

The Intensifiers *this/that* in Some Varieties of English

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Abstract

The intensifiers *this/that* acquired their adverbial status as a result of a grammaticalization process by means of which the deictic demonstratives became degree adverbs with the meaning of ‘to this/that extent, so much, so’ (OED s.v. *this/that* adv; Diessel 1999:17). The phenomenon disseminated in the early 19th-century as a typical resource of spoken English and since then, these intensifiers have found their room in the written domain imposing a scalar construal on adjectives for which scale is not the default construal (Author 2019:167-169). These intensifiers have been hitherto ignored in the literature, perhaps as a result of an erroneous accusation of informality, and consequently *so* has been traditionally recommended in these contexts (Fowler 1926:772; Swan 1980:566; Quirk et al. 1985:1466).

Even though the phenomenon is observed in practically all the varieties of English worldwide, it has a variable distribution. The phenomenon is found to be more widespread in American English, with all the other inner circle varieties lagging well behind it (i.e., Canadian English, British English, and Australian English). Among the outer circle varieties, the construction is also subject to some geographical preferences. In African Englishes, these intensifiers become more significant in Nigerian English, whereas in Asian Englishes Singapore English stands out. The present study then contributes to the study of the development of these intensifiers in some varieties of English worldwide with the following objectives: a) to analyze their use and compare their distribution in different varieties of English; and b) to cast light on the lexico-semantic structure of the right-hand collocates. The

evidence comes from the New Zealand, Indian, Singaporean, and Philippines components of the *Corpus of Global Web-based English*.

Keywords: Intensifiers, This/That, World Englishes, Mode of Construal, Corpus Linguistics.

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