

Título: DEATH-RELATED INTENSIFIERS IN THE HISTORY OF THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE: GRAMMATICALISATION AND OTHER PROCESSES OF LANGUAGE CHANGE

Nombre: Blanco Suárez, Zeltia

Universidad: Universidad de Santiago de Compostela

Departamento: Escuela de Doctorado Internacional de la Universidad de Santiago de Compostela

Fecha de lectura: 15/12/2017

Mención a doctor europeo: concedido

Programa de doctorado: Programa de Doctorado en Estudios Ingleses Avanzados: Lingüística, Literatura y Cultura por la Universidad de A Coruña; la Universidad de Santiago de Compostela y la Universidad de Vigo

Dirección:

> **Director:** María José López Couso

Tribunal:

> **presidente:** Hubert Cuyckens

> **secretario:** M^a Belén Méndez Naya

> **vocal:** Augusto Soares Da Silva

Descriptores:

> ETIMOLOGIA

> SEMANTICA

> LINGUISTICA HISTORICA

> LINGUISTICA COMPUTACIONAL

El fichero de tesis ya ha sido incorporado al sistema

> 366705_995364.pdf

Localización: BIBLIOTECA XERAL USC

Resumen: The experience of death is, anthropologically, of the most genuine concern for all cultures and societies worldwide, since it marks the most extreme limits of human existence. With such an impact on our routines, it should come as no surprise that it can be effectively exploited as a source of intensification in language, perhaps even cross-linguistically.

Although some studies have addressed the uses of specific intensifiers from the semantic field of death (cf. Claridge 2011 on *dead* or Margerie 2011 on *to death*), a comprehensive diachronic corpus-based study of death-related intensifiers is still missing. This dissertation, therefore, sets out to explore the use of death for intensification purposes in language by focusing on the semantic evolution of the intensifiers from the semantic field of death, specifically *dead(ly)*, *mortal(ly)*, and *to death*, covering from the Middle English period (1100-1500) to Present-day English.

This dissertation is divided into seven chapters. Chapter one serves as an introduction to the current research,

detailing the aims and scope, as well as the outline of the manuscript. Chapters two, three, and four provide the theoretical framework of this study, dealing, in general terms, with intensification and intensifiers and with the theory of grammaticalisation. Chapter five, in contrast, presents the methodology used in the research, which is corpus-based. Finally, chapter six sets forth the actual corpus-based study on death-related intensifiers in English and chapter seven closes with some concluding remarks and suggestions for future research.

Chapter two starts with an initial theoretical discussion of intensification in language and how it is realised linguistically by means of manifold intensification strategies or intensifiers. Section 2.2 introduces the defining features of intensifiers and reviews the different definitions and models of classification which have been put forward in the literature. These models can be subsumed under two broad categories: those which classify intensifiers based on a degree scale, on the one hand, and those models which propose a semantic classification of intensifiers, on the other hand. After presenting the different models of classification, I assess their suitability and present the model adopted in the present dissertation (section 2.2.2), before presenting some concluding remarks for the chapter (cf. 2.3).

Chapter three discusses in detail the theory of grammaticalisation, central for this dissertation. An overview of its history is provided in section 3.1. In 3.2 I introduce the parameters and principles of grammaticalisation, as established by Lehmann (1985) and Hopper (1991). Next, in section 3.3, some of the phenomena typically associated with grammaticalisation are duly discussed, specifically unidirectionality, reanalysis, (inter)subjectification, and frequency. Section 3.4 looks into some recent trends in the field of grammaticalisation, before presenting some concluding remarks for the overall chapter in 3.5.

Chapter four revises the history of different intensifiers which have been discussed in the literature, both from the perspective of grammaticalisation (section 4.1) and of language variation, including social variation and geographical variation (section 4.2).

Chapter five is concerned with the methodology of this research. In section 5.1. I provide some introductory remarks on usage-based models of language and on the rise of corpus linguistics, the methodological framework of this thesis (section 5.1). Section 5.2 introduces the different sources of data used, namely dictionaries, corpora, and electronic collections and section 5.3 deals with the computer tools required for the analysis: the concordancer Wordsmith 6.0 and the different statistical tests. To close this chapter, section 5.4 explains the database and its particulars, as well as the variables of analysis.

The actual corpus-based study is the focus of chapter 6. In the first part of the chapter (6.1), I provide a glimpse of the evolution of *dead(ly)*, *mortal(ly)*, and *to death* by resorting to evidence from the two historical dictionaries par excellence, the MED and the OED. Next, in 6.2 I trace the long diachrony of these intensifiers with the Helsinki Corpus and ARCHER. EModE and LModE are the focus of section 6.3, which turned out to be decisive periods in the history of these intensifiers. Section 6.4 is intended to provide a graphic overview and general picture of the evolution of these death-related intensifiers considering their type of meaning, semantic prosody and the type of word which they modify. Finally, in 6.5 I discuss the development of these forms in relation to the framework of grammaticalisation, hence applying all the theoretical aspects discussed in the literature review to the data.

Finally, chapter 7 provides a summary of the main findings from the study, together with some thoughts on possible future research.