

## Intensifying Adverbs in English and Romanian

Carmen COCEA \*

**Key-words:** *intensification, adverb, maximizer, booster, equivalence*

### 1. Preliminaries

As Partington notes (1993: 178), “the importance of intensification in the communicative process is that it is a vehicle for impressing, praising, persuading, insulting, and generally influencing the listener’s reception of the language”. The linguistic elements that most clearly signal intensification both in English and Romanian, as well as in other languages, fall into a syntactically defined class whose members primarily modify adjectives and adverbs. Upgrading and downgrading modifiers, such as *very, too, so, extremely, awfully, absolutely, terribly, slightly, a bit, not at all* are generally referred to under different umbrella terms: *intensifiers* (Bolinger 1972; Allerton 1987; Athanasiadou 2007; Cacchiani 2009), *degree modifiers* (Paradis 1997; Kennedy, McNally 2005), *intensives* (Stoffel 1901), *intensive qualifiers/intensifying elements* (Bezinger 1971), *adverbs of degree* (Bäcklund 1973), *intensifying adverbs* (Vermeire 1979; Anderson 2006), *intensifier adverbs* (Alexiadou 1994), *adverbial intensifiers* (Protopopescu 2012).

In this paper, we have adopted the term *intensifying adverb* for the following reasons: first, from a morpho-syntactic point of view, we find it important to discriminate *-ly* derivational adverbs which form an open class, from “lite elements” (Protopopescu 2012: 24–25) such as *very, too, so, that*, which belong to “a limited set of adverbs, namely, the set of *degree words*” (Cornilescu 1995: 237–239); secondly, we oppose *intensifying (upgrading)* modifiers to *downtoning (downgrading)* ones; thirdly, given that both adverbs and adjectives may fulfil an intensifying function<sup>1</sup>, cover terms like *intensifiers, intensifying elements, intensives* etc., which do not indicate the morphological class, may be misleading, too.

In order to figure out a number of semantic and syntactic traits that govern the use and interpretation of intensifying adverbs a syntactic restriction has been placed on our study: since gradability is mainly associated with adjectives and with adverbs

---

\* International Association of South-East European Studies, Bucharest, Romania.

<sup>1</sup>Grossmann and Tutin (2005), Morzycki (2009, 2012), Schmedecker (2010) are some of the linguists who have studied the question of noun intensification: “*real/true disaster*”, “*utter/absolute idiot*” (examples from Morzycki 2012); “*joie profonde*”, “*affreuse tristesse*”, “*chaleur suffocante*” (examples from Grossmann and Tutin 2005).

derived from adjectives, intensifying adverbs are examined as modifiers of gradable adjectives only, in both their attributive and predicative use.

## 2. Maximizers vs. boosters

As Paradis (1997: 41) observes, “it is possible to say ‘*absolutely* amazing’, while ‘*absolutely* nice’ is strange”. In an attempt to answer the question whether such a constraint is predictable or not, Paradis (1997:50) suggests a set of four criteria according to which gradable adjectives should be examined:

1. The possibility to occur in the comparative and the superlative;
2. The possibility to fill the *x* slot in *How x is it?*;
3. The possibility to fill the *x* slot in *How x!*;
4. The type of oppositeness involved (antonymy).

By applying these four criteria, Paradis (1997: 50–59) distinguishes three types of gradable adjectives – scalar, extreme and limit adjectives – which are opposed to the class of “nongradables”; we have summarized these aspects in the table below:

| criterion | Gradables  |  |   | Nongradables   |
|-----------|--|--|---|--|
|           | Scalar adjectives<br><i>good, bad, long, difficult</i> | Extreme adjectives<br><i>excellent, huge, terrific</i> | Limit adjectives<br><i>true, false, identical</i> |  |
| 1         | ✓  | implicit superlatives                                  | *   | <i>classical</i><br><i>daily</i><br><i>Russian</i><br><i>symphonic</i> |
| 2         | ✓  | *  | *   |  |
| 3         | ✓  | ✓  | *   |  |
| 4         | antonymy   | antonymy   | complementarity                                   |  |

Table 1. Semantic division of adjectives

On the basis of the above systematization, intensifying adverbs may be classified into *maximizers* and *boosters* (Paradis 1997: 77–78). Maximizers are associated with *totality* and combine with adjectives which involve a boundary (an either-or conception), more precisely, with extreme and limit adjectives: “*absolutely* brilliant”, “*completely* full”, “*totally* unsuited”, “*entirely* blameless”, “*utterly* disgraceful”, “*fully* deductible”; the members of the maximizer paradigm cannot, therefore, specify scalar adjectives (e.g. \**“entirely* good”, \**“completely* fast”). Boosters, on the other hand, are associated with *scalarity* (they are conceptualized against a mode of *more-or-less*) and they modify an unbounded gradable property of the adjective they apply to: “*terribly* sad”, “*extremely* rare”, “*incredibly* thin”, “*deeply* indebted”, “*highly* flammable”, “*enormously* proud”.

While maximizers form a relatively restricted set (*absolutely*, *completely*, *entirely*, *fully*, *perfectly*, *totally*, *utterly* and *wholly*), the ability of rapid change and recycling of different forms is a typical feature of boosters. Actually, as Bolinger

(1972: 23) remarks, any inventory of intensifying adverbs should be viewed as “a sampling rather than a catalog, not because the set of intensifiers is too big to do more than a sample, but because it is too open-ended”<sup>2</sup>.

### 3. From expressivity to delexicalization and grammaticalization

Intensification is a lexical-grammatical category that is mainly used to achieve expressivity. Thus, “it thrives on novelty, i.e. on innovation and semantic change” (Lorenz 2002: 143). The linguistic mechanism through which intensifying adverbs undergo constant change is the general process of grammaticalization, namely delexicalization. The stages which adverbs go through during the process of delexicalization are visually represented by Tagliamonte and Roberts (2005: 285) as follows (Figure 1):

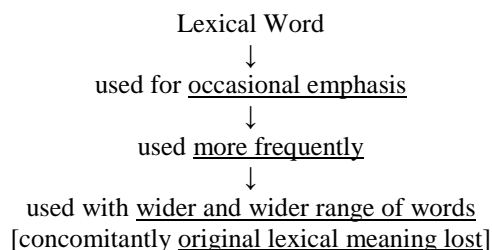


Figure1. Stages of delexicalization of intensifiers

A correlation can, therefore, be established between delexicalization and collocational behaviour: “Once a submodifier begins to collocate more and more widely, it automatically loses the independent lexical content it once had” (Partington 1993: 183). Lorenz (2002: 144), for example, illustrates the link between the degree of delexicalization of boosters and their frequency by opposing *terribly* to *horribly*: both adverbs are potential boosters of adjectives; both of them have associations of “shock, fright, disgust”; however, *horribly* is, by far, less frequent than *terribly* (10 vs. 1253 hits in the British National Corpus), which shows that a lower frequency of an intensifying adverb involves a higher level of emphasis and expressivity. With respect to the parallel between *terribly* and *horribly*, we would add that, in terms of implicit grading, *horribly* is inherently stronger, i.e. “more intense”, than *terribly*.

According to Bolinger (1972), *-ly* intensifying adverbs are “relatively ungrammaticalized” elements, while degree words are “relatively grammaticized”. Bolinger does not explicitly mention the criteria used for establishing this distinction; yet, two criteria seem to have been taken into account: (i) frequency and (ii) semantic content. Cacchiani (2009: 234) refines Bolinger’s (1972) classification

<sup>2</sup> Following Borst (1902) and Kirchner (1955), Bolinger (1972: 306–308) lines up about 270 English intensifying adverbs; Lüder (1995: 109–113) lists 242 Romanian adverbs which enter the booster-equivalent structure “adverb + preposition *de* + adjective/adverb” (e.g. *incredibly*: “incredibil(de)”, *surprisingly*: “surprinzător(de)”, *remarkably*: “remarcabil(de)”, *terribly*: “teribil(de)”, etc.).

and identifies four levels of grammaticalization/delexicalization of intensifying adverbs depending on width of collocation, as well as on style and register restrictions: (i) highly grammaticalized intensifiers like *highly* (synonym of *very* – the intensifier *par excellence*), which collocates widely but is still subject to register restrictions; (ii) relatively less grammaticalized intensifiers (e.g. “*fabulously* wealthy”); (iii) co-lexicalized intensifiers, which typically occur in strong collocations (semantic-feature-copying intensifiers like “*doggedly* determined”); (iv) lexicalized intensifiers, which still retain their original meaning (e.g. “*shockingly* underpaid”).

In our opinion, the main criteria which may be considered when evaluating the degree of grammaticalization of the intensifying adverbs are: semantic modification, syntactic specialization and frequency. Thus, we may say that the more established the intensifier is, the lower the semantic content of the intensifier is, and the more restricted the syntactic environment in which it might occur<sup>3</sup>. This means that the less meaning the intensifier carries on its own, the more it will require from its surrounding context (Greenbaum 1974: 80–82).

#### 4. From predication to intensifying adverbs: a semantic and syntactic shift

Virtually, any adverb modifying an adjective tends to have or to develop an intensifying meaning:

It is a simple matter to invent. For instance, if the word “*burgeoningly*” has ever been used as an intensifier I am unaware of it, but if one were to hear “*She’s a burgeoningly healthy girl*”, it would be taken as a normal hyperbolic intensifier (Bolinger 1972: 23).

However, as shown below, only certain types of adverbs can change their syntactic status and acquire an intensifying role. Our attempt of describing such a semantic and syntactic shift is based on Ernst’s (2000: 80, 2002: 96) classification of adverbs into functional (quantitative) vs. predication (lexical/qualitative) adverbs.

According to Ernst (2000: 84–96), most English predication adverbs have the following properties:

- a. they come from open classes<sup>4</sup>;
- b. they are composed of an adjective stem and *-ly*;
- c. they take a proposition, fact, or event as one of their arguments;
- d. they show the clausal/manner pattern of homonymous readings (1a/b, 2a/b)<sup>5</sup>:

- (1) a. *Frankly*, they won’t speak to her.  
b. They won’t speak to her *frankly*.
- (2) a. *Strangely*, Nikki was holding it.  
b. Nikki was holding it *strangely*.

<sup>3</sup> «À l’échelle diachronique [...], on peut distinguer deux mouvements en directions opposées selon que la distribution d’un adverbe tend à s’étendre ou à se restreindre : la déplétion sémantique de certains adverbess, et le figement de certains syntagmes. Dans les deux cas, le processus est plus ou moins avancé» (Romero 2001: 113).

<sup>4</sup> Modal adverbs belong to a closed class (Ernst 2000: 87).

<sup>5</sup> Modal and pure-manner do not show such a split (Ernst 2000: 84).

(examples from Ernst 2000: 84);

e. they are lexical (i.e. not functional);

i. they are subjective<sup>6</sup>.

As regards the interrelation predicational adverbs – intensifying adverbs, we would underline the following aspects: (i) boosters form an open class as they “rely” on the open class of predicational adverbs; (ii) the expressivity of boosters depends on the lexical content of the predicational adverbs which they have been derived from; (iii) the clausal/manner pattern of homonymous readings (1a/b, 2a/b) can be easily extended to an intensifying meaning, as in “*frankly* hostile”, “*strangely* clamorous”. Of great importance for the analysis of intensifying adverbs is, in our opinion, Ernst’s (2000: 96) conclusion on the distribution of adverbs:

Thus, to conclude, I have proposed that we can correlate one aspect of the distribution of adverbs with a particular semantic property. The property is that of being a “subjective” adverb, one which maps an event or proposition onto a scale with a degree of indeterminacy and context-dependence.

## 5. Romanian contra English intensifying adverbs

All English maximizers have formal equivalents (i.e. one-to-one/word-for-word corresponding forms)<sup>7</sup> in Romanian: adverbs obtained through conversion from adjectives indicating the idea of completeness/totality: *absolutely* quiet/ “*absolut liniștit*”, *completely* independent/ “*complet independent*”, *perfectly* clear/ “*perfect clar*”, *wholly* irresponsible/ “*total iresponsabil*”.

On the other hand, only few Romanian adverbs may function as boosters of adjectives (adverbs) in an identical syntactic structure to the English one. It is the case of some semantically related gradual-quantitative adverbs like “*grav*” (*severely*), “*serios*” (*seriously*), “*rău/greu*” (*badly*), “*intens*” (*intensely*), “*profund*” (*profoundly*), “*adânc*” (*deeply*), “*accentuat*” (*emphatically*), etc.:

(1) “un fragment de viață *intens* semnificativ”/an *intensely* significant life fragment

(2) “este *profund* autohtonă”/it is *profoundly* aboriginal

(3) “versuri *accentuat* parodistice”/*emphatically* parodistic verse

(examples from Pană Dindelegan 1992: 93)

Some Romanian adverbs in *-mente*<sup>8</sup>, such as “*realmente*” (*really*), “*literalmente*” (*literally*), “*eminamente*” (*eminently*) may function in a similar way, too: *really* dangerous/ “*realmente* periculos”; *literally* crazy/ “*literalmente* nebun”; *eminently* preferable/ “*eminamente* preferabil”. We would also note that the adverbs “*completamente*” and “*totalmente*” are used as variants of maximizers “*complet*” and “*total*”, respectively.

<sup>6</sup> Mental-attitude adverbs are the only non-subjective predicationals (Ernst 2000: 94).

<sup>7</sup> See Nida (1964) and Newmark (1981).

<sup>8</sup> “The suffix was not as productive in Romanian as opposed to other Romance languages and few of them are actually actively used” (Protopopescu 2008: 189).

The Romanian adverbial counterparts of the English boosters are normally linked to the adjective (or to another adverb) by means of the preposition “de” (Fr. *de*; En. *of*), in a syntactic structure of the type: “adverb + preposition *de* + adjective/adverb”.

From a morphological point of view, most adverbial determiners which appear in the structure “adverb + *de* + adjective” are conversions of adjectives. Actually, as Mihai (1963) notes<sup>9</sup>, such words function primarily as adjectives but may occur as adverbs as well: “adânc” (*deep/deeply*), “cumplit/teribil” (*terrible/terribly*), “dureros” (*painful/painfully*), “groaznic” (*horrible/horribly*), “brutal” (*brutal/brutally*), “extraordinar” (*extraordinary/extraordinarily*), “minunat” (*wonderful/wonderfully*), “surprinzător” (*surprising/surprisingly*), etc. Some other adverbial determiners are supine forms containing the negative prefix *ne-*: “neașteptat” (*unexpectedly*), “neînchipuit” (*unimaginably*), “nesperat” (*unhopefully*), “nesuferit” (*insufferably*).

These adverbs are semantically heterogeneous. According to Pană Dindelegan (1992: 91–111), they can be grouped into four classes: (i) gradual-quantitative/qualitative adverbs, (ii) non-gradual adverbs, (iii) evaluative adverbs derived from subjective verbs, and (iv) adverbs acquiring doxastic epistemic meanings. We would remark that the constructions (ii)-(iv) convey a gradual reading indirectly: semantically, the adverbial determiner becomes a consequence/result of the degree to which an object possesses a certain quality/characteristic (Pană Dindelegan 1992: 94–100)<sup>10</sup>. The intensive sense may, consequently, be decomposed by means of the adverbial correlative “atât de” (*so*):

- (1) “ochi fascinant de adânci” (*fascinatingly deep eyes*)  
 “Ochii ei sunt atât de adânci, încât ma fascinează”.

Her eyes are *so* deep, that they fascinate me.

(example from Pană Dindelegan 1992: 96)

(i) Gradual-quantitative adverbs usually indicate: the maximum degree of a quantity (e.g. *colossally* unwise/ “*colosal de neînțelept*”; *infinitely* irritating/ “*infinit de iritant*”; *immensely* successful/ “*imens de prosper*”), exceeding a certain limit (e.g. *excessively* polite/ “*excesiv de politicos*”; *exaggeratedly* timid/ “*exagerat de timid*”) or the maximum distance towards a reference point (e.g. *extremely* powerful/ “*extrem de puternic*”).

Some adverbs suggest a gradual-qualitative assessment – either positive: “desăvârșit de” (*utterly*), “extraordinar de” (*extraordinarily*), “reamarcabil de” (*remarkably*), “fantastic de” (*fantastically*), “formidabil de” (*formidably*), “uimitor de” (*astonishingly*), “minunat de” (*wonderfully*), “considerabil de” (*considerably*) – or negative: “cumplit de” (*awfully*), “groaznic/grozav de” (*terribly*), “tulburător de”

<sup>9</sup> See, also, Protopopescu 2012: 69–70.

<sup>10</sup> «Un moyen d'exprimer de l'intensité est de la donner à inférer de l'expression de sa conséquence ou de sa cause (réelle ou hypothétique). Il s'agissait de deux cas d'expression de l'intensité dite par inférence; nous verrons maintenant que ce procédé est très productif» (Romero 2001: 151).

(*disturbingly*), “șocant de” (*shockingly*), “infernă de” (*infernally*), “oribil de” (*horribly*), “brutal de” (*brutally*), “terific de” (*terrifically*), “ciudat de” (*oddly*):

(1) *astonishingly* simple way (“cale uimitor de simplă”)

(2) *disturbingly* accurate (“tulburător de precis”)

(examples from CCELD)

Gradual-qualitative determiners introduce the idea of an implicit comparison “anormal de” (*abnormally*), “nefiresc de (unnaturally)”, “neobișnuit de” (*unusually*), “nemaipomenit de” (*uncommonly*), “deosebit de” (*particularly*):

(3) *unusually* harsh winter (“iarnă neobișnuit de grea”)

(example from CCELD)

This type of construction is highly productive in both literary and colloquial registers, being more often used in spoken language. However, there is a number of gradual adverbs which cannot enter it “out of reasons that the internal history of language would not reveal” (Pană Dindelegan 1992: 93). For instance, some gradual quantitative determiners indicating the maximum degree of a quantity (e.g. “uriaș”/*hugely*,”titanic”/*titanically*, “masiv”/*massively*, “gigantic”/*gigantically*, “vast”/*vastly*, etc.), do not admit an adjectival or adverbial head:

(4) \* “uriaș de mare” (*hugely* large)

(example from Pană Dindelegan 1992: 93)

In order to render such English adverbial modifiers into Romanian, any synonymic adverb which is able to appear in the structure “adverb + preposition *de* + adjective/adverb” can be used. The degree word “foarte” (*very*), as well as its expressive synonyms – “tare” and “foarte” – may represent alternative solutions. In the following examples we shall indicate the equivalents proposed in Levițchi (2005):

(5) *hugely* vulnerable

“enorm de/extraordinar de/foarte vulnerabil” (\* *uriaș de vulnerabil*)

(6) *vastly* different

“considerabil de/enorm de/grozav de/foarte diferit” (\* *vast de diferit*)

(examples from CCELD)

We would also remark that most *English-Romanian* dictionaries do not contain entries such as *gigantically* (“gigantic”), *titanically* (“titanic”), or *massively* (“masiv”), which may demonstrate the low incidence of the Romanian corresponding forms:

(7) *gigantically* violent

*extrem de violent* (\* *gigantic de violent*)

(8) *massively* popular

*extrem de popular* (\**masiv de popular*)

(examples from CCELD)

(ii) Non-gradual adverbs are purely qualitative adverbs, such as “bolnăvicios” (*sickly*), “idiot” (*idiotically*), “incomod” (*uncomfortably*), “inuman” (*inhumanely*),

“morbid” (*morbidly*), “stânjenitor” (*embarrassingly*), “periculos” (*dangerously*), “ridicol” (*ridiculously*), “suspect” (*suspectedly*).

(9) *embarrassingly* easy questions/ “întrebări stânjenitor de simple”

(10) *dangerously* low water level/ “nivel al apei periculos de scăzut”

(examples from CCELD)

(iii) Evaluative adverbs derived from subjective verbs: semantically, the stem verbs express a subjective evaluation; syntactically, the selectional restriction [+Human] is placed on their objects. Two suffixes are generally used: *-tor* and *-ant*: “dezgustător” (*disgustingly*), “îngrozitor” (*terrifyingly*), “surprinzător” (*surprisingly*), “uluitor” (*amazingly*), “exasperant” (*exasperatingly*), “alarmant” (*alarmingly*), “dezarmant” (*disarmingly*), etc.

(11) “dezgustător de abstract”/*disgustingly* abstract

“atât de abstractă, încât ma dezgustă”/so abstract, *that* it disgusts me

(12) “enervant de delicat”/*annoyingly* delicate

“atât de delicat, încât ma enervează”/so delicate, *that* it annoys me

(examples from Pană Dindelegan 1992: 98)

(iv) Adverbs acquiring doxastic epistemic meanings are described by two types of modal operators: (1) epistemic operators (“possibility” and “negated possibility” within a doxastic modal attitude) and (2) evaluative operators (involving the subject’s appraisal). This category comprises the situations below, the constructions in (b) and (c) being semantically equivalent (examples 17–22, from CCELD):

a. determiners derived from verbs, with the suffix *-bil*:

(13) an *admirably* clear discourse/ “un discurs admirabil de clar”

(14) *regrettably* disgusting symptoms/ “simptome regretabil de neplăcute”

b. determiners derived from verbs, with the suffix *-bil* and the negative prefix *in-*:

(15) *incalculably* large impact/ “impact incalculabil de mare”

(16) *incredibly* hard work/ “muncă incredibil de grea”

(17) *unbearably* hot weather/ “vreme insuportabil de caldă”

c. supines with the negative prefix *ne-*:

(18) *unimaginably* outrageous behaviour/ “comportament neînchipuit de brutal”

(19) *unutterably* beautiful image/ “imagine nespuse de frumoasă”

(20) *unexpectedly* shrewd look/ “privire neașteptat de pătrunzătoare”

(21) *insufferably* well-pleased person/ “om insuportabil de plin de sine”

## 6. Conclusions

The findings of this paper can be summarized as follows.

The class of maximizers includes a limited number of items, which form a morphologically and syntactically homogenous group: they are obtained from adjectives which denote the idea of ‘totality’, either by means of derivational suffixes (En. *completely*, *totally*) or through conversion (Ro. “complet”, “total” etc). Maximizers have a relatively narrow lexical- semantic scope, modifying only ‘limit’

(“either-or”) and ‘extreme’ (implicit superlatives) adjectives: En. *perfectly true*, *absolutely huge*; Ro. “perfect adevărat”, “absolute uriaș”. Besides the literal rendition of English maximizers, a number of synonymic adverbial phrases can be used in Romanian: “în întregime”, “cu totul”, “întrutotul”, “pe deplin”, “cum nu se poate mai”. Such transpositions are generally used as alternatives to functional equivalents in order to highlight the expressive function of maximizers.

Boosters belong to a semantically heterogeneous, very productive class. From a morphological point of view, Romanian adverbial boosters are derived directly from adjectives having the same form (masculine singular) as the qualifying adjectives. Since English is an *adverbial* language while Romanian is a *partly adverbial* language<sup>11</sup>, only few Romanian adverbs – like “grav” (*severely*), “serios” (*seriously*), “rău/greu” (*badly*), “intens” (*intensely*), “profund” (*profoundly*), “adânc” (*deeply*), “accentuat” (*emphatically*) – can be used as “complete” word-for-word renditions of the English intensifying adverbs in a syntactically identical structure: [intensifying adverb + adjective] (e.g., *seriously* damaged – “*serios* afectat”); such Romanian intensifiers belong, to a large extent, to the class of words which qualify as *both adjectives and adverbs*. Some other Romanian intensifying adverbs in – *mente* like “*realmente*” (*really*), “*literalmente*” (*literally*), “*eminamente*” (*eminently*) can function in a similar syntactic way, too (e.g., En. *literally* crazy – Ro. “*literalmente* nebun”). On the other hand, a considerable number of Romanian adjectives *which may also occur as adverbs* are converted in intensifying adverbs in a structure of the type [adverb + linker *de* + adjective/adverb]. This latter structure is very productive and it represents the largest booster-equivalent class in Romanian (e.g., *extremely* happy – “*extrem de fericit*”, *unimaginably* beautiful view – “*vedere neînchipuit de frumoasă*”).

## References

- Alexiadou 1994: Artemis Alexiadou, *Issues in the Syntax of Adverbs*, PhD thesis, University of Potsdam.
- Allerton 1987: David Allerton, *English intensifiers and their idiosyncrasies*, in (eds) B.R. Steele and T. Threadgold, “Language topics. Essays in honour of Michael Halliday”, Amsterdam, John Benjamins, p. 15–31.
- Anderson 2006: Wendy Anderson, *Absolutely, totally, filled to the brim with the Famous Grouse*, in “English Today”, 22 (3), p. 10–16.
- Athanasiadou 2007: Angeliki Athanasiadou, *On the subjectivity of intensifiers*, in “Language Sciences”, 29, p. 554–565.
- Bäcklund 1973: Ulf Bäcklund, *The collocation of adverbs of degree in English* in “Studia Anglistica Upsaliensia”, 13, Uppsala, Almqvist&Wiksell.

<sup>11</sup> See, for instance, Protopopescu’s (2012: 77) classification of languages according to their behaviour with respect to adverb formation: on the one hand, Romanian – unlike English – has a quite limited number of evaluative adverbs, which implicitly means a smaller number of intensifying adverbs; on the other hand, Romanian prefers using adverbs derived directly from adjectives having the same form (masculine, singular) as the qualifying adjectives.

- Benzinger 1971: Edith Moore Benzinger, *Intensifiers in Current English*, PhD thesis, University of Florida.
- Bolinger 1972: Dwight Bolinger, *Degree Words*, London-The Hague-Paris, Mouton.
- Borst 1902: Eugen Borst, *Die Grad adverbienim Englischen (=Anglistische Forschungen 10)*, Heidelberg.
- Cacchiani 2009: Silvia Cacchiani, *Lexico-functional categories and complex collocations: the case of intensifiers*, in (eds) U. Römer and R. Schulze, *Exploring the Lexis-Grammar Interface*, 35, Amsterdam, John Benjamins, p. 229–246.
- Ciompec 1985: Georgeta Ciompec, *Morfosintaxa adverbului românesc. Sincronie și diacronie*, București, Editura Științifică și Enciclopedică.
- CCELD = *Collins Cobuild English Language Dictionary*, 1987, edited by J. Sinclair, London, Collins Heinle.
- Cornilescu 1995: Alexandra Cornilescu, *Concepts of Modern Grammar. A Generative Grammar Perspective*, București, TUB.
- Ernst 2000: Thomas Ernst, *Semantic Features and the Distribution of Adverbs*, in “Zas Papers in Linguistics”, 17, p. 79–97.
- Ernst 2002: Thomas Ernst, *The Syntax of Adjuncts*, Cambridge University Press.
- Gramatica Academiei Române: Gramatica limbii române*, 2008, ediție revăzută și adăugită, vol. I–II, București, Editura Academiei Române.
- Greenbaum 1974: Sydney Greenbaum, *Some Verb-Intensifier Collocations in American and British English*, in “American Speech”, 49, p.79–89.
- Grossmann, Tutin 2005: Francis Grossmann, Agnès Tutin, *Joie profonde, affreuse tristesse, parfait bonheur. Sur la prédicativité des adjectives intensifiant certains noms d’émotion*, in «Cahiers de lexicologie», 86, pp. 179–196.
- Kennedy, McNally 2005: Christopher Kennedy, Louise McNally, *Scale Structure, Degree Modification, and the Semantics of Gradable Predicates*, in “Language”, 81 (2), p. 345–381.
- Kirchner 1955: Gustav Kirchner, *Gradadverbien: Restriktiva und Verwandtes im heutigen Englisch (Britisch und Amerikanisch)*, Halle.
- Levițchi 2005: Leon Levițchi, *English-Romanian Dictionary*, Bucharest, Editura 100+1 GRAMAR
- Lorenz 2002: Gunter Lorenz, *Really worthwhile or not really significant? A corpus-based approach to the delexicalization of intensifiers in Modern English*, in (eds) G. Diewald and I. Wisner, *New Reflections on Grammaticalisation*, Amsterdam, Benjamins, p. 142–161.
- Lüder 1996: Elsa Lüder, *Procedee de gradație lingvistică (ediție revăzută și adăugită)*, traducere din limba germană de Horațiu Decuble, Iași, Editura Universității “Alexandru Ioan Cuza”.
- Mihai 1963: C. Mihai, *Valoarea adverbială a adjectivelor în limba română contemporană*, in “Studii și cercetări lingvistice”, XIV (2), p. 209–218.
- Morzycki 2009: Marcin Morzycki, *Degree Modification of Gradable Nouns: Size Adjectives and Adnominal Degree Morphemes*, in “Natural Language Semantics”, 17 (2), p. 175–203.
- Morzycki 2012: Marcin Morzycki, *The Several Faces of Adnominal Degree Modification*, in the *Proceedings of the 29th West Coast Conference on Formal Linguistics (WCCFL)*, p. 187–195.
- Newmark 1981: Paul Newmark, *Approaches to Translation*, Oxford – New York, Pergamon.
- Nida 1964: Eugene Nida, *Toward a Science of Translating*, Leiden, E. J. Brill.
- Pană Dindelegan 1992: Gabriela Pană Dindelegan, *Sintaxă și semantică. Clase de cuvinte și forme gramaticale cu dublă natură (adjectivul, adverbul, prepoziția, forme verbale nepersonale)*, București, Editura Universității București.

- Paradis 1997: Carita Paradis, *Degree Modifiers of Adjectives in Spoken British English*, Lund University Press.
- Paradis 2008: Carita Paradis, *Configurations, construals and change: expressions of DEGREE*, in “English Language and Linguistics”, 12, 2, p. 317–343.
- Partington 1993: Alan Partington, *Corpus evidence of language change: the case of intensifiers*, in (eds) M. Baker, G. Francis et alii, *Text and technology: In honour of John Sinclair*, p. 177–192.
- Protopopescu 2008: Daria Protopopescu, *On adverb formation in Romanian*, in “Bucharest Working Papers in Linguistics/University of Bucharest. Department of English”, XI (1), p. 187–196.
- Protopopescu 2012: Daria Protopopescu, *The Syntax of Manner Adverbs in English and Romanian*, București, Editura Universității din București.
- Romero 2001: Clara Romero, *L'intensité en français contemporain: Analyse sémantique et pragmatique*, Université Paris 7.
- Schneidecker 2010: Catherine Schneidecker, *La notion de gradation s'applique-t-elle au nom?*, in „Langue française”, 165, p. 17–34.
- Stoffel 1901: Cornelis Stoffel, *Intensives and Down-toners: A Study in English Adverbs*, Heidelberg, Carl Winter's Universitätsbuchhandlung.
- Tagliamonte, Roberts 2005: Sali Tagliamonte and Chris Roberts, *So weird, so cool, so innovative: The use of intensifiers in the television series Friends*, in “American Speech”, 80 (3), p. 280–300.
- Vermeire 1979: Antoine R. Vermeire, *Intensifying adverbs: A Syntactic, Semantic and Lexical Study of Fifteen Degree Intensifiers, Based on an Analysis of Two Computer Corpuses of Modern English*, PhD thesis in the Department of Linguistics and Modern English Language, University of Lancaster.

## Abstract

This article sets out to provide an analysis of English intensifying adverbs and their Romanian (formal) equivalents. Since gradability is mainly associated with adjectives and with adverbs derived from adjectives, we examine intensifying adverbs as specifiers of gradable adjectives only, in both their attributive and predicative use. In line with Paradis (1997), we classify them into maximizers and boosters according to their lexical-semantic scope: *totality* versus *scalarity* (e.g. “absolutely”, “completely”, “totally”, etc. versus “enormously”, “extremely”, “highly”, “awfully”, “amazingly”, “terribly”, etc.). A special focus is set on the semantic and syntactic shift undergone by certain types of predicational adverbs when developing an intensifying function. At the same time, the process is discussed in terms of expressivity versus delexicalization/grammaticalization. Following Nida (1964) and Newmark (1981) we distinguish between formal equivalents (i.e. one-to-one/word-for-word corresponding forms) and functional equivalents (i.e. other translational procedures, such as transpositions, modulations etc.). Thus, we would conclude that: (i) all English maximizers have one-to-one equivalents in Romanian (adverbs obtained through conversion from adjectives indicating the idea of *completeness/totality*: e.g. *absolutely* quiet/ “*absolut liniștit*”, *completely* independent/ “*complet independent*”, *perfectly* clear/ “*perfect clar*”, *wholly* irresponsible/ “*total iresponsabil*”); (ii) normally, the Romanian equivalents of English boosters are linked to the adjective they intensify by means of preposition “*de*” (En. *of*), in a highly cohesive syntactic structure of the type: “adverb + preposition *de* + adjective/adverb” (e.g. *unimaginably* beautiful view/ “*vedere neînchipuit de frumoasă*”).