REMARKS ON INTENSIFIERS AND INTENSIFICATION IN ENGLISH AND ROMANIAN¹

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.

¹ **Constantin MANEA**, University of Piteşti, Romania. kostea m@yahoo.com

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. strasnic 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,

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	esențial; cel mai important	-	essential
exquisite	desăvârșit; rafinat	most exquisite	desăvârșit
former	anterior	-	anterior

Studii de gramatică contrastivă

inferior	inferior	_	inferior
infinitive	infinitiv	_	_
junior	junior; mai mic	_	_
latter	ulterior; ultimul (din	_	ulterior
	doi); recent		
main	principal	_	fundamental
maximum	maxim	-	maxim
minimum	minim	_	minim
monthly	lunar, mensual	-	lunar
now	actual; de moment	-	_
optimum	optim; cel mai bun	-	optim
perfect	desăvârșit; perfect	most perfect	perfect, desăvârșit
predicative	predicativ	_	predicativ
principal	principal; conducător,	_	principal
	de căpetenie		
quadruple /	cvadruplu, împătrit	_	cvadruplu
fourfold			
-	_	_	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 /	triplu, întreit	_	triplu
threefold			
ultimate	ultim, final; desăvârșit,	_	ultim
	excepțional		
unique	unic; excepțional	most unique	unic
weekly	săptămânal;	_	săptămânal
	hebdomadar		
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,

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 nesimțit*! E *de-a dreptul insuportabil*! Este *cu totul și 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 știi!
- (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 așa / 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 hoții hoților, Era cel mai netrebnic dintre netrebnici, sfânta sfintelor, ultimul dintre (cei) umili, etc. (However, the relatively recent structure băiat de băiat, țuică de țuică, 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 (...) și *gătită- gătită*' (I. L. Caragiale, *Five o'clock*), Era *roșie-roșie* la față.
- (9) **Prolonging** and **emphasizing vowels**: 'I haven't got the least idea' [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 cârtiță	
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	

Studii de gramatică contrastivă

as cold as ice rece ca gheaţa

(as) cool as a cucumber ('very calm; self-

possessed')

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 criță / 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 nesimțitor

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)
as miserable as sin
(asemănători) ca două picături de apă
amărât(ă) ca vai de el / ea
nebun de-a binelea / de legat

(as) mad as a hatter nebun de legat, complet țăcănit/ sărit de pe fix

(as) meek as a lamb blând ca un miel(uşel)

as mute as a fish tăcut / mut ca un pește / ca mormântul

as obstinate as a mule încăpățânat ca un catâr

as old as the hills vechi de când lumea (și 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 pește / un chitic
as quiet / rapid as liphtning inte ca fulgerul

as quiet as a mouse tâcut ca un pește / un chitic as quick / rapid as lightning iute ca fulgerul ca nou, perfect sănătos as silent as the grave tâcut ca mormântul / un mormânt

as silly as a sheep prost ca o oaie / ca oaia
as slippery as an eel alunecos ca un tipar / peşte

as slippery as an eel alunecos ca 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 stort as wax

inoale ca cearla

as steady as a rock

as stiff as a poker

as strong as a lion

inoale ca cearla

teapăn de parcă ar fi înghiţit un băţ / baston

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 înțelept 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,

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. overcentralization overcautious. overcivilise, overcommon, overcentralisation, overcerebral, overcivil, overcivilize / 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, 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, 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. <u>stone-cold</u> 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 anticonstitutional!

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 tipa ca toți 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 chiorăști un șoarece); 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.)"; cop³ '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).

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 eyeopener 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

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, esențial, 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

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 desăvârsi, a nimici, a extermina, a termina (also used figuratively), a curăta (de bani), a face una cu pământul, a zdrobi, a face praf (și 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'; tucker² '(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'.

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 knowledge of Romanian.

Bibliography:

Academia Română, Institutul de Lingvistică "Iorgu Iordan – Al. Rosetti"), *Gramatica limbii române – I – Cuvântul*, Editura Academiei Române, Bucuresti, 2005.

Baciu, I., 2004, Functional Categories in English, vol. I, EUB.

Bantaş, A., 1996, Descriptive English Syntax, Iaşi, Editura Institutul European.

Bantas, A., 1991, Limba engleză în liste și tabele, București, Teora.

*** Collins English Dictionary and Thesaurus (electronic version), HarperCollins, 1993 (COLL).

Crystal, David, A Dictionary of Linguistics and Phonetics, Blackwell, 1991

Crystal, David, Linguistics, Penguin Books, Harmondsworth, 1990

Delahunty Andrew, The Oxford Guide to Correct English, Oxford University Press, 1993

Eastwood, John, Oxford Guide to English Grammar, Oxford University Press, 1996

Găitănaru, Șt., 1998, Gramatica actuală a limbii române, București, Editura Tempora.

Harrap's English Grammar, London, 1990.

Longman Dictionary Online www.doceonline.com.

MacMillan English Dictionary for Advanced Learners – International Student Edition, MacMillan Education, 2002.

Manea, C., 2004, English Morphology. Nomina, Editura Universității din Pitești.

Swan, M., 1994, Practical English Usage, Oxford University Press.

Ștefănescu, I., 1988, Morphology (2), T.U.B.

The American Heritage Dictionary, Third Edition, Softkey International Inc., 1998.

The Oxford Dictionary of English Grammar, Oxford University Press, 1994.

Thomson A.J., Martinet A.V., 1996, A Practical Grammar, Oxford University Press.

Weiner, E.S.C., Delahunty, A., The Oxford Guide to Correct English, Editura Teora, 1993.

On-line sources:

 $\underline{http://learnenglish.britishcouncil.org/en/english-grammar/adjectives/intensifiers}$

http://grammar.about.com/od/il/g/intensifierterm.htm

http://www.annies-annex.com/intensifiers.htm

Constantin Manea holds a degree in Philology (French and English) from the University in Piteşti (1985). Doctoral thesis (*The Etymological Structure of the Neologistic Lexicon of Romanian, with Special Reference to the English Borrowings*) at the University of Bucharest (defended 2003). Teacher of English and French (1985-1990). Assistant lecturer, lecturer and senior lecturer at the Faculty of Letters (1990-2001, 2008-present) and the Faculty of Educational Sciences (2001-2008) of the University in Piteşti. Main subjects and professional competences covered: linguistics, applied linguistics, Anglo-Romanian lexicology and lexicography, interdisciplinary research. Authored

Studii de gramatică contrastivă

several papers and books, mainly didactic, including three bilingual dictionaries. Participated in lifelong learning programmes and colloquiums, symposiums, congresses, both national and international. Member of national research teams (National Research Project PN II 32174 of 1.10.2008, conducted from 2008 to 2010; National Research contract, University of Piteşti, no: 72209 of 1.10.2008, conducted from 2008 to 2010). Multi-lingual: fluent in English and French, able to communicate in Italian, Spanish and Russian.