



**VERY VS REALLY: A CORPUS-BASED STUDY OF  
SYNONYMOUS INTENSIFIERS IN TED-TALKS**

**BY**

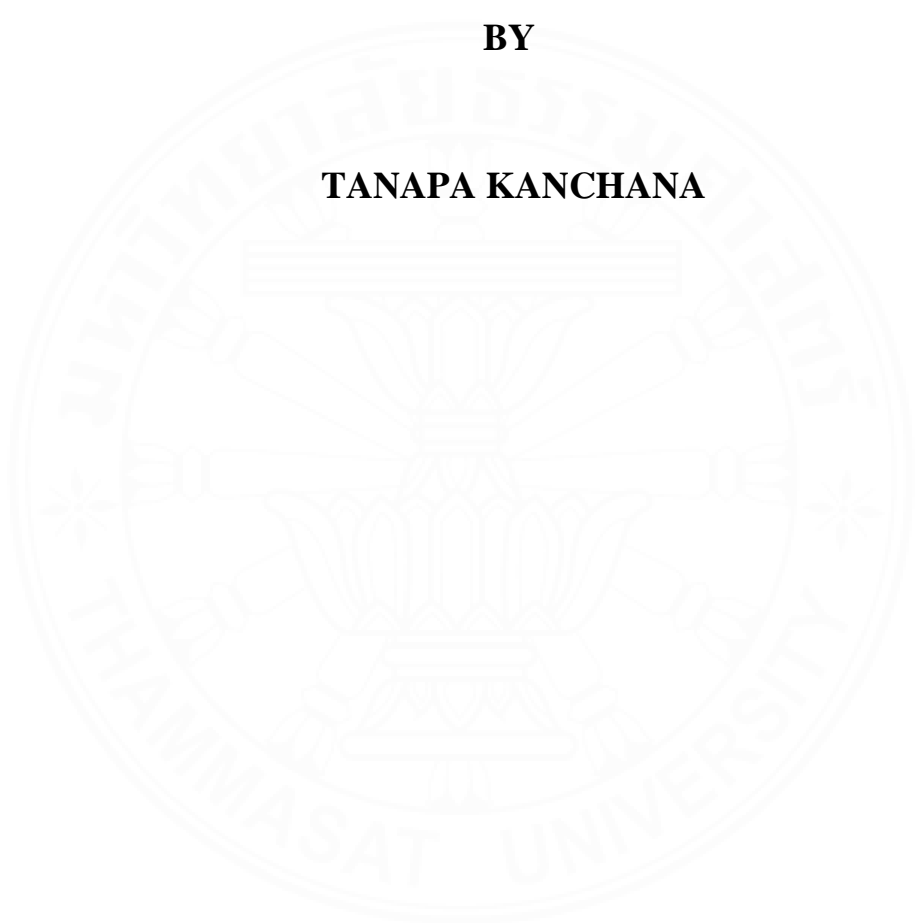
**TANAPA KANCHANA**

**AN INDEPENDENT STUDY SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL  
FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE  
OF MASTER OF ARTS IN CAREER ENGLISH FOR  
INTERNATIONAL COMMUNICATION  
LANGUAGE INSTITUTE  
THAMMASAT UNIVERSITY  
ACADEMIC YEAR 2022**

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ENTITLED

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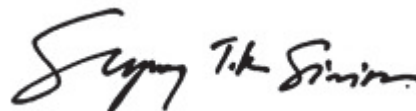
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### ABSTRACT

The corpus-based study compared and contrasted the similarities and differences between the synonymous intensifiers "*very*" and "*really*" in TED Talks on the topic of communication. This investigation employs a corpus-based approach. The data for the DIY TED Talks corpus was extracted from the transcripts of TED Talks on the topic of communication. The analysis revealed that "*very*" and "*really*", in general, have the same meaning but differ marginally in terms of frequency, collocations, and grammatical patterns within the DIY TED Talks corpus. Despite the fact that these terms are considered synonymous words, the results indicated that they are not always used interchangeably in terms of their collocations and grammatical patterns. This study demonstrates the utility of corpora for language study focusing on the use of intensifiers, which ultimately students can benefit from using corpus data to identify effective vocabulary through applying corpus data examples. The sample classroom instruction can also benefit educators by identifying intensifiers and providing examples of their use as a framework for designing pedagogical approaches, and pragmatic educational materials.

**Keywords:** Corpus-based study, intensifiers, synonyms, collocations, grammatical patterns.

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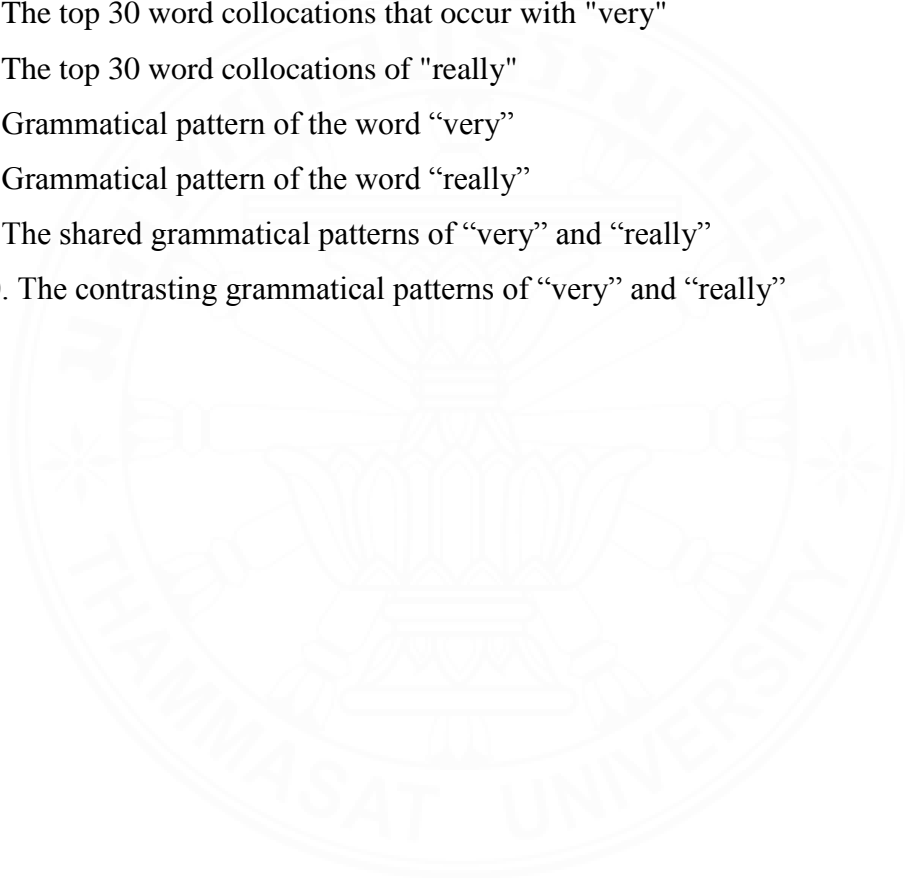
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# CHAPTER 1

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Background of study

In this era of globalization, language is recognized as an important factor in communication, which is the process of people sharing ideas and feelings with each other in commonly understandable ways (Hamilton, 2014). Kool-on (2014) also explains that language is an element of communication that people use to convey the message from one person to other persons. Nowadays, English has attained the status of a universal language (Recski, 2004). It is extensively spoken across the globe and has become an international language, finding applications in various domains such as scientific research, education, business, the internet, tourism, media and newspapers, etc.. (Parupalli, 2019). People are aware of the necessity of the English in international communication and for cooperation with other countries. (Bohdanská, 2012). This recognition has led to a growing number of language learners endeavoring to acquire proficiency in English, recognizing it as the primary language for international communication. For language learners, developing a robust vocabulary and understanding its usage is essential for effective communication and improved comprehension of spoken and written English. Such proficiency enables learners to naturally and appropriately apply words in specific contexts, while also grasping their connotative meanings and expressive qualities, particularly when engaging with native speakers (Gampaenggaew, 2016).

Regarding the importance of vocabulary in communication, words in a language can be a polysemous word, such as the word "**bat**", which in English can refer to a wooden stick used in baseball to hit the ball or a nocturnal animal. The context of the statement may modify the meaning of the word. In addition to their meaning, words can occasionally take on different parts of speech, such as the difference between words with similar meanings, for example, the words *small* and *little*. Although these two words are generally synonymous, that does not mean that they can be used interchangeably. The difference is that when discussing a quantity, we say *small*. However, when describing the size of a person or an object, we use the term *little*.

The use of synonyms are one of the major difficulties of English language acquisitions (Cao, 2020). However, synonymous intensifiers, particularly Adverbs and adverbial expressions that emphasize and enhance the meaning of other expressions, are also an essential part of the sentence because they add additional information. When learners encounter a sentence with unfamiliar words, they can use their knowledge of intensifiers to predict their meaning. Furthermore, there are many studies have been conducted on intensifiers, examining the similarities and differences among these linguistic elements in various words. The primary discoveries regarding intensifiers offer valuable insights that can aid instructors in developing more effective instructional materials for teaching this concept. These findings facilitate the implementation of a pedagogical approach that is better suited to the needs of learners.

Presently, there are a variety of platforms and applications that give an opportunity for people around the world to speak, such as TED Talks, that illustrate the differences and similarities in the wording of the speaker. TED Talks are popular presentations and effective for enhancing language skills. They are available online for free. The presentations are limited to 18 minutes, which is lengthy enough to be serious but short enough to hold the attention of the audience. (Chris Anderson, 2016). The presenters are as diverse as the audience: innovators, influencers, military strategists, beat boxers, and others speak. More than that, every speaker has a professional expertise of a topic that makes presentations exceptionally useful, especially for viewers with specific interests and hobbies, which is interesting to explore the linguistic features used in the show in relation to their use in a recorded public-speaking presentation.

In this regard, corpus linguistics can be used to study the linguistic elements of public speaking dialogue in terms of language use in context. Since the advent of corpus software, it can store the texts on a computer and provide its functions, for example, frequency, concordance lines and clusters, collocation, part of speech, and so on (Friginal, 2018). There has been previous research employing corpus linguistic approaches to examine language features and numerous studies have investigated the effectiveness of applying corpus linguistics. For instance, Patumanon (2016) conducted a comparative analysis of intensifiers in American spoken language and conversations from the TV show Friends, while Ramanee (2020) examined synonymous intensifiers

in the Thai Learners English Corpus (TLEC) and the Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA). These studies, along with others, demonstrate the significant utility of language corpora and computer analysis tools in language education, attracting considerable attention in the past decade. The incorporation of computers and corpora in language learning and teaching has gained prominence. Among these tools, concordancers have received particular emphasis. Concordancers are software programs designed to present words or grammatical items within their contextual usage. By utilizing concordancing, vocabulary and grammar development can be revealed, promoting the use of authentic language and fostering students' active and independent language analysis. Moreover, it offers empirical evidence that relates to language use.

In this study, therefore, the purpose is to investigate the use of two synonymous words “*very*” and “*really*” using a corpus-based approach. This is because building, processing, and analyzing language corpora with computer systems is one of the most important ways that computer programs have helped language teaching and learning. Using authentic presentations of foreign learners is preferable to creating examples that do not simulate actual language use. A corpus shows how language is used and gets rid of the idea that a native English speaker must rely on intuition to figure out what is used often and what is not. Immediate corpus searches can be conducted on a computer and using computer tools to investigate corpora is significantly quicker and safer than doing manually. The researcher collects data and input it into corpus software to analyze the frequency, collocation and grammatical patterns of two mentioned intensifiers in TED Talks. This kind of knowledge can lead to a better understanding in terms of the similarities and differences in terms of mentioned targets. Teaching strategies based on the implementation of these two synonymous intensifiers as a guideline for course development and authentic teaching materials will have a positive impact on the public speaking proficiency of language learners.

## **1.2 Statement of Problem**

Although synonymous intensifiers have been investigated in various non-native speaking countries using a corpus-based approach, few corpus studies have focused on studying the two synonymous intensifiers “*very*” and “*really*” on the topic of

communication in a presentation corpus. Bordet (2017) states that the two most frequently used intensifiers in the 21<sup>st</sup> century are “*very*” and “*really*” in TV series contexts. It is therefore worthwhile to investigate the differences and similarities between these two intensifiers, since most language learners use these words to indicate force or intensity of expression. In general, English language learners may believe that the adverbs “*very*” and “*really*” have similar meanings. In a presentation context, however, the occurrence, collocations and grammar structure of these adverbs seem to be significantly different. The language learner may not understand which uses of these two words are appropriate in particular contexts. This can contribute to confusion regarding whether these two intensifiers are interchangeable in all situations. This motivated the researcher to investigate the similarities and differences between these two adverbs based on the frequency, collocations and grammatical patterns in order to enhance language learners' understanding of synonymous intensifiers and to assist in the development of their skills in communication.

### **1.3 Research Questions**

- 1) What is the frequency of the synonymous intensifiers among “*very*” and “*really*” found in TED Talks?
- 2) What are the similarities and differences in terms of collocation between the synonymous intensifiers “*very*” and “*really*” found in TED Talks?
- 3) What are the similarities and differences in terms of grammatical pattern between the synonyms “*very*” and “*really*” found in TED Talks?

### **1.4 Research Objectives**

- 1) To explore the frequency of the synonymous intensifiers among ‘*very*’ and ‘*really*’ found in TED Talks.
- 2) To investigate the similarities and differences in terms of collocation between the synonymous intensifiers “*very*” and “*really*” found in TED Talks.
- 3) To examine the similarities and differences in terms of grammatical pattern between the synonymous intensifiers “*very*” and “*really*” found in TED Talks.

### 1.5 Definition of terms

1) **TED Talks** refer to the recorded public speaking presentations that were initially given at the main TED annual event or one of its many satellite conferences around the world.

2) **Intensifiers** refer to adverbs and adverbial expressions that emphasize and strengthen the meaning of other expressions. Common intensifiers include *absolutely, really, so, too, completely, utterly, very, and completely*, etc..

3) **Collocations** refer to word collocates that co-occur naturally with terms and have received widespread acceptance through repeated use. Even though words that are synonyms have similar meanings, some words can only be used in specific contexts, for example *really* and *actually* are collocation, Both are manner adverbs. However, 'really' is an intensifier that emphasizes a sentence's subject or verb. On the other hand, 'actually' indicates a fact. It is not emphasized.

4) **Grammatical patterns** refer to the rules of grammar in which each word in a set of intensifiers occurs frequently. Although two words may share a similar meaning in general, their colloquial structures may differ. For instance, *say* and *tell* have comparable meanings but different grammatical structures. *Say* does not require an object for a sentence to be complete and meaningful, whereas *tell* does.

5) **Do-it-yourself (DIY) corpora** refers to small-scale databases of electronic texts created by users for specific, limited, and local purposes. In this study, it refers to the transcript of TED Talks on the topic of “communication”.

### 1.6 Scope of the study

The study focuses on the two most frequently used intensifiers, as stated by Bordet (2017), which are “*very*” and “*really*”. (Bordet, 2017), grammatically, the word “*very*” can function as an adjective and adverb. However, this study examined the use of the adverbs by focusing solely on the adverb form. Based on a list of the 3,000 core words from the Oxford Dictionary, The Oxford 3000's most essential keywords have been thoroughly selected by a group of language experts and knowledgeable instructors and valuable words to prioritize in vocabulary study. These two targeted words are listed in 3,000 core words. This demonstrates the importance of comparing and

contrasting the two synonymous intensifiers in terms of their frequency, collocations and grammatical patterns.

Regarding the scope of this analysis, the primary focus of this study revolves around the theme of communication. Specifically, it emphasizes the significance of acquiring effective communication skills, which enable individuals to establish connections and foster relationships. By honing these skills, individuals can proficiently articulate their experiences and express their needs, thus facilitating the development of a robust communication language. To support this exploration, the study examines 85 episodes of TED Talks that delve into various aspects of communication.

While it is acknowledged that the speakers' native language and language proficiency can play a significant role in their use of intensifiers, the researcher is aware of English as a lingua franca, which is international communication. This study is not concerned with speaker competency; alternatively, it investigates the use of intensifiers in TED Talks to determine the language used for the presentation of the target word. Therefore, the nativeness and the competency of the speaker is not taken into account; instead, this study focused on the presentation context in TED Talks related to the use in terms of frequency, collocations and grammatical patterns. Even though these presentations have a wide range of linguistic features, this study will focus on the use of the intensifiers “*very*” and “*really*”.

### **1.7 Significance of the study**

English synonyms serve an important role in the vocabulary learning of second language learners. In spite of the fact that dictionaries can help students by providing definitions and examples, they cannot provide sufficient clarification in particular context. There is an opportunity for second-language learners to experience confusion when encountering words with similar meanings, such as “*very*” and “*really*”. Language learners should be able to select the most appropriate word based on the particular context.

This study investigates the synonymous intensifiers “*very*” and “*really*” in terms of frequency, collocations and grammatical patterns. Nesselhauf (2003) stressed that collocations and phrases are problematic for both native speakers and learners of English. Hence, collocations are considered important for language learning. The

findings of this study will provide insights into the collocations and grammatical patterns of synonymous intensifiers, enabling learners to discern contextual distinctions between the two words. This knowledge will guide them in using the appropriate synonym based on the specific context, emphasizing that these synonyms are not interchangeable. Furthermore, the examination of intensifiers found in presentation contexts can serve as a valuable language learning resource for both learners and teachers.

For language learners, the study's findings will be beneficial in enhancing their listening comprehension skills in the target language (L2). The results will serve as motivational factors for learning and encourage further discussions and research on intensifiers. Moreover, learners can now rely on tools to effortlessly capture the distinct features of the synonymous intensifiers they are studying or acquiring from corpora, eliminating the need for extensive manual reading or searching. This allows learners to concentrate on comprehending the collocations, grammatical patterns, and degrees of formality associated with these words.

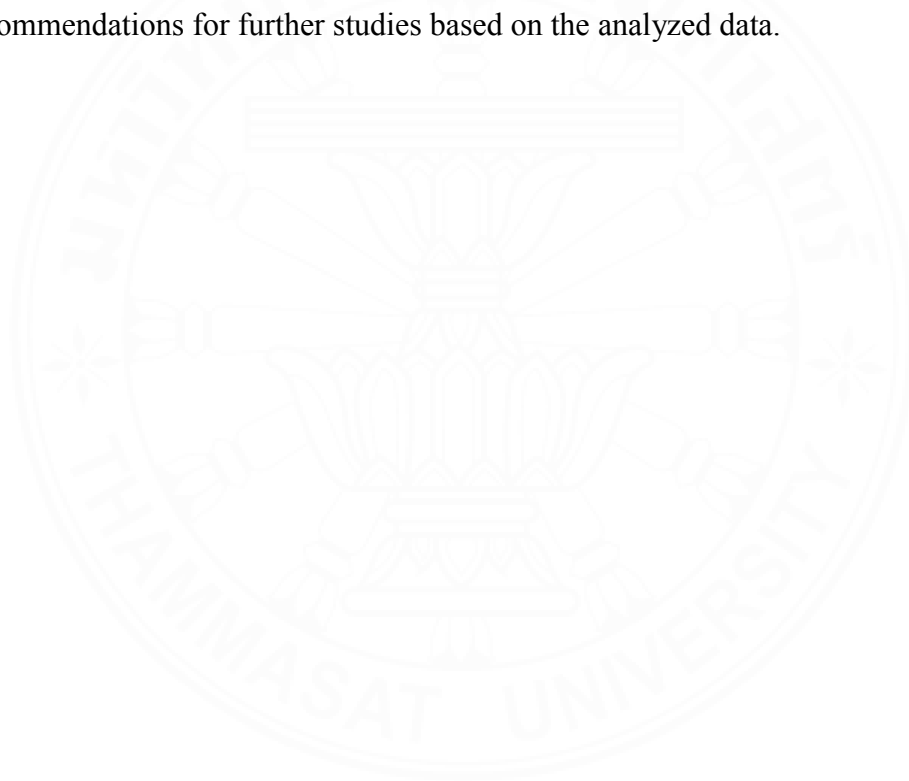
For teachers, the study's findings can be utilized to extract relevant intensifiers from the sample dialogues and provide explanations on their usage in diverse contexts. By incorporating these two synonymous intensifiers as a guiding framework, teachers can develop courses, adopt effective teaching strategies, and create authentic teaching materials that will positively impact learners' presentation proficiency.

In summary, the results of this study will contribute to a deeper understanding of synonymous intensifiers, empowering learners to apply them accurately and appropriately in their language use. This, in turn, will enhance listening comprehension, inspire learning, and facilitate the development of teaching resources for educators.

## **1.8 Organization of the study**

The study of synonymous intensifiers in TED Talks to examine the similarities and differences of the synonymous intensifiers *very* and *really* in a presentation context consists of five chapters. The first chapter presents the background of the study, definitions of terms involved in this study including scope, and the significance and limitations of the study. The second chapter provides a comprehensive summary of the four main areas of literature: corpus linguistics, intensifiers, synonyms, and

collocations. It also incorporates relevant studies and concludes with key findings. Moving on to the third chapter, the methodology is presented, which includes an explanation of the target intensifiers, details on data collection, and an overview of the data analysis process. The fourth chapter is dedicated to reporting the results and discussions derived from the analysis of the two synonymous intensifiers within the DIY TED Talk Corpus. This section delves into the frequency of occurrence, collocations, and grammatical patterns associated with these intensifiers. Lastly, the fifth chapter encompasses a summary of the study, a conclusive overview, implications derived from the findings, limitations encountered during the research, and recommendations for further studies based on the analyzed data.



## **CHAPTER 2**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

In this chapter, a variety of different concepts and theories regarding corpus linguistic analysis are identified to construct the theoretical framework for this study. The first section of this chapter will discuss (1) the definition of the term corpus linguistics, (2) intensifiers, (3) synonyms, (4) collocation (5) grammatical patterns (6) previous studies and (7) chapter summary

#### **2.1 The definition of Corpus Linguistics**

Linguistically, corpus linguistics is a research methodology focusing on the empirical investigation of language use and variation, producing results that have much greater generalizability and validity than would otherwise be feasible (Biber, Reppen, 2010). Frignal (2018) also states that this reliance on accurate, real-world (linguistic) data supports many interrelated theories of successful language learning and teaching. Mobile technology, individual education, and big data visualization as intrinsic components of CL all contribute to the adaptability and appreciation of corpus-based techniques by digital learners of English. Numerous researchers differently define the term “corpus” in their studies. In general, a corpus is a large and principled collection of natural texts (Biber, Conrad, & Reppen, 1998, p. 12) in electronic form, selected according to external criteria to represent, as far as possible, a language or language variety as a source of data for linguistic research (Sinclair, 2005).

In addition, O’Keeffe et al. (2007) define a corpus as a collection of electronic texts usually stored on a computer. Language corpora can consist of either written or spoken texts, or a combination of both. A corpus of written language is a corpus of texts that have been scanned, typed, or downloaded from the Internet into a computer or employ already-existing electronic information. A corpus of spoken language, on the other hand, is collected from recorded and transcribed data, and it takes approximately two days to transcribe, depending on the level of coding (O’Keeffe et al. 2007).

Based on the above definition of the corpus, the approach of corpus linguistics is the study of language based on corpus-stored examples of actual language usage, which are studied by computationally analyzing large databases of written texts and spoken recordings. This can be used to describe language features. For example, the corpus records of speakers from various contexts can provide language learners with information regarding the use of verbs, adverbs, intensifiers, collocations, and grammatical features. A corpus can inform and guide language education, from text sample extraction to frequency distributions of key words and phrases used in context, especially in public-speaking presentations, which assists teachers and students in establishing a broader perspective of language features by allowing them to evaluate language usage in real-world contexts.

### ***2.1.1 Types and Descriptions of corpora***

A corpus is always created for a specific reason, that defines the corpus itself, and it can be generally categorized into six categories based on its widespread usage (Hunston 2002, cited in Anagnostou & Weir 2006). To clarify categorization, the researcher provides the table below to summarize the six types and descriptions of corpora:

**Table 1**

*Types and Descriptions of Corpora*

<b>Type of corpora</b>	<b>Descriptions</b>	<b>Examples</b>
<i>Specialized corpus</i>	The corpus studies a language. CANCODE and MICASE are two well-known corpora that focus on casual British English and academic English	newspaper editorials, textbooks, linguistic papers, student essays, and more.
<i>General corpus</i>	Additionally, it may comprise a variety of words. Generally speaking, a general corpus is larger than a specialized corpus. It can be used to produce reference materials for	written or spoken language and literature from one or more countries.

Type of corpora	Descriptions	Examples
	language learning or translation, as well as a source of information for more specialized corpora.	
<i>Comparable and translation corpus</i>	This refers to two or more corpora in different languages	English and Spanish or various dialects of a language like Indian English and Canadian English
<i>Parallel corpus</i>	This refers to two or more corpora in different languages, each containing texts that have been translated from one language into the other,	an English novel translated into Spanish and one in Spanish translated into English, or texts that have been produced simultaneously in two or more languages, such as European Union regulations
<i>Learner corpus</i>	This corpus compares learners' language to native speakers'	International Corpus of Learner English
<i>Monitor corpus</i>	This type examines linguistic changes. A monitor corpus grows rapidly due to annual, monthly, or daily additions	Bank of English corpus

## 2.2 Intensifiers

Quirk et al. (1985, as cited in Athanasiadou, 2007) indicate intensifiers as “adverbs that express extent or intensity.” They categorize intensifiers into two main groups: amplifiers and boosters. Each category has its own subcategories. The categories of amplifiers are categorized into two subgroups: maximizers and boosters. The final group is the downtoners which are separated into four subgroups: compromises, diminishers, minimizers, and approximators.

Maximizers, which are a type of amplifier, are very simple in English and indicate "an absolute degree of intensity and therefore occupy the extreme upper end of the scale" (Altenberg, 1991, p. 128). Popular examples of maximizers are *absolutely, completely, etc.*, as seen in previous studies. "Maximizers can almost always be omitted from a sentence or interchanged with each other since they do not hold any content, but merely serve as a function in a sentence" (Athanasiadou, 2007, p. 557). Studies have also shown that native English speakers and people who do not communicate in English as their first language use maximizers in different ways.

Maximizers and boosters are employed slightly differently. It seems difficult to differentiate them. They have distinct semantic differences. Boosters are used to modify gradable items such as tall and short (Ghanbaran et al., 2014, p. 545). The most popular examples of boosters are *badly, highly and strongly*.

**Table 2**

*The Definitions of Intensifiers Proposed by Quirk et al. (1985)*

Terminology	Scaling upwards	Scaling downwards
<b>Intensifiers</b>	Amplifiers 1) maximizers: <i>absolutely, altogether, completely, y e.g. My shoes were completely soaked</i> 2) boosters: <i>so, highly, well, enormously, e.g. She's a really nice person.</i>	Downtoners <i>quite, pretty, rather,</i> 1) Approximators: <i>almost e.g. I'm almost full</i> 2) Compromisers: <i>more or less e.g. She's more or less a genius</i> 3) Diminishers: <i>somewhat e.g. I feel somewhat sick</i> 4) Minimizers: <i>hardly e.g. He's hardly qualified</i>

The term intensifier was defined by (Bolinger, 1972) as “any device that scales a quality, whether up or down or somewhere between the two”. According to these definitions, Intensifiers are the adverbs that adjust the meaning of words by maximizing. Such examples include utterly, completely, very, and really, among others. Due to the fact that they are adverbs, they can modify verbs, adverbs, and adjectives. For instance, the intensifier completely can be used to modify the verb defeat, as well as the adjective *absurd*.

Maximizers are used frequently in spoken interaction but much less frequently in academic writing. Intensifying adverbs, like maximizers, seem to be related to an informal rather than a formal form of communication. Guo et al. (2011) also highlights that maximizer semantic prosody—positive or negative connotations in context—is vital for language learning. For the correct and natural use of the language, it is important that second-language learners are able to use words correctly. Intensifiers seem to be beneficial in sentences. Since the use of intensifiers of the L2 is sometimes different, L2 may think the word or sentence in their own language.

## **2.3 Synonyms**

### ***2.3.1 Definition of Synonyms***

There are definitions of synonyms provided in numerous dictionaries. According to the online Cambridge Dictionary of Contemporary English (Dictionary, C. 2008), a synonym is a word or phrase that has the same or nearly the same meaning; similarly, the online Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English (LDOCE) (Dictionary, L. 1978) defines synonyms as words that have the same meaning in the same language, "extremely" and "very" as an example are synonymous. Understanding synonymy is important but difficult for language learners. In addition, ESL students and users may have difficulties with the synonyms due to the fact that synonymous words are used in a number of contexts to express different meanings.

### ***2.3.2 Types of synonyms***

Regarding the types of synonyms, there are two main types of synonyms: strict synonyms and loose synonyms (Jackson & Amvela, 2007). *Strict synonyms* refer to words that can be substituted by their synonym without an effect on the original

meaning, style or connotation in the use of all possible contexts (Cruse, 1986). The use of strict synonymy results in language redundancy. As a result, this form of synonymy would not only be inefficient, resulting in a large number of similar terms in a language, but also redundant, causing some words to become ineffective and eventually disappear.

*Loose synonyms*, on the other hand, refer to terms whose meanings overlap greatly if they are substituted with their synonyms. In other words, loose synonyms cannot be completely substituted in every case. They have the same underlying concept but differ in details or other factors. According to Jackson and Amvela (2000), loose synonyms possess overlapping meanings but cannot be used interchangeably. For instance, consider the pair "bring about" and "cause." While they share similarities, they cannot be substituted for one another. Therefore, it becomes crucial for EFL/ESL learners to understand the nuances and distinctions between synonyms in order to select the most suitable word for a given context.

Based on the definitions and types of synonyms discussed earlier, it can be inferred that although synonyms share a similar semantic relationship, they can differ in meaning and/or context. Utilizing synonyms can be invaluable when aiming to avoid repetition in a specific context. Notably, choosing the most appropriate synonym enhances communication, both verbal and nonverbal, and plays a pivotal role in expanding one's vocabulary. Learning a new set of words with comparable meanings significantly enhances English communication skills and the ability to employ precise words in specific contexts.

## **2.4 Collocations**

The definitions of collocations from several viewpoints are provided below, allowing for a deeper comprehension of the characteristics of collocations.

Sinclair (1991) stated that collocations are the recurrent co-occurrences that the word had with its collocate within a given distance of each other, measured in words. Lewis (2000) also states that collocations are often idiomatic and seem to be an important part of the language considered as an advanced level of word acquisition, which can make non-native speakers misunderstand the meaning of words that go together.

Based on these definitions, the term "collocation" refers to the combination of words that commonly occur together and can be discovered in data from corpora. This combination of words can be found in most everyday conversations. When used together, the words "*take*" and "*rest*" are an example of a collocation. This is due to the fact that it is natural or regular to say "take a rest". In other words, these terms naturally complement each other. Therefore, it can be said that collocation is mostly related to those co-occurrence of terms that typically go together.

Different researchers have varied conceptions of what the term "collocation" means, but an accurate description is required for this study. According to what the researcher discovered from the review definition of the collocation in the literature, a collocation is a term that is typically used with another word to change its meaning. It can also refer to a collection of words or phrases that make English sound natural and simple to comprehend. Thus, the meanings of each word group may be the same as or distinct from the meanings of each individual word.

## **2.5 Grammatical patterns**

Grammatical patterns play a crucial role in differentiating English synonyms, as evident in various research studies. For example, studies have examined grammatical differences between English and Thai, which contribute to challenges faced by Thai learners of English. Additionally, analyses of grammatical patterns have been conducted on specific word pairs, such as "to" and "for" with the verb "provide" in monetary texts, as well as the near-synonyms "quit" and "stop" in COCA, focusing on semantic prosody and grammatical patterns.

According to McCarthy et al. (2010), grammar encompasses the immutable rules governing speech and writing. Douglas et al. (1998) also propose that language contains numerous words that can be considered synonyms due to their similar meanings but distinct usage. For instance, "say" and "tell" have comparable meanings but differ in their grammatical structures. "Say" does not need an object to create a meaningful and complete sentence, whereas "tell" does.

Corpus-based lexicographic analysis is particularly well-suited for revealing systematic distinctions in the usage patterns of each synonym intensifier. By closely examining their concordances and language patterns, we can observe syntactic

differences between synonymous words. Concordance analysis, facilitated by powerful search options, is capable of identifying words, phrases, identifiers, documents, text types, and corpus structures, presenting the results effectively.

Understanding one's language patterns through such analysis promotes more precise communication and allows individuals to seek clarifications when interacting with others. Therefore, grammatical patterns serve as a valuable criterion for distinguishing between synonymous intensifiers, facilitating effective communication.

## 2.6 Previous studies

Numerous studies on intensifiers have used corpus-based data to investigate the differences between the words used. Many intensifiers have been investigated and analyzed in various fields all over the world. The studies below demonstrate that the investigation of intensifiers is of significance to corpus linguistic studies.

Patumanon (2016) compared intensifiers in American spoken language and Friends conversations. This study examines daily language features and use. This study used the common adverbs *so*, *really*, *very*, *too*, and *pretty*, by comparing their usage in real speech among distribution, adjectival collocations, and semantic prosody. The corpora showed some similarities and differences. Distributionally, Friends prefers “*so*”, whereas COCA prefers “*extremely*”. Both corpora employ *so* and *really* with adjectives. Finally, with regards to semantic prosody, *too* is the most consistent between both corpora. COCA uses *very* positive and negative words more often than Friends, while Friends uses *so* and *really*.

Ramane (2020) compared the synonymous intensifiers *quite*, *pretty*, *rather*, and *fairly* between the Thai Learners English Corpus (TLEC) and the Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA) using a corpus-based approach. The study found that *quite*, *pretty*, *rather*, and *fairly* have fundamentally similar meanings but varied in terms of connotations, collocations, grammatical patterns, and formality. In the TLEC and COCA, *fairly* is used the least, *quite* is used the most, and *pretty* is used the most. *Fairly* and *pretty* are emotionally positive in the TLEC and COCA. In the TLEC, *fairly* is used more in formal circumstances than its loose equivalents, while *rather* is used in highly formal contexts in COCA.

Gampaenggaew (2016) examined the use of adverbial intensifiers with semantic prosody. With respect to the term "*semantic prosody*", the Cambridge Online Dictionary (COD) defines "*semantic*" as "connected with the meanings of terms." and "*prosody*"—a noun that means "*a. the pattern of rhythm and sound in poems and b. the rhythm and intonation (the way a speaker's voice rises and falls) of language*"—both linguistic terms. This study examined the semantic prosody of the adverbial intensifiers *really*, *certainly*, and *clearly* by examining their adjective and verb collocations when used and by observing authentic concordance lines from the Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA). The results demonstrated that these three adverbial intensifiers convey a stronger positive semantic prosody than a negative prosody, as they are frequently used to emphasize positive words, particularly those relating to mental states, general evaluation, and description.

Rush (2021) examined syntax variations of multi-word units of "*example*" and "*instance*" in native English academic writing. This study examined variation in word selection, particularly in giving examples in academic writings. Native speakers' academic writing employed the noun *example* and *instance* to compare their frequency of co-occurrences with verb collocates. First, direct second-person imperatives were common. Second, the verbs *be* and *see* were found to be the top four verb collocates of both two target words in either the left or right positions. Third, the verb *provide* was often used with the target noun to convey meaning, people, and events as examples. Last, both *target word* were used more frequently as verb complements. The findings can be applied in the classroom as corpus-informed materials that illustrate alternative linguistic patterns for illustrative purposes by providing an example and focusing an emphasis on the frequent error usage among language students due to the fact that corpora enable access to authentic data and illustrate frequency patterns of words and grammatical structure. These kinds of patterns can either be applied as supplements to existing language materials or to teach learners directly.

In a grammatical study, Sanguan-Boon (2018) investigated the semantic prosodies and grammatical patterns of *quit* and *stop*, which were selected from the online dictionaries of Longman and Cambridge. The data were obtained from COCA. It was found that these two words have neutral semantic prosodies through collocational behavior and contextual analysis. Although *quit* and *stop* share basic meanings, their

grammatical patterns cannot be interchanged in all contexts. This is because the word *quit* lacks certain grammatical structures such as the passive form, past participle usage, phrasal verbs, base form as a noun, adjective + noun constructions, and conditional present. On the other hand, *stop* encompasses all of these grammatical features. Therefore, while the two words may have similar meanings at their core, their divergent grammatical patterns make them distinct in terms of usage.

## **2.7 Chapter summary**

Previous research has compared the significant differences between intensifiers in various contexts and for various analysis objectives. Therefore, it is beneficial to compare the use of intensifiers in TED Talks since they are a great resource to learn English; the transcripts are short, informative and build your vocabulary and grammar by practicing the listening and reading skills. In addition to providing support for the theory, the results would also corroborate the frequency findings of these intensifiers from earlier studies. Specifically, similarities and differences in the frequency, collocation grammatical pattern of these intensifiers between the two corpora would be identified.

## CHAPTER 3

### RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This chapter is divided into four sections: research methodology, target intensifiers, data collection, and data analysis. The purpose of this study is to investigate the similarities and differences between the two synonymous intensifiers “*very*” and “*really*” in terms of their frequency, collocations and grammatical patterns found in the DIY corpus of TED Talks.

#### 3.1 Research Methodology

A corpus-based approach was used in this study to investigate the use of intensifiers “*very*” and “*really*” in the presentation context in TED Talks. The researcher constructed a DIY (Do-it-yourself) corpus, which was designed for specific purposes, particularly educational and learning purposes for instructional design or as a language classroom instrument, in order to address the three research questions.

#### 3.2 Target Intensifiers

The words “*very*” and “*really*” are the target intensifiers in this study. These two synonymous intensifiers are aimed at forcing or intensifying the meaning of the word, which are worth investigating the similarities and differences in this study. And Border (2017) states that the most frequently used intensifiers of the 21<sup>st</sup> century are “*very*” and “*really*”; these words emphasize and strengthen the meaning and sometimes cannot be used interchangeably, for example, some people might say “*I very like it*” instead of “*I really like it*”.

The two target words for this study were chosen based on their inclusion in the list of the 3,000 core words recommended for English language learners, as provided by the reliable source, the Oxford Dictionary. The Oxford Dictionary remains up-to-date with the addition of new words and meanings, with the latest updates made in March 2023. According to a report by Rapid website (Arellano, K. 2022), which identifies the best online dictionaries in 2022, the Oxford Dictionary is recognized as one of the top dictionaries. It serves as an effective tool for defining words in both

British and American English and is highly regarded for its assistance to students and learners. The Oxford Dictionary offers various features such as illustrations, example sentences, synonyms, and audio pronunciations, which enhance clarity. Furthermore, it employs significant symbols to indicate a word's importance in the English language. When conducting proposals or research papers, the Oxford Dictionary is an ideal resource, helping students identify high-frequency, high-value words that are particularly beneficial for second language learners of English.

The relevance of the Oxford Dictionary to this study lies in its connection to the objective of examining communication in TED Talks. It provides comprehensive spoken and written data for analysis. In the context of this study, the words "really" and "very" have identical definitions, which can potentially lead to misunderstandings in their usage during communication.

The selection of these words is based on their frequency in the Oxford English Corpus and their significance for English language learners, specifically guiding students at the A1-B2 proficiency levels. Both "very" (adverb) and "really" are classified as A1, indicating their relevance for learners at elementary and pre-intermediate levels. This highlights the importance of comparing and contrasting these two synonymous intensifiers in terms of their collocations and grammatical patterns. The accompanying picture is taken from the Oxford English Dictionary to provide visual support.

### Figure 1

*The word "very" was listed as A1. (Dictionary, O, E, 2016)*



## Figure 2

*The Word “Really” Was Listed as AI. (Dictionary, O, E, 2016)*



## 3.3 Data Collection

### 3.3.1 TED Talks

In this study, data was collected from the transcripts of TED Talks public-speaking presentations to form a DIY corpus called DIY TED Talks corpus. The TED Talks selected for this study encompass a time span from 2020 to March 2023, with presentations ranging in length from 12 to 18 minutes. This limited period was chosen to capture the evolution of language use within a specific timeframe. Accuracy of information is paramount in this study, and TED Talks place a strong emphasis on transparency and reliability, striving to present information that is engaging and completely accurate.

Over the years, TED Talks have gained immense popularity and are considered the gold standard of modern presentations. Their unique format makes them an appropriate medium for analyzing language use by speakers. TED Talks stand apart from other types of presentations due to their effectiveness in delivering accurate and easily comprehensible information to a specialized audience (Lares, A. 2019). Hence, TED Talks are deemed a reliable source for analyzing the most frequent use and similarities or differences in the synonymous intensifiers "very" and "really" in public speaking on the topic of communication.

To conduct the analysis, the transcripts of all 85 episodes, totaling 144,452 tokens, were collected from TED Talks focusing on communication. These presentation transcripts exclusively included recorded public-speaking presentations on the selected topic. The data encompass various linguistic structures, including nouns, verbs, articles,

pronouns, prepositions, collocations, and grammatical patterns. The two intensifiers, "very" and "really," were specifically examined. The TED Talks transcripts were then imported into the AntConc program for analysis, utilizing its targeted functions to systematically evaluate the frequency, collocation, and grammatical patterns of these intensifiers.

Upon collecting the transcripts of all 85 episodes, a corpus known as the DIY TED Talks corpus was compiled. This corpus excludes certain particles, interjections, and context-dependent words such as (applause), (laughter), (cheering), (Clears throat), (Quiet laughter), and (Video) as they were deemed unhelpful for learners and lacked distinct discourse features. The following provides the DIY corpus and its word count, which were used for analysis in this study.

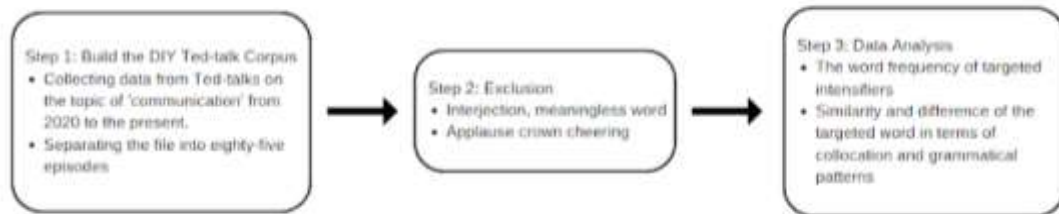
### 3.4 Data analysis

The researcher collected the DIY corpus of the intensifiers (“*very*” and “*really*”) and then analyzed the collected data based on the frequency, collocations, and grammatical patterns of two synonymous intensifiers.

Regarding frequency, the data were investigated by using the AntCont program, and plain text was required. As a result of this, the 85 episodes from TED Talks were saved and uploaded through AntConc. The "Cluster/N-Grams" function was then used to show the frequency of the targeted words.

Regarding collocations, the collected data were analyzed by using the concordance lines. The verbs that go together with the two synonymous intensifiers were represented in the table form. The table will be organized from most frequent to least frequent words that co-occur with the two synonymous intensifiers. (“*very*” and “*really*”).

Regarding grammatical patterns, the structure of each sentence was qualitatively analyzed by the researcher. Then all the grammatical patterns that were found in the DIY corpus are presented by comparing them with the grammatical patterns between the two synonymous intensifiers (“*very*” and “*really*”). The procedures for investigating the three targeted objective are shown in figure 4.1 below:

**Figure 3***Data analysis process*

### 3.5 Chapter summary

This study investigates the use of intensifiers in the presentation context on the topic of communication in TED Talks using a corpus-based approach. To collect the data for specific purposes, a DIY TED Talks corpus was built to address the research objectives with regard to frequency, collocation and grammatical patterns. As the statement of the most frequently used intensifiers of the 21<sup>st</sup> century (Border, 2017) and the Oxford Dictionary, these two words “*very*” and “*really*” were selected to be the target word in this study. And the DIY TED Talks corpus was put into the analysis program, AntConc, to analyze the research objective regarding frequency, collocations and grammatical patterns.

## CHAPTER 4

### RESULTS

In the previous chapter, we discussed the methodology employed in this study, which included the selection of target intensifiers, data collection, and data analysis. In this chapter, we present the results of the analysis conducted on the DIY TED Talks corpus, which consists of recorded public-speaking presentations from TED Talks. The aim of this chapter is to address the research questions pertaining to the similarities and differences between the two target synonyms, "very" and "really," in terms of their frequency, collocation, and grammatical patterns. The presentation of the results is divided into three sections: word frequency, collocation, and grammatical patterns of the intensifiers "very" and "really" in the DIY TED Talk corpus.

#### 4.1. Word frequency

The word frequency of the intensifiers "very" and "really" was analyzed with the DIY TED Talk Corpus, which was the transcript file of 85 episodes on the topic of communication in TED Talks, appearing between the years 2020 to March 2023 with a corpus size of 144,452 tokens. The data was analyzed using the Antcont program's 'word' function. The results presented in *Table 3* show the frequency of the targeted synonymous intensifiers:

**Table 3**

*The Overall Frequency of Synonymous Intensifiers 'Very' and 'Really' based on the DIY TED Talk Corpus*

Corpus	Synonymous intensifiers	Frequency	Percentages
DIY TED Talks corpus (144452 words)	<i>very</i>	221	43.42%
	<i>really</i>	288	57.51%

As shown in *Table 3*, the overall frequency of the synonymous intensifiers “*very*” and “*really*” is based on the DIY TED Talk Corpus, containing 288 occurrences of “*really*” per one hundred thousand words, while “*really*” occurs 221 times. In the DIY TED Talks corpus, ‘*really*’ is the most common intensifier, accounting for 57.51 percent of all occurrences, while “*very*” accounted for 43.42%. The occurrence of “*very*” and “*really*” is different when they are used in a presentation context; the word ‘*really*’ seems to be more frequent than the word ‘*very*’.

In addition to the overall frequency of the synonymous intensifiers, the frequency of “*very*” and “*really*” in each episode in the DIY TED Talks corpus is shown in *Table 4* below.

**Table 4**

*The Frequency of “Very” and “Really” in the DIY TED Talks Corpus*

	Topic	Very	Really	Example
1	3 skills every middle school boy needs	1	2	a) “ <i>there's a lot of nonsensical humor. And <u>very</u> few of them have taken up regular usage of deodorant.</i> ” b) “ <i>YouTube rabbit hole or mindlessly indulging in meme culture, which we know can get <u>really</u> hairy really fast,</i> ”
2	3 steps to turn everyday get-togethers into transformative gatherings	-	-	-
3	3 strategies for effectively talking about climate change	1	3	a) “ <i>...pollution from our industrial activity is irreversibly heating the earth in a way that will make it <u>very</u> hard for us to live here safely...</i> ” b) “ <i>And frankly, to the uninitiated, much of it doesn't <u>really</u> sound that bad.</i> ”
4	3 ways companies can support grieving employees	11	-	a) “ <i>When you lose the most precious thing in your life, you gain a lot of humility and a <u>very</u></i>

	Topic	Very	Really	Example
				<i>different perspective free of egos and agendas.”</i>
5	3 ways to lead tough, unavoidable conversations	2	4	<i>a) My job was to help Protestants and Catholics, Loyalists and Republicans have some <b>very</b> difficult conversations. b) But not having these conversations or having them poorly is <b>really</b> bad.</i>
6	4 kinds of regret -- and what they teach you about yourself	12	18	<i>a) “Third category. Moral regrets. Very interesting, <b>very</b> interesting category. b) And I think that, you know, my ... Like, I didn't <b>really</b> come into my own until I got to college...”</i>
7	4 ways to have healthy conversations about race	1	-	<i>a) “I found myself feeling <b>very</b> frustrated. Learning to have conversations with people about race across racial differences has been a part of my own deepening learning journey.”</i>
8	5 steps to remove yourself from drama at work	1	2	<i>a) “So in a brief, small, <b>very</b> tiny lapse in judgment, you vent to the nearby coworker.” b) “What you're <b>really</b> doing is setting yourself up and creating this anxiety in your head that doesn't exist.”</i>
9	A brain implant that turns your thoughts into text	4	9	<i>a) “So it wasn't easy, took us ten years, but I'm <b>very</b> excited to show you guys. We called this the Stentrode.” b) “Apart from the fact that the recovery is tricky, the brain doesn't <b>really</b> like having needles put into it.”</i>
10	A second chance for fathers to connect with their kids	-	-	-

	Topic	Very	Really	Example
11	A sex therapist's secret to rediscovering your spark	1	3	a) <i>Well, she felt like he needed to lose control, both in and out of the bedroom, and he was <b>very</b> ticklish.</i> b) <i>Whenever the issue is a failure to launch, what we <b>really</b> need is a new way in.</i>
12	A simple trick to improve positive thinking	1	3	a) <i>Thank you <b>very</b> much.</i> b) <i>Gosh, I think I could dance, but I can't, and you <b>really</b> don't want me to.</i>
13	An aerialist on listening to your body's signals	-	1	a) <i><b>Really</b> good, I feel like you could probably do it.</i>
14	Are video calls the best we can do in the age of the metaverse	2	6	a) <i>And it just doesn't feel like a <b>very</b> natural way to communicate.</i> b) <i>That's that feeling of <b>really</b> being there with others.</i>
15	Can we learn to talk to sperm whales	-	4	a) <i>One of the principal conclusions was that machine learning had a <b>really</b> good chance of understanding the patterns of sperm whale communication.</i>
16	Could we treat Alzheimer's with light and sound	6	2	a) <i>You know, the causes for Alzheimer are <b>very</b> complex.</i> b) <i>If you start early enough, you <b>really</b> believe that alone could delay materially the onset of Alzheimer's.</i>
17	How to ask for help and get a yes	8	22	a) <i>There are a few other things that are <b>very</b> helpful to keep in mind.</i> b) <i>And I remember we got <b>really</b> badly lost.</i>
18	Everything happens for a reason and other lies I've loved	2	1	a) <i>I research a form of Christianity nicknamed "the prosperity gospel," for its <b>very</b> bold promise that God wants you</i>

	Topic	Very	Really	Example
				<i>to prosper. b) And they <b>really</b> want me to understand the reason.</i>
19	Evolution's great mystery - Language	1	-	<i>a) all of them now extinct, which makes it <b>very</b> difficult to know if they had language or anything like it.</i>
20	How can we support the emotional well-being of teachers	-	-	-
21	How couples can sustain a strong sexual connection for a lifetime	3	4	<i>a) These are not couples who have sex very often. Almost none of us have sex <b>very</b> often. b) And the <b>really</b> difficult part is that space is not empty.</i>
22	How I help people understand vitiligo	2	-	<i>a) And that actually went <b>very</b> well for years. I went from being a reporter in New York City</i>
23	How miscommunication happens (and how to avoid it)	1	-	<i>a) "The fact is even when face-to-face with another person, in the <b>very</b> same room, and speaking the same language..."</i>
24	How to avoid catching prickly emotions from other people	1	-	<i>a) I remember seeing one of these for the <b>very</b> first time while hiking in Arizona</i>
25	How to build your confidence -- and spark it in others	1	-	<i>a) one of them was disabled, but all of them were the <b>very</b> last people this world invites to be confident.</i>
26	How to connect with people who are different than you	3	4	<i>a) "And so years later, I did become a CIA officer, and I was <b>very</b> excited to realize you could build an entire career..." b) "I was very excited to realize you could build an entire career just asking questions. So it was <b>really</b> the perfect career path for</i>

	Topic	Very	Really	Example
				<i>me.”</i>
27	How to foster productive and responsible debate	2	-	<i>a) To be <b>very</b> clear: false speech can lead to devastating real-world harms</i>
28	How to get serious about diversity and inclusion in the workplace	1	4	<i>a) So the thing about speech writing is, it's <b>very</b> personal. b) “the business case for diversity, as it stands today, doesn't <b>really</b> speak to any problem.”</i>
29	How to have constructive conversations	1	7	<i>a) It is <b>very</b> tempting to dwell in present tensions and get bogged down in practicalities. b) Because inadvertently they were doing something that we do naturally with outsiders and find it <b>really</b> difficult sometimes to do with insiders.</i>
30	How to lead a conversation between people who disagree	1	4	<i>a) That we're elitist, pie-in-the-sky intellectuals, rich people, Whole Foods-eating, <b>very</b> out of touch. b) but then, once there, do something <b>really</b> different.</i>
31	How to meaningfully reconnect with those who have dementia	2	12	<i>a) “She was a <b>very</b> powerful woman who had lost a battle with a stroke that stole her ability to speak.” b) well, it didn't <b>really</b> need much translation.</i>
32	How to start a conversation about suicide	6	4	<i>a) That's what I thought too. I thought it was <b>very</b> clever. b) For me, it's <b>really</b> crucial to get to these young, vulnerable men and women.</i>
33	How to stop the metaverse from becoming the internet's bad sequel	3	-	<i>a) I hope you like memes, or the next few minutes will get <b>very</b> awkward.</i>

	Topic	Very	Really	Example
34	How to teach kids to talk about taboo topics	5	3	a) "And I always thought this was <b>very</b> curious because religion and politics often are such huge influencing factors..." b) And as I watched the conversation <b>really</b> marinate with my students...
35	How to win an argument (at the US Supreme Court, or anywhere)	3	2	a) And so you've got to go in and fight, you <b>very</b> well may, like me, get the timing wrong b) But it is so painful when you lose and patience is <b>really</b> hard.
36	How to write less but say more	1	3	a) There's <b>very</b> little scientific proof that that's true. What happened and what we think is happening is... b) And to be honest, for me, <b>really</b> humbling.
37	How understanding divorce can help your marriage	3	1	a) "I know, it doesn't sound <b>very</b> romantic, but sometimes the things we do out of love can be the things..." b) "Deb leaves behind an extended family, her friends and a job that she <b>really</b> liked."
38	How visual storytelling creates better health care	1	2	a) A health care story can benefit from <b>very</b> simple pictures b) There was this one evening when I <b>really</b> had to get home to my kids.
39	How your brain responds to stories and why they're crucial for leaders	2	2	a) This is why storytelling is such a critical skill for a leader cause the <b>very</b> act of telling a story makes people trust you more. b) Ray was <b>really</b> happy to see her
40	Language around gender and identity evolves (and always has)	3	5	a) For some of them, this meant some <b>very</b> specific changes. b) But what I'm <b>really</b> interested in is what people think.

	Topic	Very	Really	Example
41	My secret to creating real magic	4	1	a) My <b>very</b> first food memory was when I was three or four b) That's interesting. That's a <b>really</b> delicious flavor of milk.
42	Sex education should start with consent	2	2	a) Everything about this <b>very</b> taboo subject was so intriguing to me. b) All of this is to say, I <b>really</b> want to create the better transition process for young people.
43	Stories of photographing monumental people -- from Michelle Obama to Stephen Hawking	3	-	a) He couldn't speak <b>very</b> well because of Parkinson's. So I had to get close, and he whispered, "I have a confession to make."
44	The art of paying attention	4	5	a) You're going to draw each other with two <b>very</b> simple rules. b) That's not <b>really</b> what a face looks like.
45	The beauty and complexity of finding common ground	4	5	a) Agonism comes from the same Greek root word "agon" from which we get "agony." How <b>very</b> appropriate. b) We were <b>really</b> angry to have our children stereotyped like that.
46	The benefits of expressing your emotions (constructively)	5	-	a) The parents leave; we have a <b>very</b> nice time with David
47	The benefits of not being a jerk to yourself	4	7	a) This was <b>very</b> strange and embarrassing, but in this moment, I had an epiphany. b) But the practice <b>really</b> helped me with my anxiety and depression.
48	The best way to apologize (according to	-	2	a) Marie tells you she was <b>really</b> hurt when she didn't see you in

	Topic	Very	Really	Example
	science)			<i>the crowd.</i>
49	The cost of work stress and how to reduce it	1	5	<i>a) This all hits <b>very</b> close to home for me. b) In order for me to <b>really</b> help my clients achieve their financial goals.</i>
50	The counterintuitive way to be more persuasive	2	-	<i>a) As it turns out, your local department store has announced a sale on the <b>very</b> set you've been looking for</i>
51	The hidden power of sad songs and rainy days	8	8	<i>a) Steve was tall and distinguished and <b>very</b> decent b) Except it only lasts a moment, and we <b>really</b> want to live there for good.</i>
52	The humans at the center of the US immigration debate	6	-	<i>a) The judge, for every single case, would, in essence, read the <b>very</b> same instructions.</i>
53	The language of lying	1	-	<i>a) ...this administration presently employed was involved in this <b>very</b> bizarre incident.</i>
54	The link between menopause and gender inequity at work	1	4	<i>a) But at the <b>very</b> least, increasing awareness and demonstrating some real empathy can be low-cost. Just this year. b) And this is where the symptoms <b>really</b> start, and it can last up to 10 years.</i>
55	The mental health benefits of storytelling for health care workers	1	14	<i>a) She grew up in a really beautiful home in Northern California, <b>very</b> safe and stable b) I started getting more essays that made me <b>really</b> anxious and <b>really</b> worried.</i>
56	The most powerful yet overlooked resource in schools	1	-	<i>a) Our dream is that one day, they'll feel included in the <b>very</b> communities that they're</i>

	Topic	Very	Really	Example
				<i>expected to build.</i>
57	The profound power of gratitude and living eulogies	3	6	<i>a) And how do we honor all those around us who are <b>very</b> much alive? b) But now, as a business owner, I can see that ball kicking can <b>really</b> come in handy</i>
58	The psychological traits that shape your political beliefs	3	-	<i>a) I also explore how political elites and partisan media use these <b>very</b> differences to engender hatred.</i>
59	The radical act of choosing common ground	1	2	<i>a) you can be <b>very</b> different, but you come together because you know together we're stronger than being apart. b) After the Indian independence movement, the country was <b>really</b> divided between people who wanted to keep the country together</i>
60	The relationship between sex and imagination	1	3	<i>a) That kind of disclosure can be <b>very</b> intimate and affirming. b) In many parts of our life, we are <b>really</b> great at imagining.</i>
61	The secret to giving great feedback	1	3	<i>a) Either they're of the camp that is <b>very</b> indirect and soft. b) They add more ums and ahs and justifications, and the whole thing gets wonky <b>really</b> fast.</i>
62	The secret to mastering life's biggest transitions	-	-	-
63	The secrets of learning a new language	3	3	<i>a) That's all <b>very</b> nice to enjoy language learning. b) I also met Lucas from Brazil who had a <b>really</b> interesting method to learn Russian.</i>
64	The value of kindness at work	6	6	<i>a) And I remember <b>very</b> clearly when that definition first entered</i>

	Topic	Very	Really	Example
				my life. b) And in the moment, I didn't <b>really</b> understand why they were giving it to me.
65	Theranos, whistleblowing and speaking truth to power	10	18	a) But honestly, my first year was <b>very</b> challenging. b) And at the time, there wasn't <b>really</b> that much information about the company.
66	TikTok, Instagram, Snapchat and the rise of bite-sized content	-	-	-
67	What do all languages have in common	-	-	-
68	What happened when we paired up thousands of strangers to talk politics	5	11	a) And so they met on the <b>very</b> spot where football roots were invented. b) That was <b>really</b> cool, and I enjoyed every single minute of it.
69	What kids can teach adults about asking for help	5	2	a) From <b>very</b> early on, children, like adults, are sensitive to the values that we place on objects and behaviors. b) To <b>really</b> capture this phenomenon, we did three variations of the study.
70	What makes a language... a language	-	-	-
71	What productive conflict can offer a workplace	-	2	a) "Oh," he replied, and he got <b>really</b> quiet.
72	What reading slowly taught me about writing	2	-	a) And so, unlike my siblings, who were racing through books, I read <b>very, very</b> slowly.
73	What you can learn from people who disagree with you	1	2	a) The death penalty is state sanctioned murder and that it reinforces the <b>very</b> behavior that it's trying to suppress.

	Topic	Very	Really	Example
				<i>b) I would say that's <b>really</b> up for you to decide.</i>
74	What you discover when you really listen	-	5	<i>a) At first, I was <b>really</b> looking at those isolated pieces of music to do the work of revealing the inside of their respective houses.</i>
75	What you need to know about stalkerware	6	8	<i>a) And this gives them a lot of opportunity to do things to people's accounts, which is <b>very</b> dangerous. b) And one of the things that <b>really</b> struck me about this article is how scared they were.</i>
76	When do kids start to care about other people's opinions	2	7	<i>a) From <b>very</b> early on, children, like adults, are sensitive to the values...". b) To <b>really</b> capture this phenomenon, we did three variations of the study.</i>
77	Why Africa needs community-led conservation	2	4	<i>a) Jeneria still lives a <b>very</b> traditional Samburu life b) I <b>really</b> began to unearth the conservation models that had led us to this point.</i>
78	Why can parrots talk	1	-	<i>a) And while parrots' beaks are rigid, they have <b>very</b> flexible jaw joints</i>
79	Why do we, like, hesitate when we, um, speak	-	-	-
80	Why does your voice change as you get older	-	-	-
81	Why it's so hard to talk about the N-word	4	4	<i>a) Another from Connecticut talked about the pain of severing a <b>very</b> close relationship with a family member b) And these debates are important. But they <b>really</b></i>

	Topic	Very	Really	Example
				<i>obscure something else.</i>
82	Why joy is a state of mind	-	1	<i>a) What is going on today that I'm <b>really</b> proud of is that those young girls are becoming entrepreneurs and creating jobs.</i>
83	Why we need to make education more accessible to the deaf	7	-	<i>a) Lucky for them, I happen to be <b>very</b> good at volleyball.</i>
84	Why we're more honest with machines than people	5	-	<i>a) so not all too surprisingly, after this <b>very</b> unique social interaction at the barbecue.</i>
85	You are fluent in this language (and don't even know it)	7	11	<i>a) "What makes a language powerful is that you can take a <b>very</b> complex idea..." b) And I <b>really</b> pity each and every one of you who has to spend your days discovering new galaxies.</i>
	<b>Total</b>	221	288	

The frequency of the words “*very*” and “*really*” in the separated episodes is shown in *table 4*. It can be inferred that the majority of presentations on the topic of communication in the DIY TED Talk corpus include the two specified synonymous intensifiers, "very" and "really," exhibiting some differences in their usage structure.

### Discussion of word frequency

Regarding the frequency of “*very*” and “*really*” in the DIY TED Talks corpus, the findings show that these words are slightly different in terms of frequency. The intensifier ‘really’ has the occurrences in the DIY TED Talks corpus of 288 tokens, while “*very*” had an occurrence of 221 tokens.

However, despite being synonymous, there are differences in the use of the intensifiers "really" and "very," even when considering their part of speech. While "really" is commonly used before adjectives or adverbs to intensify meaning and

supposition, "very" is typically found preceding adjectives or adverbs, but not verbs. This contrast highlights the importance for speakers to be aware of these distinctions.

In the context of the TED Talks corpus, both target intensifiers are frequently used in presentation contexts to intensify or strengthen the meaning of words. Generally, language intensifiers are employed to amplify meaning to high levels. However, the analysis of the TED Talks corpus reveals instances where the usage of intensifiers deviates from this general knowledge. Examples such as "Ever since, I've felt very little regret. And I know it's because I shared my full heart with him before it was too late" (DIY 66: The profound power of gratitude and living eulogies) and "one of them was disabled, but all of them were the very last people this world invites to be confident" (DIY 25: How to build your confidence -- and spark it in others) demonstrate the contextual dependence and modification of meaning by these intensifiers. Here, even though "very" intensifies the meaning, it actually indicates a low degree of intensity, depending on the specific context and the words it modifies.

Table 4 also highlights notable differences between these two intensifiers. While some presentations do not feature the words "very" and "really," such as DIY80: Why does your voice change as you get older, others include them frequently. For instance, DIY17: How to Ask for Help and Get a Yes contains the word "very" eight times and "really" 22 times, indicating a higher frequency of usage for "really" in that particular presentation. On the other hand, some presentations utilize the word "very" more frequently than "really," such as DIY16: Could we treat Alzheimer's with light and sound, which includes "very" six times and "really" twice. This discrepancy in frequency demonstrates significant differences in the usage of these two synonymous intensifiers within the TED Talks presentations on the topic of communication.

Speakers employ these intensifiers to emphasize and enhance the meaning of their sentences, such as "*a very complex idea*" (DIY59: You are an influence in this language), "*very close relationship*" (DIY55: Why it's so hard to talk about the N-word), "*really proud of*," and "*really understand*" (DIY58: Why joy is a state of mind), among others. However, it is worth noting that not all speakers include these intensifiers in their presentations, and this decision ultimately depends on the individual speaker's choice and style.

## 4.2 Collocation

It is possible for synonyms of intensifiers or words to have a similar meaning; however, the collocations or a group of words that are naturally associated with each other of these synonyms could be different from each other. In this study, the collocations of 'very' and 'really' were examined to determine the differences between two synonymous intensifiers in terms of collocation. Because the words 'very' and 'really' are considered adverbs in this study, the word that can come after these targeted adverbs should be a verb, adjective, or adverb. The data obtained from the TED Talks is divided into two corpora in order to compare the similarities and differences between two targeted words as follows.

### 4.2.1 The results of the word "very"

The DIY TED Talks corpus was put into an analysis program to determine the similarities and differences of the target intensifiers. The collected data was analyzed by using the Antcont program using the 'collocate' function. The results of the word collocations which occur together with "very" in the DIY TED Talks corpus are shown in *Table 5* below:

**Table 5**

*The Top 30 Word Collocations That Occur with "Very"*

Rank	Words	Frequency	Rank	Words	Frequency
1	much	15	16	challenging	2
2	different	8	17	complex	2
3	simple	6	18	dangerous	2
4	little	5	19	deliberately	2
5	first	4	20	delicate	2
6	good	4	21	dramatic	2
7	same	4	22	easy	2
8	very	4	23	hard	2

Rank	Words	Frequency	Rank	Words	Frequency
9	well	4	24	helpful	2
10	clear	3	25	interesting	2
11	close	3	26	least	2
12	difficult	3	27	long	2
13	early	3	28	smart	2
14	excited	3	29	often	2
15	best	2	30	nice	2

Table 5 represents the top 30 word collocations of ‘very’ from the 221 sentences from DIY TED Talks corpus. The adjective ‘much’ is ranked first, occurring with the intensifier “very” 15 times, for example:

- a) *And we can honor all those around us who are **very much** alive. I call this intentional honoring of others “Gracenotes”. (DIY 66: the profound power of gratitude and living eulogies )*
- b) *“So please meet someone and have an argument and enjoy it **very much**.” (DIY 77: what happens when we paired up thousands strangers to talk politics)*

The adjective ‘different’ was second ranked (10 times), for example:

- c) *“Empathy training can help people acknowledge that a coworker is a **very different** person after a life-changing loss.” (DIY 4: 3 ways companies can support grieving employees)*
- d) *“I was born deaf. My deafness shaped my childhood, and it’s all I’ve ever known. So my perspective on life and my experience of the world is **very different**.” (DIY 57: Why we need to make education more accessible to the deaf)*

The least frequent word from the top 30 word collocation was ‘nice’, appearing only 2 times, for instance:

- e) *“Everything is great, you go in, it's going to be a blasty evening. The parents leave; we have a **very nice** time with David.”* (DIY 46: The benefits of expressing your emotions)
- f) *“That's all **very nice** to enjoy language learning, but isn't the real secret that you polyglots are just super talented and most of us aren't?”* (DIY 72: The secrets of learning a new language)

In addition, it is worth noting that the collocations of the word "very" tend to be a recurring expression used by certain individuals. Speakers often employ it to emphasize an adjective or adverb, intensifying and highlighting the significance of a situation or conveying a hyperbolic tone of voice. For example:

- g) *“It is perfectly, perfectly acceptable to pay strangers to do things for you, you need to be **very, very** careful when it comes to incentivizing your friends and coworkers.”* (DIY 17: how to ask for help and get yes)
- h) *And guess what happened? We got two **very, very** different results. So what do you think they did in this scenario?* (DIY74: Theranos, whistleblowing and speaking truth to power)

In the DIY TED Talks corpus, the analysis of collocations involving the word "very" reveals its frequent usage with adjectives and adverbs. It is commonly positioned before adverbs and adjectives to add emphasis and highlight specific characteristics of a person or thing. Notably, in the corpus, "very" is often followed by an adjective. The adjectives that most frequently occur with "very" are primarily associated with emotions, sensations, and measurements, such as "indicate," "long," and "well." Additionally, "very" can also modify another adverb, as observed in phrases like "very, very" and "very often." Furthermore, it is evident that the word "very" is sometimes repeated with the same word in the presentation, indicating an overstated tone in the sentence. Consequently, the analysis suggests that the repeated use of "very" before an adjective or adverb serves to intensify and emphasize the meaning of utterances within a sentence.

#### 4.2.2 The results of the word “really”

Based on the DIY TED Talks Corpus, which consists of transcripts from 85 episodes focused on the topic of communication presented on the TED Talks platform between 2020 and March 2023, the collected data was analyzed using the 'collocate' function of the AntConc program. The analysis aimed to identify the word collocations that frequently occurred together with the intensifier "really" in the DIY TED Talks Corpus. The results of this word collocation analysis are presented in *Table 6* below:

**Table 6**

*The Top 30 Word Collocations of "Really"*

Rank	Words	Frequency	Rank	Words	Frequency
1	good	7	16	great	3
2	wanted	7	17	have	3
3	different	6	18	liked	3
4	difficult	6	19	modest	3
5	really	6	20	understand	3
6	hard	5	21	amazing	2
7	just	5	22	high	2
8	like	5	23	clear	2
9	simple	5	24	come	2
10	want	5	25	comfortable	2
11	intereesting	4	26	cool	2
12	need	4	27	crucial	2
13	do	3	28	easy	2
14	excited	3	29	east	2
15	feel	3	30	get	2

Table 6 represents the top 30 word collocations of “*really*” from the 288 sentences from DIY TED Talks corpus. The adjective ‘good’ ranked first, occurring with the intensifier “*really*” 7 times, for example:

- a) “*One of the principal conclusions was that machine learning had a **really good** chance of understanding the patterns of sperm whale communication.*” (DIY 15: Can we learn to talk to sperm whales)
- b) “*The choice you are given through medicine, from a lot of your mentors even, is like, you have to choose, like, being a **really good** person or a really good doctor.*” (DIY 64: The mental health benefits of storytelling for health care workers)

As the Oxford Dictionary (Dictionary, O, E, 2016) defines the meaning of “*really*” as very or very much, it can imply that 'really' is used to describe adjectives or other adverbs like the word “*very*”, and it can also be used to convey unexpected doubt, or nervousness.

The word 'wanted' was second ranked (7 times), for example:

- c) “*but I **really wanted** that moment of validation that yes, I had earned a kid's trust enough to be the one to help them.*” (DIY 78: What kids can teach adults about asking for help)
- d) “*what happened was that the people who **really wanted** to solve these problems once and for all*” (DIY 75 : The value of kindness at work)

The least frequent word of the top 30 word collocation was 'get', which appears 2 times, for example:

- e) “*But you can't **really get** immersed if that's the case. Imagine trying to listen to a song while singing a different song in your head.*” (DIY 83: What you discover when you really listen)
- f) “*And this is the part in my story where I **really get** lucky. I was approached by a very talented journalist, John Carreyrou from the Wall Street Journal...*” (DIY 74: Theranos, whistleblowing and speaking truth to power)

The collocation ‘really really’ is also a frequently used expression in the DIY TED Talks corpus. The repeated intensifier is used to highlight an adjective, adverb, or verb to a great degree or extremely, the significance of the situation, or the extravagant language of an expression.

- g) *“Now, I also know that these types of conversations can seem **really, really** intimidating with our students, especially with young learners.”*  
(DIY 34: How to teach kids to talk about taboo topics)
- h) *“But I want to take just a few minutes to tell you about another aspect of regret that I think is **really, really** just super interesting”* (DIY 6: 4 kinds of regret -- and what they teach you about yourself.

Based on the examples of "really" found in the DIY TED Talks corpus, it is evident that this intensifier frequently collocates with adjectives, adverbs, and verbs. "Really" is typically positioned before adverbs and adjectives to add emphasis, emphasizing specific characteristics of a person or thing. In the DIY TED Talks corpus, it is often followed by an adjective or verb. The words that most frequently occur in collocation with "really" are often related to emotions and sensations, such as "amazing" and "difficult." Additionally, "really" forms collocations with verbs, such as "need," "wanted," and "come," among others. Furthermore, it is notable that "really" can also occur with the same word repeated for emphasis, as seen in phrases like "...really, really..." This repetition of the adverb in the presentation can indicate an overstated tone and a more hyperbolic feeling in the sentence. The modifying adverb clarifies the degree or intensity of the adverb it modifies, intensifying the overall impact of the statement.

### **Discussion of the collocations**

In terms of the collocation of two targeted words, the researcher analyzed the findings of the study and came to the conclusion that “very” and “really” are frequently employed with adjectives, as they are adverbs that emphasize the specific characteristics of a person or thing. They are followed by an adjective in presentation contexts. According to the results of these synonymous intensifiers, the adjectives that occur most frequently are related to emotion, sensation, and measurement. The ranking

of the word “*very*” is emotion, sense, and measurement, such as *simple*, *helpful* and *long* etc., while the ranking of the word ‘*really*’ is emotion and feelings, such as *amazing*, *easy* and *difficult*. As for the collocations themselves, the synonyms “*very*” and “*really*” share a similar choice of collocational words. For instance, the words *hard*, *different*, *difficult*, and *simple* share the same collocation. Additionally, the repeated intensifiers, such as “...*very*, *very*...” or “...*really*, *really*...” are used to heighten the intensity of an adjective or adverb, indicating a highly or extremely exaggerated sentiment. This use of modifying adverbs clarifies the degree or intensity of the adverb it modifies, depending on the significance of the situation or the desired emphasis in the sentence. This finding aligns with Palmer's (1997) study, which suggests that certain words have limited collocations and only co-occur with specific words.

In conclusion, both the words “*very*” and “*really*” exhibit similar collocations with adjectives and adverbs. They intensify the meaning of sentences when placed before adjectives and adverbs. However, a notable difference between them is that “*really*” is occasionally collocated with verbs, whereas the word “*very*” is not found in such contexts within the TED Talks presentations. Despite their similar meanings, these terms are not interchangeable in all contexts, and language learners must be aware of the distinctions in language use, including their distinct grammatical structures.

### **4.3 Grammatical Patterns**

In terms of grammatical structure, synonymous intensifiers or words used in context may be used differently. The purpose of this investigation was to determine the grammatical structure of the two targeted intensifiers: “*very*” and “*really*”. Each synonym's grammatical structure was analyzed separately, and the two words were compared to determine their differences and similarities.

#### **4.3.1 Grammatical patterns of the word “*very*”**

The researcher discovered four grammatical patterns of the intensifier ‘*very*’ in the first 221 concordance lines from DIY Corpus. The ranking begins with the most common grammatical pattern of the word ‘*very*’ and continues to those that are less common.

**Table 7***Grammatical Patterns of the Word “Very”*

<b>Intensifiers</b>	<b>Grammatical Patterns</b>	<b>Freq.</b>	<b>Examples</b>
Very	very + adjective	121	<p><i>“That’s all <b>very nice</b> to enjoy language learning, but isn’t the real secret that you polyglots are just super talented and most of us aren’t?”</i> (DIY: The secrets of learning a new language)</p> <p><i>“So digital nerds that we are, we came up with obviously many <b>very strange</b> digital product ideas...”</i> (DIY: What happened when we paired up thousands of strangers to talk politics)</p>
	v. to be + very + adjective	49	<p><i>“Either they’re of the camp that is <b>very indirect</b> and soft and the brain doesn’t even recognize that feedback is being given...”</i> (DIY: The secret to giving great feedback)</p> <p><i>“So we’re doing events for the partners, who themselves may need help. TAFEs are very popular. For me, it’s <b>really crucial</b> to get to these young...”</i> (DIY: How to start a conversation about suicide)</p>
	article + very + adjective	48	<p><i>So this is a <b>very long</b> answer, but, yes, I’m absolutely going to give you a magic word</i> (DIY: Language around gender and identity evolves (and always has))</p> <p><i>“The fact is even when face-to-face with another person, in <b>the very same</b> room...”</i> (DIY: How miscommunication happens (and how to avoid it)</p>

Intensifiers	Grammatical Patterns	Freq.	Examples
	linking v. + very + adjective	3	<p><i>Ever since, I've <b><u>felt very little</u></b> regret. And I know it's because I shared my full heart with him before it was too late. (DIY: The profound power of gratitude and living eulogies)</i></p> <p><i>I know, it doesn't <b><u>sound very romantic</u></b>, but sometimes the things we do out of love can be the very things that make it hard for that love to last. (DIY: How understanding divorce can help your marriage)</i></p>

Table 7 presents the four grammatical patterns of the word "very" found in the DIY corpus of TED Talks. The structure "very + adjective" occurs most frequently in the presentation context of the DIY TED Talks corpus with 121 occurrences, followed by "v. to be + very + adjective" (49 occurrences), article + very + adjective (48 occurrences), and "linking v. + very + adjective" (48 occurrences).

#### 4.3.2 Grammatical patterns of the word "Really"

The researcher discovered five grammatical patterns of the intensifier 'really' in the first 288 concordance lines from the DIY corpus. The ranking begins with the most common grammatical pattern of the word 'really' and continues to those that are less common.

**Table 8**

*Grammatical Patterns of the Word "Really"*

Intensifiers	Grammatical Patterns	Freq.	Examples
Really	really + verb	175	<p><i>"But I was in it to win it. I <b>really wanted</b> to be a nicer person. I kept getting tripped up though..."</i> (DIY 47: The benefits of not being a jerk to yourself)</p>

Intensifiers	Grammatical Patterns	Freq.	Examples
			<p><i>“I didn't <b>really</b> come into my own until I got to college, where I found a really great group of friends...” (DIY 6: 4 kinds of regret -- and what they teach you about yourself)</i></p>
	v. to be + really + adjective	64	<p><i>“So meeting other polyglots helped me realize that it <b>is really crucial</b> to find enjoyment in the process of learning languages” (DIY 72: The secrets of learning a new language)</i></p> <p><i>“And maybe the most important skill for an artist is really empathy. You need craft and you need...” (DIY 59 : You are fluent in this language and don't even know it)</i></p>
	really + adjective	18	<p><i>“We partnered with the Alabama Media Group to do something <b>really different</b>.” (DIY 30: How to lead a conversation between people who disagree)</i></p> <p><i>“Men I know find it <b>really difficult</b> to open up conversations. They certainly do. If you're going to open up conversation...” (DIY 32: How to start a conversation about suicide)</i></p>
	article + really + adjective	27	<p><i>“Like, I didn't really come into my own until I got to college, where I found <b>a really great</b> group of friends...” (DIY 6: 4 kinds of regret and what they teach you about yourself)</i></p> <p><i>“The choice you are given through medicine, from a lot of your mentors even, is like, you have to choose, like, being <b>a really good</b> person or <b>a really good</b> doctor.” (DIY 64: The mental health benefits of storytelling for health care workers)</i></p>

Intensifiers	Grammatical Patterns	Freq.	Examples
	linking v. + really + adjective	4	<p><i>“They <b>feel really</b> mortal. Because they are. As am I. As are you.”</i> (DIY 66: The profound power of gratitude and living eulogies)</p> <p><i>“Now, talking about politics amongst people with different opinions has <b>become really</b> difficult, not only in Europe.”</i> (DIY 77: What happened when we paired up thousands of strangers to talk politics)</p>

According to Table 8, there are five grammatical patterns of the word "really" in the DIY TED Talks corpus. The structure "really + verb" appears 175 times in the DIY TED Talks corpus, followed by "v. to be + really + adjective" with 64 occurrences, "really + adjective" with 18 occurrences, article + really + adjective with 27 occurrences, and "linking v. + really + adjective" with 4 occurrences.

### Discussion of the grammatical patterns

In terms of grammatical patterns, the study results reveal both similarities and differences between the two synonymous intensifiers. The analysis demonstrates that the two target synonyms share four grammatical patterns. However, there are certain patterns that are unique to one intensifier and not present in the other. For instance, the pattern of "really + verb" is found only with "really" and is not observed with "very." This finding supports Phoocharoensil's (2010) statement that grammatical patterns can be used to identify the grammatical distinctions among synonyms. Despite the general interchangeability of these intensifiers, they still exhibit differences in terms of their grammatical patterns. The following table presents a comparison and contrast of the synonymous intensifiers "very" and "really" in relation to their grammatical patterns:

**Table 9**

*The Shared Grammatical Patterns of 'Very' and 'Really'*

<b>Very</b>	<b>Really</b>
very + <b>adjective</b> + <b>preposition</b>	really + <b>adjective</b> + <b>preposition</b>
very + <b>adjective</b> + <b>noun</b>	really + <b>adjective</b> + <b>noun</b>
<b>article</b> + very + <b>adjective</b>	<b>article</b> + really + <b>adjective</b>
<b>v. to be</b> + very + <b>adjective</b>	<b>v. to be</b> + really + <b>adjective</b>
<b>linking v.</b> + very + <b>adjective</b>	<b>linking v.</b> + really + <b>adjective</b>

According to *table 9*, the results show that 'very' and 'really' share four patterns of grammar; these two words can be used interchangeably in some contexts. Besides, there was one different grammatical pattern found in the analysis, as shown in the following table:

**Table 10**

*The Contrasting Grammatical Patterns of 'Very' and 'Really'*

<b>Very</b>	<b>Really</b>	<b>Example</b>
very cannot modify <b>verbs</b>	really + <b>verb</b>	<p>"I needed therapy to figure out how to be considerate of others' normal lives when my own life is so <b>very different</b>." (DIY 4: 3 ways companies can support grieving employees)</p> <p>"It's all good, dude, I know this sucks, but I've got you." This was <b>very strange</b> and embarrassing, but in this moment, I had an epiphany..." (DIY 47 - The benefits of not being a jerk to yourself)</p> <p>"The list is long and symptoms can change, so it means you never <b>really know</b> what to expect. But make no mistake: they are significant." (DIY 63: The link between menopause and</p>

Very	Really	Example
		gender inequity at work) <i>“All of this is to say, I <b>really want</b> to create a better transition process for young people...” (DIY 42 - Sex education should start with consent)</i>

It can be concluded that words considered synonyms may have the same meaning but can be used differently based on their grammatical patterns. Specifically, the intensifier "really" is used exclusively with verbs in the grammatical pattern "really + verb," while the intensifier "very" does not exhibit this pattern.

Regarding the results of the present study, the grammatical patterns of the two synonymous intensifiers, "very" and "really," are context-dependent. The corpus analysis reveals that the speaker utilizes four patterns for the word "very" in the presentations. Similarly, the word "really" is also used in the same four patterns, except for one pattern that differs from "very."

In grammar, an adverb modifying another adverb is employed to modify an adverb using another adverb before it. This construction provides additional information or alters the meaning by using one adverb to modify another. The impact of this construction on the sentence's expression depends on the specific adjective used in the given sentence. For instance, the construction "very + adjective + preposition" may have a different effect compared to "very + adjective + noun," with the adjective playing a crucial role in determining the outcome.

#### 4.4 Chapter summary

In this chapter, the data indicate both the similarities and differences between two intensifiers that are synonymous. Despite the fact that these terms are synonymous, they are not always used interchangeably in all contexts, as evidenced by the findings. In regards to collocation and grammar, however, the two concepts are distinct. Despite sharing the same meaning of emphasizing and intensifying a word, "very" and "really" are not similar in terms of their usage. As explained by Douglas et al. (1998), words that are considered synonyms may have identical meanings but can be used in distinct ways.

## CHAPTER 5

### DISCUSSION, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter contains the summary of the study, as well as the summary of the findings, discussion of the findings implications, limitations and recommendations according to the data analyzed in the previous chapter.

#### 5.1 Summary of the study

This study has three main objectives, which are 1) to explore the frequency of the synonymous intensifiers among “*very*” and “*really*” found in TED Talks, 2) to investigate the similarities and differences in terms of collocation between the synonymous intensifiers “*very*” and “*really*” found in TED Talks and 3) to examine the similarities and differences in terms of grammatical pattern between the synonymous intensifiers “*very*” and “*really*” found in TED Talks.

The intensifiers “*very*” and “*really*” were selected by the reliable source based on a list of 3,000 core words that the learner of English needs to know from the Oxford dictionary. The transcripts on the topic of communication in TED Talks were collected to create a DIY TED Talks corpus. The corpus concordance line data was analyzed using the AntConc program.

Frequency, collocation and grammatical patterns are the criteria for distinguishing the two targeted synonymous intensifiers. To analyze the data, the DIY TED Talks corpus was input to the AntConc program to identify the word frequency and collocations of each word. To examine the grammatical patterns, the contexts shown in the concordance lines from the DIY TED Talks corpus were manually investigated.

#### 5.2 Summary of the findings

The findings can be summarized that the synonymous intensifiers “*very*” and “*really*” are considered as near-synonyms. These words are differentiated by three criteria: frequency, collocations and grammatical patterns, as well as how these words are used in context.

- 1) “Really” is the most frequently used word in the DIY TED Talks corpus at 288 times, followed by ‘very’ at 221 times.
- 2) In terms of collocations, the present analysis indicates that “*very*” and “*really*” share a number of adjective collocations and co-occur frequently with adjectives representing the degree of emotion, feeling, and sensibility. It is notable that the meanings of the words “*very*” and “*really*” are extremely similar. These words share some collocational terms; however, in terms of collocations, they are different. Despite the fact that ‘very’ and ‘really’ share the same meanings, they are not interchangeable in all situations since they each have a particular characteristic according to the criteria used to distinguish synonyms.
- 3) Regarding grammatical patterns, the target synonymous intensifiers mostly appear with similar patterns, since “*very*” and “*really*” share four common patterns, and there is one different pattern.
- 4) In general, language intensifiers indicate high levels that strengthen the meaning. Language learners may recognize that the intensifier is only used to a high degree. However, the TED Talks corpus illustrates the contrast to the general knowledge. Since the corpus in this study reveals some examples, such as, “*Ever since, I've felt very little regret. And I know it's because I shared my full heart with him before it was too late*” (DIY 66: The profound power of gratitude and living eulogies). And “*Some of them were immigrants, some of them were disabled, but all of them were the very last people this world invites to be confident.*” (DIY 25: How to build your confidence and spark it in others), does not indicate a high degree. Therefore, even though ‘very’ intensifies the meaning, in this context, it indicates a low degree of the intensifier.

### 5.3 Discussion of the findings

This research studied the two synonymous intensifiers “*very*” and “*really*” in the DIY TED Talks corpus in terms of their similarities and differences by examining the frequency of adjectives and verbs that collocate with them, their collocation patterns, and their grammatical structures. The findings shed light on several significant issues, which are discussed in relation to relevant theories and previous research studies:

As shown in Chapter 4, the frequency of the intensifiers “*very*” and “*really*” appears to be relatively equal in the presentation context. However, there are differences between them in terms of usage, which support the statement of Phoocharoensil (2010) that grammatical patterns can help identify the grammatical differences among synonyms. In this study, with a corpus size of 144,452, the intensifiers “*very*” and “*really*” were found to occur approximately two hundred times per one hundred thousand words.

The top three adjectives that frequently collocate with *very* are *much*, *different*, and *simple*. It is also found that most of the adjectives collocating with *very* are related to superlative forms or have a positive connotation, such as *good*, *well*, *clear*, *smart*, *best*, *interesting*, and *easy*. On the other hand, the top three words collocated with *really* are *good* and *wanted*. Similarly, most of the adjectives collocating with *really* are linked to positive attitudes and favorable evaluations, including *good*, *easy*, *clear*, *nice*, *cool*, and size-related adjectives like *high*.

From these findings, it can be concluded that when either of these intensifiers appears before an adjective or adverb, it intensifies the meaning of that word. However, there is a difference in usage between them: *really* can also describe adjectives, adverbs, and verbs, such as *want*, *need*, *feel*, *like*, *mean*, and *come*, whereas *very* is primarily used with adjectives and adverbs, not verbs. This observation aligns with Palmer's (1997) theoretical standpoint, which considers collocation as a criterion for distinguishing synonyms.

In general, intensifiers in language indicate heightened levels of intensity, strengthening the meaning of a sentence. However, the TED Talks corpus reveals a contrast to this general knowledge. The intensifier may also indicate a low degree or emphasis. For example, the phrase “the very last people this world invites to be confident” (DIY 25: How to build your confidence — and spark it in others) implies being the last remaining quantity before complete depletion, which does not indicate a high degree. This suggests that intensifiers are sentence modifiers that add more intensity to the word they modify. They can intensify both high and low degrees, depending on the context.

Regarding the literature reviews presented in this study, Benson and Ilson (1998) mentioned that collocations are often inconsistent and unpredictable, making them

challenging for non-native speakers to handle. Therefore, learners should be guided on how to use collocations in a natural way. Although synonyms share a basic meaning, they may not have the same collocations (Palmer, 1997). Additionally, Phoocharoensil (2010) states that grammatical patterns can help identify the grammatical differences among synonyms. This is evident when examining concordances and language patterns, which can identify words, phrases, collocations, grammatical structures, and display the results as concordances.

#### **5.4 Implications**

The results of this study indicate that while talk shows are an excellent resource for language improvement, the corpus could provide second language learners with a deeper instrument for analyzing word patterns with collocations and grammatical patterns. In addition, the corpus provides data that can be used to compare and contrast terms, a function that dictionaries are not designed to perform because they primarily provide definitions. Even though grammatical patterns are more complicated for learners, they can still be observed, compared, and contrasted.

Synonyms play a crucial role in language education, as students' quality can be negatively impacted by the use of inappropriate language. It seems beneficial to teach students how to select appropriate vocabulary so that they can effectively communicate. In addition, frequency, collocation, and grammatical patterns are suggested as ways to differentiate between synonyms in the current investigation. It would be helpful for Thai English learners to understand the differences between the two synonyms in word talks.

To ensure that the language learner combines appropriate adjectives with the correct intensifiers, students can use collocations to determine which words are compatible with each of the two intensifiers. The most common adjective collocations for each intensifier, as shown by the corpus data, can be taught to students. Teachers may use example sentences in which frequent collocates of adjectives appear with the two synonymous intensifiers by showing their frequency. In addition, the shared grammatical patterns of each synonymous intensifier can be used to teach learners both the shared grammar and the distinct grammar that these words have in common.

Apart from the synonym, teaching collocation and grammatical patterns can be the way to improve a student's English skill and the use of language. It assists students in expanding their vocabulary. Discovering words with the same meanings that can serve as substitutes for commonly used words may provide language learners with additional options of expression. Collocations and grammar rules are useful for the language learner to be aware of and begin using when developing their second language by using the presentation context as an example and recognizing the similarities and differences between the synonyms, which can be the benefit of teaching collocations and grammatical structure in the language classroom is the way it improves fluency among students as these are the aspects of this study.

In summary, the results of this study support the usefulness of corpus for language study and language learners. In English classes, students can benefit from using corpus data to identify effective vocabulary. They can also improve their collocation and grammatical patterns with the use of examples from corpus data. In addition, teachers can also benefit from the sample talks by identifying intensifiers and providing examples of their use. Students' competence will benefit from using these two interchangeable intensifiers as a framework for designing educational programs, pedagogical approaches, and pragmatic educational materials.

### **5.5 Limitations of the Study**

Firstly, it is important to acknowledge that this study was limited to the DIY TED Talks corpus as the primary source of data. The findings and conclusions drawn from this research should be interpreted within the context of TED Talks presentations on the topic of communication, and caution should be exercised when generalizing these results to other varieties of the English language, such as spoken language. Secondly, the study focused solely on two specific synonymous intensifiers, namely "very" and "really". It is worth noting that the results may vary if other forms or synonyms are included in the investigation. Thirdly, it is crucial to recognize that the sample size of the corpus used in this research was relatively small. Consequently, the generalizability of the results to other word contexts should be approached with caution, and further studies with larger and more diverse corpora are recommended. Fourthly, it is important to acknowledge that the data collected for analysis were based on transcripts of spoken

presentations. While transcripts provide valuable linguistic information, they may not fully capture the pragmatic aspects of the speaker's delivery and presentation style. Lastly, it is worth considering that the scope of this investigation was confined to the presentation context. Different genres, such as movies, documentaries, and newspapers, may yield different results in terms of frequency, collocation, and grammatical patterns. Future research exploring these other genres could provide a more comprehensive understanding of the use of synonymous intensifiers in various contexts.

### **5.6 Recommendations for further study**

Regarding the results and conclusions in the study, there are three main points of recommendations for the further study.

Due to the limited size of the word tokens in the corpus, it was determined that additional research would benefit from collecting data from other similar shows. To expand the scope of the corpus for improved studies and more reliable findings.

Further studies may compare two corpora that each represent distinct English languages, for example, the Contemporary Online Corpus of America (COCA) and the British National Corpus (BNC). The BNC stands for British English and the COCA for American English. These two corpora may provide an accurate representation of the similarities and differences of the two varieties of English.

This analysis focused on the two adverbs of intensity-very and really. To fill this gap, it is recommended that future research expand its focus to include intensifiers of higher degrees or intensifiers with similar meanings but different scales.

In further study, semantic and pragmatic theories should be combined in order to produce a more comprehensive examination of the similarities and contrasts between the two words regarding the use of intensifiers.

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