EXAMINING HIGH FREQUENCY ADVERBS IN LEARNER AND NATIVE SPEAKER LANGUAGE: SOME IMPLICATIONS FOR SPOKEN EFL LEARNING AND TEACHING

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IN THIS TALK

• Why adverbs?
• Introducing our research project
• Results
• Insights for the classroom
FROM DANDELIONS TO DUSTBINS

I believe the road to hell is paved with adverbs, and I will shout it from the rooftops.

To put it another way, they’re like dandelions. If you have one on your lawn, it looks pretty and unique. If you fail to root it out, however, you find five the next day . . . fifty the day after that . . . and then, my brothers and sisters, your lawn is totally, completely, and profligately covered with dandelions. By then you see them for the weeds they really are, but by then it’s—GASP!!—too late (Stephen King 2000: 124-5)
‘The adverb is not your friend’ (King: 2002)
‘are a varied and thus problematic category’ (Culpepper 2009:53)
“miscellaneous or residual category” (Huddleston & Pullum, 2002: 563)
“ identical in most respects to the structure of adjectival phrases” (Bowers 1975: 530)
“it is sometimes helpful to think of 'adverb' as a 'dustbin' term - all the types of word that don't fit neatly into other categories such as noun, adjective, verb, preposition are lumped together as adverbs”
BUT “small words” Carter & McCarthy (2017)
THE PROJECT

• Adverbs in spoken language: Cambridge Humanities Grants Scheme 2016-2017
• High frequency adverbs in spoken communication Chinese, German, Spanish L2 and L1 English
• LINDSEI & Extended LOCNEC
• *just*, *well*, *maybe*, *really*, *actually*, *obviously*, *perhaps*, *probably*
THE QUESTIONS

• Is the frequency of use related to the speaking task?
• Do some groups have a preference for one adverb over another?
• What do the collocational and colligational profiles of the adverbs look like?
THE DATA

LINDSEI: The Louvain International Database of Spoken English Interlanguage (Gilquin et al. 2010)
50+ interviews SP GE CN

LOCNEC: Louvain Corpus of Native English Conversation (De Cock 2004)
+28 Extended LOCNEC
78 interviews (Aguado et al. 2012)

3 tasks: set topic; free discussion; picture description

L2 Undergraduates 3-4 years university  L1: Undergraduates ML

Interviewer (S1) L1 speaker of English 96.25% (85% in CH data)
The methodology

Quantitative and qualitative methods

**QUAN**
- Frequency
- Tasks
- Contexts of use
- Function
- Position

**QUAL**
- Overall use
- Task effect
- Corpus analysis (1): analysis of frequency
- Corpus analysis (2): collocational & colligational analyses
- Corpus analysis (3): analysis of (pragmatic) uses
## THE FINDINGS: TASK SENSITIVITY

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THE FINDINGS: A SNAPSHOT
THE FINDINGS: % SPEAKERS USING REALLY

[Bar chart showing percentage of speakers using the word 'really']
INTRASPEAKER / INTERSPEAKER VARIATION
TOP 20 EN USERS OF REALLY
# The Findings: Really

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Function</th>
<th>Example</th>
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<td><em>It was really good; I really wanted to see you</em></td>
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<td>Sceptical response</td>
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<td><em>It doesn’t look like she is really</em></td>
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<td>Hedging</td>
<td><em>She doesn’t really like it</em></td>
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<td>Concessive / summative</td>
<td><em>It’s a bit disappointing really</em></td>
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# The Findings: Function

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THE FINDINGS: BOOSTING FUNCTION

the province the province is really .. Is really beautiful (CH0121P1)

so I think I think that place really impress me .(CH0147P1)

But then if you really look into her you can’t find anything at all (SP0107P1)

But I remember it was really nice (SP124P2)
I mean it was really like her ... (CH0145P3)

and she really looks better than in the first: picture (SP0132P3)

she is erm more beautiful than she is really and she is mm silent to the (SP0150P3)
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especially the old people were really friendly. although if any people (GE0111P1)

from that moment on he. he didn't really play so much. more tennis anymore (GE0121P1)

you couldn't really tell the plot you just thought oh it's a nice story about a guy (GE0132P1)

yeah yeah. well I. I'd like to have children. surely studying is all.. I don't really know ... I don't really know because ...
PATTERN: BOOSTING AND EVALUATING

[and/so + it/that + (was) + really + (VP/CL)] frame:

once I went to I was on the beach and it was [really] really warm and then in the same day (LOCNECX73P1)

the Lion King Disney's the Lion King that's the latest one I've watched yeah and it was [really] cool I I like Disney films (LOCNEC2P1)

so that's [really] good and that that's a a step up from Shakespeare (LOCNEC4P1)
1: but what would you like to do after you've finished your degree
2: erm I was thinking about going into journalism
1: oh journalism
2: yeah yeah
... (40 turns later)
1: I don't what would you like to write about politics or sports or
2: erm
1: about everything
2: er I'm not really er er too bothered about this er obviously with an interest in sport that I've
   got er I could write quite fluently about sport but
1: mhm
2: I will if a: a certain area interested me such as politics
1: mhm
2: I think I could write about that as well
1: mhm

2: just I'm just really looking at it er as journalism any form of journalism at the moment and I
   don't really want to narrow myself down to sports journalism or
1: mhm mhm
2: political or economic journalism so I'm looking at everything
S1: uhu and er why did you choose literature
S2: erm well
S1: good question
S2: I I've always been erm very keen on reading
S1: mhm
S2: and and in my first year I did English literature and language and French so there was reading involved in most of my courses really. (LOCNEC1P2)
THE FINDINGS

- Some L1 groups show sensitivity to task.
- Some L1 groups primed both the use of some of the adverbs as well as distinct collocational profiles and colligational patterns.
- EN data tends to display some unique collocational and colligational patterning. They are not free spirits.
- EN data shows a greater range of functions: interaction.
- EN use of is characterised by the ability to evaluate, moderate, attend to the online nature of the discourse.
“Learners do not use all the functions of pragmatic markers or use them with different frequencies from native speakers.” Paquot & Granger (2012:140)

Not the case in all learners across all tasks in this study  BUT

Lack of exposure and awareness of the collocational frames where small words occur in conversation (Carter & McCarthy, 2017) expressing stance-related meanings may contribute to the lack of understanding and use.
THE CHALLENGE

Form–meaning mappings can only be explored in instructed settings if there is some basic understanding of how this is mapped by the L1 community of users.

Otherwise we’re only giving part of the story.
SUGGESTIONS FOR THE CLASSROOM?

- the role of tasks
- the role of L1
- language patterning, including collocation
- pragmatic considerations
LI AND TASK

just maybe really
SP
No task effect
well
actually
Task effect
just maybe well really
CH
EN
GE
Task effect
SUGGESTIONS FOR THE CLASSROOM?

Exposure / awareness of the role of ‘small words’:
Wider functions: role in relationship creating / interactivity
Wider collocational and colligational patterns
Task/context/position
Data-driven solutions: teachers/materials writers
Conversations
Listening scripts / Dialogues on the page
THANK YOU FOR LISTENING


