

Abstract

The present MA thesis studies adjectives of positive evaluation in present-day spoken British English. Other means of expressing subjective stance (e.g. intensifiers) were repeatedly described as undergoing constant change. However, variation in evaluative adjectives has received little quantitative attention so far (perhaps with the exception of Tagliamonte & Pabst, 2020).

Our material consists of two corpora of informal spoken British English: Spoken BNC2014 and the spoken, demographically sampled section of the original BNC (1994). The starting point for the analysis is a frequency list of adjectives, from which we select adjectives with evaluative potential which differ significantly in frequency across the two corpora. Three adjectives: *amazing*, *awesome* and *cool*, are described in greater detail.

The use of evaluative adjectives is described from several perspectives. We focus on syntactic functions of the adjectives, their co-occurrence with intensifiers and their collocations. From a sociolinguistic point of view, we describe the use of the adjectives with respect to the age and gender of the speakers.

The analysis showed that adjectives of positive evaluation are an unstable category, and the change in adjectival use was reflected in its distribution. At the same time, we note changes in syntactic behaviour or semantic shifts.

Key words: positive evaluation, adjectives, informal spoken language, language change