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문학석사학위논문

**English Amplifiers in American  
Television Sitcoms:  
A Corpus-based Analysis on *Friends*  
and *How I Met Your Mother***

미국 시트콤 속에서의 영어 확장사:  
*Friends*와 *How I Met Your Mother*에 관한 코퍼스  
기반 연구

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## **Abstract**

# **English Amplifiers in American Television Sitcoms: A Corpus-based Analysis on *Friends* and *How I Met Your Mother***

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Amplifiers are considered one of the most interesting grammatical features to study for their versatility and tendency to change quickly. Amplifiers are also often linked with colloquial usage and female speakers. The purpose of this study is to investigate the competition of different English amplifiers in American television sitcoms in the past decade, the current standings of the selected amplifiers, and whether the television sitcoms reflect the actual amplifier use in contemporary American English. This study also aims to explore the types of adjectives and verbs collocated with the selected amplifiers, and the sociolinguistic correlation between the amplifier use and gender.

The transcripts from the two world-popular American television sitcoms were collected to create an original corpus, *Friends-HIMYM* Corpus, and it was compared with the spoken portion of Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA), Corpus of Historical American English (COHA), and Corpus of American Soap Operas (CASO).

The data was analyzed for chronological distribution, collocation and gender/age-preferential usage of the three selected amplifiers: *very*, *really* and *totally*.

The results indicated the amplifier use in the sitcoms partially reflected contemporary American English. *Very* was the oldest amplifier, followed by *really* and *totally*, in all corpora used in the study; however, *really* was the most popular amplifier for *Friends-HIMYM* Corpus and CASO while *very* was most frequently used in COCA and COHA. The results also showed that *very* and *really* are collocated with common, scalar adjectives and *totally* with more complex, prefixed adjectives. *Very* was never collocated with verbs, *really* was collocated with auxiliary and cognitive verbs, and *totally* was collocated with suffixed verbs. All three amplifiers were used more often by female characters than male characters. However, a comparative analysis on MICASE and BNCweb indicated that amplifier preferences varied depending on different gender and age groups in American and British English samples.

**Keywords:** amplifiers, colloquial, collocates, corpus, gender, television, delexicalization

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# **Chapter 1: Introduction**

## **1.1 Motivation of the study**

For several decades, researches have focused on identifying the best predictors and the main cause of linguistic change in English. Not only is obtaining significant results from such linguistic research a tremendous leap for the academia in relation to discovering and understanding causes for linguistic change and direction, but it can also help develop innovative trends in general language learning and even pedagogy.

Over the last 50 years since the first electronic corpora began to be used around in the 1960's, corpus is adopted by many linguists to investigate numerous descriptive phenomena occurring in different branches of linguistics. Corpus linguistics is not the study of a particular aspect of a language, but rather a methodology which is first-hand proof that “researchers are just now learning how to fully exploit the resources of representative text... they are also becoming aware of the many new research questions that can be investigated” (Biber, Conrad, & Reppen, 1998), as corpora are collections of texts and conversations in real-life situations, such as newspaper, academic lectures, magazines, soap operas, etc. One of the advantages for using corpus when studying is that corpus allows scholars to compare any random words or expressions with one another, observe the evolving process in them, and even analyze feasible reasons for the changes occurred.

Colloquial English has turned into one of the most popular and interesting topics for linguists during the past two decades, as “there has been strong convergence of



various interests in the topic of spoken language, leading to an increasing awareness of the characteristics of spoken language” (Leech, 2000). It also represents the ultimate presentation of native language use, and is considered as a prospective candidate for providing the essential key to the understanding of any changes the language is currently undergoing. The following quote illustrates such point:

“Spoken language research has provided a wealth of descriptive insights... has shed interesting light on the distinctive use of both lexis and grammar in conversation...providing a window on the general picture that has emerged of spoken language” (Timmis, 2012)

The most easily accessible and the most enjoyably collectible sample of colloquial English could be extracted from mass media, especially contemporary television shows. The spoken data recorded from actual conversations would undoubtedly be the most perfect ingredient for analysis; however, the processing of actual spoken data is quite difficult, considering that transcription, organization, and grammatical tagging of the data must be executed manually. While using scripts from television shows avoids bearing the burden of procedural intricateness, television conversations might not fully reflect realistic description of language use due to their tendency to be censored and fictitious. Yet spoken languages in media usually are the “trendiest,” the most updated versions of colloquial English, and they often coin new vocabulary words in them, as well as making new inventions, as shown in the following examples:

- (1) Google<sup>1</sup> him yourself, it's all there. (Molly, *As the World Turns*, 2004)
- (2) A few months later, she rounded up her colleagues from symphony orchestras and had them play for money - busking<sup>2</sup>, it's called. (*60 Minutes II*, 2004)
- (3) Yeah, all gentlemen carijack<sup>3</sup> women at gunpoint while fleeing the scene of their latest shooting. (Jax, *General Hospital*, 2004)
- (4) Cowabunga!<sup>4</sup>(*Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles*, 1996)

The researcher for the present study is very much intrigued in media reflections of such linguistic transformation, inventions, integration and substitution, and thus aims to investigate further for other phenomena and to analyze them from a variety of perspectives. The present study will particularly focus on any linguistic competition in amplifiers in spoken English during the last ten years, reflected in contemporary American television situational comedies. This study will also look at collocates for the selected amplifiers and any characteristics found in them, and whether there are gender and age differences present in actual use of the selected amplifiers.

---

<sup>1</sup> *Google*, the name of a global search engine, was used as a verb.

<sup>2</sup> Performing on the streets and other public places, while soliciting donations.

<sup>3</sup> Blend of 'car' and 'hijacking'

<sup>4</sup> *Cowabunga* was first popularized by a character on the US television program *Howdy Doody* in the 1950s and 1960s. It later became associated with surfing culture and was further popularized by use on the US television cartoon program *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles* (1987–96).

## 1.2 Background: English amplifiers

Prior to discussing English amplifiers, their “parent”, or intensifiers, should first be precisely defined. Intensifiers are a class of lexico-grammatical elements expressing the degree or exact value of the item that they modify (Huddleston & Pullum, 2002). The terminology referring to these types of grammatical elements is not entirely uniform among scholars; Stoffel (1901) calls them “intensive adverbs,” and Bolinger (1972) refers to them as “degree words.” The present study will simply refer to the uppermost category of such elements as “intensifiers.”

Amplifiers are adverbs having “downtoners” as a counterpart, the other major subtype of intensifiers. While amplifiers “scale upwards from an assumed norm”, downtoners “have a lowering effect, usually scaling downwards from an assumed norm” (Quirk et al., 1985).

**Table 1.1 Subtypes of intensifiers**

*(abstracted from Quirk et al., 1985)*

Intensifiers	Amplifiers	Maximizers (e.g. <i>completely</i> )
		Boosters (e.g. <i>very much</i> )
	Downtoners	Approximators (e.g. <i>almost</i> )
		Compromisers (e.g. <i>more or less</i> )
		Diminishers (e.g. <i>partly</i> )
		Minimizers (e.g. <i>hardly</i> )

Among the subtypes of intensifiers, amplifiers, which will be the main topic of the present study, can be further categorized into two types: “maximizers” (*absolutely*,

*completely, entirely, totally, utterly, etc.*), which denote a perfect degree and therefore occupy the extreme upper end of an abstract scale of intensity, and “boosters” (*very, awfully, terribly, tremendously, etc.*), which denote a high degree of intensity without reaching the absolute end of the scale. In short, amplifiers are types of adverbs which maximize or boost meanings. According to Altenberg (1991), “a basic semantic difference between maximizers and boosters is their different demands on the gradability of the intensified element”. Maximizers typically modify “nonscalar” items, which do not normally permit grading (e. g. *empty, impossible, right*), since they express an absolute degree of an assumed norm. On the other hand, boosters are usually used to modify “scalar” items, which are allowed to be fully graded, such as *beautiful, nice, important, etc.* The following sentences illustrate some examples of maximizers and boosters, respectively (In the examples below, maximizers and boosters are italicized, and the items modified are underlined).

#### Maximizers

- (5) You were *absolutely* right about my feelings for you. (Tad, *All My Children*, 2006)
- (6) I wasn't *entirely* convinced that your client's claims were on the up-and-up. (Spencer, *Young and the Restless*, 2011)
- (7) I feel *completely* and *utterly* alone. (Carly, *General Hospital*, 2008)

#### Boosters

- (8) As difficult as it may be to believe, Zach is a *very* special man. (Dixie, *All*

*My Children*, 2006)

(9) I'm *terribly* sorry about your mother. (Stephanie, *Bold and Beautiful*, 2010)

(10) Ok, um, well, they're both *really* nice. (Whitney, *Passions*, 2007)

Amplifiers are the most rapidly and constantly changing developments in the English language (Ito & Tagliamonte, 2003), and amplifiers in particular, have been the subject of several studies in the past (Bergeton & Pancheva, 2012; Gries & Stefanowitsch, 2004; Harwood, 2005; Islam & Inkpen, 2008; Lalor & Rendle-short, 2007; Laviosa, 1998; Lorenz, 2002). Following Bolinger's (1972) comment, amplifiers "afford a picture of fevered invention and competition that would be hard to come by elsewhere, for in their nature they are unsettled." Since they are the main instruments for emphasis in spoken English, where all means of emphasis grow quickly vapid and therefore need to be continuously replaced, "the process is always going on, so that new words are in constant requisition, because the old ones are felt to be inadequate to the expression..." (Stoffel, 1901). The process mentioned in the prior quote will be discussed further in detail in the next chapter.

Amplifiers are also an interesting category to study for they are usually associated with younger generations and female usage (Ito & Tagliamonte, 2003; Tagliamonte & Roberts, 2005; Méndez-Naya, 2008b). As the results of the study conducted by Ito and Tagliamonte (2003) indicate, amplifiers were favored in speech when the speakers' age was lower. The primary users of amplifiers were speakers between the age of 17 and 34, followed by the 35-65 group, leaving the 65 and older group to be the last on the line. In Barbieri's (2008) experiment, the keyword analysis

suggested that younger speakers of age 35 or younger preferred amplifiers such as *totally*, *seriously*, and *really*. Another social variable often linked with amplifiers is gender. Although some linguists still question the possibly mythical nature of gender language differences, a number of empirical studies have reported female preference in amplifier use (Cody, 1995; Fitzpatrick, Mulac, & Dindia, 1995; Mulac, Lundell, & Bradac, 1986). According to Jespersen (1922), not only do women have a higher frequency in amplifier use, but they also play as an active leader in amplifier change: “The fondness of women for hyperbole will very often lead the fashion with regard to adverbs of intensity.”

Given that amplifiers are one of the most rapidly changing developments of English and are often associated with colloquial language, it is natural to view amplifiers as the most updated part of spoken English. Since it is a modern belief that the mass media has contributed to mediating the selected expressions from utterly colloquial to fairly conventional, it might be granted to speculate that any innovative changes they go through would sufficiently be reflected in the spoken mass media. Among many different forms of mass media, a component where the trendiest, hippest language is applied would be television shows, especially those in the contemporary genre.

### **1.3 Organization of the study**

The present study consists of five chapters. Chapter 1 discusses the motivation and background of the study, briefly introducing the main topic of the study. Chapter 2 describes the previous literature divided into three segments: history and characteristics of English amplifiers, gender and age differences in amplifier use, and media-related studies on amplifiers. In Chapter 3, the data and methodology of the present study are

discussed: the background and character description in the two television comedy shows, *Friends* and *How I Met Your Mother*, the corpora used for the study, the software tool utilized for analysis, and the analytical procedure. Chapter 4 follows with the analyses and discussion on the distribution of amplifiers, their collocates, and their correlation with gender and age variables. Finally, Chapter 5 summarizes the results of the findings, acknowledges the limitations of the study, and suggests possible directions for future research.

## **Chapter 2: Literature Review**

### **2.1 History and characteristics of English amplifiers**

#### **2.1.1 Historical trajectory of English amplifiers**

The academic interest in amplifier is not new as it can be retraced to as early as the turn of the twentieth century with the works of pioneering linguists including Stoffel (1901) and Borst (1902), who provided structured, comprehensive inventories of amplifiers, “as well as valuable insights into how they originated” (Méndez-Naya, 2008b). In order to accurately understand the birth and extinction of amplifiers throughout history, an exceptional form of a process called grammaticalization, or “delexicalization” must be addressed first. Delexicalization is defined as “the reduction of the independent lexical content of a word, or group of words, so that it comes to fulfill a particular function” (Partington, 1993). The visualized, simplified presentation of how an adverb becomes an amplifier in the delexicalization process is shown in Figure 2.1.

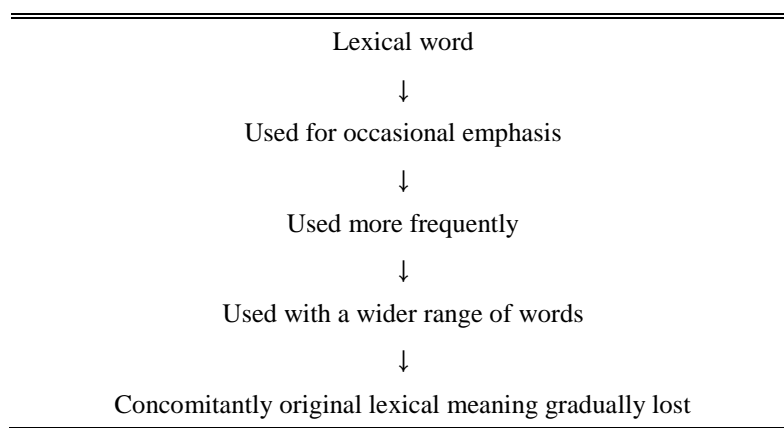
Delexicalization is a phased, step-by-step process rather than an instant phenomenon. At the beginning of the delexicalization process, there exists a word which initially has a lexical content. Then, the original lexical word is used for the occasional upgrading, modifying, or emphasizing of a following word. In the next step, the word is now rather frequently performing an emphasizing function, tagged with a wider and broader range of words, finally resulting in a gradual loss of the word’s original lexical meaning. The more delexicalized the word becomes, “the more it will



lose its lexical restrictions and increase in frequency” (Wischer & Diewald, 2002). Rephrased, as a certain adverb reaches towards the furthestmost end of the delexicalization scale and ripens as an amplifier, it eventually loses its original lexical meaning and appears more frequently without limitations on co-occurring words, thereby increasing its syntactical freedom.

### Figure 2.1 Delexicalization process

(abstracted from Tagliamonte & Roberts, 2005)

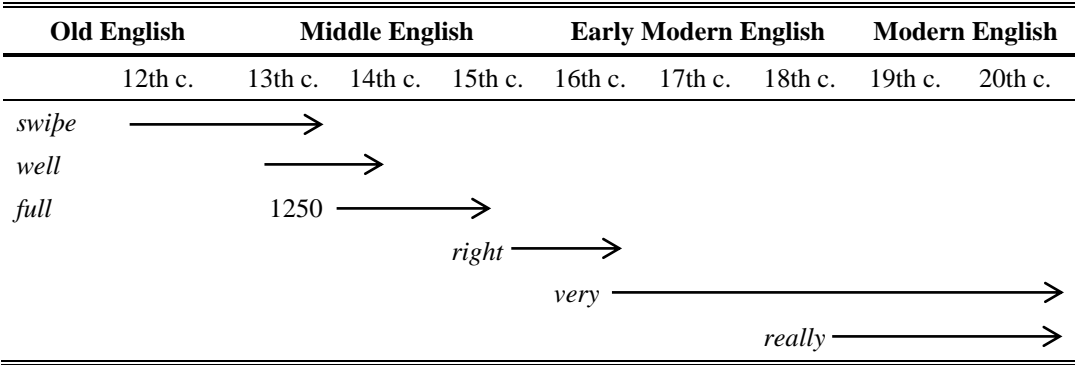


Old amplifiers become extinct and new amplifiers are born through constant and repetitive delexicalization. When a particular amplifier is repeatedly used for an extensive period of time and its original amplifying strength weakens, it is substituted, replaced or used in parallel with a new amplifier in order to maximize the notion previously conveyed with the old one. For example, *very*, which originally meant ‘true’ or ‘real’, now serves as one of the most common amplifiers through the identical process of delexicalization. However, since *very* has been used for so long and is gradually losing its amplifying power, words such as *extremely* or *completely* are becoming “the

next generation” amplifiers and being used to put emphasis more and more often than to deliver their original lexical meanings. The history of English amplifier popularity in different time periods from Old English of the 12<sup>th</sup> century to Modern English and the shift from old amplifiers to new ones are visually summarized in Figure 2.2 below.

**Figure 2.2 Historical summary of English amplifier popularity**

(abstracted from Mustanoja, 1960)



The pattern of grammatical shifts in which new amplifiers are created has repeated itself from earlier periods of English. According to Mustanoja (1960), *swipe*, which was the most popular amplifier in Old and Middle English, had an original lexical meaning of ‘strong.’ However, after the mid-13<sup>th</sup> century, *swipe* began losing its favorability with English speakers and surrendered its throne to other amplifying adverbs, such as *well*, *full*, and *right*. By the 16<sup>th</sup> century, *well*, *full*, and *right* had all become extinct as amplifiers while *very* was taking over the popularity. Since then, *very* is one of the most popular amplifiers until the present days, along with *really*, which first appeared in the history of amplifiers during the mid-18<sup>th</sup> century. The following sentences are the

examples<sup>5</sup> of some of the older adverbs mentioned above from the *Oxford English Dictionary*, functioning as amplifiers (italicized in the examples below).

- (11) He hine læ dde upon *swipe* hea dune. (*The Blickling Homilies*, 971, OED)
- (12) Niðede ðat folk him fel *wel*, And deden him flitten hise ostel. (*Genesis and Exodus*, 1325, OED)
- (13) Þese boonys in oon partie ben *ful* hard. (*Lanfranc's Science of Chirurgie*, 14<sup>th</sup> century, OED)
- (14) A gentle Squyre..*Right* cleanly clad in comely sad attyre. (*The faerie queene*, 1590, Edmund Spenser, OED)

As an adverb is delexicalized, it undergoes a significant grammatical shift from a truth identifier to an amplifier. For example, listeners simply assume that when speakers make utterances, they intend to be true. Adding a word such as *really* does not make the utterances more true, rather it emphasizes the truth feature of the statement. Hearing a sentence like *She is really smart*, the listener readily assumes with the utmost certainty that it is absolutely true that the person is smart, rather than identifying or proving her smartness to be true or contradicting her dumbness. The amplification thus easily begins its process from a mere adverb with a concrete semantic content to an amplifier virtually without any literal meaning, but with an amplifying purpose only.

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<sup>5</sup> The sentences (11) through (14) were directly extracted from the examples listed under the entries of the *Oxford English Dictionary*.

## **2.1.2 Characteristics of English amplifiers**

Based on the premise that amplifiers are one of the most interesting linguistic features, a substantial body of research (Athanasiadou, 2007; González-Díaz, 2008; Kennedy, 2003; König & Gast, 2006) on amplifiers has defined their characteristics. Two major characteristics of amplifiers are (i) versatility and color; and (ii) their tendency for rapid and constant change (Ito & Tagliamonte, 2003). Amplifiers play a crucial role in the social or emotional expression of speakers, for they are used when a speaker wishes to be taken as original or to attract the audience's interest by enhancing and exaggerating the versatility and colorfulness of his or her expressions. Partington (1993) described amplifiers as "a vehicle for impressing, praising, persuading, insulting, and generally influencing the listener's reception of the message," and Peters (1994) stated that amplifiers are "subject to fashion." Ito and Tagliamonte (2003) also highlights "vulgar" tendency and speediness of amplifiers by mentioning in their study that amplifiers have been largely associated with spoken English and have been going through continuous change since as early as the 12<sup>th</sup> century. The latter attribute of the two key characteristics mentioned above is well reflected in the following quotes:

"When the strong word is used on light occasion its strength begins to be dissipated, and when the fitting moment for it actually arrives it will no longer serve; familiarity had bred contempt in the hearer, and one must begin again to find a new 'strong word'" (Robertson, 1954).

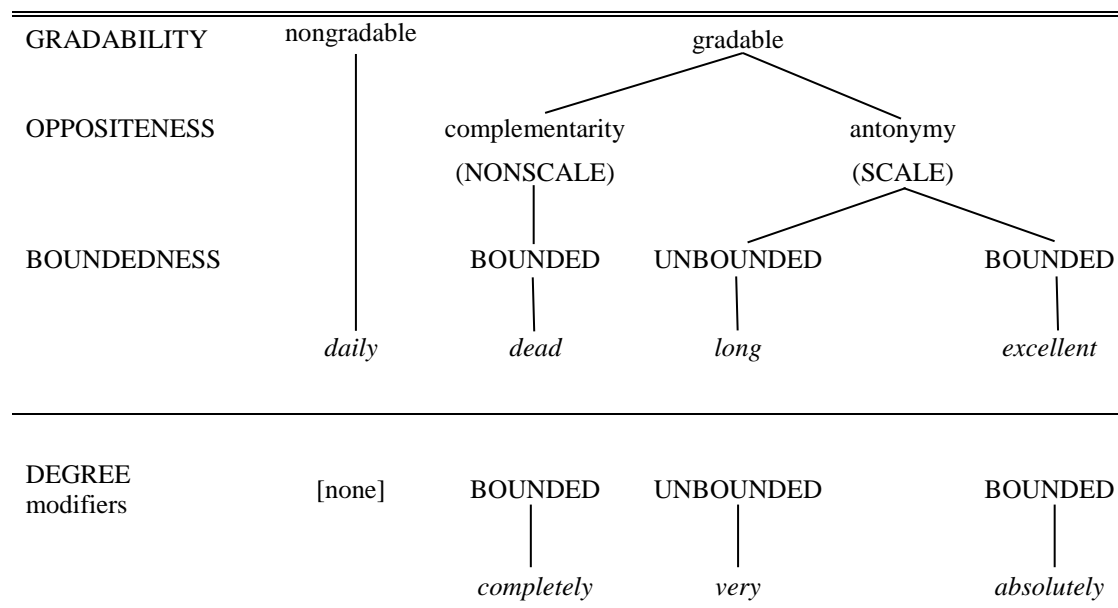
"...as each newcomer has appeared on the scene it has elbowed the other aside. The old favorites do not vanish but retreat to islands bounded by restrictions...and the newcomer is never fully successful and extends its

territory only so far” (Bolinger, 1972).

Briefly mentioned in the introduction, many amplifiers are also known to be collocationally restricted in different ways. Amplifiers are often collocated only with a certain semantic class of word items. The standards in which scholars distinguish between semantic classes of word items collocated with amplifiers vary greatly. In the article written by Paradis (2008), she distinguished between NONDEGREE adjectives and DEGREE adjectives first, as Figure 2.3 shows. According to her distinction, NONDEGREE adjectives are not compatible with DEGREE modifiers, or intensifiers, as referred to in the present study. DEGREE adjectives, on the other hand, are further divided into two types of OPPOSITENESS, complementarity for NONSCALE, and contrariety for SCALE and two modes of BOUNDEDNESS, BOUNDED and UNBOUNDED. For instance, a NONSCALE, BOUNDED adjective *dead* would combine with a BOUNDED DEGREE modifier *completely*; a SCALE, UNBOUNDED adjective *narrow* is collocated with an UNBOUNDED DEGREE modifier *very*; and a SCALE, BOUNDED adjective *excellent* probably chooses another modifier with a BOUNDED semantic configuration, such as *absolutely*. She then came to a conclusion that “these three types of adjectives have a direct effect on the type of prospective intensifier with which they may collocate in the sense that they need to be naturally compatible and share some sort of semantic configurations” (Calle-Martín, 2014). Paradis’s visual representation of semantic schematicity in adjectives and degree modifiers is shown in Figure 2.3.

Figure 2.3 Semantic schematicity in adjectives

(from Paradis, 2008)



A different approach to collocational patterns of amplifiers is described by Tao (2007), who linked the behavior of amplifiers with sets of adjectives. For example, *absolutely* and *perfectly* strongly co-occur with positive collocates, such as *nice*, *good*, *well*, or *legitimate*, while *utterly* and *completely* are linked with collocates carrying a negative notion, including *opaque*, *useless*, *wrong*, or *different*. Sometimes, amplifiers limitedly occur with particular lexical items, including *stark naked*, *plain silly*, and *clean forget* (Altenberg, 1991). Such instances where a particular amplifier is collocated only with a particular lexical item are continuously repeated and are now almost fossilized as if they are a set of idioms.

Another interesting fact about amplifiers is that they tend to represent a certain group identity, which has been previously studied by many scholars (Macaulay, 2006;

Partington, 1993). The use and preference of amplifiers are often associated with social variables, such as gender and age, which will be discussed separately in the following section.

## **2.2 Gender and age differences in amplifier use**

A study of language and gender<sup>6</sup> is a branch of sociolinguistics and applied linguistics, and is associated with research in gender-specific linguistic behavior or social criterion by which a certain behavior is marked “gender-specific” or “gender-preferential.” The term for gender-specific or gender-preferential language is commonly referred to as “genderlect.” Gender-related studies in sociolinguistics have been activated from Lakoff’s (1973) publication *Language and Woman’s Place* and a few of her other previous works, and have fanned out from thenceforth.

Amplifiers are often means of unique speech styles by which socially stratified classes or groups prefer to boast their identity, and have been a subject for many scholars in the field of sociolinguistics (Barnfield & Buchstaller, 2010; Bradac et al., 1995; Graddy, 2006; Guiller & Durndell, 2007; Nevalainen, 2008; Schultz et al., 1984; Xiao & Tao, 2007). Among many sociolinguistic variables often experimented, gender difference has been a “Holy Grail” of sociolinguistics in a way that causes scholars to be simultaneously certain and skeptical about the impact of gender on language use let alone

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<sup>6</sup> Usually, “gender” is used as a sociological term and “sex” as a biological term; however, “gender” and “sex” will be used somewhat interchangeably in the present study and both of the terms will refer to a more general dichotomy, instead of strictly limiting to the sociological or biological connotations.

its sheer existence. Behind the incoherence among academic opinions on gender difference lays complexity in controlling numerous variables of sociolinguistic empirical studies. Since speakers' behavior changes depending on situations, many factors in any sociolinguistic studies must be properly controlled: age of subjects, age of interlocutors, gender of subjects, gender of interlocutors, socioeconomic status of subjects, socioeconomic status of interlocutors, the list can be endless. Moreover, the term "gender difference" should carefully be applied in all instances, for the gender-specific linguistic behaviors are "gender-preferential rather than gender-exclusive," and "women and men are equally capable of using the styles of the opposite sex and may modify their usage in various interaction contexts" (Fitzpatrick et al., 1995). In other words, a linguistic behavior which is inclined to a group of certain-gendered speakers is not restricted within the group; rather, it is only "preferred" by a particular gender than by the other.

Despite all the complexities, a number of linguists succeeded in providing some evidence of gender difference in language use (Holmes, 1988; Leaper & Robnett, 2011; Monaghan et al., 2012; Underwood, 2004). One of the empirical studies was conducted by Mulac et al. (1988), testing for gender effect in informal settings. Ninety-six university students, 48 males and 48 females, formed 48 dyads with a randomly assigned partner. Problem-solving conversations between the 48 dyads were recorded for 20 minutes, and the scripts from the conversations were transcribed. The results showed that male and female speech were easily distinguishable by a gender-specific combination of certain linguistic forms. For example, five linguistic variables were extracted by their analysis as female speech indicators: Questions, Justifiers (evidence or



reason given for a statement; e.g., “*I would put ‘appreciation’ because...*,” “*That’s hard, though, because...*” (Mulac et al., 1986), Intensive Adverbs (referred to as intensifiers in the present study), Personal Pronouns, and Adverbials Begin Sentence (e.g., “*Really, I don’t want to agree on that...*”) (Mulac et al., 1986). The findings additionally proved that male and female speakers tilted heavier on their gender-specific linguistic norms when communicating with a different gender.

Unlike the assumptions from the previous study mentioned, Fitzpatrick et al. (1995) hypothesized that a speaker’s choices on his or her linguistic style are not entirely based on his or her gender, and male and female groups will display gender-preferential speech styles more significantly in same-gender interactions than in opposite-gender interactions. The researchers tested 20 married couples for seven 10-minute randomized dyadic conversations with either their spouse, three other married men, or three other married women. One of the 32 variables coded for the study was intensifier use. The results contradicted with the researchers’ initial hypothesis, proving that a weighted combination of language features is a strong predictor of discrimination between male and female speakers. In addition, men and women smoothly applied subtle adjustments to their gender-preferential speech styles in interactions with the opposite gender; however, the stereotypical gender-preferential linguistic features were indeed more frequently employed in the same-gender conversations.

Another sociolinguistic variable often associated with amplifiers is age of speakers. They tend to represent a certain group identity, which has been previously studied by many scholars (Macaulay, 2006; Partington, 1993). Amplifiers often confirm a particular in-group membership, teenagers for example, as Peters (1994)

argued, “when the use of a particular booster spreads to other groups in the speech community, the word loses its function of group identification, and the linguistic “trend-setters” will then normally put a new group-symbol into circulation. Such shibboleths thus tend to change rapidly.” The phenomenon described in the quote above is obviously proven in “pubilect”, the term referring to social dialect of North American puberty or teenagers (Danesi, 1988). North American teenagers and college students are often sighted using their own regional amplifiers such as *wicked*, *hecka* or *hella*, which all are excellent examples of “pubilect,” as they are only shared and understood within their age, regional, and social groups but not any others. Macaulay (2006) studied the appearance of unusual amplifiers in the speech of working-class adolescents in Glasgow, Scotland. The frequent, dominant usage of “*pure*” and “*dead*” by a range of young speakers over other well-established amplifiers such as *really* or *very* suggested that the Glasgow teenagers have developed an indigenous norm for their speech community “that owes little to adult or outside influence.”

It has also been noted that teenagers sometimes make a nonstandard use of regular adverbs as amplifiers. One example of such is well-illustrated in the study on *well* and *enough* conducted by Stenstrom (2000). Stenstrom discovered that *well* and *enough*, common adverbs which are normally used in the postmodifier position for adjectives, were often used in the premodifier position in London teenage vernacular. Although some of London adults also made a use of *well* as an amplifier, *enough* was solely used as an amplifier by London teenagers. Moreover, teenagers residing outside of London were using *well* and *enough* in the premodifying position as well, even though there existed a variance in the combination with adjectives.

On the other hand, some linguists seem to disagree on the subject of amplifier preference, while still finding a generational gap. According to Poynton (1990), middle-aged and elderly speakers tend to use amplifiers more often than younger speakers. According to another study, Tagliamonte (2006) generated the Toronto English Corpus, which consists of the data from 168 Toronto natives. A larger scale of British sample was obtained from a similar data collecting method and a similar design and was compared with the Toronto English Corpus. Tagliamonte discovered that certain amplifiers that are older, such as *very*, are preferred by older speakers in both British and Canadian English. Also, the difference between the oldest group, which consisted of speakers 60+ years old, and the second oldest group, which consisted of speakers from 50 to 59 years old was substantial.

## **2.3 Media-related studies on amplifiers**

Since amplifiers tend to change quickly and be preferred by younger generations, it can be safely presumed that media, spoken in particular, are somewhat related to reflection of proof for their evolution and traits.

In an article, Fitzmaurice (2000) argued that “the spoken media, especially the broadcast media, provide a context in which informal registers, with their range of casual, colloquial, and occasionally nonstandard constructions and expressions, may be conventionalized as unmarked.” She stated that the informal, vulgar linguistic expressions develop into unmarked, conventional language by stylistic shifts in the spoken media. For example, the set of expressions in which the preposition *of* is inserted after an adjective is now very familiar (e.g. “*that big of a deal*”). However, the

particular use of the preposition was only common in certain regions of the United States, according to an entry for *of* in the *Dictionary of American Regional English*, or *DARE*. *DARE* suggests the usage in Northeastern states, East coastal states, and the Great Lakes states, citing the following examples collected from 1914 to the present.

(11) I wondered if any one in that *big of* a hurry knowed where he was going  
(Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings, *Cross Creek*, 1942).

(12) How *big of* an engine is that? (*Barrick College*, 1982)

For the comparing purpose of the study, the majority of examples were collected from mainstream network media including radio and television, uttered by announcers, politicians, and reporters.

(13) We have not as *full of* trade relations with these people (Rep. Richard Gephardt, *MacNeil Lehrer News Hour*, 1990).

(14) You can't get in here and make that *big of* a mess, can you? (Jeff Smith, *The Frugal Gourmet*, 1987).

Although varying in speech situations and contexts, one can definitely observe that these remarks were formally produced, appropriate to their purposes. The writer of the article reached a conclusion that over the past few decades, the media played a crucial role in transforming the regional colloquial expression using the preposition *of* after an adjective to conventional language throughout the nation.

In another empirical study, Tagliamonte and Roberts (2005) specifically studied amplifiers from the popular television comedy show *Friends*, in order to analyze them based on frequency, distribution, gender and other factors and also to compare them with the norm of the time period. Their data obtained from unofficial transcripts of *Friends*, “one of the most influential cultural phenomena (Kim, 1995),” exhibited almost the same overall rate of amplification as contemporary British English. They collected all adjectival tokens from the scripts, and excluded any that remained bare, which left them 8,611 adjectives. Out of those 8,611 adjectives, *Friends* had 22% rate of amplification, while the overall rate of amplification in British English was 24%. The most frequently used amplifiers were also partially overlapped, with *so*, *really*, *very*, *pretty*, and *totally* from the show and *very*, *really*, *so*, *absolutely* and *pretty* from the random sample of British English, which is represented by the data from British National Corpus (referred to as BNC hereafter). Moreover, the once most popularly used amplifiers in America, *really*, was overtaken by *so*, according to *Friends*. *So*, which was used more frequently especially by female characters, was preferred far more often than other amplifiers in the show. According to the statement in Labov’s Principle II (1990), which mentions that “women are most often the innovators,” the study concluded that *so* is being “innovated” by females and replacing the former *really*. Overall, their findings suggest not only media language reflect linguistic change but even pave the road for innovation.

The present paper aims to develop the empirical study conducted by Tagliamonte and Roberts (2005) with a few modifications and improvements. They were successful at proving that American television sitcoms can be a surrogate for the contemporary linguistic norm, they failed, however, to compare their data from *Friends*

with any other data set from a different time period. They also made a mistake of using the British corpus for the analysis of *Friends*, an American television show. The present paper differs from Tagliamonte and Roberts' (2005) study in three major aspects: (i) the present study adopted an additional American television show from a more recent time period to make a clearer chronological comparison; (ii) the present study also employed an American corpus, Corpus of Contemporary American English, rather than a British corpus, BNC, for an accurate analysis, since the data used for the study is extracted from American television shows; and (iii) the present study will also explore collocates of the amplifiers, let alone investigating the frequencies of the amplifiers.

## **2.4 Research questions**

Méndez-Naya (2008) mentioned in her study that the scholarly approaches during the twenty-first century on amplifiers have specifically focused on three aspects: (i) the distribution of amplifiers among variables such as social groups, registers, and text-types (Macaulay, 2002; Nevalainen, 2008); (ii) the competition of different amplifiers across time (Méndez-Naya & Pahta et al., 2010); and (iii) the study of individual items and the origin of their amplifying function (Calle-Martín, 2014; Méndez-Naya, 2008a; Tao, 2007).

Taking the three approaches above into account, the present study will be examining the following research questions:

1. During the past decade, has there been a linguistic competition among the selected English amplifiers in the selected American television sitcoms?

2. Does amplifier use in the selected American television sitcoms reflect contemporary American spoken English?
3. What kinds of collocates does each of the selected amplifiers have?
4. Are there any gender differences in amplifier use in the selected American television sitcoms?
5. How does the amplifier use in the selected American television sitcoms compare with other corpora in terms of social variables such as gender and age?

## Chapter 3: Data and Methodology

### 3.1 Data

Under the conjecture proven by many scholars that amplifiers are one of the fastest innovated English linguistic features and given their colloquial nature and preference by younger generations, the researcher safely assumed that the changes amplifiers go through would be noticeable even in a mere decade. Also assumed was that such changes would be visible in public media, especially television shows, which usually reflect the latest norms of beauty, cultural values, and language (Milkie, 1999). The researcher chose two very popular American situational comedy shows as samples to study the changes in amplifiers, *Friends* and *How I Met Your Mother*. Both are popular, world-wide shows which mirror mundane lives of typical Caucasian, upper-middle class, well-educated young Americans in their late 20's to early 30's, living in New York City.

#### 3.1.1 *Friends*

*Friends* is an American television sitcom which originally ran from September 22, 1994, to May 6, 2004, on NBC. Lasting for ten seasons, the series is without a doubt one of the most popular television sitcoms of all time, watched by millions of viewers, and being rerun repeatedly around the world. The series features six main characters including three female characters and three male characters: Rachel, Monica, Phoebe, Joey, Chandler, and Ross.

Rachel Greene, played by Jennifer Aniston, is a fashion enthusiast who is in an



on-and-off relationship with another main character, Ross Geller, also best friends with his younger sister and another female character, Monica Geller. She is from a very wealthy, typical American upper class family, her father being a dentist and providing more than enough for her and her two sisters. As a consequence, she behaves quite spoiled and selfish at times, but she's also depicted as very sweet, attractive, and relatively naïve.

Monica Geller, played by Courtney Cox, is known for her perfectionism, bossiness, competitiveness, and obsessive-compulsive nature. Part of her characters seems to be derived from her childhood, when she was extremely overweight and got jokingly teased by others a lot. Nevertheless, she is seen as a mother figure to the rest of the group throughout the show. Monica is working as a head chef at an upscale Italian restaurant, and she's married to another main character, Chandler Bing, by Season 7.

Phoebe Buffay, played by Lisa Kudrow, is an eccentric masseuse who had an unpleasant childhood. Her mother committed suicide and her stepfather was sent to prison when she was young, therefore she had to live on the streets and did not receive proper education, which sometimes made her envious and inferior of the rest of the group. She does not maintain a good relationship with her twin sister, Ursula, either. She is street-smart and quirky in a weird way, giving the rest of the group a great pleasure.

Joey Tribbiani, played by Matt LeBlanc, is a soap-opera actor on a show called *Days of Our Lives*, and a complete foodie. He is of an Italian ancestry, and a simple-minded playboy, using his charming appearance to lure girls for serial short-term relationships. Although he is very childlike and constantly makes others worry about

him, he has an innocent, good heart and warmly care for others. He is best friends with his roommate, Chandler Bing.

Chandler Bing, played by Matthew Perry, is an executive in statistics analysis and data reconfiguration in a large multi-national corporation. He uses sarcastic humor as a defense mechanism and is often referred to as the “funny man” since the divorce of his mother, who is an erotic, promiscuous novelist and his father, a cross-dressing gay man. He is friends with Ross Geller from college, and marries his sister Monica Geller.

Ross Geller, played by David Schimmer, has a doctoral degree in paleontology and a professor at NYU. He has a geeky nature yet always behaves in a very sweet, caring way. He is often clumsy and socially awkward, however. He was married to a recurring character Carol and has a son, Ben, with her, but divorces her after finding out that she was a lesbian. He keeps failing at two more marriages afterwards, one of them being Rachel Greene, who he ends up remarrying at the end.

### **3.1.2 *How I Met Your Mother***

*How I Met Your Mother* (referred to as *HIMYM* hereafter) is also an American sitcom which started airing on CBS since September 19, 2005 and recently ended on March 31, 2014. The series continued for nine seasons and voted as Favorite Network Television Comedy by the People’s Choice Award in 2012. The series has been compared to *Friends* by many media sources (Anand, 2014; Tobitt, 2013), for both shows were wildly popular, and the two shows share very similar settings and characters. The series revolves around the main character, Ted, and his groups of friends, Marshall, Lily, and Robin, living in Manhattan. The format of the show is very unique, with the future Ted

from the year 2030 recalling his story from his younger, bachelor years and telling it to his two children.

Ted Mosby, played by Josh Radnor, is the central character and the narrator throughout the series. He is an architect whose alma mater is Wesleyan University, where his two friends Marshall and Lily also graduated from. He's portrayed as a helpless romantic, always looking for "the one" and easily falling for a new woman on a false hope. He is the most mature and classy of the group, pursuing elegant interests such as poetry reading and calligraphy. He continually claims his love for another main character, Robin Scherbatsky, ending up marrying her after his first wife dies.

Marshall Eriksen, played by Jason Segel, is a lawyer and Ted's best friend. He is married to his first serious girlfriend Lily Aldrin, after having been in a committed relationship with her for 9 years. Originally from a small town in the Midwest, he has an innocent, gullible personality, fascinated by mysteries such as Big Foot, Loch Ness monster, and UFOs. He is easily deceived and often falls for simple tricks despite the high level of education he received.

Lily Aldrin, played by Alyson Hannigan, is a kindergarten teacher who has an aspiration for the art world. She is the mother hen of the group, always moderating conflicts, giving advice to the others with social decency and making important life decisions and lending a shoulder to cry on. She is adorable, yet cleverly manipulates other people to obtain the results she wants from them. Even though she appears cute, she often shows her other side as a sexual seductress.

Barney Stinson, played by Neil Patrick Harris, is an executive at a large finance company, Goliath National Bank. He's also an evil womanizer, using his wealth and

unconscientious yet brilliant strategies to lure women to have an instant physical relationship without having guilt or feeling responsible. He was raised by a single mother after his father left him, leaving him with a lifelong abandonment issue.

Robin Scherbatsky, played by Cobie Smulders, is a news anchor on a network, and is from Canada, where she was a teenage pop star. Her Canadian background becomes the source of many jokes from the rest of the group throughout the show. Although she is beautiful on the outside, she has masculine hobbies including smoking cigars, drinking scotches and shooting guns, due to the fact that her father was disappointed of not having a son and tried to raise her as a boy.

### **3.2.3 *Friends-HIMYM* Corpus**

In order to examine the selected English amplifiers on American television shows during the last decade, a new corpus was created exclusively for the present study, from the scripts of *Friends* and *HIMYM*. The unofficial scripts for both shows were easily accessible from multiple websites on the internet. Recalling the fact that both shows ran for near ten years, at 65,000 words a season on average, *Friends* would have a total of approximately 650,000 words and about 585,000 words for the whole series of *HIMYM*. Due to the difficulty of fabricating an original corpus from such a massive volume of texts, only a selected number of seasons were used for the study. For *Friends*, seasons 7 through 9, which ran from October 12, 2000, to May 15, 2003, were chosen; for *HIMYM*, seasons 6 through 8, which ran from September 20, 2010, to May 13, 2013, were chosen.

**Table 3.1 Number of words in *Friends* and *HIMYM***

<i>Friends</i>			<i>HIMYM</i>		
Season	# words	# of Ep.	Season	# words	# of Ep.
7	63,179	24	6	70,840	24
8	56,959	24	7	143,211 <sup>7</sup>	24
9	61,694	24	8	65,611	23
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>181,832</b>	<b>72</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>208,822</b>	<b>71</b>

**Table 3.2 Finalized number of words in *Friends* and *HIMYM***

<i>Friends</i>			<i>HIMYM</i>		
Season	# words	# of Ep.	Season	# words	# of Ep.
<b>6</b>	<b>26,088</b>	<b>9</b>			
7	63,179	24	6	70,840	24
8	56,959	24	7	143,211	24
9	61,694	24	8	65,611	23
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>207,920</b>	<b>81</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>208,822</b>	<b>71</b>

The scripts originally obtained online were partially flawed in terms of grammar and literalness; therefore, the researcher watched every single selected season along with the unofficial scripts and completed or edited any imperfect utterances there existed. The scripts were also divided line by line based on gender, for the investigation of whether there is a difference in amplifier use between male and female in the shows. After the scripts were completely finalized, the number of words in *Friends* was largely exceeded

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<sup>7</sup> The exceptionally higher word count for Season 7 of *HIMYM* can be accounted for by the following reasons: (1) a number of regularly recurring roles within the season including Robin's boyfriend 'Kevin', Barney's brother 'James' and Barney's girlfriend 'Nora'. (2) many incidents in which verbal interactions are essential are included in the season, such as psychological therapy, romantic disputes and imaginary monologues.

by the number of words in *HIMYM*, as shown in Table 3.1 above. For a more accurate comparison between the two shows, a part of Season 6 (Episodes 15-24) for *Friends* was added, resulting in each show to yield similar numbers of words, as shown in Table 3.2 above.

## **3.2 Comparative corpora**

### **3.2.1 Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA)**

Among various kinds of corpora available online, Corpus of Contemporary American English (referred to as COCA hereafter) was used as a sample of contemporary American English, and only the spoken portion of the corpus was taken into analysis since its counterpart is also a spoken data. COCA is one of the many corpora which were first created by Mark Davies, and is by far the biggest general corpus for American English accessible from the internet, with a total of approximately 450 million words from 190,000 texts.

According to Davies (2010), the most important differences between COCA and other previous corpora are twofold: (1) COCA is designed in a way that the texts included in the corpus are almost equally divided between various genres such as spoken, fiction, magazines, newspapers, and academic journals, allowing it to “model linguistic changes in the ‘real world’” as accurately as possible; (2) Ever since COCA was first released online in 2008, the corpus is regularly updated by adding about 20 million

words each year, while many of English corpora remain ‘static’, for they are no more updated once created and thus unable researchers to examine linguistic changes over time.

Based on the advantages above, the researcher concluded that data extracted from COCA, with its resemblance to the real discourse and its elasticity to linguistic changes, would be a decent sample for a comparison with the data collected from the two American television sitcoms over a decade.

### **3.2.2. Corpus of Historical American English (COHA)**

Corpus of Historical American English (referred to as COHA hereafter) is a structured corpus of historical English, which contains more than 400 million words of American English texts from 1810 to 2009. COHA allows research on chronological fluctuation in frequencies of words or phrases, changes in meanings of words over time, and overall stylistic changes in language. COHA also enables its users to examine each decade’s texts separately from 1810 to 2009 and even each year’s texts; however, only the texts in the year of 1990 and 2000 were utilized in the present study in order to make a better chronological comparison with the data from the two American television shows and to provide a complementary support to the sample of American spoken English data extracted from COCA.

### **3.2.3. Corpus of American Soap Operas (CASO)**

Corpus of American Soap Operas (referred to as CASO hereafter) is another corpus created by Mark Davies, and contains approximately 100 million words in more than

22,000 transcripts of ten American soap operas from 2001 to 2012. The ten selected soap operas include *All My Children*, *As the World Turns*, *Bold and Beautiful*, *Days of Our Lives*, *General Hospital*, *Guiding Light*, *One Life to Live*, *Passions*, *Young and Restless* and *Port Charles*, in an alphabetical order. Although the dialogs in this corpus are scripted, it is evident that CASO provides a decent sample of colloquial American English, for informal words, phrases and expressions are much more common to be found in CASO than in the spoken portion of COCA. In order to illustrate a few examples, two words, two phrases, and two expressions were randomly chosen from an English slang dictionary (Farmer, 2007), and the frequency lists were generated for each word and expression in COCA and CASO.

**Table 3.3 Frequency lists for informal words and expressions (per million)**

	<b>COCA</b>	<b>CASO</b>
<i>damn</i>	3,149	28,583
<i>stuff</i>	11,039	25,115
<i>freak out</i>	69	963
<i>fair enough</i>	153	690
<i>get cold feet</i>	5	29
<i>out of nowhere</i>	307	956

\*Due to the different sizes of the two corpora, the frequencies from COCA (per 4 million) were normalized.

As clearly seen in the table above, informal words (*damn*, *stuff*), informal phrases (*freak out*, *fair enough*) and expressions that are considered more “colloquial” rather than formal or literary (*get cold feet*, *out of nowhere*) showed higher frequencies in CASO



than in COCA. *Stuff* was found about twice as frequently in CASO than in COCA, but other informal words and phrases appeared far more commonly in CASO than in COCA, ranging from five to ten folds, confirming the informal quality of the corpus.

### 3.2.4. Michigan Corpus of Academic Spoken English (MICASE)

Michigan Corpus of Academic Spoken English (referred to as MICASE hereafter) contains approximately 1.8 million words in a total of 152 transcripts from nearly 200 hours of recordings of 1,571 speakers. The overall structure of the corpus is shown in Table 3.4 below.

**Table 3.4 Structure of MICASE (*abstracted from Ludeling & Kyto, 2008*)**

Gender	%	Academic Role	%	Language Status	%	Academic Division	%	Primary Discourse Mode	%
Male	46	Faculty	49	Native	88	Arts & humanities	26	Monologue	33
Female	54	Students	44	Non-native	12	Social sciences & education	25	Panel	8
		Other	7			Biological & health sciences	19	Interactive	42
						Physical sciences & engineering	21	Mixed	17
						Other	9		

Speakers in MICASE are divided into four different age groups: 17-23, 24-30, 31-50, and 51+; and are classified a number of academic roles: junior and senior undergraduates, junior and senior postgraduates, junior and senior faculty and researchers, etc. 49% of speakers were faculty members and 44% of speakers were students. Male and female speakers consisted 46% and 54% of all speakers, respectively. 88% of all speakers were

native speakers of American English, and the remaining 12% were non-native speakers. Speakers' academic vision varied from arts & humanities, social sciences & education, biological & health sciences to physical Sciences & engineering. The most frequent mode of discourse in the corpus was interactive at 42%, followed by monologue at 33%.

MICASE definitely has a certain extent of formality compared to other corpora used in the present study, since the speech events collected for the corpus are in an academic register. Although the sample data for the present study involves mundane, everyday and rather informal linguistic settings, the researcher concluded that it might be quite interesting and worth comparing the gender and age differences between an academic corpus and a set of television sitcom scripts.

### **3.2.5. British National Corpus web CQP Edition (BNCweb)**

British National Corpus web CQP Edition (referred to as BNCweb hereafter) is a web-based interface of the British National Corpus (referred to as BNC hereafter), which is perhaps the first and best-known national corpus. BNCweb integrates strengths of the previously used BNCweb interface and CQP (Corpus-Query Processor). BNCweb is one of the ways to remotely access BNC from online, along with BNC Online service.

British National Corpus (referred to as BNC hereafter), the original corpus on which BNCweb is based, is designed to represent as wide a range of modern British English as possible so as to “make it possible to say something about language in general” (Burnard, 2002). BNC is comprised of approximately 100 million words of written

texts and transcripts of speech in modern British English. Written texts, which comprise 90% of the whole corpus, were selected using the following three criteria: domain, which refers to the content type; time, which refers to the period of text production; and medium, which refers to the type of text publication such as books, periodicals or unpublished manuscripts. The spoken data was collected based on two criteria: demographic and context-governed. The demographic component is composed of informal conversations recorded by 124 volunteer participants selected by age group, sex, social class and geographical region; the context-governed component is consisted of rather formal registers, such as meetings, lectures and radio broadcasts. Naturally, only the spoken data was used for the present study.

### **3.3 Methodology**

#### **3.3.1 Tool**

AntConc is one of the corpus software available online for anyone who has an intellectual curiosity in the field of linguistics. AntConc was created by Lawrence Anthony from Waseda University in Japan. The program can be downloaded for free for any individual users. It is easy to use even for beginners, and provides most functions needed by corpus users, including word lists, concordance lines, collocates, N-grams, keyword lists, advanced search, etc. Due to its simplicity and convenience, AntConc was used to process all corpus analyses executed in the present study.

### 3.3.2 Amplifier selection

In order to determine a subset of amplifiers to be used for the present study, a basic frequency list for American English adverbs was generated from the spoken portion of COCA. The list displayed all of 200 most frequently used words which have any adverbial function; therefore not all the words were actually adverbs nor all the contexts contained adverbial phrases. The top thirteen most popularly used adverbs with amplifying functions were selected from the list, based on the following criteria: (i) the adverbs must have the amplifying function; (ii) the adverbs from Bolinger's (1972) intensifying adverbs list were preferred; and (iii) the adverbs with *-ly* suffixes were preferred over those without. The following table presents the results for the most frequently used amplifiers:

**Table 3.5 The top 13 most frequently used amplifiers from COCA (spoken)**

<b>Adverb</b>	<b>Frequency</b>
<i>so</i>	346,877
<i>very</i>	226,837
<i>really</i>	160,638
<i>certainly</i>	30,755
<i>absolutely</i>	29,068
<i>exactly</i>	26,751
<i>obviously</i>	19,424
<i>clearly</i>	13,637
<i>definitely</i>	9,057
<i>completely</i>	8,698
<i>totally</i>	7,770
<i>extremely</i>	5,587
<i>seriously</i>	5,370

For all of the thirteen amplifiers selected from COCA, the frequencies from *Friends* and *HIMYM* were calculated using AntConc. Out of the thirteen amplifiers, only the four amplifiers with the highest frequencies were chosen for further analysis: *so*, *very*, *really*, and *totally*. The remaining nine amplifiers were omitted from the study due to the very small number of tokens. The selected amplifiers were analyzed for their chronological standings and popularities in the *Friends-HIMYM* Corpus, COCA, COHA, and CASO.

### 3.3.3 Collocates

The frequency lists for the four selected amplifiers were then examined for their collocates in concordances. In order to proceed with the rest of the study, the terms “collocation” and “collocates” first need to be discussed. Collocation, which has been studied for at least five decades, was first used as a technical term by Firth (1957), who stated “collocations of a given word are statements of the habitual or customary places of that word (Firth, 1968).” Many linguists (Greenbaum, 1974; Hoey, 1991; Sinclair, 1991; Stubbs, 1995) followed Firth’s quantitative notion for collocates in that they all argue that collocation refers to co-occurring patterns of a given word within a small space called “windows,” commonly up to four or five words either to the left or to the right, as in various definitions including “an arbitrary recurrent word combination (Benson, 1990)” or “a juxtaposition of words appearing in the same location (Yarowsky, 1995).”

Collocation in this study, however, would be given a definition which is limited to a more localized space than a “window”, a set of words or phrases occurring adjacently in a text, and a collocate, a component word which comprises a collocation, would refer to “a word or phrase of which a given amplifier is located on the immediate

left.” After studying the context the three amplifiers were included in, it was discovered that the three amplifiers appeared with collocates in some cases, and without collocates in the others. The concordances in which the amplifiers appeared with collocates were categorized into two major types, Amplifying and Non-amplifying, which were once more divided into four subcategories: Adjectival, Verbal, and Others for Amplifying; and Non-Amplifying. The concordances in which the amplifiers appeared without collocates were labeled Independent Utterances<sup>8</sup>. The simplified, visualized representation of the categorization is shown in Table 3.6 below.

**Table 3.6 Amplifier categorization in concordances**

Collocates	Amplifying	Adjectival	adjectives collocated with the selected amplifiers ex) <i>very pretty, really cute</i>
		Verbal	verbs collocated with the selected amplifiers ex) I <i>totally</i> want it.
		Others	other grammatical elements collocated (i.e. adverbs, prepositions, relative clauses) ex) <i>very quickly</i> , It's <i>really up</i> to you, It's <i>really what it is</i> .
	Non-amplifying		other non-amplifying functions ex) It happened in this <i>very room</i> .
Independent Utterances			single-worded phrases of the selected amplifiers ex) <i>Really? Totally!</i>

<sup>8</sup> For example, amplifying adverbs such as “No, she’s *really* asking (Robin, *HIMYM*),” was included in the Collocates category for collocate analysis, but independent utterances such as “*So?*” or “*Really.*” were separated in the No collocates category, as they do not perform amplifying nor any other grammatical functions within a given sentence.

## Chapter 4: Analysis and discussion

### 4.1 Chronological Analysis

#### 4.1.1 *Friends-HIMYM* Corpus

First of all, the amplification rate was calculated for each of the aforementioned four adverbs. The amplification rate refers to the percentage of tokens of a given adverb used for amplifying functions out of all tokens of a given adverb in a text or data. For example, the amplification rate for *really* in Table 4.1 below indicates that out of 789 total tokens in *Friends-HIMYM* Corpus, 72.1% of those tokens were executed to fulfill amplifying functions.

**Table 4.1 Amplification rate for the four amplifiers in *Friends* and *HIMYM***

	<i>Friends</i> (2000-2003)					<i>HIMYM</i> (2010-2013)				
	Amplifying		Non-amplifying		TOTAL	Amplifying		Non-amplifying		TOTAL
	Freq.	%	Freq.	%		Freq.	%	Freq.	%	
<i>so</i>	688	44.5	857	55.4	1,545	426	32.4	891	67.5	1,317
<i>very</i>	198	97.5	5	0.5	203	76	84.4	14	15.6	90
<i>really</i>	569	72.1	220	27.9	789	406	83.9	78	16.1	484
<i>totally</i>	55	79.7	14	20.3	69	88	83.8	17	16.2	105
TOTAL	1,510		1,096		2,606	996		1,000		1,996

As can be seen in Table 4.1 above, the characters from the two shows mostly uttered all of the four adverbs for amplifying functions, except for *so*, which was utilized more frequently for non-amplifying functions both in *Friends* and *HIMYM*, at 55.4% and

67.5%, respectively. The noticeable increase of the non-amplification rate from *Friends* (2000-2003) to *HIMYM* (2010-2013) suggests that after 10 years, *so* is now being even less favored as an amplifier. The researcher reached a reasonable conclusion that it is unnecessary to examine *so* more in depth and therefore to exclude *so* from any further analysis in the study, for it serves significantly more frequently as a conjunction or a non-amplifying adverb<sup>9</sup>, while the primary purpose of the study is to investigate amplifiers.

*Very* had the highest amplification rate for both shows, especially for *Friends* at 97.5%. Such high percentage suggests that during the early 2000's in American television sitcoms, *very* was almost exclusively used as an amplifier rather than other adverbial functions, if not always. The amplification rate has diminished to 84.4% for *HIMYM*; the 13.1% decrease over the past decade in the trendy sitcoms clearly hints that *very* as an amplifier is not as preferred among younger generations as before, indicating that *very* is an “aging” amplifier.

Another notable point is the quite large shrinkage of the number of all tokens of *very* in the two shows. As already mentioned, the total word counts for *Friends* and *HIMYM* were very similar at 207,920 and 208,822. However, the number of tokens for *very* seems to have significantly dropped from 203 in *Friends* to 90 in *HIMYM*, reducing its total word count by more than half. The sudden decrease of the total word count of

---

<sup>9</sup> For non-amplifying use, *so* was mainly used to indicate the following:

- (1) Thus  
So all I need to do is get some new skin. (Ross, *Friends*)  
So at midnight, I can kiss her. (Joey, *Friends*)
- (2) Likewise or correspondingly; also; too  
 If I can meet a great guy, so can you. (Phoebe, *Friends*)  
 Is this friendship? I think so. (Joey, *Friends*)
- (3) In order (that)  
 Come by at lunch so that my boss won't see you. (Rachel, *Friends*)  
 Is that why you became a chef, so that people would like you? (Chandler, *Friends*)



*very* during the last ten years also reflects its withering popularity.

The total number of tokens also decreased from 789 in *Friends* to 484 in *HIMYM*, but the amplification rate for *really* rather increased by larger than 10%, from 72.1% in *Friends* to 83.9% in *HIMYM*. The decrease in the total number of tokens and the increase in the amplification rate suggest that although *really* was actually used less frequently by the speakers in *HIMYM*, the portion of the usage in which *really* was used as an amplifier has increased in *HIMYM*. The discrepancy can be accounted for with a hypothesis that *really*, specifically as an amplifier, is gaining its favorability over the past decade, even though the word itself is actually being uttered less and less frequently by younger generations, similar to *very*.

The amplifier showing the most interesting change is *totally*, marking increases both in token number and amplification rate over the last ten years. Not only did the characters from *HIMYM* simply make more utterances of *totally* than the characters from *Friends*, but they also used *totally* more often as an amplifier, from the amplification rate of 79.7% in *Friends* to 83.8% in *HIMYM*. Such findings pose a possibility that *totally* might be the youngest amplifier out of the three examined in the present study, being the favorite of average American people in their 20's and 30's, represented by the speakers of *HIMYM*, who lead the linguistic trend in American English.

The findings from the analysis so far suggest that older amplifiers, *very* and *really*, are not preferred among younger generations and are in the gradual replacement or substitution process due to their weakened emphasizing function. In reverse, a relative new amplifier in the delexicalization process, *totally*, is overtaking *really* and *very*. To sum up, the present chronological standings of the three amplifiers examined and the

intermediate results are as follows:

- A. *Very* is the oldest amplifier out of the three, has already reached near the end of the delexicalization process, and is being less and less preferred by the younger generations and all the other generations as well, proven by the negative growth rate from both *Friends-HIMYM* Corpus and COCA.
- B. *Really* is newer than *very* but older than *totally*; despite its positive growth in COCA, its negative growth in *Friends-HIMYM* Corpus highly suggests that it is not as often uttered by the younger generations as the older generations, and that the linguistic shift is quicker and hence more easily visible in the language of the younger generations.
- C. *Totally* is the newest and the most rapidly growing amplifier, as indicated by the positive growth both in *Friends-HIMYM* Corpus and COCA.

## **4.1.2 Comparison with other corpora**

### **4.1.2.1 COCA**

To seek for any conformity between the results from the previous section and the comparable American English corpus, the frequency for the three adverbs, *very*, *really* and *totally* were obtained from the spoken portion of COCA. Since COCA provides all

frequency results per a million words, the numbers were normalized down to word counts per exactly 200,000. The three adverbs in *Friends-HIMYM* Corpus underwent the identical procedure of normalization, from the results displayed per 207,920 for *Friends* and per 208,822 for *HIMYM* to the frequencies recalculated exactly per 200,000 words, for an outcome as accurate comparison. Also, to be as elaborate as possible, only the spoken portion from the 2000-2004 period and the 2010-2012 period were used from COCA, thus making the comparison with *Friends* data (2000-2003) and *HIMYM* data (2010-2013) even more chronologically reliable and plausible.

**Table 4.2 Normalized amplifier frequency in *Friends-HIMYM* Corpus and COCA (spoken)<sup>10</sup>**

	<i>Friends</i>	<i>HIMYM</i>
	2000-2003 (per 200,000)	2010-2013 (per 200,000)
<i>very</i>	192.3	86.2
<i>really</i>	759.0	463.6
<i>totally</i>	66.4	100.6
<b>TOTAL</b>	1017.7	649.4
<b>COCA</b>		
	2000-2004 (per 200,000)	2010-2012 (per 200,000)
<i>very</i>	106.7	100.9
<i>really</i>	68.6	84.8
<i>totally</i>	2.8	3.6
<b>TOTAL</b>	178.1	188.3

<sup>10</sup> Although titled “Normalized amplifier frequency,” this table refers to the raw frequency data of the three amplifiers, meaning that the numbers include contexts in which *very*, *really* and *totally* were not used as amplifiers, but to serve other grammatical functions.

The first and the most noticeable difference between the two corpora shown in Table 4.2 above is the difference between the total frequencies for the three amplifiers. The total frequency for *Friends-HIMYM* Corpus in the 2000-2003 period was quite high at 1017.59 per 200,000. Although the total frequency has decreased to 650.31 per 200,000 in the 2010-2013 period, the *Friends-HIMYM* Corpus still showed total frequencies much higher than COCA. On the contrary, COCA data had relatively low total frequencies compared to *Friends-HIMYM* data at 177.99 per 200,000 during the 2000-2004 period and at 189.21 per 200,000 during the 2010-2012 period. The total frequency in *Friends-HIMYM* Corpus in the 2000-2003 period was almost six folds of the total frequency in COCA in the 2000-2004 period, and the total frequency in *Friends-HIMYM* Corpus in the 2010-2013 period was about four folds of the total frequency in COCA in the 2010-2012 period. Such discrepancy between the total frequencies probably is due to the fact that *Friends-HIMYM* Corpus deals mainly with everyday spoken English, once again confirming the colloquial nature of amplifiers.

The two corpora differ from each other in terms of the popularity of the amplifiers as well. The most popular amplifier in COCA was *very* at 106.66 per 200,000, followed by *really* and *totally*, in both time periods. While *really* was the most popular amplifier in *Friends-HIMYM* Corpus at 758.95 per 200,000, *very* was the second most popular in the 2000-2003 period and *totally* was the second most popular in the 2010-2013 period. *Totally* was the least popular amplifier out of the three amplifiers in *Friends-HIMYM* Corpus, despite much higher frequencies than COCA. While *totally* had the frequency of only 2.77 per 200,000 in the 2000-2004 period and 3.58 per 200,000 in the 2010-2012 period in COCA, it was used quite more often in *Friends-*

*HIMYM* Corpus, at 66.37 per 200,000 in the 2000-2003 period and at 100.56 per 200,000 in the 2010-2013 period. The reason for such high frequency for *totally* can possibly be accounted for the fact that *totally*, being the youngest amplifier itself, is strongly preferred among young American speakers, represented by the characters in *Friends-HIMYM* Corpus.

Another interesting phenomenon is the differences between the growth rates of amplifiers between the two corpora. The first point worth noticing is the difference in the growth rates of the total frequency of the three amplifiers over the past decade. In Table 4.2 the total frequency of all three amplifiers decreased by 36.1% from 1017.59 per 200,000 to 650.31 per 200,000 in *Friends-HIMYM* Corpus, while the total frequency of all three amplifiers increased by 6.3% from 177.99 per 200,000 to 189.21 per 200,000 in COCA. Secondly, the growth rates for each amplifier in *Friends-HIMYM* Corpus also differ from their counterparts in the COCA data. While *really* is found to be used the most frequently by young Americans and therefore should be considered a more modern amplifier than *very*, both *very* and *really* had negative growth rates in *Friends-HIMYM* Corpus, suggesting their declining popularity within the younger generations. *Really* recorded a decrease of 38.9% from *Friends* to *HIMYM*, and *very*, with even a bigger drop of 55.2%, revealed itself again to be the least favorite amplifier for the younger generations out of the three. There existed a few contradictions in the findings from COCA. While *very* still displayed a negative growth rate of 5.4%, the rest of the amplifiers, *really* and *totally*, are presenting similar, positive growth rates at 23.7% and 29.2%. It is safe to claim that *very* has definitely and fully ripen as an amplifier and even to assume that it began its aging process. The different results for *really* from

*Friends-HIMYM* Corpus and COCA indicate that its use has become more popular and common for all generations of the United States in the past decade; however, it's slowly losing popularity with its younger speakers in their 20's and 30's. *Totally* was the only amplifier to record positive growth rates for both *Friends-HIMYM* Corpus and COCA. *Totally* increased dramatically in frequency in *Friends-HIMYM* Corpus with 51.5% of growth rate, and still displayed a positive growth rate in COCA, even though slightly less than that from *Friends-HIMYM* Corpus.

#### **4.1.2.2 COHA**

The frequency lists for the selected amplifiers were also generated from COHA for comparison with *Friends-HIMYM* Corpus. However, chronologically precise comparison between the two corpora was not possible due to the discrepancy between time periods of the two corpora. The data collected from the 2000-2002 period and the 2007-2009 period in COHA was used to be as close as possible to *Friends-HIMYM* Corpus data. The frequency lists for the three selected amplifiers are shown in Table 4.3 below. All the frequencies were once again normalized to 200,000.

Similar with the previous section, there is a difference between the total frequencies for the three amplifiers between the two corpora, although not as large as with COCA. While the total frequencies from *Friends-HIMYM* Corpus was four to six folds of the total frequencies from COCA, the total frequencies for the three amplifiers in COHA is approximately half of those in *Friends-HIMYM* Corpus, at 564.15 per 200,000 during the 2000-2002 period and at 354.55 per 200,000 during the 2007-2009 period. When the researcher closely examined the contexts that included the selected three

amplifiers, they were mainly extracted from fictions rather than from newspaper or magazines. Since dialogs between characters in fictions are based on colloquial English, it is understandable that COHA had higher frequencies of amplifiers than COCA.

**Table 4.3 Normalized amplifier frequency in *Friends-HIMYM* Corpus and COHA**

	<i>Friends</i>	<i>HIMYM</i>
	2000-2003 (per 200,000)	2010-2013 (per 200,000)
<i>very</i>	192.3	86.2
<i>really</i>	759.0	463.6
<i>totally</i>	66.4	100.6
<b>TOTAL</b>	1017.7	649.4
<b>COHA</b>		
	2000-2002 (per 200,000)	2007-2009 (per 200,000)
<i>very</i>	326.0	189.4
<i>really</i>	221.5	152.6
<i>totally</i>	16.8	12.6
<b>TOTAL</b>	564.3	354.6

COHA yielded mixed results in terms of popularity ratings and growth rate patterns. The most popular amplifier in COHA was *very*, followed by *really* and *totally*, same as in COCA. *Very* was used much more frequently in COHA than in *Friends-HIMYM* Corpus and COCA at 323.78 per 200,000 in the 2000-2002 period and at 188.2 per 200,000 in the 2007-2009 period. The total frequencies of *really* and *totally* in COHA were higher than those in COCA but lower than those in *Friends-HIMYM* Corpus. Although the popularity ratings from COHA were similar to COCA, the growth rate patterns shown in COHA were rather similarly shared with *Friends-HIMYM* Corpus.

For both corpora, *very* and *really* recorded negative growth rates in the last decade. The frequency for *very* diminished by 41.9% from 323.78 per 200,000 in the 2000-2002 period to 188.2 per 200,000 in the 2007-2009 period, which was very similar to the growth rate of negative 55.2% in *Friends-HIMYM* Corpus. *Really*, as well, was used 31.1% less frequently at 152.55 per 200,000 in the 2007-2009 period than at 221.45 per 200,000 in the 2000-2002 period from COHA, again, a growth rate quite similar to *Friends-HIMYM* Corpus. *Totally* was the only amplifier in COHA to show a different growth pattern from *Friends-HIMYM* Corpus, at the negative growth rate of 2.5% from 16.75 per 200,000 in the 2000-2002 period to 12.6 per 200,000 in the 2007-2009 period. The overall resemblance of the growth rate patterns between the two corpora discussed in this section, *Friends-HIMYM* Corpus and COHA, seems to confirm the chronological order of the three amplifiers. Already mentioned previously, *very* is the oldest amplifier out of the three, and therefore aging quickly especially in colloquial English, followed by *really* and *totally*. The negative growths shown in COHA for *very* and *really* are congruent with the order, except for *totally*. However, the total frequencies for *totally* in COHA were too low to be considered as the proof for one of the significant changes in amplifier use.

#### 4.1.2.3 CASO

The frequency lists for the three selected amplifiers from *Friends-HIMYM* Corpus data was compared with CASO, yet another American English corpus, specializing in soap opera scripts. Since CASO contains data from 2000 to 2012, comparison between multiyear periods was impossible; consequently, two single year periods were compared



with Friends-HIMYM Corpus, as shown in Table 4.4 below. All frequencies were normalized down to 200,000.

**Table 4.4 Normalized amplifier frequency in *Friends-HIMYM* Corpus and CASO**

	<i>Friends</i>	<i>HIMYM</i>
	2000-2003 (per 200,000)	2010-2013 (per 200,000)
<i>very</i>	192.3	86.2
<i>really</i>	759.0	463.6
<i>totally</i>	66.4	100.6
<b>TOTAL</b>	1017.7	649.4
<b>CASO</b>		
	2002 (per 200,000)	2012 (per 200,000)
<i>very</i>	254.9	246.3
<i>really</i>	524.8	572.5
<i>totally</i>	27.1	26.0
<b>TOTAL</b>	806.8	844.8

The interesting thing to note in comparison between *Friends-HIMYM* Corpus and CASO is the similarity in total frequencies and amplifier popularity ratings to each other. The total frequencies of the three amplifiers in CASO were 806.2 per 200,000 in the year of 2002 and 844.79 per 200,000 in the year of 2012. In fact, the total frequencies are the most similar out of the three American English corpora used in this study. Moreover, the two corpora shared the same amplifier popularity ratings, *really* being the most popular. As CASO is an American soap opera corpus and so is *Friends-HIMYM* Corpus, the expected extent of similarity can be said to have proven itself.

There existed, however, an outstanding difference in the growth rate patterns of

CASO. Unlike from the three previous corpora, *Friends-HIMYM* Corpus, COCA and COHA, there were very little fluctuations in the growth rates for the three amplifiers. While the other three corpora showed somewhat noticeable positive or negative growth in the last decade ranging from negative 55.2% to positive 51.5%, CASO data remained more or less identical, with the growth rates ranging from negative 4% to positive 9.1%. The stable frequencies over the past ten years in CASO might be due to the following reasons. Since CASO consists of ten American soap operas, it is possible that the amplifier use in those ten shows were consistent. The scripts for the ten shows might have never been changed and therefore were able to keep their own unique writing styles, and the characters from the ten shows must have built their idiolects over the years, using a certain amount of amplifiers. Consequently, it might be accounted for with the individual speaking styles of the characters of the shows. As five out of the ten soap operas used for data in CASO ran for twelve full years (*Bold and Beautiful*, *Days of Our Lives*, *General Hospital*, *One Life to Live*, and *Young and Restless*), the chances are that most of the characters from the show kept their personal speaking styles throughout all the seasons. The remaining five shows also ran for at least seven years, except for *Port Charles*, which only aired for three years. Unlike people in real lives, the fictional characters are more likely to adhere to their unique speaking styles, considering that they are usually given their “personalities” even before the show began.

## **4.2 Collocational Analysis**

The selected amplifiers were analyzed for their collocates. The formerly used two major categories, Amplifying and Non-amplifying, were divided and organized better in

detail, depending on their grammatical functions. Any of the three amplifiers that were independently uttered were counted separately for the analysis. The most important category in this section, Amplifying category, was once more subcategorized into three components: Adjectival, Verbal, and Others. Intensified phrases which did not belong to any of the three components included adverbial phrases, prepositional phrases or relative clauses, as shown in the following examples, where the amplifiers are italicized and the amplified words are underlined.

#### Adverbial phrases

(15) If you listen *very* carefully, I think it's "Celebration" by Kool and the Gang.

(Chandler, *Friends*)

(16) *Totally* hypothetically, do you like movies with a twist? (Barney, *HIMYM*)

#### Prepositional phrases

(17) This wasn't *really* about seeing Ted's house. (Marshall, *HIMYM*)

(18) They're *totally* onto us. (Lily, *HIMYM*)

#### Relative clauses

(19) It's just *really* who I am. (Tag, *Friends*)

Since the phrase structures shown in the examples above are not only smaller in numbers than adjectival or verbal collocates, but also grammatically complex to analyze and more difficult to generalize than single-word phrases, the present study restricted its

collocational analysis to adjectival and verbal collocates to simplify the sorting procedure and leave more complicated, in-depth analyses on other phrasal concordances for further studies. However, Independent Utterances and Others categories under Non-amplifying will be briefly discussed in the last section of this chapter. The results for the collocational distribution for *Friends* and *HIMYM* are shown in Table 4.5.

**Table 4.3 Collocational distribution for amplifiers in *Friends* and *HIMYM***

Friends													
	Collocates									Ind. Utt.		TOTAL	
	Amplifying								Non.				
	Adjectival		Verbal		Others		TOTAL						
	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%					
very	145	71.4	0	0	9	1.1	94	95.6	9	1.1	0		203
really	191	24.2	267	33.8	111	14.1	569	72.1			20	27.9	789
totally	21	30.4	30	43.5	4	5.8	55	79.7			14	20.3	69
TOTAL	357		297		124		718		9		34		1,061

HIMYM													
	Collocates									Ind. Utt.		TOTAL	
	Amplifying								Non.				
	Adjectival		Verbal		Others		TOTAL						
	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%					
very	64	71.7	0		12	13.3	76	84.4	14	15.6	0		90
really	121	25	222	45.9	63	13	406	83.9	0	0	78	16.1	484
totally	25	23.8	39	37.1	24	22.9	88	83.8	0	0	17	16.2	105
TOTAL	210		261		99		570		14		95		679

\*Non. is an abbreviation for Non-amplifying, which includes other grammatical components that were intensified by the three adverbs: prepositions, nouns, adverbs, relative clauses, etc.

\*Ind. Utt. is an abbreviation for Independent Utterances, which refer to single worded phrases, such as “*Really?*” or “*Totally!*”

It is quite clear to see from Table 4.5 that *very* mostly amplifies adjectives, never amplifies verbs and is never uttered independently. However, *very* performed a non-

amplifying function different from independent utterances, which will be examined closely in the last section of this chapter. It is also notable that *really* and *totally* amplify verbs more often than they amplify adjectives, and have a number of instances for independent utterances as well.

### 4.2.1 Amplifying

#### 4.2.1.1 Adjectival collocates

*Very*, *really*, and *totally* were analyzed using the spoken portion of COCA to extract the top 20 adjective frequency lists. Each amplifier was searched in the spoken portion of COCA using the “‘a given amplifier’ [j\*]” command, which would generate a frequency list including the amplifier and the most frequently collocated adjectives with it. The most popular adjectival collocates of the three amplifiers are summarized in Table 4.6 below (See Appendix A for the complete list).

**Table 4.4 Most popular adjectival collocates for *very*, *really*, and *totally* (COCA)**

<i>Very</i>	<i>Really</i>	<i>Totally</i>
<i>good, important, interesting, nice, happy, difficult, hard, tough, serious, concerned, big, close, high, small</i>		<i>different, wrong, unacceptable, false, inappropriate, untrue, unexpected, unrelated, ridiculous, unnecessary, irresponsible</i>

Based on the COCA collocate list, the two relatively older amplifiers, *very* and *really*, shared fairly common adjective as collocates: scalar adjectives carrying positive

denotation (*good, important, interesting, nice, happy*, etc.), scalar adjectives carrying negative denotation (*difficult, hard, tough, serious, concerned*, etc.), and adjectives used for spatial and dimensional measurements (*big, close, high, small*). Considering the fact that the two amplifiers belong to the same category of “boosters”, their collocate lists mostly including scalar items seem quite reliable.

On the contrary, the only “maximizer” and the newest of the three amplifiers, *totally*, indicated results slightly different from the former two. First, the vast majority of the collocates for *totally* was filled with negative adjectives such as *different, wrong, false*, and *ridiculous*. Also, it was safe to argue that *totally* is more likely to collocate with nonscalar word items, as Paradis (2008) predicted. Although some of the adjectives collocated with *totally* (*different, ridiculous, irresponsible*) were scalar, most of the adjectival collocates for *totally* were in fact considered nonscalar (*wrong, false*, etc.). Second, the adjectives collocated with *totally* were rather syntactically complex than the adjectival collocates for *very* and *really*, with most of the collocates including prefixed adjectives (*unacceptable, inappropriate, unexpected, irresponsible*, etc.).

The collocate lists for the three amplifiers from *Friends-HIMYM* Corpus were also examined for such tendencies, if there existed any, and the results were organized in Table 4.7 and Table 4.8. Any adjectives with less than two frequencies were omitted due to their probable insignificance (See Appendix B for the complete list for *Friends*, and Appendix C for the complete list for *HIMYM*).

**Table 4.5 Adjectival collocates for *very*, *really*, *totally* in *Friends***

<i>Very</i>		<i>Really</i>		<i>Totally</i>	
Adjective	Freq.	Adjective	Freq.	Adjective	Freq.
<i>good</i>	25	<i>good</i>	31	<i>different</i>	7
<i>nice</i>	11	<i>great</i>	17		
<i>funny</i>	9	<i>nice</i>	15		
<i>sorry</i>	5	<i>sweet</i>	9		
<i>attractive, pretty</i>	4	<i>sorry</i>	8		
<i>beautiful, happy, important, lucky, sad</i>	3	<i>bad, hard</i>	6		
<i>busy, close, different, generous, interested, interesting, long, mature, old, practical, serious, special</i>	2	<i>big, cute, nervous, weird</i>	5		
		<i>fun, glad, hot, important, long, sad</i>	4		
		<i>drunk, excited, funny</i>	3		
		<i>beautiful, boring, cool, expensive, fast, mean, sick, strong, tight, tough, upset</i>	2		

As shown above in Table 4.7, *very* occurred with *good* the most frequently at the total of 25 times per 200,000, followed by *nice*, *funny*, *attractive*, and *pretty*. Given its nature as a “booster,” *very* was indeed collocated mostly with scalar adjectives, especially those with positive denotations (*beautiful, happy, important, lucky*, etc.). *Really* indicated clear evidence as a booster as well, with a similar set of positive, scalar items on its adjectival collocate list, including *great, sweet, cute, fun, glad, hot* (not as in temperature; as in attractiveness), etc. *Really* was also collocated with negative but very common adjectives (*bad, hard, nervous, weird, sad*) and with adjectives used for measurements (*big, long, fast, strong*). Last but not least, *totally* had a single significant adjectival collocate from *Friends*, which was *different*. Although *totally different* occurred only seven times, the result conforms to Quirk et al’s (1985) and Paradis’s (2008)

categorization for maximizers, which collocate with nonscalar adjectives.

**Table 4.6 Adjectival collocates for *very*, *really*, *totally* in *HIMYM***

<i>Very</i>		<i>Really</i>		<i>Totally</i>	
Adjective	Freq.	Adjective	Freq.	Adjective	Freq.
<i>important</i>	5	<i>good</i>	11	<i>fine</i>	2
<i>much</i>	4	<i>nice</i>	8		
<i>clear, good, special</i>	3	<i>hard</i>	7		
<i>bad, expensive, first, long, neat, safe, simple, small</i>	2	<i>happy, hot</i>	5		
		<i>sorry</i>	4		
		<i>bad, fast, great, scary, slippery, sweet, weird</i>	3		
		<i>awesome, big, boring, cool, crazy, creepy, fun, important, okay, rich, sad, scared, short, special</i>	2		

Quite different from *Friends*, *very* from *HIMYM* lacked any prominent adjectival collocates, having *important* as the most frequently used collocate at the total frequency of only five. While other adjectival collocates with *very* were fairly common, mundane words (*clear, special, expensive, neat*, etc.), there was less semantic or syntactic consistency between the items, unpredictably ranging from positive to negative and from scalar to nonscalar. *Really* was collocated the most frequently with *good* at the total frequency of 11; however, similar to its antecedent, it was difficult to find any outstanding regularities among the adjectival collocates of *really*. Suggesting parallel findings, *totally* had close to no significant adjectival collocates, with *fine* as its most important collocate at the trifling sum of two frequencies.



The overall depatternization of the adjectival collocates for *very*, *really*, and *totally* during the last ten years shown in *Friends-HIMYM* Corpus can be accounted for from two possible perspectives (Refer back to Table 4.5). First, the total number of frequencies for the adjectival collocates with the two older amplifiers, *very* and *really*, had significantly decreased. Reflecting its aging state, *very* had dropped its total frequency of adjectival collocates from 145 in *Friends* to 64 in *HIMYM*. *Really* also was less favored in *HIMYM* with 191 tokens plummeted from 121 tokens in *Friends*. The huge downfall of the total frequency of the adjectival collocate might have affected any particular adjective to outstand and rather caused a thin-layered distribution pattern over many various adjectives.

Secondly, *very* and *totally* were less frequently collocated with adjectives than used to serve different grammatical functions. The frequency for *very* used to serve a non-amplifying function increased from 9 in *Friends* to 15 in *HIMYM*, despite the noticeable drop in the total frequency. The detailed analysis on the non-amplifying function of *very* will be discussed in the last section of this chapter. Although the amplification rate increased for *totally*, it was more frequently collocated with verbs and other phrases than adjectives. The smaller portion of adjectival collocates for *totally* adds to the evidence that *totally* is still ascending along the scalar delexicalization process. According to Bolinger (1972), a progress from an adverb to an intensifier “involves a reassortment of the constituents of the sentence,” and “the closer it comes to the normal position of a premodifier of the adjective, the more readily it is taken to be one.” Therefore, *totally* is still placed somewhere near the beginning of the delexicalization, or “amplification” stages, with *very* at the furthestmost position.

#### 4.2.1.2 Verbal collocates

The next category to be examined is verbal collocates. Except for *very*, which was mainly collocated with adjectives, *really* and *totally* had much higher amplification rates with verbs than adjectives in *Friends-HIMYM* Corpus. *Very*, *really* and *totally* were analyzed using the spoken portion of COCA to extract the top 20 verb frequency lists. Same as the previous section, each amplifier was searched in the spoken portion of COCA using the “‘a given amplifier’ [v\*]” command, which would generate a frequency list including the amplifier and the most frequently collocated verbs with it. The most popular verbal collocates for the three amplifiers are summarized in Table 4.9 below (See Appendix D for the complete list).

**Table 4.7 Most popular verbal collocates for *really* and *totally* on COCA (spoken)**

<i>Very</i>	<i>Really</i>	<i>Totally</i>
<i>encouraged, limited, moved, struck, accepting, taken, mixed</i>	<i>do (does, did), be(is, are, been), have (had), want (wanted), go (going, gone), think, know, need, like, believe, get</i>	<i>agreed, disagreed, committed, understand, believe, oppose, destroyed changed</i>

Although results were obtained for verbal collocates for *very* from COCA, not only did they have very low frequencies, but also they were not “verbal” collocates. When closely examined line by line, the verbal collocates with *very* were actually adjectival collocates using verbal past participle form. Please refer to the following sentences extracted from COCA for examples.

(20) The question is, they all sounded *very* encouraged after these talks the other day.

(Susan Milligan, *Fox Sunday*)

(21) Well, it has *very* limited ability to maneuver, and so it follows a specific ground track around. (Rick Hawk, *NBC Today*)

(22) I think people will be *very* moved by this special. (Katie Couric, *CBS Early*)

(23) I was *very* struck that the head of the Sony Studios was on the jury. (Charles Gibson, *ABC GMA*)

(24) They referred to her as a boy, but kids are *very* accepting at that age. (Renee Jennings, *ABC 20/20*)

As clearly shown in the examples above, all of the contexts in which the most popular verbal collocates for *very* were included were in fact used as adjectives, in the past participle form of verbs. Considering the results, it can be naturally assumed that *very* is never collocated with verbs, but only with adjectives and other grammatical categories.

There existed an obvious verbal collocate pattern for *really*, although some verbs displayed different forms of themselves. *Really* was almost always collocated with auxiliary verbs (*do, be, have*), cognitive verbs (*want, think, need, like, etc.*) or common verbs (*go, get*) (Leech et al., 2013). *Totally* was mostly collocated more complex verbs with the dental suffix *-ed* (*disagreed, committed, destroyed, etc.*).

For comparison, the verbal collocates with *really* and *totally* in *Friends-HIMYM* Corpus were organized according to their frequencies as well, as shown in Table 4.10 for *Friends* and *HIMYM* below. *Very* was excluded from the analysis as it did not have any verbal collocates from *Friends-HIMYM* Corpus. All of the verbal collocates were

written in their base form in order to achieve uniformity and thus to maximize legibility, and any verbs with less than three tokens were omitted from the list (See Appendix E and F for the complete lists).

**Table 4.8 Verbal collocates for *really* and *totally* in *Friends* and *HIMYM***

<i>Friends</i>				<i>HIMYM</i>			
<i>Really</i>		<i>Totally</i>		<i>Really</i>		<i>Totally</i>	
Verb	Freq.	Verb	Freq.	Verb	Freq.	Verb	Freq.
<i>do</i>	34	<i>forget</i>	4	<i>think, want</i>	21	<i>do</i>	5
<i>want</i>	32	<i>freak, understand</i>	3	<i>do</i>	19	<i>go, understand</i>	3
<i>like</i>	28			<i>be</i>	15		
<i>be</i>	20			<i>need</i>	12		
<i>think</i>	18			<i>like</i>	11		
<i>go</i>	15			<i>go</i>	8		
<i>have</i>	14			<i>mean</i>	7		
<i>need</i>	13			<i>know</i>	6		
<i>love, should</i>	6			<i>get, talk</i>	5		
<i>appreciate</i>	5			<i>care, love, see</i>	4		
<i>feel, freak, make</i>	4			<i>appreciate, can,</i>	3		
<i>enjoy, get, miss, take</i>	3			<i>hurt, start, take</i>			

The verbal collocate lists for *really* from *Friends-HIMYM* Corpus were very similar to that from COCA, consisting of mostly cognitive verbs (*think, want, like, need*, etc.), auxiliary verbs (*do, be*, etc.), and common verbs (*go, get, take*, etc.). No organized collocational patterns were present for verbal collocates with *totally*. The total frequency of the verbal collocates for *totally* were not as significant as *really*, nor it had any remarkable verbal collocates to further analyze. As already discussed in the previous section of this chapter, *totally* was not collocated with any particular adjectives,

either, leading to an interim conclusion that *totally* is not yet collocated with certain adjectives nor verbs, but rather used with a wide range of various grammatical categories, once again proving that *totally* is still in the beginning stage of the delexicalization process.

### 4.2.2 Non-amplifying

The subcategory of Non-amplifying was only noteworthy for *very*. There was a total frequency of 9 for *very* performing a non-amplifying function in *Friends*, and a total frequency of 14 in *HIMYM*. Since the lump-sum frequency was not preposterously high at all, the researcher examined each and every non-amplifying context. All of the instances in which *very* was used as non-amplifying served one single grammatical function, as shown in the examples below:

(11) He just went poo-poo this *very* second. (Lily, *HIMYM*)

(12) Last year, I slapped on a dress, took a few laps around this *very* bar, and I got this. (Barney, *HIMYM*)

(13) But that *very* night, the Autumn of Breakups would claim its first victims.  
(Narrator, *HIMYM*)

(14) No. Let me refresh your memory. We were in this *very* room. (Chandler, *Friends*)

(15) I cheated on her with someone at this *very* table. (Ted, *HIMYM*)

All of the utterances of *very* in the examples (28) through (32) indisputably have the

identical meaning of “particular,” which is actually an adjective. To put it in easier terms, when *very* was used to serve a non-amplifying function, it was not exactly used as an adverb, but a completely different part of speech, an adjective. Another thing they have in common is that they are all preceded by a demonstrative, such as *this* or *that*. It can subsequently be assumed that the usage of *very* to denote exact identity always follow a demonstrative, which is proven in one of the entries from *Oxford English Dictionary* for *very*.

Also, the absence of any non-amplifying *really* and *totally* should briefly be discussed as well. *Really* and *totally* did not perform any non-amplifying functions except for independent utterances to express interest, surprise, reproof, complain, sarcasm, and/or to answer questions. In other words, it is possible that *really* and *totally* never serve non-amplifying functions in a phrase consisting of two or more words and including the two amplifiers.

### 4.2.3 Independent Utterances

In *Friends-HIMYM* Corpus data, independent utterances for *really* and *totally* constructed about 16 to 27% of the total frequencies, except for *very*, which had never been independently uttered in the two television shows. *Really* was uttered a total of 220 times in *Friends*, which constructed 27.9% of all frequencies; in *HIMYM*, 16.1% of all frequencies for *really* were independent utterances, at the total of 78 times. In *Friends*, there were 14 independent utterances for *totally*, marking 20.3% of all frequencies; the number increased to 17 in *HIMYM*, overpowering the slight decrease of percentage to

16.2%.

Independent utterances for *really* were mostly in the interrogative form, and served to indicate one of the following emotions: (i) interest; (ii) surprise; (iii) reproof; and (iv) complain/sarcasm. The following sentences provide examples for each.

#### Interest

- (16) A few years ago, I was backpacking across Western Europe. (Ross, *Friends*)

*Really?* (Ross's date, *Friends*)

#### Surprise

- (17) Not that it's any of your business, but we did go out. (Ross, *Friends*)

*Really?* You two? (Store clerk, *Friends*)

#### Reproof

- (18) I would love to come by tonight. (Phoebe, *Friends*)

*Really?* (Chandler, *Friends*)

- (19) I'm fine. *Really*. (Ted, *HIMYM*)

#### Complain/sarcasm

- (20) You wouldn't have to take care of it. (Robin, *HIMYM*)

*Really?* And who watered the philodendron on your bookcase and sang it back to life? (Ted, *HIMYM*)

Independent utterances for *totally* were mostly in the declarative or interjectional form, and indicated strong affirmation<sup>11</sup>, which is shown in the following examples.

(21) This is why bro-parenting works! (Barney, *HIMYM*)

*Totally.* (Ted, *HIMYM*)

(22) You kissed him? (Rachel, *Friends*)

*Totally!* (Phoebe, *Friends*)

The percentage of *really* and *totally* being uttered independently decreased over the last decade, which can be accounted for the possible emerging of other adverbs (*completely*, *absolutely*, *definitely*, etc.) serving the same function, therefore replacing, substituting, or layering *really* and *totally*, “undoubtedly reflecting the coexistence of older and newer layers in the process of change” (Ito & Tagliamonte, 2003).

Another interesting point to pay attention on is the lack of any frequencies for *very* as independent utterances in *Friends-HIMYM* Corpus. To clear any potential confusion, the research produced frequency lists for combinations of *very*, *really*, *totally* and different kinds of punctuations, which basically generates results equivalent to numbers of independent utterances, from the spoken portion of COCA. The frequency lists obtained are organized in Table 4.11 below:

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<sup>11</sup> If an adverb was used to indicate “strong confirmation,” all instances serving that function can and should be categorized under Amplifying; however, the present study attempted to analyze independent utterances separately from the very beginning of the study, due to any possible confusion with collocated tokens.



**Table 4.9 Frequency lists for *very*, *really*, *totally* and punctuations on COCA (spoken)**

Adj. + Punc.	Freq.	Adj. + Punc.	Freq.	Adj. + Punc.	Freq.
<i>Very.</i>	226	<i>Really.</i>	2,983	<i>Totally.</i>	285
<i>Very!</i>	1	<i>Really!</i>	22	<i>Totally!</i>	0
<i>Very?</i>	2	<i>Really?</i>	3,855	<i>Totally?</i>	19

Evident from Table 4.11, *really* had the highest frequency of independent utterances among the three amplifiers in the study, followed by *totally* and *really*. *Very* was the least frequently uttered as single-word phrases, providing proof for its unpopularity as means of answering, expressing emotions, or questioning. Although nearly as favored for independent utterances as *really* in *Friends-HIMYM* Corpus, *totally* rather recorded a very low frequency in COCA, which again solidifies the previous finding that *totally* is a relatively new amplifier, and is hence preferred and used more by younger generations (*Friends-HIMYM* Corpus) than other generations.

### **4.3 Gender/age-based analysis**

#### **4.3.1 *Friends-HIMYM* Corpus**

This section reports analysis by gender of speakers for the three amplifiers, *very*, *really*, and *totally*. Table 4.12 refers to the frequency lists of *very*, *really*, and *totally* for *Friends* and *HIMYM*. The numbers inside the parentheses written next to gender category indicate the total number of words each category has. For example, there are a total of 107,562 words for the female group in *Friends* recorded 107,562 and the male

group in *Friends* recorded a total of 100,358 words. The numbers of words spoken by female and male speakers for *Friends* are quite similar, as there were exactly equal numbers of speakers for each gender in the show. However, the numbers of female and male speakers were not equivalent in *HIMYM* and one of the male characters, Barney Stinson, was depicted as excessively talkative, causing the word count for the male group to weigh more than twice that of the female group. Thus, in order to better compare two corpora of different sizes, the amplifier frequency lists for *Friends* and *HIMYM* were normalized to per 65,000 words, which match the size of the smallest category of the *Friends-HIMYM* Corpus, the female group from *HIMYM*. The results are organized in Table 4.12 and Table 4.13 below.

As predicted from Section 2 of Chapter 2, amplifier utterance frequencies for the female group were higher than the male group, except for *very*. In *Friends*, the frequencies of *very* for the female and male groups were almost identical; confirming that *very* has arrived at the final stage of the delexicalization process. At the beginning of the delexicalization process, female speakers use a particular amplifier more often than male speakers; lessening or neutralization of the sex effect occur as the amplifier reaches later stages of the delexicalization process (Tagliamonte & Roberts, 2005). However in *HIMYM*, female use of *very* was less than male use, once again solidifying that women indeed are innovators and adopters of new linguistic features, hinting that female speakers had already shifted onto other, newer amplifiers.

**Table 4.10 Amplifier frequency by gender for *Friends* and *HIMYM* (the sizes of corpora)**

	<i>Friends</i>		<i>HIMYM</i>	
	Female (107,562 words)	Male (100,358 words)	Female (65,901 words)	Male (142,804 words)
<i>very</i>	115	108	23	67
<i>really</i>	468	407	178	309
<i>totally</i>	43	38	41	64
<b>TOTAL</b>	626	553	242	440

**Table 4.11 Normalized amplifier frequency by gender for *Friends* and *HIMYM* (per 65,000)**

	<i>Friends</i>			<i>HIMYM</i>		
	Female	Male	TOTAL	Female	Male	TOTAL
<i>very</i>	69.5	70	139.5	22.7	30.5	53.2
<i>really</i>	282.8	263.6	546.4	175.6	140.7	316.3
<i>totally</i>	26	24.6	50.6	40.4	29.1	69.5
<b>TOTAL</b>	378.3	358.2	736.5	238.7	200.3	439

Female use overpowered male use for *really* both in *Friends* and in *HIMYM*, but the total frequencies have significantly decreased from *Friends* to *HIMYM*. While *really* is still in the middle of the delexicalization process, showing gender-tilted distribution, it has lost its popularity within the speakers in their 20's and 30's during the past decade.

*Totally* was the only amplifier to record increased frequencies from *Friends* to *HIMYM*. In *Friends*, female and male use of *totally* are quite similar; however, *totally* was uttered more dominantly by female speakers, suggesting that female speakers have begun using the amplifier more often recently and thus *totally* has risen as the trendy amplifier by entering the delexicalization process.

### 4.3.2 Comparison with other corpora

For comparison with *Friends-HIMYM* Corpus, gender- and age-specific data were obtained from MICASE and BNCweb. Reasonably, only the spoken portion of BNCweb was used for the current analysis. Both corpora enable advanced search with various restrictions, including age, region, gender, social class, dialect, education, etc. The frequency lists for the three selected amplifiers, *very*, *really*, and *totally*, were generated based on genders and three different age groups. The standards by which each corpus divides its age groups differ from each other; consequently, only the general pattern will be sought after, rather than an exact generation-by-generation comparison. The results obtained from the two corpora, MICASE and BNCweb are shown in Table 4.14 and Table 4.15<sup>12,13</sup> in the following subsections (See Appendix G and Appendix H for the detailed data from MICASE and BNCweb, respectively), and the visually enhanced representations of MICASE and BNCweb data are shown in Figure 4.1 through Figure 4.4, also in the following subsections.

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<sup>12</sup> The frequencies indicated in Table 4.14 and Table 4.15 only include contexts in which the three adverbs, *very*, *really*, and *totally*, were used as amplifiers; any contexts in which any of the three adverbs were used to serve other grammatical functions, such as independent utterances (i.e. “*Really?*”, “*Totally!*”), non-amplifying (i.e. “She mentioned that *very* moment.”), or sentential adverbs (i.e. “It means nothing, *really*.”) were excluded from the tables.

<sup>13</sup> The 17-30 age group was formed from a combination of the 17-23 age group and 24-30 age group, which were the original categorization in MICASE, in order to avoid one particular age group to cover a narrower range of ages. Similarly, only the 25-34, 35-44, and 44-59 age groups were used from BNCweb, which originally include other age groups such as 0-14, 15-24, and 60 and over, in order to ensure the ranges of ages each group covers would approximately be the same.

#### 4.3.2.1 MICASE

As shown in Table 4.14 below, the most popular amplifiers and gender preference were quite similar between the two corpora. MICASE data as a total indicated that female speakers used the amplifiers more frequently than male speakers, which is identical with the results obtained from *Friends-HIMYM* Corpus. Also, it was evident that *really* was the most favored amplifier both gender groups showing the highest frequency of 2,516 for female speakers and 1,636 for male speakers. The second popular amplifier for both genders was *very* with 2,023 total tokens for female speakers and 1,546 total tokens for male speakers, followed by *totally*, at the total tokens of 125 for female speakers and 74 for male speakers.

A small discrepancy was visible among individual age groups. In the 17-30 age group from MICASE, *really* was the most popular amplifier for both female and male speakers at 1,160 and 715 respectively, followed by *very* and *totally*. For all three amplifiers, female speakers had higher frequencies than male speakers in the 17-30 age group. In the 31-50 age group, *very* was the most popular amplifier for both gender groups at 1,039 and 597 tokens, with *really* as a close second at 978 and 468 tokens. The frequency for *totally* evidently decreased from the 17-30 age group at 78 and 42 to the 31-50 age group at 36 and 6 for female and male speakers, respectively.

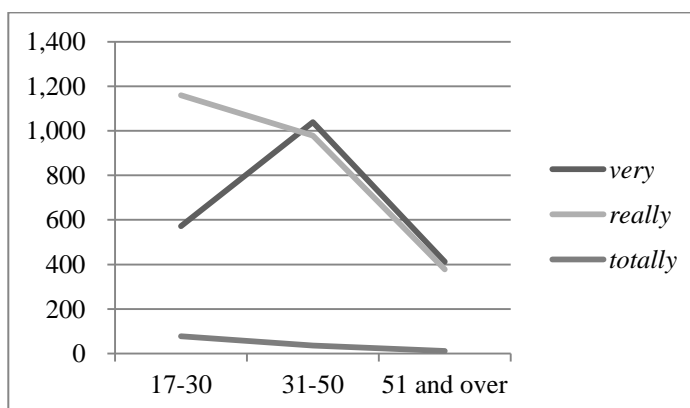
**Table 4.12 Gender/age-specific frequencies for *very*, *really*, and *totally* in *Friends-HIMYM* and MICASE**

	<i>Friends</i>			<i>HIMYM</i>		
	Female	Male	TOTAL	Female	Male	TOTAL
<i>very</i>	69.5	70	139.5	22.7	30.5	53.2
<i>really</i>	282.8	263.6	546.4	175.6	140.7	316.3
<i>totally</i>	26	24.6	50.6	40.4	29.1	69.5
TOTAL	378.3	358.2	736.5	238.7	200.3	439

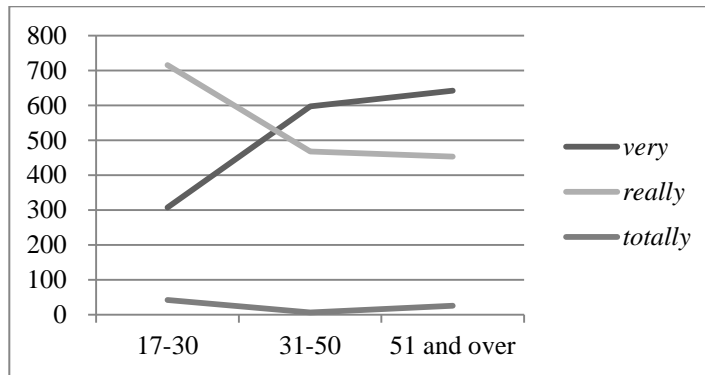
  

MICASE								
	Female				Male			
	17-30	31-50	51 and over	TOTAL	17-30	31-50	51 and over	TOTAL
<i>very</i>	572	1,039	412	2,023	307	597	642	1,546
<i>really</i>	1,160	978	378	2,516	715	468	453	1,636
<i>totally</i>	78	36	11	125	42	6	26	74
TOTAL	1,810	2,053	801	4,664	1,064	1,071	1,121	3,256

**Figure 4.1 Age-specific data of amplifier frequencies for females in MICASE**



**Figure 4.2 Age-specific data of amplifier frequencies for males in MICASE**



Noteworthy phenomena were mainly observed in the 51 and over age group. Although *very* was still the most popular amplifier in the 51 and over age group for both genders at the total of 412 and 642 tokens, while the frequency for female speakers significantly decreased from the 31-50 age group, the frequency for male speakers continued to increase from the 17-30 age group and the 31-50 age group. In other words, *very* topped its popularity in the 31-50 age group for female speakers; however, *very* became more and more popular as male speakers age increased. Another important thing to consider is that while *very* is by far the most popular in the 31-50 age group and similarly unpopular in the 17-30 and 51 and over age groups for female speakers, the differences between the frequencies of the 51 and over age group and other two groups for male speakers were not as large as for female speakers. Also, the frequency for *totally* kept decreasing from the 17-30 age group and the 31-50 age group to the 51 and over age group for female speakers, male speakers in the 51 and over age group had a tendency to use *totally* more frequently than the 31-50 age group, indicating that *totally* is used more frequently by male speakers than female speakers in the 51 and over age group. To

summarize, MICASE data seemed almost as if female speakers had their “blooming” age period for each amplifier: definitely between the age of 31 and 50 for *very*, from the age of 17 to 50 for *really*, and the age of 17 to 30 for *totally*. On the other hand, male speakers’ data from MICASE showed that they do not really have a strong preference of one particular amplifier over one another throughout their lives, except for *totally*, but rather use *very* and *really* quite fairly from teenage period to elder period.

The results drawn from investigating the two corpora above prove a couple of important points. First and the most importantly, the results obtained from MICASE are identical with the results from *Friends-HIMYM* Corpus, once again supporting the chronological order of the three amplifiers, *very* as the oldest amplifier and *totally* as the youngest. Given that MICASE is only a representation of academic data, the identical results yielded from MICASE and the colloquial *Friends-HIMYM* Corpus do prove that there exist a certain gender-preferential pattern in amplifier use in American spoken English, formal or informal. Second, the belief that younger generations and female speakers lead and innovate changes in amplifier use was confirmed, as younger female speakers showed a strong preference for newer amplifiers, *really* and *totally*.

#### **4.3.2.2 BNCweb**

In contrast to MICASE, male speakers used amplifiers more frequently than female speakers in BNCweb data. *Very* was the most popular amplifier for both gender groups with the highest frequency of 2,785 for female speakers and 5,636 for male speakers, followed by *really* at 1,916 and 2,174 for female and male speakers respectively, and *totally* had the lowest frequency of the three amplifiers, at 92 for females and 149 for



males.

**Table 4.13 Gender/age-specific frequencies for *very*, *really*, and *totally* in *Friends-HIMYM* and BNCweb**

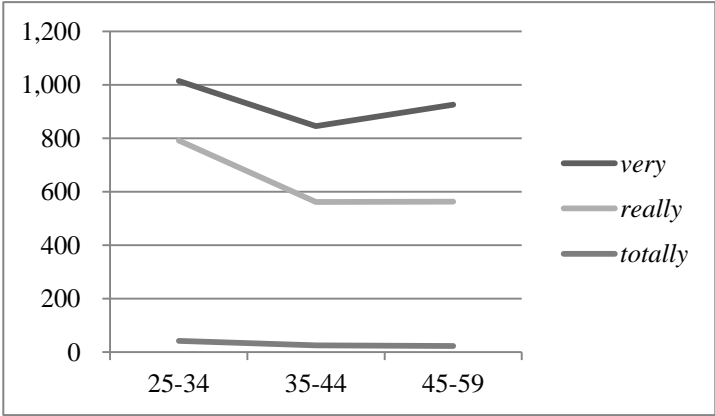
	<i>Friends</i>			<i>HIMYM</i>		
	Female	Male	TOTAL	Female	Male	TOTAL
<i>very</i>	69.5	70	139.5	22.7	30.5	53.2
<i>really</i>	282.8	263.6	546.4	175.6	140.7	316.3
<i>totally</i>	26	24.6	50.6	40.4	29.1	69.5
<b>TOTAL</b>	378.3	358.2	736.5	238.7	200.3	439

<b>BNCweb</b>								
	Female				Male			
	25-34	35-44	45-59	TOTAL	25-34	35-44	45-59	TOTAL
<i>very</i>	1,014	845	926	2,785	1,263	1,869	2,504	5,636
<i>really</i>	791	562	563	1,916	588	584	1,002	2,174
<i>totally</i>	43	26	23	92	48	36	65	149
<b>TOTAL</b>	1,848	1,433	1,512	4,793	1,899	2,489	3,571	7,959

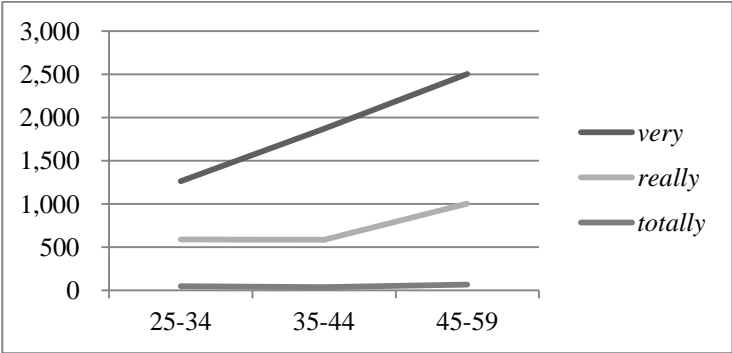
For BNCweb, *very* was the most popular amplifier in all of the three age groups for both genders, followed by *really* and *totally*. The shift in popularity for the three amplifiers in each gender group differed by age, however. *Very* was more or less similarly popular in all three age groups for female speakers at 1,014, 845, 926 total tokens, but for male speakers, the popularity of *very* increased as their ages increased, from 1,263 for the 25-34 age group to 1,869 for the 35-44 age group to 2,504 for the 45-59 age group. *Really* and *totally* were the most popular in the 25-34 age group for female speakers at 791 total tokens, and almost equally popular in the remaining two age groups, with the frequency

of 562 for the 35-44 age group and 563 for the 45-59 age group. On the other hand, *really* and *totally* were the most popular in the oldest, 45-59 age group for male speakers at 1,002 and 65 tokens respectively, the remaining two age groups shows similar frequencies. The differences between the age group which uses a certain amplifier the most frequently and the remaining two age groups were much larger for male speakers.

**Figure 4.3** Age-specific data of amplifier frequencies for females in BNCweb



**Figure 4.4** Age-specific data of amplifier frequencies for males in BNCweb



The most interesting thing about the results from BNCweb is the opposite tendency in using amplifiers for two gender groups. For female speakers of BNCweb, the youngest age group used all three amplifiers the most frequently; however, the differences between each age group were rather small, indicating that there is not much of an age factor in using amplifiers for female speakers. Meanwhile, a preference for all three amplifiers by the oldest age group is clearly observed for male speakers. The 45-59 age group for male speakers prominently uses all the three amplifiers more frequently than other age groups. The causes for which older British males use amplifiers far more frequently than younger British males need to be further explored.

To summarize, female speakers did not really have any specific age periods preferring a certain amplifier in BNCweb, except for the youngest group, which showed a weak preference for all amplifiers in general. Second, male speakers clearly showed an obvious preference for using amplifiers after the age of 45, which contrasts one of the predictions of many linguists who study gender differences in amplifier use. The reason for such strong preference of using amplifiers among the oldest male speakers should definitely be one of the most interesting topics in any future studies. Third, all age groups for both genders preferred *very* over other amplifiers, unlike MICASE and *Friends-HIMYM* Corpus, where different amplifiers were preferred in different age groups and genders. BNCweb yielded results completely different from the MICASE results, suggesting that the United States and Great Britain may have *very*, *really*, and *totally* on different positions on the delexicalization scale, as well as on the sociolinguistic mapping of the three amplifiers.

## Chapter 5 Conclusion

### 5.1 Summary

To answer the first research question, the three amplifiers, *very*, *really* and *totally* have undergone a linguistic competition in the selected American television sitcoms, *Friends* and *HIMYM*, during the past ten years. A decade ago in *Friends*, *really* was the most frequently used amplifier, followed by *very* and *totally*. Ten years later, although *really* was still the most popular amplifier in *HIMYM*, *totally* became the second popular amplifier, nearly doubling its frequency, while *very* was less favored and was dropped to the third popular amplifier. It is evident from such findings that amplifiers indeed do go through continuous delexicalization, which is a process in which amplifiers gradually lose their original meanings and become substituted, replaced or used in parallel with new amplifiers

Secondly, such shifts in amplifier use in the selected American television sitcoms were partially reflected in contemporary spoken American English, represented by the spoken data from COCA, COHA and CASO. While the decrease of frequency for *very* in *Friends-HIMYM* Corpus were visible in all the other three corpora, the decrease of frequency for *really* and the increase of frequency for *totally* in *Friends-HIMYM* Corpus were contradicted. The disparity can be accounted for by the fact that *Friends-HIMYM* Corpus data only reflects the 20's and 30's age group, while the other three corpora represents all age groups, suggesting that *really* has been losing its popularity and *totally* has been gaining its popularity especially among younger speakers

of American English.

Next, the selected amplifiers had a set of lexical items with which they were more likely to collocate. *Very* and *really* were usually collocated with generic, scalar adjectives, carrying both positive and negative meanings, proving that the two amplifiers are boosters; while the adjectives often collocated with *totally* mainly included nonscalar adjectives with negative notions, once again solidifying the fact that *totally* is a maximizer. The regularized collocational pattern for adjectives in *Friends* was obscured in *HIMYM*, which can be accounted for from two perspectives: (i) the total frequencies for *very* and *really* had significantly dropped from *Friends* to *HIMYM*; and (ii) *totally* is still in the beginning stages of the delexicalization process, and is hence yet collocated with different grammatical structures, rather than the position of premodifier of an adjective, which is a sign of an amplifier which nearly completed the delexicalization process.

The findings suggested that the collocational pattern for verbs also exist. *Very* was never collocated with verbs, but only with adjectives in the form of verbal participles. The verbal collocates for *really* were mainly cognitive verbs (*want, think, know, like, etc.*) and auxiliary verbs (*do, be, have, etc.*). *Totally* has not yet had a distinctive pattern; however, it was hardly ever collocated with common verbs, but rather with more complicated verbs. The results from *Friends-HIMYM* Corpus and COCA were very similar, indicating that the *Friends-HIMYM* Corpus data was somewhat a reliable sample of the American English for verbal collocates.

Next, gender difference in amplifier use in the American television sitcoms was identical to the prediction of many sociolinguists, evident in higher frequencies of

utterances by female characters from the two shows. Also, female characters had a clear preference for newer amplifiers, using *very* less, *really* and *totally* far more than male speakers, proving that female speakers quickly adapt to linguistic changes and shift onto newer terms.

Finally, gender and age differences in amplifier use showed different tendencies for American spoken English, represented in the MICASE data, and British spoken English, represented in the BNCweb data. The 17-30 age group for female speakers from MICASE had a strong preference for *really*, and the 31-50 age group and the 51 and over age group preferred to use *very* and *really* almost equally, although the frequency for the two amplifiers dropped largely from the 31-50 age group to the 51 and over age group. *Totally* was more frequently used as the age of female speakers was younger. The 17-30 age group for male speakers from MICASE also had a strong preference for *really*; nonetheless, the 31-50 age group and the 51 and over group clearly preferred *very* over *really*. For male speakers, *totally* was the least favored among the 31-50 age group.

All age groups from the BNCweb data strongly preferred *very* over *really* and *totally*. However, the youngest age group used all amplifiers the most frequently for female speakers, but the oldest speakers had the highest frequency for all three amplifiers. *Very*, in particular, had a stiff growing curve as the speakers age increased. The discrepancy between the previous belief that amplifiers are preferred among younger, female speakers and the results obtained from the BNCweb data suggests that British English may have different sociolinguistic tendencies in using amplifiers than American English.

## 5.2 Limitations of the study

The findings deducted from the present study are only tentative, for the study is not without its limitations. First, *Friends-HIMYM* data and the American English sample were not in a perfect comparison. For example, the data set obtained from COCA, the sample of American spoken English, represented all age groups, while *Friends-HIMYM* Corpus data was uttered only by characters in their late 20's and early 30's. MICASE data did show frequencies for each age group; however, MICASE is an academic corpus, and the results obtained from MICASE cannot be said to exactly represent the American norm. The discrepancy of age groups and contextual settings might have made the comparison more difficult or tilted in a certain direction. Second, *Friends-HIMYM* Corpus data was transcribed from television shows, which means that the personality of the characters and writing style of the script writers might play an important role, irrespective of the time periods. For example, the decrease of frequency for *very* and the increased frequency for *totally* in *HIMYM* might be due to the casual, easygoing character of *HIMYM* characters, or to the idiosyncratic writing pattern of the writer for *HIMYM*, rather than reflecting the general shift in the American norm. Moreover, the possibility that the television shows, or the spoken media, do not fully reflect the descriptive use of amplifiers in contemporary American English also exists. Lastly, the genre of the television shows used in the study might have inclined its results. Comedy has its limitations with only a small set of particular words or expressions being used repeatedly in similar settings.

### 5.3 Directions for future research

For a better structured research in the future, a few additional factors must be taken into consideration. First, a new data set which is able to be accurately compared to the American norm could be helpful. For example, academic conversations recorded from actual classrooms might be directly compared to MICASE; a script for a television show in which characters across all ages appear would be a perfect match for COCA. Second, amplifiers other than the three studied in the present study should be revisited for further analysis. *So*, being the most frequently used amplifier, probably would have a certain impact on the amplifier use as a whole, and other amplifiers should also be reexamined for any statistical or linguistic significance. Third, gender/age variables for amplifiers use in British English should be investigated more in detail. The causes for such a high frequency that the oldest British male speakers showed for all three amplifiers are not yet covered in the present study. Lastly, future studies need to investigate other collocates than adjectives and verbs. The present study discovered that some amplifiers do not usually take adjectival or verbal collocates due to their evolving state on the delexicalization scale. Non-adjectival and Non-verbal collocates must be properly categorized and analyzed, in order to better define and stratify stages of the delexicalization process.



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## Appendix A

Top 20 adjectival collocates for *very*, *really*, and *totally* in COCA (per 450 million words)

Rank	<i>very</i>	Freq.	<i>really</i>	Freq.	<i>totally</i>	Freq.
1	very good	8,976	really good	2,726	totally different	578
2	very important	6,970	really important	1,215	totally wrong	99
3	very difficult	5,577	really hard	1,008	totally unacceptable	71
4	very different	3,257	really interesting	817	totally false	69
5	very interesting	2,873	really great	773	totally new	69
6	very hard	2,824	really bad	767	totally inappropriate	44
7	very clear	2,818	really nice	716	totally innocent	42
8	very strong	2,730	really big	558	totally untrue	40
9	very close	2,414	really tough	392	totally honest	33
10	very serious	2,073	really fun	354	totally dependent	32
11	very nice	2,022	really happy	316	totally unexpected	32
12	very happy	1,770	really cool	305	totally separate	29
13	very high	1,562	really difficult	301	totally unrelated	28
14	very tough	1,519	really serious	272	totally convinced	26
15	very small	1,507	really sure	257	totally ridiculous	26
16	very big	1,448	really concerned	242	totally unnecessary	26
17	very long	1,339	really interested	222	totally irresponsible	25
18	very concerned	1,221	really funny	219	totally unfair	25
19	very careful	1,198	really strong	218	totally free	24
20	very simple	1,178	really true	210	totally safe	24

## Appendix B

Adjectival collocates for *very*, *really*, *totally* in *Friends* (per 207,920 words)

<i>Very</i>		<i>Really</i>		<i>Totally</i>	
Adjective	Freq.	Adjective	Freq.	Adjective	Freq.
good	25	good	31	different	7
nice	11	great	17	alone	1
funny	9	nice	15	back	1
sorry	5	sweet	9	cool	1
attractive, pretty	4	sorry	8	drunk	1
beautiful	3	bad	6	empty	1
happy	3	hard	6	gay	1
important	3	big, cute, nervous, weird	5	hot	1
lucky	3	fun, glad, hot, important, long, sad	4	naked	1
sad	3	drunk	3	normal	1
busy	2	excited	3	perfect	1
close	2	funny	3	rational	1
different	2	beautiful	2	right	1
generous	2	boring	2	true	1
interested	2	cool	2	unreasonable	1
interesting	2	expensive	2		
long	2	fast	2		
mature	2	mean	2		
old	2	sick	2		
practical	2	strong	2		
serious	2	tight	2		
special	2	tough	2		
bad	1	upset	2		
bendy	1	alone	1		
big	1	amazing	1		
careful	1	awkward	1		
clear	1	brave	1		
comfortable	1	bright	1		
common	1	classy	1		
cute	1	close	1		
eager	1	complicated	1		
easy	1	confused	1		



effective	1	depressed	1
excited	1	difficult	1
expensive	1	disappointed	1
far	1	easy	1
flattered	1	embarrassing	1
flattering	1	emotional	1
fond	1	exciting	1
formal	1	fancy	1
gentle	1	far	1
glad	1	fit	1
heavy	1	flattered	1
helpful	1	gorgeous	1
impressive	1	guilty	1
insecure	1	happy	1
lifelike	1	heavy	1
little	1	lame	1
loud	1	little	1
nasal	1	loud	1
noticeable	1	mad	1
offensive	1	old	1
productive	1	overweight	1
protective	1	pregnant	1
quiet	1	pretty	1
rich	1	red	1
romantic	1	relieved	1
scary	1	rich	1
secluded	1	right	1
sexual	1	romantic	1
smart	1	round	1
soft	1	scary	1
specific	1	serious	1
successful	1	sexy	1
sweet	1	sharp	1
talented	1	shy	1
tired	1	silly	1
tiny	1	slow	1
understaffed	1	small	1
upset	1	steamy	1
weird	1	stuck	1

wide	1	supportive	1	
wise	1	talented	1	
young	1	tiny	1	
		tired	1	
		uncomfortable	1	
		unfair	1	
		violent	1	
		white	1	
		wonderful	1	
		worried	1	
		young	1	
TOTAL	145	TOTAL	191	TOTAL 21

## Appendix C

Adjectival collocate list for *very*, *really*, *totally* in *HIMYM* (per 208,822 words)

<i>Very</i>		<i>Really</i>		<i>Totally</i>	
Adjective	Freq.	Adjective	Freq.	Adjective	Freq.
important	5	good	11	fine	2
much	4	nice	8	affectionate	1
clear	3	hard	7	awesome	1
good	3	happy	5	cool	1
special	3	hot	5	crazy	1
bad	2	sorry	4	disgusting	1
expensive	2	bad	3	even	1
first	2	fast	3	honest	1
long	2	great	3	hot	1
neat	2	scary	3	new	1
safe	2	slippery	3	normal	1
simple	2	sweet	3	okay	1
small	2	weird	3	overreacted	1
attractive	1	awesome	2	patriotic	1
big	1	big	2	random	1
close	1	boring	2	ridiculous	1
convincing	1	cool	2	right	1
dear	1	crazy	2	safe	1
drunk	1	creepy	2	smitten	1
excited	1	fun	2	sweet	1
famous	1	important	2	true	1
far	1	okay	2	understandable	1
flattered	1	rich	2		
fun	1	sad	2		
gentle	1	scared	2		
hard	1	short	2		
interested	1	special	2		
interesting	1	annoying	1		
intimate	1	bummed	1		

large	1	busy	1	
moved	1	clingy	1	
nostalgic	1	comfortable	1	
open	1	cute	1	
persuasive	1	dark	1	
popular	1	dead	1	
pretty	1	easy	1	
reasonable	1	excited	1	
serious	1	exciting	1	
sorry	1	funny	1	
thin	1	glad	1	
tiny	1	helpful	1	
tough	1	high	1	
unfunky	1	honest	1	
		hungover	1	
		large	1	
		lonely	1	
		memorable	1	
		pretty	1	
		quiet	1	
		relevant	1	
		rough	1	
		serious	1	
		sick	1	
		simple	1	
		small	1	
		smart	1	
		stupid	1	
		tough	1	
		worried	1	
TOTAL	64	TOTAL	121	TOTAL 25

## Appendix D

Top 20 verbal collocates for *very*, *really*, and *totally* in the spoken portion of COCA (per 450 million words)

Rank	<i>very</i>	Freq.	<i>really</i>	Freq.	<i>totally</i>	Freq.
1	very encouraged	74	really do	5,204	totally agree	178
2	very limited	43	really is	4,504	totally disagree	58
3	very moved	40	really have	2,945	totally changed	45
4	very struck	26	really want	2,620	totally destroyed	45
5	very accepting	21	really did	2,328	totally lost	43
6	very taken	19	really think	2,060	totally understand	41
7	very mixed	17	really was	1,828	totally committed	33
8	very concerning	15	really does	1,573	totally shocked	31
9	very discouraged	14	really know	1,566	totally focused	29
10	very influenced	13	really are	1,531	totally believe	27
11	very withdrawn	13	really going	1,506	totally ignored	25
12	very giving	12	really need	1,398	totally get	24
13	very turned	10	really has	1,225	totally devastated	19
14	very freeing	9	really like	1,066	totally opposed	19
15	very best	8	really believe	1,035	totally isolated	17
16	very drawn	8	really be	995	totally change	16
17	very hard-it	8	really get	965	totally do	15
18	very insulted	8	really had	944	totally gone	15
19	very welcomed	7	really wanted	927	totally confused	12
20	very enthused	6	really been	891	totally exonerated	12

## Appendix E

Verbal collocate list for *really* and *totally* in *Friends* (per 207,920 words)

<i>Really</i>		<i>Totally</i>	
Verb	Freq.	Verb	Freq.
do	34	forget	4
want	32	freak	3
like	28	understand	3
be	20	be	2
think	18	check	2
go	15	get	2
have	14	take	2
need	13	believe	1
love	6	blow	1
should	6	crack	1
appreciate	5	decide	1
feel	4	flirt	1
freak	4	hear	1
make	4	mean	1
enjoy	3	misread	1
get	3	ruin	1
miss	3	settle	1
take	3	support	1
can	2	yank	1
come	2		
read	2		
help	2		
hurt	2		
know	2		
leave	2		
matter	2		
mean	2		
put	2		
wish	2		

would	2		
act	1		
admire	1		
ask	1		
believe	1		
calm	1		
care	1		
cry	1		
dig	1		
end	1		
hear	1		
hope	1		
hang	1		
keep	1		
learn	1		
live	1		
look	1		
mess	1		
open	1		
overcharge	1		
owe	1		
prefer	1		
say	1		
seem	1		
start	1		
suck	1		
teach	1		
tell	1		
try	1		
TOTAL	267	TOTAL	30

## Appendix F

Verbal collocate list for *really* and *totally* in *HIMYM* (per 208,822 words)

<i>Really</i>		<i>Totally</i>	
Verb	Freq.	Verb	Freq.
think	21	do	5
want	21	go	3
do	19	understand	3
be	15	buy	2
need	12	hold	2
like	11	win	2
go	8	afford	1
mean	7	be	1
know	6	believe	1
get	5	cut	1
talk	5	dupe	1
care	4	forget	1
love	4	give	1
see	4	get	1
appreciate	3	hide	1
can	3	join	1
have	3	kid	1
hurt	3	love	1
start	3	nail	1
take	3	play	1
bother	2	pull	1
come	2	read	1
cross	2	recommend	1
feel	2	take	1
happen	2	talk	1
lie	2	think	1
look	2	use	1
matter	2	want	1
miss	2		



put	2
try	2
use	2
ask	1
believe	1
break	1
bust	1
chant	1
cheer	1
click	1
connect	1
convince	1
count	1
crop	1
explode	1
fall	1
give	1
grow	1
hang	1
help	1
hire	1
hit	1
hope	1
learn	1
make	1
mature	1
nail	1
root	1
ruin	1
say	1
seem	1
should	1
stick	1
stress	1
struggle	1

suck	1		
suggest	1		
trust	1		
will	1		
win	1		
young	1		
TOTAL	222	TOTAL	39

## Appendix G

Gender/age-specific frequencies for *very*, *really*, and *totally* from MICASE

MICASE									
Female									
	17-30 years old			31-50 years old			51 years old and over		
	Amp.	Non-amp.	TOTAL	Amp.	Non-amp.	TOTAL	Amp.	Non-amp.	TOTAL
<i>very</i>	572	21	593	1,039	44	1,083	412	7	419
<i>really</i>	1,160	86	1,246	978	10	988	378	3	381
<i>totally</i>	78	7	85	36	0	36	11	0	11
TOTAL	1,810	114	1,924	2,053	54	2,107	801	0	811
Male									
	17-30 years old			31-50 years old			51 years old and over		
	Amp.	Non-amp.	TOTAL	Amp.	Non-amp.	TOTAL	Amp.	Non-amp.	TOTAL
<i>very</i>	307	19	326	597	24	621	642	22	662
<i>really</i>	715	63	778	468	10	478	453	8	461
<i>totally</i>	42	0	42	6	0	6	26	0	26
TOTAL	1,064	82	1,146	1,071	34	1,105	1,121	30	1,149

\*Amp. = Amplifying; Non-amp. = Non-amplifying

## Appendix H

Gender/age-specific frequencies for *very*, *really*, and *totally* from BNCweb

BNCweb									
Female									
	25-34 years old			35-44 years old			45-59 years old		
	Amp.	Non-amp.	TOTAL	Amp.	Non-amp.	TOTAL	Amp.	Non-amp.	TOTAL
<i>very</i>	1,014	29	1,043	845	28	873	926	45	971
<i>really</i>	791	433	1,224	562	275	837	563	354	917
<i>totally</i>	43	2	45	26	3	29	23	7	30
TOTAL	1,848	464	2,312	1,433	306	1,739	1,512	406	1,918
Male									
	25-34 years old			35-44 years old			45-59 years old		
	Amp.	Non-amp.	TOTAL	Amp.	Non-amp.	TOTAL	Amp.	Non-amp.	TOTAL
<i>very</i>	1,263	61	1,324	1,869	75	1,944	2,504	102	2,606
<i>really</i>	588	257	845	584	274	858	1,002	468	1,470
<i>totally</i>	48	1	49	36	2	38	65	5	70
TOTAL	1,899	319	2,218	2,489	351	2,840	3,571	485	4,146

\*Amp. = Amplifying; Non-amp. = Non-amplifying

## 국문 초록

# 미국 시트콤 속에서의 영어 확장사: *Friends*와 *How I Met Your Mother*에 관한 코퍼스 기 반 연구

영어 확장사는 특유의 융통성과 빠르게 변화하는 성향 때문에, 여러 문법 요소 중에서도 가장 흥미로운 연구 주제로 꼽힌다. 또한, 영어 확장사는 종종 구어적인 쓰임새 및 여성 화자들과 연관 지어진다. 이 연구는 미국 텔레비전 시트콤 속에 나타난 여러 가지 확장사들의 지난 10년간의 사용빈도, 선별된 확장사들의 현재 빈도순위, 그리고 근대 미국 영어에서의 확장사들의 실제 쓰임새가 텔레비전 시트콤에 반영되는지 살펴보는 것을 목적으로 한다. 또한 이 연구는 선별된 확장사들과 언어관계에 있는 형용사와 동사의 종류가 무엇인지를 알아보고, 확장사의 쓰임새와 화자의 성별간의 사회언어학적 관계에 대해 알아본다.

세계적으로 유명한 두 편의 미국 텔레비전 시트콤, *Friends*와 *How I Met Your Mother*의 대본을 수집하여 *Friends-HIMYM* 코퍼스라는 독창적인 코퍼스가 만들어졌고, *Friends-HIMYM* 코퍼스는 Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA)의 spoken 부분, Corpus of Historical American English (COHA), 그리고 Corpus of American Soap Operas (CASO)와 비교 분석되었다. 선별된 *very*, *really*, 그리고 *totally* 세 개의 확장사의 쓰임새를 연대별 분포, 언어관계, 성별/나이에 따른 선호도를 바탕으로

분석하였다.

결과는 시트콤에 나타난 확장사의 쓰임새는 근대 미국 영어를 부분적으로 반영하는 것으로 나타났다. 현 연구에 사용된 모든 코퍼스에서 *very*가 가장 오래된 확장사였으며, *really*와 *totally*가 그 뒤를 이었다. 그러나, *Friends-HIMYM* 코퍼스와 *CASO*에서는 *really*의 사용빈도가 가장 높았던 반면, *COCA*와 *COHA*에서는 *very*의 사용빈도가 가장 높았다. 또한, *very*와 *really*는 스칼라의 보통 형용사와 연어관계에 있으며, *totally*는 좀 더 복잡하고 접두사가 있는 형용사와 연어관계에 있었다. *Very*는 절대 동사를 연어로 갖지 않았으며, *really*는 조동사와 인지동사, *totally*는 치경접미사가 있는 동사와 연어관계에 있었다. 세 개의 확장사는 모두 남성 화자들보다 여성 화자들에 의해 더 자주 사용되었다. 그러나 *MICASE*와 *BNCweb*과의 비교 분석에 따르면, 확장사 선호도는 성별과 나이에 따라 미국 영어와 영국 영어 표본에서 다른 양상을 보였다.

주요어 : 영어 확장사, 구어, 연어관계, 코퍼스, 성별, 텔레비전, 역문법화, 탈문법화

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