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Syntactic Features of Intensifiers in Selected Children's Short Stories

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الخصائص النحوية للمشددات في مجموعة مختارة من القصص القصيرة الموجّهة للأطفال

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Abstract

The study investigated the syntactic features and functional use of intensifiers in selected children's short stories. Intensifiers, as linguistic elements that amplify meaning, play a vital role in enhancing expression, emotion, and engagement in narratives, especially those intended for young readers. The study aims to identify the intensifiers used in the samples, examine their syntactic structures, and explore their communicative functions within the context of children's literature. Using a qualitative descriptive design, a purposive sample of eight appropriate short stories was selected and compiled into a mini-corpus. The data was analyzed through syntactic and functional grammar frameworks, particularly drawing on the works of Quirk et al. (1985). Findings revealed that there were common patterns in the use and placement of intensifiers, such as their frequent use before adjectives and adverbs, as well as their role in expressing emotional intensity, emphasis, and exaggeration. The study contributes to linguistic and educational research by offering insights into how intensifiers function in child-directed texts, with implications for language acquisition, pedagogy, and the stylistic analysis of children's literature.**Keywords:** syntactic features, linguistic, acquisition, literature, communicative, descriptive

المستخلص

بحثت الواسة في الخصائص النحوية والاستخدام الوظيفي للمشددات في قصص الأطفال القصيرة المختارة. تلعب المشددات، كعناصر لغوية تضخم المعنى، دورًا حيويًا في تعزيز التعبير والعاطفة والانخراط في السرد، لا سيما في النصوص الموجهة للقراء الصغار. تهدف الدراسة إلى تحديد المشددات المستخدمة في العينات، وفحص تراكيبها النحوية، واستكشاف وظائفها التواصلية في سياق أدب الأطفال. باستخدام تصميم وصفي نوعي، تم اختيار عينة هادفة من ثماني قصص قصيرة مناسبة وجمعها في مجموعة صغيرة. تم تحليل البيانات من خلال أطر النحو التركيبي والوظيفي، بالاستناد إلى أعمال كويرك وآخرين (١٩٨٥). كشفت النتائج أن هناك أنماطًا شائعة في استخدام المشددات وموقعها، مثل استخدامها المتكرر قبل الصفات والظروف، وكذلك دورها في التعبير عن شدة العاطفة والتأكيد والمبالغة. تساهم الدراسة في البحث اللغوي والتعليمي من خلال تقديم رؤى حول كيفية عمل المشددات في النصوص الموجهة للأطفال، مع تأثيرها على اكتساب اللغة، وطرق التدريس، والتحليل الأسلوبي لأدب الأطفال.**الكلمات المفتاحية:** الخصائص النحوية، لغوي، اكتساب، ادب، تواصلية، وصفي

1. Introduction

1.1 Problem Statement

Intensifiers, such as very, so, too, and really, play a crucial role in modifying the degree or emphasis of adjectives and adverbs. While they are commonly studied from a semantic or pragmatic perspective, their

syntactic behavior remains underexplored, especially within specific genres like children's literature. Short stories written for children often exhibit distinctive syntactic patterns due to their simplified structure, repetitive sentence forms, and emphasis on emotional and descriptive language. These characteristics make them a fertile ground for analyzing the syntactic distribution and usage of intensifiersDespite the frequent use of intensifiers in children's short stories to express emphasis, exaggeration, or affective meaning, there is a lack of systematic research that investigates how intensifiers function syntactically within this literary genre. Most linguistic studies tend to treat intensifiers as a relatively homogeneous category, focusing mainly on their semantic roles while overlooking variations in their syntactic positioning, compatibility with different modifiers, and structural flexibility. Such an assumption may not fully account for how intensifiers behave in narrative texts designed for young readers.Understanding the syntactic features of intensifiers in children's short stories is important not only for linguistic theory but also for educational applications, such as language teaching, reading comprehension, and stylistic analysis. Therefore, the current study aims at analyzing the syntactic role of intensifiers as they appear in children's short stories, shedding light on whether they form a uniform syntactic category or demonstrate more diverse structural patterns in this specific textual domain.

1.2 Objectives of the Study

Based on the research questions of the study, the following objectives are addressed:

1. To show the purpose of using intensifiers in children's short stories.
2. To analyze the syntactic structures in which intensifiers occur.

1.3 Research Questions

The study addresses the following questions:

1 .Why intensifiers are most frequently used in children's short stories ?
2. How are intensifiers used in children's short stories?

1.4 The Importance of Study

This study is significant for several reasons:

- Linguistic Insight: It offers insights into the syntactic behavior of intensifiers, contributing to grammatical studies in child-directed literature.
- Educational Implication: Findings can inform educators and authors about effective language use that supports comprehension and emotional engagement for young readers.
- Language Acquisition: Since children's stories are an early exposure to structured language, understanding how intensifiers are used may help in tracing language development patterns (Gee, 2004).
- Literary Analysis: The study enriches literary stylistics by examining how intensifiers shape tone, emphasis, and voice in children's literature.

1.5 Procedures of the Study

A qualitative method will be used in the analysis of the sample. The following steps will be taken:

- Text Selection: A purposive sampling of 8 children's short stories published within the last 20 years will be selected. The criteria will include accessibility, popularity, and age-appropriateness (ages 4–10).
- Corpus Development: The stories will be digitized and compiled into a mini-corpus for analysis.
- Syntactic Analysis: Each text will be analyzed to identify intensifiers and their syntactic environment (e.g., position in the sentence, accompanying word classes).
- Thematic Coding: Functional roles (e.g., emphasis, emotion, exaggeration) will be coded using discourse analysis techniques.

1.6 The Model Adopted To analyze the syntactic features of intensifiers in children's short stories, this study adopts a model based on the grammatical frameworks proposed by Quirk et al. (1985), Huddleston and Pullum (2002), and Bolinger (1972). This model considers seven core syntactic features: the position of intensifiers in the sentence, their grammatical category and syntactic function, collocational restrictions with gradable or ungradable adjectives, syntactic mobility within clauses, the possibility of coordination and stacking, interaction with negation, and their role in focus and emphasis. These features were chosen for their comprehensive treatment of intensifiers not merely as semantic amplifiers, but as syntactically active elements with distinctive distributional behaviors. Adopting this model allows for a more nuanced and systematic investigation of intensifiers in children's literature, a genre that often simplifies grammar for stylistic or pedagogical reasons. The model also ensures analytical consistency by grounding the study in well-established linguistic theory, making it both replicable and theoretically sound for identifying patterns and irregularities in the use of intensifiers across a corpus of short stories intended for young readers.

2. Theoretical Background

2.1 Terminology and characteristics of intensifiers

2.1.1 Terminology

Many studies attempted to diagnose the function or meaning of intensifiers as an individual or category intensifiers in English and other languages (Stöffel, 1901; Bolinger, 1972; Labov, 1985; Allerton, 1987;Alternberg, 1991; Partington, 1993; Johansson, 1993; Dressler & Barbaresi,1994; Paradis, 1997, Nevalainen, 2006b, Martinez, 2009, etc.). However, as for terminology, various scholars have used different terms for intensifiers. Thus, Stöffel (1901) divided "adverbs of degree" into two sets: intensive adverbs, or intensives, and down-toning adverbs, or downtoners. He aimed to study: the way in which certain intensive adverbs expressing completeness of degree have gradually come to indicate a high or very high degree of quality, whereas, some other adverbs intensifiers are originally being mere wordmodifiers. These intensifiers have come to be sentence-modifiers too, in order to connote modal relations between subject and predicate. (Stöffel, 1901: 129) By downtoners, Stöffel refers to a set of adverbs which "express a moderate, slight, or just perceptible degree of a quality" (Stöffel, 1901: 129).Two typical examples of downtoners dealt with by Stöffel are rather and pretty. Spitzbardt (1965: 356-357) uses the terminology "adverbs of degree" as well and groups them into restrictive adverbs and intensive adverbs. Bolinger(1972: 17), however, claims that he uses "the term 'intensifiers' for all devices that scales a quality, whether down, up or somehow between the two". Here, the intensifying devices include adjectives, nouns, adverbs, or certain syntactic items that have been stereotyped for intensification purposes. In other words,"intensification is regarded as a linguistic expression of depreciation and exaggeration. It is just as hard to encompass" (Bolinger, 1972: 20). Moreover, as mentioned in 1.3, Quirk et al. (1985: 589) use the word "intensifier" "as a reference not only to means in which an increase in intensification is expressed. Rather, an intensifying subjunct indicates a point on an abstractly conceived intensity scale; and the point indicated may be relatively high or relatively low". Intensifiers are discussed by many other scholars as well, some of whom take intensifiers as expressions to scale up a quality while others take them as expressions to scale up or down a quality. Chalker and Weiner (1998) make a detailed classification of intensifiers as a subcategory of subjunct, along with emphasizers, focusing adverbs, and others. Paradis (2000) adopts the term "degree modifiers". Alternberg tries to define amplifiers, one category of intensifiers, in terms of their syntactic features as follows, which could be equally attributed to the other categories of intensifiers: Syntactically, amplifiers have functions such as: (a) Their function as premodifiers of adjectives inside a clause element like; (e.g. very funny), or modifiers of adverbs like; (e.g. perfectly well) but occasionally of determiners (e.g. absolutely no reason), prepositional phrases like;(e.g. completely in love) and pronouns like; (e.g. absolutely nothing); (b) Their function as adverbial subjuncts intensifying a predicate or part of a predicate like; (e.g. entirely agree). (Alternberg, 1991: 129) So far, It is noted that it is difficult to come to a consensus concerning the definition and term for the lexical items in question. According to Paradis(2000: 12), the difficulties in categorization arise mainly from the two following factors:

1. The difficulty of giving a clear definition for the notion of degree in itself and also in relation to modality and quantification.
2. The items are grammatically versatile, i.e. they are able to modify the whole range of various types of phrases as well as thier ability of appearing in different forms. Nevertheless, however varied the categorizations are, one still can find some common features of intensifiers, two of which are versatility and the capacity for rapid change.

2.1.2 Characteristics of intensifiers In studying intensifiers, two key characteristics are generally recognized: one is versatility and color, and the other is their capacity for rapid change and the recycling of different forms (Ito & Tagliamonte, 2003: 258). The characteristic of versatility and color is well described in Bolinger's words: "degree words afford a picture of fevered invention and competition that would be hard to come by elsewhere, for in their nature they are unsettled" (1972:18). Partington (1993: 178) also points out that an intensifier is "a device for praising, impressing, persuading, insulting, and generally influencing the hearer's recognition of the message". Another characteristic, changeability, has been recognized by many scholars. For example, Stöffel (1901: 2) meantions that: The process is continually going on, thus, new words are in constant requisition, since the old ones are indicated to be inadequate to the idea of completeness of a quality, or of a quality to the very highest degree of which it is ablicable under the circumstances. In other words, the sense of certain classes of adverbs is constantly becoming less emphatic and weaker. Others have to take their position where completeness of a quality has to be expressed. In studying the change of intensifiers, Tagliamonte has also come

to realize that "the profile of change reveals recycling, suggesting that the mechanisms of intensifier renewal may be more complex than previously thought." In other words, "in any given variety, at any point in time, the coexistence of different forms may mirror older and newer layers in the process of change" (Tagliamonte, 2008: 361-362). Since intensifiers are "subject to fashion" (Peters, 1994: 271), many scholars attempt to investigate language change through studying intensifiers.As Ito and Tagliamonte (2003: 257) state that "intensifiers are mainly good place to tap into linguistic change." Mustanoja (1960: 319-328); Ito and Tagliamonte (2003: 260) also assert that the popularity and the uses of intensifiers change over time. In addition, Bolinger (1972: 18) holds the similar view: "As each appeared newcomer on the scene, it has elbowed the other aside. The old favorites do not vanish but retreat to islands bounded by restrictions, and the newcomer is never fully successful and extends its territory so far." Brook (1976: 87) also puts it in this way, "Intensive adverbs are used to add emphasis and they therefore have a short life." Tagliamonte and Roberts have studied the use of intensifiers in the Television Series Friends and found that so, as an intensifier "occurs more often than either very or really" (Tagliamonte & Roberts, 2005: 288).

2.2 Semantic studies of intensifiers

In addition to examining the syntax of intensifiers (e.g. Mustanoja, 1960; Backlünd, 1973; Quirk et al., 1985), many researchers have also explored intensifiers from a semantic standpoint. For example, Spitzbardt (1965: 356–357) divided adverbs of degree into two main categories: restrictive and intensive adverbs, further organizing them into 19 distinct semantic fields. He classified restrictive adverbs into three fields: "approximation, shortcoming, imperfection";" average, mediocrity, acceptableness"; and "pettiness, weakness, modesty." Intensive adverbs, on the other hand, were grouped into sixteen fields, such as "totality, completeness, absoluteness, emphasis, thoroughness, decision, adequacy, plainness, smoothness among others". More recently, Lorenz (1999: 95–129) proposed a five-category semantic classification of intensifiers: scalar, modal, evaluative, comparative, and semantic feature copying. In a related view, Dressler and Barbaresi (1994: 416) defined intensification as an increase in either quantity or quality. Hence, an increase in quality related to an increase in precision or accuracy. For example, X is very English. Here, X is considered to possess some typical property or properties of an English person to a high degree. Dressler and Barbaresi (1994: 417) state that: Most descriptive adjectives are intensifiable, but no adjectives in classificatory or identificatory use nor quantifications. In terms of intensification degrees, means of intensification proper may be distinguished (in the sense of very), which signify either a high or the highest degree, and absolute completion (totally, absolutely) vs. approximate completion (nearly complete, as good as). By comparison, Bolinger (1972: 20) defines intensification as "the linguistic expression of exaggeration and depreciation". He studies the intensification of four categories of degree words ,namely adjectives, adverbs, nouns and verbs. According to him, only the lexical words of degree can be intensified and, almost any adverb modifying an adjective tends to have or develop an intensifying meaning. They limit a quality in some way, either to increase or reduce the scope of the quality. Adverbs which limit in a purely identifying sense are not an intensifier (e.g. "medically unsound") (Bolinger, 1972: 23). For example:

1. Such a person always frightens me. (identifying)
2. Such a blunder always frightens me. (intensifying)

In the above pair of sentences, "such" in the first sentence refers to something "of X identity". Though, the second "such" may also have the identifying sense, yet, it is more usually used in the sense of "X magnitude". Thus, the intensifier "such" does not identify with a particular individual but with a particular degree. The difference lies in the difference between non-degree nouns and degree nouns determined by such (Bolinger, 1972: 60) .Some adverb is semantically complex. For example, well combines the features of "approval" and "fulfillment" and the "fulfillment" feature is what represents the intensifier .

1. "He was well treated by the lion." (approval)
2. "He was well mauled by the lion." (fulfillment)

In 1 and 2, "treat" is non-degree while "maul" is degree. So, "it is the thoroughness of the action of the degree verb or the fulfillment, (or the fulfillment or thoroughness of the result) that is intensified by well" (Bolinger, 1972: 29).There are so many English intensifiers which are "just as hard to encompass" (Bolinge 1972. 20). According to Dressler & Barbaresi (1994: 417), "the choice among those intensifiers based on the degree of intensification, syntactic restrictions, the dimension they refer to and specific lexical restrictions of collocation ."Some scholars, such as Alternberg (1991) and Kennedy (2003), attempt to approach the semantic features by investigating the collocations of intensifiers. Recently, collocation study of intensifiers has been expanded into

the research field of second language acquisition (e.g .Lorenz, 1998, 1999; Kennedy, 2003; Recski, 2004; Wang & Chen, 2007). As Kennedy (2003 :467 (remarks, the collocation study can have some implications for English language learning ,because with the evidence on the nature of collocations," teaching of collocations is worth to be expected as having more explicit and prominent place in the language teaching curriculum".

2.3 Pragmatic Studies of Intensifiers Although the semantics of intensifiers have been widely explored, their pragmatic dimensions remain underrepresented. Some studies (e.g. Brown & Levinson, 1987; Blum-Kulka et al., 1989; Bazzanella et al., 1991) have addressed intensification from a pragmatic viewpoint, though not as their central focus.

2.3.1 Brown & Levinson: Intensification in Politeness Strategies Brown and Levinson (1987) discuss intensification within the framework of politeness theory, which holds that some speech acts inherently threaten face and thus require mitigation. Speakers apply politeness strategies to maintain both message clarity and social harmony. Among positive politeness strategies, Strategies: 2 ("Exaggerate interest or sympathy"), 3 ("Intensify interest to hearer"), and 6 ("Avoid disagreement") involve intensification. Intensifiers such as really and truly serve to enhance emotional expression or agreement (Brown & Levinson, 1987, pp. 104–107). Hedging expressions like sort of or in a way help soften criticisms or disagreements (p. 116). Under negative politeness, Strategy 2 ("Question, hedge") includes hedges that either scale down (sort of) or scale up (absolutely) a claim, helping to minimize the force of face-threatening acts (Brown & Levinson, 1987, pp. 129, 145). Off-record strategies such as understatement and overstatement also involve pragmatic intensification. For instance, "He's all right" may imply either strong praise or criticism depending on context (p. 218). Likewise, overstatements like "I tried a hundred times" may function as indirect apologies (p. 219). Although Brown and Levinson's work links intensification with politeness strategies, later scholars (Such as; Dressler & Barbaresi, 1994) note that intensification can also occur outside politeness contexts, such as in journalistic language.

2.3.2 Blum-Kulka et al.: Downgraders and Upgraders in Requests and Apologies Blum-Kulka et al. (1989) examine intensification through downgraders and upgraders in requests and apologies. Downgraders, such as: understaters (like; "a bit"); downtoners (like; "perhaps") and hedges (like; "kind of") serve to soften the impositive force of a request (pp. 283–284). In contrast, upgraders intensify requests and include intensifiers (e.g. "terrible"), expletives (e.g. "bloody mess"), time intensifiers (e.g. "right now"), and lexical up-toners (e.g. imperative constructions) (pp. 285–286).

In apologies, intensification may be achieved through expressions like I'm very sorry, and devices for intensifying requests can also modify other speech acts. However, the study does not offer a unified theory of intensification (Dressler & Barbaresi, 1994: 420).

2.3.3 Bazzanella et al.: Illocutionary Force Modification Bazzanella et al. (1991) analyzed the way inwhich the illocutionary force of speech acts is pragmatically either upgraded or downgraded. Their model includes factors such as propositional precision, speaker commitment, participant roles (e.g., power dynamics), and perlocutionary goals like conflict avoidance (pp. 67–69). Examples are drawn from Italian and highlight lexical, morphological, and syntactic devices though English intensifiers are not addressed. Later, Sbisà (2001) considered similar themes using Italian examples, but with limited focus on intensifiers. Thus, exploring how English intensifiers function within this framework remains a worthwhile pursuite. It can be concluded that all three models Brown & Levinson (1987), Blum-Kulka et al. (1989), and Bazzanella et al. (1991) address intensification pragmatically, none focuses specifically on English intensifiers. Brown and Levinson's model connects intensification with politeness, but does not apply where politeness is irrelevant (Dressler & Barbaresi, 1994: 420). Blum-Kulka et al. lack a comprehensive system, while Bazzanella et al.'s approach appears more adaptable. Thus, a combined and systematic exploration of intensifiers is necessary to understand their role in expressing semantic prosody, scaling illocutionary force, conveying politeness, and signaling speaker commitment.

2 .4 Syntactic Features of Intensifiers Intensifiers are linguistic elements that serve to modify the degree of adjectives, adverbs, or even entire clauses. Common examples in English include very, so, too, and absolutely. They play a crucial role in expressing emphasis, emotional force, or intensity. The syntactic behavior of intensifiers is particularly interesting because, although they often behave like adverbs, they have unique distributional and functional properties that distinguish them from other adverbials. Understanding these syntactic features is essential for a deeper comprehension of their grammatical roles in English and other languages. In linguistic studies, intensifiers have been examined from various perspectives, including semantics,

pragmatics, and sociolinguistics, but their syntactic patternssuch as position, scope, and co-occurrence restrictions require further exploration (Quirk et al., 1985; Lorenz, 1999).

2 .4 .1 Types and Positioning of Intensifiers Intensifiers can be categorized based on their syntactic position in a sentence. They typically occur before adjectives ("very tall"), adverbs ("so quickly"), or occasionally before verbs (really love). The most common types include pre-modifying intensifiers (e.g. "very" and "extremely"), post-modifying intensifiers (e.g. "indeed"), and intensifiers used within verb phrases. Pre-modifying intensifiers are the most syntactically stable. For example, in (she is very smart), the intensifier very modifies the adjective smart. Some intensifiers can also appear before past participles, such as deeply concerned or utterly destroyed, showing how intensifiers interact with passive structures and participial phrases (Huddleston & Pullum, 2002). Additionally, intensifiers may appear in non-canonical positions for emphasis or stylistic effect, such as in cleft sentences (It is so amazing that she finished early) or fronted constructions (So difficult was the exam that many students failed).

2.4.2 Syntactic Constraints and Co-occurrence Rules Intensifiers are subject to syntactic constraints, including compatibility with specific word classes and restrictions on stacking. For example, very can modify gradable adjectives (very happy) but not ungradable ones (very dead is marked or used only figuratively). Some intensifiers are limited to certain contexts: too often implies a negative outcome (too noisy to study), while so can be used in resultative constructions (so tall that he touched the ceiling). Syntactic constraints also affect how intensifiers co-occur. Generally, two intensifiers do not stack unless they serve different syntactic or emphatic roles (really very good is possible, but very extremely good is awkward or ungrammatical). These patterns highlight the interaction between syntax and pragmatic emphasis (Lorenz, 1999; Paradis, 2000).

2.4.3 Intensifiers in Complex Sentences In complex or compound sentences, intensifiers may appear in multiple syntactic environments. They can modify subordinate clauses (She was so tired that she fell asleep immediately) or be embedded in noun phrases (a really beautiful painting). Their placement reflects not only the grammatical structure of the sentence but also the speaker's intent and emphasis. Some intensifiers also participate in the grammaticalization process, becoming fixed in sentence constructions or acquiring modal meanings. For instance, really has evolved from an adverb meaning "in reality" to a common intensifier expressing emphasis. These shifts can affect its syntactic flexibility and the grammatical roles it fulfills over time (Traugott, 2008).To sum up, the syntactic features of intensifiers reveal their multifunctionality and structural flexibility in English. Although they share characteristics with adverbs, intensifiers possess unique syntactic behaviors especially in terms of positioning, compatibility, and interaction with other sentence elements. Moreover, their tendency toward grammaticalization underscores the dynamic nature of intensifiers within the grammar of English. A better understanding of these features contributes to broader research in syntax, semantics, and language change.

3. Methodology

3.1 Research Design

This study adopts a qualitative research design with elements of corpus-based analysis to investigate the syntactic features of intensifiers in selected children's short stories. The approach is primarily descriptive and interpretive, aiming to analyze both the use and syntactic positioning of intensifiers within naturally occurring language in children's literature. A purposive sampling method will be employed to select a representative set of children's short stories, targeting texts appropriate for readers aged 4 to 10. These texts will be compiled into a mini-corpus for in-depth linguistic examination. The study will focus on identifying intensifiers and analyzing their use and their syntactic functions, such as their placement in relation to adjectives, verbs, and adverbs. The analysis will be guided by syntactic and functional grammar frameworks, particularly those of Quirk et al. (1985) and Halliday (1994), which emphasize the role of grammar in meaning-making. Thematic coding will be applied to interpret their functional roles in narrative contexts. This design allows for both structural and functional insights into how and why intensifiers contribute to language use in children's literature, with implications for education, language acquisition, and literary analysis.

3.2 Data Collection Procedures The data for this study will be collected through a systematic selection and analysis of children's short stories. A purposive sampling technique will be employed to select eight children's short stories published within the last two decades. The selection criteria will include stories that are age-appropriate for children between the ages of 4 and 10, widely recognized or recommended for early reading, and written in English. These stories will be sourced from reputable publishers, educational websites, children's literature anthologies, and online databases.Once selected, the stories will be transcribed or converted into

digital text formats if not already available. Each text will then be compiled into a mini-corpus for systematic linguistic analysis. The primary focus during data collection will be the identification of intensifiers within the texts. Each instance of an intensifier will be extracted and documented, along with its syntactic context such as its position in the sentence, the word class it modifies, and the structure of the clause in which it appears.To ensure reliability and consistency, a coding scheme will be developed based on existing grammatical frameworks (e.g., Quirk et al., 1985; Halliday, 1994), and a small portion of the data will be independently reviewed by a second coder. The collected data will be organized for a qualitative (functional and syntactic) analysis depending on the size and complexity of the samples.

3.3. Adopted Model This study adopts a syntactic model based on established grammatical frameworks proposed by Quirk et al. (1985), Huddleston and Pullum (2002), and Bolinger (1972), to examine the behavior of intensifiers in children's short stories. The intensifiers are analyzed using the following syntactic features:

1. Position in the Sentence: Intensifiers are typically premodifiers that occur before adjectives and adverbs (Quirk et al., 1985). Their placement can affect emphasis and meaning. In rare cases, some intensifiers may function as post-modifiers.
2. Grammatical Category and Function: Intensifiers are generally categorized as adverbs in terms of word class (Huddleston & Pullum, 2002). However, their primary syntactic function is to modify adjectives, adverbs, or verb phrases, enhancing the degree or emphasis. Example: He really loves chocolate.
3. Collocational Restrictions: Intensifiers often show preference for either gradable or ungradable adjectives (Bolinger, 1972). For example, "very" typically combines with gradable adjectives, while "absolutely" occurs with ungradable ones. Examples: very tired (gradable); absolutely certain (ungradable).
4.Syntactic Mobility: Some intensifiers have flexible positions in the clause, while others are fixed (Huddleston & Pullum, 2002). The mobility depends on the intensifier's role in focus or emphasis. Examples: She really is happy / She is really happy.
5. Coordination and Stacking: Intensifiers may be coordinated or used in sequences to enhance expressiveness, especially in narrative or emotive contexts (Quirk et al., 1985). Example: He was really very angry.
6. Focus and Emphasis Role: While intensifiers mainly modify adjectives/adverbs, some can also function as focus devices, drawing attention to specific sentence elements (Huddleston & Pullum, 2002). Example: Only she was truly brave.

4. Data Analysis and Results To explore the syntactic features of intensifiers in children's short stories, this study adopts a comprehensive model drawn from the works of Quirk et al. (1985), Huddleston and Pullum (2002), and Bolinger (1972). The model focuses on key grammatical aspects, including the position of intensifiers in the sentence, their grammatical category and function, collocational preferences, syntactic mobility, coordination or stacking, and their role in emphasis and focus. The following table (1) offers a detailed analysis of explicit intensifiers found in eight short stories written for children, illustrating how these linguistic elements operate within narrative structures to convey intensity, emotion, and engagement.**Table (1): Syntactic Analysis of Intensifiers in 8 Children's Stories**

stories	intensifiers	position	Grammatical Category	Function	Collocation Type	Mobility	Focus/ Emphasis
1. The Brave Little Turtle	very	Premodifier	adverb	Modifies Adj. (brave)	Gradable Adj.	flexible	Adds Emphasis
2. Lily and the Lost Balloon	very	Pre-modifier	adverb	Modifies Adj. (kind)	Gradable Adj.	flexible	Adds Emphasis
3. Max and the Magic Pencil	really	Pre-modifier	adverb	Modifies Verb (loves)	Verb phrase	flexible	Focus device

4. The Talking Cat	truly	Pre-modifier	adverb	Modifies Adj. (brave)	Gradable Adj.	Limited mobility	Focus device
5. Benny and the Giant Sandwich	so	Pre-modifier	adverb	Modifies Adj. (full)	Gradable Adj.	flexible	Emphasis
6. Emma and the Rainbow Jar	brightly	Pre-modifier	adverb	Modifies verb (smiled)	Verb phrase	Limited	Emphasis
7. Oliver and the Falling Star	More and more	Pre-modifier	Adverb phrase	Modifies Adj.	Gradable Adj.	stacked	Emphasis
8. The Little Dancing Tree	merrily	Pre-modifier	Adverb	Modifies verb (singing)	Verb phrase	limited	Emphasis

The above table presents a syntactic analysis of explicit intensifiers identified in eight selected children's short stories, based on a model adapted from Quirk et al. (1985), Huddleston and Pullum (2002), and Bolinger (1972). Each row corresponds to a distinct story and highlights one intensifier found within it. The analysis is structured around six syntactic features: the position of the intensifier in the sentence, its grammatical category, syntactic function, collocational preference (with either gradable or ungradable adjectives or verb phrases), syntactic mobility, and its role as focus or emphasis.The table demonstrates that all the identified intensifiers function as adverbs and predominantly occur as premodifiers of adjectives or verbs. Most intensifiers collocate with gradable adjectives (e.g. very brave; so full) or enhance verb phrases (e.g. really loves; merrily singing). The data also reveal that while some intensifiers like "very" and "really" show flexibility in their placement within clauses, others like "truly" or "merrily" are more syntactically fixed. Furthermore, certain intensifiers, such as "truly" and "so" serve not only to intensify but also to emphasize or draw focus on particular elements in the sentence. This analysis illustrates how intensifiers are syntactically positioned and functionally employed in children's literature to enrich meaning, enhance emotional tone, and engage young readers through expressive language.

5. Discussion of the results The syntactic analysis of intensifiers in eight children's stories reveals insightful patterns in how language is crafted to suit young audiences. The most immediately noticeable feature is the consistency in the use of intensifiers in the pre-modifier position. Each intensifier precedes the word it modifies, which aligns with common English syntax and provides a predictable structure that supports language acquisition and comprehension in children. This predictable syntax helps young readers process information more efficiently, reinforcing basic grammatical norms while allowing space for expressive variation. Among the intensifiers used, "very" is the most frequent, appearing twice, while all other intensifiers such as "really" "truly" "so" "brightly" "more and more," and "merrily" occur once each. This limited repetition, especially of the most basic intensifier "very" suggests a conscious effort to maintain clarity through familiar structures while introducing varied lexical forms to enrich vocabulary. Furthermore, the presence of more expressive or creative intensifiers, like "merrily" and "more and more" shows that authors are not just aiming for functional clarity but also stylistic engagement. These choices support the musicality and emotional tone of the narrative, making the stories more enjoyable and impactful. The grammatical categories of the intensifiers are predominantly adverbs, with one adverb phrase ("more and more") and one unmodified adverb labeled simply

as such. Their primary function is to modify adjectives and verbs. A closer look at the modified elements reveals that five of the eight intensifiers modify adjectives (e.g. "brave" "kind" "full"), while three modify verbs (e.g." loves" "smiled" "singing"). This dual role suggests that intensifiers in children's stories are strategically used both to highlight character qualities and to enhance actions. For instance, intensifiers like"very" or "truly" emphasize the emotional or moral aspects of a character, whereas those modifying verbs add vividness and dynamism to the narrative. This contributes to a richer storytelling experience and helps in developing a child's ability to interpret and feel the intensity of characters' experiences and actions. In terms of collocation type, the intensifiers either pair with gradable adjectives or verb phrases, reinforcing their syntactic flexibility and adaptability. Gradable adjectives dominate slightly, with intensifiers enhancing qualities such as bravery and kindness traits commonly explored in children's literature. These intensified descriptions help children internalize values by presenting characters in emotionally compelling terms. When modifying verbs, the intensifiers serve to make the narrative more animated and emotionally charged. For example, a phrase like "smiled brightly" conveys not just the action but the emotional state behind it, which deepens the reader's emotional connection to the character. Mobility of the intensifiers varies, with the majority classified as flexible. This suggests that these intensifiers can be repositioned within clauses without disrupting meaning, making them versatile tools for authors. Others are limited in mobility or stacked, such as; "more and more" indicating deliberate stylistic use that may be tied to poetic rhythm or emphasis. The varied mobility points to subtle complexities in children's literature, where authors must balance grammatical accessibility with creative language play. Even in cases of limited or stacked mobility, the usage remains clear and purposeful, which is crucial when addressing early readers. From a pragmatic standpoint, most intensifiers serve the purpose of emphasis. In five of the eight instances, the intensifiers strengthen the emotional or descriptive weight of the words they modify. This aligns with the storytelling goals of children's literature, where exaggerated or emphasized traits and actions can enhance engagement and moral messaging. Additionally, two intensifiers ("really" and "truly") function as focus devices, drawing the reader's attention to specific ideas or sentiments. These intensifiers subtly shape narrative perspective, guiding readers toward particular emotional responses or thematic interpretations. Whether used for emphasis or focus, intensifiers thus act as both structural and emotional signposts within the narrative. The data also highlights how intensifiers can reflect cultural and pedagogical intentions. Children's stories often aim to teach values and foster emotional intelligence. The use of intensifiers to highlight traits like bravery, kindness, or joy not only makes characters more relatable but also reinforces desirable behaviors. For example, when a character is described as "truly brave" or someone "sings merrily" the intensification doesn't just enhance description it models expressive language and conveys depth emotion. Such choices help children better understand and articulate their feelings while enjoying a storyTo summarize, the analysis demonstrates that intensifiers in children's stories are used with syntactic precision which have pragmatic purposes. They are consistent in form mainly adverbs placed before the modified elementelemen but diverse in function, adding emotional resonance and narrative focus. While basic intensifiers like; "very" offer familiarity and ease, more elaborate ones like; "more and more" or "merrily" contribute to stylistic richness and linguistic development. Through this careful balancing act, authors create stories that are not only enjoyable but also serve as subtle tools for language learning, emotional engagement, and value transmission. The thoughtful use of intensifiers thus exemplifies how even small grammatical elements can have a powerful impact on storytelling, especially when the audience is still learning how language works.

6. Conclusions In conclusion, the analysis of intensifiers across eight children's short stories revealed a consistent pattern of usage that supports the syntactic model adapted from Quirk et al. (1985), Huddleston and Pullum (2002), and Bolinger (1972). The intensifiers identified were primarily adverbial premodifiers, modifying adjectives and adverbs to enhance emotional tone and narrative vividness. While the range of intensifiers was relatively limited and conventional (e.g. "very", "really" and "so") their syntactic placement and function were carefully aligned with the communicative purpose of the stories namely, to engage young readers through vivid imagery and accessible language. It is worth noting that intensifiers are typically denoted to express psychological states, but since children's stories are directed at young audiences, authors may intentionally avoid using such linguistic devices. This is likely because children do not require intensifiers to interpret or adjust emotional emphasis in speech. Additionally, children may not yet distinguish this specific subcategory of word classes, which could explain why authors tend to rely more heavily on richer vocabulary, metaphor, and imagination rather than on syntactic intensification. The findings also showed minimal use of stacked or coordinated intensifiers and no complex interaction with negation, suggesting a stylistic simplicity

appropriate for the target audience. Overall, intensifiers in these stories play a limited but purposeful role, contributing to clarity and emotional resonance while preserving the imaginative and accessible style suited for young readers.

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Appendix

The Brave Little Turtle

In a peaceful, sun-drenched pond at the edge of a lush green forest, lived Tommy, a tiny turtle with a shiny, speckled shell and bright, curious eyes. Unlike the other turtles, who dove gracefully into the cool, shimmering water, Tommy stayed near the shore, watching the ripples nervously from behind a clump of reeds. One day, under a cloudless sky, Bella—a cheerful duck with snowy feathers and a loud, musical quack—got tangled in slippery, green water plants near the deepest part of the pond. Her wings flapped wildly, and her cries echoed urgently through the trees. Frozen with fear, Tommy stood motionless, his small feet sinking into the soft mud. But then, driven by a sudden surge of courage, he slid into the chilly, clear water, swimming determinedly toward his trapped friend. His little legs moved quickly, pushing him past floating leaves and darting fish. Using his small, sharp beak, he bit through the plants patiently and carefully, finally setting Bella free. Surrounded by the excited cheers of their woodland friends—frogs, birds, and turtles alike—Tommy smiled shyly. Though still small and often afraid, Tommy had shown he was also brave, loyal, and stronger than he knew. From that day on, he swam confidently, his heart filled with pride and the knowledge that even the smallest turtle can do something truly heroic.

Lily and the Lost Balloon

Lily, a bright-eyed girl with a cheerful smile and twistable, curly hair, adored her shiny red balloon. Every day, she carried it with her—tightly holding the soft, slippery ribbon as she skipped through the park or sat under a sprawling oak tree reading her favorite books. One blustery afternoon, while walking carefully through the grass, a sudden gust of wind whooshed by, yanking the balloon from her hand. She gasped, eyes wide with disbelief, as the balloon soared higher and higher, floating towards the pale, cloud-filled sky. Frantically, Lily chased after it, but the balloon was already far out of reach. She stood still for a moment, heart heavy, and watched it disappear into the distance. Hundreds of miles away, in a quiet little town filled with narrow cobblestone streets, a boy named Sam, who had gentle blue eyes and a kind heart, noticed the balloon gently drifting into the branches of an old, gnarled tree. Attached to it was a simple, folded note, which read: "To whoever finds this, please smile today." Sam smiled brightly and, feeling moved by the message, decided to send the balloon back with his own note. He tied a new, colorful balloon to the string and wrote:

"To the girl who lost her balloon—it's safe and happy now. And so am I, thanks to your note."

The next day, Sam's balloon floated gracefully into the sky, heading toward a new adventure. Though Lily never saw her balloon again, she often thought of it as it drifted through the world, carrying joy and smiles along the way.

Max and the Magic Pencil

Max, a wildly creative boy with untamed brown hair and a loud, infectious laugh, loved to draw. His room was always a colorful mess of paper, crayons, and imaginary creatures that sprang to life with every sketch. One day, while wandering through the dusty park, Max found a strange golden pencil hidden beneath a tangled pile of autumn leaves. The pencil sparkled in the sunlight, as if it had a secret all its own. Back in his room, Max excitedly began to draw a tall, delicious chocolate cake—and, to his amazement, a real cake, as rich and fluffy as the one he had imagined, appeared on the table. Max couldn't believe his eyes. He quickly drew a bouncy, colorful ball, and it rolled playfully across the floor. With each new drawing, from a fluffy pink bunny to a giant rainbow kite, more magical objects appeared in his room. But when Max drew a giant mountain of sweets just for himself, the candy melted mysteriously away. He realized the pencil's magic only lasted when he used it to share joy, not keep it all to himself.

So, Max began to draw generously—a bright, soft blanket for a neighbor, a shiny new bicycle for his sister, and a basket full of fruit for an elderly friend. With each good deed, the pencil glowed even brighter. Eventually, the pencil disappeared, but Max knew that true magic wasn't in the pencil—it was in the kindness he shared.

The Little Dancing Tree

In the heart of a silent, deep forest, there stood a small, slender tree with pale green leaves that shimmered when the wind passed by. The tree longed to dance like the animals that frolicked around it. The squirrels leapt through the branches, the foxes twirled through the underbrush, and the deer pranced elegantly in the distance. But the little tree couldn't move—its roots were firmly planted in the rich, damp soil. One gentle morning, the wind whispered softly through the branches. The tree swayed, spinning and twisting in the breeze, its branches moving like graceful arms in a dance. Birds perched on its limbs, singing merrily, and the playful squirrels joined in, running up and down its trunk. The little tree realized that it may not be able to leap or run, but it could still dance—in its own way. And from then on, it swayed with the wind, its leaves rustling with joy as it danced through the quiet, magical forest.

blue sky, eating, laughing, and sharing stories. Benny had never felt so full—not just from eating, but from the joy of sharing something so big with so many wonderful people.

Emma and the Rainbow Jar

Emma was a dreamy, color-loving girl who loved to paint. Her room was filled with rainbow-painted walls and sparkling, brightly-colored vases. She spent hours creating beautiful pictures, filling every inch of her world with vibrant hues. One rainy day, while splashing through the puddles near her house, Emma noticed something strange: a glowing rainbow that arced gracefully down from the sky, landing softly in her backyard. With her heart racing, Emma grabbed an empty glass jar and, with gentle hands, trapped the rainbow inside. It shimmered and glowed, lighting up her entire room with soft, pastel hues. She painted joyful murals, made cheerful cards, and shared her colorful creations with everyone she knew. The dazzling rainbow filled her life with magic and happiness. Eventually, the rainbow faded, but Emma knew that the true color of the world was the kindness she painted with.

Oliver and the Falling Star

One peaceful evening, as the cool night air swirled gently around him, Oliver looked up at the sky. Suddenly, a tiny, twinkling star streaked across the sky, falling softly toward his backyard. Oliver rushed outside, his heart pounding with excitement, and discovered the shiny little star resting on the grass. It was warm and glowing gently, like a soft light in the quiet night. He wrapped it in a fluffy, soft blanket and placed it in a shoebox, whispering, "Don't worry, little star. I'll take care of you." Each night, Oliver gave the star moonlight from his flashlight and told it stories about brave knights, mystical creatures, and his own dreams of adventure. The star grew brighter and brighter until, one night, it floated into the sky, twinkling and dancing in the air. Oliver smiled and whispered, "Goodbye, little star." And every time he saw a star twinkling in the sky, he remembered the star that had once fallen just for him.

The Talking Cat

Sophie, a kind-hearted girl with a love for colorful scarves, had a special bond with her cat, Whiskers. He wasn't like other cats. His fur was as black as midnight, and his eyes were the color of golden autumn leaves. Whiskers never seemed to need anything, but he was always by Sophie's side, watching her with knowing eyes that seemed to see straight into her heart. One quiet evening, while the wind softly whistled through the trees, Sophie sat at her desk, reading a book. Suddenly, she heard a soft voice. "You've left your homework again, Sophie." Sophie froze, her heart racing. Was that her cat's voice? She turned to find Whiskers sitting calmly by the window, his tail flicking elegantly back and forth.

"You can talk?" Sophie gasped.

"Of course," Whiskers replied, his voice smooth and comforting. "I've been waiting for you to hear me."

From that moment on, Sophie and Whiskers had countless conversations about everything—from the fascinating adventures Sophie wanted to go on to the unusual habits of the squirrels in the garden. Whiskers shared wise advice when Sophie needed it most, and he always knew exactly how to make her laugh. It was their magical secret, one that Sophie would keep forever, knowing that some friendships were meant to be shared only between hearts.

Benny and the Giant Sandwich

Benny, a hungry and adventurous boy, was always ready for a snack. His appetite seemed endless, and he had a special talent for making gigantic sandwiches with towering layers of ham, cheese, and fresh, crunchy lettuce. One lazy Sunday afternoon, as Benny sat beneath the bright, golden sun, he made a whimsical wish: "I want the biggest sandwich in the world!" And just like that-poof!-the sandwich appeared. It was huge—so tall it touched the sky, with thick layers of cheese, crunchy pickles, and even a few sweet, juicy tomatoes. Benny could hardly believe his eyes! At first, Benny tried to eat the sandwich alone, but soon he realized he couldn't finish it by himself. So he invited everyone in his neighborhood, the curious mailman, the chatty neighbors, and the playful kids from down the street. They had a grand picnic, sitting on the soft grass under the bright