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Type: Practice-oriented Oral Face-to-face presentation

## Teaching intensifying adverbs: The case for autonomy, and its limits

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### TITLE

Teaching intensifying adverbs: The case for autonomy, and its limits

### RELEVANT SIG

Vocabulary

### FORMAT

Practice-oriented Oral Face-to-face presentation (25 minutes, including Q&A)

### Short English description

### KEYWORDS

Intensifying adverbs, Corpus data, Student autonomy

### First-time presenter?

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### ABSTRACT

Intensifying adverbs, such as “very”, “quite”, “totally”, and “bitterly”, can strengthen or weaken the words they modify. However, their ever-evolving usage over the last millennium has led to grammatical challenges, such as gradability, particularly for Japanese learners who may say “absolutely hungry” or “very starving”. Learners also struggle with the vast number of intensifier collocations and how L1 speakers choose them based on age, gender, and identity. For instance, “totally hysterical” carries different connotations, and a slight error in usage or intonation could lead to embarrassment or even offence towards different social communities.

While some coursebooks briefly cover gradability and present select collocations, this important area of human expression is often avoided as too broad and too sensitive. To address these issues, I will present two practical activities that I used originally in Czechia but have adapted for the Japanese university context. The first guides learners to use corpus data, promoting autonomy by helping them discover intensifiers relevant to their

needs. The second encourages learners to notice intensifiers associated with social communities but involves more direct teacher intervention when discussing phonological features and sociocultural implications. This is particularly useful for higher-level learners who plan to study or move abroad.

**Author:** SHAW, John (Westgate)

**Presenter:** SHAW, John (Westgate)

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