

## Intensifier Variation in Norwegian

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While the linguistic and social correlates of intensifier variation have been explored widely in languages such as English (e.g., D’Arcy, 2015; Fuchs, 2017), Norwegian intensifiers have been largely unexplored other than a few descriptive works which lack sociolinguistic coverage (e.g., Skommer, 1992). Because previous studies have found intensifier use to correlate with social factors such as sex and age (e.g., D’Arcy, 2015; Fuchs, 2017; Stratton, 2020), the present study employs variationist quantitative methods to analyze the correlation of these factors in Norwegian. Two research questions were posited. First, what is the current distribution of Norwegian intensifiers (i.e., which variants are most frequent?), and second, is intensifier use sensitive to linguistic (e.g., syntactic position) and social constraints (e.g., sex and age)?

To examine these questions, the *Norwegian Speech Corpus* (NoTa-Oslo), reasonably stratified for sex and age, was used. Following previous research (Stratton, 2020), a sample of 5000 adjectives was randomly extracted from the corpus. Each intensifiable adjective was coded for the absence or occurrence of a preceding intensifier (1 = yes, 0 = no), as well as linguistic (syntactic position, adjective type) and social factors (sex, age).

Results from the distributional analysis revealed two major findings. First, Norwegian amplifiers (e.g., *veldig* ‘very’, *så* ‘so’, *helt* ‘completely’) were more frequent than downtoners (e.g., *litt* ‘a little bit’), which in line with crosslinguistic evidence (e.g., Stratton, 2020), suggests that amplification is more common than moderation. Second, while a total of 36 intensifying adverbs were identified in the sample, *veldig* ‘very’, *så* ‘so’ and *helt* ‘completely’ were the most frequent. Some examples are reported in (1).

- (1) (a) *jeg var veldig flink på skolen* ‘I was very good at school’  
(b) *jeg synes det er så greit å ha* ‘I think it’s so good to have’

To address the second research question, a mixed effects logistic regression model was run with intensification as the binary dependent variable and sex and age as independent variables. The regression analysis found both age and sex to be significant factors influencing the choice to intensify a Norwegian adjective or not. Women, specifically younger women, used intensifiers more frequently than men; a finding which resonates with cross-Germanic data (e.g., D’Arcy, 2015; Fuchs, 2017; Stratton, 2020). All in all, this study suggests that the Norwegian intensifier system is subject to the same constraints of structured heterogeneity observed in other Germanic languages, pointing toward some potential common crosslinguistic tendencies.

### Selected References

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