REMARKS ON INTENSIFIERS AND INTENSIFICATION IN ENGLISH AND ROMANIAN[1]

Abstract. *The aim of the present paper is to briefly illustrate and assess the main uses of intensifiers and intensification in English and Romanian, trying to hint at the complexity of the phenomenon in the two languages, while sketchily suggesting ways to improve the teaching and learning activities in Romanian schools, as well as much of the activity of translators in this country. The authors's illustrative treatment tackles the broader sphere of intensification, not only such intensifiers as* very, terribly, awfully, really, definitely, kind of. *The main subsections of the paper deal, respectively, with semantic aspects, word formation, syntactic aspects, stylistic issues, and a few remarks on usage.*

Key words: *intensifiers, intensification, contrastive approach, semantic aspects, syntactic aspects, stylistic aspects, didactic lists and materials.*

Résumé*. Le but de l'article est d'illustrer brièvement et d'évaluer l'essentiel de l'usage des intensificateurs et de l'intensification en anglais et en roumain, tout en essayant de suggérer la dimension réelle de la complexité de ce phénomène dans les deux langues et d'indiquer quelques moyens d'améliorer, de ce point de vue, l'enseignement et les activités d'apprentissage dans les écoles de Roumanie, ainsi qu'une bonne partie des activités de nos traducteurs. Le traitement illustratif de l'auteur aborde le domaine plus vaste de l'intensification, non seulement les intensificateurs tels que* très, terriblement, extrêmement, vraiment, vachement *etc. Les parties principales de l'article traîtent, respectivement, des aspects sémantiques, de la formation des mots, des aspects syntaxiques et stylistiques, tout en ajoutant quelques remarques sur l'utilisation des intensificateurs discutés.*

Mots clé*: intensification, anglais, roumain, usage, adverbes d'intensification, aspects comparatifs, sémantique, syntaxe, dérivation, didactique des langues.*

1. **Introduction**. This paper aims at providing a relative assessment and a brief illustrative overview of the main uses concerning intensifiers in English and Romanian, in an attempt to give a hint on the overall intricacy of the phenomenon in both languages, and to suggest a few possible ways to improve the teaching and learning activities in Romanian schools, especially through better, innovative didactic materials and aids (which may appear, for instance, as computer applications).

Our main contention is that the field under research is not merely supported by the uses of the various types of intensifiers. Rather, there is a much broader sphere of intensification that can be appropriately analyzed – in terms of traditional grammar of course – in order to assess the overall thrust of the phenomenon in grammar, stylistics and discourse. Furthermore, we believe that, by an in-depth, detailed comprehension of the great complexity of the picture offered by the English language, Romanian learners, translators and non-specialists will be able to more easily sort out, check on, and secure their own awareness, representation of, and availability in using intensifiers and intensives / intensification in their native language.

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So, the actual compass of intensification extends far beyond such mere scholarly definitions as 'Intensifiers are adverbs that enhance adjectives and adverbs, and are placed before the words they modify.'; or: *intensifier* is 'a word, esp. an adjective or adverb, that has little semantic content of its own but that serves to intensify the meaning of the word or phrase that it modifies: *awfully* and *up* are intensifiers in the phrases *awfully sorry* and *cluttered up*' (cf. COLLINS electronic dictionary). Or: '*intensifier* (*intensifying*) A term used in some grammatical classifications of words to refer to a class of adverbs which have a heightening or lowering effect on the meaning of another element in the sentence, e.g. *very*, *terribly*, *definitely*, *hardly*, *kind of*' (cf. Crystal, 1991).

Some typical examples could be: It's *quite* / *extremely hot* today. He's *absolutely right*! Mr. Greene is *really busy* now. Sue is my *very best* friend. It was a *pretty good* essay. Waine has just got a *brand new* car). As we can see, *downtoners* are also part of the overall picture: He's *a little tired*.

Traditionally, intensifiers proper are considered to be modifiers that give additional emotional context to the words they accompany, and consequently are thought of as grammatical expletives. English intensifiers basically quantify the sense of the word that they modify, so they are considered degree modifiers, namely adverbs of degree, or degree adverbs. The grammatical use of the intensifiers serves to emphasize the respective concept emotionally.

Additionally, the term *intensive* is used by some grammars, in the sense an intensifier or intensive pronoun or grammatical constructions (cf. COLLINS electronic dictionary, hence COLL). (The term *intensive* is not used here in the sense meant by Crystal's (1991) definition: 'A term used in some GRAMMATICAL analyses to refer to STRUCTURES where there is a close SEMANTIC identity between ELEMENTS of structure, such as between SUBJECT and COMPLEMENT…').

2. Semantic aspects of intensification:

To begin with, we are going to deal with some **semantic aspects** of intensification. In addition to the common intensifying adverbs, which are by far the most frequent (e.g. *even*, *just, most, simply, so, such*), or the emphatic pronouns (e.g. *himself*, *herself*, *itself*, *oneself*, *themselves*, etc.), or *own* determiner (preceded by a possessive): (a) (intensifier): *John's own idea*; *your own mother* (COLL), both the intensifying adjectives and adverbs in English bear the conspicuous mark of linguistic expressivity – which is characteristically associated (especially when analysed from a strictly etymological standpoint) with unmistakeably negative semantic nuances: their typical, priority semantic sphere includes concepts like *devil*, *dread*, *fear*, etc. (e.g. *devilish*: *devilish good food*; *this devilish heat*; *diabolical*: *a diabolical liberty*; *dreadful*: *this is a dreadful waste of time*; *dreadfully* : *you're dreadfully kind*; *fearfully*: *you're fearfully kind*; *horribly*: *I'm horribly bored*; *terribly*: *you're terribly kind*, etc.).

As a matter of fact, the same negative proclivity can be noticed, from the etymological point of view , in Romanian, too, e.g. *strașnic de…*, *grozav de…*, *teribil de…*, *groaznic de…* (jocular, rare), *al dracu*(*lui*) *de…* / *al naibii de…*, *dat(ă) dracu*(*lui*) / *naibii de…*, etc.

Nevertheless, there are also intensifiers semantically (and etymologically) associated with the idea of verisimilitude' or of exception', e.g. *extremely*, *indeed*,

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positively (*He disliked her; in fact, he positively hated her*), *truly* (*He is a truly great man*), *uncommonly* (*You're uncommonly friendly*), *utterly* (*I was utterly miserable*), *wondrous*. (*adv*.: *It is wondrous cold*). Their closest Romanian correspondents illustrate, as a general rule, the same (relative) lack of expressiveness: *chiar*, *tocmai*, *taman* (dial., colloq.), *de-a dreptul*, etc.

There are also exceptions, but their number is rather small (i.e. terms endowed with positive semantic-stylistic nuances), e.g. *honestly*: (*I honestly don't believe it*), *old* (intensifier, esp. in phrases such as *a good old time*, *any old thing*, *any old how*, etc.), *literally* (*There were literally thousands of people*). Being specifically English, as one might say (with few exceptions, such as *literally* – cf. Rom. *literal(mente)*), such terms can pose quite a number of problems of translation or adaptation, or even of comprehension and learning.

Still, the most serious problems of translation, as (contextual) *False Friends*, and comprehension are implied, especially at the elementary and intermediate level of learning, by such adverbs as *awfully, fearfully, terribly* (mainly in combinations like *He is awfully / fearfully kind*, *She is unbelievably / incredibly true to ther friends*).

The so-called *strong adjectives* are terms the meaning of which includes the superlative (i.e. the sense of *very*), such as: *enormous*, *huge*, *tiny*, *brilliant* very clever', *awful*, *terrible*, *disgusting*, *dreadful* 'very bad', *certain* 'very sure', *excellent*, *perfect*, *ideal*, *wonderful*, *splendid* 'very good', *delicious*. They preclude the use of the intensifiers *very* and *extremely*, collocating instead with adverbs like *absolutely*, *completely*, *quite*, *really*, *totally*, *exceptionally*, *utterly*, *particularly* (e.g. *absolutely awful*, *really disgusting*, *exceptionally brilliant*); so the question of specific collocation arises.

The intrinsic lexical difficulty that collocability implies is greater with a number of adjectives like *ill*, *damaged*, *successful*, *intelligent*, *likely* and *unlikely*, which use intensifiers that vastly differ from the usual intensifiers / intensifying adverbs (e.g. *dangerously ill*, *seriously damaged* / *hurt*, *highly intelligent*, *highly successful*, *bitterly disappointed* / *unhappy* / *cold*).

As far as the non-gradable qualitative adjectives in English are concerned, such comparative-contrastive and explanatory tables or lists as the one below are most welcome, we believe, mainly for elementary or intermediate learners of English:

Adjective	**Translation**	**Superlative (absolute only)**	**Similar list of Romanian adjectives** (*cf.* Ion Coteanu, 1990: 92)
absolute	absolut; perfect	most absolute	absolut
almighty	atotputernic	most almighty	(*cf. anual*)
attributive	atributiv	–	atributiv
capital	capital, de căpetenie; de bază; formidabil	–	capital
complete	complet	most complete	complet
daily	zilnic; cotidian	–	cotidian
definitive	definitiv	–	definitiv
double / twofold	dublu, îndoit	–	dublu
enormous	enorm, imens	–	enorm
entire	întreg	–	integral
essential	esenţial; cel mai important	–	essential
exquisite	desăvârşit; rafinat	most exquisite	desăvârşit
former	anterior	–	anterior

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inferior	inferior	–	inferior
infinitive	infinitiv	–	–
junior	junior; mai mic	–	–
latter	ulterior; ultimul (din doi); recent	–	ulterior
main	principal	–	fundamental
maximum	maxim	–	maxim
minimum	minim	–	minim
monthly	lunar, mensual	–	lunar
now	actual; de moment	–	–
optimum	optim; cel mai bun	–	optim
perfect	desăvârşit; perfect	most perfect	perfect, desăvârşit
predicative	predicativ	–	predicativ
principal	principal; conducător, de căpetenie	–	principal
quadruple / fourfold	cvadruplu, împătrit	–	cvadruplu
–	–	–	rarisim (*cf.* Eng. *extremely rare; most unusual*)
secondary	secundar; auxiliar	–	secundar
senior	senior; mai mare	–	senior
sublime	sublim	most sublime	sublim
subsequent	ulterior	–	ulterior
–	–	–	substantial (*cf.* Eng. *most substantial, very significant*)
superior	superior; mai bun	–	superior
supreme	suprem; cel mai înalt	–	suprem
tantamount (to…)	egal (cu…)	–	egal
then	de atunci	–	–
top	de vârf; cel mai bun	–	–
total	total	–	–
treble / triple / threefold	triplu, întreit	–	triplu
ultimate	ultim, final; desăvârşit, excepţional	–	ultim
unique	unic; excepţional	most unique	unic
weekly	săptămânal; hebdomadar	–	săptămânal
yearly	anual	–	anual

Actually, the superlative degree of the adjectives and adverbs is the most typical instance of intensification, in both English and Romanian.

Here is a brief presentation of the various patterns for expressing the superlative degree in English and Romanian:

(1) The most frequent patterns assume one of the following **plus-adverb** patterns: 'He is a *very naughty* boy, 'The play was *very good indeed*', 'I am *(very) much obliged*', 'You look *too lovely*!" (rather rare in use, in fact). Cf. Romanian *foarte priceput*, *tare zăpăcit*, *prea amabil*, *preafrumoasă*, *preaiubit*, etc.

(2) Using **intensifying adverbs** (*i.e.* submodifiers) such as: *admirably, awfully* (informal)*, colossally, completely, considerably, dreadfully* (informal)*, entirely, exceedingly, extraordinarily, extremely, greatly, highly, hugely, infinitely, perfectly, remarkably, shockingly, singularly, staggeringly* (informal)*, strikingly, stupendously,*

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terribly (informal)*, terrifically, thoroughly, uncommonly, unusually, utterly, vastly* (informal)*, wonderfully*, etc. Examples: 'It was *awfully kind* of him!", 'Donald has been *terrifically busy* lately'; 'It was *fiercely cold*'; *I'm frightfully glad*. *I'm frightfully sorry about the delay*. (*Longman Dictionary Online* specifies: *British English old-fashioned*); compare Romanian *grozav de gustos*, *teribil de cald* / *ocupat* / *drăguţ*, *deosebit de talentat*, *de-a dreptul şocant*, etc.

(3) Using **adverbs** like: *just, quite, positively, really, simply*: 'It is *just splendid*!' Cf. Romanian E *chiar nesimţit*! E *de-a dreptul insuportabil*! Este *cu totul şi cu totul nelalocul lui*!

(4) Using **prefixes** like: *hyper-*, *extra-*, *over-*, *super-*, *ultra-*: *e.g. hypersensitive, oversized, superfine, ultra-critical*. Cf. Romanian *hiperacut*, *arhiplin*, *superfin*, *supraalimentat*, *ultraconservator*, etc.

(5) Using **the relative superlative without mentioning the second term** (or mentioning it rather generally), *e.g.* He has *the worst of tempers*', 'She was *the funniest child*', 'He wasn't *the tiniest bit moved*', 'She is *the noisiest creature*', 'He is *most annoying*!' Compare Romanian: (Anton) este *cel mai tare*, să ştii!

(6) **Exclamatory patterns** like: *What a fine* speech!", 'You were *so kind* to me!", '*How green* was my valley!", 'Isn't she *the most exquisite* girl!" Cf. Romanian *Ce* (*mai*) întâmplare *ciudată*! *Ce* / *Cât de verde* era valea mea! A fost *aşa / atât de bun* cu noi!

(7) A **noun or a superlative in a genitival phrase** such as: *a / the knave of knaves, the virtue of all virtues, in her heart of hearts, the lowest of the low*. Cf. Romanian Erau *hoţii hoţilor*, Era *cel mai netrebnic dintre netrebnici*, *sfânta sfintelor*, *ultimul* dintre (cei) *umili*, etc. (However, the relatively recent structure *băiat de băiat*, *ţuică de ţuică*, is rather puzzling in point of semantico-syntactic analysis).

(8) **Repeating an adjective** or an **adverb**: 'She's *goody-goody*', 'He's *clever-clever*', 'The *never-never* system', '*Naughty-naughty*!" Cf. Romanian 'O bătrână mică, urâtă (…) şi *gătită- gătită*' (I. L. Caragiale, *Five o'clock*), Era *roşie-roşie* la faţă.

(9) **Prolonging** and **emphasizing vowels**: 'I haven't got the least ideȧ' [li:i:st]; 'He's *the rudest* ['ru:u:dist] fellow here'. Cf. Romanian *maare*, *muult*, *enorrm*, etc.

(10) There are **comparative patterns conveying the idea of a superlative** (especially as idioms, and having a colloquial, or jocular tone), *e.g. as blind as a bat, as bold as brass, as close as an oyster, as cool as a cucumber, as dead as mutton, as dumb as a fish, as good as gold, as hard as nails, as keen as mustard, as mad as a March hare / as a hatter, as poor as a church mouse, as sharp as a needle, as tall as a maypole*, etc. Cf. Romanian *bun ca pâinea caldă*, *negru ca pana corbului* / *smoala* / *catranul*, *verde ca iarba* / *smaraldul* / (rar) *ca frunza codrului*, etc.

And here is a nearly complete list of such comparative-superlative structures, i.e. set phrases / comparative idioms with superlative value:

Comparative-superlative structures in English	**Romanian equivalents:**
as black as coal	negru ca tăciunele / ca abanosul / ca pana corbului / ca smoala / cum e catranul
as blind as a bat / mole	orb ca o cârtiţă
as bold as a lion	curajos ca un leu
as bold as brass	neruşinat la culme / ca un porc
as bright as day	strălucitor ca lumina soarelui
as changeable as weather	schimbător ca vremea / vântul

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as cold as ice	rece ca gheaţa
(as) cool as a cucumber (‘very calm; self-possessed’)	rece / nepăsător ca un sloi de gheaţă
as dead as mutton	mort de-a binelea, mort-mort
as deaf as a post	surd ca un lemn
as drunk as a lord / skunk	beat criţă / ca un porc
as dry as dust	uscat ca iasca
as dull as ditchwater	plicticos la culme; complet neinteresant
as fresh as a daisy	proaspăt ca un boboc de trandafir
as good as gold (‘excellent; very good indeed’)	*approx.* clasa întâi(a)
as greedy as a dog	*approx.* hapsân ca un diavol
as green as grass	verde ca smaraldul / ca bradul
(as) hard as nails	tare ca stânca; sănătos tun; complet nesimţitor
as hard as iron	tare ca oţelul / ca piatra / o stâncă
as large as life	în mărime naturală; ca în realitate
as light as a feather	uşor ca un fulg / ca o pană
as like as two peas (like two peas in a pod)	(asemănători) ca două picături de apă
as miserable as sin	amărât(ă) ca vai de el / ea
(as) mad as a March hare	nebun de-a binelea / de legat
(as) mad as a hatter	nebun de legat, complet ţăcănit/ sărit de pe fix
(as) meek as a lamb	blând ca un miel(uşel)
as mute as a fish	tăcut / mut ca un peşte / ca mormântul
as obstinate as a mule	încăpăţânat ca un catâr
as old as the hills	vechi de când lumea (şi pământul)
as pale as death	palid ca un mort
as poor as a church mouse	sărac lipit pământului
as proud as a peacock	mândru ca un păun
as quiet as a mouse	tăcut ca un peşte / un chitic
as quick / rapid as lightning	iute ca fulgerul
(as) right as rain	ca nou, perfect sănătos
as silent as the grave	tăcut ca mormântul / un mormânt
as silly as a sheep	prost ca o oaie / ca oaia
as slippery as an eel	alunecos ca un ţipar / peşte
as smooth as oil	lins-prelins
as sober as a judge	perfect treaz, nebăut / negustat nici un pic
as soft as wax	moale ca ceara
as steady as a rock	neclintit ca o stâncă, tare ca stânca
as stiff as a poker	ţeapăn de parcă ar fi înghiţit un băţ / baston
as strong as a lion	puternic ca ursul / ca leul / ca un urs / un leu
as sweet as sugar	dulce ca mierea
as tall as a lamp-post / as a maypole	înalt cât o prăjină / cât un stâlp de telegraf
as tender as a chicken	slab / fraged ca un pui de găină
as thin as a lath	slab ca o scândură
as timid as a hare	fricos ca un iepure / ca iepurele
as ugly as sin	urât(ă) ca moartea / Muma Pădurii
as wise as a serpent	înţelept ca un şarpe.

3. Word formation

Some remarks on the **make-up** of the English intensifiers can demonstrate their relative ampleness.

There are quite numerous intensifiers based on nouns (typically, in the plural) that are used as quantifier-adverbials (cf. Romanian *o grămadă* / *căciulă* / *poală de bani*): *He said he was feeling heaps better*; *loads better*; *thanks loads*; *He likes his new job miles better*; *The new flat is tons better than the old one*. Similarly: *a twopenny damn*. (Lately,

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the phrase *tone de…* has come into common use, mainly in the speech of the young – maybe under the influence of the English model).

However, the most typical pattern of lexical formation is based on verbs (namely, verbal adjectives – sometimes used as adverbs), e.g. *dripping wet*; *a blinking fool*; *a blinking good film*, *a crashing bore*, *you flaming idiot*, *a raving beauty*, etc.

As a word formation mechanism, affixation seems to be rather productive, unlike the scope of intensification in Romanian:

● Prefixation, e.g. *un- Prefix*: *unloose*' (COLL). If such affixation formations as *paraleu*, *paracomisii* or *a răsrepeta*, *a răsanaliza* do exist în Romanian, where their expressivness can be quite remarkable, the (rather limited) set of intensifying prefixes in English (*arch-*, *over-*, *out-*) can be really plethoric: *arch-* eminent above all others of the same kind; extreme: *archenemy*; *archfiend*; *archfool*' (COLL); *over-* 'excessive or excessively; beyond an agreed or desirable limit: *overcharge*; *overdue*; *oversimplify*' (COLL), e.g. *overabound*, *overaccentuate*, *overactive*, *overadorned*, *overadvance*, *overaffect*, *overaggressive*, *overambitious*, *overambitiously*, *overangry*, *overanimated*, *overanimatedly*, *overanxious*, *overappreciative*, *overapprehensive*, *overapprehensively*, *overargumentative*, *overassert*, *overassertive*, *overassertively*, *overassertiveness*, *overassessment*, *overassured*, *overattached*, *overattentive*, *overattentively*, *overattentiveness*, *overbold*, *overbook*, *overbrave*, *overbulky*, *overbusy*, *overbuy*, *overcapacity*, *overcareful*, *overcasual*, *overcautious*, *overcentralization / overcentralisation*, *overcerebral*, *overcivil*, *overcivilize / overcivilise*, *overcommon*, *overcompetitive*, *overcomplacency*, *overcomplacent*, *overcomplex*, *overcomplicate*, *overconcern*, *overconfidence*, *overconfident*, *overconscientious*, *overconservative*, *overconsiderate*, *overconsume*, *overconsumption*, *overcook*, *overcool*, *overcorrect*, *overcorrection*, *overcostly*, *overcritical*, *overcriticize / overcriticise*, *overcrowd*, *overcultivate*, *overcurious*, *overdecorate*, *overdefensive*, *overdeferential*, *overdeliberate*, *overdelicate*, *overdependence*, *overdependent*, *overdesirous*, *overdetailed*, *overdiligent*, *overdiligently*, *overdilute*, *overdistant*, *overdiversification*, *overdiversify*, *overdiversity*, *overdramatic*, *overdramatize / overdramatise*, *overdressed*, *overdrink*, *overdrinking*, *overeager*, *overearnest*, *overeat*, *overeating*, *overeducate*, *overeffusive*, *overelaborate*, *overelaboration*, *overelate*, *overembellish*, *overembroider*, *overemotional*, *overemphasis*, *overemphasize / overemphasise*, *overemphatic*, *overemulation*, *overenthusiasm*, *overenthusiastic*, *overexacting*, *overexcitable*, *overexcitably*, *overexcite*, *overexercise*, *overexert*, *overexpand*, *overexpansion*, *overexpectant*, *overexpenditure*, *overexplicit*, *overexpressive*, *overextend*, *overfacile*, *overfamiliar*, *overfamiliarity*, *overfanciful*, *overfar*, *overfastidious*, *overfearful*, *overfeed*, *overfeeding*, *overfed*, *overfill*, *overfish*, *overfond*, *overfragile*, *overfull*, *overfurnish*, *overgeneralization / overgeneralisation*, *overgeneralize / overgeneralise*, *overgenerous*, *overhastily*, *overhastiness*, *overhasty*, *overhurried*, *overidealistic*, *overidealize / overidealise*, *overimaginative*, *overimpress*, *overimpressionable*, *overincline*, *overindustrialize / overindustrialise*, *overinflate*, *overinfluence*, *overinfluential*, *overinsistence*, *overinsistent*, *overinsistently*, *overinsure*, *overintellectual*, *overintellectually*, *overintense*, *overintensely*, *overinterest*, *overinvest*, *overladen*, *overlarge*, *overlavish*, *overleap*, *overleaping*, *overmagnify*, *overmagnifying*, *overmagnified*, *overmanage*, *overmany*, *overmeasure*, *overmodest*, *overmodestly*, *overmodify*, *overmodified*, *overoptimism*, *overoptimist*, *overoptimistic*, *overparticular*, *overpeopled*, *overpessimistic*, *overpopulate*, *overpopulation*, *overpowerful*, *overpraise*, *overprecise*, *overprice*, *overproduce*, *overproduction*, *overprominent*, *overprompt*,

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overpromptly, *overproportion*, *overproud*, *overpublicise* / *overpublicize*, *overreliance*, *overrestrict*, *overrestriction*, *overrich*, *overrighteous*, *overrighteously*, *overrighteousness*, *overripe*, *overroast*, *overromanticize* / *overromanticise*, *oversceptical*, *overscrupulous*, *oversensitive*, *oversevere*, *oversexed*, *oversharp*, *oversmart*, *oversolicitous*, *oversophisticated*, *oversparing*, *overspecialization* / *overspecialisation*, *overspecialize* / *overspecialise*, *overspread*, *overspreading*, *overstimulate*, *overstrain*, *overstretch*, *overstrict*, *overstride*, *overstriding*, *oversubtle*, *oversubtlety*, *oversupply*, *oversupplied*, *oversusceptible*, *oversuspicious*, *oversystematic*, *overtask*, *overtechnical*, *overtire*, *overtired*, *overtrain*, *overuse*, *overvalue*, *overviolent*, *overwater*, *overwilling*, *overwise*, *overzealous*, *overzealously*; *out-* 'excelling or surpassing in a particular action: *outlast*; *outlive*' (COLL), e.g. *outact*, *outbargain*, *outbluff*, *outboast*, *outbox*, *outdance*, *outdare*, *outdodge*, *outdrink*, *outeat*, *outfight*, *outfly*, *outguess*, *outhit*, *outjump*, *outlast*, *outlaugh*, *outleap*, *outmatch*, *outpace*, *outperform*, *outplay*, *outproduce*, *outrace*, *outrange*, *outrival*, *outroot*, *outsing*, *outsit*, *outspeak*, *outsprint*, *outstare*, *outstep*, *outtalk*, *outvalue*, *outwalk*.

● Suffixation, e.g. *-most* '*Suffix*. forming the superlative degree of some adjectives and adverbs: *hindmost*; *uppermost*' (COLL).

● Compounding: The proportion of the compound intensifiers in English (a Gemanic language) is much higher than that in Romanian (a Romance language), e.g. *stone-cold sober*; *stock-still* absolutely still; motionless' *stone-cold*; *stone-deaf*, etc. The closest Romanian counterpart that could be invoked in this context is, we believe, the adverbialized noun, e.g. *beat turtă*, *adormit tun*, etc.

4. The functional-grammatical **status of intensifiers**

As far as their functional-grammatical **status** is concerned, it is easy to see that very many English intensifiers can function both as adjectives and as adverbs, e.g. *a blinking fool*; *a blinking good film*; *a dead stop*, *a dead loss*; *dead easy*; *stop dead*.

As a matter of fact, their dual status is a clear indication of their colloquial or informal value, e.g. *precious* '*adv*. *informal*. (intensifier): *there's precious little left*' (COLL).

In a number of intensifiers, their very intensifying sense and functionality is derived from their exclamatory nature, e.g. *what* '(intensifier; used in exclamations): *what a good book!*'; *such a man!*

5. Syntactic features of intensifiers

Syntactically, the following remarks will be in order in this context: When adjectives, intensifiers tend to be used prenominally, e.g. *a consummate fool*, *dead easy*; *dead level*, *a downright certainty*; *downright rude*, *a howling success*; *a howling error*, *the living daylights*, *a plumb nuisance* (Informal, chiefly U.S.), *a positive delight*, *I felt a proper fool*, *he's proper stupid* (Brit. informal), *pure stupidity*; *a pure coincidence*, *a regular fool*, *an unmitigated disaster*, *an unqualified success*, *an utter fool*; *utter bliss*; *the utter limit*, *in vast haste*, *a wretched nuisance* (intensifier qualifying something undesirable). This English syntactic structure may be likened to such Romanian intensifying constructions as *curat anticonstituțional!*

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The cases when adjectival intensifiers are placed postpositively are rather uncommon, e.g. *whatsoever* '(postpositive) at all: used as an intensifier with indefinite pronouns and determiners such as *none*, *any*, *no one*, *anybody*, etc." (COLL); cf. Romanian *pură poezie* / *poezie pură*.

Another obvious tendency is using intensifiers in comparative structures, e.g. *tired as hell*', *He works like hell*; *This is even better*. Sometimes, they occur in set phrases, e.g. *like anything* '(intensifier; usually euphemistic): *he ran like anything*', *like billyo* '*Informal*. (intensifier): *snowing like billyo*" (COLL). (Cf. Romanian *a ţipa ca toţi dracii*.

When intensification occurs in typical coordinated structures (e.g. *good and proper* (*Informal*. thoroughly: *to get drunk good and proper*; *good and* '*Informal*. (intensifier): *good and mad*' *and* '(preceded by *good* or *nice*) : (intensifier): *the sauce is good and thick*' (COLL), there is no possible similar structure to be found in Romanian – hence the challenges for both translators and learners.

A special category is represented by intensification through negative structures (which often have to do with Negative Polarity, i.e. expressions that may appear in the presence of a negation, in other words they cannot appear in a purely affirmative environment), e.g. *not a blind bit of notice*. (cf. Romanian *nici un chior*; *lumină chioară*; *nici cât să chiorăşti un şoarece*); *red cent* '(used with a negative) *Informal*, *chiefly U.S*. a cent considered as a trivial amount of money (esp. in the phrases *not have a red cent*, *not worth a red cent*, etc.)"; *cop*[3] '*Brit. slang*. (usually used with a negative) worth or value: *that work is not much cop*'; *fig* '(used with a negative) something of negligible value; jot: *I don't care a fig for your opinion*, etc.

Sometimes, intensification in negative structures refers to scarcity / lack / privation, e.g. *all that* 'Also: *that*. (usually used with a negative) *Informal*. (intensifier): *she's not all that intelligent*'. At other times, the negative context boosts a certain (positive) meaning by a kind of antiphrasis, e.g. *no end (of)* '*Informal*. (intensifier): *I had no end of work*' (COLL).

6. Stylistic values of intensifiers:

Seen from the viewpoint of their **stylistic** description, a very important number of words belonging to the batch that we selected from the lexicographical sources supporting our survey are part of the category of the informal terms, e.g. *an almighty row*, *an almighty loud bang*, *I'm awfully keen to come*, *the weather is so beastly hot*, *you did beautifully well in the race*, *a crashing bore*, *a devil of a fine horse*, *it's fantastically cheap*, *you flaming idiot*, *a helluva difficult job*; *he's a helluva guy*, *to run like blazes*; *what the blazes are you doing?*, *monumental stupidity*, *there's precious little left*, *a rattling good lunch*, *a raving beauty*, *a real fool*; *a real genius*, *a right idiot*, *I'm right glad to see you* (Informal or dialectal), *a tremendous help*, *a walloping drop in sales*.

In addition to the *informal* words, quite a lot of (both British and American) English intensifying terms are glossed as 'not standard' (e.g. *an awful cold day*, *clean forgotten*; *clean dead*, *he was plenty mad* – chiefly U.S.), 'slang' (e.g. *barking mad*, *a blasted idiot*, *damn fool*, *a damn good pianist*, *a damned good try*, *a damned liar*, *I should damned well think so!* , *this darned car won't start*, *a darned good shot*, *it's a perishing nuisance!*), or even 'taboo slang' (e.g. *you frigging idiot*, *a fucking good time*).

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As a matter of fact, one can safely state that the intensification vocabulary of contemporary English, in both its North American and British variants, literally abounds in such slang, slangy, highly colloquial and informal, or altogether taboo terms, unlike Romanian – although, unfortunately, the younger generations are trying hard to catch up with the Anglo-Saxon model in the field, mainly under the direct influence of various (typically second-rate) books and film translations (which are not always felicitous, to say the very least).

To give a complete picture, the regional or dialectal criterion asserts itself in the style and register description of the English intensifiers; consequently, they can be variously described as:

● Informal British, e.g. *a fucking good time*, *a blooming genius*, *blooming painful*, *he's a deuced idiot*, *deuced good luck*, *a dirty great smack in the face*, *Great Scott!*, *a hellish good idea*, *a ruddy fool*, *a whacking big lie*.

● British slang: *a bleeding fool*, *it's bleeding beautiful*, *a bloody fool*, *bloody / bally fine food*, *a flipping idiot*; *it's flipping cold* (perhaps a euphemism for *fucking*).

● North American: *a goddamn fool*, *he was mighty tired*.

● U.S. slang: *don't be so all-fired sure of yourself!* (altered from *hell-fired*).

As can be noticed, there are quite numerous words the intensifying use of which is in keeping with a pejorative sense, e.g. *a big dope*, *you miserable wretch*, *you cotton-picking layabout!* (U.S. and Canadian slang).

Interestingly enough, the terms described as *facetious* or *jocular* are not really numerous, e.g. *actual* '(usually preceded by *your*) *Brit. informal*, *often facetious*; (intensifier): *That music's by your actual Mozart, isn't it?*" (COLL); *Here is your actual automatic tin-opener*.

Last but not least, considered from a *diachronic* point of view, intensifiers can be distinguished that are: ● Obsolete (or poetic): *surpassing fair*; ● Old-fashioned: *a consumedly fascinating performance*; ● Archaic: *thyself*, as in *thou, thyself, wouldst know*; *veriest*, as in *the veriest coward*.

7. Some usage notes

To conclude this subsection of the paper, here are some passing remarks on the **usage** of the English intensifiers. Most careful users of the language avoid intensifiers like *literally*, *actual* and *actually*, which tend to give emphasis without adding to the meaning of the sentence. Expressions such as *The bank was literally only three minutes' walk away…* literally reek of (pretentious) informality, or sheer absurdity: *The news was literally an eye-opener to me*. Similarly, sentences such as *In actual fact, she is forty-five*, and *He did actually go to the play but did not enjoy it* are semantically cumbersome, i.e. rather redundant.

8. Other intensifiers.

In the context of intensification, we strongly believe that a highly significant category of adjectives and adverbs, especially in teaching and learning activities, are those whose very meaning is intensifying (typically comprising the notion of 'completely'), which virtually

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confers them the status of non-gradables. They can be compared with the Romanian adjectives whose sense is either superlative or comparative, or of 'completeness', such as *optim*, *suprem*, *principal*, *perfect*, *superior*, *inferior*, and even *desăvârşit*. It will be however a mistake to include in the same category, in a strict (and falsely etymological) manner, such adjectives as *prioritar* (e.g. in phrases like *prima prioritate*), for fear of using pleonastic expressions…

Here is a (hopefully complete) list of intensifying words (adjectives, adverbs, verbs and particles), selected from the same electronic Collins dictionary; they are typically **lexical** intensifiers.

(a) Other **adjectives** used for intensification (comparable with such Romanian adjectives as *neprihănit*, *imaculat*, *esenţial*, *pur*, *complet*, *sătul*, *leoarcă*, *devastat*, *diametral* (*opus*), *infailibil*): *all in* '(postpositive) *Informal*. completely exhausted; tired out'; *bankrupt* 'depleted in resources or having completely failed: *spiritually bankrupt*'; *bone-dry* '*Informal* completely dry: *a bone-dry well*; (postpositive): *the well was bone dry*'; *chock-full*, *choke-full* or *chuck-full* '(postpositive) completely full; *complete* '(prenominal) thorough; absolute: *he is a complete rogue*'; *destitute* '(postpositive; foll. by *of*) completely lacking; deprived or bereft (of): *destitute of words*'; *diametric* or *diametrical* 'completely opposed'; *done in* or *up* '*Informal*. physically exhausted'; *essential* 'completely realized; absolute; perfect: *essential beauty*'; *forsaken* 'completely deserted or helpless; abandoned'; *full out* 'with maximum effort or speed; the greatest degree, extent, etc.'; *hard-core* 'completely and enduringly established in a belief, etc.: *hard-core Communists*'; *immaculate* 'completely clean; extremely tidy: *his clothes were immaculate*; completely flawless, etc.: *an immaculate rendering of the symphony*'; *infallible* 'completely dependable or trustworthy'; *immersed* '(of plants) growing completely submerged in water'; *packed* 'completely filled; full: *a packed theatre*'; *replete* 'having one's appetite completely or excessively satisfied by food and drink; stuffed; gorged; satiated'; *shambolic* '*Informal*. completely disorganized; chaotic'; *smashed* '*Slang* completely intoxicated with alcohol'; *sodden* 'completely saturated'; *stark* '(usually prenominal) utter; absolute: *stark folly*. *Archaic*. severe; violent. *Archaic or poetic*. rigid, as in death (esp. in the phrases *stiff and stark*, *stark dead*); short for *stark-naked*'; *stonkered Slang*. completely exhausted or beaten; whacked'; *thorough* 'carried out completely and carefully: *a thorough search*'; *thunderstruck* or *thunderstricken* 'completely taken aback; amazed or shocked'; *wrapped up in* '*Informal* completely absorbed or engrossed in'.

(b) Other **adverbs** used in the sense of intensification (cf. Rom. *de-a dreptul*, *complet*, *cu totul*, *diametral*, *final*(*mente*), *curat…*, *drept…*): *absolutely* 'in an absolute manner, esp. completely or perfectly'; *altogether* 'completely; utterly; totally: *he was altogether mad*'; *clear* '*adv*. completely or utterly'; *diametrically* 'completely; utterly (esp. in the phrase *diametrically opposed*)'; *entirely* 'without reservation or exception; *wholly*; completely'; *finally* 'completely; conclusively; *irrevocably*'; *flat* 'completely or utterly; *absolutely*: *he went flat against the rule*'; *full* '*adv*. completely; entirely(in combination): *full-grown*; *full-fledged*'; *perfectly* 'completely, utterly, or absolutely'; *quite* 'to the greatest extent; completely or absolutely: *you're quite right*; *quite the opposite*'; *radically* 'thoroughly; completely; fundamentally: *to alter radically*'; *solely* 'only; completely; entirely'; *sopping* 'completely soaked; wet through. Also: *sopping wet*'; *stiff* 'completely or utterly: *bored stiff*; *frozen stiff*'; *throughly* '*Archaic*. thoroughly; completely'; *wholly* 'completely, totally, or entirely'; *right* '*adv*. absolutely or completely; *utterly*: *he went right*

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through the floor'; *rigid* '*adv*. completely or excessively: *the lecture bored him rigid*'; *sheer* '*adv*. completely or absolutely'.

(c) Similarly, a limited number of particles add to this list of lexical intensifiers, e.g. *off* '(particle) so as to be completely absent, used up, or exhausted: *this stuff kills off all vermin*' (COLL).

(d) However, in this context of intensification we think that verbs are the most interesting items: namely, those verbs whose (various) lexical senses render te idea of intensity, completeness, high or supreme energy, the absolute, etc. (cf. such Romanian counterparts as *a desăvârşi, a nimici*, *a extermina*, *a termina* (also used figuratively), *a curăţa* (*de bani*), *a face una cu pământul*, *a zdrobi*, *a face praf* (*şi fărâme*), *a lichida*, *a stârpi*, *a aduce în / la sapă de lemn*, etc.), e.g. *annihilate* '(tr) to destroy completely; extinguish; *Informal*. to defeat totally, as in debate or argument'; *blot* 'to darken or hide completely; obscure; obliterateto destroy; annihilate'; *boil away* 'to cause (liquid) to evaporate completely by boiling or (of liquid) to evaporate completely'; *cave in* '*Informal*. to yield completely, esp. under pressure'; *choke up* 'to block (a drain, pipe, etc.) completely'; *clean out* '*Slang*. to leave (someone) with no money: *gambling had cleaned him out*; *Informal*. to exhaust (stocks, goods, etc.) completely'; *close up* 'to shut entirely; (intr.) (of wounds) to heal completely'; *collapse* '(intr.) to fail completely: *his story collapsed on investigation*'; *cover up* 'to cover completely'; *crash* '(of a computer system or program) to fail suddenly and completely because of a malfunction'; *deep-six* '*U.S. slang*. to dispose of (something, such as documents) completely; destroy'; *drench* 'to make completely wet; soak'; *engross* 'to occupy one's attention completely; absorb'; *erase* 'to destroy all traces of; remove completely: *time erases grief*'; *exterminate* 'to destroy (living things, esp. pests or vermin) completely; annihilate; eliminate'; *extirpate* 'to remove or destroy completely. 2. to pull up or out; uproot. 3. to remove (an organ or part) surgically'; *fill up* 'to make or become completely full'; *finish* '(often foll. by *off*) to destroy or defeat completely', *give up* '(tr., often passive or reflexive) to devote completely (to): *she gave herself up to caring for the sick*'; *hang out* '*Slang*. to relax completely in an unassuming way (esp. in the phrase *let it all hang out*'; *incinerate* 'to burn up completely; reduce to ashes'; *inundate* 'to cover completely with water; overflow; flood; swamp'; *murder* '*Informal*. to defeat completely; beat decisively: *the home team murdered their opponents*'; *obliterate* 'to destroy every trace of; wipe out completely'; *obsess* '(tr.; when passive, foll. by *with* or *by*) to preoccupy completely; haunt'; *overwhelm* 'to cover over or bury completely'; *polish off* '(tr.) *Informal*. to finish or process completely'; *pulverize* 'to destroy completely; defeat or injure seriously'; *quash* 'to subdue forcefully and completely; put down; suppress'; *raze* or *rase* 'to demolish (a town, buildings, etc.) completely; level (esp. in the phrase *raze to the ground*)'; *root out* 'to remove or eliminate completely: *we must root out inefficiency*'; *sell out* 'Also (*chiefly Brit.*): *sell up* 'to dispose of (supplies of something) completely by selling'; *sew up* 'to fasten or mend completely by sewing'; *smear* '*U.S. slang*. to defeat completely'; *squelch* 'to crush completely; squash'; *strip* 'to denude or empty completely'; *stuff* '(mainly tr.): to pack or fill completely; cram'; *tucker*[2] '(tr.; often passive; usually foll. by *out*) *Informal*, *chiefly U.S. and Canadian*. to weary or tire completely'; *use up* '(tr.). 1. to finish (a supply); consume completely. 2. to exhaust; wear out'; *wash down* 'to wash completely, esp. from top to bottom'; *whack* '(usually passive) *Brit. informal*. to exhaust completely'; *wipe out* 'to destroy completely; eradicate'.

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Conclusions:

We believe that the complex comparative (and learner-oriented) treatment of the intensifying mechanisms and items in contemporary English, added to the effort to compile new, (mainly interactive), flexibile, relevant and attractive materials, could greatly benefit the naturalness and accuracy of learning English by the native speakers of Romanian, be they pupils or university students, or any other type of users of EFL. The result could be primarily didactic corpora, which could in turn be the starting point for variously using (either in class or individually) sets of tests and practice materials, exercises, glossaries and interactive handbooks or guides, etc. Most of these didactic materials can come as computer applications. We strongly believe that these would be extremely useful instruments not only for improving the knowledge and practical use of English by broad groups of people in this country (including most translators), but also their knoweldge of Romanian.

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