

From Lexicographic Evidence to Lexicological Aspects: A Cognitive Linguistic Perspective on Phonaesthetic Intensifiers

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Depending on source domain, pattern of intensification and extent of grammaticalization, intensifiers may differ in a number of ways: degree (Paradis 2000, 2003) and degree and polarity sensitivity (Klein 1998); semantic prosody (Bublitz 1998); genre and register restrictions (Paradis 2000, 2003, Ito and Tagliamonte 2003), type and degree of expressivity, extent to which they can take part in reinforcing, aggravating or mitigating the underlying speech act, and, of course, collocational profile (Cacchiani 2005).

In the light of this, it is the purpose of this paper to show how lexicographic data can provide evidence in favour of adopting a cognitive-linguistic perspective on the process of loosening and meaning recreation which characterizes the development of intensifiers from other categories. Specifically, using data from the Oxford English Dictionary, I shall investigate the nature and use of phonaesthetic intensifiers (e.g. howlingly), within the framework of Ruiz de Mendoza's (1998ff) Combined Input Hypothesis. As will be seen, this helps shed light on the pattern of intensification (Lorenz 2002, Cacchiani 2005) at play while acknowledging the role played by contextual and encyclopaedic knowledge. Using the Combined Input Hypothesis, therefore, offers considerable lexicological insights while providing reasonable motivations for the polysemous nature of phonaesthetic intensifiers, and also accounting for discourse-pragmatic restrictions on their use. As such, it might integrate pragmatic, lexicographic and grammaticalization approaches to the study of intensifiers and, second, to the inclusion and representation of non-grammaticalized, peripheral intensifiers in advanced learner's dictionaries and, most importantly, bilingual dictionaries, which do not always include entries and subentries for phonaesthetic intensifiers.

1. Intensifiers

Intensifiers express the semantic role of degree (Quirk et al. 1985). They have an expressive meaning (cf. Bühler 1934), insofar as they are indexical of the speaker and express a personal evaluation. Intensifiers are vehicles for expressivity and emphasis (Bolinger 1972), which brings about ongoing development from other categories and changes within the category itself. As such, they represent an extremely varied and ever-changing set, which takes an intermediate position between lexis and grammar: next to core items, or full, central members of the category, which express degree (e.g. *very* or *extremely*), less grammaticalized, polyfunctional items form a gradient from central to peripheral depending on how far and in what ways they deviate from the prototype (e.g. *bloody*, *dramatically*, *shockingly*, *thumpingly*).

New intensifiers are used and created in order to signal in-group membership and, second, to find new means of emphasis (Bolinger 1972: "the human fondness of exaggeration"). Intensifiers spring from four basic lexical domains (Cacchiani 2003: 78-83): expressions of quantity and distance (chiefly Old English), e.g. *far*, *greatly*, or *highly*; identifiers, e.g. *so*, modal adverbs and emphasizers, e.g. *really*, or *very* (developing from a modal adjective); qualitative/evaluative expressions (chiefly Modern English), e.g. *badly*, *dramatically*, or *incredibly*, as well as locative/quantity adverbs which do not have a concrete spatial referent, e.g. *excessively*, and expletives/taboo words, e.g. *bloody*, *fucking* (Peters 1993). Phonestaemes, e.g. *screamingly*, *thumpingly*, represent a peripheral and numerically minor set of intensifiers. As far as I am aware, they have not received much attention in the relevant literature, the only exception being Cacchiani (2003, 2005).

2. Lexicological insights and purposes of the investigation

The development into intensifiers proceeds from concrete to abstract. Older and newer senses coexist (Hopper and Traugott 2003: *layering*). After their first inception into the language, intensifiers may fall into disuse or undergo (relative) semantic bleaching and go all the way towards grammaticalization, thereby turning into functional words and losing their original lexical meaning (e.g. *extremely, very*). This amounts to a (relative) shift from objectivity to subjectivity in Langacker's (1997) sense (Athanasiadou 2007), or, in terms of Cruse and Togia (2006) from content domains, which provide the meaning proper, hence involving propositional meaning, to the schematic domain of GRADABILITY, shared by the intensifier and its head (Paradis 2001). In other words, intensifiers are relational concepts, which link their heads to a scale of gradability as a result of a *scale transfer* from objective domains via conceptual metaphors like A HUGE AMOUNT IS A HIGH DEGREE OF INTENSITY (*completely / totally wrong*), A HIGH DEGREE OF CERTAINTY IS A STRONG DEGREE OF INTENSITY (*absolutely wrong, ab brill, really nice*), or A STRONG EMOTION IS A HIGH DEGREE OF INTENSITY (*miserably unhappy*).

Understanding new intensifiers, Peters (2005) points out, rests in the search for optimal relevance (Sperber and Wilson 1995: *Communicative Principle of Relevance*). This helps minimize processing efforts and resources, and works towards cognitive economy (Ruiz de Mendoza and Diez 2002). Most importantly, Ruiz de Mendoza's (1998ff) *Combined Input Hypothesis* represents an extremely powerful tool for understanding intensifiers: besides accounting for the reinterpretation of adverbs as intensifiers, it is consistent with the principle of cognitive economy and acknowledges the role played by contextual and encyclopaedic knowledge.

In the light of this, it is therefore the purpose of this paper to provide lexicographic evidence for favouring such a cognitive-linguistic approach to intensifiers. Specifically, the focus will be not so much on entrenched intensifiers as on phonaesthetic intensifiers. After briefly summarizing the model, examples of its application will be given using evidence from the Oxford English Dictionary on-line, 2nd edition and later additions (henceforth, OED) in Section 3. Finally, some concluding remarks will be given in Section 4.

3. Ruiz de Mendoza's *Combined Input Hypothesis*: some preliminary remarks on phonaestemes.

Ruiz de Mendoza's (1998ff) *Combined Input hypothesis* overcomes the drawbacks of Fauconnier and Turner's (2002) *Conceptual Integration Network* and, in particular, acknowledges the role played by contextual and encyclopaedic knowledge, hence enabling us to account for the process of loosening and meaning recreation which is at play in developing intensifiers from other categories.

As summarized in Figure 1, understanding metaphorical expressions entails activating multiple source inputs, which integrate together and project onto the Combined Source Input to provide correlations with the elements of the metaphorical target.

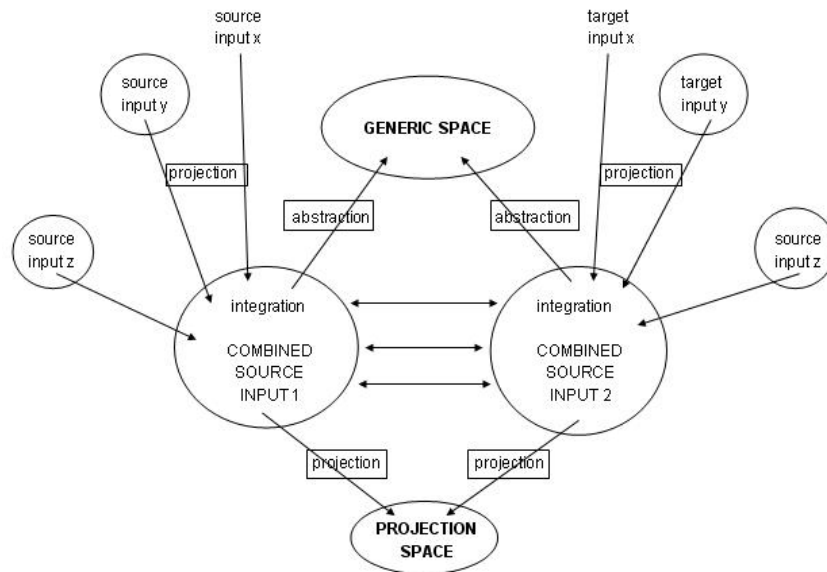


Figure 1: Ruiz de Mendoza's (1998ff) *Combined Input Hypothesis*

Specifically, creation and use of phonaesthetic intensifiers like *crackingly*, *howlingly*, *hummingly*, *rattlingly*, *roaringly*, *thumpingly* (that is, iconic, onomatopoeic intensifiers which imitate natural sounds) or *screamingly* (with a less direct resemblance to the related sound effect) clearly rest on a perceptual explanation of language (cf. Anderson 1998, Fischer and Nänny 1999). Let us take one example:

- (1) DRY is at times *howlingly funny*, devastatingly moving and, in the end, exhilaratingly uplifting as the author finally gets it together. (on-line review:
www.newyorkhistory.info/forums/Main01/messages/841786733.html)

The construal of *howlingly* is determined by the gradable head, *funny*. Intensification is grounded in perception. Initially used to denote an extremely long, mournful sound (said of animals), and then also the savage yell of rage or disappointment (often used contemptuously), as a third step *howling(ly)* loses part of its original lexical meaning and, in particular, of its negative connotations (possibly giving rise to collocational clashes initially exploited in the interest of pragmatic intensification). As such, *howlingly* is reinterpreted, or construed, as an intensifier which modifies the head in focus for the extremely high degree while indicating great surprise and approbation.

Turning to the OED, *howlingly* is found in HOWLING *ppl. a.* As illustrated in Table 1, definitions, usage labels, notes and quotations for senses 1 through 4 clearly provide evidence in favour of this type of analysis, with the intensifying use of *howling* (sense 4) being brought to the fore by definition, usage labels (*colloq.*) and quotations, or, better, by the presence in quotations of linguistic devices typically found in spoken / colloquial / more involved registers (contractions like *It's*, *He'll*, *You're*, *I'm*; repetitions across subsequent sentences, e.g. *glad*, or emphatic accent, as signalled by exclamation marks). Note that the derived adverb, *howlingly*, still invites a manner reading in the relevant quotation, dating back to the end of the 16th century. This seems to reflect not only the non-grammaticalized status of intensifying *howling* / *howlingly*, but also the preference for shorter forms in colloquial / spoken registers (hence, *howling* versus *howlingly*).

Table 1. Understanding *howling(ly)*

<p>OED: HOWLING, <i>ppl. a.</i> [f. as prec. + <u>-ING</u>.²]</p> <p>1. That howls; that utters or produces a prolonged wailing sound. Spec. howling baboon, monkey = <i>HOWLER</i> 1b.</p> <p>a1605 <u>POLWART</u> <i>Flyting w. Montgomerie</i> 195 Where howling howlets aye doth hant.</p> <p>1668 <u>H. MORE</u> <i>Div. Dial. III. xix.</i> (1713) 217, I believe you mean the howling Quakers, as uncivil as they are.</p> <p>[...]</p> <p>1924 <u>C. W. DOMVILLE-FIFE</u> <i>Among Wild Tribes of Amazons</i> viii. 121 On reaching camp..in the half light it was just possible to see the huddled and impaled body of a furry guaribas, or howling monkey (<i>simia mycetes</i>).</p> <p>1959 <i>Jrnl. Mammalogy</i> XL. 317 (title) Field observations on a howling monkey society.</p> <p>2. Characterized by, or filled with, howling, as of wild beasts or of the wind; dreary. In the Biblical howling wilderness, and derived phrases, the word tends to become merely intensive.</p> <p>1611 <u>BIBLE</u> <i>Deut.</i> xxxii. 10 He found him in a desert land, and in the waste howling wilderness.</p> <p>1696 <i>tr. Du Mont's Voy. Levant</i> 222 The very Sight of those howling Desarts deterr me.</p> <p>1728-46 <u>THOMSON</u> <i>Spring</i> 13 His blasts obey, and quit the howling hill.</p> <p>1847 <u>EMERSON</u> <i>Poems, Monadnoc Wks.</i> (Bohn)I. 435 Fit the bleak and howling place For gardens of a finer race.</p> <p>1848 <u>DICKENS</u> <i>Dombey</i> iv. (C. D. ed.) 22 Going regularly aloft to bed..in a howling garret remote from the lodgers.</p> <p>1857 <u>THOREAU</u> <i>Maine W.</i> (1894) 300 Generally speaking, a howling wilderness does not howl; it is the imagination of the traveler that does the howling.</p> <p>3. <i>fig. (chiefly slang.)</i> Glaring, very pronounced, 'screaming': cf. <i>HOWLER</i>3. Also, extreme, great (<i>colloq.</i>).</p> <p>1865 <u>SALA</u> <i>in Daily Tel.</i> 25 Nov. 6/6 To risk a very vulgar phrase, a Nawab is 'a howling swell' in the East.</p> <p>1884 <i>Nonconf. & Indep.</i> 7 Aug. 766/3 Those mistakes which are sometimes</p>	<p>Combined Input Hypothesis: <i>howling(ly)</i></p> <p><i>SOURCE INPUTS</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - knowledge about <i>howling</i> (cf. OED <i>HOWL, n.</i>, <i>HOWL, v.</i>, <i>HOWLING, vbl. n.</i>) - hence: knowledge about type of sound, reasons for uttering such a sound, negative connotations attaching to that wailing and prolonged sound as a result of reaction to its perception, sound iconism. <p>OED: <i>HOWL, n.</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. a. The prolonged and mournful cry of a dog, wolf, etc., which dwells upon the vowel u or some kindred sound; the similar sound of the wind or other inanimate agent. b. A howling noise produced in a loud-speaker as a result of electrical or acoustic feedback; howling. 2. A loud wail or outcry of pain or anguish; a savage yell of rage or disappointment. (Often used contemptuously.) <p>OED: <i>HOWL, v.</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. <i>intr.</i> To utter a prolonged, loud, and doleful cry, in which the sound of u prevails. Said of dogs, wolves, and various wild animals; formerly also of the owl (now said to screech or hoot). 2. Of a human being: To utter a similar sound; to utter loud and doleful inarticulate cries; to wail, lament, esp. with pain. In modern use often somewhat contemptuously applied to any cry of pain or distress. <p><i>PROJECTION SPACE</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>howling(ly)</i>: intense doleful cry, hence intense emotion <p><i>GENERIC SPACE</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - gradability - scale of degree - scale of degree of intensity of emotion <p><i>METAPHORICAL TARGET</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - extremely high degree - strong, intense emotion (hence, discourse pragmatic restriction on its use: colloquial / spoken registers)
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<p>called 'howling' blunders.</p> <p>1884 'MARK TWAIN' <i>Huck. Finn</i> xliii. 437 Le's all three slide out of here, one of these nights, and get an outfit, and go for howling adventures amongst the Injuns.</p> <p>1908 <i>Magnet</i> I. 1, 'You howling ass!' shouted Bulstrode. 'I tell you he's busted my two-guinea camera.'</p> <p>1933 <i>Times Lit. Suppl.</i> 27 Apr. 283/4 If his book is not a big, a very big, a 'howling' success..but I need offer no 'if's'.</p> <p>4. As adv. In the highest degree. (Cf. <i>screamingly</i>) <i>colloq.</i></p> <p>1895 <i>Century Mag.</i> Sept. 678/2 It's howling lonesome at the Mule Deer.</p> <p>1899 <i>KIPLING Stalky</i> 45 He'll be howling drunk to-night.</p> <p>1928 <i>Sat. Even. Post</i> 4 Feb. 100/4 Glad! You're howling right I'm glad.</p> <p>Hence ¹<i>howlingly</i> adv.</p> <p>1593 <i>NASHE Christs T.</i> (1613) 52 The Owle on the house~top, euer-more howlingly, cal's for some Corse.</p>	<p>- approbation / criticism (via a contraction and partial loss of the memory of the original meaning)</p>
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Turning now to the lexicographic information on other phonaestemes, the multidimensional nature of synchronically polysemous adverbs can be traced within and across the related entries (*n.*, *v.*, *vbl. n.*, and *ppl. a.*) for *cracking*, *rattling(ly)*, *roaring(ly)*, *thumping(ly)* and *screaming(ly)*. This provides compelling evidence for positing a *phonaesthetic pattern* (i.e. mechanism) of *intensification* next to the ones devised by Lorenz (2002) (cf. also Cacchiani 2005):

i.	DEGREE INTENSIFIERS (or grammaticalized intensifiers)	<i>very, awfully</i>
ii.	COMPARATIVES	<i>extraordinarily</i>
iii.	MODALS	<i>genuinely, really, truly</i>
iv.	TELIC INTENSIFIERS (indicating that a norm is reached or over-reached)	<i>unbelievably, unutterably</i>
v.	NON-TELIC POLYFUNCTIONAL INTENSIFIERS	<i>amazingly, stunningly</i>
vi.	SEMANTIC-FEATURE-COPYING INTENSIFIERS (which repeat conceptual meaning)	<i>radiantly cheerful</i>
vii.	TABOO INTENSIFIERS	<i>bloody, damn</i>
viii.	PHONAESTHEMIC INTENSIFIERS	<i>howling(ly), screamingly, funny</i>

3.1. Some cursory remarks on current lexicographic practice

So far we have seen that Ruiz de Mendoza's (1998ff) Combined Input Hypothesis helps shed light on the patterns of intensification at play while acknowledging the role played by contextual and encyclopaedic knowledge and accounting for the radial structure of polysemy, or the existence of links between the various readings of the intensifier under investigation. Table 3 below illustrates how the hierarchical ordering of definitions within *ppl. a.* entries and the links to other entries or subsenses within the entry reflect the semantic structure of *screaming(ly)* and *rattling(ly)*. Illustrative quotations are only given if relevant to our investigation.

Table 3. Lexical entries for *screaming* and *rattling* in OED

SCREAMING, <i>ppl. a.</i> [f. as prec. + --ING ² .]	RATTLING, <i>ppl. a.</i> [f. as prec. + --ING ² .]
<p>1. a. That screams; sounding shrilly. b. screaming eagle (<i>U.S. slang</i>) = ruptured duck (b).</p> <p>2. transf. and fig. a. Tending to excite screams of laughter; said esp. of a farce. b. Violent or startling in effect; glaring, blatant, obvious. c. slang. First-rate, splendid.</p> <p>3. Comb., as <i>screaming-scared</i> adj. 1963 <u>C. S. LEWIS</u> <i>Poems</i> (1964) 106 My body awakes in bed Screaming-scared.</p> <p>Hence <i>screamingly</i> adv.; chiefly in the phr. '<i>screamingly funny</i>' (cf. prec. 2a). 1847 <u>KINGLAKE</u> <i>Eothen</i> 173 The joyous girls will suddenly, and screamingly, and all at once, explain to each other that [etc.]. 1879 <u>GEO. ELIOT</u> in <i>Cross Life</i> (1885) III. 368 You would be screamingly amused by one. 1892 <i>Cornhill Mag.</i> Apr. 444 They are screamingly funny.</p>	<p>1. That rattles, or makes a rattle. †<i>rattling baby</i> = rattle-baby (see <i>RATTLE</i> n.¹ 11).</p> <p>2. a. Characterized by a rapid flow of words or liveliness of manner. †b. Full of scolding or reproof. <i>Obs.</i></p> <p>3. Of persons: Extremely lively in manners or speech.</p> <p>4. a. Remarkably good, fine, fast, etc. (freq. with more or less suggestion of the literal sense). b. Extremely severe. c. Adverbially with adjs. (esp. <i>good</i>): Remarkably, extremely. Also with vbs.: Extremely well.</p> <p>1829 <u>T. C. CROKER</u> <i>Legends</i> (1862) 242 A rattling fine dinner we had of it. 1851 <u>MAYHEW</u> <i>Lond. Lab.</i> I. 223/2 We had a fine 'fake', ..it sold rattling. 1877 <u>BLACK</u> <i>Green Past.</i> i. (1878) 6 A rattling good sort of a girl. 1885 <i>Punch</i> 4 July 4/1 You do see some rattling pretty, fresh faces. 1930 <u>A. G. HAYS</u> in <u>W. E. Weeks</u> <i>All in Racket</i> 13 This is a rattling good story. 1978 <i>Jrnl. R. Soc. Arts</i> CXXVI. 636/1 Herkomer's <i>The Last Muster</i> is a rattling good picture.</p> <p>†5. <i>slang</i> or <i>Cant</i> (see quotes.).</p> <p>Hence <i>rattlingly</i> adv.; <i>rattlingness</i>. 1824 <i>Blackw. Mag.</i> XV. 101 [They] shake in skin as rattlingly as they ere shook the castor. 1855 <u>WISEMAN</u> <i>Fabiola</i> 220 The old capsararius, as he had had himself rattlingly called in his anteposthumous inscription. 1869 <i>Contemp. Rev.</i> XI. 18 The general rattlingness of the rhythmic movement.</p>

Setting aside the lexicographic *linearization problem* (cf. Geeraerts 1990, 2001), it is clear that applying the Combined Input Hypothesis to the two lexical entries can do full justice to the multidimensional nature of the semantic structures of the adjectives and adverbs under investigation in that it helps explicitate the relations existing among the different senses of the *ppl. a.*, and, most importantly, among *ppl. a.*, adverbial uses of the *ppl. a.*, and derived *-ly adv.*, used as intensive (*screamingly*) or manner adjunct (*rattlingly*).

Besides integrating pragmatic, lexicographic and grammaticalization approaches to the study of intensifiers, therefore, the Combined Input Hypothesis may also contribute to the discussion on the inclusion of non-grammaticalized, peripheral intensifiers (both adjectives and adverbs) in advanced learner's English dictionaries and bilingual English-Italian dictionaries, which, as illustrated respectively in Table 4 and Table 5, do not provide a systematic treatment thereof. Table 4 and Table 5 focus on the inclusion (\checkmark) or exclusion (x) under the relevant sub-entry or separate entry (for *screamingly*) of phonaesthetic adjectives and *-ing* and *-ly* adverbs which are assigned an intensifying function in OED. The monolingual dictionaries selected are CALD (Cambridge Advanced Learner's Dictionary online / 2003), OALD (Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary of Current English, 2005), MEDAL (Macmillan English Dictionary for Advanced Learners, 2002), CCADEL (Collins Cobuild Advanced Learner's Dictionary of English, 2003). The bilingual dictionaries selected are HAZON (Dizionario Garzanti Hazon di Inglese 2008), PICCHI (Grande Dizionario Hoepli Inglese, on-line), RAGAZZINI (Il Ragazzini 2008, Dizionario Inglese-Italiano, Italiano-Inglese). As regards the treatment of individual intensifiers, although the microstructure of the individual entries within each dictionary may vary considerably, broadly speaking definitions via synonyms or paraphrase (D) and / or examples (E) distinguish the intensifying reading of adjectives and adverbs, the only exception being *thumping* [HAZON] (marked as / in Table 5). Second, usage labels (U) are found in nearly all entries, both in monolingual and bilingual dictionaries.

Table 4. Phonaesthetic intensifiers in monolingual advanced learner's dictionaries

INTENSIFIER	CALD		OALD		MEDAL		CCEDAL	
	ADJ	ADV	ADJ	ADV	ADJ	ADV	ADJ	ADV
<i>cracking</i>	x	x	x	\checkmark d e	x	\checkmark DEU	x	x
<i>howling</i>	\checkmark DE	x	\checkmark DEU	x	\checkmark d	x	x	x
<i>rattling</i>	x	x	x	\checkmark DEU	\checkmark DEU	x	x	x
<i>roaring</i>	\checkmark DEU	\checkmark DEU	\checkmark DEU	\checkmark DEU	\checkmark DEU	x	\checkmark DE	x
<i>roaringly</i>		x		x		x		x
<i>screamingly</i>		\checkmark DEU		\checkmark d e		\checkmark d		\checkmark DE
<i>thumping</i>	\checkmark DEU	x	\checkmark DEU	\checkmark DEU	\checkmark DEU	\checkmark E	\checkmark DEU	x
<i>thumpingly</i>		x		x		x		x

Table 5. Phonaesthetic intensifiers in bilingual English-Italian dictionaries

INTENSIFIER	HAZON		RAGAZZINI		PICCHI	
	ADJ	ADV	ADJ	ADV	ADJ	ADV
<i>cracking</i>	x	x	X	x	\checkmark E	x
<i>howling</i>	\checkmark EU	x	\checkmark EU	x	\checkmark E	x
<i>rattling</i>	x	\checkmark EU	X	\checkmark EU	x	x
<i>roaring</i>	x	\checkmark EU	\checkmark EU	\checkmark EU	\checkmark EU (<i>rip-roaring</i>)	\checkmark EU
						\checkmark (<i>rip-roaringly</i>)
<i>screaming</i>	x	x	X	x	x	\checkmark EU
<i>screamingly</i>		\checkmark EU		\checkmark EU		\checkmark D
<i>thumping</i>	/ U	x	X	x	\checkmark DE	x
<i>thumpingly</i>		x		x		\checkmark EU

4. Conclusions

The analysis has shown how lexicographic data can provide evidence in favour of adopting a cognitive-linguistic perspective on the process of loosening and meaning recreation which characterizes the development of intensifiers from other categories. Specifically, the multidimensional nature of synchronically polysemous phonaestemes can be traced within and across related entries (*n.*, *v.*, *vbl. n.*, and *ppl. a.*). In particular, applying Ruiz de Mendoza's *Combined Input Hypothesis* to data from individual *ppl. a.* entries of OED also helps account for the multidimensional nature of the semantic structures of the adverbs under investigation by explicating the links among different sub-senses of the *ppl. a.*, and, most importantly, among *ppl. a.*, adverbial uses of the *ppl. a.* and the derived *-ly adv.*

Turning to advanced learner's dictionaries, besides looking up the meaning of frequent words or lexico-grammatical patterns in the dictionary, the learner may also need information on less frequent phenomena in order to improve his / her productive and receptive skills. Likewise, the user may need information on the very same items in bilingual dictionaries, primarily to improve his / her receptive skills, but is not likely to be interested in diachronic sense development. Focussing on diachronic sense development using the Combined Input Hypothesis, however, justifies and promote inclusion and more consistent treatment of highly infrequent polysemous items—here, phonaesthetic adjectival and adverbial intensifiers—in advanced learner's and bilingual dictionaries. Together with lexicographic, grammaticalization and pragmatic approaches to intensifiers, therefore, this may contribute to the discussion on microstructure design and polysemous words which necessarily precedes the launch of dictionary-making or dictionary-revising projects.

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