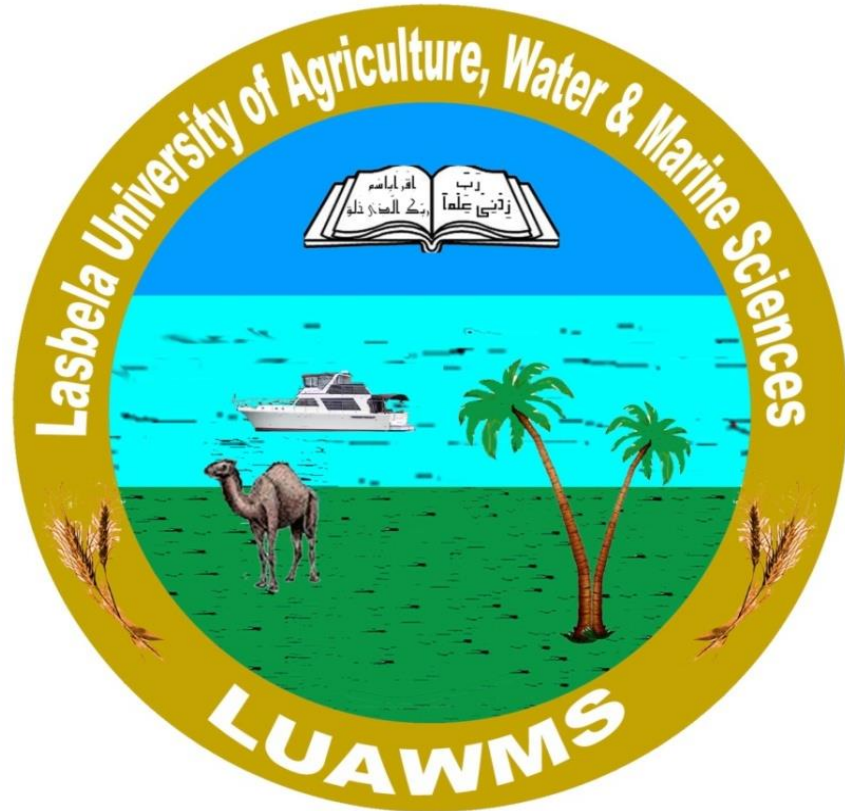


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I. All manuscripts in English should follow the following format:

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II. Manuscripts in English should use the following style for headings and subheadings:

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- 1.1
- 1.1.1
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Linguistic Transformation and Covid-19: A Corpus-Based Analysis of Intensifiers

Hassan Bukhtiar¹, Muhammad Saqib Zafar², Faryal Waseem Khan³

Abstract

The COVID-19 pandemic has heavily affected all aspects of human life. Leaving out the social, psychological, and economic effects; the coronavirus has introduced a number of linguistic changes. The present study analyzes the impact of COVID-19 on Language in terms of the use of intensifiers and the presentation of the Coronavirus, especially by the media. The best way to analyze a language is with the help of its expressive aspect, that is, the use of intensifiers, as noted by Tagliamonte & Roberts (2005). This study followed a mixed-method approach. The researchers took two different sets of four-month data, containing 134000 tokens in each from 16 international English newspapers from four different countries and named as pre-COVID corpus and COVID-19 corpus with the boundary line of 30th December 2019. Ten negative and ten positive intensifiers were classified and then analyzed with the help of Antconc (Version 3.5.8). The findings of this study showed that after the COVID-19 outbreak the negative intensifiers have been more frequently used as compared to the past. The frequent use of the negative intensifier “deadly” and similar adjectives with the COVID-19 delineates the current scenario of frustration, fear, and depression. Moreover, the COVID-19 impact on the use of language may affect the ideologies and bent of mind of the people and leads them towards stress, depression, frustration, and anxiety, which can also cause mental issues and negative feelings.

Keywords: COVID-19, Intensifiers, Corpus Linguistics, Language Variation, English Newspapers

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1 Introduction

COVID-19 has affected the life of all human beings by leaving a devastating and fearful impact on their mental health and made them depressed. Language has been the only medium to express people's mental thoughts about the COVID-19. The only way to express what is inside the people's mind about COVID-19 is revealed with the use of language that is full of emotions, feelings, and gestures. Rafi (2020) highlights that many people are sharing misinformation about this novel disease. The negative implications of sharing "mis-infodemic" on people's psychological state.

Beltrama and Andrea (2015) view the linguistic intensifiers as the most important element of language as it expresses clearly and adequately the internal thoughts and the variety of feelings. To analyze language variation more aptly, a special focus can be placed on the use of intensifiers. So far, several studies have been conducted on the use of language and the influence of the social factors. Jamshaid (2016) highlights that language is a continuum process that changes across time and space because of the changes in social perspective. Wolfram (2006) suggests that language variation, which is transitional and stable, can be studied through examining the linguistic patterns across time that result from the sociolinguistic variations. These social factors are based on wealth, religion, schooling system, family structure, and the population of that community, etc. COVID-19 also affected all these social factors. Xiao and Tao (2007) highlight that change in social factors can make a change in the use of language. Martinez (2016) suggests that language variation can be viewed by analyzing the use of intensifiers.

1.1 Intensifiers

The most significant aspect of any language is the use of intensifiers. These are the words that are used to maximize or emphasize on the meaning of the modified word. Linguists offered different definitions of intensifiers. According to Stoffel (1901), intensifiers are the "intensive adverbs" only. However, Bolinger and Dwight (1972) described them as degree words and amplifiers. When we use language, we want to make sure that the words or phrases that we are using genuinely mirror our thoughts, especially the intense ones. Therefore, to present this intensity, we use words called Intensifiers. Calle-Martín (2014) viewed intensifiers as a rich historical changing component of the language. Fuchs and Gut (2016) claimed that intensifiers are more frequently found in informal speech than formal or academic texts.

These words don't have their individual meaning, but they boast or lay emphasis on the word that is next to them to show the complete intensity of that word. These words are used to reflect one's imagination and to express ideas more clearly. Stoyanova-Georgieva (2017) found that the intensifiers are used in Bulgarian media to build the emotional attachment with the audience and to set the stage for psychological manipulation. Méndez-Naya (2008) viewed intensifiers as the degree words that add intensity to the modified words. They modify nouns and verbs as well. Moreover, adverbs and expletives are also used as intensifiers. When intensifiers are placed before the modified words, they are called "premodifiers".

Xiao and Tao (2007) viewed intensifiers as a broad term of amplifiers that may have a scaling-up effect and downtoners that have a scaling-down effect on the words. Stratton (2020) found that the amplifiers are more prominent than the downtoners in speech. Techacharoenrungrueang (2019) proposed that positive remarks are conveyed by means of intensifiers. Tagliamonte and Roberts (2005) investigated the use of intensifiers through different periods of time to examine recycling and layering phenomena in language use. König & Gast (2006) pointed out five types of intensifiers that are identical. Furthermore, to identify the context of the words, there is another terminology used by Louw (1993) that is about semantic prosody. A dichotomy of positive and negative word collocations can be used to identify the context of the modified word.

From the above concept, intensifiers are categorized into two sets: positive-sounding and negative-sounding. The impact of the social factors on the use of language has been investigated by numerous scholars in several ways, but the analysis of the impact of COVID-19 on the use of language has yet to be done. Probing the use of language in the newspapers, during these terrifying and pervasive circumstances, is essential as it tells the people about the changes in lexical choices due to COVID-19. This study will help in overcoming the “coronaphobia” by understanding its nature and precautions to remove all kinds of stress and depression which can lead to mental disorders and more sickness. Moreover, this study will provide some suggestions to the editors of the newspapers to convey information rather than fear and anxiety.

This study answers the following research questions:

1.2 Research Question:

- Does the COVID-19 issue leave an impact on the use of language concerning its intensification?
- Which types of intensifiers are more frequently used after the COVID-19?
- How is the COVID-19 presented by the newspaper language?

2 Literature Review

2.1 Background of the study

Numerous studies so far have been conducted on the language variation by social factors. Xiao, R., & Tao, H. (2007) studied the use of Amplifiers (a subcategory of intensifiers) concerning sociolinguistic factors such as age, gender, education, and register, etc. They took the data from British National Corpus to analyse the variations among these factors. They examined 33 amplifiers with the help of a corpus tool to proceed to the study. The findings of this study show that amplifiers are more frequently used in speech than writing because of their informal nature. The second higher level of education leads more to the use of intensifiers because of their more skilled and polished bent of mind. Thirdly aged people are also more frequent with the use of intensifiers. Lastly, women are more familiar with the use of intensifiers as compared to their counterparts because of their emotional and more expressive nature.

Fuchs, R., and Gut, U. (2016) highlights that intensifiers are more frequently found in informal data than in academic or formal text. Secondly, data shows a strong variation with respect to geographical positions of language use. Martinez, I. M. P. (2016) conducted comparative research on the negative intensification by the youth or teenagers. For this study, he took data from the COLT corpus that is part of BNC. He compared this

data with the Diachronic Corpus of Present-Day English and examined the variation. As a result, he delineates that the tendency of negative intensifiers is more in young people than the old people due to the fact of being more natural in conversation. Whereas the social factors are more prompt on the use of language on adults so that they make conversations with each other's more consciously to show their wise, witty, and well-experienced cognitive model.

Tagliamonte, S., and Roberts, C. (2005) investigated the use of intensifiers concerned with the different periods of time to view recycling and layering phenomena of the language. To proceed further the data was taken from the famous American comedy serial Friends to find out linguistic innovation as well as to prove the generalization of media language data on the real-world language data by conducting a historical survey about the use of intensifiers. The researchers took adjectival head intensifiers from the data which were 8611. Findings show that 'so' is the most frequently used intensifier which replaced previously really and very. Moreover, they asserted that media is also the most innovative way to study the variation of the language that is continuously recycled and layering which is the most appealing thing about the language.

Beltrama, A. (2015) conducted a study on the sociolinguistic variation on the use of intensifiers. As a sample Corpus of Contemporary American English was examined for different aspects of the text genre more specifically. The researcher proposed that Adjectival intensification is mostly found in the spoken form whereas almost equally found in fiction and newspapers with the percentage of 18% and 17% respectively. Moreover, she concluded with the remarks that the semantic aspect of the intensifier does always affect its sociolinguistic variation.

Stratton, J. M. (2020) also studied the German language which is unexplored yet. By giving main focus on syntactic intensification of adjectives concerning age and gender. He analyzed the data with the help of corpus by using social variation methods. The researcher concludes that the subcategory Amplifiers are more prominent than downtoners. Whereas Maximizers are less frequent as compared to the boosters in the German language.

Stoyanova-Georgieva, I. (2017) highlights the frequencies and diversities of the adverbial intensifiers that are found in the newspaper's letter to editors. The researcher claims that the emotional presentation of the facts is a very important way for the writer to grasp the attention of the audience. The emotional and expressive values of the text can be described aptly by analyzing the use of intensifiers. Comparative data was collected from the British newspaper's letter to editors and the Bulgarian newspaper's letter to editors. Ten widely used intensifiers are selected to proceed with the analysis. The quantitative findings of the study show that Bulgarian newspapers are more familiar with the use of intensifiers. The use of Bulgarian media to attack their audience by the excessive use of qualifiers can be taken as an example. Techacharoenrungrueang, S. (2019) proposed that positive remarks are manifested through the use of intensifiers. Moreover, these intensifiers are used positively as they always aim to impress others.

The above-mentioned studies focused on the analysis of language variations with many social factors such as age, gender, class, education, etc. These changes are measured by

using different methods as well as by analyzing different components of the language such as adjectives, adverbs, intensifiers, modalities, and elements of subjectivity, etc. These studies have taken data from many resources like fiction, dramas, BNC, COCA, or other already developed corpora's. These researches also inform us about the variation of language by social factors synchronically as well as diachronically. But none of them, so far investigated the use of intensifiers to measure the impact of Social scenario such as COVID-19 to examine the variation in the use of language. Moreover, previously only one study so far has been conducted about the analysis of the use of intensifiers in the newspaper which only talks about the one genre that is letters to the editor. Another difference is that the present data has been collected from news headlines with their detail only. Furthermore, the most important gap, which needs immediate analysis is the impact of the COVID-19 on the linguistic transformation which we are going to analyze in this study.

3 Methodology

Intensifiers are mainly viewed with two types that are adverbial intensifiers and adjectival intensifiers. They are further categorized, with respect to their properties, into 4 types, such as Amplifiers, Downtoners, Maximizers, and Boosters. The main function of the intensifiers is to give emphasis or to boost up the meaning of the word with which it collocates. Louw (1993) proposed that neutral words can give negative and positive meanings when they are associated with other words used in specific contexts. So, to limit the scope of the present study, the researchers focused only on two types of intensifiers: positive sounded intensifiers and negative sounded intensifiers. A total of ten positive and negative intensifiers were taken from the categories that are mentioned below.

Table 1. Types of intensifiers

No	Positive intensifiers	Negative intensifiers
1	Pretty	Seriously
2	Absolutely	Deadly
3	Completely	Critically
4	Greatly	Strictly
5	Utterly	Bitterly
6	Highly	Wrongly
7	Really	Insanely
8	So	Terribly
9	Very	Never
10	Fairly	Extremely

3.1 Sample:

For sampling, two equal-sized corpora were developed from similar resources from different countries that share the same genre and size over different periods of time. First, the data of the pre-COVID-19 corpus were collected from the newspaper's text related to

general news headlines and their detail, dated from 1st August, 2019 to 30 November, 2019. The corpus contained 134000 tokens. These data were collected from English newspapers from four different countries. These countries are USA, UK, China, and Pakistan. Four newspapers from each country were selected. Then, these data were compared with the COVID-19 corpus which was recently developed by the students of MPhil in Applied Linguistics at the University of Management and Technology, Sialkot. It was supervised by Mr. Saqib Zafar – the resource person. Four English newspapers were taken from each country. The total word count of the COVID-19 corpus is 134000 tokens.

The data were collected before and after the covid-19 outbreak. The post-COVID corpus was collected from the Covid-19 news between 31 December 2019 and 20 April 2020. The details of these newspapers are mentioned below. Table 2 provides a description of the newspapers. Since Dor, D. (2003) considers newspapers as the most upgrade source of knowledge, the researchers collected data from newspapers to examine the linguistic transformation.

Table 2. Sample detail

Country name	USA	UK	Pakistan	China
Newspaper 1	The New York Time	Metro	The News	China Daily
Newspaper 2	USA Today	The SUN	Dawn	People Daily
Newspaper 3	The Wall Street Journal	Daily Mail	The Nation	Global Times
Newspaper 4	The Washington Post	The Sun or Sunday	The Express Tribune	The Observers

3.2 Research Procedure:

This study followed a mixed-method design. In the quantitative analysis, frequencies of both negative and positive intensifiers were counted and compared with the use of Antconc software 3.5.8 version from both corpus data. Whereas, the qualitative analysis was based on the identification and description of the collocations of words related to COVID-19/Coronavirus. The words were viewed and then interpreted according to their context. To answer the research questions, the most recurrent intensifiers were selected from the two main categories. Then, as a pilot study, the pre-COVID-19 corpus file was loaded in the software and the frequencies of these intensifiers were noted down with the help of Antconc by using the Wordlist tool to view the number of occurrences of intensifiers in the language used before COVID-19.

After the identification of the pattern of the use of intensifiers, the researchers entered the COVID-19 corpus file in Antconc and viewed the number of occurrences again by using Wordlist tool. After that, these findings were compared with the results of the pre-COVID-19 corpus to answer the first two research questions. Moreover, to answer the third research question, the words related to COVID-19, such as “Coronavirus”,

“disease”, “infection”, and “health”, were searched with the help of Antconc by using the Cluster/N-gram tool to find their associations. Then, with the help of these findings, the third research question was also answered and interpreted and then the results were discussed.

4 Data Analysis

4.1 Data Analysis:

The data were analyzed after inscribing the number of occurrences that were identified with the help of Antconc. First, the pre-COVID-19 corpus data were loaded in Antconc. Then, with the help of the preference tool option, the software was instructed to detect and classify the positive intensifiers first, and then the negative intensifiers. After that, the frequencies of both types of intensifiers were noted down by using the word list portal. Next, COVID-19 corpus data was loaded in the same software. Then, by using the same process, the frequencies of the positive intensifiers and the negative intensifiers were noted one by one.

Then, the outcomes of both corpora were compared and discussed. Furthermore, the collocations of Corona-related words were firstly examined by using the cluster and n-gram portal of this software and then explained with the help of COVID-19 context. This section is divided into three sub-sections. In the first section, the results of the pre-COVID-19 corpus were discussed. Then, in the next section, the results of the COVID-19 corpus were discussed. The third section compares the findings of the pre-COVID corpus and the post-COVID corpus.

4.2 Analysis of the Pre-COVID-19 corpus:

After the analysis of the Pre-COVID-19 corpus, the researchers found that the positive category of the intensifiers were more frequent as compared to the negative type of the intensifiers in the whole corpus. That means, in this corpus, the language is intensified positively.

4.2.1 The use of Positive Intensifiers:

The most frequent positive intensifier was “So”. It occurred 254 times, in the whole corpus. Mostly, it was adjacent to words like “effective”, “common”, and “fun” etc. The second most frequent positive intensifier was “Very” and it was repeated 112 times. The word “very” in this data was mostly used in the pleasant sense, such as “very much, very good, and very important”. The third most used positive intensifier was “completely” which totally occurred 14 times, and most of the time, clustered with the word “different” and “zero” three times. On number four, the word “pretty” was used 9 times in the whole data. “Highly” comes on number five and it was used 8 times and was collocated with words like “sophisticated” and “respectable” etc. On number seven and number eight, intensifiers “greatly” and “absolutely” were used respectively. Their number of occurrences was seven and five. Lastly, the most infrequent positive intensifiers in the whole corpus were “utterly” and “fairly”. They were used only once.

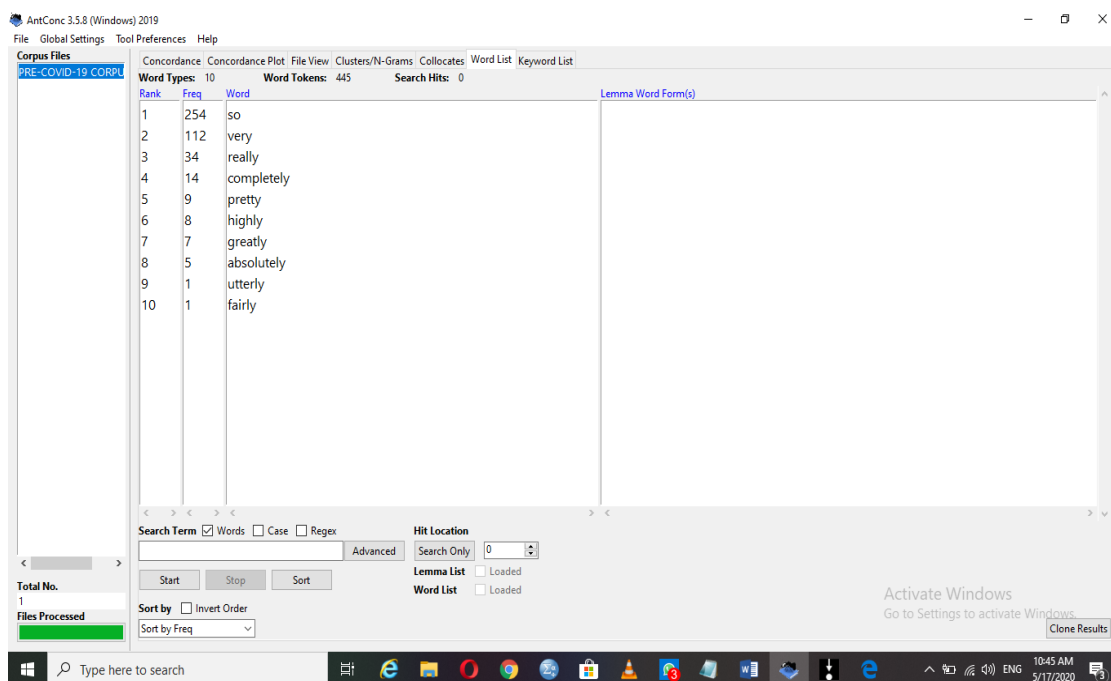


Figure 1. Use of Positive Intensifiers in Pre-COVID Corpus

4.2.2 Use of Negative Intensifiers:

In the pre-COVID-19 corpus, the most frequent negative intensifier was “Never”. It was repeated 66 times and used 7 times and mostly clustered with “be able”. This intensifier modifies its collocation word negatively. The second most frequent negative intensifier in this corpus was seriously, which occurred 12 times with the word “wounded”, which implies a negative or unpleasant meaning. Then, the third most frequently used word was “extremely” which was repeated 6 times. Next, the most important negative intensifier of this study was “deadly” and it occurred three times. In this corpus, it was clustered with words like “factory”, “collapse”, “weapon”, and “crime”, where it emphasized more negatively on the meaning. The less frequent words were “wrongly”, “bitterly”, and “strictly.” These words occurred one time in the whole study respectively. In the pre-COVID corpus, the researchers did not find any examples of these negative intensifiers: “critically”, “terribly”, and “insanely”, in the whole corpus data.

Although there were many other types of intensifiers found in this data, here the demand of the research is to find out only ten negative and ten positive intensifiers to answer the targeted research questions, as well as, to explore other aspects of this study. These negative intensifiers were less used as compared to the positive intensifiers mentioned above.

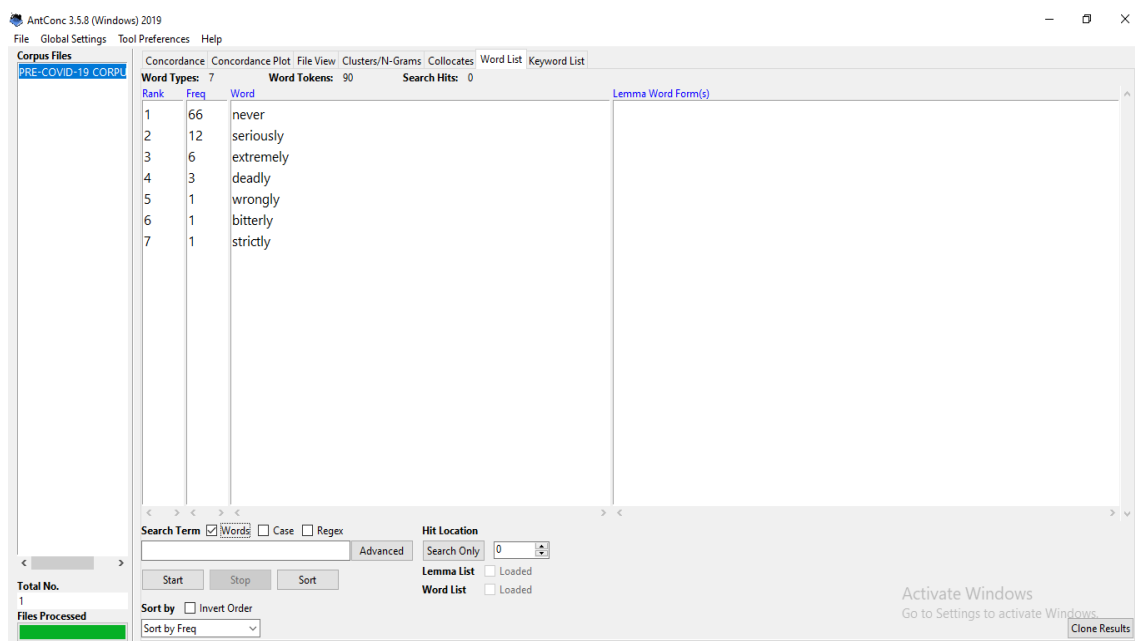


Figure 2. Use of Negative Intensifiers in Pre-COVID Corpus

4.3 Analysis of the COVID-19 corpus:

After the analysis of the COVID-19 corpus, the researchers found out that the positive intensifiers, as well as, the negative intensifiers were used in the whole data, but mostly these types of words were used in an unpleasant and negative manner. The language and choices of the words that were used in this study mostly create a gloomy and unpleasant scenario. The details of both types will be discussed below.

4.3.1 Use of Positive intensifiers:

The data revealed that the most frequently used intensifier among the positive category was “so”. This word was used 188 times in the whole corpus. The word “so” was mostly conjoined with the word “far” with a frequency of 93 times where it, most of the time, informs about the intensity of Coronavirus in the whole world. The second more frequent word in this study was “very” with an occurrence rate of 75 times. It mostly occurred with words like “much” and “difficult” respectively five and six times. This word is mostly used to inform about the intensity of the pandemic for example, “very high mortality rate”, “very dangerous”, and “very malignant disease” etc. Thirdly, the intensifier “highly” was used after them with a frequency rate of 17 times. Regarding clusters, this intensifier occurred with the word “contagious” five times.

The positive intensifier “really” occurred 16 times and it was found as the fourth most used positive intensifier in the corpus. The most frequent cluster of this word was “been infected”, which also gave a bad impression to the readers. In the list, among these intensifiers, on the fifth number, the word with respect to occurrences was “completely”. It was repeated 12 times and mostly collocated with the word “parallelized”.

Then, the word “absolutely” came on number six with the frequency of occurrences of 4 times. On numbers seven, eight, and nine words such as “greatly”, “pretty”, and “fairly” occurred with the ratio of three times respectively in the whole data. Lastly, the less

frequent intensifier was “utterly” that was identified once in the whole corpus. The analysis revealed that the positive sounded intensifiers in the COVID-19 corpus were used, most of the time, to talk about the negative and unpleasant scenario.

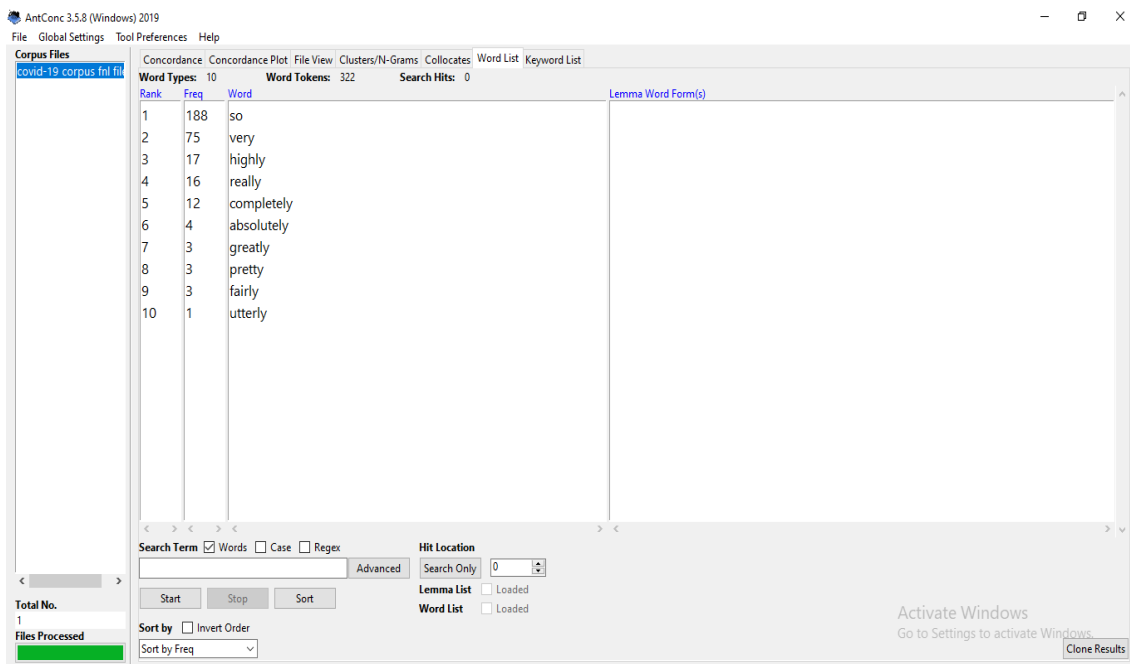


Figure 3. Use of Positive Intensifiers in COVID-19 Corpus

4.3.2 The use of Negative Intensifiers:

In the COVID-19 corpus, the most frequent negative and unpleasant sounded intensifier is “deadly”. It expressed the severe intensity of the pandemic scenario. This word occurred 116 times in this corpus data. It was usually clustered with words like “deadly virus”, “deadly Coronavirus”, and “deadly disease” with the number of frequencies of 27, 25, and 18 respectively. These intensifiers were used to highlight the severity of the virus and its serious impact on people’s mental and physical wellbeing.

The second most frequent intensifier of this category was “never” and it was mentioned 16 times. On the third number, the word “seriously” occurred 12 times. This word, most of the time, was associated with words like “ill”, “damage”, and “infections” in this corpus data. Fourthly, the next frequent word is “critically” and it occurred 7 times in the whole data. This intensifier is mostly clustered with the word “ill” 6 times totally. The fifth most frequent word among this list is “wrongly”. It occurred 4 times in total. Similarly, ranked as the sixth and seventh mostly used intensifiers, “terribly”, and “strictly” were detected four times in the data corpus.

Lastly, the less frequently repeated word from the mentioned list was “extremely”. It appeared 2 times only; and it was classified at the end of the list.

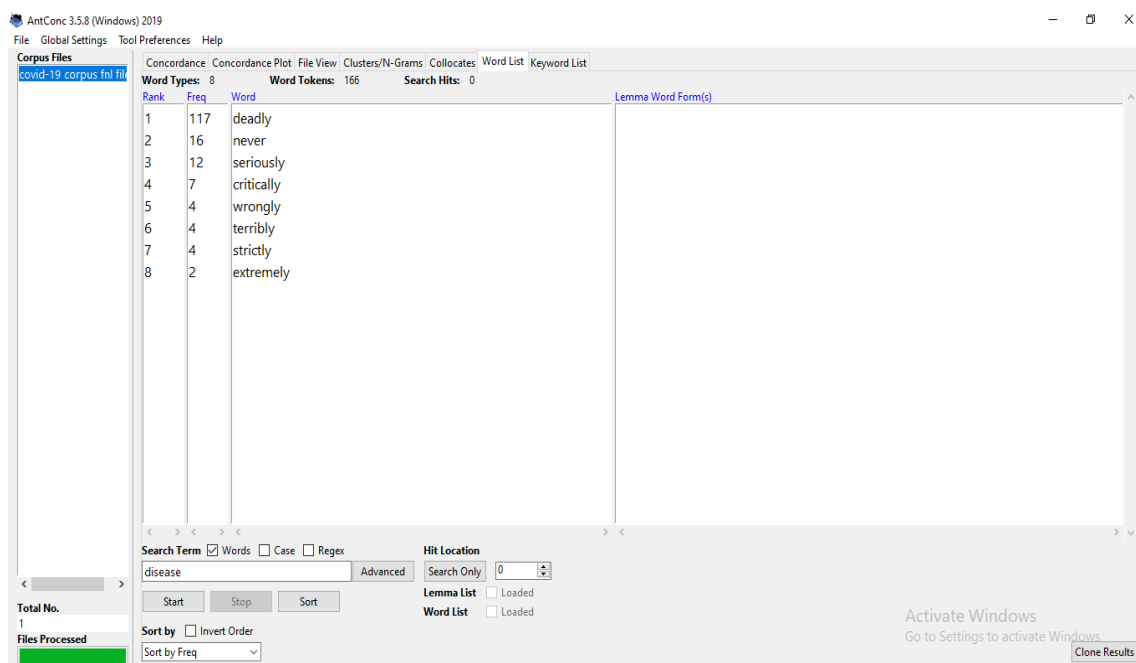


Figure 4. Use of Negative Intensifiers in COVID-19 Corpus

4.4 Comparison between pre-COVID-19 corpus and COVID-19 corpus:

After analyzing both corpus data, the researchers came to the point that in the pre-COVID corpus data, they discussed positive sounded intensifiers were more used than the negative sounded intensifiers. Moreover, these positive intensifiers were also applied in a positive context. Whereas, the findings of the COVID-19 corpus indicated that, with respect to the number of occurrences, the positive intensifiers were mentioned more than the negative intensifiers. However, the deep analysis showed that the positive intensifiers such as "so", "very", and "really" that conveyed pleasant meaning in the pre-COVID data list, showed negative and unpleasant meaning in the COVID corpus.

Furthermore, the number of occurrences of positive intensifiers was less in the COVID-19 data as compared to the pre-COVID data. Whereas, the frequency of occurrences of the negative intensifiers were higher in the COVID data as compared to the pre-COVID data. For example, the most frequent negative intensifier "deadly" occurred 117 times in the COVID-19 corpus, but it occurred only three times in pre-COVID-19 corpus. This revealed that during the pandemic scenario, the negative intensifiers were more frequently used than in the pre-pandemic scenario.

Moreover, the positive intensifiers were less frequent in the pandemic scenario than before the outbreak of the pandemic. The sudden change in the use of the negative intensifier "deadly" was alarming as it indicates a big change in language choices as a result of the impact of the current social emergency. For example, according to the British National Corpus (BNC), the intensifier "deadly" was used in the written data only 8.73 times per million words. If we compare BNC results with the COVID-19 corpus results, we can conclude that use of "deadly" has changed due to these entire social factors. Similarly, the other negative or unpleasant sounded intensifiers are rapidly used these days.

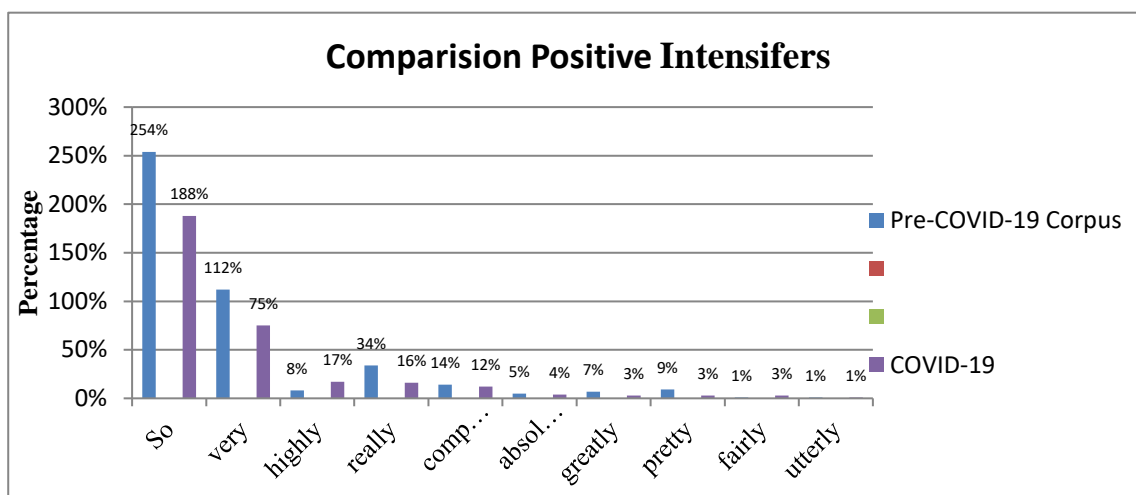


Figure 5. Comparison of Positive Intensifiers

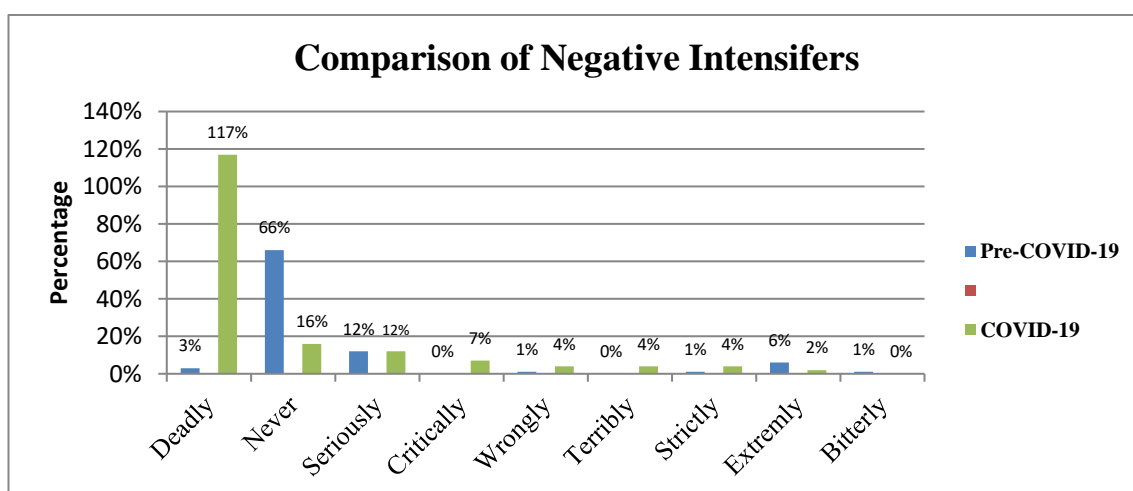


Figure 6. Comparison of Negative Intensifiers

4.5 The use of COVID-19 related words:

After placing the file in the Antconc and using the Cluster/N-gram tool, the researchers found that the use of words related to Coronavirus, such as “COVID-19”, “disease”, and “infection” are collocated with the most unpleasant words, in a way that can lead a normal person into depression. These words are mentioned below in table 3. The table shows that the newspaper’s editors tend to use pejorative terms to spread fear and exacerbate “Coronaphobia”. For example, in table number 3, expressions like “Corona wharf”, “threatening disease”, “lethal disease”, “malignant disease”, and “indigenous COVID-19” were used to exaggerate and downplay the danger of the coronavirus in the world.

According to Van Dijk (1997), discourse is mainly about the construction and reflection of society. When someone talks, the ideologies are reflected by the use of words; therefore, they also make changes in the existing perspectives of the social actors because discourse always leaves an impact on the listener. If we study the use of the negative intensifiers in the light of Van Dijk’s (1997) concept, words like “killer”, “exploitation”,

and “threatening” etc. can leave a detrimental impact on the psychology of the people. In return, this will inevitably lead to depression and mental illness, rather than informing people about the actual situation. In this section, the researchers concluded that the “COVID-19” was generally presented in an unpleasant and frightful manner. The writers described the virus with the use of a plethora of negative intensifiers just to insist on the seriousness of this emergency situation.

Table no 3 Words Related to Coronavirus:

Words	COVID-19	Coronavirus	Disease
1	Indigenous COVID-19	Killer virus	Deadly disease
2	Suspected COVID-19	Novel Corona	Contagious disease
3	Death of COVID-19 patients	Diverse Corona	Threatening disease
4	Exploited COVID-19	Corona wharf.	Lethal disease
5	Amidst COVID-19	Chinese virus	Malignant disease
6	COVID-19 infection	Combat with virus	Viral disease

5 Discussions and Further Recommendations

5.1 Discussion:

The objective of this study was to find out the linguistic variations caused by the COVID-19 social factors. In this study, the researchers probed the changes by focusing only on the use of intensifiers as it forms the best way to analyze a language because it deals with the description part of the language more clearly, expressively, and even emotionally (Beltrama, 2015).

Secondly, Wolfram (2006) portrays that the social factors always make changes in the lifestyle of the people. Hence, the change in their life means the change in their use of language, because the use of language is part of the social practice. Similarly, the wake COVID-19 has enormously affected every sphere of life in terms of social factors and language use as well.

In a recent study, Tiwari, et al., (2020) revealed that the sudden spread of this fatal disease caused severe psychological and cognitive negative effects, like stress, depression, and mental disorders caused by the immediate changes in the social practices. Thus, the change in the use of language can be seen in the already discussed analysis.

Regarding the pre-COVID corpus, people are using more positive intensifiers than the negative ones. But in the COVID-19 data, the researchers realized that the use of positive intensifiers has become less than before. Whereas, the detailed study showed that these positive sounded intensifiers are used even to emphasize the negative and unpleasant impressions.

Furthermore, the negative category of the intensifiers is less frequent in the pre-pandemic data as compared to the pandemic data. The intensive use of the negative and unpleasant intensifiers proposed that there is a variation in the use of language that is directly related to the COVID-19. In the pandemic data, we found that the intensifier “deadly” was used more frequently than any other intensifier. This rapid change has heavily affected the use of intensifiers. The historical analysis showed, in BNC written data, “deadly” was used only 8.73 times per million words. Whereas this word was used in the pre-COVID data only 3 times, but in the pandemic data, it was used 117 times. So the researchers found that the exaggerated use of the intensifier “deadly”, which has an unpleasant sense, reflected the inner fear of the people that was related to the COVID-19 disease.

This article was based on three research questions that are answered below:

1. Does the COVID-19 issue leave an impact on the use of language concerning its intensification?

With the above-mentioned findings, researchers concluded that the COVID-19 issue created a diverse impact on the use of intensifiers. The use of positive intensifiers has become less compared to the way they were used before the pandemic scenario. On the other hand, the negative intensifiers have become more frequently used during the COVID-19 scenario. For example, the negative intensifier “deadly” was used 117 times during COVID-19; whereas it was used 8.73 times per million words in the British National Corpus (BNC) data, and three times in pre-COVID data.

2. Which types of intensifiers are more frequently used after COVID-19 issue?

The findings of the current study showed that, after the COVID-19 issue, the negative intensifiers were more frequently used by the newspapers’ editors. The deep analysis showed that some of the mentioned positive intensifiers were also used with the modified words to add a negative discernment.

3. How is the COVID-19 presented by the newspaper language?

The results of this study showed that in the Coronavirus scenario, the language used by the media is quite depressing, negative, and unpleasant. As the above mentioned words, such as “killer”, “death”, “exploitation”, “malignant”, and “lethal” disease were used to present the Corona scenario in a way that leads the people towards fear, depression, anxiety, mental disorder, and frustration only. With the main aim of this study, researchers come to know that the use of language always depends upon the social factors, social conditions, and the social context.

Any change in these things can lead to a big change in our lifestyle, which, in turn may affect directly our use of language. This supports the concept of the Linguistic Transformation, especially in the case of the excessive use of the intensifier “deadly” and other intensifiers usage due to the COVID-19. The second more important thing about the present study is that it explains how the use of language always leaves an implicit impact on the cognitive model of the human beings which can affect the present condition of the language users as well. Therefore, the media should convey information rather than creating phobia, fear, and frustration in the mind of people. Moreover, it should inform the audience only about the basic preventions of the COVID-19 in a more generous way to calm and relax their mind.

5.2 Further recommendations:

Future studies should investigate other linguistic aspects that have changed due to the spread of the COVID-19. Moreover, the research can proceed by analyzing other forms of intensifiers and by taking the data from daily life conversations because the use of intensifiers is more concerned with the informal way of presenting social phenomena. As the written data we have taken for the present study is the formal genre of language, this will be a new dimension of studying the Linguistics Transformation linked to the social scenario.

6 Conclusion

This study explored the language variations caused by the new social factors related to the “COVID-19” by using two data sets to analyze the use of intensifiers before and after the pandemic. The current study shows that the use of language with respect to their lexical choices or other aspects can vary on the basis of the social circumstances, needs, and scenario of the social actors. The COVID-19 has not only impacted the life of human beings by disturbing their lifestyles, but also changed the way they use language. Moreover, the presentation of the Coronavirus by the media created a devastating effect on the life of the human beings which can be easily seen by analyzing the use of language. The language and social conditions are interrelated. Therefore, the media should present objective information about Coronavirus rather than fear. Furthermore, from this study, we can conclude that the use of language varies on the social scenario. The social scenario is the mere creation of the humans. The use of language can present and build social identities and ideologies. Additionally, language is always recycled and layered due to its social nature and social factors that have an implicit as well as explicit effect on language use.

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