of *obviously* in the speech of Tyneside teenagers has demonstrated the high frequency of its grammaticalised intersubjective function to mark shared knowledge. Its evidence-based uses are not as frequent. The grammaticalised use of *obviously* appears to take over other uses in older speakers. Solidarity *obviously* is much more frequently used by girls in the sample, a trend also reflected in the speech of Jon and Ian. High frequency of this function suggests a conversational style that aims at involving other interlocutors in personal experiences, narratives, and opinions.

7.2.5. *Literally*, *genuinely*, and *honestly*

Type of utterance, position, and breakdown of medial positions

Literally, *genuinely*, and *honestly* are grouped together because they are all style stance markers that appeal to the truthfulness of the statement. *Literally* makes it into the top five emphasisers at a rate of 0.49 (0.68 if the outlier, Claire, is included), while *honestly* is used at half that frequency (0.23) and *genuinely* is extremely rare (n=6, index of 0.03). Given their semantic similarities, this shows not only that *literally* is preferred as a form, but also that its grammaticalised uses are exploited more often —and, in turn, are more established than those of *honestly* and *genuinely*. This idea underpins the discussion in this section.

These three style stance markers occur much more frequently in positive declaratives, a pattern particularly noticeable in the case of *literally*, which occurs in positive declaratives at a frequency of 0.43, and in any other context at around 0.01 and 0.02 each. In terms of position, these markers are expected to occur more frequently clause-initially, setting the scene for the utterance that follows. This is the case for *honestly* (LP 0.13 versus medial 0.05, and RP 0.02), but not for *literally* and *genuinely*, which occur medially with a higher frequency (see Table 31 in §7.1.2). The use of *literally* as a mirative reinforcer, further from its truthfulness meaning, explains this distribution.

Table 36 displays the frequency of occurrence in each type of medial position, both for the trio of style stance markers, and specifically by form. Given the low frequency of clause-internal

honestly and the general rarity of *genuinely*, it is only logical that their indices per medial position are also low. In comparison, *literally* shows a much wider collocability.

Table 36. Frequency indices per 1,000 words of style stance markers per medial position (from least to most frequent)

Medial positions	Style stance m.		*literally*		*genuinely*		*honestly*	
	N	**Index**	**N**	**Index**	**N**	**Index**	**N**	**Index**
pre-gerund	1	0.01	/	/	1	0.01	/	/
pre-adjective phrase	1	0.01	/	/	/	/	1	0.01
pre-adverb	2	0.01	2	0.01	/	/	/	/
pre-prepositional phrase	4	0.01 (0.02)	4	0.01 (0.02)	/	/	/	/
pre-clause	1	0.01	1	0.01	/	/	/	/
pre-adjective	5	0.03	2	0.01	1	0.01	2	0.01
pre-pronoun	6	0.03	6	0.03	/	/	/	/
pre-noun	13	0.07	12	0.06 (0.07)	/	/	1	0.01
pre-verb	53	0.27 (0.29)	45	0.23 (0.25)	3	0.02	5	0.03

Some of the occurrences in medial position represent parenthetical uses that act over the whole utterance like a peripheral use would (e.g. (92) and (93)), although these are very few. Pre-verbal position is the most common locus for *literally*, which generally accounts for the use of the form as an emphasiser with global scope. The mobility of *literally* not only demonstrates grammaticalisation, but also could motivate it. Medial uses could be reanalysed as having local scope over the following item, and are as such a 'bridge context' where the interpretation of mirative reinforcer *literally* can emerge (following grammaticalisation trends explored in §4.3 and §4.5). The functions of style stance markers are analysed in more detail in what follows.

(92) [Jack is explaining that he toasts his cheese scones] It's so, *honestly,* so much better, your butter melts on it, it's unreal (**Jack**, M, 19, 2017_SEL2091_043_A).

(93) [When asked about what plans she does with her family] I don't know, like for a family day out, *literally*, with my little sister (**Claire**, F, 17, Ben03f2_A).

Overview of functions and general distribution

As explored in Section 3.2.1, these three style stance markers are differentiated from others, such as *confidentially*, by their reference to the truthfulness of the statements, which makes them closer in meaning and function to markers like *really, actually, definitely,* and *obviously*. *Literally* is further differentiated from *genuinely* and *honestly* by its core metalinguistic import. Three discourse-pragmatic functions can be identified as possible for all of them. On top of that, *literally* has also developed uses as an emphatic response marker, and *honestly* can be used to express frustration.

Table 37 displays the frequency of each function overall and per form (the 'x' symbol marks functions that cannot be performed by the given emphasiser).

Table 37. Frequency indices per 1,000 words of the functions of style stance markers (from least to most frequent)

Functions of *literally*, *genuinely* and *honestly*	**Total**		***literally***		***genuinely***		***honestly***	
	N	**Index**	**N**	**Index**	**N**	**Index**	**N**	**Index**
response (confirmation)	2	0.01	2	0.01	x	x	x	x
modesty	6	0.02 (0.03)	3	0.01 (0.02)	1	0.01	2	0.01
response (agreement)	8	0.02 (0.04)	8	0.02 (0.04)	x	x	x	x
frustration	11	0.05 (0.06)	x	x	x	x	11	0.06
metalinguistic	49	0.25 (0.27)	45	0.22 (0.25)	2	0.01	2	0.01
mirative reinforcer	108	0.46 (0.60)	69	0.26 (0.38)	4	0.02	35	0.19

The function as a mirative reinforcer and/or to mark self-emphasis is the most common both generally, and per emphasiser. This function is a result of delexicalisation, since the meaning of truthfulness is faint in favour of a simply expressive reinforcement of an opinion or a particular item in the clause. The more lexical metalinguistic function lags behind. Modesty-marking is fairly infrequent overall; the speakers in this sample appear to prefer *actually* and *really* for this function, or it may be that this use is simply not as established in the three forms analysed here. Response uses of *literally* are relatively infrequent, yet considering that they have not been attested in previous work and are indeed the most grammaticalised version of the form, just their occurrence is already a finding. Frustration *honestly,* in contrast, is comparatively frequent.

The analysis per function here does not follow the frequency order strictly. The metalinguistic function will be explored first, since it helps us understand how mirative reinforcement differs. After those two functions, modesty will be analysed, as it is common to the three forms. Then response *literally* and frustration *honestly* will close the section.

In their metalinguistic use, *literally, genuinely* and *honestly* can indicate that the term used is appropriate even though it may sound shocking, with a clear mirative tone (e.g. (94)-(96)). Emphasisers here disambiguate expressions that can sound exaggerated and turn figurative language into non-figurative language. The specification is emphatic often at a local level and is commonly used to liven up narratives and descriptions. This is the core meaning of *literally* and a rarer one for *genuinely* and *honestly*, as attested in this project's results. In the case of *literally,* this use is also found introducing reported speech, where it signals that the quotation is verbatim or very close to reality (e.g. (97) and (98)).

(94) [Emily is criticising the entrance of her accommodation hall] It's just *literally* a door in a building (**Emily**, F, 19, 2017_SEL2091_080_B).

(95) [Lizzie is talking about a video she became famous for, where she slipped while running] It wasn't staged at all. It was *genuinely* me running around my house with my phone (**Lizzie**, F, 17, Nsfc01f2_B) [also coded as mirative reinforcer].

(96) Daredevil, that is, *honestly*, one of the best shows I've ever watched (**Tim**, M, 16, Sc02m2_A) [also coded as mirative reinforcer].

(97) She was *literally* just like 'I don't have any money, so can everybody please just come to mine and get drunk? I wanna go out but I don't have any money' (laughs) (**Sarah**, F, 19, 2017_SEL2091_078_A).

(98) He *literally* says like 'I've been catfished (laughs), can you help us [=me]?' (laughs) That's actually what he said to us [=me] (**Claire**, F, 17, Ben03f2_A).

In the more delexicalised function of mirative reinforcement and self-emphasis, *literally, genuinely* and *honestly* can emphasise utterances (global scope) or items (local scope) that somehow appear as difficult to believe (e.g. (99)-(102)). This use tends to occur in evaluative opinions that are negative, extreme, or shocking (where it is better described as self-emphasis, like *actually* and *really*). However, it can also occur in any other type of utterance simply for the sake of expressivity.

(99) He *literally* didn't have a clue what it was (**Jeremy**, M, 19, 2017_SEL2091_021_A).

(100) [Bryan is explaining why he likes jaguars] It'll *literally* just sit there for hours, waiting for an animal to come around and just pounce (**Bryan**, M, 12, Ccc01m1_A).

(101) We were driving up the Manchester curry mile and we were just giggling at the names of the shops of the curry shops and like his stepdad *genuinely* looked at both of wuh [=us] and went 'you've barely said anything, all you've been doing is like laughing at curry shop names, like are you going to say anything else to each other?' (**Lizzie**, F, 17, Nsfc01f2_B).

(102) I don't like the cold. *Honestly*, I hate the cold (**Amber**, F, 13, Ccc02f1_B).

Particularly in the case of *literally*, this reinforcer use demonstrates advanced delexicalisation, since it appears to conflict with its original lexical meaning (as elaborated in §3.2.1). Although it is not always clear, there are three aspects that distinguish reinforcer *literally* from metalinguistic *literally*. First, reinforcer *literally* can have global scope (e.g. (103) and (104)), whereas metalinguistic *literally* very rarely would. Second, reinforcer *literally* is used with expressions that are metaphorical or exaggerated and not meant to be taken in a literal sense (e.g. (99) above, and (104) and (105) below), while metalinguistic *literally* specifies the non-figurative readings of items. Third, *literally* is more clearly a reinforcer when it is used with language that is not open to second readings, and therefore in no need of disambiguation (e.g. (100) above, and (106) and (107) below).

(103) We were losing four nil at half time. *Literally,* like half of the Newcastle fans are just leaving (**Jack**, M, 19, 2017_SEL2091_043_A).

(104) [Emily is talking about someone she hates] *Literally* when I see him, I just… I see red (**Emily**, F, 19, 2017_SEL2091_080_B).

(105) I've watched it like *literally* over two hundred times (**Jack**, M, 19, 2017_SEL2091_043_A).

(106) [Abbie is recounting one of her favourite scenes of a film] Oh my God, the feelings, and then he *literally* like stands there and sings in Scottish (**Abbie**, F, 19, 2017_SEL2091_078_B).

(107) He was *literally* kneeling on the pavement, nearly crying (**Jane**, F, 19, 2017_SEL2091_080_A).

In some contexts, *literally, genuinely,* and *honestly* can be separate from the opinion or statement that is being reinforced (e.g. (108)-(111) below). It is ambiguous whether the emphasiser is simply in delayed final position or is being used as a stand-alone form. In the latter case, it could be understood as a response marker that emphatically confirms an idea that another interlocutor has explicitly or implicitly found to be surprising. As such, it would cover a functional niche that none of the other emphasisers fill.

(108) [When asked about how long she's had her parrot] Erm pff like four years [**Interviewer**: Oh wow okay], *literally* (**Claire**, F, 17, Ben03f2_A).

(109) My house is like a party house pretty much (everyone laughs), *literally* (**Charlotte**, F, 18, Ben03f2_B).

(110) Emos have turned into hipsters (Interviewer laughs), *genuinely* (**Melissa**, F, 19, 2017_SEL2091_031_B).

(111) [Jack and Callum are discussing flavours of alcopops] I think the tropical one's got a nicer texture [**Jack**: Texture?], *honestly, honestly*, I swear to God (**Callum**, M, 19, 2017_SEL2091_043_B).

Mirative reinforcement and self-emphasis is the most common function for all three style stance markers. In the case of *honestly*, the meaning of sincerity and truthfulness is faint in favour of plain expressive emphasis. Regarding *literally*, the high frequency of this use among young speakers has indeed ignited much criticism (see e.g. Boston.com 2011; Inman 2020; Masters 2012; Merriam-Webster 2021; Quirk et al. 1985: 619). Contrary to claims that it is a wrong and mistaken use of the form, what the results suggest is that *literally* has grammaticalised into a delexicalised emphasiser, and younger speakers, such as the Tyneside teenagers in this sample, are the ones leading the change. Similar uses of *honestly* and *genuinely* are not judged as negatively, which suggests that they have been used for this function for longer. Hence *literally* might have developed it by analogy either with them or with *really* and *actually* (as suggested by Powell 1992: 101).

The last function that can be performed by all three style stance markers is the expression of modesty by admitting lack of knowledge. *Literally*, *genuinely*, and *honestly* mark modesty with a

mirative and counter-expectation nuance (e.g. (112), (113), and (114)). As with modesty *actually* and *really*, this use emphasises the lack of knowledge in a humble and almost apologetic way, which can be considered a marker of positive politeness. This is a highly infrequent use of the forms in the current sample (0.02 overall).

(112) I don't use Twitter coz I cannot work it, *literally*. It just baffles us [=me] (**Claire**, F, 17, Ben03f2_A).

(113) I didn't even know what contouring was. I didn't even know what like… I actually didn't, *genuinely* didn't know erm, but that's just because I don't know much about make-up anyway (**Beth**, F, 20, 2017_SEL2091_031_A).

(114) I *honestly* can't think of anything that I've ever lost when I'm like 'oh man' (**Lewis**, M, 17, Sc01m2_A).

Unlike *genuinely* or honestly, *literally* can occur as a stand-alone response to mark emphatic agreement with the other interlocutor's opinion or argument (e.g. (115) and (116)) or to respond to a question asking for confirmation (e.g. (117)). This use constitutes the most grammaticalised version of *literally*, where it has become an independent response marker/discourse particle, similar to *definitely* and *absolutely*. Infrequent in the sample overall (0.02 for agreement, and 0.01 for confirmation), the occurrence of these response-marking uses is concentrated in Claire's speech (including her count makes the index of agreement *literally* rise to 0.04).

(115) [Claire and Charlotte are explaining why they wouldn't enjoy flying on a magic carpet]
Interviewer: With a flying carpet you can fly anywhere.
Claire: Ah knaa [=I know] but you'd be freezing (laughs).
Charlotte: Ah knaa [=I know] and then you can't put the heating on and you're like freezing (Interviewer laughs).
Cl: *Literally* (Ben03f2).

(116) [I had asked Claire and Charlotte if they considered they had bad luck. They said they felt lucky to have a loving family and a house, so I specified that I meant if they felt they were lucky on a daily basis]
Claire: I've got such bad luck on a daily basis, so bad (laughs).
Interviewer: So on a daily basis, bad luck.
Cl: *Literally*. Oh, everyday something bad'll happen (Ben03f2).

(117) [Beth is explaining how she used to mix Greek and English]
Beth: We used to literally, we used to physically mix the two languages together in one sentence.
Melissa: So like Greeklish or something?
B: Mhmh, *literally*. Yeah, *literally* that. Erm and my mum would write them down (laughs) coz she'd be like 'ha ha it's funny' so she'd write down what we said (2017_SEL2091_031).

Finally, *honestly* is exclusive in its function to mark annoyance or frustration, either as a stand-alone marker (e.g. (118) and (121)) or in peripheral positions (e.g. (119) and (120)). The

lexical meaning of honesty is completely bleached out in this use in comparison with the other two uses above, where it is still discernible. Frustration *honestly* can be considered a subjective expression of the speaker's stance towards the situation that is being talked about. Although the label 'frustration' might imply this is always a negative emotion, *honestly* can also express frustration that is somehow affectionate, showing that the interlocutors know each other well (e.g. (121)). This use is the second-most frequent for *honestly* in the sample, although half of all tokens come from one single speaker, Emily.

(118) [Emily is complaining about how strict they are at a friend's accommodation]
Emily: They had to sign us in and out and we had to like give like all our like details over and stuff.
Jane: So strange.
Interviewer: We- They never like checked on us, though, like we never did that.
E: *Honestly*… (2017_SEL2091_080).

(119) Geordie Shore, I think it's been so bad for Newcastle, *honestly*. Like I I remember I went to London and I was asked if I like I knew anyone from Geordie Shore I was just like 'oh God when when no one's like that' like it's just bad (**Matthew**, M, 17, Sc04m2_A) [also coded as self emphasis].

(120) I'm living in the absolute pits, man, *honestly* (**Emily**, F, 19, 2017_SEL2091_080_B).

(121) **Jane**: Oh the other school trip that I went on to go see universities but it was a Wednesday so obviously we'd b- all been to Osborne Road the night before.
Emily: *Honestly*…
J: Even at Sixth Form I was a mess (2017_SEL2091_080).

Next, results are broken down by age group and gender. Given the low frequency of *genuinely*, the social distribution of its functions will not be explored any further.

Functions of *literally* and *honestly*, and age

Both *literally* and *honestly* are more frequent in the speech of the older groups of speakers sampled here. There is a stepped increase in the frequency of *honestly* from younger to older age groups (0.15 – 0.23 – 0.30), whereas the pattern of *literally* displays the form as markedly more frequent among the speakers aged 19 or 20 (0.17 – 0.20 – 1). Figure 46 and Figure 47 display the results for *literally* and *honestly,* respectively.

Figure 46. Comparison of frequency indices of the functions of *literally* per age group

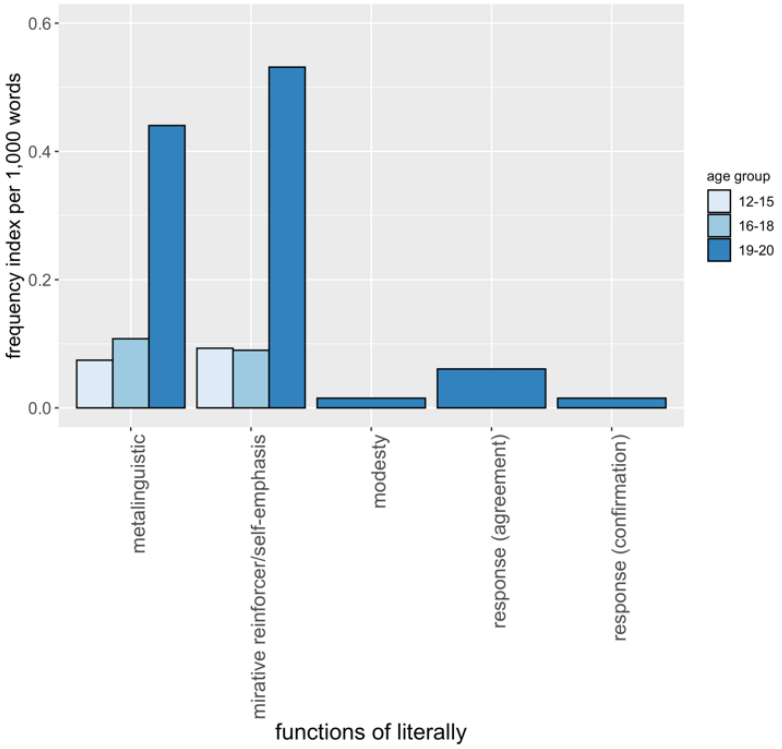
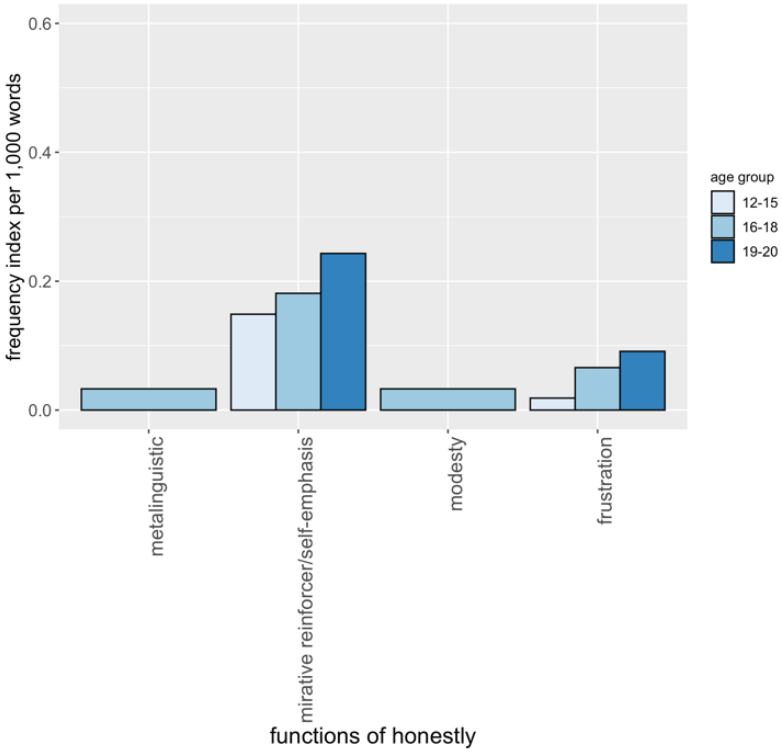


Figure 47. Comparison of frequency indices of the functions of *honestly* per age group



The oldest group of speakers uses both *literally* and *honestly* most frequently as a mirative reinforcer. They are also the almost exclusive users of the most grammaticalised functions

(response *literally* and frustration *honestly*). Older speakers have a wider range of uses for *literally* in comparison with younger ones, although they use the expressive functions of metalinguistic specification and mirative reinforcement more frequently. The same group of speakers shows a more limited range of uses for *honestly* in contrast with other age groups, and their use of the form is not as drastically different to that of younger speakers.

Functions of *literally* and *honestly*, and gender

Female speakers are the most frequent users of both *literally* and *honestly*. This pattern is much starker in the results for *literally*, which is used almost four times more frequently by girls (F 0.81, M 0.23). In a similar format to the plots above, Figure 48 and Figure 49 report the results for gender.

Figure 48. Comparison of frequency indices of the functions of *literally* per gender

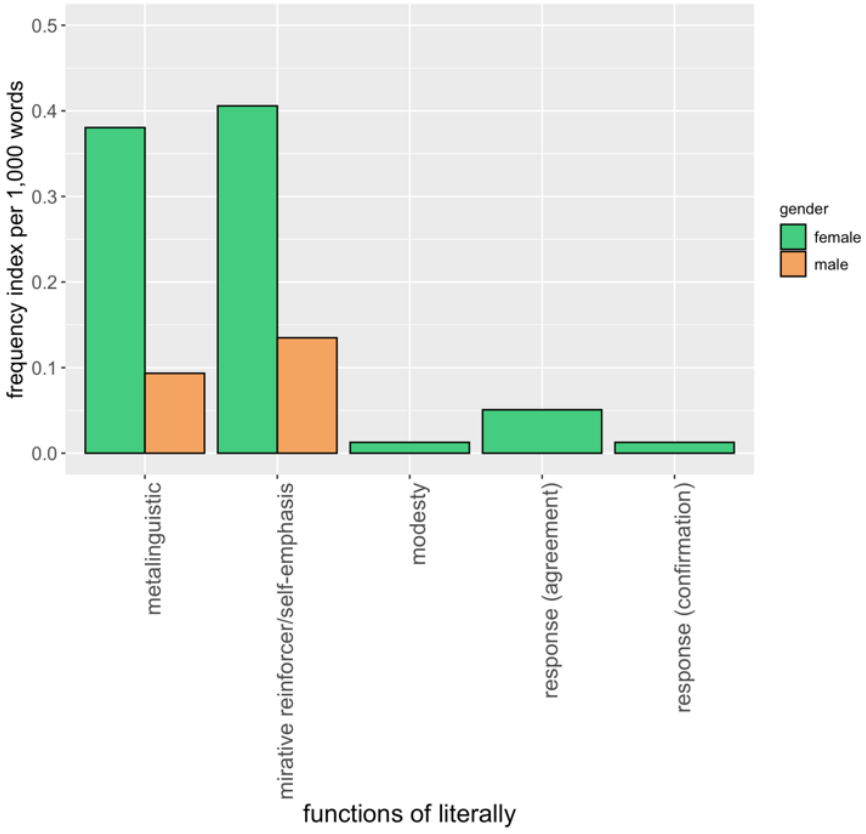
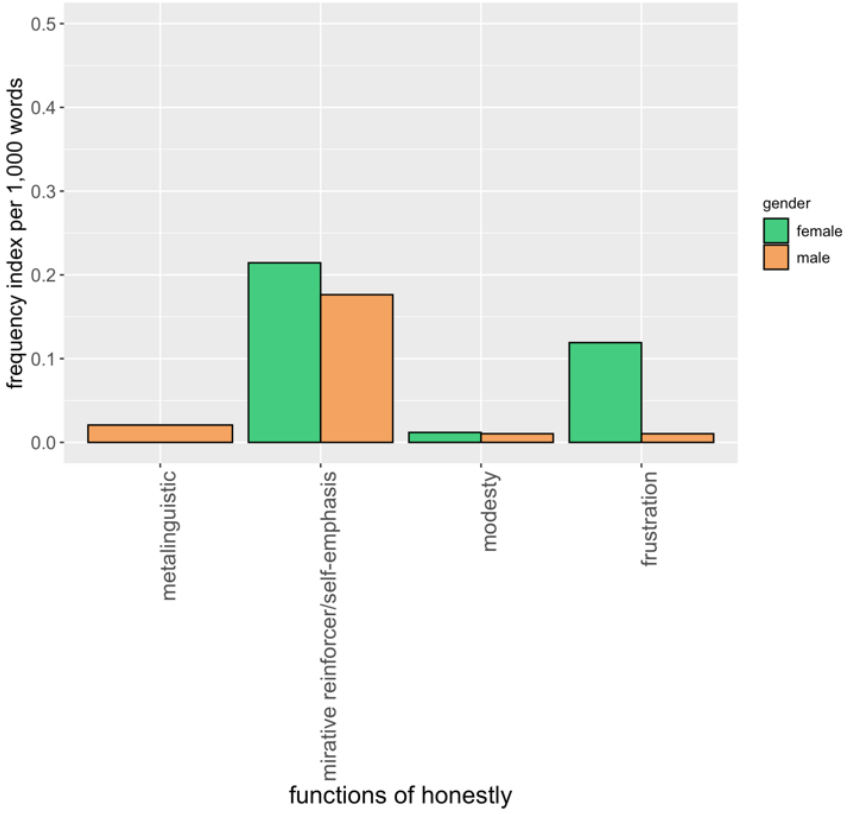


Figure 49. Comparison of frequency indices of the functions of *honestly* per gender



Girls not only use *literally* much more frequently, but also for a wider range of purposes, and particularly those that enrich the expressivity of their messages (metalinguistic and mirative reinforcer). The almost levelled frequency of *honestly* across genders is mirrored in its functional distribution. In terms of grammaticalisation, girls lead the change of both *literally* as a marker of agreement and confirmation, and *honestly* as a marker of frustration. The speech of Claire showcases this trend perfectly.

The outlier Claire and her use of *literally*

Claire (F, 17) uses *literally* a total of 37 times in her recorded conversation, which equates to a frequency of 7.27 per 1,000 words. This is highly frequent compared with the other speakers, considering that the second most frequent user of the form in the sample, Beth, uses it at a rate of 2.09. Although Claire's use of *literally* demonstrates the great versatility of the form, mirative reinforcement and self-emphasis are overwhelmingly preferred. Her use of *literally* as a stand-alone response marker also stands out, despite its rarity, as half of all the tokens in the sample are found in her speech. The excerpts and discussion below illustrate these ideas.

Claire often uses *literally* to enrich her narratives. One excellent example is her recounting of her holidays in the Caribbean. Tokens of *literally* here account for both metalinguistic and reinforcer uses.

(122) [Claire is talking about how they build houses in the Caribbean] They just have like stilts like *literally*, like stilts and then there's like a platform where they put a platform (unclear) but that's not built yet, like they build downwards. […] But like huge, you know? like the house is like *literally* on massive stilts, like up the mountain, like just (laughs) it's like crazy, if you like, if you like fell off downstairs, you would *literally* like die, it's so far down (Interviewer gasps). I know, it's really, really weird, like so weird (**Claire**, F, 17, Ben03f2_A).

(123) [Talking about crammed buses in Aruba] They're just sitting on top of each other and everything it's like so crazy, *literally* (**Claire**, F, 17, Ben03f2_A)

(124) [Talking about a beach close to the airport]
Claire: I don't know, it's like so close (unclear) the beach, then the road, then the plane thing (laughs). Like the plane is like *literally* just there.
Interviewer: You have to hold everything like 'yeah, there's a plane coming'.
Cl: *Literally*. Just like s- yeah (laughs) *literally* (laughs) it's so bad, so bad (Ben03f2_A).

(125) [Talking about the aftermath of a hurricane] It was just like, it was just like yachts in the middle of the road, and like *literally* all the houses were destroyed. They were just like climbing on the roof and like fixing it, like it was just like crazy (laughs) like (unclear) yeah, like all animals were just like walking along the road, like the cows and the sheep and all sorts, so they were just (unclear) walking along (laughs) like *literally* it was just like 'what the hell?' (**Claire**, F, 17, Ben03f2_A).

(126) [Talking about clubs] Er some of the other ones were like very Caribbean, like *literally* like all the music (unclear) would play stuff like that, like all on the beach (**Claire**, F, 17, Ben03f2_A).

With her use of *literally*, Claire manages to capture the things that she herself found surprising, shocking, or funny during her holidays: the houses being built downwards (in (122)), people on top of each other on buses (in (123)), planes flying over the beach (in (124)), the post-hurricane situation (in (125)), and the type of music that was played (in (126)). Her narrative is also peppered with extreme adjectives like *huge* or *massive*, boosters like *really* and *so*, and expressions of surprise like *it's crazy* and *what the hell?* The uses of *literally* with *die* in (122) and *all the houses were destroyed* in (125) showcase the emphasis of expressions that, paradoxically, are not meant to be taken in a literal sense; *literally* reinforces the idea of the houses being high up, and portrays a very dismal picture of the area after the hurricane. In most other cases, the statements are not particularly subject to disambiguation, but are assumed to be unbelievable in some way and in need of reinforcement. Agreement/confirmation *literally* in (124) also adds to the expressivity, but in this case, it fulfils an interpersonal function, rather than being a reinforcer of her feelings and experiences.

Another common context of occurrence of Claire's *literally* is in the strengthening of subjective opinions, the use labelled as self-emphasis that is subsumed within mirative reinforcement. Some of these are already illustrated in her narrative of the Caribbean holidays, but below are some further examples. *Literally* accompanies expressions that can be considered

categorical and only meant to be expressive, not to be understood in a literal sense, such as *always* (in (127)), *hate* (in (128)), and *all around her face* (in (129)). It also reinforces opinions that have already been boosted (like *really changed* in (129)) or are personal and subjective (e.g. in (130), *I'm not too bad* and *I know it's fake*).

(127) You're always early (laughs) *literally* (**Claire**, F, 17, Ben03f2_A).

(128) [Talking about her PE teacher] He just hated us [=me] like *literally* hated us [=me], so I was never in the PE, but apart from that I was like getting on with me [=my] lessons (**Claire**, F, 17, Ben03f2_A).

(129) [Talking about a celebrity that had surgery done] She, she really changed (laughs), *literally*. […] She's got fillers all around her face, *literally* (**Claire**, F, 17, Ben03f2_A).

(130) [Talking about how some celebrities set unachievable beauty expectations] You just feel like worse than how they look like (unclear) [**Interviewer**: Mmm, yeah]. *Literally,* I'm not too bad (laughs) I don't really get it coz I know it's fake anyway, like *literally* (**Claire**, F, 17, Ben03f2_A).

Response *literally* is also characteristic of Claire's speech. Examples from her recording have been used in the description of the function (at the beginning of this section, 7.2.5, and see also (124) above). What is also interesting is that Claire's data provides examples of possible contexts that led to the use of *literally* as a stand-alone marker. Response *literally* could have branched out from medial uses of the form in affirmative answers (e.g. (131) below), as suggested for the grammaticalisation of response *absolutely* (McManus 2012: 73; Tao 2007: 17). However, its detachment from the clause can also come from contexts where right-periphery *literally* is uttered with a certain delay, usually after laughter or some other kind of feedback from the other conversation participants (e.g. (132), (133), and (134) below). Although it reinforces the statement, it seems to be a stand-alone reaction to contextual cues of surprise or disbelief. More than half of Claire's RP *literally* were coded as delayed.

(131) **Claire**: I watch Ellen (laughs)
Charlotte: Oh aye yeah, I watch Ellen, like I've watched that quite a few times.
Interviewer: Really? (laughs)
Cl: Yeah, I *literally* do (Ben03f2).

(132) I can't remember where I went the year before that one though. Probably Tenerife (laughs), *literally* (**Claire**, F, 17, Ben03f2).

(133) Er I speak more or less the same like mam and dad [**Interviewer**: Mmm okay], *literally* (**Claire**, F, 17, Ben03f2).

(134) [In response to a 'Would you rather' card where she could choose between unlimited free trips within the UK, or one free international trip a year] I'd go to China if they're paid for (laughs) I like Cuba [**Interviewer**: Mmm]. Yeah, I don't know, just drive in the UK, you can drive there (laughs), *literally* (**Claire**, F, 17, Ben03f2).

Claire is a profuse user of *literally*, which enriches her expressive and lively conversational style in the telling of narratives and sharing of opinions. *Literally* adds to her use of strong *actually* (which she also uses unusually frequently at a rate of 3.34), boosters, and generally enthusiastic and semantically extreme language. The examples in her speech showcase the grammaticalisation of the form, both as a mirative reinforcer and a response marker.

The analysis of *literally, genuinely,* and *honestly* in this project can be summarised as follows. First, *literally* is much more frequent than either of the other two, mainly due to its expressive functions of metalinguistic specification and mirative reinforcement. Second, *literally* is an emphasiser characteristic of late adolescence and female speech; *honestly* shows similar yet less stark patterns. Third, both *literally* and *honestly* show advanced grammaticalisation in their reinforcer, response, and frustration uses, changes mainly led by female speakers. Response *literally* in particular has not been discussed in previous literature, and the sample here not only provides examples of its use but also of the contexts where it could have emerged: as a reinforcer in affirmative responses, or conveying self-emphasis in the delayed right periphery.

7.2.6. *Proper*, swearwords, *absolutely*, *completely* and *totally*

Type of utterance, position, and breakdown of medial positions

Intensifiers are relatively rare as emphasisers in positions other than pre-adjectival, all of them with indices below 0.10. *Proper* is the most frequent one, closely followed by swearwords and *absolutely*. They overwhelmingly occur in positive declaratives, and exclusively in medial position. Although *absolutely* and *totally* can be used as stand-alone response markers, there are only 2 tokens of the former and 1 of the latter in this sample (see (135), (136), and (137)). *Definitely* and even *literally* are more frequent in this use.

(135) **Interviewer**: Would you feel like that has influenced your sort of northern English accent at all? Do you know what I mean?
Beth: *Absolutely yeah* (2017_SEL2091_031).

(136) **Beth**: We don't get taught a language to the extent that they do in terms of people who live in, I don't know, Spain.
Melissa: Mmm, *absolutely not* (2017_SEL2091_031).

(137) **Interviewer**: I'm just in the middle of organising it [=a trip to Australia] now. It's expensive, though, but (laughs)
Anna: Very.
Scarlett: *Totally*, especially the flights (Jpa01f2).

Table 38. Frequency indices per 1,000 words of intensifiers per medial position (from least to most frequent)

Medial positions	*proper*		Swearwords		Maximisers	
	N	Index	N	Index	N	Index
pre-quantifier	1	0.01	/	/	/	/
pre-prepositional phrase	1	0.01	/	/	/	/
pre-clause	/	/	/	/	1	0.01
pre-no/not	/	/	/	/	2	0.01
pre-adverb	1	0.01	/	/	2	0.01
pre-noun	/	/	2	0.01	4	0.02
pre-verb	14	0.08	12	0.07	15	0.08
pre-adjective	37	0.21	12	0.07	36	0.20

Table 38 summarises the frequency of each type of pre-modification in medial position. Their occurrence in pre-adjective position has been included here for the sake of comparison, but this is analysed in Chapter 6. *Proper* and the group of maximisers are much more common in this context, while swearwords occur in either pre-verbal or pre-adjective position at exactly the same frequency. If we compare these results with those of *really* (in §7.2.2 above), we can see that *really* is the preferred variant both in pre-adjective (index of 2.11) and pre-verbal position (1.78 —or 0.57 if we focus on booster *really*).

In frequency terms, there are barely any differences in the choice of *proper,* swearwords, or maximisers in pre-verbal position. A closer look at the data, however, reveals two dissimilarities. First, the use of pre-verbal swearwords is restricted to five speakers, two of whom (Jack and Callum, in the same interview) account for half of all the tokens. In comparison, the use of *proper* and the maximisers is more widely split across speakers (despite certain age and gender trends discussed later).

Second, there are differences in the type of verbs modified. Half of all swearwords premodify *love* or *hate* (e.g. (138) and (139)), while only one token of *absolutely* intensifies *hate* and none of the other intensifiers are used in these contexts. In contrast, *absolutely* is more commonly found in the intensification of other verbs of extreme meaning (e.g. (140) and (141)), *completely* collocates with a limited range of verbs where it could convey its manner meaning (e.g. (142) and (143)), and *totally* only occurs once in this position, with a hint of certainty meaning (see (144)). *Proper* also occurs with some extreme verbs (e.g. (145)), yet the remaining collocations suggest that it is used with meanings similar to strong *actually*, and reinforcer *literally* (e.g. (146) and (147)).

(138) I *fucking* hate that place (**Mick**, M, 20, 2017_SEL2091_032_A).

(139) I *fucking* love Grease, one of the greatest movies ever made (**Callum**, M, 19, 2017_SEL2091_043_B).

(140) He was *absolutely* raging (**Jeremy**, M, 19, 2017_SEL2091_021_A).

(141) He took his gloves off and *absolutely* hammered the kid all over (**Declan**, M, 12, Ccc05m1_A).

(142) It was planned, it was *completely* planned (**Abbie**, F, 19, 2017_SEL2091_078_B).

(143) I just *completely* forgot (**Lizzie**, F, 17, Nsfc01f2_B).

(144) [Melissa is reporting what was going through her head in the first day of university] Like 'oh first impressions mean everything you have just *totally* made them think that you're a freak (laughs) because you can't speak loudly' (**Melissa**, F, 19, 2017_SEL2091_031_B).

(145) And it was *proper* like lashing down with rain (**Dave**, M, 13, Ccc06m1_A).

(146) I think it's hilarious sometimes, like when they *proper* argue with each other (**Claire**, F, 17, Ben03f2_A).

(147) It makes you *proper* like shake the next day if you drink them (**Ian**, M, 19, 2017_SEL2091_021_B).

The use of *proper* in the boosting of verbs is, albeit marginal, very relevant. It already sets it apart from more traditional boosters, such as *very*, and brings it closer to multifunctional forms such as *so, really,* the group of maximisers, and other emphasisers discussed in this chapter. As explored in Section 3.1.3 regarding intensifiers in Tyneside, it also appears to have a connection with the region, which none of the other forms do. In fact, the pre-verbal use of *so* is unattested in this sample, contrary to what has been found in studies of American and Canadian English (Kenter et al. 2007; Kuha 2005; Tagliamonte 2008; Zwicky 2011). In terms of grammaticalisation, the flexibility of collocations of *proper* here mirrors its versatility in the boosting of adjectives of different semantic categories and evaluative prosodies (discussed in §6.2.4). The extension of the booster to verbal contexts appears to be related to the adverbial form *properly*, but I consider that it is actually a result of the adjective *proper* gaining mobility and new functions. This theory is explored in the following sub-section.

The grammaticalisation path of *absolutely* and *totally* is not explored any further, given the extreme rarity of response and certainty-marking uses in this sample. It appears that these uses are not common in the particular cohort of Tyneside teenagers sampled for this project, in contrast with what has been found in other groups of speakers (Aijmer 2011, 2016, 2020; Carretero 2012; McManus 2012; Tao 2007).

Grammaticalisation of *proper*

Adjective *proper* has four main meanings (OED 2007 A): 'appropriate', 'fitting', 'suitable' (e.g. (148)), 'correct', 'formal', 'posh' (e.g. (149)), 'of good quality' (e.g. (150)), and 'real', 'actual',

'genuine' (e.g. (151), (152), and (153)). The appeal to reality in the latter meaning brings it close to stance markers such as *really* and *actually*. The redundant marking of reality could have naturally developed into a purely emphatic meaning in contexts where the reality meaning is no longer invoked, thereby also turning the form into a highly mobile adverb. Collocations with gerunds could have been the ambiguous context for reanalysis (e.g. (152) and (153)).

(148) [Jeremy and Ian are discussing whether the job of a head teacher is easy]
Ian: It would have to be like *proper* for you, though, coz if like…
Jeremy: Yeah, definitely. It's definitely the type of person you are (2017_SEL2091_021).

(149) [Jon is talking about the Geordie variety] I mean, I wouldn't say it's not *proper* English, but I would just say like maybes I can't understand them, so maybes, maybes, saying it's not *proper* English is a bit unfair, but… (**Jon**, M, 12, Ccc05m1_B).

(150) [Tim is talking about a football pitch they used to go to] It's good quality like Astro, they've got *proper* nets and everything, and we'd just we'd be there for like five hours (**Tim**, M, 16, Sc02m2_A).

(151) [Mick is talking about his university lessons] I don't know, I can be in for like nine to five but it wouldn't be like a *proper* nine-to-five day, like the other day I was in ten to four (**Mick**, M, 20, 2017_SEL2091_032_A).

(152) Just PE, just didn't like us [=me] (laughs) so like do you know like stupid little things like if I kicked a tennis ball, like just across the field, like, not like *proper* kicking, just like kick it a little bit, I'd be like 'behavioural support for a week', like he just hated us [=me], like literally hated us [=me] (**Claire**, F, 17, Ben03f2_A).

(153) [Bryan and Phil are talking about how their brothers get along]
Bryan: They get on quite well, they just always just like fight and that.
Phil: Just like just play fighting, but sometimes that leads to *proper* fighting (Ccc01m1).

The OED entry also includes a definition of adjective *proper* meaning 'accurate, in the strict use of the word, literal, not metaphorical' (2007 A.III.7.c and e). This undoubtedly links *proper* with local metalinguistic uses of *actually, really,* and, more clearly, *literally*. Emphasiser *proper* is, in fact, used with a similar mirative overtone, often occurring together with hyperbolic words or surprising situations (e.g. *proper lashing down* in (145) above, or (154), and (155) below).

(154) [Jeremy is recounting how he tore his jeans apart on a night out] I went to like go tackle him and I literally like *proper* like did the splits, basically, and I just tear (**Jeremy**, M, 19, 2017_SEL2091_021_A).

(155) [Chris is recounting one time that he lost his wallet and had to go pick it up at a building company, and he concludes saying the following] *Proper* looked proper shady, didn't it? (**Chris**, M, 19, 2017_SEL2091_032_B).

A more in-depth historical analysis of *proper* could clarify whether its emphatic meaning is a logical consequence of its degree-marking intensifier use, or if it was the reality and metalinguistic original adjectival meanings that developed into emphasis and intensification. In fact, it is possible that pre-adjectival uses of intensifier *proper* developed from contexts where adjective *proper* modified an already modified noun, and thus it was reanalysed as intensifying the adjective (e.g. *a [proper [rough area]] > a [[proper rough] area]*; *a [proper [shy kid]] > a [[proper shy] kid]*).

Intensifiers, age and gender

The conclusions that can be drawn from the choice of intensifier according to social predictors are extremely tentative given the scarcity of results. Still, figures in Table 39 and Table 40 suggest some trends. *Proper* is more frequent the older the speaker, and almost exclusively used by boys. This ties in with (i) results of the form in pre-adjectival contexts, (ii) the idea that younger speakers have a dominant predilection for *really* (§6.1.3.1), and (iii) the argument that male speakers are generally more comfortable using locally-indexed features.

Table 39. Frequency indices per 1,000 words of intensifiers per age group

Intensifier	Age group					
	12-15		16-18		19-20	
	N	Freq. index	N	Freq. index	N	Freq. index
proper	1	0.02	6	0.10	10	0.15
swearwords	/	/	/	/	14	0.21
absolutely	2	0.04	1	0.02	10	0.15
completely	1	0.02	4	0.07	3	0.05
totally	1	0.02	2	0.03	3	0.05

Table 40. Frequency indices per 1,000 words of intensifiers per gender

Intensifier	Gender			
	Female		Male	
	N	Freq. index	N	Freq. index
proper	3	0.04	14	0.15
swearwords	6	0.07	8	0.08
absolutely	4	0.05	9	0.09
completely	7	0.08	1	0.01
totally	4	0.05	2	0.02

Swearwords are exclusive to the oldest age group, a result explained on the basis of an interviewer effect. They are used at practically the same rate by boys and girls, as attested in Stenstrom's (2003: 109–10) study of the enactment of gender identities in COLT interviews.

Regarding maximisers and age, results are disparate and the only apparent trend is the more frequent use of *absolutely* among speakers aged 19 or 20. This matches what was found for pre-adjectival uses and the general trend of older speakers using maximisers more frequently (see §6.1.2). In terms of gender, *completely* and *totally* are more frequently used by girls, just like their pre-adjectival results showed. However, gender results of *absolutely* here contrast with what was found in Section 6.1.2: girls use this form more frequently than boys to intensify adjectives, yet boys use this form more frequently in any other context. These gender differences are, however, minimal.

Proper, swearwords, *absolutely, completely,* and *totally* are relatively infrequent in contexts other than pre-adjective position —other emphasisers and in particular *really* are preferred in non-pre-adjectival contexts. In pre-verbal position, the type of verb appears to constrain the intensifier chosen. More relevant findings derive from the study of *proper*. Considered a form with certain ties to local identity (as discussed in §3.1.3), *proper* is used practically only by the boys in this Tyneside sample, is found mainly in pre-adjectival and pre-verbal contexts, and appears to perform the function that pre-verbal *so* does in American English. I have argued that pre-verbal emphasiser *proper* has developed in a way that resembles other emphasisers in the set, possibly parting from the meaning of exactitude, truthfulness, and reality of its adjectival form.

7.2.7. Other emphatic devices: clause-final *like* and right dislocation

The use of clause-final *like* and right dislocation have also been studied as conveyors of emphasis, and indeed perform discourse-pragmatic functions similar to the rest. They are not the focus of this analysis, and will not be analysed in the same depth as other emphasisers.

Overview of functions of clause-final *like*

In this sample, clause-final *like* is used at a rate of 0.39, more frequently than right dislocation (0.23) and many adverbial emphasisers. Considered to be a salient feature of Irish English and by extension of Tyneside English, clause-final *like* is strongly tied to the local variety of the region (as discussed in §3.2.1). In comparison with the rates found in adult DECTE data in Bartlett's (2013) study, the frequency of clause-final *like* in this sample suggests a decline in the use of the form. This might simply follow on the downward trend found between the 70s and 90s datasets in Bartlett's study, or show that teenagers in the region are particularly infrequent users of the feature.

The second conclusion cannot be tested since the corpus here constitutes the first record of Tyneside teenage speech, and thus cannot be compared with teenagers in other times.

Clause-final *like* performs a core textual function of closing a narrative or a turn, and carries the moderating or mitigating meaning of the form in other positions. It also performs functions similar to *really* and *actually* in questions. Table 41 reports the distribution of these functions in the sample.

Table 41. Frequency indices per 1,000 words of the functions of clause-final *like* (from least to most frequent)

Functions of clause-final *like*	N	Freq. index
apologetic correction	4	0.02
need for information	4	0.02
asking for confirmation	11	0.06
mitigation	25	0.14
closure	31	0.17

Clause-final *like* is exploited to mark closure almost as often as to mitigate opinions, the two main meanings explored in previous research (see §3.2.1). The more specific uses of the feature in questions and its function in correcting other interlocutors' statements are fairly infrequent.

In the context of narratives or explanations, closure *like* can signal that there is no more to say about a topic, that is, it must be accepted as it is (e.g. (156), (157) and (158)). It performs the textual function of closing a turn in a more clear and categorical way than other uses. *Really* can perform this same function and indeed does so more frequently than clause-final *like* (*really* 0.21 versus *like* 0.17), a difference that could be due to the lack of regional associations of the former.

(156) **Interviewer**: Do you think you put on like a bit of a persona like a, an appearance on Instagram? Do you do that? Like to look cooler or not?
Claire: Not really, coz me [=my] life's pure boring (laughs), so there's just not a lot (Charlotte and Interviewer laugh). There's not a lot, *like* (Ben03f2).

(157) **Tristan**: That was the second time we played you this season and er the game before this season where we played you, we were winning three one, they managed to come back three three… […]
Tim: It was a good game, I wa- I was waiting, I thought it was going to be the same when we went like three nil down this week but it was er just awful.
Tristan: It was a good comeback, *like* (Sc02m2).

(158) [After talking for a while about how good stotties are] Well, I always got a stottie in the freezer just in case, *like* (**Callum**, M, 19, 2017_SEL2091_043_B).

Clause-final *like* can hedge an opinion on the assumption that it will not be well-received or expected by the other interlocutor (e.g. (159)-(162)). Despite its mitigation meaning, *like* also co-occurs with features that actually reinforce the opinion, such as boosters (e.g. (161)) and right dislocation (e.g. (162)). In comparison with other opinion-related uses of emphasisers, *like* is closer to *obviously* and further from self-emphatic *actually*, *really*, or *literally*. Mitigation *like* is used more frequently than mitigation *obviously*.

(159) All the wine's like 8 quid ea- at Blanc, isn't it? [**Jane**: Yeah] Not that I know the prices of the alcohol, *like* (**Emily**, F, 19, 2017_SEL2091_080_B).

(160) [Declan is talking about girls in the school] The ones that we talk to like we've known them for long enough now that they like take a bit of banter and they give banter and sort of… [**Interviewer**: yeah] and like they're just generally canny. But then there's other ones that's like they, they just bit over the top I think, *like* (**Declan**, M, 12, Ccc05m1_A).

(161) [Talking about Guinness] It's proper thick, *like* (**Chris**, M, 19, 2017_SEL2091_032_B).

(162) I wouldn't go on holidays for three weeks, me, *like*. It's too long (**Phil**, M, 12, Ccc01m1_B).

In questions, clause-final *like* can perform two different functions. More often in the context of *wh-* questions, *like* emphasises that the requested information has not been provided yet but is needed (e.g. (163) and (164)). It is very similar to *actually* in this same function, although *like,* given its overarching nuance of mitigation, does it almost apologetically.

(163) How young are you talking, *like*? (**Jeremy**, M, 19, 2017_SEL2091_021_A).

(164) [Megan is frustrated that sometimes friends interfere in couples] Like it's me who's seeing him, not you. At the end of the day, like 'I'm happy for who you're seeing, why can't you be happy for who I'm seeing, *like*?' (**Megan**, F, 14, Ccc04f1_A).

Like at the end of *yes/no* questions checks for confirmation or disconfirmation of some situation (e.g. (165), (166), and (167)). This can stem from either scepticism and surprise, as is the case with *actually* and *really*, or from the need to clear possible misunderstandings. Confirmation may also be simply rhetorical, that is, it serves a phatic function in checking that the interlocutor is still following the message. This is clearest in the common collocation of *like* at the end of the tag *do you know what I mean?* This collocation accounts for 8 out of 11 tokens of this function, which suggests the idiomatisation of the construction.

(165) [Lewis has been speaking about opening the doors of the lift while it is running and has just mentioned one time that he was scared the lift was going to drop. James responds the following] Yeah, that was close. Have you stopped doing that, *like*? (**James**, M, 17, Sc01m2_B).

(166) **Ian**: I haven't played that [=golf] in a while, though.

Jeremy: No, we haven't in a while, but I'd still say I play it, do you know what I mean, *like*? (2017_SEL2091_021).

(167) I need to meet her before I judge her [**Jane**: I know]. Like not that I'm gonna judge her as soon as she walks in, but you know what I mean, *like*? Get my bearings of her (**Emily**, F, 19, 2017_SEL2091_080_B).

Lastly, clause-final *like* can softly correct misinterpretations or possible wrong assumptions derived from a previous utterance (e.g. (168)). Both *actually* and clause-final *like* perform this function very infrequently, probably because it requires a very specific discourse situation to occur.

(168) [Jack is recounting the story of him and Callum being caught kicking grass piles in school]
Jack: Miss Borough had just spoken to Callum where Callum's been like 'yeah, yeah, me and Jack went round kicking the grass piles because…'
Callum: No, I don't think I told you out, *like*. I'm not a grass, I attacked a grass, but I'm not a grass (2017_SEL2091_043).

Functions of clause-final *like*, age and gender

Although the differences are small, clause-final *like* is more frequent in the speech of speakers aged between 16 and 20 and among male speakers. Table 42 and Table 43 report the frequency of its functions across social predictors.

Table 42. Frequency indices per 1,000 words of the functions of clause-final *like* per age group

Functions of clause-final *like*	Age group					
	12-15		16-18		19-20	
	N	Freq. index	N	Freq. index	N	Freq. index
apologetic correction	1	0.02	1	0.02	2	0.03
mitigation	4	0.07	11	0.18	10	0.15
closure	7	0.13	14	0.23	10	0.15
need for information	1	0.02	2	0.03	1	0.02
asking for confirmation	1	0.02	3	0.05	7	0.11

Table 43. Frequency indices per 1,000 words of the functions of clause-final *like* per gender

Functions of clause-final *like*	Gender			
	Female		Male	
	N	Freq. index	N	Freq. index
apologetic correction	/	/	4	0.04
mitigation	11	0.13	14	0.15
closure	14	0.17	17	0.18
need for information	2	0.02	2	0.02
asking for confirmation	3	0.04	8	0.08

The two younger groups of teenagers use clause-final *like* for closure more frequently than for mitigation, while the oldest group exploits these two functions at the same rate. Regarding gender, only male speakers use the feature to signal apologetic correction. Apart from that, the distribution of other functions is practically the same. The results here therefore do not support Bartlett's (2013: 16) predictions that the functions of clause-final *like* in Tyneside were becoming subject to gender preferences in the more recent Tyneside data. In none of the social categories does clause-final *like* occur more frequently than *really* and *actually* for similar functions (closure and apologetic correction, respectively). However, it is more frequent than *obviously* in mitigating opinions, both per age group and per gender.

Overview of functions of right dislocation

Right dislocation is the repetition of the subject at the end of a clause in the form of a tag. More specifically, pronoun tags are the ones spotted as frequent in Tyneside English and thus the focus here (see §3.2.1). At a rate of 0.23 per 1,000 words, right dislocation is the least frequent emphatic device out of the two non-adverbial devices studied in this project. It is exactly as frequent as *honestly*, and more frequent than the group of intensifiers and other infrequent features. Its rarity in the sample appears to match Durham's (2011: 264) results regarding reverse right dislocation in York: local forms are in decline. However, a comparison with adult data could also test if results here match Snell's (2018: 686) conclusions: young speakers use local features more frequently to 'assert status in local interactional uses', independently of overall social stigmas.

As explored in Section 3.2.1, right dislocation performs textual and stance-marking functions. Two textual functions were identified and four stance and affective ones, labelled 'subjective uses'. Table 44 reports their distribution in the sample. Note that the function as a reinforcer of commands is not attested in the sample (e.g. *Get off, you*) (Snell 2008: 193–94).

Table 44. Frequency indices per 1,000 words of the functions of right dislocation (from least to most frequent)

Functions of right dislocation	N	Freq. index
textual (phatic)	3	0.02
textual (new topic)	3	0.02
subjective (choice-insistent)	11	0.06
subjective (self-emphasis)	20	0.11
subjective (side-comment)	21	0.12

Tyneside teenagers here mainly use right-dislocated pronoun tags as an expressive side-comment in their narratives or to reinforce their opinions (self-emphasis). Rarer is the contrastive use of the feature to insist on personal preferences and choices as well as the textual functions. What follows is an exploration of each of these.

Often in narratives and with 1st person or demonstrative pronouns, right dislocation highlights a side comment that is not necessarily an opinion (self-emphasis) or a preference (choice-insistent). This use livens up stories by emphasising the speaker's actions at the time (1st person) or the speaker's stance towards some recounted situation. Side-comment RD has not been identified as a distinct function in previous work on the form, yet it is the most frequent use of the feature in this project's sample (e.g. (169), (170), and (171)).

(169) **Jane**: Emily is grim, ate some four-day-old chicken… [**Interviewer**: Ugh]
Emily: I didn't realise it was four-day-old, to be fair.
J: …that travelled from Newcastle to London to Italy (laughs).
E: It was Josh's fault, like (I laughs). This four-day-old chicken (laughs) hadn't been in a fridge for about two days [**I**: Oh no] (J laughs). Surprised I didn't die, we'll see [**I**: Oh, that's horrible], got a good immune system, *me* (I and J laugh) (2017_SEL2091_080).

(170) [Claire has just been speaking about a video she saw of the Geordie Shore cast filming, which made her realise that it was all set up]
Claire: Yeah, it's really bad.
Charlotte: I didn't know it was that fake.
Cl: Yeah, I couldn't believe it, *me* (laughs). I knew it was fake but I didn't think it was like that bad (Ben03f2).

(171) [Phil is explaining the rides he likes in the South Shield funfair] I like them [=those] surf boarding ones, do you know the… the ones that you… [**Bryan**: Yeah] You go and surf, but they're fun, *them*. You hurt when you fall off them (**Phil**, M, 12, Ccc01m1_B) [also coded as self-emphasis].

In its self-emphasis function, right dislocation reinforces the speaker's personal opinion (Carter et al. 2000: 148; Snell 2008: 190). This can serve three different purposes. First, it could be used as a solidarity marker, creating an affective bond with hearer either supporting a previous opinion by the other interlocutor or in the expectation that they will share the opinion (e.g. (172) and (173) below) (Moore and Snell 2011: 107; Snell 2008: 194). Second, it can present the speaker's opinion in contrast with someone else's (present earlier in the discourse, implied, or assumed) (e.g. (174) and (175)) (Cheshire 2005c: 98; Snell 2008: 188). Third, with 2nd and 3rd person pronoun tags, right dislocation tends to emphasise 'unequivocally negative propositions' (e.g. (176)) (Snell 2008: 190), a face-threatening move that only very close friends or those with certain social status in a community could afford to perform (Moore and Snell 2011: 107). Self-emphasis RD is only more

frequent than *actually* with a similar function (RD 0.11 versus *actually* 0.07), while *really, literally,* and *honestly* are preferred in this context.

(172) [Chris has just explained what his next haircut is going to look like, to which Mick replies] That's very cool, *that* (**Mick**, M, 20, 2017_SEL2091_032_A).

(173) **Tim**: We went to Alcatraz, that was, that was great […]
Tristan: Alcatraz, Alcatraz, aye, that would be pretty impressive, *that* (Sc02m2).

(174) [Megan has just said she is a 'calmer' speaker when she's around boys, to which Caroline responds the following] I think I'm just normal around boys, *me* (**Caroline**, F, 15, Ccc04f1_B).

(175) [Tristan has been commenting on a Newcastle United player that he thinks is not very good, to which Tim replies] Honestly, I think he's one of the be-, like my personal opinion, I think he's class, *me*. I've always loved him and I think he's still great (**Tim**, M, 16, Sc02m2_A).

(176) You're disgusting, *you* (**Callum**, M, 19, 2017_SEL2091_043_B).

Choice-insistent pronoun tags can be placed at the end of the expression of preferences and likings, emphasising the speaker's subjective personal choice (e.g. (177), (178) and (179)) (Cheshire 2005c: 98; Snell 2008: 196). Similar to self-emphatic RD, this function may contrast the speaker's choice(s) against someone else's (e.g. (178) and (179)). This is a very specific function that is not performed as such by another emphatic device in the sample: right dislocation in these contexts emphasises subjectivity to an extent that other features do not.

(177) [When asked where he likes going out] Oh, I'd go, go out anywhere, *me* (**Callum**, M, 19, 2017_SEL2091_043_B).

(178) [Lewis has just said that he wouldn't like to read minds because he would hear other people's negative opinions about him. James thinks otherwise] I'd be worried if people could read my mind but not if I could read others'. […] I would just be… I think I would be fine, *me* (**James**, M, 17, Sc01m2_B).

(179) [Claire and Charlotte are talking about films]
Charlotte: The first one's good like er when they go to the the house, the little cottage thing.
Claire: Oh the lake house [**Ch**: Yeah]. Oh and they go there and like, the waterpark.
Ch: Yeah, and then they…
Cl: I like the other one, *me*, where that they have a massive party (Ben03f2).

Pronoun tags also perform discourse management functions, but these are very rarely exploited in this dataset. These functions never occur independently of some layer of subjectivity meaning. We speak of its phatic function, by which right dislocation secures the attention of the addressee, emphasising the message as relevant (e.g. (180)) (Durham 2011: 259–60). It is difficult to gauge when this is the case, since all of the uses of subjective reinforcement listed above could be argued to call the addressee's attention to some extent. Pronoun tags can also be placed at the

end of a comment that triggers a change of topic, usually in the speaker's interest (e.g. (181)) (Cheshire 2005c: 98).

(180) Phatic function:
[Charlotte said she likes going to Nando's for food]
Claire: Yeah, I went to Nando's and I didn't get it, *me* (laughs). I didn't understand it. (Charlotte laughs) Like it wo- like the menu just proper confused us [=me].
Ch: What do you mean? That's why I get my brother doing mine like 'Jim do it, you know what I want to take' (laughs).
Cl: (laughs) I was so confused, *me*, though (Ben03f2) [both tokens also coded as self-emphasis and side-comment].

(181) Introduction of a new topic:
[Bryan has been speaking about a show with dolphins and killer whales, and moves on to recount some YouTube videos of dolphins]
Bryan: This one was taking a video of er the dolphins in the water, she dropped the phone, the dolphin went and got it up, gave it back.
Phil: They do with anything, really, like it's like they know what the what's going to happen if they lose it [**Interviewer**: Yeah]. I hate killer whales, *me*, though. I really do (Ccc01m1) [also coded as choice-insistent].

Functions of right dislocation, age and gender

Speakers in the 16-18 age group are particularly frequent users of right dislocation, closely followed by the 19-20 group. Gender differences are not big, yet male speakers appear to use it more frequently. Interestingly, most of the instances of right dislocation in female speech are concentrated in the speech of Claire's and Charlotte's sample, while a wider range of male speakers use it. These results match the demographics more commonly associated not only with right dislocation in other studies, but also with other local features, as shown by the use of *proper* in this project (see §6.2.4 and §7.2.6). The distribution of functions per social predictor is presented below in Table 45 and Table 46.

Table 45. Frequency indices per 1,000 words of the functions of right dislocation per age group

Functions of right dislocation	Age group					
	12-15		16-18		19-20	
	N	Freq. index	N	Freq. index	N	Freq. index
textual (phatic)	/	/	3	0.05	/	/
textual (new topic)	1	0.02	1	0.02	1	0.02
subjective (self-emphasis)	4	0.07	9	0.15	7	0.11
subjective (choice-insistent)	3	0.06	6	0.10	2	0.03
subjective (side-comment)	4	0.07	11	0.18	6	0.09

Table 46. Frequency indices per 1,000 words of the functions of right dislocation per gender

Functions of right dislocation	Gender			
	Female		Male	
	N	Freq. index	N	Freq. index
textual (phatic)	2	0.02	1	0.01
textual (new topic)	1	0.01	2	0.02
subjective (self-emphasis)	4	0.05	16	0.17
subjective (choice-insistent)	5	0.06	6	0.06
subjective (side-comment)	10	0.12	11	0.11

Results show that side-comment and self-emphasis are the most common functions. Still, there are two patterns that are worth discussing. First, speakers in the middle age group, who are also the most frequent users of the form, appear to use right dislocation for side comments much more frequently. Second, self-emphasis appears to be much more commonly exploited by boys than girls. In comparison with other emphasisers used to reinforce opinions, male speakers prefer right dislocation over *literally* and *actually*, while female speakers use any other form for the same function more frequently than right dislocation.

The non-adverbial means of emphasis studied in this project are less frequent than most of the adverbial emphasisers analysed in previous sections. Clause-final *like* and right dislocation are more common in the speech of older and male speakers, a pattern particularly noticeable in the case of *like*. Male speakers indeed use right dislocation for the reinforcement of their opinions more frequently than other features, a trend that is reversed for female speakers. In mitigating their opinions, Tyneside teenagers in this project prefer clause-final *like* over *obviously*, although the whole range of hedges (e.g. *sort of, kind of,* medial *like*) should be studied for more solid conclusions in this respect.

7.3. Discussion of results

This section draws connections between the findings that have emerged from the analysis of the individual emphatic devices. This will show what the trends are compared with the findings of previous research, and provide an overview of the conversational style of Tyneside teenagers in this sample. The section is organised by themes that cover the three main functional areas identified across emphatic devices: local emphasis (§7.3.1), reinforcement of opinions (§7.3.2), and solidarity (§7.3.3). Ideas of variation, change and grammaticalisation will be invoked throughout.

7.3.1. Local emphasis and metalinguistic specification

The focus of this section is on emphasisers with local scope over the following item. Local emphasis is practically the most frequent function exploited by Tyneside teenagers in this sample and it demonstrates a lively and expressive manner of speaking. It also tends to be the most frequent function per emphasiser that can perform it.

Really is the most frequent emphasiser for this role in the sample, followed by *actually*, *definitely*, and the iterations of *literally* as a mirative reinforcer and metalinguistic specifier. Intensifiers *proper, absolutely, completely* and *totally*, together with swearwords, are in comparison extremely infrequent. However, the picture is not as simple: the distribution of these forms is largely subject to the syntactic context in which they occur and the social predictors that constrain them.

Pre-verbal position is the favoured position for most local uses of emphasisers, except for *really, proper, absolutely, completely* and *totally*. Intensifiers, both those studied in this chapter and all of those analysed in the discussion of boosters in Chapter 6, are most commonly found in pre-adjectival position (as expected, according to e.g. Bäcklund 1973: 279 and Lorenz 2002: 144). The occurrence of *actually, definitely,* and *literally* in the pre-modification of adjectives would suggest a grammaticalisation move towards becoming intensifiers, as happened with *really* (see e.g. Lorenz 2002). However, this context is still dominated by paradigmatic intensifiers in the speech of this particular cohort of Tyneside teenagers, in contrast with findings, for example, of pre-adjectival *definitely* in COLT (Aijmer 2008). Nonetheless, the sample provides examples of medial *actually, definitely* and *literally* that resemble intensification, where the respective meanings of contrast, certainty, and truthfulness appear to be bleached. This is particularly noticeable in the speech of girls.

Really appears to be the most common pre-verbal emphasiser, although this only applies to its truth-insistent use. This meaning is slightly different from the uses of *actually* as a strong scalar emphasiser, assertive *definitely*, and local *literally*. By breaking down the truth-insistent and booster uses of *really* (the latter is more comparable with the other forms), *really* as a pre-verbal booster is indeed less frequent than *actually*. The high frequency of *actually* in youth speech has also been attested in other studies (Barbieri 2008: 74; Waters 2008: 35). Furthermore, if we were to

amalgamate the mirative reinforcer and metalinguistic uses of *literally*, [62] booster *really* would even rank behind that form.

Several conclusions can be drawn from the use of these emphasisers as local reinforcers. First, *really* is specialised in the function of metalinguistic specification or adjustment to reality in the very particular context of post-negation. *Actually* occurs in these situations as well, yet far less frequently than *really*. This is a fairly common use in this sample and *really* is the preferred option for it, so the high frequency for *really* is largely explained by this fact.

Second, *actually* and *literally* evidence advanced grammaticalisation. A*ctually* is much more frequent in this local-emphasis use than in its more established uses as a contrastive linker. Setting aside post-negator uses, medial *actually* is even more frequent than medial *really*. *Literally* is also largely favoured in medial position, which would, in theory, clash with its definition as a style stance marker, usually placed in the left periphery (like *honestly*). This formal result is already evidence of grammaticalisation. In terms of meaning, medial *literally* is used to emphasise that the term that follows is the most appropriate for a situation, often disambiguating meaning (metalinguistic, 'in a literal sense'). However, it also occurs in contexts where it reinforces a figurative, extreme, or exaggerated expression; far from signalling disambiguation, *literally* here enriches the expressivity of the reinforced item. Bolinger (1972: 107) and Powell (1992: 79) spotted these uses, Quirk (1985: 619) commented on them as colloquial and absurd, and the general public appears to react against them. However, no other sociolinguistic study has looked into *literally* in detail before, to the best of my knowledge. Results suggest that *literally* is delexicalising into an emphasiser exploited for expressive purposes, drifting apart from its manner and style-stance meaning of 'in a literal sense'.

Definitely also shows patterns of delexicalisation, as attested by the loss of certainty meaning. Its high frequency over similar items like *certainly* and *surely* appears to corroborate this idea, and matches Aijmer's (2008) findings of the form becoming more frequent in teenage speech. In the cohort of Tyneside teenagers sampled here, however, *definitely* still lags behind other forms with a similar function of local reinforcement.

Third, the use of pre-verbal *proper* is marginal but still constitutes a very relevant finding. It shows that *proper* has expanded its collocability, becoming more similar to *so, really*, *actually* and *literally*. The basis of this change appears to be in the 'real, actual, genuine' meaning of the adjective.

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[62] The division of these two uses of *literally* is only relevant in the context of a finer understanding of the grammaticalisation of the form, but in terms of local emphasis, both uses can be compared with *actually, really,* and *definitely*.

Fourth, there seems to be a common denominator to all of the local emphasisers here: the nuance of metalinguistic specification. Most noticeable in the use of *literally* and least in *definitely*, all of the forms here appear to have a role in reinforcing the item that follows as an accurate term for what the speaker means, either by appealing to reality and certainty (*actually, really* and *definitely*) or to truthfulness and accuracy (*literally* and *proper*). This sets these local-scope emphasisers apart from the degree-marking focus of intensifiers, and brings them together in contrast with other emphasisers such as *obviously*. It is this nuance that also appears to explain the context expansion of *proper*. Linked to metalinguistic specification, the expression of mirativity, that is, surprise or counter-expectation, is also common to *actually, literally,* and *proper*.

Lastly, it is worth discussing the social factors that constrain emphasisers with local scope in the sample. The only age-related patterns are the youngest speakers' predilection for *really* and the higher frequencies of *definitely* and *literally* in the older groups. In terms of gender patterns, girls use every local-emphasis form more frequently than boys, except for *really* and *proper*. Teenage girls in this sample are the forerunners in the grammaticalisation of *actually* and *literally*. [63] If we were to consider them as a small-scale representation of general female teen talk, we can see that the criticism against this use of *literally* by the general public might be rooted in overarching patterns of linguistic discrimination: teenagers cannot speak properly (see discussions in Drummond 2016, Eckert 2003, and Chapter 2) (i.e. they are misusing *literally*), and female speakers overuse intensifiers, emphasisers, and emotional language in general (Jespersen 1922; Lakoff 1973; Stoffel 1901; and discussion in Coates 2003, and Holmes 1995) (i.e. they are overusing *literally*). This criticism reflects a misunderstanding of linguistic mechanisms. The teenage girls' use of *literally* (and of less overtly proscribed *actually*) demonstrates a vivid and subjectively involved discourse style, and, most importantly, unavoidable language change.

Proper is overwhelmingly preferred by boys. In fact, pre-verbal *proper* appears to be even more gendered than pre-adjectival *proper*. Argued to be associated with Tyneside speech (see §3.1.3), these results confirm what Labov (1990: 367) called the Conformity Paradox: girls lead in linguistic changes unless these are overtly proscribed. In the interviews, the girls' frequent comments on how boys sound or try to sound more Geordie to signal toughness or coolness evidence their awareness of gender associations with the variety. Male speakers spearhead the grammaticalisation of *proper*, not only as a booster of a wide range of adjective types, but also in its

[63] Although this use of *literally* has been attested in language dating back to the 18th century (OED 2011), it appears that female speakers are the ones behind the increased frequencies nowadays.

pre-verbal uses. However, their use of *proper* does not seem to be subject to as much criticism as the girls' use of *literally*.

7.3.2. Reinforcement of opinions and choices

Another of the most common functions of emphasisers in this sample is the reinforcement of opinions and choices. Labelled self-emphasis, the high frequency with which teenagers here exploit this function reveals a way of speaking that places great importance on the marking of subjectivity. As such, the forms that are used to fulfil that role can be considered to have undergone subjectification, since they all originally conveyed more objective lexical meanings of reality (*actually* and *really*), certainty (*definitely*), and truthfulness (*literally, genuinely,* and *honestly*). Right dislocation also performs a similar function.

Really, literally, and *honestly* are the most common emphasisers used by this cohort of teenagers to reinforce their opinions.[64] The use of *honestly* to express frustration also reinforces the speaker's subjective stance. As with *literally*, the use that speakers in this dataset make of *honestly* demonstrates a detachment from its function to frame the speech act that follows. Speakers are generally not appealing to how sincere and honest they are; this is propositionally redundant in most cases (see discussion on the redundancy of marking reality and truthfulness in §4.5). Instead, they simply want to reinforce how they feel or the opinion they are presenting. The same logic applies to the use of assertive *definitely* in the specific context of 1st person subjects: speakers have no need to mark how certain they are about their personal opinion or feelings, so what *definitely* does is strengthen the subjective force of the utterance.

Right dislocation and *actually* are also exploited in these functions, but at lower frequencies. What makes *actually* different from other features in the reinforcement of opinions is that it carries a contrastive nuance. The speaker emphasises their point of view in contrast with either someone else's or, more commonly, the assumption that the opinion is unexpected. This particularity might explain why it is less frequent than the more generic reinforcement expressed by *really, literally* and *honestly*. Right dislocation appears to be the least frequent device used for self-emphasis. Still, it is worth noting that its other functions —choice-insistent and side-comment— are also conveyors of the speaker's subjectivity. Overall, this feature is more common than *honestly*. However, social constraints apply.

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[64] The count of *literally* and *honestly* here also includes local reinforcement uses (mirative reinforcement and self-emphasis were amalgamated as one function), yet the overwhelming majority of *honestly* tokens are peripheral uses of the form to reinforce an opinion.

Male speakers more commonly reinforce their opinions by means of right dislocation, and *really*. Female speakers are much more frequent users of *literally*, and, less markedly, of *honestly*. The use of *actually* for the reinforcement of opinions is levelled across genders. Although boys exploit *actually* for the strict function of self-emphasis more frequently, girls are more frequent users of elaborative *actually*, which also fulfils the purpose of opinion reinforcement. Speakers aged 12 to 15 prefer *really* for this function, those in the middle age group favour right dislocation, and the oldest speakers have a marked preference for *literally* and *honestly*.

Despite the apparent messiness of the results, several conclusions can be drawn. First, teenagers use a rich variety of resources to emphasise their subjective stance. Second, the more frequent use of right dislocation by boys reflects the trend of locally-indexed features being preferred by male speakers —aligning with Durham's (2011) findings of right dislocation in York and Childs's (2016) comments on *canny* in Tyneside. Third, there are no great gender differences in the rate of self-emphasis in general: both boys and girls reinforce their opinions frequently, yet they do it by different means —as attested in studies that analysed gender differences in discourse styles (Coates 2003; Holmes 1995; Macaulay 2005; Precht 2008; Stenström 2003).

Fourth, age-related patterns match overall trends in the sample: younger speakers prefer *really*, and older ones are the almost exclusive users of *literally*. In the case of the middle group's predilection for right dislocation, what we find is that most of the speakers that have shown a particular attachment to the local variety (both in their language and their comments in the interviews) are aged between 16 and 18: Claire, Charlotte, Lewis, James, Tim, and Tristan. They are also the most common users of *proper* and *canny*. Therefore, although the result is loosely attached to age, it is more strongly connected to individual speaker styles. It could be argued that the dialectal features of speakers in the oldest group might have eroded further due to an increased exposure to other varieties of English, since most of them are university or college students and have made non-local friends.[65] A more in-depth ethnographic study along the lines of those conducted by Moore and Snell (Moore 2003, 2011; Moore and Podesva 2009; Moore and Snell 2011; Snell 2008, 2018) could shed light on this possibility.

Obviously and clause-final *like* can do the opposite: mitigating opinions. *Like* is more frequent than *obviously* for this function. This could be due to the general high frequency of *like*

[65] Jeremy (M, 19) comments on this:
Obviously being at uni all this time, like everyone's from so many different places, like Manchester, like Huddersfield, Leeds, like… [**Ian**: yeah]. You always pick up other people's like catchwords and things like that […] I er I think I would come home if I've been at uni all week and I've not seen the lads from home in a while and I come home and I use like a new word which like no one said, they're just like 'what on earth does that mean?' (Jeremy and Ian laugh) (2017_SEL2091_021).

found in the speech of younger people (e.g. Andersen 2001: 289; Dailey-O'Cain 2000: 68; D'Arcy 2005: 85–86; Romaine and Lange 1991: 251; Schourup 1985). The difference might also respond to the fact that mitigation is the core function of clause-final *like* (together with closure), whereas *obviously* is most commonly exploited for other functions. Male speakers are the most frequent users of clause-final *like*, although the gender difference is not as stark as with other locally-indexed features. It is also relatively infrequent in the sample. These findings match what was found in previous research in Tyneside (Bartlett 2013).

7.3.3. Interactional patterns and solidarity

Emphasisers also play a key role in maintaining solidarity across conversation participants. This section covers all the functions that in some way contribute to a cooperative discourse style, focused on interpersonal relations across speakers and positive politeness (in accordance with Brown and Levinson's (1987) Politeness Theory). In other words, the concept of solidarity here encapsulates Coates's (2003) idea of doing friendship through language. The discussion will look at (i) the building of common ground through *obviously* and markers of agreement (*definitely, literally, absolutely* and *totally*), (ii) the softening of face-threatening utterances —that is, management of contrast and correction through *actually* and *like*, and expression of concession by means of *obviously* and *definitely*—, and (iii) the marking of self-repair and modesty (*actually, really, literally, genuinely,* and *honestly*).

The clearest instance of the teenagers' focus on liaising with conversation participants is the use of solidarity *obviously*. Speakers assume and build common ground on topics that are unknown to all or some of the other interlocutors, narrowing the gap between speakers, and turning a personal narrative or opinion into a shared experience. This is the most common function of the form in the sample, and complements Aijmer's (2008) findings in COLT. This project adds to her findings that solidarity *obviously* also serves to involve outsiders and make the topic of conversation more approachable (as attested by Jon's use of the form). Generally, girls use solidarity *obviously* more frequently than boys. However, this does not mean that boys are less cooperative; as discussed below, they are linguistically friendly in other ways. The high frequency of this function also demonstrates a highly advanced grammaticalisation status of the form, which in these contexts has gained intersubjective meaning beyond evidentiality. This situation could explain the recent rise in frequency attested in British and Canadian English (Tagliamonte and Smith 2018).

Another way in which speakers interact with their conversation partners is by means of agreement. As far as emphasisers are involved, teenagers in this sample do not appear to signal

emphatic agreement very frequently. Phatic responses like *aye, yeah* or *mhmh* are more common. Still, there is a noticeable gender pattern in this respect, with girls being the almost exclusive users of emphatic agreement responses *definitely* and *literally*. Even the three tokens of *absolutely* and *totally* are uttered by girls (Beth, Melissa, and Scarlett). This mirrors what Guiller and Durndell (2006: 375) found regarding the female tendency to intensify agreement. It shows not only a noticeable interactional discourse style on their part but also a trend to exploit grammaticalised versions of the forms. This is particularly true of *literally*. Unattested in previous work, *literally* is used as a stand-alone response marker of emphatic agreement in this project's dataset, but only by girls. Most tokens come from Claire, whose speech is one of the key reflections of linguistic innovation in the cohort. In this function, *definitely* is the most common emphasiser and practically exclusive to female speech.

In terms of managing possible face-threatening comments, teenagers in this sample profusely exploit *actually* to soften contrast and *obviously* to introduce concession (more frequently than *definitely*). There are not many instances of correction, yet those that occur are of the apologetic kind, by means of *actually* (more common among girls) or clause-final *like* (more common among boys). The only noticeable age pattern in these functions is the higher frequency of concessive *obviously* among the youngest speakers. Gender patterns appear to be more interesting. Results suggest that the marking of contrast through *actually* is more common among female speakers in the sample. In comparison, the use of concession to buffer comments is more frequent among boys, who use *obviously* and *definitely* for this function more frequently than girls (the only four tokens of *definitely* with this function were present in male speech). Overall, the emphasis of contrast through *actually* in female speech and of concession through *obviously* in male speech show that both gender groups are keen to avoid conflict with their interlocutors, leaning towards a cooperative and nuanced discourse style —in line with Stenström's (2003: 110–12) conclusion that male teenagers are not any less cooperative than girls. Even the abundant use by both gender groups of response marker *not really* to avoid a categorical *no* could be seen to support this idea.

Finally, *really, actually,* and —to a marginal extent— *literally* and *honestly* are used by teenagers in this sample to reformulate their utterances or admit lack of knowledge. This function is more frequent in the speech of speakers aged 16 and above, and is levelled across boys and girls. Against the idea that this function evidences linguistic or social insecurity (see discussion on tentativeness in §3.2.3), I consider that teenagers are performing the key interpersonal and affective function of avoiding playing the expert (Coates 2003: 338).

In summary, the wide variety of ways in which teenagers in this sample maintain a positive relationship with their interlocutors demonstrates a generally cooperative and interactional style of

speaking. This idea is reinforced by the absence of more face-threatening functions like the uses of *obviously* to impose opinions (authoritative), *actually* for defensive corrections, or any means of emphatic disagreement. Their use of emphasisers for textual functions also evidences a focus on interaction, like the use of closure *really* and clause-final *like*, phatic *like* at the end of tags, or *really, actually* and *like* in questions. The results of this project correspond with the way that teenage conversation is often portrayed: highly interactional and concerned with creating social bonds (Biber and Finegan 1989: 110; Danesi 1997: 457; Jørgensen and Martínez 2010: 194; Stenström 2014: 14; Tagliamonte 2016: 3; Tannen 1984: 30).

Chapter 8
Conclusions

This study has explored the spoken discourse of Tyneside teenagers with a focus on intensification and emphasis. Findings relate to patterns of variation and change, grammaticalisation, discourse styles, and local language and identities. This chapter summarises the conclusions derived from the study (§8.1) and outlines limitations and avenues for future research (§8.2).

8.1. Summary of findings

This section provides a comprehensive overview of the answers provided by this study to the four research questions posed at the outset. The analysis has also yielded relevant findings with respect to the conceptualisation of the linguistic variables and the methodologies followed in their analyses. These will be discussed first.

One of the key original features of this project lies in the connections drawn between intensifiers and emphasisers. Only a few sociolinguistic studies have examined them together (see e.g. Barbieri 2008; Bondi 2008; Holmes 1995; Labov 1984; Myers 2010), and they do not always acknowledge the functional and formal differences between the two categories. The analysis carried out for this project helps to reflect on both similarities and differences. It also advances our knowledge of how these features operate in natural speech, and how they relate to speech styles specific to the individual and particular social groups.

Intensifiers and emphasisers have previously been shown to perform very similar roles in enriching expressivity and speakers' involvement in oral discourse (Aijmer 2020: 144; Bondi 2008: 39; Carretero 2012: 90; Lorenz 2002: 150–52; Quirk et al. 1985: 583). This similarity shows through in their similar grammaticalisation patterns: both intensifiers and emphasisers undergo semantic attrition and subjectification to become discourse-pragmatic tools for expressivity. A few forms showcase the bidirectionality of the intensifier-emphasiser grammaticalisation path (e.g. *very* and *really* becoming boosters, or *absolutely* and *totally* gaining a certainty overtone and response-marking functions). Some forms are currently in grey areas between intensification and emphasis, such as *really, so, proper, absolutely,* and emphasisers *actually, definitely,* and *literally* with local scope. With regard to their social distribution, results from this project and previous research show that both intensifiers and emphasisers are markedly frequent in the speech of young speakers. Previous research has suggested that women are particularly fond of intensification and emphasis, but that

trend is not as clear in the cohort sampled here. For both intensifiers and emphasisers, high frequency is often tied to discussions of innovative, emotionally-loaded, and vivid discourse styles.

Despite their similar roles, it is still useful to mark a distinction between intensifiers and emphasisers, contrary to what some researchers have claimed (see e.g. McManus 2012: 75–76). Although they are both tools for expressivity and reinforced subjectivity, there are crucial functional differences between them. The degree-marking function is exclusive to intensifiers, and these cannot usually perform the wide array of interpersonal and textual functions performed by other emphasisers (except for borderline cases, such as *really, proper* or *absolutely*, as mentioned above). There are also formal differences that are not often discussed in previous research. Intensifiers are practically restricted to pre-adjectival position, a locus rarely occupied by other emphasisers. This also means that intensifiers always have local scope, whereas emphasisers can act over either a whole utterance or a single item. Such functional and formal differences thus make intensifiers and emphasisers difficult to study as one single variable. Even as separate variables, I would argue —based on the evidence here— that they cannot be analysed by the same means. The study of intensifiers can rely on a closed set of variants, where different options are practically equivalent in formal and functional terms and variation and change respond to socio-stylistic factors. The study of emphasisers —given the colourful repertoire of functions, flexible mobility, and variety of forms— cannot be carried out in the same accountable manner, and quantitative results provide only a snapshot of the whole system. Instead, my analysis suggests patterns of grammaticalisation of individual forms, and general features of the speakers' conversational styles. These findings enrich our understanding of how grammaticalisation operates more broadly and of the discourse-pragmatic dynamics of teenage conversation.

What is novel in the Tyneside teenagers's use of intensifiers and emphasisers in comparison with speakers analysed in previous studies and other locales?

The intensification and emphasis patterns of Tyneside teenagers are not radically different from those found in other parts of the English-speaking world. *Really* takes the lead as the most frequent booster and emphasiser. *So* is the second most-common booster of adjectives, although it is not readily found in the premodification of other parts of speech, contrary to the findings of previous studies of American English. *Actually* is the second most common emphasiser and is more frequently used with local scope rather than with its original linking functions. *Definitely* and *obviously* are relatively frequent, a result that is explained by their delexicalised discourse-pragmatic uses as assertive and solidarity markers respectively. The manner in which *literally* is used in the dataset constitutes a novel finding from this project which is well worth testing beyond Tyneside

English. Girls are particularly frequent users of it as a delexicalised form, that is, as a mirative reinforcer of opinions or particular items within an utterance. More broadly, the use that Tyneside teenagers make of these features mirrors the conversational style expected in this life stage: involved, cooperative, and vivid.

The particularities of Tyneside teenage speech reside in the use of locally-indexed features such as *proper, dead, canny,* clause-final *like*, and right dislocation. They are all infrequent in this sample, particularly *dead* and *canny*, which suggests dialect levelling. Out of all these features, the study of *proper* is the most revealing. The patterns of occurrence and commodification of the form suggest that it indeed holds local value, even though no previous research has noted it. Its use outside pre-adjectival position suggests a grammaticalisation path closer to *really, actually,* or *literally*, rather than similar to other boosters.

What evidence, if any, is there of synchronic age-grading patterns during the period of adolescence —as defined in this project— or for diachronic language change with respect to previous studies in the same region?

Both age-grading and language change phenomena were identified in this research. No synchronic comparisons between Tyneside teenagers and adults have been made here, but the fact that the patterns are very similar to those found in studies of other varieties that did focus on such comparisons suggests that there could likewise be age-graded differences between these life stages in Tyneside that are worth testing in future research. At a more specific level, my results suggest that there are changes in the use of boosters and emphasisers from the start to the end of adolescence. The younger the speaker, the more limited is their repertoire of boosters and emphasisers. Boosters *so* and *proper*, clause-final *like*, and right dislocation are markedly more frequent among speakers aged 19-20. They also make more frequent use of the grammaticalised functions of *obviously* and *literally*, and show wider collocability for non-pre-adjectival *really*. This all points to potential trends of rapid cognitive and discourse-pragmatic development across this life stage. This project is among the very few to test these differences explicitly within adolescence.

In terms of change *per se*, the comparison with Barnfield and Buchstaller's (2010) results allows for firmer conclusions. *Really* and *so* have continued increasing in frequency in this more recent dataset, just as *very* has starkly declined. Results from this project highlight the need to focus on the competition between *really* and *so*. The latter appears to be poised to overtake *really*, perhaps spurred on by Transatlantic trends (as discussed in §6.2.2). Other variants are, by contrast, in decline. The low frequency of *dead* here captures the direction of travel found previously for this region, although gender preferences seem to have reversed because it is now practically exclusive

to male speakers. The stark decline of *canny* contrasts with its apparent rise in frequency in the 2007/8 NECTE2 data. The survey of its degree modification functions provides original empirical evidence that *canny* is, in fact, a multivalent modifier in this speech community. The low frequency of clause-final *like* and right dislocation, alongside their associations with male speech, continue the trajectories forecast in previous research. With regard to *proper*, we see that it seems to have increased in frequency in Tyneside, mirroring what was found in the BNC, yet it is nevertheless a rather infrequent variant.

This is the first ever study of *actually, definitely, obviously,* or *literally* in the area. Interestingly, their frequency and usage in this sample appear to mirror what has been found in data from other varieties of British English (e.g. MLE), as well as dialects of American and Canadian English: they are increasing in frequency across time and their meanings and functions are changing. This diachronic change has most likely occurred in Tyneside English too, although a longitudinal study would be required to test this hypothesis.

What can the patterns in Tyneside teen talk tell us about the grammaticalisation patterns of intensifiers and emphasisers in the region?

The analysis of linguistic predictors and the study of the multifunctionality of emphasisers reveal interesting aspects about the grammaticalisation status of several forms.

High frequencies, wide collocability, and the practical absence of gender differences suggest an advanced grammaticalisation status for boosters *really* and *so*. *Proper* is also fairly advanced in its grammaticalisation pathway judging by its collocational patterns, both pre-adjectivally and elsewhere. I have argued that the development of adjective *proper* into its intensifier and emphasiser functions responds to a process of analogy with other emphasisers that hold a similar metalinguistic overtone. Results relating to *very* suggest a process of specialisation as it decreases in frequency overall, contrary to the idea that collocability remains wide as intensifiers become less frequent. Grammaticalisation might have also resulted in an erosion of its expressive value.

Emphasiser *really* appears to have specialised in its post-negator truth-insistent role, and *actually* is frequently used in contexts where the contrast and mirative meanings are faint. The functions most frequently performed by *definitely*, *obviously*, and *literally* are far from the meanings of certainty, evidentiality, and truthfulness, respectively. This situation denotes a process of delexicalisation and subjectification that can explain their high frequencies in comparison with similar forms like *certainly*, *clearly*, and *genuinely*. This is particularly clear in the use of *definitely* and

literally as response markers. Girls lead in the grammaticalisation of these forms, as grammaticalised uses are most frequent in their speech samples.

What can the study of the spoken discourse of Tyneside teenagers reveal about teenage language in general?

Findings in the speech of Tyneside teenagers generally align with previous claims about teenage language more broadly. They are frequent users of both intensification and emphasis, which makes their telling of narratives and sharing of opinions notably expressive and emotive. Their discourse style is also remarkably cooperative and linguistically polite, as attested, for example, by their marked use of solidarity *obviously* and the avoidance of face-threating conversational moves (e.g. categorical disagreement or defensive correction). At a broader level, the comments teenagers make on their social life corroborate their concern about fitting into peer groups and finding their identity, which again resonates in their patterns of linguistic interaction. Despite the general sense of local pride displayed by most teenagers in the sample, dialectal intensifiers and emphasisers are rare and almost exclusive to male speakers. This is indeed the pattern found across teenage cohorts in previous research.

However, there is little evidence in this project that teenagers are particularly innovative in their language use by comparison to other age groups. For example, girls, who are often argued to be pioneers in the system of intensification, do not use any innovative variants. The only apparent innovations are the grammaticalised uses of *obviously* and *literally*. Still, it cannot be claimed that these functions are teenage-specific or, particularly in the case of mirative reinforcer *literally*, that this function is completely novel. In this sense, I argue that there are benefits to taking a more nuanced approach in the study of adolescent language, whereby we do not always expect teenagers to innovate. First, it avoids possible biases in research, where scholars might actively search for innovations. Second, this approach recognises that teenagers tend to display higher rates of innovation, as well as it acknowledges that this is not always necessarily the case. More broadly, the perspective I present would help combat the misconceptions that teenagers are always rule-benders whose language needs to be policed and that they are to be blamed for what prescriptivists would call the degradation of language (see §2.2 and §2.3).

Findings from this project contribute to lines of research that give value to teen talk as a distinct register. The differences found across age groups suggest that linguistic development is highly active during this life period. These differences, together with those found across genders and individual speakers also corroborate the fact that teenagers are not a linguistically homogeneous group, and should not be otherised as such. The richness of their oral discourse

should not be criticised or banned from educational institutions, since their language reflects and drives broader trends of unavoidable language change, and it plays a crucial role in their social life.

8.2. Limitations and avenues for future research

Several limitations and possible future lines of research have been identified throughout this project.

The first limitation of this study relates to the sample of speakers. The current dataset has produced very relevant and reliable findings in a timely manner. Still, a larger sample would allow more complex conclusions to be drawn from the data. Statistical tests like the mixed-effects model adopted here are more accurate on larger samples. The stratifying criteria also meant that only age and gender could be tested using this dataset. Ethnicity and social class had to remain untested, despite their potential relevance for patterns of language variation and change in general and teenage talk in particular —see for example work done on MLE (e.g. Cheshire et al. 2008), MUBE (e.g. Drummond 2018b), and Armagh English (e.g. Corrigan 2020). By a similar token, the influence of friendship networks and social pressure could not be analysed here. Ethnographic observations similar to those carried out by Eckert (1988) in Detroit, Moore (2003) in Bolton, or Snell (2008) in Middlesbrough, would have provided very valuable information regarding the social meaning of booster variants and emphatic devices. The friendship network questionnaire that was designed to compensate for this limitation proved not to be robust enough for systematic scientific analysis. Although the sample is drawn from a wide geographic spread of Tyneside boroughs, linguistic differences within Tyneside could not be tested either, since geographical distribution was not operationalised as a stratifying criterion.

Findings related to patterns of language change also need to remain tentative in certain respects, since the dearth of younger teenage speakers in DECTE data of earlier time periods prevents reliable diachronic comparisons. There is also a generational effect when comparing the findings with Barnfield and Buchstaller's (2010) results: the majority of speakers in their dataset were older at the time of the recordings, which again limits comparability.

Another limitation of this study is the qualitative nature of certain aspects of the data analyses. Booster results are easier to quantify and less subject to personal interpretation than those of emphasisers. Still, the coding for types of adjective is largely subjective, despite its significant role in the results presented here. As clear and precise as the coding protocols are across research, aspects such as gradability, semantic categories, and, most of all, emotional value, often rely on the researcher's intuitions and interpretations. This is also the case in the analysis of emphatic functions. Taxonomies of functions are not stable (and are not meant to be). Even after compiling

a comprehensive list of functions, the coding process remains largely interpretative. Inter-coder agreement rates between several researchers are highly useful in this kind of project, yet in this case the coding was done mainly by me (in consultation with the supervisory team, and with the help of a local native speaker). All of this potentially impacts upon comparability of results across studies.

The findings here open new avenues of research in studies of intensification and emphasis. With regard to the variable of degree modification, studies with larger corpora could further test the upward trajectory of the frequency of intensification over time that was found here. The findings regarding differences between maximisers and boosters, often clumped together as intensifiers of equivalent function in previous studies, could be problematised further. I would suggest teasing their functions apart by running perception experiments that could shed light on whether there is indeed different illocutionary forces involved in the use of either, as I argue (see §5.4.1). The trajectories of *really* and *so* should be scrutinised further in future research on boosters, given that *so* appears to be overtaking *really* as the new top variant across speech communities. Similarly, this project's results support the previously-attested decline of *very* across age groups and most notably among younger speakers. Future work should continue this line of research and confirm or refute its potential disappearance as a variant. It would also be interesting to run a comprehensive diachronic analysis of *proper* using data from the earlier subcomponents of DECTE, as well as local literature of different time periods, to investigate when its saliency in Tyneside emerged. More broadly, there should be additional research on how collocational patterns affect overall frequency, and on the similarities and differences between current variants and those that are obsolete but which appear to have undergone similar processes, such as *swipe*. Studies of a more qualitative nature could endeavour to determine other aspects that make variants different from each other, and that are not quantifiable or discernable by the linguistic predictors analysed in this project (such as expressivity value, a feature invoked several times throughout the present study).

As regards emphasisers, the findings here pave the way for future research that enlarges the envelope of variation to include phrasal forms (*to be honest, to be fair, in fact*, *of course*, etc) and non-verbal language, and analyses aspects of prosody and intonation in more depth. Based on a framework that recognises the core function of emphasis and the functional differences across devices, future research ought to test emphasisers across different demographics, locales and types of linguistic data. Doing so will likely generate more information about the social distribution of the grammaticalised uses of *definitely, literally,* and *obviously*. As with *proper*, right dislocation in Tyneside English should be analysed across time to gather more information about its status in

the region. All in all, the frequency results here serve as a benchmark in future studies that look at emphasisers in earlier or later time periods in Tyneside, as these forms had not been analysed in depth in the region prior to this study. Future work could also explore how emphasisers are perceived by the wider public: what associations are linked to speakers who display an abundant use of emphatic devices in their speech? Is a more muted discourse style perceived as more professional and mature, or as bland and emotionless? Are there gender or age patterns involved?

Adding this project's dataset to DECTE will of course also open a wide array of new avenues for research. In the field of discourse-pragmatics, this sample is rich enough for the analysis of quotatives, tag questions, general extenders, and markers such as *like*, *just*, and *even*. The use of intensifiers and emphasisers analysed in this project could be compared synchronically with patterns in adult cohorts of roughly the same time period (2017-2019), so as to make additional contributions to our understanding of the apparent time model and its implications. Likewise, the *Tyneside Teenagers Corpus* can be mined for the study of language variation and change in other parts of the grammar —particularly morphosyntax and phonology. Doing so will contribute greatly to discussions of how rates of change might differ depending on the particular linguistic phenomena examined.

More broadly, all of the results presented here constitute an important first step to a more comprehensive picture of whether dialect levelling and supra-localisation are taking place in the speech of 21st-century Tyneside teenagers. My analysis of their speech has important implications for the understanding of how social identities are portrayed through language, as well as how their linguistic behaviour offers different and original perspectives on aspects of discourse-pragmatic variation and change.

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Appendices

Appendix I. Interview schedule

This interview schedule is based on the one used for NECTE2 interviews and the *Toronto Teen Corpus* (Tagliamonte 2006: Appendix B). Green-coded prompts were more prone to eliciting narratives. Italicised topics were not used frequently

Home and neighbourhood

- Home, time there, distance to places, stuff around
- Neighbours, relation with neighbours, stories
- Events in neighbourhood
- Newcastle, relation with Sunderland
- Visiting each other's places

Family

- Siblings, relation with siblings, getting away with things, pranks, relation with parents
- Parents, education style, curfew
- Troublemaker, stories, punishment, blamed for something you didn't do
- Embarrassed by your family
- Likes and dislikes
- Grandparents, aunts & uncles, cousins

Holidays with family / with friends

- Places, favourite place, ideal place
- Missing a plane or losing luggage
- Funny and scary anecdotes, cultural shock

Free time

- Plans with friends, what you'd like to do but can't
- Hobbies, competitions, stories
- Scouts, summer camps, winter camps, anecdotes
- TV, Netflix
- Cinema, last film, favourite film

- *Music, favourite bands/singers, experience in concerts*
- Social media, addiction, parents control, catfishing, life before social media
- Technology, videogames, hidden to play
- *Toys, favourite as a child, story behind it*
- Sports, experience with matches, experience with Sunderland FC

Food

- Likes and dislikes
- Cooking/baking experience, anecdotes
- Experiences with strange food

Money and work

- Pocket money, getting money from your parents, stories
- Work experience, anecdotes
- Volunteer work experience
- Wanting to be independent

School

- Previous school experience
- Favourite and least favourite part of the school, experiences to explain why
- Major problems in the school (fire, storm, school closed, blackout), experience
- Subjects, best and worst moments in lessons
- School trips
- Relationship with teachers and stories, cool, creepy, weird, mad teachers
- Troublemakers, stories, punishment, passing notes
- Thinking about the future
- Social groups in school, relation between them, stories

Friends

- Advice for new kid in school, recollection of how they fitted in
- Fighting with friends, stories, forgiving
- *Board games, cards, truth-or-dare, Ouija board, ghost stories*
- Parties, anecdotes

Birthday

- Best and worst party
- *Best and worst present, reactions*
- Sleep-over parties, anecdotes

Celebrations and local customs

- Bonfire Night, Halloween, New Year's Eve, Easter, best memories
- Christmas, presents, anecdotes
- *Great North Run, The Hoppings, Holi Run*
- Traditions in your family

Uncommon experiences

- Anecdotes with animals and pets, pet running away
- Meeting famous people
- Accidents and tragic events, hospital
- Luck
- Near death experience
- Fears
- Paranormal experiences, ghost stories, spooky places

Dreams

- *Sleepwalking, talking in your sleep*
- Weird dreams, nightmares
- *Dreams that came true*

Language

- Special features of local English, differences with Sunderland
- Differences between old and young
- Differences between boys and girls
- Experience been told about your English, changing your English, perceptions
- Hard time understanding an accent

Appendix II. 'Would you rather' cards

Would you rather go back to aged 5 with everything you know now, or know now everything your future self will learn?	Would you rather be permanently transported 500 years in the past or 500 years in the future?	Would you rather have a flying carpet or a car that that can drive underwater?
Would you rather lose all of your money and valuables or all of the pictures you have ever taken?	Would you rather be famous when you are alive and forgotten when you die or unknown when you are alive but famous after you die?	Would you rather your shirts be always two sizes too big or one size too small?
Would you rather be alone for the rest of your life or always be surrounded by annoying people?	Would you rather never use social media sites / apps again or never watch another movie or TV show?	Would you rather be completely invisible for one day or be able to fly for one day?

Would you rather be locked in a room that is constantly dark for a week or a room that is constantly bright for a week?	Would you rather live without the internet or live without A/C and heating?	Would you rather be able to teleport anywhere or be able to read minds?
Would you rather be able to control fire or water?	Would you rather have hands that kept growing as you got older or feet that kept growing as you got older?	Would you rather be able to control animals (but not humans) with your mind or control electronics with your mind?
Would you rather get one free return trip international plane ticket every year or be able to fly anywhere in the UK anytime for free?	Would you rather have amazingly fast typing / texting speed or be able to read ridiculously fast?	Would you rather have to read aloud every word you read or sing everything you say out loud?

Would you rather be able to go to any theme park for free for the rest of your life or eat for free at any drive-through restaurant for the rest of your life?	Would you rather have everyone laugh at your jokes but not find anyone else's jokes funny or have no one laugh at your jokes but you still find other people's jokes funny?	Would you rather take amazing selfies but all of your other pictures are horrible or take breathtaking photographs of anything but yourself?

Appendix III. Gatekeeper information sheet and consent form

Tyneside Teenage Talk
PhD project led by Joaquín Bueno-Amaro

School of English Literature Language and Linguistics
Newcastle University
Percy Building
Newcastle upon Tyne
NE1 7RU United Kingdom

Dear Headteacher,

I am Joaquín Bueno-Amaro, a postgraduate student at Newcastle University and I am contacting you to outline the details of my PhD research project which involves working with teenagers. I would welcome the opportunity to conduct this research in your school. Please read through the information below before you consent to this project being conducted in your school. If you have any queries, please do not hesitate to get in touch with either myself or my supervisors, Dr Adam Mearns and Prof. Karen Corrigan, using the above address or the contact details at the bottom of this information sheet.

My project is a study of the language of teenagers in Tyneside. As well as conducting my own interviews with local teenagers, I will be drawing on recordings that are part of DECTE (the *Diachronic Electronic Corpus of Tyneside English*), an archive of local language spanning five decades (More information on the DECTE project can be found at http:/research.ncl.ac.uk/decte or by contacting my supervisors).

The project will study three age groups in particular: 12-15, 16-18, and 19-20. Data for the 19-20 age group is already available. In order to cover the other two groups, I would like to interview students from KS3, KS4, and KS5. My project will need at least 24 participants (six males and six females in each of the three age groups). Pupils will be selected randomly, subject to parental and the students' consent. Please note that other schools will also be participating, so that not all 24 participants need to come from your school.

WHAT PARTICIPATION INVOLVES

I will carry out semi-structured interviews of up to 75 minutes. The participants will be interviewed in same-sex and same-age-group pairs, and the interviews will be recorded for later analysis using a digital audio recorder. Interviews will take place at the school, preferably in a social setting such as a common room. I will use my personal laptop and recording devices.

The aim of the interviews is for students to speak freely about topics they feel comfortable with (e.g. family life, their neighbourhood, holidays, plans for the weekend, anecdotes, hobbies). Should you want to check the interview schedule (outlining possible

questions and topics of conversation), I can e-mail it to you prior to any interviews. To ensure language authenticity, it would be ideal if no member of staff is present. The audio recordings will later be transcribed for analysis.

Your school's participation in this project is entirely voluntary, and the school, its students and their parents/guardians have the right to withdraw their consent and discontinue participation at any time. This information is communicated in the Parent/Guardian Information Sheet and the Participant Information Sheet, and parents/guardians have been advised to notify their child's teacher if they change their mind about their child's participation. The teacher will then communicate this to me before further data is collected. Further information on risks of participation can be found on page 3.

I will lead the project. I am DBS-checked and have worked as a teacher of Spanish in a British school in the past. My DBS certificate is recorded in the DBS Update Service. Please contact me for more details should you require to check my DBS status. Also, this project has undergone a strict process of Ethical Approval from University.

The findings of this study might not benefit the students or the school directly. However, their participation will be vital to help me explain what makes Tyneside teenage talk so special. This will hopefully mean a step forward in understanding North-Eastern English better and possibly in predicting patterns of linguistic change. I would be happy to send you a summary of my findings at the end of the project if you would like to know how my research turns out.

ANONYMITY & CONFIDENTIALITY

In writing or talking about this data, sensitive information such as any person's name will never be used, so as to protect the participants' identity. Likewise, I will use a pseudonym to refer to the school and protect students' anonymity further. Further information on data storage and usage can be found on page 3.

CONTACT DETAILS

Should you require any further details about any aspect of the project or the resulting data, please do not hesitate to contact me at j.bueno-amaro2@newcastle.ac.uk. Alternatively, you can contact my supervisors:

- Dr Adam Mearns on 0191 208 3534 or via email at adam.mearns@ncl.ac.uk
- Prof. Karen Corrigan on 0191 208 7757 or via email at k.p.corrigan@ncl.ac.uk

Thank you very much for considering your school's participation in this project.

If you agree to the school participating in this project, please complete the consent form attached and send it to me. You should retain this information sheet for your own records.

Once your consent has gone through, I will provide you with information sheets and consent forms to be filled in by both parents/guardians and students.

RISKS OF PARTICIPATION

This project does not pose significant risks to the participants. Possible risks and solutions are:

- Disclosure of bullying or child abuse testimonials during interviews. I will divert the topic to avoid delving into sensitive topics and will inform staff immediately after the interview is finished, for them to take the appropriate measures.

- Emergence of sensitive topics in the interviews that cause distress to the participants. The interview schedule follows a tried-and-true design previously used in sociolinguistic research that avoids any sensitive topics. Still, should the participants feel they have been affected by the questions or the interview situation, the interview will stop immediately to avoid further distress. Also, participants will have the option of having those parts of the interview deleted or indeed of removing their consent to participate.

- Data theft or loss. If despite all the safety and confidentiality measures, data happens to be stolen or lost, I will contact the supervisory team and Ethics Convenor at the School of English Literature, Language and Linguistics immediately. Even so, the chances of the data being accessed are small (as folders will be password-protected), and so are the chances of the identities of the participants being associated with the recordings (as recordings and demographic information will be kept on separate drives).

DATA STORAGE AND USAGE

1) The interview recordings will first be stored on the digital recorder and subsequently transferred to my password protected personal laptop and to a university server where access will be restricted to IT personnel (in case of technical issues), the researcher and the supervisory team. Documents recording personal information about the participants (their names, ages, addresses and contact details) will be kept separately from the interview recordings so as to further safeguard anonymity. Access to these documents will be secured with a password, known only to the researcher and the supervisory team.
2) Recordings will be transcribed. Sensitive information such as names will be coded as pseudonyms during the transfer from speech to writing. Transcriptions will be kept in the same password-protected folder as the recordings, but always separately from the spreadsheet of personal information (different drives).
3) Data will be analysed using corpus concordance and other relevant software.
4) When discussing the interview material in the thesis (as well as in any publications and presentations related to or arising from it), the anonymity of the participants will be preserved: they will be referred to only using their assigned pseudonyms, sex and age

group. Only general references will be made to the location of the school(s); the names of the schools will not be used.

5) Audio recordings and anonymised transcripts will become part of DECTE (the *Diachronic Electronic Corpus of Tyneside English*) at Newcastle University after completion of the project. This is a password-protected archive on a secure university server.

Tyneside Teenage Talk
PhD project led by Joaquín Bueno-Amaro

School of English Literature Language and Linguistics
Newcastle University
Percy Building
Newcastle upon Tyne
NE1 7RU United Kingdom

HEADTEACHER CONSENT FORM

If, having read the Information Sheet that details the purpose of this research project you are happy for your school to participate, please complete this consent form and return it to me at j.bueno-amaro2@ncl.ac.uk

AGREEMENT

- ✓ I have read and understood the information provided about the project, as provided in the Information Sheet.
- ✓ I have been given the opportunity to ask questions about the project and my students' participation.
- ✓ I have been given the opportunity to check the researcher's DBS status.
- ✓ I agree that my students' interviews may be audio-recorded and later transcribed.
- ✓ I understand that any information related to my students' participation in this project will be anonymised and am reassured that the data they produce will remain secure at Newcastle University and that it will be quoted in published work and in the doctoral dissertation in anonymous form.
- ✓ I understand that audio recordings and anonymised transcripts will become part of the DECTE (*Diachronic Electronic Corpus of Tyneside English*, at research.ncl.ac.uk/decte) at Newcastle University. This is a password-protected archive on a secure university server.

Headteacher	
Name of school	
Name of Headteacher	
Headteacher's signature	
Date	
Researcher use only	
Name of researcher	Joaquín Bueno-Amaro
Researcher's signature	

Date	

Appendix IV. Parent/Guardian information sheet and consent form

Tyneside Teenage Talk
PhD project led by Joaquín Bueno-Amaro

School of English Literature, Language and Linguistics
Newcastle University
Percy Building
Newcastle upon Tyne
NE1 7RU United Kingdom

Dear Parents/Guardians,

I am Joaquín Bueno-Amaro, a postgraduate student at Newcastle University. I will be conducting a research study of the language of teenagers in Tyneside. I would like to invite your child to be a part of this project.

WHAT IS MY CHILD GOING TO BE ASKED TO DO?

If you allow your child to participate in this study, they will be interviewed in pairs by myself, the lead researcher. I am DBS-checked and have worked as a teacher of Spanish in a British school in the past.

These interviews would last up to 75 minutes. Interviews will take place at the school and I will use my personal laptop and recording devices. The aim of the interviews is for teenagers to speak freely about topics they feel comfortable with (e.g. family life, their neighbourhood, holidays, plans for the weekend, anecdotes, hobbies). To ensure teenagers use language the way they would use it outside school, there might not be a member of staff present. The audio recordings will later be written down for analysis.

When I write down the interviews, names and any other information that might help identify your child will be coded, using fake names. Any reference to these interviews in my research paper will be completely anonymous, and at no point there will be any reference to the school or your child's identity. More information on data storage and usage can be found in page 2.

There will be at least 24 students taking part in this study. Please note that your child's participation in this project is entirely voluntary. At any time, the school, its students, and you as parents/guardians have the right to decide not to participate. If at any point during the project you change your mind about your child's participation, please inform your child's teacher and they will be withdrawn from the project immediately.

If you would like to know more about my project, please do not hesitate to contact me or my supervisors:

- Joaquín Bueno-Amaro via email at j.bueno-amaro2@newcastle.ac.uk
- Dr Adam Mearns on 0191 208 3534 or via email at adam.mearns@ncl.ac.uk

- Prof. Karen Corrigan on 0191 208 7757 or via email at k.p.corrigan@ncl.ac.uk

Thank you very much for considering your child's participation in this project.

If after reading this information, you have decided to allow your child to participate in the project, please complete the consent form attached and hand it to the school as soon as possible. You should retain this information sheet for your own records. Your child has also been given an information sheet and a consent form that needs to be filled in.

DATA STORAGE AND USAGE

1) The interview recordings will first be stored on the digital recorder and subsequently transferred to my password protected personal laptop and to a university server where access will be restricted to IT personnel (in case of technical issues), the researcher and the supervisory team. Documents recording personal information about the participants (their names, ages, addresses and contact details) will be kept separately from the interview recordings so as to further safeguard anonymity. Access to these documents will be secured with a password, known only to the researcher and the supervisory team.
2) Recordings will be transcribed. Sensitive information such as names will be coded as pseudonyms during the transfer from speech to writing. Transcriptions will be kept in the same password-protected folder as the recordings, but always separately from the spreadsheet of personal information (different drives).
3) Data will be analysed using corpus concordance and other relevant software.
4) When discussing the interview material in the thesis (as well as in any publications and presentations related to or arising from it), the anonymity of the participants will be preserved: they will be referred to only using their assigned pseudonyms, sex and age group. Only general references will be made to the location of the school(s); the names of the schools will not be used.
5) After completion of the project, audio recordings and anonymised transcripts will become part of DECTE (the Diachronic Electronic Corpus of Tyneside English) at Newcastle University, an archive of local language spanning five decades (More information on the DECTE project can be found at http:/research.ncl.ac.uk/decte or by contacting my supervisors). This is a password-protected archive on a secure university server.

Tyneside Teenage Talk
PhD project led by Joaquín Bueno-Amaro

School of English Literature, Language and Linguistics
Newcastle University
Percy Building
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NE1 7RU United Kingdom

PARENT/GUARDIAN CONSENT FORM

If, having read the Information Sheet that details the purpose of this research project you are happy for your child to participate, please complete this consent form and return it to the school office.

AGREEMENT

- ✓ I have read and understood the information about the project, as provided in the Information Sheet.
- ✓ I have been given the opportunity to ask questions about the project and my child's participation.
- ✓ I agree that my child will participate in this research project.
- ✓ I give the researcher permission to interview my child.
- ✓ I agree that my child's interview will be audio-recorded and later transcribed.
- ✓ I understand that any information related to my students' participation in this project will be anonymised and am reassured that the data they produce will remain secure at Newcastle University and that it will be quoted in published work and in the doctoral dissertation in anonymous form.
- ✓ I agree that audio recordings and anonymised transcripts will become part of the DECTE (*Diachronic Electronic Corpus of Tyneside English*, at research.ncl.ac.uk/decte) at Newcastle University. This is a password-protected archive on a secure university server.

Parent/Guardian	
Name of school/centre	
Name of student	
Name of parent/guardian	
Parent's/Guardian's signature	

Date	
Researcher use only	
Name of researcher	Joaquín Bueno-Amaro
Researcher's signature	
Date	

Appendix V. Participant information sheet and consent form

Tyneside Teenage Talk
PhD project led by Joaquín Bueno-Amaro

School of English Literature, Language and Linguistics
Newcastle University
Percy Building
Newcastle upon Tyne
NE1 7RU United Kingdom

Dear Student,

I am Joaquín Bueno-Amaro, a postgraduate student at Newcastle University. I am going to study the language of teenagers like you in Tyneside and it would be very helpful if you could help me.

If you accept to participate, you and another student from your same centre, age, and sex, will spend up to 75 minutes speaking to each other and to me. These conversations will take place in a comfortable room in your centre.

The only thing you will have to do is speak. We will speak about your family, where you live, and whatever topics you feel interested in, such as holidays, plans for the weekend, your free time, or any anecdote that you want to share with us! There will not be any staff present, so you will feel more relaxed about what you say.

As I have limited memory, I will have to record the conversation (only sound, not video), and after I leave the school I will have to write down everything. However, don't worry, your names will be changed to fake names, and I will delete the name of the school, so nobody can recognise you. Still, neither your teachers or your parents/guardians will listen to these recordings. I will keep them safe so only my teachers at University and I can access them.

It is not the first time a project like this takes place. After I complete my work, your recordings will become part of DECTE, which is a database of interviews in Tyneside since the 1970s. This means your interview could potentially help other researchers in the future to study the language here.

There will be at least 24 students taking part in this study. Your participation is completely voluntary. If at any point you decide not to participate, just tell your teacher, he/she will tell me and you will not participate in the project. If you have already had an interview with me and you have changed your mind, we can discuss it and I will delete all recordings.

If after reading this information, you have decided to participate in the project, please complete the consent form attached and hand it to the school as soon as possible. One of your parents/guardians will also have to complete a consent form.

Thank you very much for considering participating in this project. I am very looking forward to meeting you soon!

Best regards,

Joaquín Bueno-Amaro

j.bueno-amaro2@ncl.ac.uk

Tyneside Teenage Talk
PhD project led by Joaquín Bueno-Amaro

School of English Literature, Language and Linguistics
Newcastle University
Percy Building
Newcastle upon Tyne
NE1 7RU United Kingdom

STUDENT CONSENT FORM

If, after reading the Information Sheet where I explain my project, you would like to participate, please complete this consent form and return it to the school office as soon as possible. Remember your parent/guardian will also have to hand in their consent form.

AGREEMENT

- ✓ I have read and understood the information about the project.
- ✓ I agree to participate in this research project.
- ✓ I understand that my interview will be audio-recorded.
- ✓ I understand that the researcher will keep my information safe and that all personal information that could identify me will be deleted or changed to fake names.
- ✓ I understand that the recording of my interview will become part of DECTE (the *Diachronic Electronic Corpus of Tyneside English*) after the researcher completes his work.

Student	
Name of school/centre	
Name of student	
Student's signature	
Date	
Researcher use only	
Name of researcher	Joaquín Bueno-Amaro
Researcher's signature	
Date	

Appendix VI. Demographic information sheet and friendship network questionnaire

Informant demographic information sheet & Friendship network questionnaire

Full name: _____

Gender: _____

Age: _____

Date of birth (DD/MM/YYYY): _____

Where were you born? _____

Ethnic origin: _____

Where do you live? (Full address/es including postcode)

_____

_____

_____

Have you lived anywhere else before? _____

What school do you go to? _____

What school year are you in? _____

	Your mother	**Your father**
Where do they live?		
What job do they do?		
What education do they have?	GCSE/O Levels ☐ College ☐ Vocational qualification ☐ A Levels ☐ University ☐	GCSE/O Levels ☐ College ☐ Vocational qualification ☐ A Levels ☐ University ☐
What is their ethnic origin?		

Group of friends and number of friends in it	Gender Age range	What school do these friends go to? (1 to 5)	If you answered 1, 2 or 3 in the previous question, please name the schools your friends go to.	How strong is your relationship with this group? (1 to 5)	How often do you meet this group of friends? (1 to 5)

Best friends	From what group of friends?	Gender	Age	Do you both go to the same school? Y/N If you don't, please name the school your best friend goes to.	How often do you meet this friend? 1. Every 2 or 3 months or more 2. Once a month 3. Every 2 weeks 4. Weekly 5. Almost daily

Appendix VII. Risks and solutions

I. Disclosure of bullying or child abuse testimonials during interviews. It would have been dealt with in a manner that is consistent with established child protection policy and guidance within the school(s) where I was located.

II. Emergence of sensitive topics in the interviews that cause distress to the participants. The interview schedule followed a tried-and-tested design previously used in sociolinguistic research. Nevertheless, had the participants expressed their discomfort with the questions or the interview situation, the interview would have stopped immediately to avoid further distress. Also, participants had the option of having parts of the interview deleted or indeed of withdrawing their consent to participate.

III. Data theft or loss. If, despite all the safety and confidentiality measures, data happened to be stolen or lost, I established a procedure to follow: I would contact the supervisory team and Ethics Convenor at the School of English Literature, Language and Linguistics immediately, and would consider informing the institution from which the participants were recruited. Even if there had been data theft or loss, the chances of the data being accessed were small (as folders were password-protected), as were the chances of the identities of participants being linked with the corresponding recordings (as recordings and demographic information were kept on separate drives).

Appendix VIII. Tables of degree modification

First stage: rate and type of modification

Table 47. Raw count and proportion of modification and lack of it per age group

Modifiable adjectives	Age group					
	12-15		16-18		19-20	
	N	Proportion	N	Proportion	N	Proportion
modified	296	17.2%	377	20.1%	483	21.2%
unmodified	1426	82.8%	1497	79.9%	1790	78.8%
Total	1722	100%	1874	100%	2273	100%

Table 48. Raw count and proportion of modification and lack of it per gender

Modifiable adjectives	Gender			
	Female		Male	
	N	Proportion	N	Proportion
modified	623	22.0%	533	17.5%
unmodified	2207	78.0%	2506	82.5%
Total	2830	100%	3039	100%

Table 49. Raw count, proportion, and frequency indices of types of modification per age group

Type of modifier	Age group								
	12-15			16-18			19-20		
	N	Prop.	Index	N	Prop.	Index	N	Prop.	Index
ambiguous	0	0%	0	8	0.4%	0.13	0	0%	0
downtoner	118	6.9%	2.19	123	6.6%	2.03	110	4.8%	1.67
intensifier	178	10.3%	3.31	246	13.1%	4.05	373	16.4%	5.67
zero	1426	82.8%	26.52	1497	79.9%	24.65	1790	78.8%	27.19
Total	1722	100%		1874	100%		2273	100%	

Table 50. Raw count, proportion, and frequency indices of types of modification per gender

Type of modifier	Gender					
	Female			Male		
	N	Prop.	Index	N	Prop.	Index
ambiguous	1	< 0.1%	< 0.01	7	0.2%	0.07
downtoner	126	4.5%	1.50	225	7.4%	2.33
intensifier	496	17.5%	5.91	301	9.9%	3.12
zero	2207	78.0%	26.29	2506	82.5%	26
Total	2830	100%		3039	100%	

Second stage: type of intensification

Table 51. Raw count and proportion of type of intensifier per age group

Type of intensifier	Age group					
	12-15		16-18		19-20	
	N	Proportion	N	Proportion	N	Proportion
maximiser	4	2.2%	17	6.9%	22	5.9%
booster	174	97.8%	229	93.1%	351	94.1%
Total	178	100%	246	100%	373	100%

Table 52. Raw count and proportion of type of intensifier or lack of it per age group

Type of intensifier / lack of intensifier	Age group					
	12-15		16-18		19-20	
	N	Proportion	N	Proportion	N	Proportion
maximiser	4	0.2%	17	1.0%	22	1.0%
booster	174	10.5%	229	13.0%	351	16.1%
unintensified	1478	89.3%	1521	86.1%	1812	82.9%
Total	1656	100%	1767	100%	2185	100%

Table 53. Raw count and proportions of type of intensifier per gender

Type of intensifier	Gender			
	Female		Male	
	N	Proportion	N	Proportion
maximiser	27	5.4%	16	5.3%
booster	469	94.6%	285	94.7%
Total	496	100%	301	100%

Table 54. Raw count and proportions of type of intensifier or lack of it per gender

Type of intensifier / lack of intensifier	Gender			
	Female		Male	
	N	Proportion	N	Proportion
maximiser	27	1.0%	16	0.5%
booster	469	17.4%	285	9.8%
unintensified	2198	81.6%	2613	89.7%
Total	2694	100%	2914	100%

Second stage: distribution of maximiser variants

Table 55. Raw count and proportions of maximiser variants per age group

Maximiser variant	Age group					
	12-15		16-18		19-20	
	N	Proportion	N	Proportion	N	Proportion
fully	0	0.0%	2	11.8%	1	4.5%
perfectly	0	0.0%	3	17.6%	1	4.5%
totally	3	75.0%	0	0.0%	5	22.7%
completely	1	25.0%	7	41.2%	4	18.2%
absolutely	0	0.0%	5	29.4%	11	50.0%
Total	4	100%	17	100%	22	100%

Table 56. Raw count and proportions of maximiser variants per gender

Maximiser variant	Gender			
	Female		Male	
	N	Proportion	N	Proportion
fully	0	0.0%	3	18.8%
perfectly	3	11.1%	1	6.3%
totally	5	18.5%	3	18.8%
completely	9	33.3%	3	18.8%
absolutely	10	37.0%	6	37.5%
Total	27	100%	16	100%

Third stage: distribution of booster variants

Age effects

Table 57. Raw count and proportion of boosters in predicative contexts per age group

Boosters in pred. contexts only	Age group					
	12-15		16-18		19-20	
	N	Proportion	N	Proportion	N	Proportion
other	4	2.4%	10	5.1%	23	7.6%
proper	3	1.8%	10	5.1%	15	4.9%
very	23	13.9%	16	8.1%	40	13.2%
so	30	18.2%	55	27.8%	110	36.2%
really	105	63.6%	107	54.0%	116	38.2%
Total	165	100%	198	100%	304	100%

Table 58. Raw count and proportion of boosters in predicative contexts per age group of girls

Boosters in pred. contexts only	Age groups of girls					
	12-15		16-18		19-20	
	N	Proportion	N	Proportion	N	Proportion

other[66]	5	4.5%	6	5.2%	19	9.5%
very	20	18.0%	11	9.5%	27	13.4%
so	21	18.9%	29	25.0%	77	38.3%
really	65	58.6%	70	60.3%	78	38.8%
Total	111	100%	116	100%	201	100%

Table 59. Raw count and proportion of boosters in predicative contexts per age group of boys

Boosters in pred. contexts only	**Age groups of boys**					
	12-15		**16-18**		**19-20**	
	N	**Proportion**	**N**	**Proportion**	**N**	**Proportion**
other[67]	0	0.0%	3	3.7%	6	5.8%
dead	2	3.7%	5	6.1%	0	0.0%
proper	0	0.0%	6	7.3%	13	12.6%
very	3	5.6%	5	6.1%	13	12.6%
so	9	16.7%	26	31.7%	33	32.0%
really	40	74.1%	37	45.1%	38	36.9%
Total	54	100%	82	100%	103	100%

Gender effects

Table 60. Raw count and proportion of boosters in predicative contexts per gender

Boosters in pred. contexts only	**Gender**			
	Female		**Male**	
	N	**Proportion**	**N**	**Proportion**
other	21	4.9%	16	6.7%
proper	9	2.1%	19	7.9%
very	58	13.6%	21	8.8%
so	127	29.7%	68	28.5%
really	213	49.8%	115	48.1%
Total	428	100%	239	100%

Table 61. Raw count and proportion of boosters in predicative contexts per gender in the 19-20 age group

Boosters in pred. contexts only	**Gender in the 19-20 age group**			
	Female		**Male**	
	N	**Proportion**	**N**	**Proportion**

[66] 'Other' boosters (<3% of the time) in female speech are *dead, incredibly, proper, pure, raw, real, super,* swearwords, and *well.*

[67] 'Other' boosters (<3% of the time) in male speech are *incredibly, real, ridiculously*, *stupidly, super,* and swearwords.

other[68]	11	5.5%	3	2.9%
swearword	6	3.0%	3	2.9%
proper	2	1.0%	13	12.6%
very	27	13.4%	13	12.6%
so	77	38.3%	33	32.0%
really	78	38.8%	38	36.9%
Total	201	100%	103	100%

[68] 'Other' boosters (<3% of the time) in the speech of 19-20-year-olds are *dead, super, real*, and *well*.

Type of boosted adjective

Percentages sum 100% lengthwise (e.g. out of all 'age' adjectives in predicative position that have been boosted, 58.3% were modified by *really*).

Table 62. Raw count and proportion of booster variants per type of boosted adjective in predicative contexts

Type of boosted adjective	Booster variant in predicative contexts										Total
	really		so		very		proper		other		
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	
Semantic category											667
position	7	70.0%	3	30.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	10
age	7	58.3%	3	25.0%	1	8.3%	0	0.0%	1	8.3%	12
origin	4	33.3%	0	0.0%	5	41.7%	2	16.7%	1	8.3%	12
measurement	8	47.1%	6	35.3%	1	5.9%	0	0.0%	2	11.8%	17
physical property	34	50.0%	22	32.4%	1	1.5%	5	7.4%	6	8.8%	68
other	25	34.2%	25	34.2%	19	26.0%	1	1.4%	3	4.1%	73
value	100	63.3%	42	26.6%	7	4.4%	6	3.8%	3	1.9%	158
propensity	143	45.1%	94	29.7%	45	14.2%	14	4.4%	21	6.6%	317
Emotional value											667
non-emotional	85	44.3%	59	30.7%	27	14.1%	8	4.2%	13	6.8%	192
emotional	243	51.2%	136	28.6%	52	10.9%	20	4.2%	24	5.1%	475
Type of gradability											667
extreme	5	31.3%	5	31.3%	0	0.0%	3	12.5%	4	25.0%	17
limit	8	36.4%	5	22.7%	5	22.7%	3	13.6%	1	4.5%	22
scalar	315	50.1%	185	29.4%	74	11.8%	22	3.7%	32	5.1%	628
Evaluative prosody											667
negative	72	45.9%	58	36.9%	7	4.5%	11	7.0%	9	5.7%	157
positive	135	58.7%	69	30.0%	17	7.4%	5	2.2%	4	1.7%	230
neutral	121	43.2%	68	24.3%	55	19.6%	12	4.3%	24	8.6%	280

Appendix IX. Multiple intensification

Intensifiers can appear in concatenation patterns. These include repetition of the same intensifier, either twice (e.g. *very very good*) or three times (e.g. *so so so nice*), and combination of intensifiers (e.g. *so very friendly, so dreadfully annoyed*). Intensifiers are repeated or combined for emphasis and further intensification, and in turn, higher expressivity and speaker's involvement (Cacchiani 2009: 230; Paradis 2003: 200; Quirk et al. 1985: 472). Even though repetition and combination are discussed as being potentially realised by both boosters and maximisers, a closer look at the examples given in the literature seems to suggest that apart from *absolutely*, all other intensifiers in these patterns are boosters (Cacchiani 2009: 240).[69]

There are 21 concatenation tokens in the sample for this study, and they all concern boosters. The majority are duplets, that is, the same booster is repeated twice (see e.g. (1)). There are also two triplets (see (2)) and combinations of different boosters —only two instances, and both are *so fucking* (see (3)).[70]

(1) Duplets
   a. With make-up you're either *really really* good or just… (**Beth**, F, 20, 2017_SEL2091_031_B)
   b. Me and my sister would just drive around with the nana trolley like next to my mam with my dad in the wheelchair, it was *really really* fun (**Lizzie**, F, 17, Nsfc01f2_B).
   c. A lot of our friends are like *really really* Geordie (**Jeremy**, M, 19, 2017_SEL2091_021_A).
   d. Digi Mondays' been *very very* popular for the last two years (**Jeremy**, M, 19, 2017_SEL2091_021_A).

(2) Triplets
   a. I wouldn't say that my accent is *really really really* Geordie (**Beth**, F, 20, 2017_SEL2091_031_B). **Coded as moderator (negative context)*
   b. They actually howled and I was *very very very* tempted to howl as well (**Abbie**, F, 19, 2017_SEL2091_078_B).

(3) Combinations of boosters
   a. I'm *so fucking* angry (**Sarah**, F, 19, 2017_SEL2091_078_B).
   b. He's *so fucking* funny (**Sarah**, F, 19, 2017_SEL2091_078_B).

[69] For a fuller explanation of the restrictions of different types of intensifiers in complex collocations, see Cacchiani (2009).

[70] Duplets and triplets were counted as one instance of the pertinent variant in the dataset. In the case of *so fucking*, there is a token entry for each.

Out of the 21 tokens, only five come from speech samples of boys —three of which come from the same speaker, Jeremy (M, 19). This pragmatic strategy seems to be exploited more often by girls in this cohort. In particular, Beth (F, 20) is the most common user.

In this sample, *really* is clearly the favoured variant when it comes to repeating boosters for pragmatic intensification, as it occurs in 14 out of 21 instances of multiple intensification. Other boosters involved in these complex collocations are *so* (*n*=4), *very* (*n*=3), and *fucking* (*n*=2). *Very* is expected not to be very frequent in these concatenation patterns, since it is classed as conveying rational evaluation, devoid of much expressivity, in comparison with *so* or *really* (Cacchiani 2009: 235). In the combination *so fucking,* Aijmer (2018a: 72) argues that *fucking* has a 'pragmatic expressive function rather than degree-modifying function' and *so* simply reinforces it. Another possible reading would be that both *so* and *fucking* are performing the functions of boosting and emphasising simultaneously and in parallel, and that they reinforce each other —*so* reinforces *fucking* as much as *fucking* reinforces *so*. Whichever way, their combination is a pragmatic strategy to achieve a more expressive style.

It is also worth noting that in many examples of duplets, there is not only a consecutive concatenation of boosters, but also repetitions of the same statement with a different or the same booster (see (4)) and combinations with other expressive features like extreme adjectives (see (4)e) or emphasisers (see (4)f and (5)). All of these constructions further reinforce the subjective stance of the speaker and their emotional involvement in the utterance.

(4) Repetition of statement

a. It's *really really* weird, like so weird (**Claire**, F, 17, Ben03f2_A).

b. [speaking about her language skills] really bad, like *really really* bad (**Melissa**, F, 19, 2017_SEL2091_031_B).

c. Yeah God it was *so so* bad, oh it was so… (**Matthew**, M, 17, Sc04m2_A)

d. Tynemouth is gorgeous, though. It's so nice, *so so* nice (**Beth**, F, 20, 2017_SEL2091_031_B).

e. It was a big boat, *really really* massive boat (**Lizzie**, F, 17, Nsfc01f2_B).

f. She's so talented, like she's actually *really really* talented (**Beth**, F, 20, 2017_SEL2091_031_B).

(5) Combination with emphasisers

a. I think everyone was just *really really* drunk, to be honest (**Jeremy**, M, 19, 2017_SEL2091_021_A).

b. It was definitely a *really really* enlightening experience to be in the water that cold (**Beth**, F, 20, 2017_SEL2091_031_B).

Appendix X. Online survey on the use of *canny* in Tyneside

The following survey was distributed on the social media platforms Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram. This is a list of the Facebook groups where it was shared:

- 'Classic Photos of Newcastle and the East End'
- 'Events in the North of England'
- 'Geordie 4 Life'
- 'Geordie Expats'
- 'Geordies around the World'
- 'Newcastle Queer Quarter'
- 'North East Theatre Practitioners UK'
- 'Northern Gossip'
- 'Old pictures of Newcastle/East End'
- 'Singing Community North East'
- 'Tyneside through the ages'
- The community of neighbours in my street in Newcastle

Hello,

I am Joaquin Bueno-Amaro, a PhD student at Newcastle University and I'm studying the North East. First of all, thank you very much for agreeing to fill in this questionnaire. Your responses will provide very relevant information for my research. The questionnaire consists of 22 questions and it should take about 10 minutes to fill in. There are no right or wrong answers.

You will not be asked to provide any personal information, so confidentiality and anonymity are guaranteed. This questionnaire has been generated through the Online Surveys system of Newcastle University. This is a safe and secure system and only I and my academic supervisors will have access to your responses. Your responses might be included as part of my PhD thesis but there will not be any information that could potentially identify you as a participant. You are welcome to contact us should you need more information regarding the nature of this questionnaire or the management of the data:

Joaquin Bueno-Amaro: j.bueno-amaro2@newcastle.ac.uk

Professor Karen Corrigan: k.p.corrigan@newcastle.ac.uk

Dr Adam Mearns: adam.mearns@newcastle.ac.uk

By filling in this questionnaire you give your consent for the lead researcher and his supervisors to access, use, and publish your anonymous responses for academic research.

Background information

1. Age
2. Age group:
   <18 / 19-30 / 31-40 / 41-50 / 51-60 / 61-70 / 71-80 / >80
3. Gender
4. Have you lived in a Tyneside borough for the majority of your life (Newcastle, Gateshead, North Tyneside, South Tyneside)?
   Yes / Yes, but intermittently / No
5. Have you lived outside of Tyneside for more than seven years?
   Yes, but in the North East / Yes, somewhere else in the UK / Yes, abroad / Yes, both inside and outside the UK / No
6. Where do you currently live?
   Newcastle / Gateshead / North Tyneside / South Tyneside / Somewhere else in the North East / Somewhere else in the UK / Abroad

Fill in the gap questions

For each of the following statements, enter as many different words as you would use to say exactly the same thing as the word in bold.

If you cannot come up with any words, you may leave it blank or enter 'None'.

For example:

Oh, I think she's **awesome**.

Oh, I think she's _____.

Response*: great, amazing, incredible, mint, class, legend, champion.*

7. Aye, my brother's **quite** annoying but we get on.
8. I personally find her jokes **really** funny.
9. The place was **proper** packed when we walked in.
10. Her dad is **class**, he always bakes something when I come around.
11. It's **canny** mad how easy it is to jump the queue in that bar.
12. The chocolate in advent calendars is **lifting**, man.

Multiple-choice questions

For each of the following statements, choose the option(s) that you think match the meaning of the original sentence.

13. **The hotel served very good food**. I really enjoyed my holidays!
    a. The hotel served proper good food.
    b. The hotel served pretty good food.
    c. The hotel served really good food.
    d. The hotel served canny good food.
    e. Other. Please write out your option:
14. Do you remember the other day when I saw you? **It was canny windy**, wasn't it?
    a. It was very windy
    b. It was a bit windy
    c. It was pretty windy
    d. It was completely windy
    e. Other. Please write out your option:
15. Why would you do that?! **That is absolutely disgusting**!
    a. That is so disgusting!
    b. That is totally disgusting!
    c. That is canny disgusting!
    d. That is pretty disgusting!
    e. Other. Please write out your option:
16. **That make-up brand is proper bad**. I wouldn't buy it, really.
    a. That make-up brand is canny bad.
    b. That make-up brand is pretty bad.
    c. That make-up brand is quite bad.
    d. That make-up brand is really bad.
    e. Other. Please write out your option:
17. I just cooked it in the microwave but honestly, **it's belter**.
    a. it's not bad.
    b. it's awesome.
    c. it's okay.
    d. it's good.
    e. Other. Please write out your option:
18. I'm sorry to say but **my date was canny ugly.**

a. My date was ugly.
b. My date was quite ugly.
c. My date was so ugly.
d. My date was proper ugly.
e. Other. Please write out your option:

For each sentence, please say which option sounds to you like the most natural end to the sentence, or pick 'either' if they sound equally natural.

19. The guys in the hotel organised some stuff to do. I think…
    a. they were quite fun activities.
    b. the activities were quite fun.
    c. Either
20. She didn't really like the film because…
    a. it was a proper sad story.
    b. the story was proper sad.
    c. Either
21. Although Ben warned us about Tom, he turned out to be…
    a. really friendly.
    b. a really friendly guy.
    c. Either
22. I wish I hadn't lost my wallet, but overall…
    a. it was a canny good night out.
    b. the night out was canny good.
    c. Either

Results

Responses coded as evidence of intensifier *canny* include instances where *canny* was given as a synonym for *really* and *proper*, and *canny* was selected as having a meaning similar to *very*, *absolutely*, and *proper* in multiple-choice questions, on its own or together with other intensifiers. They also include every intensifier that was entered or selected as a synonym to *canny* (e.g. *very, so, amazingly, bloody, geet*).

In comparison, *canny* is understood as a downtoner when it was entered as a synonym for *quite*, as well as when downtoners were offered or selected as synonyms of *canny* (e.g. *a bit, fairly*, *somewhat, sort of*). The use of boosters in negative contexts, such as *not very* and *not really*, as similar to *canny* also denoted a downtoner meaning of the form.

Finally, multivalent *canny* is directly evidenced by responses that seem to be conflicting at first because they combine intensifiers and downtoners. This coding was only applied to the responses arising from multiple-choice questions, since they comprised an analysable closed set of possible combinations. Examples of multivalent responses include:

- Synonyms of *very* (question no. 13): *pretty+canny*
- Synonyms of *absolutely* (question no. 15): *canny+pretty*
- Synonyms of *proper* (question no. 16): *canny+pretty*, *canny+quite*
- Synonyms of *canny* (questions no. 14 and 18): *pretty+completely*, *very+a bit*, *very+pretty*, *quite+proper*, *quite+so*

Table 63. Raw count and proportions of coded responses as evidence for different functions of canny

Possible functions of *canny*	**N**	**Proportion**
intensifier	564	53.1%
downtoner	409	38.5%
multivalent	89	8.4%
Total[71]	1062	100%

[71] This number reflects the number of total coded responses and does not match the number of participants because of the way responses have been handled. Participants have entered varying numbers of functional synonyms in the free-text/open-ended questions and these have been separated into different responses and coded separately. For example, one respondent might have entered three different words, which count as three different responses, while for the same survey question another might have entered one or none, and some other participant entered ten.

Figure 50. Distribution of coded responses according to the possible functions of *canny* they evidence

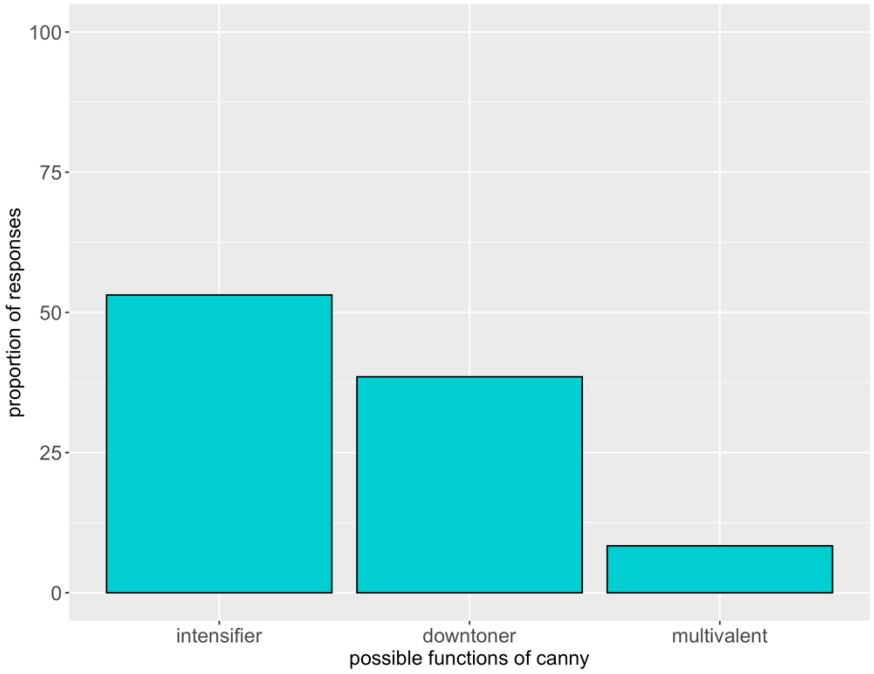


Figure 51. Distribution of coded responses per age group

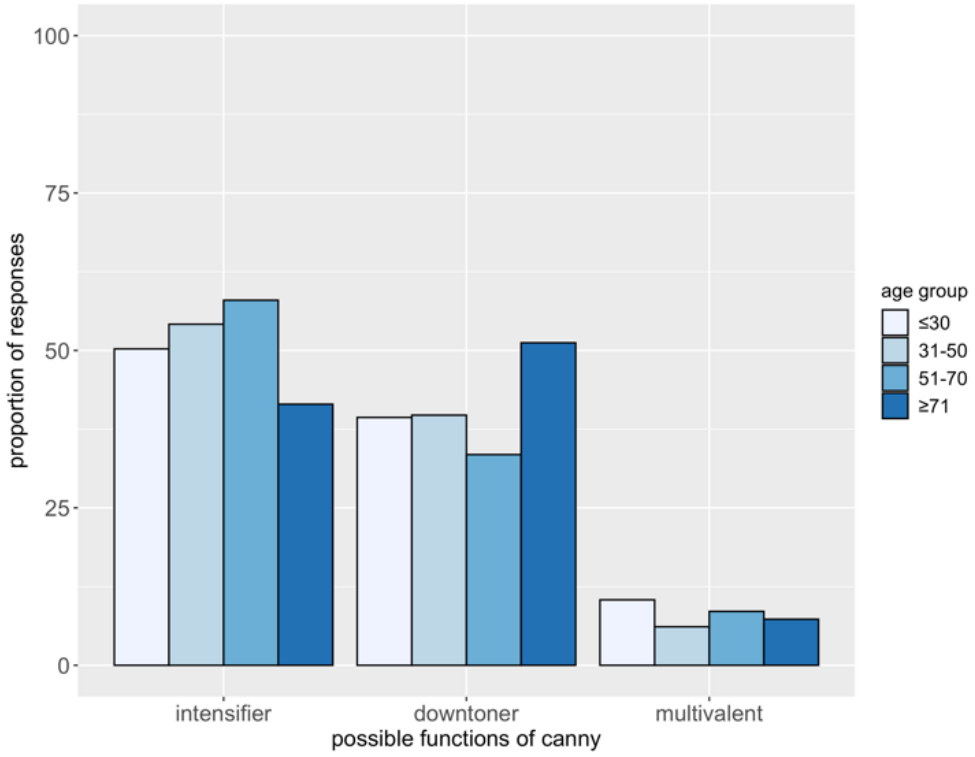


Figure 52. Distribution of coded responses per gender

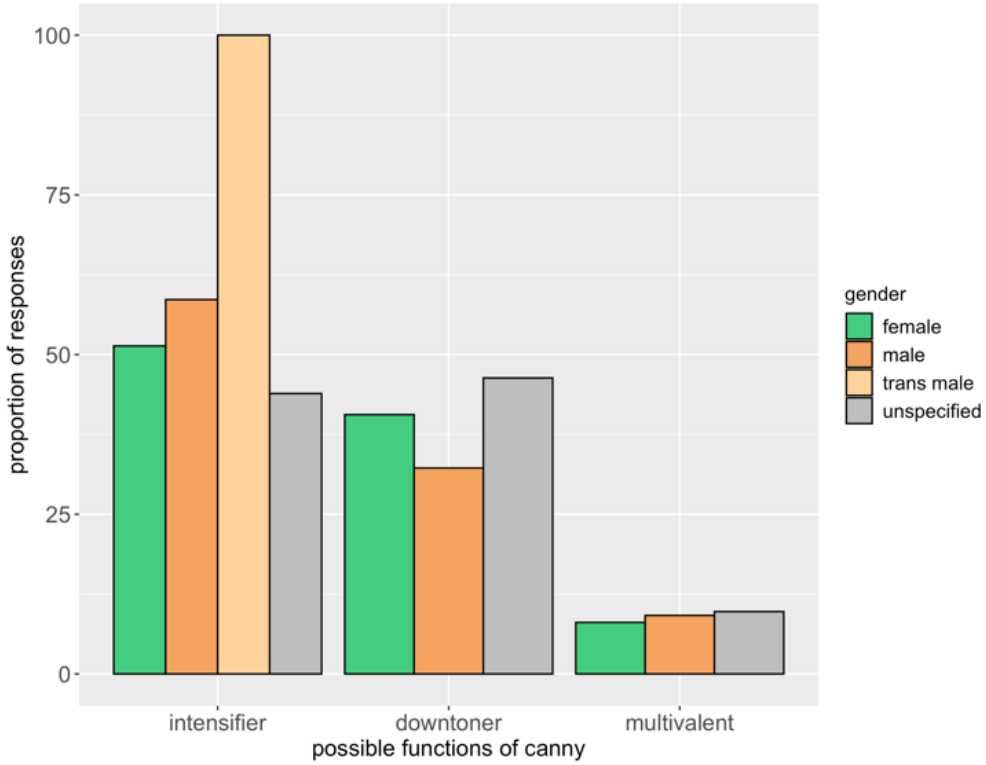


Figure 53. Distribution of coded responses according to whether the respondents had lived in Tyneside for the majority of their lives

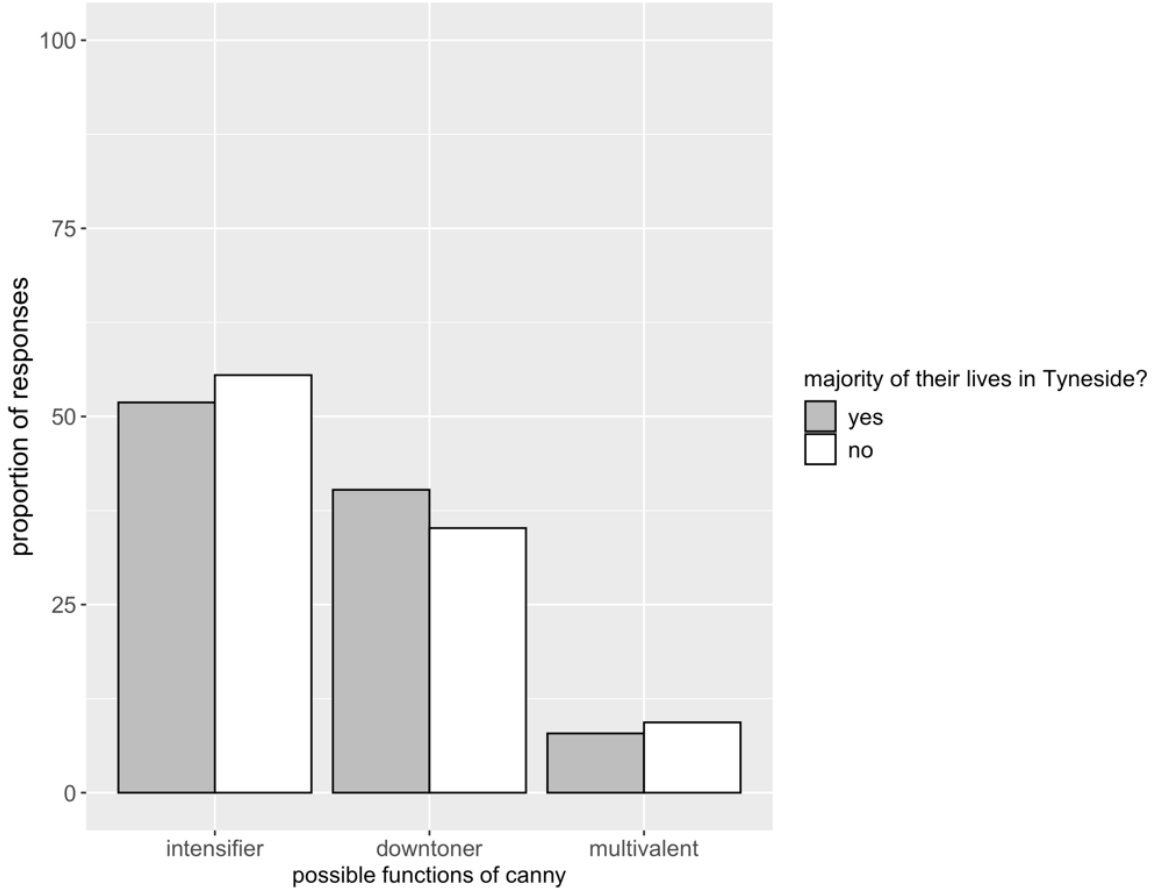
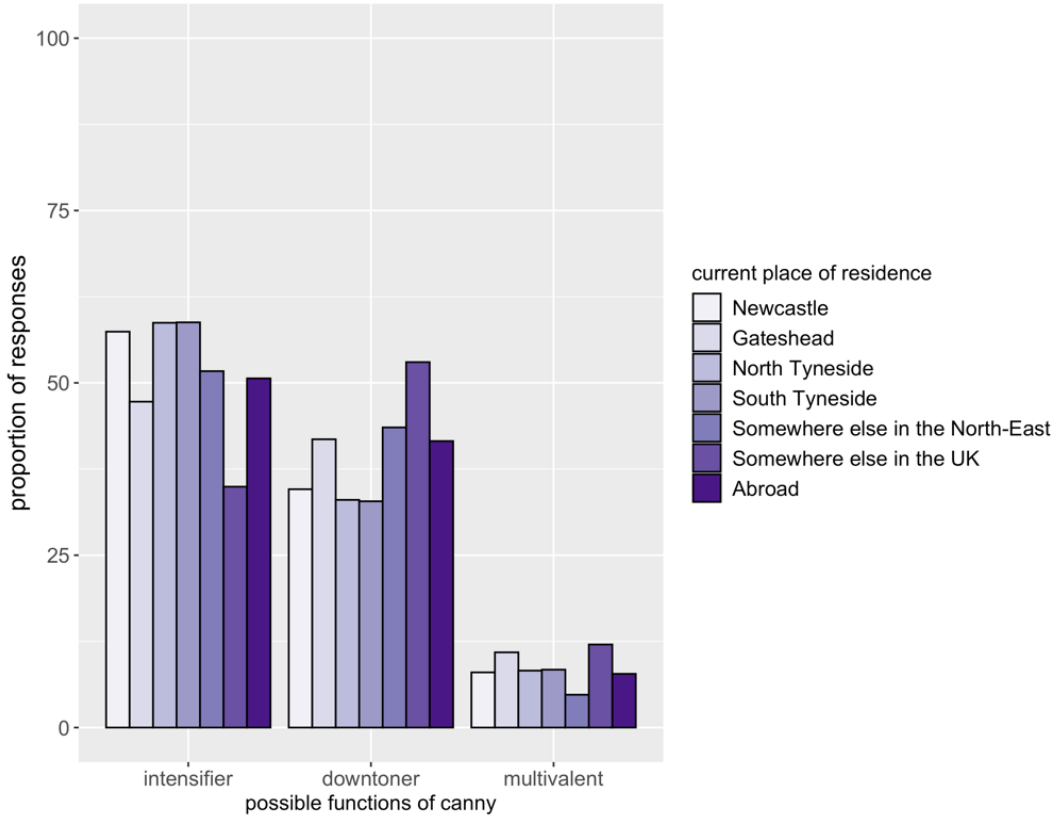


Figure 54. Distribution of coded responses per place of residence at the time of the survey



Appendix XI. Multivariate analyses: random forest tests and mixed-effects models

Figure 55. Results from the random forest test applied to booster *really*

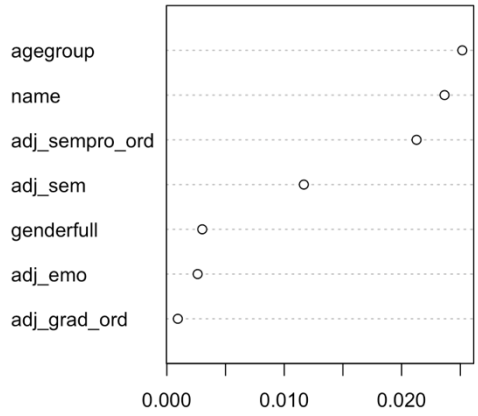


Figure 56. Results from the random forest test applied to booster *so*

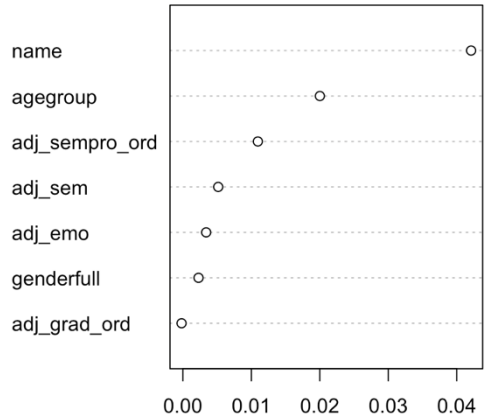


Figure 57. Results from the random forest test applied to booster *very*

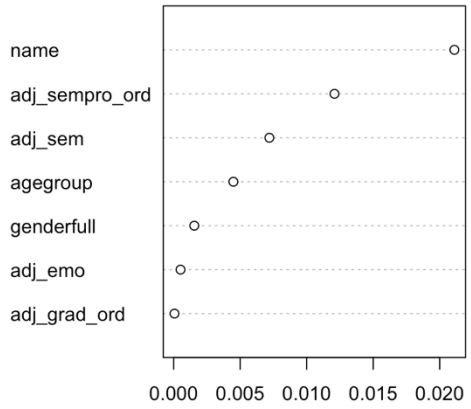
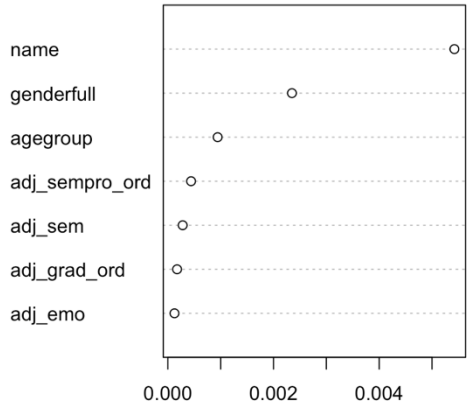


Figure 58. Results from the random forest test applied to booster *proper*



Significance codes: < 0.0001 '***' 0.001 '**' 0.01 '*' 0.05 '.' 0.1 ' ' 1

Table 64. Results from the mixed-effects model applied to booster *really*

Factors	Estimate	Std. Error	z value	Pr(>|z|)	
(Intercept)	0.84945463	0.72208233	1.17639581	0.23943675	
genderfullmale	-0.0757582	0.2226488	-0.3402587	0.73366174	
agegroup_reallyord16-18	-0.5365742	0.28926115	-1.8549817	0.06359884	
agegroup_reallyord19-20	-1.1732123	0.27601988	-4.2504631	2.13E-05	***
adjsem_reallyordage	-0.4134032	0.94652038	-0.436761	0.6622847	
adjsem_reallyordorigin	-1.5679702	1.05304714	-1.4889839	0.13649162	
adjsem_reallyordmeasurement	-1.0123132	0.88647785	-1.1419497	0.25347491	
adjsem_reallyordphysical property	-0.7144268	0.77043351	-0.9273049	0.35376825	
adjsem_reallyordother	-1.3351699	0.7630493	-1.749782	0.08015594	
adjsem_reallyordvalue	-0.3149887	0.77714445	-0.4053156	0.68524557	
adjsem_reallyordpropensity	-0.9810026	0.74361196	-1.31924	0.1870889	
adj_grad_ordextreme	-0.8354822	0.58158583	-1.4365587	0.15084341	
adj_grad_ordlimit	0.11011767	0.57134913	0.19273272	0.84716829	
adj_sempro_ordpositive	0.31408148	0.25684843	1.22282808	0.22139464	
adj_sempro_ordnegative	-0.0542806	0.25731469	-0.2109503	0.83292608	
genderfullmale:agegroup_reallyord16-18	-1.4492758	0.58356682	-2.4834788	0.01301061	*
genderfullmale:agegroup_reallyord19-20	-0.8235741	0.55573249	-1.4819614	0.13835058	

Table 65. Results from the mixed-effects model applied to booster *so*

Factors	Estimate	Std. Error	z value	Pr(>|z|)	
(Intercept)	-0.594613716	0.605114156	-0.982647175	0.325781118	
genderfullmale	0.076555927	0.376986847	0.203073206	0.839077814	
agegroup_soord12-15	-1.178353165	0.477285665	-2.468863514	0.013554291	*
agegroup_soord16-18	-0.353617016	0.426800067	-0.828530834	0.40736994	
adjsem_soordposition	-0.417582941	0.945571712	-0.441619537	0.658764544	
adjsem_soordage	-0.887661634	0.916930837	-0.96807916	0.333004837	
adjsem_soordorigin	-16.2264513	80.95445613	-0.20043926	0.841137057	
adjsem_soordphysical property	-1.058736078	0.669620872	-1.581097787	0.113855681	
adjsem_soordother	-0.460936437	0.648514822	-0.710756981	0.477234843	
adjsem_soordvalue	-1.697329062	0.682338794	-2.487516577	0.012863846	*
adjsem_soordpropensity	-1.404029543	0.641108615	-2.190002613	0.028524047	*
adj_grad_ordextreme	-0.165978089	0.598150709	-0.2774854	0.781407415	
adj_grad_ordlimit	-0.112662472	0.653390842	-0.172427382	0.863101547	
adj_sempro_ordpositive	0.81767895	0.305567325	2.675937125	0.007452062	**
adj_sempro_ordnegative	1.103304508	0.306966585	3.594216964	0.000325369	***
genderfullmale:agegroup_soord12-15	0.803663139	0.959222341	0.837827795	0.402127426	
genderfullmale:agegroup_soord16-18	1.330237442	0.870293948	1.528492121	0.126390398	

Table 66. Results from the mixed-effects model applied to booster *very*

Factors	Estimate	Std. Error	z value	Pr(>|z|)
(Intercept)	-1.407613813	0.397415593	-3.541918932	0.000397228
genderfullmale	-0.556250141	0.541639769	-1.026974334	0.30443255

agegroup_veryord16-18	-0.779088663	0.706616636	-1.102562018	0.270217412	
agegroup_veryord19-20	-0.095266686	0.654265049	-0.145608705	0.884230296	
adjsem_veryordposition	-17.5423985	299.6556814	-0.058541852	0.953317027	
adjsem_veryordage	-1.087829142	1.145145221	-0.949948637	0.342138352	
adjsem_veryordorigin	1.321376352	0.999766208	1.321685351	0.186272949	
adjsem_veryordmeasurement	-1.908172125	1.125031037	-1.696106207	0.089865768	
adjsem_veryordphysical property	-2.801721715	1.069804043	-2.61891113	0.008821092	**
adjsem_veryordvalue	-1.112213931	0.651984506	-1.705890125	0.088028539	
adjsem_veryordpropensity	-0.105865782	0.393001183	-0.269377769	0.787638992	
adj_grad_ordextreme	-16.00550092	196.1647774	-0.081592124	0.934971064	
adj_grad_ordlimit	-0.810749192	0.895016809	-0.905848007	0.365016307	
adj_sempro_ordpositive	-0.862211549	0.422535089	-2.040567923	0.041293793	*
adj_sempro_ordnegative	-1.816869057	0.508300833	-3.574397163	0.000351036	***
genderfullmale:agegroup_veryord16-18	1.616659207	1.404905467	1.150724547	0.249845575	
genderfullmale:agegroup_veryord19-20	2.043495065	1.313732999	1.555487353	0.119830044	

Table 67. Results from the mixed-effects model applied to booster *proper*

Factors	Estimate	Std. Error	z value	Pr(>|z|)
(Intercept)	-5.282805338	15.59962328	-0.338649546	0.734873754
genderfullmale	-4.165462324	31.09079033	-0.13397737	0.893420469
agegroup_properord12-15	-9.212006007	46.63368576	-0.197539737	0.843405189
agegroup_properord19-20	-0.331291793	0.767334477	-0.431743657	0.665927734
adjsem_properordposition	-18.94426674	367.1452401	-0.051598835	0.958848347
adjsem_properordage	-18.7631565	314.8974644	-0.059584972	0.952486188
adjsem_properordmeasurement	-18.64446922	710.1934934	-0.026252661	0.979055813
adjsem_properordphysical property	-0.434807759	1.441449067	-0.301646287	0.762921719
adjsem_properordother	-2.728184179	1.580637179	-1.726002789	0.084346911

adjsem_properordvalue	-1.603473402	1.51236498	-1.060242351	0.289034358
adjsem_properordpropensity	-1.219958196	1.357778923	-0.898495459	0.368921465
adj_grad_ordextreme	1.334089283	0.950412099	1.403695602	0.160409513
adj_grad_ordlimit	1.102099559	1.090228168	1.010888905	0.312069605
adj_sempro_ordpositive	-0.669701028	0.745046018	-0.898872031	0.368720827
adj_sempro_ordnegative	0.500876501	0.622356616	0.804806261	0.420931488
genderfullmale:agegroup_properord12-15	-17.09662915	93.24941326	-0.183343021	0.85452888
genderfullmale:agegroup_properord19-20	2.426556297	1.540509829	1.575164436	0.115218494

Appendix XII. Issues in the quantitative study of emphasisers

As explored in Section 5.4, the traditional concept of the sociolinguistic variable cannot be strictly applied to the group of emphasisers analysed in this project. As much as they all have been discussed in previous literature as conveyors of emphasis, the choice of form (or device) to express emphasis is largely determined by positional restrictions, contextual uses, and factors particular to each discourse situation. Therefore, neither percentages nor frequency indices are accurate measures for the analysis of emphasisers, yet the latter is less problematic.

Percentages assume that the different variants are in complementary distribution, mean/do the same thing, and are almost exclusively subject to social, syntactic or stylistic constraints. This is not applicable to emphasisers, neither in cross-emphasiser analysis (comparative distribution of forms) or internal analysis of functions within each emphasiser. The main issue is the range of functions performed by either different forms or by one same form in different contexts. Forms are not functionally equivalent and different functions of a form are constrained by contextual factors that are not quantitatively measurable. For example, if we were to say that *actually* was used to convey apologetic correction 30% of the times, we are saying that in those same contexts the function of modesty-marking could have also happened but did not, which is not accurate. Each function occurs in a particular context to meet a particular communicative purpose. There is a myriad of factors in conversations with higher frequencies of 'apologetic correction *actually*' that could have triggered the need to perform that function (e.g. number of statements that needed to be corrected, friendship bonds between interlocutors, and even the personality of each speaker). This affects the rates of *actually* in comparison with other emphasisers that do not perform the function of apologetic correction. The same problem applies to the distribution of emphasisers across types of utterance or positions. Applying a proportional analysis ignores two facts: (i) not all emphasisers can be in all types of utterance or positions (e.g. *actually* cannot occur as a response, while *definitely* and *literally* can; *proper* is restricted to medial positions, whereas other emphasisers can move more freely); and (ii) type of utterance and position affect the functions that are performed (e.g. response *literally* marks agreement but medial *literally* is often a reinforcer with local scope).

Frequency indices pose similar problems. They allow for comparisons across interviews, speakers, and even corpora with differing word counts by establishing a standard measure (per 1,000 words, in Chapter 7). They are calculated based on the total word count of either the whole sample or each predictor. This calculation raises the issue that the number of tokens of one certain form in the speech samples of speakers with a smaller word count bear more weight in their indices than in the samples of speakers with bigger word counts —e.g. one token of *definitely* in Megan's

speech (6886 words) yields a frequency index of 0.15, while one token of the same form in Samantha's speech (1745 words) results in an index of 0.57. This is an unavoidable setback in any proportional measure (see Stratton 2020a: 24 for a similar discussion). The main problem that indices pose to the study of emphasisers in particular is the fact that they ignore factors specific to each discourse situation. Although the topics, set-up, and dynamics of the interviews in this sample are similar, each conversation is unique and constitutes a very different discourse-pragmatic space. In terms of analysing linguistic predictors (particularly, type of utterance), the limitation of using frequency tabulations is that it assumes not only that all emphasisers can occur in any syntactic context (as explained above) but also that there is an equal number of each type of utterance. Only by counting the amount of positive declaratives, negative declaratives, questions, etc., could we provide somewhat reliable results regarding the distribution of forms. However, such approach would still ignore functional constraints and the speakers' agency.

Nonetheless, frequency indices are less problematic than percentages for two main reasons. First, the former measure presents the frequency of each form individually, regardless of the frequency of other, non-functionally-equivalent, forms, whereas proportions assume complementary distribution and functional equivalence. Second, the same logic applies to the study of functions performed by each emphasiser: frequency is calculated and presented per function when presented in indices, independently of the frequency of other functions.

Frequency indices are used in Chapter 7 to interpret the distribution and use of emphasisers in the speech of Tyneside teenagers. They are only a guide for qualitative analysis, since any quantitative analysis would ignore the idiosyncrasy of different discourse situations. No statistical tests have been run because the low token count prevents reliable statistical results. Moreover, there is limited usefulness here in testing if age or gender statistically constrain the choice of form or functions, since what ultimately constrains the choice of emphasiser and function is the communicative need for either. What the frequency indices per age group or gender will help reveal is the predilection for some forms or functions over others per predictor, and in turn, support a qualitative discussion of different conversational styles.

Appendix XIII. Tables of emphasiser results

Age distribution

Table 68. Frequency indices per 1,000 words of emphatic devices per age group

Emphatic device	Age group					
	12-15		16-18		19-20	
	N	Freq. index	N	Freq. index	N	Freq. index
actually	50	**0.93**	96	**1.42** (1.58)	100	**1.16** (1.52)
really	226	**4.20**	267	**4.40**	173	**2.63**
definitely	14	0.26	43	0.71	49	0.74
obviously	106	**1.07** (1.97)	53	**0.87**	66	0.86 (1.00)
literally	9	0.17	48	0.20 (0.79)	66	**1.00**
genuinely	2	0.04	2	0.03	2	0.03
honestly	8	0.15	14	0.23	20	0.30
proper	1	0.02	6	0.10	10	0.15
swearwords	0	0	0	0	14	0.21
absolutely	2	0.04	1	0.02	10	0.15
completely	1	0.02	4	0.07	3	0.05
totally	1	0.02	2	0.03	3	0.05
clause-final like	14	0.26	27	0.44	29	0.44
right dislocation	8	0.15	21	0.35	13	0.20

Gender distribution

Table 69. Frequency indices per 1,000 words of emphatic devices per gender

Emphatic device	Gender			
	Female		Male	
	N	Freq. index	N	Freq. index
actually	138	**1.24** (1.64)	108	**1.12**
really	293	**3.49**	373	**3.87**
definitely	55	0.66	51	0.53
obviously	81	**0.96**	144	**0.88** (1.49)
literally	101	0.81 (1.20)	22	0.23
genuinely	4	0.05	2	0.02
honestly	23	0.27	19	0.20
proper	3	0.04	14	0.15
swearwords	6	0.07	8	0.08
absolutely	4	0.05	9	0.09
completely	7	0.08	1	0.01
totally	4	0.05	2	0.02
clause-final like	27	0.32	43	0.45
right dislocation	16	0.19	26	0.27

Appendix XIV. Results of *actually*

Based on previous work on the form (OED 2010; Aijmer 2002, 2016; Oh 2000; Taglicht 2001; Waters 2008), two main functions of *actually* were identified (mild/linking and strong), which break down into several subfunctions.

Mild/linking *actually* comments on how the utterance to which it belongs fits into discourse, emphasising its unexpectedness or relevance in the discourse situation (Aijmer 2002: 256–57; Oh 2000: 254–56; Taglicht 2001: 2–3). It performs a key textual function of discourse organisation. It can have the following contextual uses:

(1) Apologetic correction: [Jack and Callum are talking about a time they challenged each other to build a shed with whatever they found in the holiday house they were staying in]
Callum: I found a functioning sink. I had a er…
Jack: (laughs) It wasn't functioning (laughs).
C: *Actually*, it was (2017_SEL2091_043).

(2) Self-repair and modesty: If we were still friends with them [=those] other people they would've came [=come]. Well, *actually*, they probably wouldn't've, would they? (**Tristan**, M, 17, Sc02m2_B).

(3) Elaboration: [Charlotte and Claire are criticising Geordie Shore for being fake] Oh my God, right? *Actually*, I've seen something on me [=my] Snapchat not long ago and they were like my friends in the club and Geordie Shore was there filming it and they sh- and they were like videoing it and it's so fake (**Claire**, F, 17, Ben03f2_A).

(4) Slight change of topic: [Jeremy is recounting when he met a celebrity footballer] I was just asking him about his career and like if he e- like I think he'd what happened was I think it was er the Premier League had just started and he (unclear) *actually,* played City and got smashed four nil (**Jeremy**, M, 19, 2017_SEL2091_021_A).

(5) Floor-holding: [Abbie is talking about her dog] Jade's er scared of going in the field now. *Actually*, she had an episode where er she heard a gunshot like an air rifle and erm she like ran off [Sarah: aw] and erm we couldn't find her for like an hour and she like damaged the cartilage in her leg (**Abbie**, F, 19, 2017_SEL2091_078_B) [also coded as elaboration and slight change of topic].

(6) Self-emphasis: [When asked about their favourite animals]
Phil: I like a meerkat. I like meerkats.
Bryan: I like eagles, *actually*. They can dive really fast (Ccc01m1) [also coded as self-repair because he said panthers earlier].

(7) Defensive overtone: [Speaking about who's a better player in Fortnite]
Bryan: Who's better? Me or you?
Phil: (laughs) Me.
B: Really? (laughs)
P: Yeah 'really?'
Interviewer: What's that?
B: You see, I'm in Champions division on the game, he's not [I: ah].
P: I am *actually*, you know?
B: No, you're not.
P: I am.
B: Phil… (Ccc01m1).

Strong *actually* mainly performs the emphatic function of reinforcing the truth value of either the whole clause or the following item (Aijmer 2002: 256; Oh 2000: 260; Taglicht 2001: 2–6). Strong *actually* is therefore not used as a cohesive device with textual functions, but rather as an expressive device. There are three main uses of strong *actually*, two of which are specific to question contexts:

(8) Scalar/Truth-insistent: I was too scared to tell my mam that this boy existed coz I was I thought she would *actually* kill us [=me] and then three weeks later, my sister told her instead (**Lizzie**, F, 17, Nsfc01f2_B).

(9) Emphasis on the need for information: [Connor had just said he's Wiccan, a witch religion]
Connor: There's quite a large witch community in Newcastle.
Matthew: Is it? Yeah but like what do they do? I just think like like cast spells and that? (Connor and Matthew laugh) Like wha- what's like, what do they *actually* [do]? Coz like I feel like things like Harry Potter and that, they changed what I think like a witch is.
Connor: (laughs) It's nothing like that.
M: Yeah but is it like what *actually* would be like a Wiccan witch? (Sc04m2).

(10) Sceptical question: **Interviewer**: Why do you lot call Matt Cal?
Mick: I don't know.
Chris: When we were younger we were (sighs) I think…
M: Do you *actually* know?
C: Well… There's a place called Calton Gardens next to us where we used to play hide and seek there and then I think he just like he used to hide there all the time (2017_SEL2091_032).

Table 70. Functions of *actually* as identified in this project's corpus and previous research

Function	Description	Usual features
MILD/LINKING	**Textual function. Connects the utterance with surrounding discourse, usually with contrastive overtone.**	**Peripheral position / Medial parenthetical Global scope**
Apologetic correction	Softens a disagreement, counter-claim, objection or correction.	
Defensive overtone	Reinforces strong disagreement in reaction to a comment made about the speaker.	
Elaboration	Provides more evidence to reinforce an opinion or idea.	Occurs in the utterance that follows an opinion.
Floor-holding	Used to hold the conversational turn.	Usually paired with other functions
Self-emphasis	Reinforces an opinion.	Usually final. Occurs in the actual opinion itself.
Self-repair and modesty	Self-repair: introduces the reformulation of the speaker's previous utterance. Modesty: admits lack of knowledge	Modesty: usually around negated verbs of cognition
Slight change of topic	Introduces a side-comment spurred by something in the previous discourse.	
STRONG	**Used for heightened expressivity. No contrastive overtone necessarily.**	**Medial position**
Emphasis on the need for information	Signals that the information sought by the question has not been provided yet or has not been elaborated enough.	Usually in *wh*- questions
Scalar/Truth-insistent	Expresses mirativity. Scalar: emphasis on the degree of an item. Truth-insistent: emphasis on reality.	Local scope
Sceptical question	Reinforces mirativity in reactive questions to express surprise, unexpectedness, or scepticism	Usually in *yes/no* questions

Overall distribution of functions of *actually*

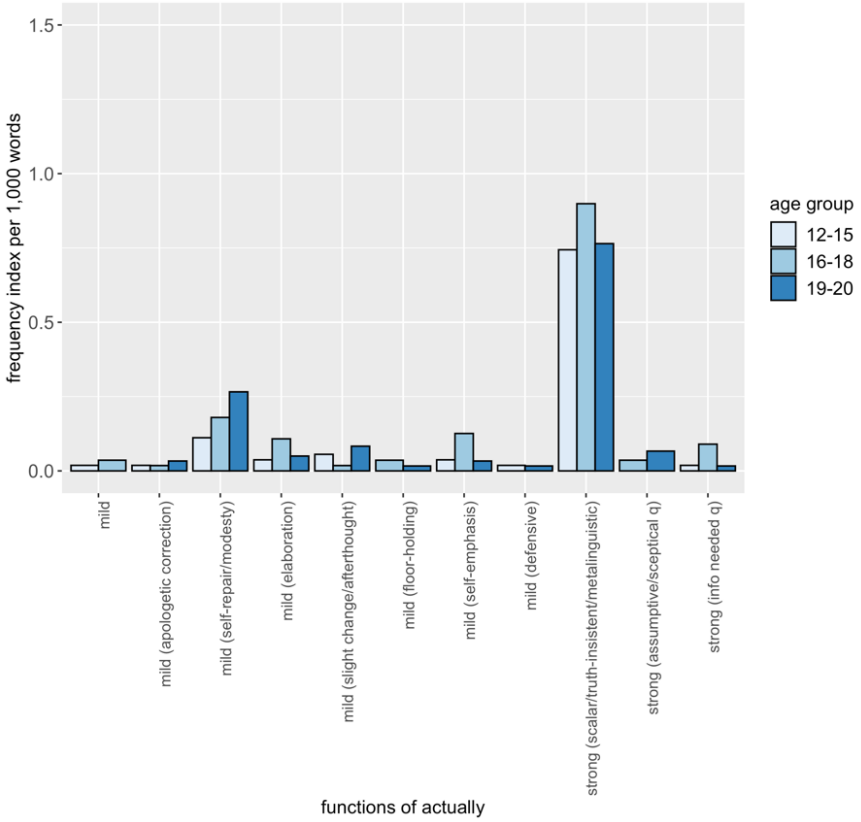
Table 71. Frequency indices per 1,000 words of the functions of *actually* (from least to most frequent)

Functions of *actually*	N	Freq. index
mild (defensive)	2	0.01

mild [72]	3	0.02
mild (floor-holding)	5	0.02 (0.03)
mild (apologetic correction)	5	0.02 (0.03)
strong (assumptive/sceptical q)	8	0.04
strong (info needed q)	7	0.04
mild (slight change/afterthought)	14	0.05 (0.08)
mild (self-emphasis)	13	0.06 (0.07)
mild (elaboration)	16	0.06 (0.09)
mild (self-repair/modesty)	36	0.19 (0.20)
strong (scalar/truth-insistent/metalinguistic)	167	0.80 (0.93)

Functions of *actually* per age

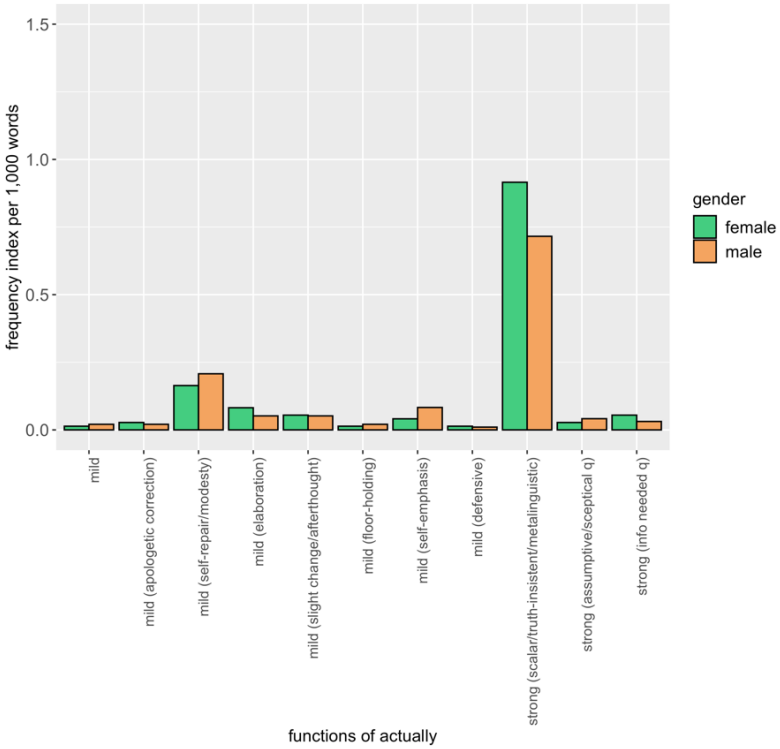
Figure 59. Comparison of frequency indices of the functions of *actually* per age group



Functions of *actually* per gender

[72] These tokens account for cases of mild *actually* that could not be classified as performing any of the other sub-functions, either because they simply emphasise reality and express mirativity, or because they were ambiguous.

Figure 60. Comparison of frequency indices of the functions of *actually* per gender



Appendix XV. Results of *definitely*

Three uses are identified: manner, assertive, and response marker (based on Aijmer 2008; OED 1989; Simon-Vandenbergen 2008; Simon-Vandenbergen and Aijmer 2007a, 2007b). Out of these, only the latter two are considered emphasiser uses. Manner *definitely* is outside of the study of emphasis and is therefore not explored further here.

Assertive *definitely* includes both the certainty and the purely emphatic uses, since it is difficult to gauge whether the speaker is making explicit reference to how sure they are of what they are saying or is simply reinforcing the utterance.

(1) [James is talking about the Sunderland accent] The accents *definitely* change. I I can't impersonate a Sunderland accent but like it does change, like I can't do it, I don't know why, but er yeah I can *definitely* recognise a change (**James**, M, 17, Sc01m2_B) [also coded as concessive definitely].

(2) [Tristan is explaining that he finds Sunday football matches stressful sometimes] You've got like all the parents watching and you- and it's *definitely* intense for me, I hate it, I hate it, in fact (**Tristan**, M, 17, Sc02m2_B).

(3) [Beth and Melissa are talking about how good younger girls are at doing their make-up]
Melissa: It's coz of YouTube, *definitely*.
Beth: Yeah, definitely, coz…
M: *Definitely* YouTube, because obviously they've got make-up tutorials (2017_SEL2091_031).

There are three nuances that assertive *definitely* can convey in some contexts, noted in this dataset but not specified in previous work:

(4) Comparison: My nana, I I don't think I've ever heard her swear but then like I do, my sister *definitely* does (**James**, M, 17, Sc01m2_B).

(5) Concession: [When asked about differences with American people] Well, *definitely* got a different accent and then, at the end of the day, like a human's a human (**Charlie**, M, 12, Ccc06m1_B).

(6) Agreement: [Anna and Scarlett are talking about unrealistic roles of teenagers in TV shows]
Anna: Then like Riverdale [**Scarlett**: yeah], they're all like 23 and stuff playing 17-year-olds.
Scarlett: I know, I think it *definitely* is with the age thing [**A**: mhmh] coz you're just like 'oh like how am I supposed to look like that?' (Jpa01f2).

Response marker *definitely* occurs on its own as an emphatic reaction or response to what another interlocutor has said, and constitutes the most grammaticalised version of the form, furthest from its manner and certainty meanings (e.g. (7) and (8)).

(7) Answer:
Interviewer: Do you think there's a lot of pressure on how you look?
Laura: Yeah.
Ellie: Yeah, *definitely* (Ccc03f1).

(8) Agreement:
Jeremy: But I wouldn't say I get a hard time fo- for it, the way I speak.
Ian: No, *definitely not* (2017_SEL2091_021).

Table 72. Functions of *definitely* as identified in this project's corpus and previous research

Function	Description	Usual features
MANNER	**Lexical, propositional meaning, appealing to the definiteness of an action or property**	**Can be paraphrased by 'in a definite and final way'.**
ASSERTIVE	**Stance meaning. High certainty or simply reinforcement with no reference to certainty**	**Can be paraphrased by 'I am certain that…' or by 'very much'.** **Mobile, but usually in medial position with local scope** **May or may not have the extra nuances below**
Agreement	Reinforces an idea expressed by another interlocutor with which the speaker agrees	
Comparison	Reinforces the certainty about part of the utterance in comparison with another part	
Concession	Reinforces the certainty about a well-known fact that does not prevent from making a bigger claim	
RESPONSE	**Emphatic reaction. Most delexicalised use**	**Used independently, fully detached from the clause**
(Dis)agreement	Reinforces agreement, in response to an opinion	
Answer	Strong *yes*, in response to a question	

Overall distribution of functions of *definitely*

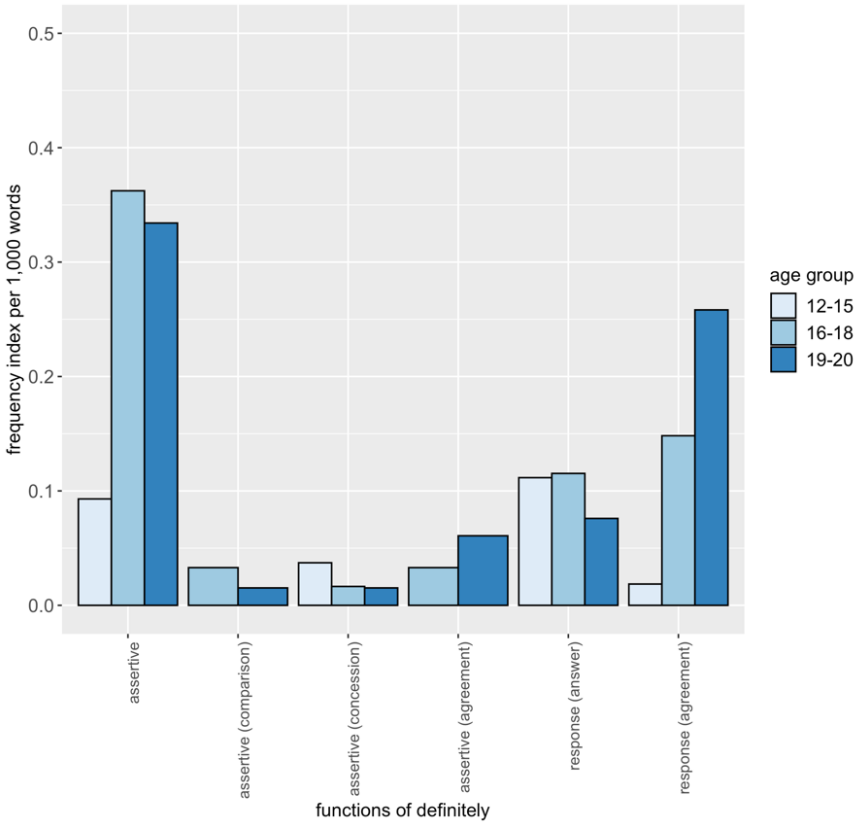
Table 73. Frequency indices per 1,000 words of the functions of *definitely* (from least to most frequent)

Functions of *definitely*	N	Freq. index
assertive (comparison)	3	0.02
assertive (concession)	4	0.02
assertive (agreement)	6	0.03
response (answer)	18	0.10
response (agreement)	27	0.15

assertive	49	0.27

Functions of *definitely* and age

Figure 61. Comparison of frequency indices of the functions of *definitely* per age group



Functions of *definitely* and gender

Figure 62. Comparison of frequency indices of the functions of *definitely* per gender