

# **Old English Intensifiers: A Quantitative Analysis of the Old English Intensifier System**

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# Intensifiers

An **intensifier** is a **device** which scales a quality **upward** or **downward** from an assumed norm (Bolinger, 1972: 17)

It is hot

(In theoretical terms: *it is  $\emptyset$  hot*)

It is *very* hot

It is *really* hot

# Quirk et al. (1985)

Quirk et al. (1985: 590) divide **intensifiers** into **two sub-categories** depending on their intensifying function

**Amplifiers:** “scale upwards from the assumed norm”

e.g., *hot* > *very hot*

**Downtoners:** “scale down from the assumed norm”

e.g., *hot* > *a little bit hot*

# Amplifiers

Quirk et al. (1985: 590) subdivide **amplifiers** further depending on their **semantic function** into *boosters* and *maximisers*

**Boosters:** “a high point on the scale”

e.g., it is *really* hot

**Maximizers:** “upper extreme point on the scale”

e.g., it is *completely* ridiculous

# Crosslinguistic Tendencies

**Amplifiers are more frequent than downtoners**

**Boosters are more frequent than maximizers**

> (English - D'Arcy, 2015: 460)

> (German - Stratton, 2020a: 200)

> (Norwegian - Stratton & Sundquist, in progress)

# Crosslinguistic Tendencies

**Adjectives** are the most frequently intensified part of speech

- > (English - Bäcklund, 1973: 279)
- > (German - Androutsopoulos, 1998: 457- 458)
- > (Norwegian - Westervoll, 2015: 4)

# Why Study Intensifiers?

They **provide** speakers with the **opportunity** to **impress, persuade, praise**

(Partington, 1993: 178)

They **lose** their **intensifying uniqueness** over time (Tagliamonte, 2008: 391)

Intensifiers undergo perpetual **renewal, recycling, and replacement**

diachronically (Ito & Tagliamonte, 2003; Tagliamonte, 2008; Stratton, 2020b)

# Lexical Replacement

Old English: *swiðe* (e.g., Ingersoll, 1978; Méndez-Naya, 2003)

Middle English: *ful, wel, riht* (e.g., Fettig, 1934: 15-21; Mustanoja, 1960: 319-32)

Early Modern English: *very* (e.g., Méndez-Naya & Pahta, 2010)

Modern English: *very, really, so* (e.g., Ito & Tagliamonte, 2003)

# Ebb and Flow

The intensifier *wel* was used in **Old English** (e.g., Peltola, 1971: 656)

It was thought to have come **most popular** in the **13<sup>th</sup> century**, but **declined** in frequency **after mid-14<sup>th</sup> century** (e.g., Fettig, 1935: 15-21; Mustanoja, 1960: 319–327)

In	þat	forest...	þer	woned	a	<b>wel</b>	<b>old</b>	cherl
In	that	forest	there	lived	a	well	old	man

‘A really old common man lived in the forest’  
[Walter William Skeat, *a1375*; from *William of Palerne* (cited in *OED2*)]

# Ebb and Flow

**Picked up** again in British English **500** years later

(Ito & Tagliamonte, 2003; Stratton, 2020b)

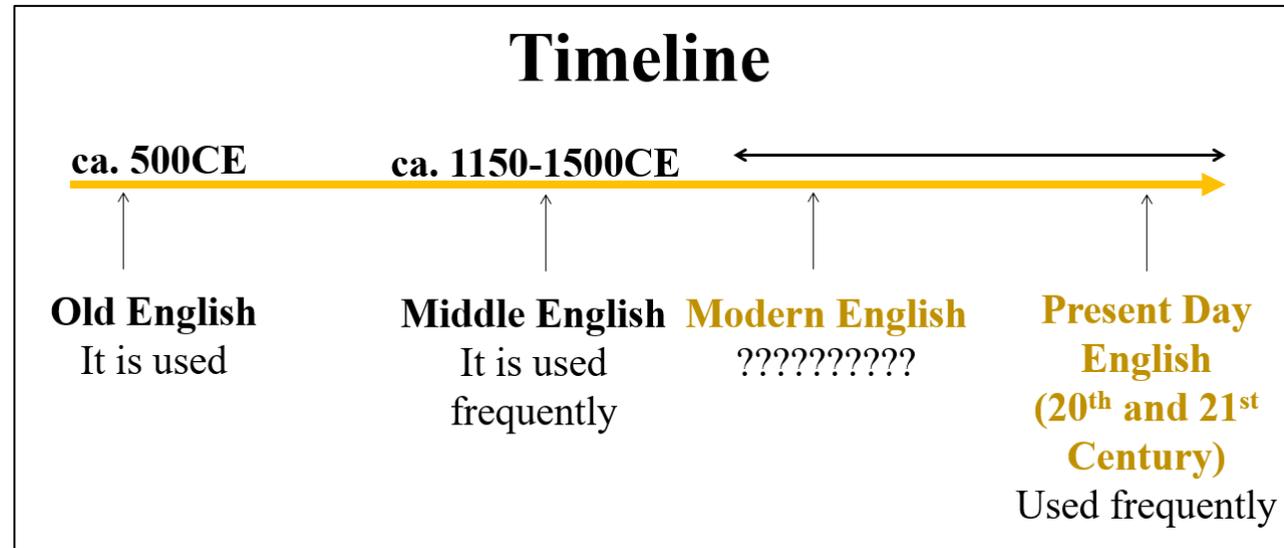
(1a) It's *well* hot today

(1b) I'm *well* glad

(1c) That film is *well* funny

(1d) This is *well* knacker

# Ebb and Flow



Its use **never** really **disappeared** (Stratton, 2020b)

# Ebb and Flow

“**Once a word has evolved to have an intensifier function it remains in the reservoir of forms that a language user may deploy to boost meaning from that point onwards regardless of whether it actually becomes one of the favoured forms or not**”

(Tagliamonte, 2008: 391)

# Why Study Intensifiers?

Systematic **linguistic** and **social** correlates

Linguistic:

- > **Semantic classification** (Méndez-Naya, 2008; Méndez-Naya, 2019)
- > **Syntactic function** (Ito & Tagliamonte, 2003; Tagliamonte & Denis, 2014)

Social:

- > **Age** (e.g., Ito & Tagliamonte, 2003)
- > **Sex** (e.g., Fuchs, 2017; Stratton, 2020a)

# Why Study Intensifiers?

- > Site of **much variability** and **lexical replacement**
- > Diachronic **waxing** and **waning**
- > **Linguistic** and **social** correlates

# Old English Intensifiers

**Syntactic** (lexical) and **morphological** (bound) intensification :

(2a) ...þa þe **swiþe** ealde beoð

‘ that which very old is’

‘which is very old’ [850-950, COLAECCE]

(2b) se swurdbora wæs **forealdod** man

‘The sword-bearer was for-old man’

‘The sword-bearer was a very old man’ [950-1050, COAELIVE]

Previous focus on morphological intensification (e.g., Lenker, 2008)

# Old English Intensifiers

The variant *swiðe* ‘very’ is reported as the **most frequent** Old English intensifier (Méndez-Naya, 2003)

However, there is **variation** by **text type**/genre (Ingersoll, 1978: 160)

> *swiðe* less frequent in poetry

> *to* ‘too’, *eal* ‘all’, *wel* ‘well’, *ful* ‘very’ more frequent in poetry

# The Present Study

# Variable System

3. (a) Ða ða þæt folc þæt gehirde, hi wæron  $\emptyset$  bliðe gewordenne  
‘Then when the people that heard, they were happy become’  
‘Then when the people heard that, they were happy’ [950-1050, COAPOLLO]
- (b) Hie þa swa blipe on morgenne wæron & gefeonde ferdon on gean þaem heðnum  
‘They then so happy in morning were and rejoiced traveled toward the heathens’  
‘They were then so happy in the morning & happily proceeded against the heathens’  
[950-1050, COBLICK]
- (c) ...ða wæs ic swiðe blipe  
‘...then was I very happy’  
‘...then I was very happy’ [950-1050, COALEX]

# Methodology

## Data Source:

- > The **Old English** component of the *Helsinki Corpus of English Texts* (Rissanen et al. 1991; Kytö 1996)
- > Contains **413,250 words**
- > **Four sub-periods:** O1 [2,190 words], O2 [92,050 words], O3 [251,630 words]), O4 [67,380 words]
- > Time depth of approx. **100 years per sub-period**

# Methodology

- > **Downloaded** the **XML dataset**
- > **Translated** ca. **80 percent** of the texts
  - **Compared** my **translations** with (Early/Late) **Modern English translations**
  - **Readers** and **translation commentaries** were useful (e.g., Marsden, 2015)
  - Located **digital copies**/facsimiles found through online platforms  
(e.g., Internet Archive, HathiTrust Digital Library)
  - **Sample** of my **translations** was **checked** by some readers/scholars of Old English

# Methodology

- > Manually **coded** each **intensifiable adjective** for **intensification** or not
- > **Intensifiability** was based on **gradability** and the **presence/absence** of intensification in Old English

4. (a) hi wæron **bliðe-ADJ**

(b) ða wæs ic **swiðe-ADV** **blipe-ADJ**

(e.g., *godcund* ‘divine’ not intensified in the Old English corpus)

# Circumscription of Variable Context

## Excluded:

- > **Fixed collocations** (e.g., *halig gast* ‘holy spirit’)
- > **Negative** (e.g., *ne sceal no to hatheort* ‘not shall be too hot-tempered’)
- > **Comparative** (e.g., *miccle lapre spell* ‘many/much more hostile tales’)
- > **Superlative** (e.g., e.g., *ænlicost* ‘most eminent’)
- > **Classifiers** (e.g., *cristene* ‘Christian’ and *hæðnum* ‘heathen’)
- > **Non-gradable adjectives** (e.g., *werleas* ‘unmarried’)
- > **Emphasizers** (e.g., *soplice* ‘truthfully/certainly’)

# Functionally Non-Equivalent Contexts

4. (a) Geswet **swipe leohtlice** mid hunige

‘Sweeten very lightly with honey’

‘Sweeten very lightly with honey’ [850-950, CMPERIDI]

(b) ðeah hit **ful wundorlic** ne sie

‘Though it fully wonderful not be’

‘Although it may not be very nice’ [850-950, COCURA]

# Data Coding

## Internal:

- **Syntactic function** [predicative vs attributive]
- **Semantic classification** [based on Dixon's (2005: 484-485) taxonomy]

## External:

- **Time** (O1, O2, O3, O4)
- **Text Type** [prose, verse]
- **Text Origin** [Latin-based, vernacular composition]
- **Text ID** *\*included as a random factor*

- ① Otto said to his lord, to King Alfred (the -e on hlāforde) that he of all 'Northmen' lived/dwelted the most north
- ② He said that he lived in the land north-west against/opposite West-sea
- ③ He said however that the land is very far from there (thence), but it is all deserted, other than in a few places where "Finna's" (Finns / Saamu) <sup>camp</sup>, (in) hunting in winter, and fishing in summer by sea
- ④ He said that he in summer, occasionally wanted to find (lit. how long the land lay north) - in other words 'how far north it is', or whether any man lived to the north of the wilderness.
- ⑤ Then he traveled northward along the land
- ⑥ it was allowed to him all way the deserted land on the starboard and the wide sea/open sea on the backboard for three days
- ⑦ Then he ~~traveled~~ was <sup>as</sup> far north as the whalehunters travel
- ⑧ Then he traveled yet/even more north as far as he 'might' (could) in another three days sailing
- ⑨ Then the land turned around to the east or the sea (sēo sēo) in the land, he didn't know whether

- VERBS
- seccgan [sæcʒan] 'to say' (past sæcle)
  - bugan [ɔ] 'to dwell' (past. būde)
  - wician [fɪ] 'to camp'

fear = far  
 fīrrest = furthest

IV  
 THE VOYAGES OF OHTHERE AND WULFSTAN

[From Additional MS. 47967 (also known as Lauderdale or Tollerach MS.), pp. 13 f., and Cotton MS. Tiberius B. i, ff. 12<sup>v</sup> ff., both in the British Museum]

THE account of these voyages was added in the Old English translation of Orosius, *Historia adversum Paganos*, which William of Malmesbury attributes to King Alfred. The account, which follows a description of northern Europe which also is an addition by the translator, is of great interest both for its content and as a specimen of natural prose of Alfred's time. The Lauderdale MS. (L), of the first half of the tenth century, has lost a gathering which included most of this text. L has been followed as far as it goes (l. 37), and the rest is taken from Tiberius B. i (C), an eleventh-century manuscript. Fragments of two other manuscripts do not contain this part of the work.

participles is relative pronoun, second is neuter def. (land) is minor

the <h> shows the aspiration of the first <t> → In English "Otto"

SUBJUNCTIVE is used for reported speech

<siē> is the subjunctive of 'to be'. This is another variant of <si>

they traveled

about in another three days

Ohtere <sup>traveled</sup> s<sup>æ</sup>de his hlāforde<sup>DATIVE</sup> Ælfrede<sup>DATIVE</sup> cyninge, þæt hē ealra Norðmonna norþmest būde. Hē cwæð þæt hē būde on þām lande norþweardum wiþ þā Westsæ. Hē s<sup>æ</sup>de þeah þæt þæt land <sup>siē</sup> swiþe lang norþ þonan; ac hit is eal wēste, būton on fēawum stōwum stycemælum wiciað Finnas, on huntoðe on wintra, ond on sumera on fiscap<sup>2</sup> be þære s<sup>æ</sup>. Hē s<sup>æ</sup>de þæt hē æt sumum cirre wolde fandian hū longe þæt land norþryhte lāge, opþe hwæðer ænig mon be norðan þām wēstenne būde. þā fōr hē norþryhte be þām lande: lēt him ealne wēg þæt wēste land on ðæt stēorbord, ond þā widsæ on ðæt bæcbord<sup>10</sup> þrie dagas. þā wæs hē swā feor norþ swā þā hwælhuntañ firrest farap. þā fōr hē þā giet norþryhte swā feor swā hē meante on þām oþrum þrim dagum gesiglan. þā bæag þæt land þær ēastryhte, opþe sēo s<sup>æ</sup> in on ðæt lond, hē nysse hwæðer, būton

<saē> the vowel is like German <er> (E:)

accusative for time expression

whole numbers

<sup>1</sup> one þæt omitted L    <sup>2</sup> fiscnoðe C, with ñ added above in later hand

he didn't know whether

then the land turned to the east or the sea or the land

past of 'witan' from *biddan* 'to wait'

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15 hē wisse þæt hē ðær bād westan windes ond<sup>1</sup> hwōn norþan, ond siglde ðā<sup>2</sup> east be lande swā swā hē meahste on fēower dagum gesiglan. þā sceolde hē ðær bīdan ryhtnorþanwindes, for ðæm þæt land bēag þær sūþryhte, opþe seo sēa in on ðæt land, hē nysse hwæper. þā siglde hē þonan sūðryhte be lande swā swā hē

20 mehte on fīf dagum gesiglan. Ðā læg þær ān micel ēa up in on þæt land. þā cirdon hie up in on ðā ēa, for þæm hie ne dorston forþ bi þære ēa siglan for unfriþe; for þæm ðæt land was eall gebūn on ðpre heafle þære ēas<sup>3</sup>. Ne mētte hē ær nīan gebūn land, siþþan hē from his āgnum hām for; ac him was ealne

25 wēg wēste land on þæt stēorbord, būtan fīscerūm ond fugelerum ond huntum, ond þæt wæron eall<sup>4</sup> Finnas; ond him was ā wīdsæ on ðæt bæcbord. þā Beormas hæfdon swīpe wel gebūn<sup>5</sup> hira land; ac hie ne dorston þæron cuman. Ac þara Terfinna land was eal wēste, būton ðær huntan gewicodon, opþe fīsceras, 30 opþe fugeleras.

Fela spella him sædon þā Beormas ægþer ge of hiera āgnum lande ge of þæm landum þe ymb hie ūtan wæron; ac hē nyste hwæt þæs sōþes was, for þæm hē hit self ne geseah. þā Finnas, him þūhte, ond þā Beormas spræcon nēah ān geþeode. Swīpost hē for ðider, tō ēacan þæs landes scēawunge, for þæm horshwælum<sup>6</sup>, for ðæm hie habbað swīpe æpele bān on hiora tōpum (þā tēð hie brōhton sume þæm cyninge); ond hiora hūd<sup>7</sup> bið swīðe gōd tō scīprāpum. Se hwæl bið micle læssa þonne ðore hwalas; ne bið hē lengra ðonne syfan elna lang; ac on his

40 āgnum lande is se betsta hwælhuntað; þā bēoð eahta and fēowertiges elna lange, and þā mæstan fīftiges elna lange; þara hē sæde þæt hē syxa sum ofslōge syxtig on twām dagum. Hē was swīðe spēdig man on þæm æhtum þe heora spēða on bēoð, þæt is, on wildrum<sup>8</sup>. Hē hæfde þā gyt, ðā hē þone

<sup>1</sup> oððe C    <sup>2</sup> þanon C    <sup>3</sup> ea C    <sup>4</sup> ealle C    <sup>5</sup> gebun C  
<sup>6</sup> horschwælum L    <sup>7</sup> here begins the lacuna in L    <sup>8</sup> altered to wildeorum in a later hand

TO RE  
 wesan or bēon  
 ic eam / ic bēo  
 pu art / þu bist  
 he is / he bið  
 we beoð / we biðoð

part of bugar

since/ after

from gōdapel 'gospel' (good story)  
 it seemed to him

teeth

because

from 'leagan' to lay (like German) liegt

double negative

'own' from āgan 'to have' (cognate German) eigen/eigne  
 ever

'very-est' (most of all)

orthographic variation

tooth wide (femine)

- bugar 'to dwell' (būde 'lived', gebūn 'participle')

- ā 'ever'

(13) (this) The whale (whales) is much smaller than other whales. He (referring to the whale) is longer than 7 elle long, but in his own land is the best whale hunting which are 40 elle long and the next 50 elle long, which

- ① he know that he waited (bād) west of the windes and slightly north of the wind and then sailed east by the land (i.e. along the coast) as far as he could/might in four days sailing
- ② Then he had to wait there for a northerly wind because the land turned to the south, or the river in the land, he ~~could not~~ didn't know which
- ③ Then he sailed southward along the coast as much as he could in 5 days sailing.
- ④ Then a great river / Then lay a great river (which went inland)
- ⑤ Then they turned inland up the river because they dared not travel along the river for hostility (for fear of being attacked) because the land, on the other half of the river, was well inhabited
- ⑥ He didn't meet before any ~~land~~ inhabited land since he left his own home
- ⑦ But to him all the land through the journey was deserted, apart from fishers, fowlers and hunters, and they were all Lapps (Sami) and he to him was ever open sea on the backboard
- ⑧ Then the Burmians had very well inhabited their land but dared not come
- ⑨ But the hunter-godteers' land was all deserted, other than the hunters who ~~camped~~ camped fishers or fowlers dwelled
- ⑩ The Burmians told him many stories both of their own land and of the land that was around them, but he didn't know how/what was true/how true that was because he didn't see it himself
- ⑪ The Finns, it seemed to him, and the Burmians spoke virtually one language
- ⑫ Most of all he travelled to there to explore the land for walrus because they had very noble bones on their teeth which they brought to the king, and their hide is very good for ship cables

- ① He was a very wealthy man in those possessions in which those possessions are (consist), that is, in wild animals
- ② He had then yet / still, when he sought the king, 6 hundred tamed animals unsold.
- ③ These animals they called reindeer, of which / of them 6 were decoys, which are very dear (expensive) among the Saami, because they captured wild reindeers <sup>with them</sup>
- ④ He was among the first men in the land, though he did not have more than 20 cows, 20 sheep and 20 hogs, and that little that he ploughed with horses, but their income is greater / most in tribute that the Saami ~~paid~~ paid to ~~the~~ him
- ⑤ The tribute is in skin of animals and in feathers of birds, and bones of whales, and ~~the~~ (the) shiprope, which are made of whale hide and hide of seals
- ⑥ Each paid by his / their rank. The highest rank shall pay 15 martin skin (skin of martin), and 5 reindeer and a bear skin and 10 measures <sup>type of animal</sup> of feathers and bear coat or coat of otto, and 2 shipropes, each of which should be 6 ells long or be made of whale hide or hide of seals
- ⑦ He said that the land of the Norwegians was very long and very narrow
- ⑧ All / everything that one could either graze / eat or plough, - ~~but~~ (refer back to previous clause) lay along the coast, and that is though in some places very rocky
- ⑨ Wild moors lie toward the east and toward ~~up~~ on the cultivated land
- ⑩ On the moor live the Saami. And the cultivated land is widest in an eastward direction, and the more north it is the more narrow it comes
- ⑪ Eastward it may be 60 miles broad or a

### VERBS

- gylðan - to pay
- OR
- gieðan (gylt) <sub>-paid</sub>
- eardian 'to live'
- herian 'to raid'

### OTHER

op - until

hriper

subjunctive  
"should be"

narrow

subject  
(wild moors  
lie toward  
the east)

Then is alongside the land to the south, on the other half of the Moor, Sweden

secan 'to seek' 'to search'

(ge)fōn 'to capture'  
(fōh - gefangen)

### THE VOYAGES OF OHTHERE AND WULFSTAN 19

cyningc sōhte, tamra dēora unbebohra syx hund. þā dēor 45  
 hi hātað 'hrānas'; þāra wæron syx stælhānas; ðā beoð swyðe  
 dýre mid Finnum, for ðæm hý fōð þā wildan hrānas mid. Hē  
 wæs mid þæm fyrstum mannum on þæm lande: næfde hē þeah  
 mā ðonne twentig hryðera, and twentig scēapa, and twentig  
 swýna; and þæt lytle þæt hē erede, hē erede mid horsan. Ac 50  
 hyra ār is mæst on þæm gafole þe ðā Finnas him gylðað. þæt  
 gafol bið on dēora fellum, and on fugela feðerum, and hwales  
 bāne, and on þæm sciprāpum, þe beoð of hwæles hýde geworht,  
 and of sēoles. Æghwile gylt be hys gebyrdum. Se byrdesta  
 sceall gylðan fiftýne mearðes fell, and fif hrānes, and ān beran 55  
 fel, and tyn ambra feðra, and berenne kyrtel oððe yterenne, and  
 twēgen sciprāpas; ægþer sý syxtig elna lang, oþer sý of hwæles  
 hýde geworht, oþer of sioles.

Hē sāde ðæt Norðmanna land wære swýpe lang and swýðe  
 smæl. Eal þæt his man āper oððe ettan oððe erian mæg, þæt 60  
 lið wið ðā sē; and þæt is þeah on sumum stōwum swýðe clūdig;  
 and licgað wilde mōras wið ēastan and wið uppon emnlange  
 þæm býnum lande. On þæm mōrum eardiað Finnas. And þæt  
 býne land is ēasteward brādost, and symle swā norðor swā  
 smælre. Easteward hit mæg bion syxtig mīla brād, oþpe hwēne 65  
 brādre, and middeward þritig oððe brādre; and norðeward  
 hē cwæð, þær hit smalost wære, þæt hit mihte beon þreora mīla  
 brād tō þæm mōre; and se mōr syðþan, on sumum stōwum, <sup>to</sup>  
 swā brād swā man mæg in twām wucum oferfēran; and on <sup>cross</sup>  
 sumum stōwum swā brād swā man mæg on syx dagum ofer- 70  
 fēran.

Ðonne is tōemnes þæm lande sūðewardum, on ðære healfe  
 þæs mōres, Swēoland, op þæt land norðeward; and tōemnes  
 þæm lande norðewardum, Cwēna land. þā Cwēnas hergiað  
 hwilum on ðā Norðmen ofer ðone mōr, hwilum þā Norðmen 75  
 on hý. And þær sint swýðe micle meras fersce geond þā mōras;

brædre

and there are very great  
 fresh water lakes throughout the moors

road to live SP

herian

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M	N	O	P	Q
1	Text ID	Text Origin	Before	Intensifier	Adjective	After	After 2	Adjective	Meaning	Semant	S_Tax	Position	Time	Text_Typ	Depend	Translat	
2	CODOC1	Native	mid	-	eaðmode	hernisse		eaðmode	humble	10	human propensity	Attributive	1	1	0		
3	CODOC1	Native	his +daere	-	haligran			halig	holy	10	human propensity	Predicative	1	1	0		
4	CODOC1	Native	+d+at +deara +anig sie +te londes	-	weorðe	sie ðe la	sie land	weorðe	worthy	10	human propensity	Predicative	1	1	0	that any of	
5	CODOC1	Native	+der +deara nan ne sie ðe londes weorðe-adj sie	-	weorðe	sie		weorðe	worthy	10	human propensity	Predicative	1	1	0	that no of t	
6	CODOC1	Native	+donne from +dyrelan stane up on broc o+d	-	smalan		cum fram	smal	narrow	1	dimension	Attributive	1	1	0		
7	CODOC1	Native	fram	-	smalan		cumbes heafde to	smal	narrow	1	dimension	Attributive	1	1	0		
8	CODOC1	Native	+Donon on +done healden weg wi+d	-	hwitan	stanes		hwit	white	5	color	Attributive	1	1	0		
9	CODOC1	Native	an	-	haran	stan		haran		5	color	Attributive	1	1	0		
10	CODOC1	Native	+da	-	lytlan	burg	westwearde	lytle	little	1	dimension	Attributive	1	1	0		
11	B CONORTHU	Native	+ta he walde on galgu gistiga	-	modig		for men	modig	proud	10	human propensity	Predicative	1	1	0		
12	B CONORTHU	Native		-				fūs	eager	10	human propensity	Predicative	1	1	0		
13	B CONORTHU	Native	Mec se	-	ueta		uong uundrum fr	wet	wet	2	physical	Predicative	1	2	0		
14	B CONORTHU	Native	mec se ueta	-	uuong		uundrum freorig	uung	young	4	age	Predicative	1	2	0		
15	B CONORTHU	Native	uundrum	-	freorig			freorig	freezing	2	physical	Predicative	1	2	0		
16	B CONORTHU	Native	ða ði	-	geolu		godueb geatum f	geolu		2	physical	Predicative	1	2	0		
17	COLAW2	Native	nage he hie ut on	-	elpeodig	folc	to bebycgganne	elpeodig	foreign/hos	6	value	Attributive	2	1	0		
18	COLAW2	Native	Gif he hire +tara nan ne do, +tonne sie hio	-	frioh			freoh	free	11	similarity	Predicative	2	1	0		
19	COLAW2	Native	sie he feores	-	wyrþe			weorðe	worthy	10	human propensity	Predicative	2	1	0		
20	COLAW2	Native	se hlaford bi+d	-	unscyldig			unscyldig	innocent	10	human propensity	Predicative	2	1	0		
21	COLAW2	Native	Gif se oxa	-	hnitol			hnitol	aggressive	10	human propensity	Predicative	2	1	0		
22	COLAW2	Native	Gif se hlaford +tonne wisse, ++at se oxa	-	hnitol		waere	hnitol	aggressive	10	human propensity	Predicative	2	1	0		
23	COLAW2	Native	Gif þu swa ne dest, +tonne cleopa+d he to me, & ic hine gehiere, forðdon þe ic eom	swiþe	mildheort			mildheort	compassion	10	human pr	1	Predicative	2	1	1	'because s
24	COLAW2	Native		-	leases	monnes word		leas	false.	9	qualification	Attributive	2	1	0	false worc s	
25	COLAW2	Native		-	unryht	gewill		unryht	righteous	10	human propensity	Attributive	2	1	0	s	
26	COLAW2	Native		-	sopfaestne	man		sopfaest	steadfast	10	human propensity	Attributive	2	1	0	s	
27	COLAW2	Native		-	unscyldigne	man		unscyldig	innocent	10	human propensity	Attributive	2	1	0	s	
28	COLAW2	Native	þam	-	elpeodegan			elpeodig	foreign/hos	6	value	Attributive	2	1	0	s	
29	COLAW2	Native		-	swiþe	sedmildre		swiþe	compass	2	physical	Attributive	2	1	0	compassion (t	

# Results

# Results

**Table 1.** Overall Intensification Rate

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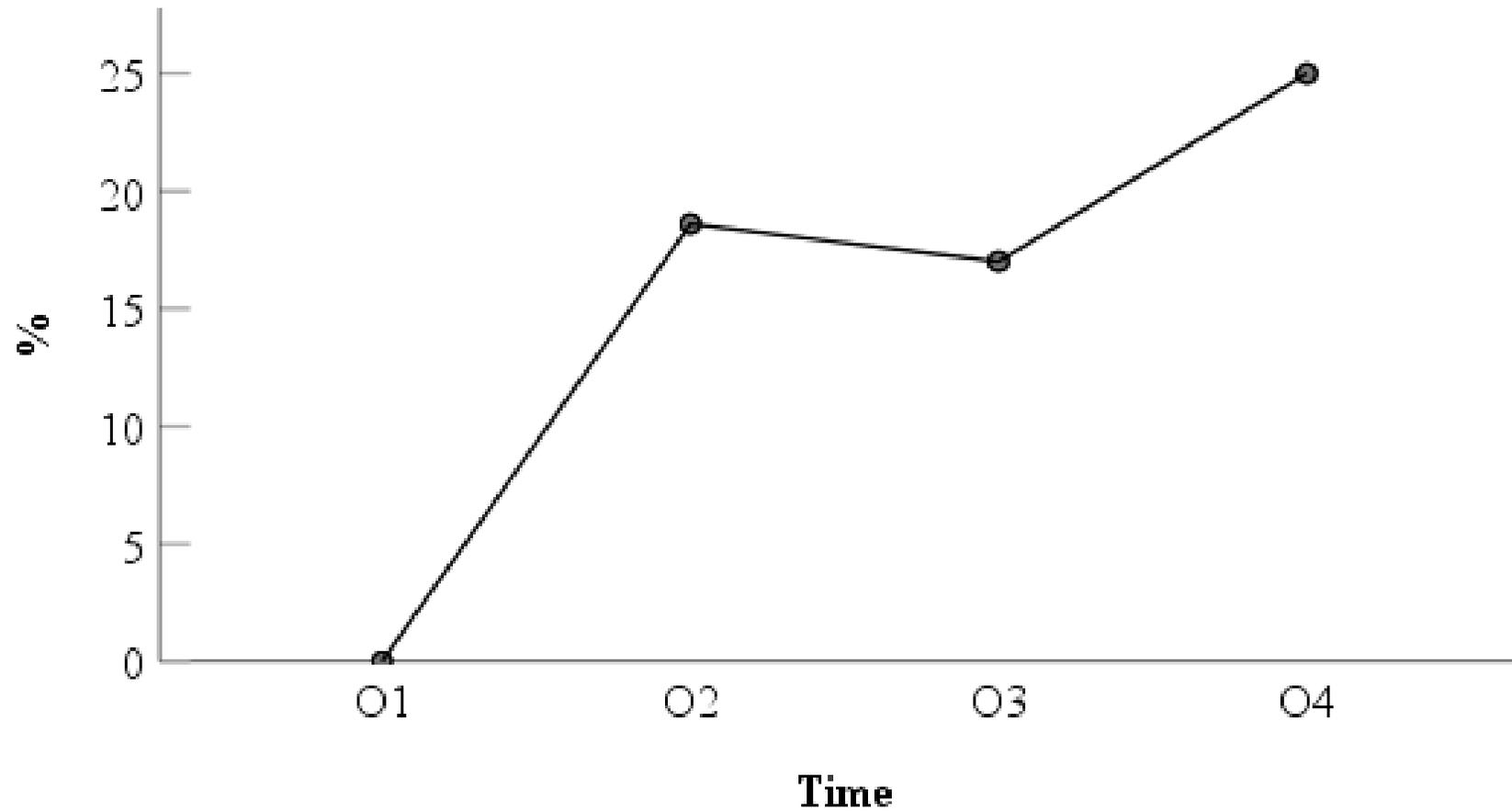
Total  $N = 2026$

---

Intensified		Not Intensified	
%	N	%	N
18.6	376	81.4	1650

---

# Intensification Over Time



**Table 2.** Overall Distribution of Intensifier Variants

Intensifier	Gloss	Tokens	%
<i>swide</i>	‘very’	215	57%
<i>ful</i>	‘full’	41	11%
<i>swa</i>	‘so’	27	7%
<i>to</i>	‘too’	21	6%
<i>eal</i>	‘all’	20	5%
<i>wel</i>	‘well’	15	4%
<i>pearle</i>	‘very’	10	3%
OTHERS <sup>12</sup>		27	7%
		376	100

\* Only five percent of the variants were downtoners (e.g., *hwon norpan* ‘a little north’)

\* Less than five percent of adjectives included in the envelope of variation were intensified morphologically (e.g., *fore-* ‘very’)

**Table 3.** Frequency of Intensifiers over Time<sup>13</sup>

	Gloss	(O2): 850-950		(O3): 950-1050		(O4): 1050-1150		Trajectory
		N	%	N	%	N	%	
<i>swide</i>	'very'	71	63%	82	49%	62	66%	Increasing
<i>ful</i>	'full'	6	5%	27	16%	8	9%	Increasing
<i>swa</i>	'so'	7	6%	12	7%	9	10%	Increasing
<i>to</i>	'too'	9	8%	7	4%	5	5%	Decreasing
<i>eal</i>	'all'	5	4%	7	4%	7	7%	Increasing
<i>wel</i>	'well'	11	10%	3	2%	1	1%	Decreasing
OTHERS		5	4%	30	18%	2	2%	
TOTAL		114	100%	168	100%	94	100	

**Table 4.** The Distribution of Intensifier Variants by Text Type

	PROSE	%	VERSE	%
<i>swide</i>	209	62	6	15
<i>ful</i>	32	10	9	23
<i>swa</i>	22	7	5	12
<i>eal</i>	17	5	3	8
<i>to</i>	14	4	7	18
<i>wel</i>	14	4	1	2
<i>pearle</i>	9	3	1	2
<i>OTHERS</i>	19	5	8	20
TOTAL	336	100	40	100

**Table 5.** The Distribution of Intensifier Variants by Text Origin

	NON- TRANSLATED	%	TRANSLATED	%
<i>swiðe</i>	140	57	75	57
<i>ful</i>	32	13	9	7
<i>swa</i>	17	7	10	7
<i>eal</i>	17	7	3	2
<i>to</i>	15	6	6	5
<i>wel</i>	9	4	6	5
<i>þearle</i>	1	.5	9	7
<i>OTHER</i>	14	5.5	13	10
TOTAL	245	100	131	100

**Swiðe** most frequent in both translated and non-translated texts

# Multivariate Analysis

Two logistic regression models were run in Rbrul (Johnson, 2009)

First Model:

**Dependent:** Presence Vs Absence of Preceding Intensifier

Fixed Factors: Internal (syntactic function, semantic class), External (Time, Origin, Text Type)

Second Model:

**Dependent:** Presence or Absence of *swiðe*

Fixed Factors: Internal (syntactic function, semantic class), External (Time, Origin, Text Type)

Appendix A. Logistic Regression of Factors Conditioning Intensification<sup>21</sup>

Input	.15		
Total N	1842		
	N	%	FW
<b>POSITION (p &lt; 2.82e-22)</b>			
Predicative	953	31.2	.67
Attributive	889	11.6	.34
Range			.33
<b>ADJ TYPE (p &lt; 2.01e-06)</b>			
Dimension	173	34.1	.65
Qualification	78	26.9	.59
Similarity	28	28.6	.64
Physical Property	431	21.1	.57
Human Propensity	601	19.1	.49
Color	47	19.0	.48
Value	435	13.1	.35
Age	49	4.4	.20
Range			.32
<b>TIME (p &lt; 0.0256)<sup>22</sup></b>			
OE4	297	30.3	.62
OE2	613	17.8	.45
OE3	932	17.5	.44
Range			.18
<b>TEXT TYPE (p &lt; 0.0118)</b>			
Prose	1402	23.0	.63
Verse	440	8.9	.37
Range			.26
<b>ORIGIN (p &lt; 0.000113)</b>			
Translated	481	26.0	.56
Non-translated	1361	17.4	.44
Range			.12
Random Effect (Text ID n = 61)			

Appendix B. Logistic Regression of the Factors Conditioning the Use of *swiðe* versus all

remaining variants			
Input	.27		
Total N	1699		
	N	%	FW
<b>POSITION (7.41e-07)</b>			
Predicative	815	16.9	.61
Attributive	884	7.8	.40
Range			.21
ADJ TYPE (0.0762)			
Color	40	15.0	.65
Dimension	142	18.3	.62
Qualification	83	15.7	.53
Human Propensity	537	13.6	.53
Similarity	28	14.3	.50
Physical Property	408	22.1	.46
Value	416	9.6	.43
Age	45	4.4	.30
Range			.35
<b>TEXT TYPE (1.49e-05)</b>			
Prose	1306	15.5	.83
Verse	393	1.3	.16
Range			.67
ORIGIN (0.515)			
Translated	438	16.4	.54
Non-translated	1261	10.7	.46
Range			.8
Random Effect (Text ID n = 61)			

# Contribution of this Study

## 1) **Intensification Rate** Increases over time

- in line with synchronic analyses (e.g., Ito & Tagliamonte, 2003)

## 2) *Swiðe* was the **most frequent**

- consistent with previous work (Méndez-Naya, 2003). However, it was used less frequently in verse texts

## 3) **Predicative adjectives** were **intensified** more **frequently** than **attributive adjectives**

- Relates to previous work (Tagliamonte & Dennis, 2014)

## 4) **Frequency** correlated with the number of semantic categories intensified

- Consistent with previous work (e.g., Méndez-Naya, 2019)

# Contribution of this Study

## 5) **Prose Texts** had **higher rates** of **Intensification** than **Verse**

- possible explanation was the metrical tradition in Old English
- relates to work on register variation (e.g., Biber et al. 1999)

## 6) **Text Origin** was an external conditioning factor

- Shows that Latin had an influence on intensifier variability
- Consistent with other linguistic variation in Old English  
(e.g., Rissanen, 2006; Taylor, 2008)

## 7) **Variable System** (variants changing over time)

- *wel* shows a cycle of ebb and flow in OE, before later recycling in English

# Line 35 of Gospel of Mark

(8) a. Gothic:

jah **air** mhtwōn usstandands usiddja jah galaip ana auþjana staþ jah jainar  
baþ

'and early morning rising up, went and departed into solitary place, and there  
prayed'

b. Old English:

and **swiðe** ær arisende, he ferde on weste stowe, and hine *ðar gebæd*

'and very early got up, he went into solitary place and him there prayed'

c. Middle English: (Wycliffe's Translation [ca. 1389])

and in the morewyng **fulerly** he rysynge, gon out, wente in to deserte place, and  
preiede there

'and in the morning very early he arose, went out and went into a deserted place and prayed there'

d. Early Modern English: (Tyndale Translation [ca. 1526])

and in the moorning **very erly** Jesus arose, and went out in to a solitary place,  
and there prayed

'and in the morning Jesus got up very early and went into a solitary place and prayed there'

# Thank you for listening!

Citation:

Stratton, James, M. (forthcoming). Old English Intensifiers: The Beginnings of the English Intensifier System. *Journal of Historical Linguistics*.

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# Examples by Semantic Classification

# Intensifier Variant Examples

a) screp þonne of þam fæte þat biþ swiðe god sealf þam men þe hæfð þicce bræwas

‘scrap then from the vessel that is very good salve the-DAT.SG man who have thick eyelids’

‘Scrape then [the scrapings] off the vessel – that is a **really good** salve/ointment for anyone who has ‘thick eyelids’

[850-950, COLAECE]

b) por & cawel & eal þa þe syn swa afer sind to fleoganne

‘Leek and colewort and all that which are so bitter are to avoid’

‘Leek and cabbage and all things which are **so bitter** are to be avoided’

[850-950, COLAECE]

c) Gif he sie to drige do on breowende wurt hwon, clæm on þa dolh & utan ymb

‘if he is-SBJV too dry do a brewing wart little bit, dab on the wound and out around’

‘if it is **too dry**, add a little bit of brewing wart (*a type of liquid extracted during the brewing process*), and dab it on the wounds and around the wounds’

[850-950, COLAECE]

d) ðonne he wel trum bið to wyrceanne ðæt he ðonne wille, ðonne ðonne him eft sio hæl

losað, ðonne gefred he æresð hwelc heo habbanne wæs ða hwile ðe he hi hæfde

‘when he well strong is to work that he then wants, then then him again the health’

‘When he is **strong enough** to do what he wants, whenever he gets sick again he will experience the same thing all over again’

[850-950, COCURA]

# Examples by Semantic Class

- (6) a. for ðæm hie habbað **swiþe æþele** ban on hiora toþum  
‘for they have very noble bones in their teeth’  
‘because they had **very noble/valuable** bones in their teeth’  
[950-1050, COOHTWU3 - Value]
- b. ...forðdon þe ic eom **swiþe mildheort**  
‘...because I am very mild-hearted’  
‘ because I am **very compassionate**’  
[850-950, COLAW2 -Human Propensity]
- c. forðam hit is **swiðe long** spell  
‘because it is very long story’  
‘because it is a **very long** story’ [850-950, COBOETH, Dimension]

# Comparative/Superlative Absolute

Examples:

- *ricost* ‘very rich’ (not richest)
- *hattost* ‘very hot’ (not most hot)

Thought to be a Latinism