

中青年学者外国语言文学学术前沿研究丛书

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吴勇 著

A PRAGMATIC STUDY  
OF INTENSIFIERS IN  
SHAKESPEARE'S PLAYS

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# Preface

This corpus-based study investigates at the discourse level the pragmatic features of English intensifiers in Shakespeare's plays. Collocation theory, speech act theory and politeness theory are adopted to explore semantic prosodies, semantic preferences, speech act patterns of intensifiers, mechanism for intensifiers to strengthen or mitigate the illocutionary force, polite behaviors of intensifiers, and the relationship between these significant pragmatic dimensions.

I conduct this study because there is a call for studies of English intensifiers at the pragmatic level and there is a lack of comprehensive treatment of intensifier usage in Shakespeare's plays. For one thing, although we have witnessed a wealth of literature and research on English intensifiers over the past century, most of the studies have been carried out mainly at the syntactic and semantic level, and the studies of the pragmatics of English intensifiers are to some extent limited. A more specific and more systematic framework of pragmatic intensification is thus to be explored. For another, there are a whole range of intensifiers in Shakespeare's plays, and yet there lacks a comprehensive treatment of them. Therefore, a detailed pragmatic study of intensifiers in Shakespeare might help us to go beyond the syntactic and semantic boundaries and get a more general picture of the pragmatic features of the intensifiers in Shakespeare.

The following is a brief account of my study:

To begin with, a working definition of English intensifiers is developed on the basis of an extensive literature review. Meanwhile, a working taxonomy of speech acts and coding schemes of semantic prosody and politeness behaviors are established to facilitate the pragmatic study of intensifiers. Then a quantitative analysis is made to reveal crucial categorical, generic, and diachronic features concerning the use of intensifiers in the Shakespeare corpus. After that, the colligational patterns, semantic prosodies, and semantic preferences of various categories and types of intensifiers are analyzed.

A further attempt is then made to probe into the speech act patterns, the modification mechanisms of illocutionary force, and the politeness behaviors of

English intensifiers. As shown in the study, within each speech act type, a greater percentage of intensives are used in speech acts which generally require reinforcement of the illocutionary force and the observation or violation of the addressee's positive face. In comparison, a greater percentage of downtoners are employed in speech acts which threaten the addressee's negative face, mainly for the purpose of mitigation.

This study then looks into the mechanism of reinforcement and mitigation with ample examples extracted from the Shakespeare corpus. Based on the theory of Bazzanella et al. (1991), this study has proposed a framework of dimensions along which intensifiers can be adopted to reinforce or mitigate illocutionary force, including propositional content, felicity conditions such as speaker's inner states and preparatory conditions, and perlocutionary effects. It has illuminated two basic purposes for reinforcement and mitigation: to express the speaker's commitment to propositional content, and to pay/violate positive or negative face to the addressee, that is, to express politeness or impoliteness.

The exploration of reinforcement and mitigation mechanism leads to the analysis of the politeness behaviors of intensifiers in various speech act categories. According to the analysis, negative politeness behaviors are more predominant in directives than in any other speech act category, and expression of the speaker's commitment to the propositional content and violation of positive politeness are most popular among constatives. In comparison, observation of positive politeness has a more even distribution in all speech act categories.

Finally, the study reveals a strong relationship between semantic prosodies, speech acts, and politeness behaviors: these three pragmatic properties work together for the accomplishment of various communicative purposes of English intensifiers. Intensifiers with collocations of negative semantic coloring tend to be used in more face-threatening acts while those with collocations of positive semantic coloring tend to occur in more positively affective speech acts. Moreover, intensifiers of positive prosodies are more inclined to function as a politeness strategy, while those with negative prosodies tend to be more involved in the expression of impoliteness. Diminishers, however, are an exception: although many of them are imbued with a negative prosody, they are often employed to mitigate the face threat, and are thus more related to the expression of politeness.

Despite some limitations, the present study has some important implications.

Firstly, it goes beyond syntactic or semantic boundaries and studies the pragmatic functions of intensifiers, thus contributing to the linguistic study of intensifiers and encouraging further exploration of English intensifiers at the discourse level. Secondly, by providing a relatively comprehensive picture concerning the use of intensifiers in Shakespeare's plays, it contributes to the research of Shakespeare's adverb usage in a systematic way. Finally, the detailed study of the pragmatic features of intensifiers furnishes a useful guideline on the achievement of pragmatic equivalence in translation of intensifiers in Shakespeare.

Demanding as it was, I took great pleasure in conducting the present study. I feel honored that it is arranged for publication, and I hope that reading about pragmatics of English intensifiers will be as much a pleasure to the reader as was studying them to me.

## Acknowledgements

This study would not have been completed without the support and care from many people, to whom I would like to express my gratitude.

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Special thanks also go to many of my friendly colleagues for their inspiring discussions and warm support. I would like to extend my sincere appreciation to Prof. Hu Kaibao, for the valuable discussions and firm support, and for sharing his knowledge concerning Shakespeare's studies. I am likewise most grateful to Prof. Wei Naixing for his inspiring advice and for letting me draw on his expertise in corpus linguistics. To Prof. Zhu Zhengcai, I owe particular thanks for his valuable lectures on statistics and his advice on how to handle the statistics in this study. My sincere thanks also go to Prof. Yu Liming, Prof. Chen Deming, Prof. Wang Zhenhua, Prof. Shao Zhihong, Prof. Chen Yongjie, Prof. Hu Quansheng, Prof. Liu Longgen, and Prof. Wang Dawei for their gentle support and acute suggestions. I am deeply grateful to Prof. Guo Hongjie, Prof. Hu Quansheng, and Dr. Daryl Chow for reviewing this work and making invaluable suggestions. They have helped me to straighten out many inconsistencies, and the ones that remain are, of course, my own responsibility.

I would also like to express my gratitude to Prof. Kathleen Bardovi-Harlig and Prof. Beverly Hartford for granting me the opportunities to study as a visiting scholar in Indiana University (IU), to access the wonderful resources of IU libraries, and to attend their enlightening lectures. I feel grateful to two other IU professors, Prof. Sandra Kübler, for sharing her knowledge in corpus linguistics; and Prof. Susan Herring, for her thought-provoking lectures on discourse analysis, which inspired me to study English intensifiers at the discourse level. I thank Prof. Robert Harnish from Arizona University for his careful explanations concerning his speech act taxonomy and for his invaluable

suggestions on speech act coding problems.

Last but not least, I would like to offer my heartfelt thanks to my family, relatives and friends. I am extremely grateful to my parents, Mr. Wu Bingyuan and Ms. Miao Jinping, and my parents-in-law, for their love and understanding. No words can express my appreciation to my husband, Mr. Jiang Feng, my daughter, Miss. Jiang Renyu, and many other beloved ones, including Mr. Ian Jiang, Mr. Zhang Yunping, Ms. Li Ruyao, Miss. Jiang Ying, Mr. Wu Chen, and Mr. Wu Qiong, who have showered me with their love and support and filled my life with happiness and hope. Special thanks also go to many of my good friends for their support and friendship, especially Ms. Yong Liping, Prof. Ye Juxian, Prof. Zhao Xiaohong, Prof. Yi Xin, and Ms. Wang Jingli.

There are many others to whom I feel grateful and it is hard to name them all one by one. This work is dedicated to all the people who care for me and whom I care for dearly.



# List of Abbreviations

## Part I: Abbreviations for reference to Shakespeare's plays

<i>Ado.</i>	<i>Much Ado about Nothing</i>
<i>Ant.</i>	<i>Antony and Cleopatra</i>
<i>Cym.</i>	<i>Cymbeline</i>
<i>H4A</i>	<i>The First Part of King Henry the Fourth</i>
<i>H8</i>	<i>The Life of King Henry the Eighth</i>
<i>Ham.</i>	<i>Hamlet</i>
<i>Meas.</i>	<i>Measure for Measure</i>
<i>Merch.</i>	<i>The Merchant of Venice</i>
<i>Mac.</i>	<i>Macbeth</i>
<i>Mids.</i>	<i>A Midsummer Night's Dream</i>
<i>Lr.</i>	<i>King Lear</i>
<i>Oth.</i>	<i>Othello</i>
<i>R3</i>	<i>The Life and Death of King Richard the Third</i>
<i>Rom.</i>	<i>Romeo and Juliet</i>
<i>Tit.</i>	<i>Titus Andronicus</i>
<i>Tem.</i>	<i>The Tempest</i>
<i>Wint.</i>	<i>The Winter's Tale</i>

## Part II: General Abbreviations

<i>A</i>	act
<i>a</i>	adjectives
<i>AC</i>	acknowledgements
<i>Abs. freq.</i>	absolute frequency
<i>ad</i>	adverbs
<i>AP_REL_F</i>	relative frequency of approximators
<i>BO_REL_F</i>	relative frequency of boosters
<i>CO_REL_F</i>	relative frequency of compromisers

C	constatives
c	comedies
CM	commissives
D	directives
<i>d</i>	act done
DI_REL_F	relative frequency of diminishers
<i>E</i>	event
<i>e</i>	expressions
express PE	express positive emotions
express NE	express negative emotions
<i>F</i>	(illocutionary) force
FTA	face-threatening act
<i>H</i>	addressee/hearer
h	histories
MA_REL_F	relative frequency of maximizers
MI_REL_F	relative frequency of minimizers
MP	Model Person
n	nouns/nominal expressions
<i>o</i>	object
<i>P</i>	proposition
past.p	past participles
prep.p	present participles
pres.p	prepositional phrases
q	quantifiers
<i>S</i>	speaker
<i>T</i>	utterance
t	tragedies
v	verbs
Z	Not clearly concerned with politeness but more related to the expression of <i>S</i> 's commitment to the propositional content of a speech act
1E	Earlier period
2M1	Mid period I
3M2	Mid period II

4L	Later period
+N	observation of negative politeness
-N	violation of negative politeness
+P	observation of positive politeness
-P	violation of positive politeness

## 中文导读

本研究采用基于语料库的方法,以搭配理论、言语行为理论及礼貌原则为理论基础,通过定量和定性分析从语篇层面研究莎士比亚戏剧中英语强调语的语用特征。研究内容包括英语强调语的语义韵、语义选择趋向、言语行为模式、言外之力强调机制、礼貌行为以及语义韵、言语行为和礼貌行为三者之间的相互关系。

英语强调语一般是指某类特定的副词(如 *really*, *very*)或副词词组(如 *kind of*, *sort of*),而且这类词或词组都“具有强化或弱化某个句子成分的作用”(Quirk et al., 1972: 438)。强调语在口语、书面语表达中起到相当大的作用,通过使用强调语,我们能表达从谨慎和疑虑(如 *fairly certain*)到肯定和强调(如 *absolutely vital*)等不同的肯定程度。强调副词是最常见的“情感表达方式”(Labov, 1985:43)。“强调在交际过程中极其重要,它是加深印象、表扬、劝说、咒骂的载体,并且在总体上影响听者对信息的接受程度”(Partington, 1993: 178)。强调语可用来“加强态度的表达力”,并“调节我们对人或事的感受程度”(Martin & Rose, 2007: 42, 48)。从该意义上来说,“强调语表达了‘人际意义’,而非纯粹的‘概念功能’表达方式。它不仅表达了对事实和价值的判断,而且表达了个人的肯定程度,正是这一功能将强调语这一句法类型与其认知情态功能联系起来”(Lorenz, 1999: 24)。正如 Halliday (1985/1994/2004: 127)所述,“强调语气副词表达了人际功能这一元功能”。强调语因其重要性得到广泛研究,包括句法、搭配、语义、语用、性别差异等方面的研究以及影响其使用的语言与社会因素分析等。

强调语的定义与分类有多种,本研究在以往研究基础上将强调语界定为:强调语是用于修饰形容词、副词、动词、分词、介词短语、限制词以及名词性词语(即代词、名词和名词短语)、并且表达比假定标准高或低的程度的副词性修饰语。本研究采用的强调语分类方式主要依据 Quirk et al (1985) 的分类方式。Quirk 等学者采用 *intensifier* 这一术语并提出:*intensifier* “不仅仅指增强强调程度的表达方式。更确切地说,一个具有强调性的次修饰语表示某强调级阶上的某一点;而被表示的该点可

以是较低程度，也可以是较高程度” (Quirk et al., 1985: 589)。他们将强调语分成两大类：强势语 (amplifiers)，即表达比假定标准高的程度；弱势语 (downtoners)，即表达比假定标准低的程度。前者分为最高程度词 (maximizers) 和增强词 (boosters)，后者包括近似词 (approximators)、折衷词 (compromisers)、减弱词 (diminishers) 和最低程度词 (minimizers)。本研究基本采用这一分类，唯一区别是本研究用 intensives 替代 amplifiers 来指代“强势语”，主要原因是 intensives 在莎士比亚研究中较为常用。

本研究以莎士比亚戏剧中的强调语为研究对象，主要原因如下：

第一，虽然对于强调语的研究比较广泛，但是以往研究基本上停留在句法、语义和搭配领域。尽管 Brown & Levinson (1987)，Blum-Kulka et al. (1989) 以及 Bazzanella et al. (1991) 曾涉及到强调的语用研究，然而他们探讨的都是较为广义的强调，并非专门研究强调副词。本研究试图超越语义层面，对强调语的语用特征包括其言语行为模式和礼貌策略进行较为系统细致的研究，从而加深英语强调语的语言学研究。

第二，强调语的研究是将语义学和语用学相结合的研究。强调语不但具有强化或弱化某一特性的作用，它们还用于表达语义韵、加强或减弱言外之力、表达说话者对命题内容的看法、或反映说话者对听话者的态度，即表示礼貌或不礼貌。因此探究语义韵、言语行为以及礼貌行为这三者之间的关系尤为必要。

第三，虽然对莎士比亚戏剧的研究数不胜数，但基本上是对其进行文学研究，采用语言学视角的研究较少，而且在副词应用方面至今未得到一个全面的考察 (Nevalainen, 1994)。因此非常有必要对莎士比亚戏剧的强调语进行分析，从而促进莎士比亚戏剧中副词的系统研究。

本书作者共选择 17 部莎士比亚戏剧 (见附录一)，建成一个莎士比亚戏剧语料库。首先，作者使用 Antconc 3.2.1w 这一检索工具搜索出语料库中所有的副词性修饰语。根据强调语的工作定义，剔除不具有强调功能的副词性修饰语，保留具有强调功能的副词性修饰语。检索到的强调语类符数 (types) 为 70，形符数 (tokens) 为 3756。作者把包含这些强调语的话句 (共 3756 句) 摘录下来，并输入到用 SPSS 11.5 生成的数据库中。

其次，作者依据 Sinclair (1996) 和 Stubbs (1996, 2001, 2009) 的搭配理论、Bach & Harnish (1979) 的言语行为理论、Brown & Levinson (1987) 和 Herring (1994) 关于礼貌行为的研究，分别确定语义韵、言

语行为、礼貌策略的分类模式及标注方式。通过仔细研究每个强调语所处的上下文确定每个强调语及其所处语句的搭配和语用特征,包括强调语的类联接形式、搭配词项、搭配的语义色彩、言语行为类型及礼貌行为等。这些特征也被输入到 SPSS 11.5 的数据库中。该数据库同时还标注了强调语所属种类、所属戏剧的体裁和创作时期以及该强调语使用者的性别、地位等(见附录二)。

然后,作者利用 SPSS 11.5 对所收集到的数据进行处理和分析。通过分析数据,作者描述了莎士比亚戏剧语言中英语强调语的总体使用情况,研究其主要语义语用特征,并探索语义韵、言语行为及礼貌行为这三者之间的内在关系。

本书共分八章。第一章为绪论。主要介绍本研究的理论依据、研究目的、研究问题和研究方法,同时介绍本研究关于英语强调语的工作定义,即对强调语的研究范围进行界定。

第二章为文献综述,主要介绍英语强调语研究和莎士比亚副词研究的现状,描述英语强调语的定义与特点,介绍以往在强调语语义、语用、语法化方面的研究。

第三章详细介绍本研究的理论依据,包括搭配理论、言语行为理论及礼貌原则,在此基础上建立起语义韵、言语行为、礼貌策略的分类模式及标注方式以便进行强调语的语用研究。

第四章描述莎士比亚戏剧语言中英语强调语的总体使用情况,通过定量分析,统计出莎士比亚戏剧语料库中不同类别的强调语在不同戏剧、不同体裁、不同创作时期的分布情况。据统计,在 3756 个强调语形符中,强势语占 88.5%,而弱势语只占 11.5%。在莎士比亚语料库中最常用的强调语是 so, most, too, well, much, very, how, almost, enough, a little, full, all, more, scarce, far 和 quite, 它们在收集到的所有强调语中约占 91%。其中 so 的比例最大,占 27.2%。另外,在不同体裁和不同创作时期的戏剧中,强调语的使用情况也各不相同。

第五章进入到语义语用层面,探究强调语的搭配行为,包括不同种类的强调语(包括强势语、弱势语)的不同类联接关系、语义韵、语义选择趋向特征。研究发现:第一,在所有强调语的搭配词项里,形容词占 43.4%,动词和副词各占 19.2% 和 18.8%。其他被强调语修饰的词项,包括过去分词、现在分词、限定词、介词短语、名词性词语等的比例则较小。第二,有些强调语的语义韵较为积极,即它们吸引的搭配词项具

有较为鲜明的积极意义,而有些强调语的语义韵则较为消极。比如,语义韵偏向积极的强调语包括 *right, entirely, most, well, strongly, enough* 等,语义韵偏向消极的强调语有 *utterly, quite, too, much, little, scarce, scarcely, almost* 等,具有中性语义韵的有 *full, far, so, how, more, very, exceedingly* 等。第三,有些具有相似语义韵的强调语具有相似的语义趋向选择。

第六章进一步研究强调语的言语行为模式,分析不同类别的强调语在不同言语行为中的使用特征,探讨不同强调语的语义韵和言语行为之间的关系。研究表明,强势语使用比例较大的往往是与积极面子有关、需要强调的言语行为,而弱势语使用比例较大的则往往是与消极面子有关、需要缓和的言语行为。另外,搭配词项具有消极语义特点的强调语往往用于威胁程度较大的言语行为中,如“警告”、“反对”、“禁止”、“威胁”等。而搭配项词具有积极语义特点的强调语则往往用于较为正面的言语行为如“问候”、“谅解”、“祝贺”、“表扬”、“感谢”等。分析结果证明了语义韵和言语行为相互配合实现交际目的。

在第七章中,作者利用从莎士比亚语料库收集到的大量实例来探究强调与缓和行为的发生机制。本研究以 Bazzanella et al. (1991) 的理论为基础,建立强调语的语用修饰模式。根据此模式,强调语可通过修饰言语行为的命题内容、取效行为以及心理状态、准备条件等适切条件来强调或缓和言外之力。语用强调有两个基本目的:一是表明说话者对命题内容的看法,二是维护/破坏听话者的积极面子和消极面子,即表示礼貌或不礼貌。为此本章还研究了不同言语行为中的强调语如何被用来加强或缓和礼貌或不礼貌行为。研究发现,与其他言语行为相比,消极礼貌行为在指令类言语行为中较为普遍;表达说话者对命题内容的看法和破坏听话者积极面子这两种行为在述谓性言语行为中较为普遍;而维护听话者积极面子的行为则在各类言语行为中表现比较均衡。在此基础上,本研究综合探讨了语义韵、言语行为及礼貌行为之间的内在关系,发现这三大语用因素为实现各种交际目的而共同作用,因此具有密切的相互关系。研究表明,具有积极语义韵的强调语倾向用于积极情感言语行为,往往与表示礼貌的行为有关;而具有消极语义韵的强调语则倾向用于威胁面子的言语行为,与表示不礼貌的行为关联较大。只有减弱词例外,虽然它们大多具有消极语义韵,但常被用来减轻对面子的威胁,因而与表示礼貌有关。

第八章为结论,总结了本研究的主要结论、研究的意义和局限性,

并指明了今后的研究方向。本研究中，作者突破句法和语义范围来研究强调语的语用功能，将有利于促进语篇层面上的强调语语用研究。作者对莎士比亚戏剧中强调语的语用特征进行了较为综合的描述，也将有助于加强对莎士比亚戏剧中副词的系统研究。此外，对于强调语语用特征的详尽描述还有利于促进从语用对等的角度开展莎士比亚戏剧语言中强调语的翻译研究。在本研究的基础上，可以开展莎士比亚戏剧中强调语的历时和共时研究，性别、年龄和社会地位差异研究以及翻译研究等。

由于各种原因，本研究不免有其局限性，一些方面有待改进和提高。比如，莎士比亚语料库的容量还可扩大，语料库越大，数据描述就越丰富，分析越透彻。另外，由于篇幅所限，本书无法面面俱到。作者希望今后能扩展研究范畴，对强调语的语用特征进行更深入、更完整的研究，为丰富强调语的语言学研究、翻译研究以及莎士比亚研究贡献一份力量。



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