“Completely Headless”

DEPARTMENT OF LANGUAGES AND LITERATURES

“Completely Headless”

Modification of adjectives in Swedish advanced learners’ English

Viktoria Börjesson

UNIVERSITY OF GOTHENBURG

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Abstract

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Author: Viktoria Börjesson
Language: English
Department: Department of Languages and Literatures, University of Gothenburg, Box 200,
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This is a corpus-based, empirical study, which investigates Swedish advanced learners' written and spoken English with regard to modification of adjectives, both reinforcing (e.g. *totally different, very nice*) and attenuating (e.g. *kind of false, somewhat cynical*). More specifically, it aims to clarify to what degree and in what ways Swedish learners differ from native speakers of English as to frequency, choice of modifier and collocations with adjectives. Possible reasons are suggested for the differences found and are discussed in relation to second language learning. The investigation is based on comparable learner and native-speaker corpora, from which quantitative data are drawn and used as a point of departure for a more qualitative approach. Differences in comparison with the native-speaker corpus are referred to as "overuse" and "underuse", respectively.

As matters of ambiguity or vagueness may interfere with definitions of linguistic categories, the study discusses and exemplifies a number of such cases, involving, e.g., semantic blends, variable scope and context-dependent function variation, all of them related to the process of selecting relevant data from the corpus material.

The investigation shows that the Swedish learners overuse both adjectives and modifiers in their written texts. This applies especially to "all-purpose", relatively informal modifiers, such as the reinforcers *totally*, *very* and *really*, and the attenuators *quite*, *fairly* and *more or less*. Underused modifiers are of the type that combines with a smaller set of adjectives, viz. *all* (e.g. *all important, all female*) and *directly* (e.g. *directly applicable*), pointing to a lack of experience in formal writing among the Swedish students. Examples of unidiomatic usage are also found, e.g. *scaringly clear* and *completely headless*, suggesting transfer from Swedish expressions.

The comparison of the spoken corpora shows many similarities in modifier use. There are also differences, indicating over-hedging and underuse of emphatic expressions such as *just amazing* and *absolutely brilliant*, as well as the modifiers *quite* and *really*.

Adopting a somewhat wider perspective, the study concludes with a discussion of the increasing degree of informality in written language, as well as the relevance of being nativelike in oral production of L2 English. Some pedagogical implications in this connection are the need to increase Swedish students' awareness of different genres, especially as regards formal written English, and, for spoken English, to make special note of certain frequently used expressions as well as changes and recent trends.

KEYWORDS: Swedish advanced learners, written English, spoken English, degree modification, adjectives, modifiers, reinforcers, attenuators, collocation, learner corpora, learner English, formal register, informal speech, genre awareness, academic writing, comparative study, contrastive interlanguage analysis.

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Asperö, April 2014
Viktoria Börjesson

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1. Introduction

1.1 Background

On a well-known traveller's guide website, the following hotel review can be found:

> "Absolutely marvellous!"
>
> Fantastic hotel! Welcoming and very accommodating hosts and staff, fabulous 4 course meals, roaring log fires, relaxing sauna, very comfortable and spotlessly clean rooms – what more could you ask for – Oh I know magnificent views – yes Hotel Rader has it all!! Would I recommend it – absolutely!
>
> (Reviewed 6 April, 2007, on www.tripadvisor.se)

The enthusiastic wording of this hotel guest mirrors one of the basic components of communication between human beings – the need to describe or evaluate our outer or inner worlds. A review may be regarded as the essence of evaluation, and we can expect it to contain a high frequency of adjectives (in fact, depending on how we define them, about ten adjectives can be found in the short text above). As our descriptions or evaluations are generally formed in relation to our earlier experience, we may also find it useful to grade adjectival qualities upwards or downwards. This can be done by the use of grammatical comparison (*mine is good, but yours is better*), or we can modify the adjective by, for instance, an adverb in order to indicate a high degree (*very comfortable*) or a low degree (*vaguely similar*) of a quality. The result of such an adjustment is an adjective phrase (AP), with the adjective as Head and the adverb as its modifier.

Apart from adverbs, the modifier may be, e.g., a noun phrase (***a bit*** *slow,* ***a trifle*** *unfair,* ***a lot*** *different*) or a prepositional phrase (*true* ***to some extent***). Higher or lower degree may also be expressed by, e.g., repetition of the adjective (*a tiny, tiny piece of cake*), using adjectives that express a high degree on their own

(*excellent* = very good, *dreadful* = very bad[1]), fronting (*Brilliant that was!*, cf. Biber et al. 1999:898), coordination of adjectives (*nice and strong, good and fresh*, cf. Biber et al. 1999:1048), or exclamations with interrogative structure, such as *Was he sick!*.[2] Furthermore, there are non-lexical and non-grammatical means of degree modifying, e.g., prosody (*The effect was e l e c t r i c a l*) (Bolinger 1972:281), gestures, facial expressions, body postures, hesitations, pauses and tone of voice (cf. Holmes 1984:350 n5). This study, however, will focus on the use of modifiers – in the form of adverbs, noun phrases and prepositional phrases – for expressing higher or lower degree of the adjectival quality.

Some of the modifiers have relatively strict collocational behaviour, e.g. ***directly*** *applicable,* ***stone*** *deaf,* ***widely*** *known*; others combine more freely, e.g. ***very*** *important*, ***really*** *nice* and ***so*** *friendly*. Factors such as negative or positive associations of the quality described and level of formality may also affect how adjectives and modifiers collocate.

Adjective modifiers can be used for a range of pragmatic functions, such as avoiding being blunt or harsh (*she's* ***a little*** *odd*) (cf., e.g., Stoffel 1901:129 and Holmes 1984:345f.), evoking support or assent by exaggeration or passion (cf. Stoffel 1901:103, 126 and Jespersen 1949:392) [3] or reducing social distance, for example by avoiding precision with *sort of*, a multifunctional modifier which may serve as an "informality marker" between speaker and listener (Holmes 1988:94, 99).

Whatever their pragmatic function, adjective modifiers are all intended – more or less consciously by the writer or speaker – to produce an effect in the reader or listener. The effect may disappear, however, as "frequent use is apt to weaken the sense of a word" (Stoffel 1901:1). This creates an incentive for a dynamic process of renewal, most rapidly in oral language, where the impact of the modifiers "is only as good as their novelty" (Tagliamonte 2008:391). The means for renewal may be, for example, unexpected or contradictory word combinations (cf. Kjellmer 1991:123 and Partington 1993:188f.), such as *awfully nice* or *decidedly hesitant*; "recycling" or reviving older uses (cf. Tagliamonte 2008:389, 391), for instance the increasing frequency of *so* (particularly with emotional adjectives, as in *so good, so annoying*) among female

[1] One of the definitions of *excellent* in *Oxford English Dictionary (OED)* online is 'extremely good' and of *dreadful* 'exceedingly bad'.

[2] Referred to as a rhetorical question by Bolinger (1972:283).

[3] For instance, Stoffel (1901:103) notes that the use of the reinforcer *so* has "an almost passionate force" and appears to imply "a kind of appeal to the reader for his assent."

speakers (Tagliamonte 2008:380, 383f, 388), or replacing hyperbole by understatement (cf. Stoffel 1901:126f.), e.g. *rather significant* and *a bit daft*. The constant need for renewal makes modifiers "a system, […] fighting for survival, and forced to modify itself at every instant" (Bolinger 1972:19). Alongside this "perpetual flux" (cf. Bolinger 1972:19), the semantic content tends to fade, being largely taken over by a reinforcing or attenuating function[4]; the modifiers are gradually grammaticalised (cf. Stoffel 1901:1, Partington 1993:181f, Lorenz 2002, Paradis 2003, Paradis & Bergmark 2003 and Swales & Burke 2003:14f.).

Like most linguistic changes, innovative modifier usage is mostly found among younger speakers. Older generations may raise an eyebrow or two at younger generations' use of *totally cool* or *well weird* (see e.g. Stenström 2000, Paradis 2000, Tagliamonte & Ito 2003 and Aijmer 2007). The flexibility and dynamics of reinforcing and attenuating modifiers are synchronically reflected in different registers[5] and social contexts, and the choice of modifier and adjective, how they combine and how frequently they are used, will affect the style and overall impression of the language produced.

Learners of English, consequently, are faced with a wealth of modifiers and adjectives to choose from which they do not only have to know, but also how they collocate in order to sound idiomatic (e.g. *completely alone* but not *?fully alone*). Furthermore, they need to know how to adjust the use of them to the range of registers that arise from different contexts (cf., e.g., Ringbom 1987:71), as well as keeping up with diachronic changes in usage. It is fair to assume that even advanced[6] learners will have difficulties sounding nativelike in their use of adjective modification, in both their written and spoken English.

As advanced learners are, as it were, at the top rung of learning, the problems they experience ought to be the most difficult aspects of language to acquire. Internationally, Swedish learners rank among the most proficient in L2 English (cf. Erickson 2004:26ff.), in other words, "the most advanced among the advanced". Hence, studying Swedish advanced learners' English narrows down

[4] A classic example of this process is the development of *very*, which has changed from meaning 'in truth' into a semantically bleached function word expressing high degree (cf., e.g., Stoffel 1901:32).

[5] Cf. Halliday & Hasan (1989:12, 24), in which register is characterized by the *field* (what is being talked about), the *tenor* (the people involved in the communication and the relationship between them) and the *mode* (the part language is playing, for example, if it is written or spoken).

[6] "Advanced" learners are here defined according to the criteria for the *ICLE* corpus (Granger 1998a:10) as university undergraduates in English language and literature in their third or fourth year.

the focus to an even more advanced level of L2 usage and directs it towards nativelike or near-native language production.

The importance of attaining nativelike proficiency is, however, no longer self-evident (cf. Graddol 2003). In a world of global Englishes and English as a lingua franca, nativelike usage may not even be the intended target. Be that as it may, nativelike proficiency can be said to imply the ability to vary and adapt one's language, lexically and grammatically, expressing oneself accurately and appropriately, to different types of communication in different registers, and to fit in socially. This may be assumed to be the ultimate aim of the advanced learners investigated in this study. Without these skills, the learner is not only prevented from taking advantage of the whole spectrum of possible word combinations and modifications, but he or she may, unintentionally, appear impolite, blunt, bombastic or perhaps even arrogant (cf., e.g., Hasselgren 2002:162ff.).

Against the background outlined above, it should be of obvious interest to study Swedish advanced learner English, written as well as spoken, with regard to adjective modification, and, more specifically, to compare it with native-speaker English. This will be done in order to find out to what extent, and where, Swedish advanced learners and native speakers differ in oral and written usage, but also to determine where their usage is similar or even more or less identical. Thus, a study of adjective modification in Swedish advanced learners' texts should also, to some extent, tell us a great deal about their vocabulary skills (including word variation), collocational knowledge, pragmatic awareness and sociolinguistic competence, all of which are more or less concerned with idiomatic language production and register awareness.

1.2 Aims

The overall aim of this study is to investigate, using corpora of both written and oral production, Swedish advanced learners' use of adjective modification by degree, both quantitatively and qualitatively, and relate their usage to that of native speakers. More specifically, the questions asked in this study are:

1. What differences and similarities are there between Swedish advanced learners' and native speakers' English, written as well as spoken, in

their use of reinforcing and attenuating adjective modifiers? This question relates to

   a. *Frequency*, i.e. the number of occurrences per 100 000 words
   b. *Distribution*, i.e. the proportion of reinforcing vs. attenuating modifiers, the representation of different subcategories and the choice of individual modifiers
   c. *Collocation*, i.e. the combinations of modifiers and adjectives

2. How can the differences and similarities found be explained?

3. What can the results of such a comparison between Swedish advanced learners and native speakers of English tell us about problems related to second language[7] learning, such as register awareness, vocabulary and transfer?

A subsidiary aim is to consider possible pedagogical implications of the findings of the present study.

In the quantitative part of the study, frequency counts are used as a point of departure, showing if there is over- or underrepresentation of certain modifiers or adjectives. There may also be differences in the representation of whole categories of modifiers or adjectives, for instance between reinforcing and attenuating modification, as will be evident in a study of how the modifiers and adjectives are distributed across a selection of categories. By looking at the collocations between modifier and adjective, finally, unidiomatic or otherwise non-preferred combinations will show up.

There are, most likely, various explanations for the differences found, which may be difficult to pinpoint. Nonetheless, from a more qualitative perspective, a few important factors on the part of the Swedish advanced learners may be considered especially relevant, such as lack of vocabulary skills and collocational knowledge, cross-linguistic influence, basically L1 (first language) transfer, or interlanguage features which cannot be traced back to the L1 of the student. Swedish students may also have different writing traditions or conversational

[7] In this study, no systematic distinction will be made between the terms "second language" and "foreign language". The term "L2" is here used mainly with reference to English as a foreign rather than a second language.

strategies, which, if transferred into their English production, may result in differences between their language production and that of native speakers. Individual differences, for instance in language skills or vocabulary preferences (cf. "lexical teddy bears"; Hasselgren 1994), may also affect the overall result. The study aims to suggest possible or likely reasons for the most salient differences, using calculations of statistical significance as a basis for the discussion, but also including non-significant differences for illustration where found relevant. Thus, the main focus is on differences, rather than similarities, between the Swedish learners and the native speakers in the study. However, similarities will also be given their fair share of attention, where relevant.

The conclusions drawn from over- or underrepresentation in relation to native-speaker corpora will form the basis for some discussion about pedagogical implications, which implies using the native-speaker students of the corpora as a norm. This is somewhat problematic, however, especially in the written corpora, as the native-speaker texts may not represent the target of the Swedish advanced learners' written English. Thus, although the basic aim of this study is to be descriptive, giving an account of Swedish advanced learners' use of adjective modification, especially in comparison with native speakers, the pedagogical implications discussed are likely to be at least partially based on normative considerations of a certain kind.[8]

1.3 Material and method: preliminary outline

In agreement with most corpus linguists (cf. Barlow 2005:344), this work may be seen as corpus-driven rather than corpus-based (cf. Tognini-Bonelli 2001:65ff.), i.e. hypothesis-finding rather than hypothesis-driven (cf. Granger 1998:15). This approach implies using observations from the material as a basis for formulating ideas of usage patterns and of the factors influencing how and why they are formed.

[8] Cf. Ohlander (2013:4648f.), who discusses the relationship between prescriptive and descriptive grammars, stating that "even a purely descriptive, scholarly grammar will, by virtue of its authority, have *prescriptive implications*, via pedagogical grammars," and that "descriptions of different registers, styles, and genres form the basis for recommendations on how to produce contextually appropriate language."

The study is based on a comparison between Swedish learners' and native speakers' use of adjective modification, as represented in two corpora of written English and two corpora of spoken English. The written corpora are the Swedish component of the *International Corpus of Learner English* (ICLE) (cf. Granger 1993) and a selection of the reference corpus *Louvain Corpus of Native English Essays* (LOCNESS) (De Cock et al. 1997). The two spoken corpora are the Swedish component of the *Louvain International Database of Spoken English Interlanguage* (LINDSEI) (Gilquin et al. 2010), and its reference corpus, the *Louvain Corpus of Native English Conversation* (LOCNEC) (Gilquin et al. 2010). They have been compiled for the purpose of being comparable, comprising a similar amount of words (approximately 200 000 for the written corpora and 100 000 for the spoken), collected during the same period of time and consisting of similar text types. Full comparability is, however, difficult to attain, and aspects of the relevant dissimilarities will be discussed in Chapter 3.

For comparative purposes, the study will, occasionally, also refer to the Swedish spoken corpus *Gymnasisters Språk- och Musikvärldar* (GSM) ('The Language and Music Worlds of Upper Secondary School Students') (Norrby & Wirdenäs 1998), the *British National Corpus* (BNC) and the *Santa Barbara Corpus of Spoken American English* (SBC) (Du Bois et al. 2000–2005).

Both automatic and manual searches of the corpora were carried out, in which the occurrences of adjective modification were counted and compared quantitatively, followed by a more qualitative study based on the quantitative findings. Further, the combinations of modifiers and adjectives (collocations) were compared with regard to style, gradability and semantic prosody.

A more detailed account and discussion of the corpora and methodological aspects is provided in Chapter 3.

1.4 Previous studies

Obviously, the present study does not start from scratch. Thus, considering the findings of previous work in relevant fields, we may expect certain similarities as regards the results from the comparison made in this study, between native-speaker texts and learner texts as well as between written and spoken corpora. For instance, more variation in vocabulary may be expected in the written production while the spoken texts are likely to contain a smaller number of

frequently used modifiers and adjectives (cf., e.g., Altenberg 1991:132 and Biber et al. 1999:545). We may also foresee the occurrence of repeated modifiers for reinforcement (excluding repetition due to hesitation), such as *really really nice*, in spoken texts (cf., e.g., Swales & Burke 2003:13) and interruptions by means of pauses, fillers, discourse markers, etc., as in *very sort of erm special*.

The comparison between learners' and native speakers' written production can be expected to show differences in the ability to manage the academic style, as one of the most pervasive results from previous learner studies is that learners have lower register awareness, mainly in the way that they fail to fully master the stylistic differences between formal and informal English (cf., e.g., Miemois 1993:16, Waller 1993:216, Ringbom 1993:297, Hyland & Milton 1997, Altenberg & Tapper 1998:92, Granger & Rayson 1998, Aijmer 2002a, Boström Aronsson 2005 and Hasselgård 2009:137f.). Frequency studies of written texts have, for example, pointed to learners' underrepresentation of formal adverbs, such as *greatly*, *truly*, *widely*, *readily* and *highly* (Granger & Rayson 1998:128), and overrepresentation of more informal modifiers, like *a bit* and *totally* (Lorenz 1999:193 and Granger 1998b:148). Moreover, Swedish students seem to write in an increasingly informal style in their native language,[9] which raises the question of whether learners "write as they speak",[10] and makes it reasonable to expect that their English academic texts are also influenced by this "informalisation", or "colloqualisation", of the written word.

Many of the previous learner studies based on LINDSEI, i.e. learners' spoken English in the early 2000s, concern discourse, or "pragmatic", markers (cf., e.g., Romero 2002, Aijmer 2004 and Buysse 2007) or recurrent word combinations, "prefabs" (cf., e.g., De Cock 1998, Kaneko 2005 and Götz & Schilk 2011), while learners' use of adjective modification in spoken English is still fairly unexplored. To some extent, however, recurrent modifiers and adjectives may be regarded as prefabs, relating this study to some of the ones exemplified above.

Unidiomatic collocations may be expected in learner texts, as found by Waller (1993:223ff., 231), e.g. *the subject is still* ***very current***. Learners may further be supposed to use modifiers with wide collocability, i.e. modifiers that combine with a wide range of adjectives (cf. Granger 1998b:148) rather than a few restricted ones. Studies on spoken corpora have shown that learners' lack of skills

[9] Maja Lindfors Wiklund, personal communication (2009).

[10] Quoted from the Swedish postal service campaign in the 1980s, which aimed to encourage people to write more letters, using informal language; cf. Ädel (2006:150).

in how to combine words in order to sound idiomatic also prevents them from automatising part of their language, which would have given them more time to plan for more demanding constructions (cf., e.g., Pawley & Syder 1983:191f., Altenberg & Eeg-Olofsson 1990:2, Kjellmer 1991:124, De Cock et al. 1998:74 and Lorenz 1999:215), and, consequently, increased their fluency.

In sum, differences in the frequency of certain modifiers or adjectives can be an effect of, amongst other factors, a less varied vocabulary, informal language in a formal context or unidiomatic collocations. Furthermore, a higher or lower frequency of whole categories, for example reinforcers or attenuators, will give rise to questions of a pragmatic character: if learners "over-attenuate", is it because they are generally more polite, more imprecise or because they copy pragmatic features of their native language usage? If they "over-reinforce", are they eager to make an impression, or are they perhaps transferring linguistic behaviour from their L1? Lorenz (1999:212, 216f.) finds that German learners both reinforce and attenuate more than native speakers, concluding that the learners' texts suffer from "information overcharge". A higher frequency of modifiers may indeed result in wordiness and linguistic excess (cf. Waller 1993:233ff.). This, Lorenz argues, is partly due to the way in which learners' sentences are structured (overrepresentation of attributively positioned degree-modified adjectives) and their lack of means of embellishment other than emphasis and density, rather than a matter of L1 transfer (1999:200ff.). However, transfer and overgeneralisation are common features of learner language (cf. Selinker 1972) and we may assume that they can explain some of the differences found in modifier + adjective usage between native speakers and Swedish learners. Another typical learner strategy is avoidance of less well-known words or expressions, leading to coinage and paraphrase (cf. James 1990:209). Avoidance and paraphrasing, however, may be difficult to pinpoint as they indicate the absence of something, i.e. what is *not* to be found in the text.

As already mentioned, comparative studies have shown that, from an international perspective, Swedish students in their last year of comprehensive school have, on the whole, a relatively high proficiency in English (cf. Erickson 2004:26ff.). Most Swedish advanced students of English have had at least ten years of English at school and daily contact with English in their spare time. Swedish TV and cinema use subtitling rather than dubbing and there is a widespread use of social media and computer or video games, which – among other factors – has proved to affect vocabulary skills in a positive way (cf. Sylvén

2004:226, 2006, 2007 and Sundqvist 2009:202).[11] However, this is likely to be beneficial primarily to their informal or spoken English, as their exposure to formal or academic texts appears to be rather limited.

1.5 Plan of study

The study is organised as follows: After this introductory chapter, Chapter 2 provides a discussion of the definitions and categorisations of modifiers and adjectives used in this study, against the background of previous research. It also includes a section on some problematic areas with regard to determining, and counting, occurrences of degree modification of adjectives. Chapter 3 gives a more in-depth account of the method and material used, also bringing up some problematic methodological aspects. Chapter 4 presents the results of the study from a basically quantitative perspective, accounting for raw as well as normalised frequencies of adjectives and modifiers, and pointing out where differences are statistically significant. In Chapter 5, the most salient or otherwise interesting results are further discussed, using the statistically significant differences found as the main point of departure. At the end of Chapter 5, a wider perspective of Swedish advanced learners of English is taken, discussing informality in written texts and some aspects of the notion of nativeness. Chapter 6, finally, provides a summary of the study and its main findings, indicating some pedagogical implications as well as suggestions for further research.

[11] Sundqvist (2009) studied the effect on Swedish ninth-graders' English proficiency of listening to music, playing video games, watching TV, watching films, surfing the Internet, reading books, reading newspapers or magazines and "other activities" in English, performed in their spare time, i.e. out of school.

2. Defining and categorising adjective modification

This chapter focuses on some of the factors that need consideration in the process of selecting the relevant modifier + adjective pairs from the written and spoken corpora used in the study, based on the disambiguation, where possible, of adjectivalness vs. verbalness, the notion of degree vs. other semantic content or pragmatic functions, different scope of the modification and of different categories of modifiers. The first section discusses the identification of the degree-modified adjective, which involves the concept of degree and gradability and how the collocational behaviour of the adjective is affected by, e.g., type of gradability, semantic prosody and level of formality. Section 2.2 discusses definitions and delimitations of adjective modifiers, introduced by a brief note on the terminology used with adjective modifiers and their morphology, followed by a description of the semantic blends between degree and manner or modality and how the scope of the modification may vary. Section 2.2.4, finally, brings up some different categorisations of modifiers. After these subsections, the collocational perspective is further looked into, and the chapter ends with a section discussing some special cases of ambiguity, or vagueness, in relation to adjective modification.

2.1 Degree-modified adjectives: some different types

2.1.1 Identifying the adjective

There is a set of well-known, frequently applied criteria for identifying adjectives, syntactically and morphologically (cf., e.g., Quirk et al. 1985:402f., Biber et al. 1999:505f. and Huddleston & Pullum 2002:528f.). Three basic criteria are:

1. They can be placed attributively and predicatively

(cf. *he's a nice guy*; *he seems nice*)
2. They can take comparison
(cf. *nice, nicer, nicest*; *interesting, more interesting, most interesting)*
3. They can be premodified by *very*
(cf. *he's a very nice guy, this is very interesting*)

It is also a well-known fact that many adjectives do not fulfil even these three criteria. For example, *afraid* or *asleep* cannot be placed attributively, *mere* or *utter* cannot be placed predicatively and *infinite* or *chemical* cannot (normally) take comparison or premodification by *very*. Some adjectives, therefore, are more central (cf. Quirk et al 1985:403) in meeting all three criteria while others are found in the periphery of the definition, fulfilling one or two of the criteria. To the peripheral adjectives we may also add, e.g., degree-modifiable quantifiers (*many*, *few*, *much*, *little*), adverbs (*close*, *near, far*) and prepositional phrases (*in good health, out of date, in love*).[12] *Many, few, much* and *little* are gradable and can be accompanied by degree adverbs such as *very, too, so, as* and *enough* (cf. Quirk et al. 1985:385). There are also several similarities between prepositional phrases and adjectives. Prepositional phrases may be placed attributively in a NP (*an out-of-date machine*), take *very* as modifier (*This machine is very out of date*), coordinate with adjectives (*They are happy and in good health*) and may be used as complementation for copular verbs other than *be* (*They seem in good health*) (cf. Quirk et al. 1985:658, 732). *Close*, *near* and *far* may also be modified by *very*, *so* or *too* (*everyone's so close, the place is too far*), as well as appearing in attributive position (*a really close proximity*) and being coordinated with an adjective (*with everything being easy and close*).[13] Thus, for the purpose of this study, some adjective-like items have been included and others not. More specifically, adjectival *close*, *near* and *far* as well as adjectival prepositional phrases are included, whereas the quantitative expressions *many*, *few*, *much* and *little* are excluded, mainly due to their very high frequency in the corpora.

[12] The preposition *into* has also been included when degree-modified (9 occurrences in the spoken corpora) by *very, quite, so, really, very much, completely* and *not particularly*, as in e.g. *he was always* ***really into*** *Beethoven* (NAT sp E054), *I'm* ***quite into*** *that sort of thing <X> sort of . clay models* (NAT sp E02), *they're* ***very: into*** *that all the time* (SWE sp 13).

[13] *Close to* is here treated as an adjectival expression, analogously to, e.g. *afraid of*, in examples such as *cos it's very close to Sicily* (SWE sp 47) and *just because you're so close to . sort of well just <X> like the social things* (NAT sp E28). Quirk et al. (1985:680), however, refer to *close to* and *near to* as complex (two-word) prepositions, the only ones that inflect for comparison. On the other hand, Quirk et al. also categorize *close to* as (non-participial) adjective, as well as, e.g., *due to* (cf. p. 1222).

Furthermore, it may be difficult to establish whether the modified item is an adjective or a verb, e.g. *fully analysed*, which may be interpreted as a process, i.e. verbal, or as the stative result of such a process, i.e. adjectival. This kind of ambiguity is further discussed in section 2.4.1.

2.1.2 Degree and gradability

A basic principle is that, in order to be modified by degree, the adjective needs to be gradable (i.e. criteria two and three in section 2.1.1 are fulfilled), which leaves out "classifiers" (cf. Biber et al 1999:509) such as *chemical*, *phonetic*, *additional* and *previous*, as well as adjectives of provenance if used in their original, local sense (*British*, *Japanese*, *Canadian*, etc.). In a study of adjective modification it would seem convenient to draw the line with gradable adjectives modified by degree. However, this distinction needs some adjustment in order to fit in with the aim of the study.

Firstly, degree modification may imply measurement, e.g. *two inches long*, and comparison, e.g. *a bit softer, more considerate*. I prefer not to include this type of degree modification for the reason that I view them as factual or "technical", objective statements, rather than expressing a subjective evaluation and, therefore, not as likely to be problematic for advanced learners in terms of adjustment to register, reader/listener, topic, etc. For the same reason, I have also excluded modifiers such as *increasingly* and *more and more* from the study.

Secondly, APs such as *absolutely fabulous* and *almost impossible*, both of which are relevant for the study due to their subjective character, would be excluded if we were to follow Biber et al. (1999:521), who refer to adjectives such as *motionless* (of the same type as *impossible*) and *tremendous* (of the same type as *fabulous*) as non-gradable, and the adverbs that modify them, e.g. *absolutely*, *quite* and *really*, as "emphatic adverbs" rather than "degree adverbs". *Motionless* and *impossible* vs. *tremendous* and *fabulous* represent what Paradis (1997) refers to as "limit" and "extreme" adjectives, respectively, further discussed in section 2.1.2.1.

Thirdly, one has to consider the fact that originally, or conventionally, non-gradable adjectives may be given a gradable reading,[14] e.g. *very British* (cf., e.g.,

[14] A gradable sense may also be given noun phrases in informal language, e.g. *That's so 1990!* (cf. Carter & McCarthy 206:141) or *It's very you.*

Quirk et al. 1985:469f.) or *purely chemical* (BNC), which means that there is a certain flexibility that prevents the adjectives from being sorted into strict categories, making it necessary to interpret their sense from the contexts in which they appear.

The semantic notion of degree can be divided into different types, which further complicates the analysis of degree modification. One distinction is found between the *partly/wholly* gradation, which is semantically different from the *a little/very* gradation. Cf., e.g.,

(2:1) They were partly responsible for the accident
(2:2) They were wholly responsible for the accident

(2:3) They were a little tired when they came home
(2:4) They were very tired when they came home

In example (2:1), we may imagine that other people (or technical failure) were also responsible for the accident. The degree is therefore a matter of shared responsibility, and the intensity of the adjective relies on how large this share is, rather than how strongly it is felt, as is primarily the case in examples (2:3) and (2:4) with *very* and *a little*.

Similar to the *partly/wholly* type are examples such as *purely economic* and *strictly scientific*, as they suggest that something is wholly economic or scientific but could have been partly so, partly something else (in these cases *political* rather than *economic* and *emotional* rather than *scientific*). Related examples are *an all black/white school*, *an all female/male dorm*, or *an all European force*, in which the gradation consist in adding or taking away parts (people or countries) carrying the adjectival quality, and not in increasing or decreasing the skin colour or gender identity of people, nor the "Europeanness" of any particular country. Despite the fact that this type of adjective modification is semantically different from the gradation expressed in, e.g., *slightly thick – very thick – extremely thick*, and somewhat similar to the more "technical" degree expressions mentioned earlier, these examples are included in the study. One reason for not excluding them is that they are not allround, easy-to-learn modifiers but represent the specific, narrow usage that most often is acquired later than more widely applicable modifiers.

2.1.2.1 Scalarity versus totality

The model of scalarity and totality referred to here is based primarily on Paradis (1997), Paradis & Willners (2006) and Kennedy & McNally (2005), but is also closely related to e.g. Allerton (1987) and grammars such as Carter & McCarthy (2006:442) and Biber et al. (1999:555). [15]

There are open-ended and closed scales of adjectival qualities, affecting the type of degree modifier they collocate with. Open-ended are, e.g., *tall, short, loud, famous, dangerous* and *interesting*. As they do not have a limit value, they are *unbounded* (they describe "more-or-less" of a quality), as opposed to closed-scale adjectives, e.g. *impossible*, *straight, unknown, safe, full* and *empty*, which are *bounded* (they describe "either-or" of a quality) (cf. Isitt 1984, Kennedy & McNally 2005:354f. and Paradis & Willners 2006:1052ff.). The unbounded, *scalar* type combines with scalar modifiers (see section 2.2), e.g. *very, extremely, slightly, a little, rather* and *relatively*, while the bounded, *limit*[16] type combines with totality modifiers, i.e. maximizers,[17] e.g. *totally, completely, quite, fully, absolutely*, and approximators, e.g. *almost*, *nearly, practically* and *virtually* (cf., e.g., Quirk et al. 1985:589ff. and Paradis 1997:28). A third type of adjective is basically scalar but placed at the very end of a scale, e.g. *fabulous, weird, terrific, disgusting, splendid,* which will here be referred to as *extreme*[18] adjectives (cf. Paradis 1997:47f.). They combine with maximizers and the booster *most,* but not with approximators. They can be described as having traits of both scalar and limit adjectives (cf. Paradis 1997:62f.).

Views may differ somewhat with regard to the gradability of these categories. As opposed to Biber et al (1999:521), Paradis (1997:58) regards all three categories as gradable. She states that, although limit adjectives are not comparable and do not exhibit different degrees, there is reason to classify them as gradable due to the fact that they can be modified by maximizers and approximators.

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[15] However, the different types of adjective scales and polarity are based on Cruse (1986). See also Klein (2001).

[16] What Paradis (1997) refers to as limit adjectives are described as *telic* by Allerton (1987: 20) and *absolute* by Huddleston & Pullum (2002:531f.).

[17] *Maximizers* and *approximators* are categorial terms added by Quirk et al. (1985) to Bolinger's (1972) *boosters*, *diminishers*, *compromisers* (*moderators* by Allerton 1987 and Paradis 1997) and *minimizers*, which will be used as a point of departure for this study. See also section 2.2.4.

[18] *Extreme* adjectives are termed *intensifying* adjectives by Quirk et al. (1985:404), *absolutive* adjectives by Allerton (1987:20) and *implicit superlatives* by Carter & McCarthy (2006:443).

While it is possible to describe the modification of scalar adjectives as indicating the degree of a quality on an imagined scale, it is harder to describe what maximizers do with limit and extreme adjectives, which are already at the end of the scale, or "denote the upper extreme on a scale" (Quirk et al. 1985:590). Allerton (1987:19f.) argues that maximizers (termed "absolutive degree intensifier") "emphasize that the degree of the adjectival quality is genuinely within the range required by the 'superlative' type of adjective with which they occur." This further means, according to Allerton, that "the type of adjective used with them already represents the extreme end of a scale, and the intensifier emphasizes that the degree described really belongs there." Similarly, Paradis (1997:63) suggests that maximizers "reinforce the precision of the observation" or "highlight the perfect match with a maximum or a boundary" (Paradis 2008:321).

It should be noted here, too, that adjectives are not always fixed in their respective categories. Combined with a modifier from another category, an adjective may take on a different reading, e.g. *totally weird* gives the adjective an "extreme" reading, whereas in *slightly weird*, the adjective takes on a "scalar" reading. In *almost safe* or *completely empty*, the adjectives *safe* and *empty* are given a limit reading, while in *pretty safe* and *extremely empty* the adjectives are interpreted as scalar (we imagine degrees of safety or emptiness). For further discussion of this semantic flexibility, see e.g. Paradis (1997:57f., 2008:319).

2.1.3 Formal versus informal style

As there are differences in frequency between the types of adjectives (and modifiers) used in written or spoken contexts in general (cf. Biber et al. 1999:545ff.), some adjectives can be regarded as more formal or informal than others. When comparing the types of adjectives found by Biber et al. (1999) in academic writing and conversational English, respectively, it is clear that academic texts have a higher frequency of adjectives such as *available, difficult, important, likely, necessary, possible* and *special*, while conversational texts contain more occurrences of, e.g., *afraid, bad, big, black, dead, fine, full, funny, glad, good, happy, little, nice, right, sure* and *white* (1999:512, 517). In the academic texts, thus, the adjectives are generally longer and of Latin origin, while conversational

language makes more use of short adjectives of Germanic origin.[19] In view of such findings, learner texts can be analysed with regard to style and register awareness, both by the types of adjective used and by their collocations with modifiers. As an illustration, Paradis (1997:66) points out that *jolly formal* is a strange combination due to the clash in style between modifier and adjective.

2.2 Adjective modifiers

In the process of defining and categorising the adjective modifiers relevant for this study, aspects of syntax, terminology, morphology and semantics will be taken into account. For the division into categories, several previous studies have been useful, taking somewhat different viewpoints in the complex matter of classifying and drawing borderlines where overlapping and context-dependent interpretation is perhaps the rule rather than the exception.

This section will discuss some concepts and terms used in relation to adjective modification and the morphological, semantic and syntactic scope of adjective modifiers chosen for the study, as well as presenting some categories proposed in earlier studies, on which this work will base the analysis of modifier distribution in the corpora.

In studies of degree modifiers, the term *intensifier* is frequently used (cf. Quirk et al 1985, Allerton 1987 and Lorenz 1999). There are somewhat different perspectives on what this concept covers, however. While, e.g., Kirchner (1955), Bolinger (1972), Quirk et al. (1985) and Lorenz (1998, 1999) view intensification as a description of the whole grading from lowest (*barely aware*) to highest (*completely aware*) degree, thus including both the strengthening and weakening of a quality, the counter-intuitive effect of referring to the weakening of a quality as "intensification" has been pointed out by e.g. Stoffel (1901), Jespersen (1949), Borst (1902), Bäcklund (1973), Isitt (1984), Paradis (1997), Biber et al. (1999) and Huddleston & Pullum (2002). In order to avoid such potential confusion, I have therefore decided to apply the terms *reinforcing* and *attenuating* modifiers, also used by Paradis (1997:26). I also find *reinforcing* to

[19] However, some monosyllabic adjectives of Germanic origin seem to be more common in academic writing, news and fiction than in conversation, viz. *small, great, high* and *low* (Biber et al. 1999:512ff.).

convey emphasis and involvement more clearly than the more technical term *amplifier*, used by, e.g., Quirk et al. (1985).

Morphologically, the reinforcers and attenuators in this study are not restricted to *–ly* adverbs. Apart from well-established, non-derived adverbs, such as *very, pretty, so, too, quite, well* and *just,* or other expressions like *a bit, a little, a lot, sort of* and *kind of*, I also include more informal non–*ly* variants such as *mighty (big), dead (drunk), plain (stupid)* and *real (nice),* as well as participial premodifiers like *burning (hot), freezing (cold), dazzling (clear)*, etc. I further include premodifying nouns when they have a grading function, such as *stone (cold), rock (hard)* and *brand (new).* Although some dictionaries classify them as compound adjectives (*brand-new, stone-cold*, etc.) (*Cambridge Dictionaries Online*, *Oxford English Dictionary* online and *The Free Dictionary* online[20]) or "quasi-adverbs" (*OED* online), the definitions given by the dictionaries suggest that the adjective is modified by degree: *brand new* is defined as 'completely new' (*TFD* and *CDO*), 'quite new' or 'perfectly new' (*OED* online), and *stone cold* as 'completely cold' (*TFD* and *CDO*), 'utterly cold' (*TFD*) or 'very cold' (*CDO*).

In the following subsections, I will discuss how degree may blend with modality (with variable scope) or manner, the syntactic position of the modifier and categorisations made for adjective modifiers.

2.2.1 Semantic blends and variable scope

In addition to "pure" degree modifiers (cf. Lorenz 1999:95), adverbs that are usually categorised semantically as, e.g., manner adverbs (e.g. *well, clearly, severely, directly, closely, tightly, deeply*) and modal adverbs (e.g. *certainly, probably*, *possibly*), and other adverbs that tend to modify a whole utterance, such as *frankly, surprisingly* (cf. Quirk et al 1985:447f.) may convey degree when positioned next to the adjective (cf., e.g., Greenbaum 1969:128 and Lorenz 1999:98, 122). Even adverbs classified as "viewpoint" adverbs (e.g. *technically, theoretically*) (cf. Quirk et al 1985:448 and Johansson 1993:43) can be argued to carry a notion of degree in certain contexts, as in e.g. *theoretically possible.*[21] We may also find a notion of degree implicit in time adverbs, as in e.g. *it's* ***always possible*** *to take the lacking vitamin in tablet form* or *In this situation* or *it's* ***often***

[20] Hereafter referred to as *CDO*, *OED* online and *TFD*.

[21] The "reductive effect" of e.g. *theoretically* in *theoretically possible* is noted by Lorenz (1999:92, 123).

useful *to look back at the good things you have achieved,*[22] indeed with a similar sense as *it's quite possible/useful* etc. This also applies to what are originally place adverbs, where the original sense has become figurative or metaphorical, e.g. *Discomfort in the open air was* ***far preferable*** *to him*. In view of the extent to which this "secondary" degree function seems to work, and largely drawing on Lorenz (1999), I find it reasonable to adopt a broad perspective in approaching the material and investigate all occurrences of what can be interpreted as degree-modified adjectives, rather than confining the study to those premodified by a number of pre-selected lexical items. Time adverbs, such as *always* and *often*, however, are not included here.

Two common "semantic blends" (cf. Quirk et al. 1985:560) found in this study are manner/degree and modality/degree, briefly discussed in sections 2.2.1.1 and 2.2.1.2.

2.2.1.1 Manner versus degree

In simplified terms, manner adverbs relate to the question "in what way?" and degree adverbs to the question "to what degree?". Very often, however, manner adverbs are found to reinforce or attenuate more or less explicitly, e.g. *clearly visible, awfully pale, closely bonded, easily accessible* (reinforcing), *poorly educated* and *loosely structured* (attenuating). In *spotlessly clean,* a phrase used in the hotel review quoted at the beginning of section 1.1., *spotlessly* is undoubtedly reinforcing the adjective *clean* while also describing in what way the rooms are clean. Bäcklund (1973:13) describes manner and degree as two separate semantic components in the same adverb, one being stronger or weaker than the other depending on context and use. For example, in *awfully good* the degree component is stronger than in *awfully pale*. The ambiguity may also be described as the semantic content being bleached in the direction of an intensifying function in a grammaticalisation process. Bolinger (1972:23) lists *awfully* as one of a number of more or less "grammaticized intensifiers" (e.g. *terribly*, *unbelievably* and *really*), finding it highly probable that, with some exceptions, "virtually any adverb modifying an adjective tends to have or to develop an intensifying meaning." Another view of this dual character is presented by Allerton (1987:17), who finds that the semantic component "manner" in some adjectival contexts *implies* degree, rather than competes with it.

[22] Examples from the *British National Corpus* (BNC).

Again, a broad perspective is taken and the study includes manner adverbs with a potential degree function.

2.2.1.2 Modality versus degree

When placed next to a gradable adjective, modal adverbs such as *certainly, possibly, probably, indeed, truly* and *really* (e.g. *certainly possible, truly great, really awful*) can be apprehended as degree-modifying, while keeping their modal force as well as their sentence-level scope. Indeed, Sweet (1891:127) observes that "some sentence-modifying adverbs single out one particular word, although they still modify the sentence as a whole". As an illustration, *really* in *This is really awful* can be seen as strengthening the adjective *awful* as well as expressing the speaker's asserting the truth of the statement, i.e. there is a syntactic and semantic ambiguity between degree modification of the adjective and modality as conveyed by a sentence adverbial. The truth-averring function becomes clearer the further away from the adjective *really* is placed, cf. *This really is awful* and *Really, this is awful* (cf., e.g., Greenbaum 1969:128ff., 191, 250; Bolinger 1972:95, Partington 1993:182 and Biber et al 1999:857f.).

For negated or interrogative uses of *really*, and combinations with limit or extreme adjectives, see section 2.4.8.

Modality and degree seem to be more closely linked than manner and degree, especially considering the fact that their relation is described as a process going in both directions: modality generating degree and degree generating modality. As an illustration of the first direction, Paradis & Bergmark (2003) note about *really* that "what is real and true with respect to a scalar property *implies* boosting of this property" (p. 81, my italics). This view agrees with, e.g., Bolinger (1972:43, 94) and Partington (1993:181), who states: "It is not hard to understand the link between modality and intensification: it is a short step from averring truth to being emphatic about it." Bolinger and Partington also discuss an ongoing modal-to-intensifier shift, in which modality is replaced by degree (another part of the grammaticalisation process). Degree modification that emanates from an expression of modality appears almost "accidental" for most modal adverbs, Lorenz concludes (1999:108) – an unintended side effect, so to speak.

The other direction, a process in which modifying by degree leads to modal modification, is illustrated by, e.g., Paradis (2003), who argues that *really* in *they are really nice* reinforces the degree of a scalar property, but also, *as a natural consequence of* this reinforcement, emphasises the truth of the utterance, thus

being expressive of epistemic commitment (cf. p. 196, my italics). Also, Lorenz (1998:53) claims that "by amplifying and downtoning adjectival qualities, as in *crucially important* or *hardly significant*, we express assertion or caution, emphasis or doubt, and we take a committed or a non-committal stance towards the message in question". In addition, Holmes (1984:354) argues that boosting adjectives "may increase the force of the speech act as a whole". Thus, degree modification seems closely linked to both modality and speaker-stance – which, Lorenz (1999:5) argues, is modality in its wider sense – as well as illocutionary force.

2.2.2 Position of modifiers

Premodification of adjectives is indeed the syntactically most common type of adjective modification (cf. Biber et al. 1999:545). A few cases of postmodification are worth noting, however. The postmodifier with the clearest word constituent scope is undoubtedly *enough*, e.g. *good enough*, *friendly enough* (see also section 2.4.4.3). Other postposed modifiers tend to have sentential scope, but can be argued to carry a certain degree of word modification, e.g. *indeed* (*I am happy indeed*), prepositional phrases such as *in a way*, *to some degree* (e.g. *which was good in a way*) or coordinated adjectives as in *pure and simple* (e.g. *it was stupid, pure and simple*).

In spoken language, the AP consisting of modifier + adjective may be interrupted by discourse markers or hesitation, as in

(2:5) this music is **very** kind of er **jolly** (NAT sp E47)[23]
(2:6) they're **so** .. **diverse** (NAT sp E13)
(2:7) it was **really** sort of . **grim** and grotesque (NAT sp E28)

These types are included in the study, with the reservation that the discourse marker itself may be regarded as having an attenuating function, e.g. *who are looking **sort of .. amused*** (NAT sp E11). For further discussion of *kind of* and *sort*

[23] Examples taken from the four main corpora used for this study are here encoded as *NAT wr* + number of essay (native speakers' written English) and *SWE wr* + number of essay (Swedish learners' written English), *NAT sp* + number of interview (native speakers' conversational English) and *SWE sp* + number of interview (Swedish learners' conversational English). For an explanation of the codes used (contributing university, essay topic, etc.), see Appendix I.

of as discourse markers vs. attenuators, imprecision or vagueness markers, see section 2.4.6.

2.2.3 Categorisation

As indicated in section 2.1.1, there is reason to distinguish modifiers which are used with limit and extreme adjectives, on one hand, and those used with scalar adjectives, on the other. Further distinctions or subcategorisation can indeed be made, and in this section I will briefly account for some of the categories proposed for degree modifiers.

When degree modifiers are categorised, the verb modifier is most often used as a point of reference, since a great deal of overlap is found in the lexical category of adverbs between verb modification and adjective modification (cf., e.g., Quirk et al. 1985:589ff.). Allerton (1987:16) points out that although some modifiers are specific to adjectives (*very, too, relatively*) or to verbs (*greatly, too much* and perhaps *strongly*), there are, semantically, more similarities than differences between them, and "dozens of dual purpose ones".

An early attempt at categorising degree modification was made by Malcev (1963, cited in Spitzbardt 1965); in many ways, it is similar to the categorisations outlined by Bolinger (1972) and Quirk et al. (1985). Somewhat different from these is Allerton's (1987) model, mainly due to the *telic* category, which comprises modifiers from the *minimizer* category (*barely, hardly, only just*) and the *approximator* category (*nearly, virtually*),[24] but also with regard to the fact that he refers *boosters*, *moderators*, *diminishers* and *zeroizers* to the umbrella category of *scalar*. In doing this, Allerton explicitly separates Malcev's "approximate degree" and "full degree" (and perhaps "sufficing degree") from the remaining types of degree (see Table 2.1).

Table 2.1 accounts for the different types of categories for degree modifiers proposed by Malcev (1963), Bolinger (1972), Quirk et al. (1985) and Allerton (1987), using Malcev's distinctions as point of departure:

[24] While *approximators* are defined by Quirk et al. (1985:597) as downtoners that "serve to express an approximation to the force of the verb, while indicating that the verb concerned expresses more than is relevant," the *telic* category is defined by Allerton (1987:19) as "relat[ing] the actual degree of the adjectival quality to the degree required for a particular purpose, and plac[ing] it above or below that mark" Indeed, Allerton's definition may be applied to both *enough* and *too* – however, *enough* is not accounted for in any category and *too* is here placed in the scalar category.

Table 2.1. Degree-modifier categories in comparison

Malcev (1963)	**Bolinger (1972)**	**Quirk et al. (1985)**	**Allerton (1987)**
1. Approximate degree (*almost, nearly*)	---	Approximator	Telic
2. Small, low degree (*a little, a bit, a trifle, slightly, lightly, faintly*)	Diminisher/Minimizer	Diminisher/Minimizer	Scalar: Diminisher/Zeroizer
3. Restrictive degree (*rather, moderately, fairly, pretty, tolerably, passably*)	Compromiser	Compromiser	Scalar: Moderator
4. Sufficing degree (*enough*)	Compromiser	Compromiser	Telic?
5. Great, high, large degree (*much, a lot, a good deal, a great deal, greatly*)	Booster	Booster	Scalar: Booster
6. Elative degree (*very, extremely, awfully, enormously, terribly, tremendously*)	Booster	Booster	Scalar: Booster
7. Full degree (*quite, completely, entirely, wholly, utterly, thoroughly*)	---	Maximizer	Absolutive
8. Abundant, excessive degree (*too*)	Booster?	Booster	Scalar: Booster

When labelling the actual modifiers *booster*, *diminisher*, etc. (cf. Quirk et al., Bolinger and Allerton) rather than describing the level of degree expressed (cf. Malcev), the function is bound to a certain word, which excludes other functions of the same modifier. For instance, there are at least two main functions of *quite* – one expressing full degree (*maximizer*), e.g. *quite clear, quite capable, quite safe*, the other expressing "small, low" (or "restrictive") degree, e.g. *quite good, quite small, quite difficult* (cf., e.g., Quirk et al. 1985:599). Also, apart from being "compromisers", *pretty*, *fairly* and *rather* may well be used for "boosting" purposes (cf. Stoffel 1901:146ff., Paradis 1997:68f. and Lorenz 1998:57). Further, *just* and *simply* are categorised as "diminishers" (Quirk et al. 1985:598), but *just* can also function, e.g., as *minimizer* (*just audible, just visible, just sufficient*) or "maximizer" (*just unbelievable, just wonderful, just impossible*), and *simply* often has a "maximizing" function (*simply stunning, simply unacceptable,*

simply superb). In addition, there are colloquial uses within particular groups of speakers, e.g. the use of *enough* as premodifying "booster" among London teenagers, e.g. *enough funny, enough old*, *enough shitted up* (cf. Stenström 2000 and Paradis 2000:153, 155), not accounted for in these categorisations. There may also be further subdivision of some categories: while Quirk et al. (1985:598) include both *partly* and *slightly* among "diminishers", Allerton (1987:19) finds them too semantically distinct to be placed in the same category (see also section 2.1.1).

When analysing and describing the material, I have found the distinction made by Allerton (1987) between scalar and non-scalar particularly useful, as there is a clear relation between the modifier and the type of adjective they collocate with (*bounded* and *unbounded*, see section 2.1.2.1). As for the subdivisions, however, I will use the terms provided by Bolinger (1972) and Quirk et al. (1985), with the exception of *moderator* (cf. Paradis 1997), i.e. *maximizer, approximator, booster, diminisher, moderator* and *minimizer*. As shown, these terms are applied somewhat differently by previous researchers, which emphasises the "unruliness" of language, i.e. its unwillingness to let itself be categorised according to well-defined concepts. Thus, the assignment of adjective modifiers in this study to specific categories may differ somewhat from previous ones. When there is ambiguity of some kind, the basis for the categorisations made is provided in section 2.4.

Adjectives may, of course, be subcategorised as well. The division of adjectives into "limit" (e.g. *impossible*, *empty*), "extreme" (e.g. *disgusting, splendid*) and "scalar" (e.g. *friendly, tall*) is mentioned in section 2.1.2.1, based on the type of gradability of the adjective and, as a consequence, the type of modifier that combines with it. Lorenz (1999:53ff.) divides the degree-modified adjectives in his study into categories based on "interest-importance-markedness", "basic qualities", "human traits" and "feasibility", aiming to illustrate what can be achieved through degree modification. Adjectives may also be divided according to formal criteria, for example participial forms ending in *–ed* and *–ing* (cf., e.g., Huddleston & Pullum 2002:78, Quirk et al. 1985:413), or by their syntactic restrictions, such as attributive-only (e.g. *utter, outright*) or predicative-only positioned (e.g. *afraid, ill*) (cf., e.g., Quirk et al 1985:403). Furthermore, we may divide adjectives by their origin, such as Germanic (e.g. *hungry, wrong, new*) and Latin/Greek (e.g. *important, dependent, tragic, hypocritical*), or by their positive connotations (e.g. *good, healthy, excellent, useful*) or negative associations (*bad, sadistic, discriminatory, awful*). This study, however, will not propose a

comprehensive subdivision of adjectives, but rather refer to different subcategories when relevant for comparison between the corpora.

2.3 Modifiers and adjectives from a collocational perspective

The combination of modifier and adjective – collocation – is of special interest, in that there are certain restrictions, or more often preferences, as to how they should be (or usually are) combined, which, if not followed, will lead to foreign-sounding or unidiomatic usage. Learners of English, thus, need to be aware of, or develop a feeling for, how modifiers and adjectives combine in order to sound idiomatic – an awareness or feeling that native speakers have acquired through many years of exposure. As mentioned in sections 2.1.2–2.1.3, factors governing the preferences related to adjectives and modifiers are, among others, scalarity vs. totality and formal vs. informal style. Other factors influencing collocational preferences are negative vs. positive connotations, also referred to as semantic prosody between the modifier and the adjective (cf., e.g., Sinclair 1987, Louw 1993, Stubbs 1995 and Partington 2004). Such cases are found in the use of, among others, the following expressions:[25]

- *a bit, a little, slightly* and other diminishers which usually modify adjectives with negative implications, e.g. *a bit difficult, a bit worried, a little odd, a little nervous, slightly awkward, slightly embarrassed* (cf., e.g., Bolinger 1972:50, Allerton 1987:19 and Paradis 2000:149)
- *totally*, the "derogatory colouring" of which is discussed by, e.g., Bäcklund (1973:211) and Lorenz (1999:179), e.g. *totally wrong, totally unacceptable, totally inadequate*.[26] The negative connotation is also found in *utterly* (cf. Bäcklund 1973:211): *utterly ridiculous, utterly miserable, utterly disgraceful*.

[25] For discussion of the semantic prosody of adjective-modifying boosters and maximizers in the BNC, see Kennedy (2003:474ff.).

[26] Note, however, that the AmE use of *totally* with scalar adjectives tends to carry positive evaluation (with some exceptions): *totally cool, totally nice* (but also *totally crazy, totally yucky*) (Aijmer 2007:14).

- *perfectly,* which is mostly associated with positive adjectives, such as *good, happy, normal, clear, reasonable* and *safe.*

It should be noted that these preferences may gradually disappear as the modifiers tend to lose their semantic content, during which process a varied usage can be observed. The AmE use of *totally* with adjectives of positive evaluation (cf. footnote 26) is an illustration of this process.

There are also a number of "narrow" collocations (cf., e.g., Lorenz 1999:30), such as *readily available, wide open* or *soaking wet*, some of which have proved to be less frequent in French (Granger 1998b:150) and German (Lorenz 1999:128) learner writing, and so may also be expected to be less frequent in Swedish learner writing. Indeed, if learners do not know these collocations well enough to use them, they may still be perfectly capable of producing grammatically correct modifier-adjective combinations – *very available, completely open* or *really wet*, for example, cannot be regarded as erroneous or not even strange-sounding.

However, knowing and using the narrow collocations will contribute to a more varied language and probably also to greater fluency, as will an awareness of preferences in style, type of gradability or any other convention that affects collocation (cf., e.g., Sinclair 1991:110). When the combination is established as a whole, rather than as two separate items (cf., e.g., Kjellmer 1991:124), its use becomes automatised and requires less processing time, i.e., the conventional combinations are more easily retrieved from the mental lexicon due to their prefabricated character (cf., e.g., Altenberg & Eeg-Olofsson 1990:1f., Kjellmer 1991:116 and Partington 2004:132). This, consequently, increases the fluency of speech (cf., e.g., Goldman-Eisler 1958:67, Pawley & Syder 1983:191f., Nattinger & DeCarrico 1992:32, Towell et al. 1996, Tannen 2007:59 and Carter & McCarthy 2006:169). Conversely, the conventional patterns can be overthrown, resulting in creative combinations (cf., e.g., Hoey 2005:410), such as *immensely limited* (NAT wr US-SCU-15.4) or *ludicrously ineffective* (Granger 1998b:150). When it comes to second language learning, however, the distinction may be subtle between creativity and unidiomatic usage.

The term *collocation* is here used for all combinations of modifiers and adjectives found in the corpora and included in the study. Certainly, we may

contrast "free" combinations (cf. the open-choice principle,[27] Sinclair 1987:319f.) or "accidental" ones (cf. Kjellmer 1991:116), on the one hand, to fixed expressions on the other, and place the combinations that occur with a certain frequency or statistically "greater than chance likelihood of co-occurrence" (cf. Jackson & Zé Amvela 2007: 132), on a continuum between these two. However, it seems irrelevant to discuss the possibility of "accidental" combinations of modifiers and adjectives, since the two components investigated (i.e. modifier + adjective) constitute a phrase (AP), and are constrained by their syntactic position, thereby also showing "a tendency to co-occur with certain grammatical choices" (cf. Sinclair 1991:112). As noted by Ohlander (2004:315f.), the line between "weak" collocations and free combinations is not evident, especially when very frequent words are combined, for instance adjectives such as *good* and *nice*, or degree adverbs like *very* and *extremely*. These might seem possible to combine in an almost infinite number of ways, but often this is not the case, Ohlander points out.

Furthermore, there are, in principle, no fixed expressions involving modifier + adjective in the corpus material. The closest we come to a fixed expression is *brand new*, which is only "semi-fixed"[28], as *new* may be combined with a variety of modifiers. Thus, this study will regard all modifier + adjective combinations as more or less wide or narrow collocations, disregarding their frequency (cf., e.g., Moon 1998:26).

2.4 Some problematic cases

Spitzbardt (1965:352) states, when discussing categories of modifiers, that "as in all other provinces of life and nature, the borderlines and categories are fluent".

[27] Unexpected or creative combinations of modifiers and adjectives, for example, can be viewed as violating the conventions of collocation or switching to the open-choice principle (cf. Sinclair 1991:114).

[28] Using the five levels of restriction presented by Howarth (1998:168ff.), ranging from less restricted to completely restricted, *brand new* would represent level 3 or 4, i.e. when only one of the items can be exchanged for another. Other combinations from the corpora representing this level are, for instance, *soaking wet, freezing cold* and *boiling hot*. *Whole new* would represent Howarth's level 1, as *whole* has a fairly restricted use (it may also be combined with *different*, as in *The Holocaust is on a whole different level*; *I'm from a whole different generation* (examples from BNC)), while *new* may be combined more freely.

The fuzziness that many linguists are faced with when aiming to find or create a system of well-defined "slots" where items fit in neatly is well known – words tend to be multipurpose and are seldom restricted to one particular use only. If categories and types are to be compared with regard to frequency, for instance, shifts of meaning or grammatical status that depend on context therefore have to be dealt with in some way. This section, thus, brings up and discusses certain cases of ambiguity or vagueness that have arisen in the process of collecting relevant data from the corpora. The borderlines needed to be drawn are to some extent based on the author's personal judgement; a certain degree of subjectivity is often hard to avoid. However, the main reasons for the choices made are included in the discussion.

2.4.1 Ambiguous *–ed* and *–ing* forms

The past or present participle of a verb may be formally identical to an adjective, most often called a *participial adjective* (e.g. Huddleston & Pullum 2002:78, Quirk et al. 1985:413). Consider, e.g., the following examples taken from Huddleston & Pullum (2002:79) and slightly modified:

(2:8) The window was **broken** by the thieves. [verb]
(2:9) The window didn't look **broken** to me. [adjective]

and these from Quirk et al. (1985:414):

(2:10) You are **frightening** the children [verb]
(2:11) You are very **frightening** [adjective]

The participial adjective may also be modified by the same type of modifiers as the verb form, e.g. *fully, greatly, widely* and *highly*. In the examples below, the *–ed* form can be interpreted as either verbal (in the passive) or adjectival:

(2:10) Every case needs to be looked at individually to be **fully analyzed**. (NAT wr US-MRQ-43.1)
(2:11) evolution appears to be a little more **widely accepted**. (NAT wr US-MRQ-1.1)
(2:12) Sex in the media is **greatly overrated** these days (NAT wr US-SCU-09.2)
(2:13) Water pollution is a situation that, in this theory's case, needs to be **highly publicized** (NAT wr US-PRB-35.2)

If interpreted as adjectives, the *–ed* forms in examples (2:10) – (2:13) are viewed as the result of a process, i.e., a state of being, whereas a verbal interpretation implies describing the process itself. Thus, in (2:10), *to be fully analyzed* means either 'to be subdued to the process of being fully analysed' or 'to reach the state of having been fully analysed'. In (2:11), *appears to be […] widely accepted* means either that people are in the process of accepting it or that people have reached a state of having accepted it. Semantically, these last two interpretations are quite close. The same principle may be applied to examples (2:12) and (2:13).

Modified *–ing* forms, however, tend to be adjectival, as they generally cannot be followed by a direct object, cf.:

(2:14) the result is a "high" that ranges from the mildly pleasant to the **highly intoxicating** (NAT wr US-PRB-36.2)
(2:15) I'd never seen that happen before in my life they were just like . […] c= **just captivating** (NAT sp E54)
(2:16) still **kind of embarrassing** when everyone came up and asked what h= what had happened (SWE sp 45)

There are some criteria for grammatically testing adjectivehood in *–ed* and *–ing* forms, provided by, e.g., Huddleston & Pullum (2002:79, 1436ff.) and Quirk et al. (1985:413ff.) and in part similar to the general criteria for adjectivehood (see section 2.1.1). These include:

1. Modification by *very* or *too*
2. Co-occurrence with *seem*, *appear*, *look*, *remain*
3. Certain types of complementation
4. No corresponding verb (e.g. **to unexpect*, **to downheart, *to time-save*)

Thus, the occurrences of *–ed* forms modified by *very* or *too* are not ambiguous and can be classified as adjectives, e.g.:

(2:17) a state system in which the institutions are very **centralised** (NAT wr ESEE22)
(2:18) it was too late to try to get his son back without getting the law too **involved** (NAT wr US-MRQ-32.1)

Also, occurrences of *–ed* forms that can be the complement of *seem, appear, look* or *remain* can be included as adjectival. In example (2:19), we may replace *is* by, e.g., *seem* ("seems limited"):

(2:19) student's education is **immensely limited** because of constant attempt of groups such as CEE (NAT wr US-SCU-15.4)

The type of complementation may indicate if the *–ed* form is verbal or adjectival, for instance if there is an indirect object (*It was given him*) or a predicative complement (*He was considered a maniac*) following the *–ed* form, in which case it is clearly verbal (cf. Huddleston & Pullum 2002:1439). Gleby (2002:83) lists four types of complementation as typical of adjectives: prepositional phrases, *that*-clauses, *wh*-clauses and *to*-infinitive clauses. Huddleston & Pullum (2002:1439), however, argue that *known* as an adjective cannot take an infinitival complement, thus being verbal in *Max was known to be an alcoholic*. There is, consequently, some lack of consensus regarding the criterion of complementation for adjectivehood.

Finally, since there are no such verbs as **unfound,* **downheart*, **time-save*, etc., occurrences such as (2:20) – (2:17) are included as adjectival (*downhearted* in ex. (2:17) being premodified by *too* is further evidence of its adjectival nature):

(2:20) The employers and insurance companies' argument is **entirely unfounded**. (NAT wr US-MRQ-23.1)
(2:21) the peoples of the Amazon and other **comparatively untouched** places (SWE wr LND-06.1)
(2:22) I'm not getting **too downhearted** (NAT sp E15)
(2:23) many of the appliances visible there are **indeed time-saving** (SWE wr LND-11.2)
(2:24) so that was **quite hair raising** (NAT sp E50)
(2:25) It is **highly non habit forming**, and their [sic] are nearly no long lasting side effects (NAT wr US-SCU-13.2)

As mentioned in relation to examples (2:10) and (2:11), the interpretation of the *–ed* form as a process or as the stative result of a process can be used as a criterion for distinguishing verbs from adjectives (cf. Quirk et al. 1985:170, 415; Johansson & Lysvåg 1986:108ff.). We may also consider attributive position as a strong criterion for adjectivehood, possibly with the exception of attributively positioned stative verbs such as *love* or *oppose* (cf. *a much loved person, a widely opposed move*) (cf.

Huddleston & Pullum 2002:1438). Thus, where the syntactic criteria 1–4 above are not applicable, occurrences with premodified *–ed* forms are, in this study, regarded as adjectival when they can be interpreted as the stative result of a process and/or are in attributive position (except for stative verbs) to a noun phrase. A certain degree of subjectivity is involved in such decisions, in which the limit is drawn between stative verbs such as *loved*, *respected* and *viewed*, and results of punctual or potentially punctual actions that are still valid, e.g. *accepted*, *understood* and *known*.[29]

2.4.2 *Quite, rather, pretty* and *fairly*

Quite has two main functions: a maximizing one (cf. *quite separate*) and a moderating one (cf. *quite small*).[30] It is often possible to identify which function *quite* has from the adjective it collocates with – if the adjective is interpreted as "unbounded" (see section 2.1.1.), *quite* means 'rather' or 'moderately', whereas in collocation with "bounded" adjectives, *quite* takes on a maximizer function, meaning 'completely' or 'altogether'. In some cases, however, more context is needed than the adjective alone, e.g. *quite different, quite beautiful* (Allerton 1987:26), *quite clear* (Paradis & Willners 2006:1056) or *quite drunk, quite brilliant* (cf. *OED* online), which are all ambiguous. Context may then provide a clue for a correct interpretation, as in

(2:26) In other words, he was **quite drunk** when he entered, but still more drunk at the time alluded to. (*OED* online)
(2:27) I only said a **'quite' brilliant** idea, sir – not a 'very'. (*OED* online)

[29] We may note a cline between stative results and continuous *-ed* forms of stative verbs, in which those to the left are the result of a terminated process, those next to them the result of a process which still affects the noun, the third column being the result of a punctual process that continues to be valid and the two rightmost being process only and not the result of any action.

← result ---------- process ----------→

integrated	involved	accepted	loved	debated
united	reported	understood	respected	discussed
reduced	publicized	known	viewed	

[30] Quirk et al. (1985:599) also distinguish between a compromising (moderating) and a diminishing function of *quite*.

The clue to a correct interpretation may also be found in the prosody. In an informant study, Paradis (1997) compared the interpretations of *quite* when stressed (*QUITE drunk*) with the adjective being stressed instead (*quite DRUNK*), and found that when *quite* is stressed, it is interpreted as a "moderator", whereas in the case *drunk* is stressed, *quite* is interpreted as a "maximizer" (p. 136ff.).

As prosodic features are left out of this study, it will have to rely on lexical contextual factors for the interpretation of *quite*. The contextual signs, however, are not always as clear as in examples (2:26) and (2:27) above; cf., e.g., the following occurrences from the written corpus:

(2:28) it is **quite obvious** that it is a very significant problem (NAT wr US-MRQ-8.1)
(2:29) What happened next was **quite predictable** (NAT wr US-MRQ-23.1)

In examples such as the above, *quite* may be interpreted as either a maximizer, meaning 'completely', or a moderator, meaning 'rather'. For this reason, there will be unsolved ambiguous cases of *quite* + ADJ in my material, which has to be taken into account in the frequency results (for example Tables 4.28 and 4.29).

Furthermore, especially in American English, *quite* may be used in the sense of 'very' or 'to a considerable degree' (cf., e.g., *TFD*, *Oxford Advanced Learners' Dictionary* Online and Carter & McCarthy 2006:126). In examples (2:28) and (2:29) above, *quite* may, thus, have three different readings: 'rather', 'very' or 'completely'. In fact, given the character of the adjectives and the fact that the texts in question were written by American students, it seems likely that the intended degree of intensification is closer to 'very' than the other two alternatives.

There is a fourth aspect to *quite*, which further complicates a straightforward classification into separate categories. *Quite* has a history of meaning 'actually', 'really', and has thus kept what Paradis calls "a modal tinge" (1997:72). The modal function is more salient in the construction *quite a* + ADJ, e.g. *quite a dreadful little house, in quite a different direction* (examples from *OED* online), but relatively difficult to distinguish from the moderating adverb, *OED* online states, in occurrences such as:

(2:30) You would observe the **quite Anglican** character of Richard. (*OED* online)
(2:31) But most of all, I think, I recall the **quite lively** resolve not to give way to the provocation of their suggestiveness. (*OED* online)

The two examples above are classified as "implying that the case or circumstances are such as fully justify the use of the word or phrase thus qualified" (*OED* online).

Quite, *rather*, *pretty* and *fairly* are categorised with *moderately* (Malcev 1963), or with *enough* (Spitzbardt 1965), in a "restrictive" category. Huddleston & Pullum (2002) also place *quite* and *rather* with *moderately*, but add *somewhat*, *partially* and *partly* to the category and call it "moderate". Quirk et al. (1985), like Spitzbardt, group *quite* and *rather* with *enough* (and *sufficiently*), with the addition of *kind of*, *sort of* and *more or less*, calling them "compromisers".[31] These are described as having "only a slight lowering effect" as opposed to diminishers, which scale downwards, roughly meaning 'to a small extent' (Quirk et al. 1985:597). In their being restrictive, moderate or compromising, there seems to be reason to distinguish these modifiers (*quite* and *rather* in particular) from those with more than 'a slight lowering effect', but there are different ways of dealing with the distinction when the modifiers are categorised.

Moreover, the boosting function is not restricted to *quite* in AmE. By litotes, *rather*, *pretty* and *fairly*, as well as other attenuators classified as diminishers (cf., e.g., Stoffel 1901:148) may indicate 'to a (very) high degree'. Quirk et al. (1985:168, 786) and Spitzbardt (1965:351) have indicated that *rather* may have a boosting function; *pretty* is said to function as both booster and moderator (Stoffel 1901:147ff. and Tagliamonte 2008:370),[32] and in Paradis (1997:154), different degrees of reinforcing effect were stated by informants, who found that *rather* was reinforcing in all tested occurrences. The degree of reinforcing effect depended on how the modifier and adjective were stressed: heavy stress on the modifier made the reinforcing effect decrease, whereas a weakly stressed modifier gave a slight reinforcing effect, which was strongest with *rather*[33] and weakest with *fairly*. Paradis states that *quite*, *rather*, *pretty* and *fairly* have a "complicated nature of being capable of both attenuation and reinforcement" (1997:68f.). Consequently, ambiguous cases may occur where it is not possible to state clearly

[31] As a diminisher, Quirk et al. (1985:598) place *quite* in the same category as, e.g., *moderately, partially, partly, somewhat, slightly, a bit* and *a little.*

[32] However, Nevalainen & Rissanen (2002:377) state that *pretty* seems to be used "more freely along the whole semantic spectrum of intensification, while *fairly* […] has more of its original meaning left", i.e. of an attenuator.

[33] For native-speaker informants' views on the differences between *rather* and *quite*, see also Palacios Martínez (2009:194).

whether *quite*, *rather*, *pretty* and *fairly* are attenuating or reinforcing. For the sake of simplicity, in unclear cases, they have been counted as attenuating modifiers.

2.4.3 *Perfectly*

Adjective-modifying *perfectly* is normally classified as a maximizer (cf., e.g., Quirk et al 1985:590, Paradis 1997:168, Lorenz 1999:97 and Huddleston & Pullum 2002:721). Indeed, the semantic core of the adjective *perfect* indicates a sort of maximum level (as in e.g. *a perfect storm* or *a perfect mess*) and its combination with adjectives which can easily be interpreted as expressing a limit, such as *safe*, *true*, *clear* and *normal*, further supports categorising *perfectly* as a maximizer.[34]

In the corpus material, there are three collocations with similar adjectives as the ones above, viz. *perfectly natural, perfectly healthy* and *perfectly logical* (all from the native-speaker written corpus). These cases will be classified as maximizer + limit adjective. However, *perfectly* also collocates with *good*, in the following contexts:

(2:32) With the risk of contracting sexually transmitted diseases on the rise, teenagers must be aware of the health dangers they expose to themselves by having sexual intercourse. Some of these diseases are life threatening. Aids is a **perfectly good** example of these diseases. (NAT wr US-MRQ-28.1)

(2:33) In the early 1990's, the United States was looking for a new Surgeon General to replace Jocelyn Elders. The media took a **perfectly good** candidate, who probably would have made an excellent Surgeon General, and dug up as much dirt on him as possible. (NAT wr US-SCU-12.4)

(2:34) In financial jargon especially, some hideous, to me, examples have been heard. When there is a **perfectly good** Swedish word, the use of a Swedicised American word is just laziness. (SWE wr LND-06.7)

Unlike *logical*, *healthy* and *natural*, *good* is not easily interpreted as having a maximum value, unless its gradability is of the *partly–wholly* type, as in e.g.:

[34] These adjectives are also used with maximizers such as *absolutely* and *completely*, e.g. *absolutely clear, absolutely true, completely safe, completely normal*. With scalar modifiers, however, they are interpreted as indicating a point on a continuum, rather than a maximum value, cf. *relatively safe, pretty normal, fairly clear, very true*.

(2:35) On one side there are some things, such as human creativity, which were once **completely good** by virtue of God's creation. (BNC)

In examples (2:32) – (2:34), furthermore, *perfectly good* does not seem to equal 'completely good'.[35] In fact, it is more similar to 'good enough', but somewhat more reinforcing. While most online dictionaries (e.g. *CDO*, *OED* online, *Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English* online and *TFD*) define *perfectly* as 'completely', although sometimes as "emphasizing the word that follows" (e.g. *CDO*), an interesting difference is found in *Merriam-Webster's* definition, viz. "to a complete or *adequate* extent" (the *Merriam-Webster Dictionary* online, my italics). The notion of adequacy is, arguably, especially present in examples (2:32) – (2:34), as well as in e.g. *perfectly acceptable* or *perfectly reasonable*. Due to the observed difference between *perfectly healthy*, *natural* and *logical* on the one hand, and *perfectly good* on the other, *perfectly* in the first three examples has been classified as a maximizer and *perfectly* in *perfectly good* as a booster, as its reinforcing function is stronger than that of *enough*.

2.4.4 Reference or comparison

2.4.4.1 *So*

In this section, the different functions of *so* + ADJ observed in the four main corpora are described and their applicability to the study is discussed.

So as a premodifier of adjectives can be deictic (cf. Huddleston & Pullum 2002:1535), i.e. more or less synonymous with premodifying, deictic *this* or *that* (as in *she was about **so** tall*), or "demonstrative'"(cf. Stoffel 1901:67), referring cataphorically in comparative constructions in which the degree of the quality is specified by a following subordinated *that*-, *as*- or *as to*-clause, e.g.

(2:36) the tension is **so thick** that you can cut it with a knife
(2:37) it is **so difficult** as to be practically impossible

or anaphorically, i.e. referring backwards, as in

[35] Cf. also the different meaning, in terms of perfection, of *a perfect excuse* ('a brilliant excuse') and *a perfectly good excuse* ('an acceptable excuse').

(2:38) it's it's scary [...] and it's very tense [---] this film you did get very caught up in it […] that was half the reason why it was **so scaring so tense** (NAT sp E20)

In some cases, *so* does not refer to anything mentioned earlier or later in the text, but to something in the world outside the text, expected to be known by the reader. I will use the term "exophoric reference" for this use, as in:

(2:39) all these media people who are **so quick** to point their fingers and ridicule others. (NAT wr US-SCU-12.4)
(2:40) If weed is **so negative** why are there so many former hustlers (NAT wr US-SCU-13.2)

There is, finally, a type of use that seems to have lost its reference altogether and taken on a completely reinforcing and emphatic function (cf. Stoffel 1901:100). Consider, for example,

(2:41) and he he just looked **so relieved** and said yes please (NAT sp E09)
(2:42) the people were **so friendly** and **so kind** and **so generous** (NAT sp E051)
(2:43) Canada was like **so cheap** petrol was half price (NAT sp E49)
(2:44) I was **so upset** (NAT wr US-IND-19.1)
(2:45) courts are **so eager** to find a scapegoat for violent crimes (NAT wr US-MRQ-0011.1)
(2:46) the British are **so proud** of their own legal history (NAT wr ESEE11)

This use is by no means a new development. Stoffel (1901:101) reports that "*so* has been employed as a very strong intensive, especially in colloquial usage, for a long time back", in particular by women, but also by children and "ladies' men" (cf. p. 102).[36] We may, indeed, infer an omitted *that*-clause[37] in the examples

[36]Stoffel (p. 101) finds this use of *so* conveying more subjectivity and passion than *very*:

> I suspect that it is especially to the fair sex that we owe the strongly intensive sense of so which we are discussing. Ladies are notoriously fond of hyperbole, and a strong-stressed so, with the first element of the diphthong in it abnormally long, before an adjective, from a lady's lips, conveys a sense widely different from a strong-stressed very under the same circumstances. Compare, for example the almost passionate force of "You are so kind!" with the comparatively tame and colourless "You are very kind!".

For later observations on women's and young people's use of *so*, see also Lakoff (1973:14f.) and Tagliamonte (2008).

above (e.g. *people were so friendly [that I couldn't believe it]*) but it seems to be virtually absent.

Prosody is, of course, an important key to interpreting the different uses of *so* as premodifier of adjectives, but for practical reasons I have excluded prosody from the study, basing my observations on written contextual factors alone.

The anaphoric or exophoric uses can be identified by the context, and by the fact that they can be expanded by the clause *as* + subject + verb (normally *be*), rather than a *that*-clause:

(2:47) all these media people who are **so quick** [as they are] to point their fingers and ridicule others. (NAT wr US-SCU-12.4)
(2:48) If weed is **so negative** [as they claim] why are there so many former hustlers (NAT wr US-SCU-13.2)

The reinforcing function of this type of use is unclear, however. It is definitely weaker than in examples (2:41) – (2:46) above, but nonetheless present.

Cataphoric *so* followed by a *that*-, *as*- or *as to*-clause is easily distinguished due to this syntactic feature, and may be excluded for being comparative in a factual way rather than subjectively reinforcing.[38] A problem that arises with cataphoric *so* + ADJ constructions, however, is the fact that the subordinating conjunction *that* can be excluded from the *so…that* construction. In conversation in particular this possibility makes it difficult to distinguish the comparative construction from a non-comparative, clearly reinforcing function:

(2:49) the tree is **so old** [that] it's dying (NAT sp E13)
(2:50) but it's **so commercial** [that] it's horrible (NAT sp E34)
(2:51) the gas in them are **so lifting** [that if] you drink it you float off the ground (NAT sp E54)

[37] Cf. Biber et al. (1999:527f.): "The degree complement construction can generally be omitted, leaving its content to be inferred. For example, *so* + ADJ without a complement can be used with almost exclamatory force: *What was his mother like before she was **so shapeless** and his father was **so fat**?*"

[38] The *so* in the *so…that* construction, however, can be perceived as more reinforcing than the *so* in the *so…as* construction, which in turn may be regarded as more reinforcing than the *as…as* construction. Compare for instance:

*In fact these issues have become **so heated** in Great Britain at present that they have lead to many disputes* (NAT wr ESEE10)
*Cf. the air becomes **so heated** as to be insupportable within* (Internet example)
and *This feud may not have gotten **as heated** as some other ones* (Internet example)

If we change places between the two clauses, the comparative interpretation is lost but the utterance still makes sense in a conversation. Compare:

(2:52) it's dying the tree is **so old**
(2:53) but it's horrible it's **so commercial**
(2:54) you drink it you float off the ground the gas in them are **so lifting**

However, in these examples, we may replace *so* with another modifier, as in:

(2:55) the tree is **very old** it's dying

which is not possible when a *that*-clause is present (**the tension is* ***very thick*** *that you can cut it with a knife*).

These types of sentences are found in the grey zone between the comparative construction *so…that* and the (seemingly) non-referring, strongly reinforcing type in e.g. *Canada was like* ***so cheap***, etc. Since there is no clear syntactic evidence for a comparative use, however, they will be included in the study.

While these distinctions may appear unnecessarily detailed – particularly, perhaps, that between the exophoric and the emphatic use – they have been found useful in order to highlight the reinforcing use of *so*, which is especially common in conversational (American) English (cf., e.g., Stoffel 1901:101, Biber et al. 1999:565f., Tagliamonte 2006 and 2008.)

It may be added here that although *such* and *such a/an* + ADJ may also express emphasis combined with different types of reference, as in *such horrible news* or *such a devastating experience*, occurrences with *such (a/an)* + ADJ have not been included in the study. This is due to the fact that *such* refers mainly to the following NP, which cannot be left out.

Finally, it should also be mentioned that occurrences with *that* + ADJ are distinguished between those with explicit reference, but without emphasis, as in

(2:56) not .. I dunno . year by year just growing further and further away from .. from where I once was when I wh= when I was a teenager I don't want to forget what it was like to be **that young**
(SWE sp 06)

and occurrences where *that* is clearly emphatic, although possibly with reference of some sort, as in

(2:57) <B> mm and they're fascinating <X> .. just as you could you could be walking through New York and you could walk through like five different countries in ten minutes because it's it's <X> <\B>
<A> is it that <overlap /> different from from <X> <\A>
<B> <overlap /> it's **that realistic** . mm
(NAT sp E31)

(2:58) <B> I find it really warm it's just nice <overlap /> it's just a nice atmosphere <\B>
<A> <overlap /> so it's it's really different <\A>
<B> mm yeah yeah I mean like . I feel I'm only forty miles off the road from where I live but I feel I'm like on another planet sometimes it's **that different** you know <\B>
(NAT sp E10)

In the negative, it is less clear whether *that* is strictly referring or grammaticalised into meaning 'not particularly'; cf. for example (2:59) and (2:60):

(2:59) <A> is there a lot of members or is it <overlap /> a very: . a very small society <\A>
<B> <overlap /> <laughs> no .. no there's about .. thirty people there's about fifty people on the books but there's about twenty-five <XX> <\B>
<A> that isn't that bad <\A>
<B> no but it's **not that good** either
(NAT sp E21)

(2:60) <A> what kind of birds and . animals did you see <X> <\A>
<B> we were**n't that lucky** actually <\B>
(NAT sp E55)

In example (2:59), the response to the interviewer's comment (*that isn't that bad*), which is almost turned into a word game (*no but it's not that good either*), underlines the non-referring, grammaticalised function of meaning 'not particularly'. *Not that lucky* in example (2:60), however, may be interpreted as strictly referring to 'as lucky as getting to see birds and animals' or as both referring to this and attenuating *lucky* in the same way as *not very* or *not particularly* would do. Occurrences with *(not) that* + ADJ have consequently been analysed from case to case and included where there is a possibility to

interpret an adjective-modifying function in the specific context in which it is used.

2.4.4.2 *Too*

Like *so*, *too* implies a kind of reference, or "norm", which can be implicit (*this is too expensive [for me to buy considering my meagre salary]*) or explicit in a comparative construction (*it's too good to be true*), but it can also be used without reference, in which case it takes on a more reinforcing, sometimes emphatic force, e.g. *you're (just)* ***too kind!***. Certainly, it is possible to infer comparison in this use, too, e.g. *you're (just) too kind [in relation to what seems reasonable],* but *you're (just)* ***too kind!*** seems to be more detached from the comparative sense than *this is too expensive*, and in particular from the explicitly comparative structure *too…to*. We may note a scale of reinforcement vs. comparison in the examples with *too*, which makes it difficult to draw the line between excluding and including them in the study of reinforcing modifiers.[39]

Too is also found in compound modifiers such as *only too* and *all too*, e.g.

(2:61) people were **only too willing** to help (NAT sp E08)
(2:62) it is **all too important** to consider the practicalities (NAT wr ESEE01)

These are clearly reinforcing and do not have the comparative implications of a single use of *too*. They mean 'very' rather than 'too' – if *only* and *all* are removed from the examples above, the meaning is changed. *Only too* and *all too* are therefore best treated as separate modifiers, both included in the study.

A common collocation is *too bad* (cf. Biber et al 1999:566), e.g. *It's* ***too bad*** *that good news makes no money* (NAT wr US-SCU-12.4). Quirk et al. (1985:787) state that *That's too bad* may be synonymous with *That's very bad*, a feature of informal style. However, in the sentence above and in similar contexts, *too bad* can be interpreted as 'a shame' or 'a pity' ('It's a pity that good news makes no money'), indicating that the reinforcing function of *too* is lost. Huddleston & Pullum (2002:585), however, interpret *That's too bad* as 'That's very unfortunate', thus retaining the reinforcing function of *too*. In accordance with Quirk et al. (1985) and Huddleston & Pullum (2002), the collocation *too bad* is included in this study as a degree-modified AP.

[39] In this study, however, the majority of occurrences with *too* + ADJ have been interpreted as comparative rather than emphatic, thus excluded from the count.

In BrE in particular, *too bad* is often used together with a negation, e.g. *at the moment it's not* ***too bad*** *at all it's it's nice* (NAT sp E51), *we have the usual arguments .. but nothing* ***too bad*** (NAT sp E37). In conversational BrE in particular, using negated *too* is a common alternative way of saying for example *quite* or *rather* + [the opposite of the adjective used], possibly with a slight understating effect, as in:

(2:63) I'm not really er .. er . **too bothered** about this er obviously (NAT sp E06)
(2:64) she doesn't look **too impressed** (NAT sp E08)
(2:65) I'm not getting **too downhearted** (NAT sp E15)

meaning (in this context):

I'm (rather) ok/fine about this obviously
she looks quite displeased
I'm quite alright/happy

Some uses are slightly more understating, probably indicating a reinforcement of the opposite adjective (cf., e.g., Quirk et al 1985:787), such as:

(2:66) that doesn't sound **too nice** (NAT sp E10)

meaning 'that sounds quite awful/very unpleasant'. However, even though the intended meaning may be to express reinforcement in examples like (2:66), the study has classified all examples with negated *too* (or other modifiers, such as *that, very, so, particularly, especially*) + ADJ by their appearance, i.e. as diminishers. Prosody might have been helpful in analysing the intended meaning, as, for example, strong emphasis on the negated modifier more clearly suggests understatement and reinforcing of the adjective of the opposite sense. This, however, is beyond the scope of the present study.

2.4.4.3 *Enough*

The third modifier of this section is *enough*, which has it in common with *too* and *so* that it refers or compares the degree expressed to something implicit or explicit in the text or in the outside world. It can be part of a comparative structure, such as ADJ + *enough to…*, ADJ + *enough for…*, as in *you are* ***old***

enough *to make mature decisions* (NAT wr US-SCU-04.4), *the furniture isn't* ***robust enough*** *for that kind of treatment* (Huddleston & Pullum 2002:397).

Without the complement phrase *to…* or *for…*, the reference or comparison of the adjectival quality postmodified by *enough* becomes weaker, especially in the positive:

(2:67) I don't know if I thought it was **good enough** (NAT sp E28)
(2:68) Slavery was **evil enough** (NAT wr US-SCU-16.2)
(2:69) everyone seems to be **friendly enough** (NAT sp E37)

Example (2:69) above can be interpreted as 'rather friendly', with a very weak, if at all existing, reference to an assumed level, or "norm", of friendliness necessary for the speaker to be happy. Indeed, in some contexts, it seems far-fetched to assume any implied reference, and *enough* is used as a reinforcing modifier, similar to *very* or *really*, as in:

> He is **handsome enough**, heaven knows; I should not even care to trust you with him – faithful of all possible wives that you are – when he looks his best, as he always does. (Ambrose Bierce, *An Heiress from Redhorse*)

Thus, if a line is to be drawn between strictly comparative uses and modifying uses, this cline makes it somewhat complicated. The line has therefore been drawn where there is syntactic evidence of reference or comparison, i.e. where *enough* is complemented by a *to-* or *for*-clause.

2.4.5 *All*

In examples with *all* preceding an adjective, there may be ambiguity between *all* that refers back to the subject (*They are all extinct*) and *all* as reinforcer (*He is all upset*). Not even these two examples are clear-cut cases, however, as *all* tends to both refer to the subject (even if this is in the singular) and carry a sense of 'completely' or 'in every part' at the same time. Further, we may note a semantic difference between *all* in *He is all upset* (meaning 'to the highest degree') and *all* in *An all female dorm* (meaning 'in every part'), although it can be argued that both types originally convey the meaning of 'in every part'. Rickford et al. (2007:11, 25) note that the two senses sometimes overlap, finding that *all* "seems

to convey both intensification and completeness" in, e.g., *Oreos make your mouth all black*. Examples of uses of *all* that have been included in this study are:

(2:70) being **all alone** at Christmas (SWE wr UG-65.2)
(2:71) a university that was **all self-contained** (NAT sp E30)
(2:72) and she thinks oh my god is that supposed to be me and has a go at him and he gets **all insulted** (NAT sp E10)

However, occurrences where *all* is somewhat ambiguous but likely to be referring to the subject have been excluded,[40] as in:

(2:73) The European ladies and Mr Winterbourne are **all upset** about her behaviour and try to stop her. (SWE wr LND-26.8)
['all of them are upset' or 'they are extremely upset']

(2:74) we don't have any exam in it it's **all practical** (NAT sp E22)
['all is practical' or 'it is wholly practical']

Here, *all* has been interpreted as referring to the European ladies and Mr. Winterbourne, i.e., 'everybody is upset' in (2:73), and to all course items in (2:74), although it can be argued that the latter means 'in every part' in a way similar to (2:71).

2.4.6 *Sort of* and *kind of*

With regard to *sort of* and *kind of*, a first distinction must be made between cases where a determiner + *sort of* or *kind of* + ADJ is followed by an NP to whose noun *sort* or *kind* refers, meaning 'type', as in *an author needs some sort of true information to back up what they believe* (NAT wr US-MRQ-5.1) and *Whether it is some sort of technological breakthrough or simply a new way of living* (SWE wr LND-3.1). There are, indeed, unclear cases or cases where we may find that *sort of* "tints" the adjective preceding the NP, as in *blaming each other or some sort of strange, vague concept they call 'the Market'* (SWE wr LND-21.7) (cf. also Holmes 1988:86). Tabor (1993:458) points out that *sort of* or *kind of* in the determiner + *sort of/kind of* + ADJ structure may function as a bridge, behaving as a noun at one end and as a degree-modifier at the other. In the material of this study,

[40] Cf. also Rickford et al. (2007:8, 25).

however, most occurrences of *sort of*/*kind of* in this structure have been regarded as conveying the meaning of 'type' rather than modifying by degree.

When *sort of* or *kind of* refers to a following adjective, the adjective is made somewhat imprecise or inexact. This may have a range of reasons or underlying intentions. Firstly, the imprecision may be expressed simply because the speaker or writer is unsure of the exact word to use. In *who are looking sort of .. amused* (NAT sp E11), for example, *amused* may not be the exact word meant, but somewhere near. Secondly, the intention may be to avoid face-threatening, i.e. to first and foremost soften the *impact* of the word rather than the degree of it (for which purpose other diminishers or moderators may be used as well, e.g. *a bit, slightly, fairly* or *quite*). This can be used when the speaker or writer finds (or fears that the listener will find) the word too strong or too direct in some way (cf., e.g., Carter & McCarthy 2006:175, 202).[41] Consider e.g.

(2:75) fighting against this band of of **sort of unregimented** Scots (NAT sp E48)
(2:76) she comes from a[ei] **sort of bad** background (NAT sp E51)
(2:77) there's Chinese people everywhere you you hardly see any **sort of** erm . **Caucasian** people (NAT sp E31)

In these examples, the speaker makes use of *sort of* in order to avoid being blunt, offensive or politically incorrect.

The fact that the adjectives used are potentially offensive or politically incorrect, as well as the presence of hesitation markers, i.e. repetition of *of* in example (2:75), the lengthened vowel (ei) in example (2:76) and filled pause (erm) followed by silent pause (.) in example (2:77), supports the idea of the speaker trying to find the appropriate word in order to avoid being blunt or face-threatening.

As seen in the examples above, *sort of* may also function as a way of gaining time to think: a "planner" (cf., e.g., Stenström 1987, Aijmer 1984:126 and Holmes 1998:85, 93). This function does not relate to the adjective, however, but to the discourse and the need to keep it fluent and undisrupted. Another function of *sort of* (and to some extent *kind of*) that appears to be discourse-related and textual rather than modifying the word following can be observed in

[41]Another reason to mitigate a word about to be uttered or just having been uttered could be to signal awareness of the fact that it does not fit in stylistically with the rest of the speaker's vocabulary, and thus avoid sounding too formal or high-strung, cf. Aijmer (1984:124)., e.g. *it's the **sort of** technical side of it* (NAT sp E16), *they have **sort of** occupational therapists* (NAT sp E11)

the spoken corpora, where *sort of* gives the impression of preparing the listener for an important word (content words such as adjectives, verbs or NPs[42]) coming up – a type of focuser or "signpost". Compare, e.g.,

(2:78) so it's it's best to **sort of** recognise recognise the **sort of** grammatical structure and realise that it's been broken and therefore you can **sort of** attempt to get (NAT sp E27)

(2:79) there are a lot of **sort of** modern architecture which I'm not terribly keen on it's all a bit .. **sort of** square and grey basically (NAT sp E16)

(2:80) there are four **sort of** positions that you can apply for in the department and it's **sort of** open to everybody so you: you've got so much chance than anybody else . erm and you **sort of** apply before March (NAT sp E08)

Apparently, there is no obvious need to hedge or mitigate the words that *sort of* precedes in examples (2:78) – (2:80). This use also seems to be closely linked to the rhythm of the utterance; the important word needs a "springboard" rather than a hedge before it is uttered. The textual, focusing function has also been noted in the study of another discourse marker, viz. *like* (Underhill 1988), and of the Swedish expression *vahettere* ['whassitcalled'] (Josephson 2004:157, my translation):

> The phrase signals that what follows is important; a kind of reaction is often required from the listener. It often introduces a whole utterance, but may also appear in the middle of a phrase, preceding the really essential word: *jag har, vahettere, kursiverat orden* [I have, whassitcalled, italicised the words].

Josephson suggests, however, that this use serves to guard (or hedge) the speaker against a norm, most likely the standard language (cf. also Aijmer 1984:124), hence implying that this function is not only textual.

Going back to the effects of signalling imprecision of the adjective, a third function may be observed. *Sort of* and *kind of* can be said to downgrade the degree of the adjectival quality, as pointed out by Quirk et al. (1985:446), who state that in informal speech, *sort of* and *kind of* are used as downtoners for adjectives, as in *He is sort of clever.* We may, thus, regard the following example from the spoken native corpus,

[42] Aijmer (1984:121) notes that *sort of* does not normally modify function words, such as auxiliaries, determiners, prepositions or conjunctions.

(2:81) it's not quite real on campus cos it's **kind of false** (NAT sp E07)

as degree-modifying, i.e. lessening the degree of falsehood and attenuating the adjective false. The functions of imprecision can be summarised as in Figure 2.1:

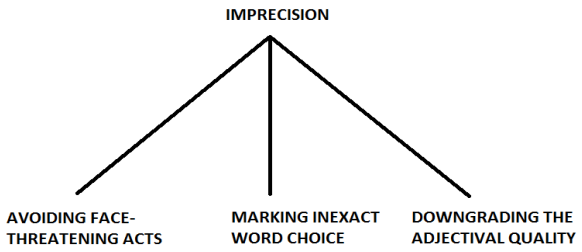

Figure 2.1. Effects of imprecision

The downtoning function is not always clear and distinguishable from the other functions, however. In example (2:81) above, *kind of false* may well be a hedge used in order to avoid face-threatening, or a search for the exact word without the intention of avoiding being blunt or impolite. In addition, the possibility of two or more functions being combined in one utterance is not unlikely. This obviously complicates the selection of downgrading uses of *sort of* and *kind of*.

The imprecision and the downgrading referred to here are distinguished from each other in appraisal theory (cf. Martin & White 2005:135ff.), where they are described as "graduation" of two types, or axes, of scalability. One type is grading according to intensity or amount, termed *force*, and the other is grading according to prototypicality, i.e. "by reference to the degree to which they match some supposed core or exemplary instance of a semantic category" (p. 137), termed *focus*. While modifiers such as *very, slightly, somewhat, totally* and *extremely* represent the force type of scalability, *kind of* and *sort of* down-scale or blur the focus of the category represented by the word they modify. In *they are kind of crazy*, the specification of 'crazy' is down-scaled or softened "so as to characterise an instance as having only marginal membership in the category" (p. 138), in this case the semantic category of 'craziness'. This ought to correspond quite well to the concept of imprecision or inexactitude, while downtoning the degree of the adjectival quality matches the scaling of intensity or amount described as force. It seems, however, that both types can work side by side in many of the instances of *sort of* or *kind of* + ADJ.

Other markers with functions similar to *sort of* and *kind of* are *like* and *you know*. They form part of the tools used in order to avoid sounding too assertive,

correct, impolite or precise (cf. Carter & McCarthy 2006:175). It may be argued that, in some uses, *like* and *you know* may also be viewed as having a blurring effect on the following adjective, perhaps softening the degree of the quality expressed, while making the conversation informal and less face-threatening. In other words, it seems that they reduce, if not the strength, at least the precision of the adjective as well as the formality of the situation. Some examples, chosen from the native-speaker corpus in order to illustrate idiomatic usage, are:

(2:82) you get that sort of feeling of being in a little world of your own here it's **like cut off** from everything isn't it (NAT sp E12)
(2:83) that someone had been hidden in .. which <X> they'd come from the[i:] East to the West in this trabbi and they were **like tied** virtually tied to the bottom of the car and things like that (NAT sp E13)
(2:84) you know under such **like intense** circumstances (NAT sp E49)
(2:85) compared to yeah compared to at home <XX> like a village it's **like dead** you know what it's like <X> there's nobody around (NAT sp E53)
(2:86) or to hitch on is . **you know horrible** (NAT sp E18)
(2:87) I want to do something **you know proper** (NAT sp E22)

In these examples, however, the discourse-marking function of *like* and *you know* appears to be more evident than in the selected examples with *sort of/kind of* + ADJ. Due to this suggested dissimilarity, the occurrences with *like* and *you know* + ADJ were excluded from the count.

Also, when *like* or *you know* appears after a reinforcing modifier, the marker seems to function even more as filler or informality marker.

(2:88) people are so aggressive and **so you know insulated** (NAT sp E51)

However, it is still possible that the speaker wishes to soften the impact of the adjective *insulated* while retaining the reinforcement achieved by *so*. Nevertheless, for the sake of simplicity, examples such as (2:88) have been treated as modifier + (discourse marker) + ADJ, i.e. the hypothetically diminishing function of *like* or *you know* has been disregarded.

2.4.7 *Just* and *simply*

Just and *simply* are distinguished – amongst other adverbs, such as *only*, *merely*, *especially*, *particularly* and *generally* – as "restrictive" and/or "focusing" adverbs (cf., e.g., Quirk et al 1985:604 and Huddleston & Pullum 2002:587), due to their ability to focus on a constituent (e.g., an AP, NP or VP) rather than modifying by degree:

(2:89) He's **simply** an idiot.
(2:90) Things will **just** get worse.

Just and *simply* are also "scope-taking" (like, e.g., *really, absolutely, quite* and *rather*) (cf. Paradis & Bergmark 2003:71), i.e. they are often flexible between modifying one particular constituent and larger parts (or the whole) of the utterance.

It seems, however, necessary to consider the potential of *just*, *simply*, and other restrictive/focusing adverbs for also modifying by degree. Indeed, Biber et al. (1999:781) state:

> In some cases, adverbials combine qualities of both the restrictive and extent/degree categories. Particularly the adverb *just*, common in conversation, often seems to have qualities of both restricting the action and lessening the intensity.

In fact, Huddleston & Pullum (2002:583f.) list *simply* and *just* as examples of degree modifiers, and Quirk et al. (1985:598) find reason to categorise *just*, *merely*, *simply* and *only* as "attitude diminishers", i.e. as a subgroup of the intensifier category of diminishers.

These categorisations are all concerned with other constituents than adjectives, however, with the exception of Huddleston & Pullum, who combine adjectives and verbs in their description of modification by degree, although never explicitly discussing *just* or *simply* as degree modifiers of adjectives. It may appear doubtful, however, whether the combination *just* + ADJ really *lessens* the degree of the quality expressed by the adjective. Instead, *just* and *simply* may definitely *reinforce* the quality, in the same sense as 'absolutely' (cf., e.g., Carter & McCarthy 2006:98 and Aijmer 2002b:164) in uses such as:[43]

[43] Cf. also Chafe (1982:47), who observes that *just* may express "enthusiastic involvement in what is being said".

(2:91) It's **just amazing!**
(2:92) He's **simply adorable!**

Also, in the sense of 'exactly', *just* can be considered to increase the degree of a quality:

(2:93) It's **just right** for you.

When *just* is used in the sense of 'no more than', however, as in

(2:94) You're **just jealous**.

the degree of jealousy is not really lessened by the presence of *just* – in this case it works solely on the sentence level (cf. Bolinger 1972:107 and Erman 1997:101), which applies to *simply* as well. Based on this observation, occurrences with *just* + ADJ or *simply* + ADJ are only included as degree-modifying when they have the reinforcing, emphatic function similar to 'absolutely', as well as, in the case of *just* + ADJ, the function of 'exactly'.

Only as premodifier of adjectives may also be scope-taking, especially in the use exemplified in (2:94) above; cf. *you're only jealous*. Quirk et al. (1985:607) note that this utterance can be glossed as 'It is merely the case that you're jealous', which lifts the word constituent modification up to a clause level, i.e. it extends the scope of the modification.

In a similar, restrictive use, however, *only* cannot as easily be rephrased as 'It is merely the case that etc.'; as shown in:

(2:95) Therefore, it is **only right** that she be returned to her biological parents (NAT wr US-MRQ-43.1)
(2:96) I think it is **only fair** to call the 20th Century, "The Century of Democracy." (NAT wr US-MICH-27.1)
(2:97) But it is **only natural** that we cannot always be right (SWE wr LND-39.8)

These uses were, however, considered non-degree reinforcing, i.e. not increasing the degree of the quality expressed by the adjective. Consequently, they were left out of the study, although we may find the line to be rather thin between *only right* and *just right*.

2.4.8 *Really*

As indicated in section 2.2.1.2, some modifiers vacillate between the semantic areas of degree and modality,[44] depending on their position in the phrase, the adjective type and other contextual factors. *Really* is found to be most degree-modifying, which also means most grammaticalised or delexicalised and most focused on the word constituent, when placed immediately before an adjective that can be referred to as "scalar", such as *nice*, *good* and *interesting*. However, when *really* is negated or appears in an interrogative phrase, it can be argued that modification at word level is completely lost in favour of the sentence-modifying function (cf., e.g., Paradis 2008:322 and Lorenz 2002:155), as in:

(2:98) At present, Britain is **not really sovereign** over itself (NAT wr ESEE21)
(2:99) His claim is **never really clear** because it is not his own. (NAT wr US-MRQ-26.1)
(2:100) Is this **really fair**? (NAT wr US-SCU-08.2)

Swales & Burke (2003:15) exemplify this distinction with the sentence *This is not really significant*, which they argue we tend to interpret as "'in actual fact, this is not significant', rather than 'this is not very significant'". Furthermore, when *really* precedes adjectives of the limit type (e.g. *essential, bilingual, true*) and of the extreme type (e.g. *amazing, horrible, fed up, weird*), the function of *really* tends to be sentence-modifying and truth-attesting rather than degree-modifying on a word-constituent level. Paradis distinguishes this function as "emphasizer *really*" (2003:80), while the degree-modifying function is ascribed to *really* + scalar adjectives only. This suggests that occurrences such as *really horrible*, *really weird* and *really essential* should be excluded from the study. However, they are included due to their similarity to maximizers (e.g. *absolutely horrible* and *totally weird*),[45] and to the fact that the adjectives denoting a potential limit or extreme kind that *really* collocates with may also be interpreted as scalar (e.g. *beautiful*, *wild*). For this reason, all such occurrences of *really* have been classified as boosters, despite their similarity to maximizers.

[44] In appraisal theory (Whitelaw et al. 2005:628), this is expressed as the modifiers being able to "affect multiple appraisal attributes at once", exemplified by *really,* which is described as functioning "both as an intensifier of force and a sharpener of focus" (cf. also section 2.4.6).
[45] Cf. Paradis & Bergmark (2003:80), who speak of a "near-synonymous effect" between e.g. *really paranoid* and *absolutely paranoid.*

2.4.9 *Well*

Well as premodifier of adjectives may be clearly modifying by degree, as in *well aware* and *well worth*, but as soon as the premodified constituent is an *–ed* form, modification by manner and verbalness of the *–ed* form have to be considered. Some occurrences are adjectival in their character (for example, by their attributive position) but clearly conveying modification by manner, such as *well written* or *well designed* in *An extremely* ***well written*** *article* (NAT wr US-MRQ-05.1) and *in* ***well-designed*** *welfare-to-work programs* (NAT wr US-SCU-06.3). Others are verbal and modifying by manner, such as *well stated* and *well received* in *The argument is* ***well stated****, but there is no evidence provided* (NAT wr US-MRQ-46) and *Watching executions on television will be both* ***well-received*** *and rejected* (NAT wr US-MRQ-34.1). Verbal *–ed* forms, degree-modified by *well*, are also possible, such as *well noticed* in *the game was so* ***well noticed*** *because it is so rare to see a women's game on television* (NAT wr US-MRQ-20.1). These types are all excluded from the study. However, a number of *well* + *–ed* occurrences of adjectival character with *well* carrying traits of both manner and degree modification are included. These are, for example, *well trained, well thought-out, well adjusted, well known, well founded, well educated* and *well developed* in their respective contexts. *Well* in this usage may be described, in Paradis' (2000:153) words, as "an evaluative adverb of manner", but with "scalar properties". Bolinger (1972:29) describes the co-existence of manner and degree in *well* as a combination of two features (which he calls "approval" and "fulfilment") "in ways that defy separation of the two."[46]

A second consideration regarding *well* is the fact that it forms compounds with the *–ed* form, which are sometimes hyphenated, sometimes not (cf. Lorenz 1999:67), although the "rule" is to hyphenate in attributive position. These may in turn be modified by degree, as in *very well known* and *really well-behaved*. In predicative position, we may sense a separation of the compound adjective into two separate items, a modifier (*well*) and a modified adjective (the *–ed* form or past participle). Compare:

(2:101) A well-known man
(2:102) The man is well known

[46] Cf. also Kennedy & McNally (2005:378).

Unlike *known* in example (2:101), the past participle may also be stressed in example (2:102), which further suggests a modifier + adjective interpretation. Thus, although a correct interpretation cannot be guaranteed, this study has chosen to distinguish between *well* + *–ed* forms in attributive position, viewing these examples as compound adjectives, and *well* + *–ed* forms in predicative position,[47] viewing these occurrences as booster + adjective. In other words, a phrase such as *a really well-known man* is treated as modifier *really* + adjective *well-known*, while *that's not er .. very well known* (NAT sp E06) is counted as modifier *well* + adjective *known*, the pair being further modified by *not very*.

[47] Exceptions are compounds with *well* where the *–ed* form cannot stand on its own, such as *well-behaved* and *well-minded*, which are treated as adjectives also in predicative position.

3. Material and Method

In order to investigate Swedish advanced learners' written and spoken use of reinforcing and attenuating adjective modification in English and relate their usage to that of native speakers, according to the aims of this study, we need comparable non-native speaker and native-speaker corpora. If they are of a manageable size (approximately 200 000 words), it should also be possible to analyse them not only computationally, i.e. quantitatively, in terms of frequency, but also manually, selecting the relevant occurrences and analysing collocations in a more qualitative approach. In this chapter, the corpora used for this study are described and discussed in terms of representativeness and comparability (section 3.1.). In addition, the chapter discusses methodological considerations with regard to the relation between quantitative data and qualitative analysis, and also how the material was handled, from a practical point of view. Further, certain aspects of comparing learners with native speakers are touched upon, including the representativeness and comparability of the corpora used, as well as the question of norms and target language.

3.1 Material

3.1.1 Introduction

Using corpora for linguistic research may be said to have begun systematically with the BROWN corpus of written American English from the 1960s and the LOB (Lancaster-Oslo-Bergen) corpus of written British English compiled in the 1970s, as well as the LLC (London-Lund corpus) of spoken British English from the 60s and beginning of 70s.[48] Due to the technological limitations of the 60s

[48]The LLC derives from two projects, the first of which (the Survey of English Usage) was launched in 1959 and the second (the Survey of Spoken English) started in 1975. The original version of LLC was released in 1980 and a completed version was published in 1990 (cf. http://khnt.hit.uib.no/icame.).

and 70s, these corpora are relatively small (500 000 to one million words). They were followed, however, by more extensive projects such as the COBUILD *(Collins and Birmingham University International Language Database)*, comprising *The Bank of English,* and the BNC *(British National Corpus)*, developed in the 1980s and 90s and containing 650 million (2011) and 100 million words, respectively (cf. O'Keeffe et al. 2011:7). They were designed to be representative of the language as a whole (cf. Lee 2010:109ff.), to be used for lexicographic and other purposes. Also, smaller and more specialised corpora were compiled, such as historical corpora (e.g. the *Helsinki Corpus*), parallel corpora (e.g. the *English-Swedish Parallel Corpus*) and learner corpora (e.g. the *International Corpus of Learner English*).

More extensive learner corpora have been compiled as a basis for learner dictionaries. Two examples of this kind are the *Cambridge Learner Corpus* and the *Longman Learners' Corpus*, both comprising 10 million words. However, these are generally unavailable to researchers. While not as comprehensive, smaller learner corpora may instead be used for combining quantitative and qualitative studies, investigating particular areas of language use, genres, age groups, etc. The different fields of application are due to both size and the level of detail on learner profiles, which is lower in the more extensive learner corpora (cf. Granger 1998a:11).

Spoken corpora are often smaller than written ones, due to the time-consuming work needed for their compilation. They include different degrees of prosodic annotation (intonation, stress, etc.) and non-verbal features (laughs, sighs, hesitation, gestures, etc.). An ideal spoken corpus might include not only transcribed text, but also audio and video files, which would give access to prosody, gestures and other extra-linguistic material. However, a great amount of work can still be done with transcribed text only, particularly if it includes hesitation markers, discourse markers, back-channelling and similar conversational features.

3.1.2 Corpora used

Four main English corpora were used for this study: two written (one Swedish-learner corpus and one native-speaker corpus) and two spoken corpora (one Swedish-learner corpus and one native-speaker corpus). The written learner component was taken from the *International Corpus of Learner English* (ICLE),

which contains 2.5 million words in total, and the spoken learner corpus forms part of the *Louvain International Database of Spoken English Interlanguage* (LINDSEI), comprising 792 852 words in total (excluding the interviewer). These corpora, as well as the native-speaker reference corpora, are described in more detail in sections 3.1.2.1 and 3.1.2.2. For complementary studies, I have also consulted the *British National Corpus* (BNC) (http://www.natcorp.ox.ac.uk), the *Santa Barbara Corpus of Spoken American English* (SBC) (Du Bois et al. 2000–2005) and *Gymnasisters språk- och musikvärldar* (GSM) ('The Language and Music Worlds of Upper Secondary School Students') (Norrby & Wirdenäs 1998), a corpus of conversational Swedish, see further sections 3.1.2.3.1–3.

The Swedish component of the ICLE corpus was chosen due to its comparability with the native-speaker corpus LOCNESS, on the one hand, and with the spoken LINDSEI corpus and the native-speaker corpus LOCNEC, on the other (see sections 3.1.2.1 and 3.1.2.2, respectively). The question of comparability is further discussed in section 3.2.3.2. These corpora were also chosen for their manageable size, which enables manual searches and qualitative analyses. Apart from being interesting from the point of view of showing high level of proficiency in relation to second language learners with other L1s (cf. Erickson 2004:26ff.), Swedish learners' texts were a natural choice (rather than, e.g., German or French) considering the fact that I am myself a native speaker of Swedish and work in a Swedish setting. It was perhaps also a suitable choice from the perspective of being able to comment on the likelihood of L1 transfer and having some insight into Swedish culture and writing traditions. Moreover, the Swedish components of ICLE and LINDSEI have not yet been compared with regard to adjective modification. SWICLE and LOCNESS have provided the basis for comparative studies of vocabulary frequencies (Ringbom 1998), adverbial connectors (Altenberg & Tapper 1998), the use of *I think* (Aijmer 2001), modality (Aijmer 2002a), the use of metadiscourse (Ädel 2006), tense and aspect (Eriksson 2004), thematic structure (Boström Aronsson 2005), overt authorial presence (Herriman 2007), and the verb-particle construction (Mondor 2008), to mention some. LINDSEI was recently released on CD, but a few studies based on the Swedish component have already been published, viz. on learners' use of pragmatic markers (Aijmer 2004), *I don't know*/*I dunno* (Aijmer 2009) and *well* (Aijmer 2011).

The four main corpora used for the study are summarised in Table 3.1 below.

Table 3.1. The four main corpora of the study: basic data

	SWICLE	LOCNESS	LINDSEI-SW	LOCNEC
Type	Written	Written	Spoken	Spoken
Genre	Argumentative essay	Argumentative essay	Informal interview	Informal interview
Number of words	162 456	161 951	71 853	120 733
Speaker nationality	Swedish	American (89%) British (11%)	Swedish	British
Age of speakers	average: 28	17–48	20–49 (average: 28)	18–30
Years of compilation	1990s	1990s	2nd half of 1990s – beginning of 2000s	2nd half of 1990s – beginning of 2000s

3.1.2.1 Written corpora: SWICLE and LOCNESS

The two corpora of written English used thus consist of the argumentative essays of the Swedish component of ICLE (*International Corpus of Learner English*) (cf. Granger 1993), also called SWICLE, and a selection of the native English reference corpus LOCNESS (*Louvain Corpus of Native English Essays*) (De Cock et al. 1997). The first ICLE version was published on CD-ROM in 2002 and an expanded version was published in 2009 (http://www.uclouvain.be/en-cecl-icle.html). In the first version of ICLE, 11 different mother tongues are represented (Bulgarian, Czech, Dutch, Finnish, French, German, Italian, Polish, Russian, Spanish and Swedish), while a more recent version, *ICLEv2*, includes another five L1s (Chinese, Japanese, Norwegian, Turkish and Tswana), thus adding up to a total of 16 language backgrounds and 3.7 million words (cf. http://www.uclouvain.be/en-277586.html). However, as I started my corpus searches in 2007, my work is based on the first version.

SWICLE contains both literary and argumentative essays, of which I have selected the argumentative ones, comprising 162 456[49] words in total, with an

[49] Due to the doubling in the corpus of a number of essays, this figure does not correspond to the number of words accounted for on the SWICLE website (www.englund.lu.se/corpus/corpus/swicle.html).

average size of 560 words per essay. They were written by 291 students of English in their third or fourth term at the Swedish universities of Gothenburg, Lund and Växjö in the 1990s. The LOCNESS corpus was compiled as a reference corpus to ICLE, comprising essays written by American and British native-speaker students, both at A-level and university level. Some essays are written in an argumentative style and others are literary in character. In total, LOCNESS contains 324 304 words. However, I have excluded parts of it for this study, mainly for the reason of having a more comparable material with regard to text type and the students' level of education, but also in order to bring its size closer to that of SWICLE. I have, therefore, selected the argumentative essays from LOCNESS written by American and British university students, thus excluding the A-level essays and the literary ones. I have also excluded the two longest essays (almost 3000 words each), resulting in a native-speaker corpus of 205 essays, 32 of them written by British students, comprising 161 951 words in total. One obvious drawback of this procedure is that there is an imbalance between British and American texts in the selection I use, in which the number of words written by British students amounts to only 11% of the total number of words. However, I find the variable of level of education to be more important and I will consider the results from the perspective of regional differences. Furthermore, the spoken material includes no American texts at all, and a secondary reference corpus of spoken American English will therefore be consulted (see section 3.1.2.3.1 below). As an illustration of the character of the LOCNESS corpus, two extracts are given below. The first one was written by a British student and the second by an American student.

(3:1) It must be noted that so many Britons regard themselves as being **somehow "different"** from other Europeans, probably due to the fact that Britain is detached geographically from "the Continent", that it is **highly unlikely** that we will merge into a mass culture, losing all of our Britishness. This detachment, or even aloofness, is demonstrated by the British Government's current lack of commitment to the European cause and its persistence in voting against motions which are favourable to the other representatives of the EEC. (NAT wr ESEE06)

(3:2) The cellular telephone has changed people's lives in many ways: the main way being the availability to be reached at any time. Communication is **readily available** in cars & on the streets now. People are able to use their car phones in case of an emergency; if they are stranded or broken down. They can take their cellular phones on vacations & to their friends houses if they are

> expecting an important call. To me, it is **a bit ridiculous**, but lots of people feel like they need this easy access to a phone. (NAT wr US-MICH-45.1)

These two extracts illustrate that native speakers may differ in style, level of formality and grammatical correctness (cf., e.g., the missing genitive apostrophe in *friends*), which I discuss further in section 3.2.3.3, but also that they use narrow[50] and idiomatic collocations with modifiers and adjectives, e.g. *highly unlikely* and *readily available*.
The Swedish component of ICLE also contains essays of somewhat different levels of writing skills, but when looking at modifiers in particular, a general pattern can nevertheless be observed, in which the modifiers seem to be of a collocationally less restricted type, as shown in the extracts below:

> (3:3) What makes me **so sceptic** is the fact that the E.C is an "organization" largely run by men. Furthermore I am **a bit ambivalent** to whether I regard it as democratic. There are very few ways in which I can affect the decisions that they make. Compared to other countries in e.g. Asia or Suth America we in Europe have a **fairly long** tradition of democracy. The E.C averts from this tradition. (SWE wr LND-13.9)

> (3:4) We are all aware of the environmental problems of which the car is a main producer – the pollution of our environment, the death of the rainforests and so forth. I think the feelings about the car is that of a **very equivocal** character – on the one hand it gives pleasure as long as we are not involved in a car-crash, something which is **altogether unhealthy**, in the other hand it helps to destroy the environment. (SWE wr LND-31.7)

In these extracts, which represent an average type of the argumentative essays of SWICLE (with regard to writing skills), highly versatile modifiers such as *very*, *so* and *a bit* are used while narrow collocations are avoided (consciously or unconsciously). This difference is further discussed in Chapter 5.

3.1.2.2 Spoken corpora: LINDSEI-SW and LOCNEC

For spoken learner English, I have used the Swedish component of LINDSEI (*Louvain International Database of Spoken English Interlanguage*) (Gilquin et al.

[50] In the sense of combining with few adjectives, cf., e.g., "restricted collocations" (Howarth 1998:164).

2010), also called LINDSEI-SW, and as a native English reference corpus, the LOCNEC (*Louvain Corpus of Native English Conversation*) (Gilquin et al. 2010). The aim of the LINDSEI project, which at present includes interviews of advanced English learners from eleven countries,[51] was to provide a spoken counterpart to ICLE, and thus a basis for comparisons across different first languages as well as between written and spoken learner English (http://www.uclouvain.be/en-cecl-lindsei.html).

LINDSEI-SW consists of 50 interviews of Swedish university students of English, aged 20–49 (average age 28 years), carried out in the second half of the 1990s and the early 2000s, comprising 71 853 words (excluding the interviewer). Its native English reference corpus, LOCNEC, contains 50 interviews of British native-speaker students at the University of Lancaster, aged 18–30, comprising 120 733 words (excluding the interviewer). The difference in size between these two spoken corpora may be due to differences in duration of the interviews or, simply, to the fact that the native speakers produced more text per time unit in their interviews, or both.

Both corpora have the same structure, the interviews being made up of three tasks: a set topic, free discussion and picture description. There are three set topics to choose from:

1) An experience that has taught you an important lesson
2) A country you have visited which has impressed you
3) A film or play you have seen which you thought was particularly good or bad

This "warming-up" part is followed by a free discussion and the interview ends with the picture description. The series of pictures shown to the interviewees is a story made up of four parts: 1) A woman has her portrait painted. 2) The painting finished, she is very displeased. 3) The artist makes a new, embellished version. 4) The woman, now very pleased, shows the idealised, quite unlike portrait to her apparently sceptic female friends (for a printed image, see Gilquin et. al 2010:109).

The guidelines for the transcriptions of the interviews are inspired by Edwards' (1992) principles for readability. Punctuation is not used and prosodic

[51]The LINDSEI project includes non-native varieties of English from the following first languages: Bulgarian, Chinese, Dutch, French, German, Greek, Italian, Japanese, Polish, Spanish and Swedish.

features are not included, but non-standard forms, pauses, fillers and discourse markers are carefully transcribed.

For illustration, an extract is shown below, in which a Swedish student (B) has chosen to talk about a trip to Iceland, which constitutes the set topic of the interview (for transcriptional codes used in LINDSEI and LOCNEC; see Appendix II.):

(3:5) <B> all the Icelandic people thought we were crazy because (eh) . we were . camping . in September and <overlap /> they thought </B>
<A> <overlap /> oh </A>
<B> it was winter </B>
<A> (uhu) </A>
<B> but we survived it <overlap /><XXX></B>
<A> <overlap /> at the time you were there what (er) what part of Sweden was it like if you think about summer . beginning of autumn and so on what temperatures </A>
<B> it was **really different** from day to day </B>
<A> (mhm) </A>
<B> because (er) .. most of the time it was . I had to have (eh) long trousers and a sweater and a jacket </B>
(SWE sp 01)

After the chosen topic has been discussed for a few minutes, the interviewer introduces the "free discussion" part by asking, for example, about the student's courses or plans for the future:

(3:6) <A> .. would you like to be a translator later do you think </A>
<B> . yes I've been thinking about it <overlap /> there was a . a course in Lund <overlap /> I wanted to take </B>
<A> <overlap /> (mhm) </A>
<B> <overlap /> but they've just stopped it <overlap /> so and I'm **not very interested** in the one you have </B>
<A> <overlap /> (mm) <overlap /> oh </A>
<B> here <overlap /> so I don't know at the moment <overlap /> but </B>
<A> <overlap /> no <overlap /> no </A>
<A> <laughs> what what did the one at Lund have that is different from the one here at Gothenburg </A>
<B> it was more . general </B>
<A> yes </A>
<B> this one is (eh) . more particular </B>
<A> (mhm) </A>

<B> areas and also in this one you have to study French </B>
(SWE sp 01)

At the end of the interview, the student is asked to describe the series of pictures (cf. above):

(3:7) <A> we're going to finish in just a minute <X> you're asked . <sound of rustling papers> to go back to a very early stage I was gonna say looking at pictures and telling about that's what they want you to do . (eh) so if you'd just like to look at those pictures for a moment <overlap /><swallows></A>
<B> <overlap /> okay </B>
<A> and see that you understand what the point of it is and then if you'd just like to . describe them </A>
<B> ... okay </B>
<A> all right </A>
<B> yeah we have a: . woman who's getting (er) her portrait painted . and I think she's **not very happy** about the way she looks . cos she goes up and . comments about it . and then the painter . changes a few things .. and she seems much more happy about it sh= sh= m= <overlap /> looks </B>
<A> <overlap /> what does he change for example </A>
<B> (erm) (eh) facial expressions <overlap /> she looks happier and (er) the hair . is . **a** </B>
<A> <overlap /> (mhm) </A>
<B> **bit curly** .. and (eh) then she's (eh) showing it off to her friends . (em) .. I think he's much more happy about the picture of (eh) . of herself </B>
(SWE sp 01)

A similar passage in LOCNEC, from the discussion about a chosen topic, is given in (3:8):

(3:8) <A> oh that's funny .. and was it during the summer that you went to Spain or <\A>
<B> (erm) .. I think .. I think I think it was quite early on it was it was **very warm** <begin_laughter> especially compared to England <end_laughter> <\B>
<A> (mhm) <\A>
<B> but I think it was it was more spring time .. and (er) I think I went to France just a few months later <\B>
<A> (mhm) <\A>
<B> so that was **quite warm** as well <laughs> <\B>
<A> and when I think it's Belinda isn't it <\A>
<B> yeah <\B>

<A> came to England .. <overlap /> what was her reaction <\A>
<B> <overlap /> that that was <laughs> well that was during the summer here I mean that was in June July so it should have been **quite warm** but I I don't think <begin_laughter> she found it **very warm** <end_laughter> .. but I mean my family is **a lot different** to hers as well
(NAT sp E18)

In the native-speaker corpus, the free discussion part is often introduced by the interviewer asking if the student lives on campus or elsewhere:

(3:9) <A> are you living on campus cos <overlap /> you're in your in your second year <\A>
<B> <overlap /> no <X> no I'm (er) living in town .. I li= I lived in Grizedale last year <\B>
<A> <overlap /> (mhm) <\A>
<B> <overlap /> and it was it's **a bit small a bit dingy** <laughs> <\B>
<A> a bit small yes but <\A>
<B> <laughs> <\B>
<A> you can find smaller places <\A>
<B> yeah but I mean I've I've got a house with a few friends this year which is **really nice** .. and it's **quite cheap** rent at the moment as well so that's good <\B>
<A> (mhm) is it in Lancaster or is it <\A>
<B> yes <\B>
(NAT sp E18)

Finally, example (3:10) illustrates the part where the native-speaker student is asked to describe the series of pictures, cf. example (3:7):

(3:10) <A> it's a nice place <XX> okay .. now I'd like you to have a look at those pictures <\A>
<B> right <\B>
<A> it's one two three four . so it's a story <\A>
<B> right <\B>
<A> and I'd like you to tell me that story <\A>
<B> oh gosh <laughs> okay .. erm .. well there's a man . a man painting a picture of a woman .. and eh .. oh I don't know what to say . erm .. he then shows her the picture of . the picture that he's painted . and she looks **quite horrified** by it <\B>
<A> <laughs> <\A>
<B> and does**n't** look **very pleased** with what he's .. with what he's drawn erm .. so he starts again and completely changes <begin_laughter> what she

looks like <end_laughter> .. erm making her look much prettier and .. erm more attractive than she does normally <\B>
<A> mhm <\A>
<B> and then she: . erm shows the picture to all her friends and . saying oh look at me <laughs> <\B>
<A> mhm <\A>
(NAT sp E20)

The material in LINDSEI-SW and LOCNEC is categorised as "informal interview data" (Gilquin et al. 2010:8). It is not as "natural" as interaction "for real communicative purposes", Gilquin et al. state (2010:5), differing in degree of elicitation between the part of the interview where the student is asked to describe the four pictures and the part devoted to free discussion. The highest degree of elicitation is found in the picture description. This part has clear similarities to the exercises used in language beginners' courses, which tends to confuse both advanced learners and native speakers, who often express doubt concerning how it should be done. The effect is that their language is often reduced to short, structurally simple sentences in this part of the interview.

Naturally, the interview is more formal than, e.g., face-to-face conversation between students, for a number of reasons.[52] The student has to choose between a few set topics and, although one part is intended to consist of "free discussion", the interviewer often controls this part, too, by introducing a topic, most often the interviewee's university studies or, in LINDSEI-SW, the subject of art. Furthermore, the students know that they are being recorded, and are likely to repress certain linguistic behaviour, using, for example, different politeness strategies from those used in a conversation with a close friend. There are also very few taboo modifiers included in the material, most likely due to these conditions. An extract from LOCNEC shows how the student is about to use a taboo modifier, but corrects himself:

(3:11) we did= didn't believe him <X> believe him <X> ah ah he's talking shit so he wandered on and erm he said ah spider from hole and there was a dead spider on the ground .. and it was **the biggest f= blinking** spider I've ever seen (NAT sp E46)

[52]Coppieters (1987:548) points to the difficulties for sociolinguists to decide if speech produced in an interview is "normal colloquial usage or a more careful or self-conscious register, or some special 'interview language'".

3.1.2.3 Other reference corpora used

3.1.2.3.1 The Santa Barbara Corpus

The *Santa Barbara Corpus of Spoken American English* (Du Bois et al. 2000–2005) is similar in size to the four main corpora used (approximately 249 000 words) and collected during the same period of time, more or less (the different parts were released between 2000 and 2005). However, its speakers differ with regard to age, occupation and area in the United States, which makes the corpus less comparable than the LOCNEC. It consists mainly of face-to-face conversation with the addition of, e.g., telephone conversations, card games, food preparation, on-the-job talk, classroom lectures, sermons, story-telling and town hall meetings (http://www.linguistics.ucsb.edu/research/sbcorpus.html).

3.1.2.3.2 GSM

To investigate the likelihood of L1 transfer, I have consulted a corpus of native conversational Swedish, *Gymnasisters språk- och musikvärldar* (GSM) ('The Language and Music Worlds of Upper Secondary School Students') (Norrby & Wirdenäs 1998). The GSM is a corpus of native Swedish spoken by upper secondary school teenagers discussing music in groups of 3 to 5 people with a discussion leader. This corpus contains about 205 000 words, some 30 000 of which are produced by the discussion leader (Nilsson 2005:5).

3.1.2.3.3 BNC

The *British National Corpus* is a 100 million word collection of samples of written and spoken British English from the late twentieth century. The written part, which constitutes 90% of the corpus, contains extracts from a wide range of genres, e.g. newspapers, fiction, academic texts, students' essays and letters. The spoken part, which constitutes the remaining 10%, contains informal conversation as well as e.g. government meetings, business meetings, radio shows and phone-ins (http://www.natcorp.ox.ac.uk/corpus/).

3.2 Methodological considerations

This section will briefly discuss the relation between quantitative and qualitative aspects of the study, as well as accounting for the way the material was

approached, selecting the modifiers and adjectives relevant to the study and comparing them between the corpora. Furthermore, the representativeness and comparability of the corpora are discussed. At the end of section 3.2, some aspects regarding the method of comparison between learners' production and native-speaker corpora are brought up, especially the concept of norm, the intended target and the native speaker as the ideal.

3.2.1 Relation between quantitative and qualitative aspects of the data

The results of calculating the frequencies of words or word categories, involving overuse or underuse[53] of these elements, may be of interest in several respects. In some cases, they can be directly used for pedagogical improvement in second language learning. However, some further analysis may be needed to get a broader perspective. The quantitative analysis may then provide the starting point for a qualitative study, as in this work. For example, if there is overrepresentation of *totally* in the written learner corpus, the answer to the following questions may be looked for:

Overuse of *totally*
→ With what adjectives is *totally* used?
How are these adjectives modified in the native-speaker corpus?
What does *totally* replace?
Is L1 transfer likely?

When looking into these questions we may find, for example, that *totally* replaces "nothing", i.e. the adjective may be unnecessarily reinforced; that there is a variety of modifiers with this adjective in the native-speaker corpus, which indicates a lack of variation on behalf of the Swedish learners; or that more formal adjectives are used by the native speakers, suggesting a lack of stylistic

[53]The terms "overuse" and "underuse" are here used in their technical, statistical sense, in accordance with Granger (1998a:18, cf. also Leech 1998:xix f), who has, as Hasselgård & Johansson (2011:39) put it, "repeatedly emphasized [that] the terms over- and underuse are intended as neutral, quantitative measures of linguistic differences, not as qualitative judgements on interlanguage performance."

awareness in the learners' texts.[54] In cases of possible L1 transfer, we may also need to ask if the source is written or spoken Swedish.

When quantifying language, however, it is important to relate to the figures appropriately. Calculating statistical significance may work as a tool for weeding out differences or similarities that are too weakly underpinned, but we also need to be aware of the fact that language is not completely coincidental and not easily analysed mathematically. Furthermore, Granger (1998a:16) states that the results of frequency studies may well be pedagogically interesting without being statistically significant. Most importantly, the quantitative study needs an interpretation of the results in order to avoid the "so what?" syndrome, Granger points out.

In this study, calculations of statistical significance have provided a basic starting point; however, some statistically non-significant uses are also discussed at times (see Chapter 4).

The tool used for calculating statistical significance is SIGIL Corpus Frequency Test (see Figure 3.1) found on the website http://sigil.collocations.de/wizard.html, in which the Two sample test is performed.

[54] See, however, the discussion about using native-speaker students as a norm in 3.2.3.

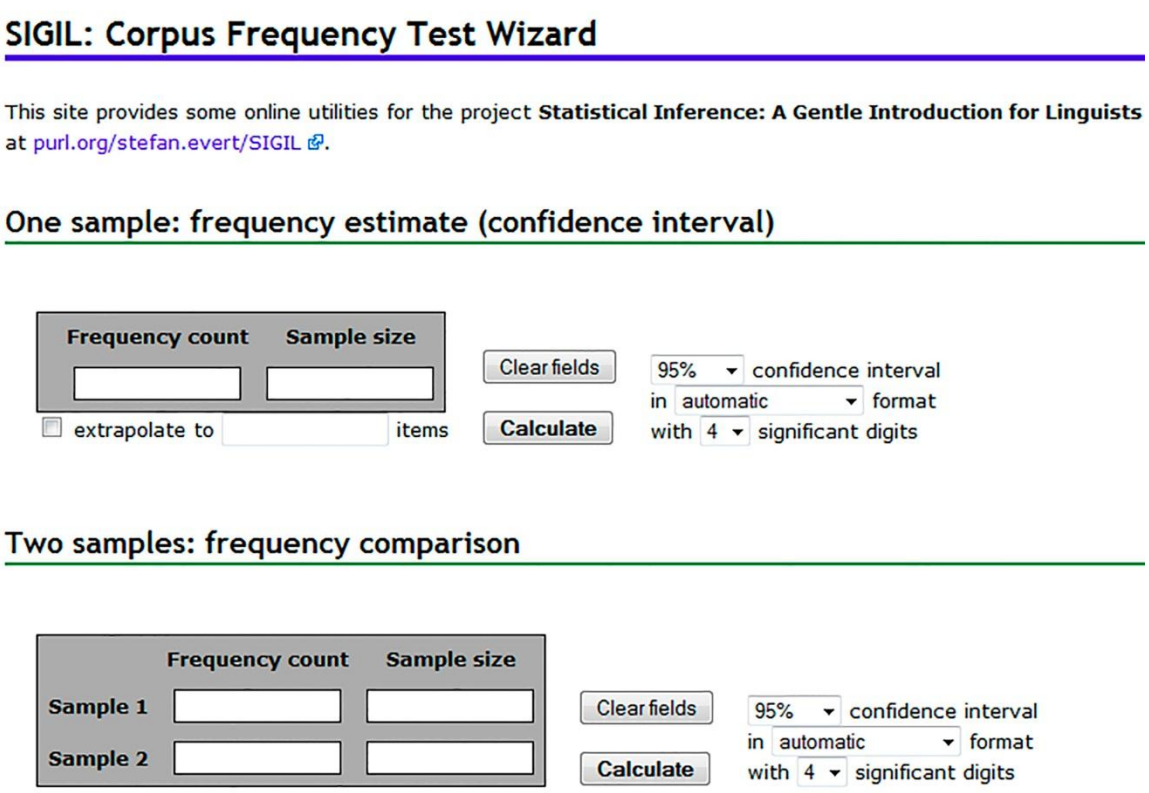

Figure 3.1. The SIGIL Corpus Frequency Test Wizard

By normalising the raw number of a certain word in relation to the total number of words in the two compared corpora, the Wizard calculates the χ^2 value and at what p-value the difference is significant, using the statistics software *R* (http://www.r-project.org), as referred to in this study (section 5.3.3). Considering that a χ^2 test is less accurate than a Fisher's Exact Test when the frequency is particularly low, the Fisher's test was performed on samples with low frequency, in which it was found that the p-value – although differing somewhat between the two tests – ended up on the same level of significance.

3.2.2 Approaching the material: practical procedure

To select the material for the study, an initial computational search was made of all **ly* occurrences, to which was added a search of non *–ly* modifiers, e.g. *a bit, a little, a little bit, all, almost, dead, just, kind of, pretty, quite, rather, real, so, somewhat, stone, too, very, well.*[55] These searches were all manually revised. After

[55] These modifiers were taken from the list of intensifiers in Lorenz 1999:262ff.

this preliminary search and selection, a manual search of all adjectives was made, from which the ones modified by degree were selected. In this way, misspelt modifiers, other modifiers than the ones searched for in the first two run-throughs (e.g. *a lot, lots, a hundred per cent, sort of, not at all*, *brand, boiling* and *freezing*) and some postpositioned modifiers (other than *enough*) were included (e.g. *in a way, in some ways, [not] at all*).

As a first step, raw occurrences for each adjective modifier as well as occurrences per 100 000 words were calculated and compared between the written and spoken corpora and between native-speaker and non-native speaker corpora, including calculations of statistical significance. The frequency differences were ordered from greatest to smallest, using non-native speaker frequencies as a point of departure. Secondly, the internal distribution of reinforcers (e.g. *totally, very*) vs. attenuators (e.g. *slightly, almost, relatively, barely*) and their subcategories was compared. Thirdly, the most frequent combinations of modifiers and adjectives (collocations) were summarised (cf. Tables 4.25–4.26).

The adjectives were then quantitatively analysed as to their total number and how many of them were modified. The most frequent adjectives were accounted for (cf. Tables 4.3–4.4), and their overuse or underuse in relation to the native-speaker corpora was calculated and presented (cf. Tables 4.5–4.8). The most frequently modified adjectives were then summarised (cf. Tables 4.11–4.12) and their overuse or underuse was calculated (cf. Tables 4.13–4.16).

After the basically quantitative investigation, the most salient results were given more in-depth attention in a qualitative study. Mainly, those were highly frequent uses and uses of significantly different frequency between the corpora, in general as well as of certain categories and individual items.

Certain ambiguous or otherwise problematic cases were singled out for special attention (cf. section 2.4).

3.2.3 Comparing learners with native speakers: some aspects

3.2.3.1 Representativeness of the material

While corpora have the great advantage of containing ”real”, authentic, language (cf. Granger 1998a:7), there is still the problem of representativeness, in particular with regard to corpora of less than one million words. Naturally, the

specialised corpora of this size are not intended to represent general language use or general learner language, as may be the aim of more extensive corpora, such as the BNC or the *Longman Learner Corpus*. The results obtained from studying specialised corpora, therefore, do not describe "the truth" of learner or native speaker language in general (cf. Leech 1998:xix), but merely indicate the likelihood of certain patterns in the specific genre represented in the corpora, in this case argumentative writing and informal interviews.

The narrower the criteria, however, the more representative of a particular genre a corpus is. Thus, if a learner corpus and a native-speaker corpus can be composed using the same criteria (such as text type, length of essays, age of student, level of education, etc.), they are highly useful for comparative studies.

The small size of the four main corpora used in this study implies a somewhat meagre material with regard to possible or accepted collocations, however. In some cases, therefore, due to its considerable size, the BNC has been a useful reference tool for studying collocations involving modifiers and adjectives.

3.2.3.2 Comparability of the material

3.2.3.2.1 Written corpora

While SWICLE and LOCNESS are relatively comparable, due to their similarity concerning writers' age, level of education and essay topics, a few details that could have affected their comparability may be mentioned. In the first place, the length of the essays in SWICLE is fairly homogeneous (approximately 500 words), while LOCNESS contains essays of varying length (between 200 and 2 400 words). This may affect the argumentative build-up of the text and also the frequency of, e.g., reinforcing modifiers.

Secondly, there is a skewed representativeness of American vs. British essays, mostly due to the fact that the British A-level essays were excluded from this study. However, the difference in level of writing skills was considered to be more misleading than an uneven distribution of regional varieties.

Thirdly, many of the essays in LOCNESS are based on a reference text, which to some extent governs the students' vocabulary choice and may have affected the frequency of some words. Also, while the Swedish essays discuss different topics, the British essays all treat the same topic, viz. Britain's sovereignty in the EU. This has given the result that, for example, the adjective *single* appears 1–10

times in 30 of 32 British essays and the adjective *individual* is found 1–5 times in 16 of them.

3.2.3.2.2 Spoken corpora

The comparability of the spoken corpora is not affected by the same factors as the written corpora. For example, differences in the length of the interviews most likely do not affect the use of adjective modifiers and the fact that the students talk about the same set of topics prevents genre confusion. However, a few circumstances with regard to the comparability of LINDSEI-SW and LOCNEC are worth mentioning.

The fact that the interviewer in the learner corpus is most often male, considerably older than the students, a native speaker and a teacher, while the majority of the students are female and in their twenties, may give a pronounced power or status difference in the interview situation. This difference may have affected the students' linguistic output, such as less fluent speech and restricted vocabulary (cf. Aijmer 2004:174f., 188). In addition, the recording environment may have pushed the learners towards a more formal style or prevented them from speaking as freely as they might well have done in a more relaxed setting. Notwithstanding these conditions, the spoken corpora LINDSEI and LOCNEC provide a highly comparable, useful material for studying oral learner production of English, and are definitely the best material available for a comparative study of Swedish advanced learners' and native speakers' spoken English at the time of writing.

The fact that the native speakers of LOCNEC are all British has to be taken into consideration as well. As a complement to the study proper, therefore, I also searched the *Santa Barbara Corpus of Spoken American English* (SBC) (Du Bois et al. 2000–2005) on a selection of relevant items. Some of these are based on the typicality of usage in American and British English, respectively, accounted for in Biber et al (1999:565f.).

One detail that may not have affected the overall results in a significant way but is still worth mentioning is that, although the interviewer was instructed to interfere as little as possible to make the interviewee's language production freer, there is a possibility of the learner copying or borrowing words or expressions from the interviewer (cf., e.g., Tannen 2007:48ff.). This is exemplified in the following extracts from LINDSEI-SW (A=teacher/interviewer, B=student):

(3:12) <A> <overlap /> (mm) is it . **very hot** </A>

<B> .. can get **very hot** ...
(SWE sp 11)

(3:13) <A> really <overlap /> that's **very young** </A>
<B> <overlap /> yes I was **very young** </B>
(SWE sp 17)

(3:14) <A> (erm) <swallows> are you **very different** . you <overlap /> know or . do you feel that you are </A>
<B> <overlap /> no </B>
<A> two halves of the same whole </A>
<B> <sighs> not that much but we are not **very different** we are very similar
(SWE sp 21)

As borrowing or repeating is a general conversational phenomenon, having underlying social reasons (cf. Tannen 2007:48ff.), the native speakers also do this to some extent. In the case of the learners, however, we do not know how much this copying may be due to lack of verbal creativity.

Finally, it should be noted that the comparison between learners' written and spoken language tends to imply, wrongly, that the texts were produced by the same individuals. Conclusions about how the learners as a group differ between written and spoken English should, therefore, be interpreted as generalisations rather than as the written and spoken versions produced by the same students. In analogy with the term "quasi-longitudinal" studies (cf. Granger 2002:11), in which younger and older students' production is compared in order to save the time needed for a follow-up of the younger students, we may perhaps speak of a "quasi-registral" study in this case.

3.2.3.3 Comparison as method: norms and target language.

Comparing learners' and native speakers' production of the same language (L2 vs. L1) is one of two strategies of Contrastive Interlanguage Analysis (CIA). The other is the comparison of two or more interlanguage productions of the same learner language (L2 vs. L2) (cf. Granger 1996:44 and 1998a:12).

In this section, a few comments are offered on the method of using native-speaker corpora as reference for judging the correctness or nativeness of learner texts.

Using native speakers as reference implies defining a *norm* to which learners' usage is compared or related, as well as expecting the Swedish students' *target* to

be the language of the native speakers in the reference corpora. However, the norm of a comparative study is not necessarily the learners' target language. While the norm, in this regard, is defined by the native-speaker text used as reference, the target is here referred to as the language production the learners aim for. In LOCNESS, the native speakers are not always skilled writers and make quite a few grammatical, structural and spelling mistakes, as illustrated in the extracts below:

(3:15) A discovery that has significantly changed many **peoples** lives and their ways of thinking is the epidemic**,** known as AIDS. Though it has probably been around for **awhile**, **it's** presence hasn't really been known **untill** fairly recently, and **it's** consequences have been **devistating**. [---] In the early eighties "casual sex" in the United States was a widely accepted idea, now it is something people really take into consideration **and rarely occurs**. (NAT wr US-MICH-13.1)

(3:16) Air transportation allows people to travel from place to place more quickly & **efficeintly** & overseas travel has been drastically **effected**. [---] As a result of the greatly decreased travel times, countries can work together much easier than previously **possibly**. (NAT wr US-MICH-12.1)

Thus, particularly in writing, the target of the learners may indeed be to produce better English than can be observed in the native corpus (cf. Leech 1998:xix, Ädel 2006:206 and Hasselgård & Johansson 2011:38f.). The notion of "norm" is therefore somewhat misleading if visualised as correct and well-written English. The results of differences in frequency, i.e. overuse or underuse of modifiers or adjectives, cannot therefore be used alone as an indication of failure to reach the intended target.

The problem with comparing learners with native-speaker students' texts has been much discussed (cf., e.g., Granger 1998a:13, Leech 1998:xix, Grabe & Kaplan 1996:197, Lorenz 1999:14, Boström Aronsson 2005:60f., Ädel 2006 and Mondor 2008:11), giving rise to questions about what we really want to prove with the comparison. If the aim is to find out where learners deviate from their target language, it is argued that we should instead consider comparing them with professional writers' texts, such as academic writing or newspaper editorials (cf. Granger 1998a:18 and Hasselgård & Johansson 2011:39). Such comparisons have indeed been made, e.g. Herriman (2007) who, in her study of

overt authorial presence, compares SWICLE with both LOCNESS and a collection of "comment" or "opinion" articles from four British newspapers.

Using professional writers' texts as a control corpus has, however, been criticised mainly for the genre discrepancy that arises between the two types of text. Lorenz (1999:14) finds it "both unfair and descriptively inadequate to juxtapose the German learners' productions with journalistic or academic writing." He argues that learners' essays constitute "a highly idiosyncratic type of text, hardly to be compared to professional writing under real-life conditions," which suggests that the two types represent different genres, depending on how we define the term. Indeed, as learners and professional native writers differ not only in proficiency, but also as regards age and life experience as well as the intended reader of the text and writing conditions, such a comparison would be skewed, adding an unnecessary complication to the discussion of likely reasons for the differences found in their usage. Rather, it is preferable to avoid differences in as many parameters as possible (cf. Granger 1998a:5ff.). In order to be able to compare advanced learners with a group of native speakers of English with as many variables in common as possible, and draw conclusions concerning deviations from the target, the native speakers ought to be language students with good writing skills. Indeed, a similar material is found in *The Michigan Corpus of Upper-level Student Papers (MICUSP),* which consists of 2.6 million words of academic text written by advanced-level native and non-native speaker students from different disciplines (including Humanities and Art), all graded A (top grade).[56] It became freely available in 2009 and could well have provided a suitable alternative to LOCNESS had this study been initiated today.

Thus, while LOCNESS is considered "the best available comparable corpus to match ICLE" (Hasselgård & Johansson 2011:38), we need to be aware of the fact that its texts most likely do not fully represent the target language of the learners. We must also consider the possibility that some Swedish learners are more skilful writers than their native-speaker counterparts, which may affect their English in terms of varied language, good sentence structure, coherence/cohesion, spelling and grammar. Despite its flaws, however, comparison with LOCNESS is certainly worthwhile, as native speakers can be expected to master a wider vocabulary and more idiomatic constructions,

[56]The MICUSP was compiled at the English Language Institute of the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor. The project was launched in 2004 by Rita Simpson-Vlach and John Swales, managed by Annelie Ädel between 2006 and 2007 and is currently led by Ute Römer (http://linguistlist.org/issues/20/20-4343.html).

including collocations, than the advanced learners, as well as being familiar with the rhetorical traditions and the "dos and don'ts" of their native language that may not be part of the advanced learner's repertoire. Regardless of their writing skills, native speakers are unlikely to produce anything that sounds distinctly "un-English".

With the spoken native-speaker material we do not face the same problems with regard to misspellings, obviously, or structural errors, as the production of speech differs from that of edited, formal, written language. Presumably, the Swedish learners' target corresponds quite well with the native-speaker output, with due allowance to the fact that the native speakers are exclusively British speakers.

The question of using native speakers as a norm also has sociocultural aspects. With L2 speakers of English now outnumbering L1 speakers (cf., e.g., Crystal 2003:107ff.) in the world, it has been proposed that the norm (or target) should be redirected from native-speaker English to something more adapted to the international arena of communication using English as a lingua franca (cf., e.g., Pakir 1999, Warschauer 2000 and Graddol 2003). Thus, considering the many kinds of English spoken in the world, and how many of these are non-native, we may ask how important it is to assess the nativeness of learners' speech. In this study, however, it has been assumed that the Swedish students involved aimed for a nativelike use of English. For some further discussion, see section 5.4.2.

4. Quantitative results

In this chapter, the primary quantitative results of the comparison between the four main corpora of the study (SWICLE, LOCNESS, LINDSEI-SW and LOCNEC) are shown with regard to frequency, variation, collocation and distribution across modifier categories. The chapter is introduced by an account of the overall frequency of adjectives, modified and unmodified, in which both raw occurrences and frequency per 100 000 words are given. Adjective variation is calculated and compared by type/token ratio and the most frequently modified adjectives in each corpus are presented. Differences with statistical significance are shown in separate tables. Similarly, section 4.2 compares the frequency and variation of degree modifiers, followed by an account of the most frequent degree modifiers and statistically significant differences. In section 4.3, the collocations between the two groups, adjectives and modifiers, are presented from a basically quantitative perspective. Finally, section 4.4 provides an approximation of the distribution of the different modifier categories, based on Quirk et al (1985), in the four corpora. The quantitative results of Chapter 4 are briefly commented on and some preliminary explanations are suggested. Rather than discussion and analysis, however, the main purpose of the chapter is to present a survey of the quantitative results, serving as a basis for Chapter 5, in which the most salient or otherwise interesting differences and similarities between learners and native speakers, and between written and spoken corpora, are further discussed and analysed.

4.1 Adjectives

As the adjective functions as the main word or Head of the adjective phrase, to which modification is added, the quantitative analysis will start from the calculation of the overall frequency of adjectives in the different corpora, whether modified or not. The focus is then narrowed down to the degree-modified

adjectives in section 4.1.2, followed by a quantitative account of modifiers in section 4.2.

4.1.1 Overall use of adjectives

The total number of adjectives, modified and unmodified, was calculated principally to obtain a basis for comparing the percentage of modified adjectives for each corpus. However, it also opened up for a survey of the types of adjectives used and a comparison of the most frequent ones, including statistically significant differences between the corpora. The calculation was performed with the help of the Stanford Log-linear Part-Of-Speech (POS) Tagger (Toutanova et al. 2003), as well as manually, which gave somewhat different results.

The POS tagger provides some erroneous adjective tagging, such as misprints (e.g. *adn*, *hte*), abbreviations (e.g. *e.g.*) and otherwise "strange-looking" items (e.g. *he/she*), which have to be weeded out manually. It also includes quantifiers (e.g. *many, few, much*), determiners (e.g. *other, same, own*), ordinals (e.g. *first, second, 4th, 19th*) and adverbs, which can be – but rarely are – adjectival (e.g. *only, very, still, well*), and also the discourse marker *well* in the spoken corpora. These were all excluded in the manual calculation. Adjectives in the comparative or superlative were included in the manual as well as the machine-tagged calculation, although tagged differently (JJR and JJS)[57] from adjectives in the positive (JJ). Finally, *okay* and *right* were tagged as adjectives in the spoken corpora, in a range of different uses.

Okay was tagged as adjective in 163 occurrences in the spoken learner corpus, as opposed to 61 in the native-speaker corpus, but a manual check showed that only a handful of these (9 and 14 occurrences, respectively) are adjectival in a proper sense, as in *it's okay*, while in the majority of cases *okay* is used as a discourse marker, such as *okay I'll choose topic number one,* or most frequently just *okay* as a comment or response.

Right was tagged as adjective in 241 cases in the native-speaker spoken corpus, but a brief revision of these uses showed that they, too, were in many cases discourse markers or "fillers", as in *right .. erm*. A manual calculation of all occurrences of *right* in both corpora showed that native speakers use *right* as a

[57] A useful tagging system is found in, e.g., http://cs.nyu.edu/grishman/jet/guide/PennPOS.html, where adjectives are tagged JJ, adjectives in the comparative JJR and adjectives in the superlative JJS.

discourse marker in 120 cases, as an adverb in 25 cases (e.g. *right at the top, playing it right*), in the construction *all right/alright* 38 times and in other adjectival uses 92 times, where the expression *that's right* – also with discourse-marking functions – constitutes the majority with 79 occurrences. The Swedish learners, on the other hand, use *right* as a discourse marker in only 12 occurrences, as an adverb in 11 occurrences, in the construction *all right/alright* 23 times and in other adjectival uses 14 times, of which *that's right* is used only once.

Although they can still technically be viewed as adjectives in ellipted phrases, *right* and *okay* used as discourse markers are quite far from their original adjectival sense, and were therefore excluded, together with the occurrences of *all right/alright* in discourse marking functions, i.e. when they appear alone and not as a predicative complement. Adverbial uses of *right* were, of course, excluded as well, while *(that's) right* was kept. The result was 23 adjectival uses of *right* in the Swedish-learner corpus and 118 in the native-speaker corpus (cf. Table 4.4). The occurrences of non-discourse marking *okay* were not frequent enough to be included in the table (the table shows the 20 or so most frequent adjectives for reasons of space), and the difference between native speakers and learners was not significant.

The machine-tagged version includes both gradable and non-gradable adjectives. So does the manually calculated version, as many of the adjectives that are non-gradable in their original sense may change into gradable adjectives in different contexts, e.g. *medical* (cf. *medical supplies* and *strictly medical issues*). However, some classifying adjectives in fixed collocations such as *high* in *high school*, *new* in *New York* or *new age* and *great* in *Great Britain* are machine-tagged as proper nouns (NNP) and were also excluded in the manual selection.

Therefore, to make the two versions more compatible, the machine-tagged version was manually edited, in which process the above-mentioned errors as well as quantifiers, determiners, ordinals, adverbs and discourse markers were removed. The machine-tagged version was then found to be somewhat smaller than the manually calculated one, which may be due to missed-out adjectives in the machine-tagging process and a number of *–ed* and *–ing* forms that were labelled as verbal by the POS-tagger but adjectival in the manual selection (cf. section 2.4.1.).

4.1.1.1 Frequency

Table 4.1 shows both the machine-tagged total of adjectives and the manually calculated version. To be able to compare the occurrence of adjective tokens between the different corpora, the raw numbers have been normalised to frequency per 100 000 words, based on the manual calculation.

Table 4.1. Frequency of modified and unmodified adjectives in the four main corpora

Corpus	Total number of adjectives, machine-tagged and edited	Total number of adjectives, manually selected	Frequency of manually selected adjectives /100 000 words
SWE wr	11 617	11 401	7 018
NAT wr	10 681	10 802	6 670
SWE sp	2 746	2 922	4 067
NAT sp	4 594	4 846	4 014

Table 4.1 makes it clear that the frequency of adjectives per 100 000 words is higher in the written corpora, which agrees with Biber et al.'s (1999:504) comparison of conversational and written English. Both native speakers and Swedish learners show a clear difference between written and spoken English with regard to the frequency of adjectives; the differences are statistically significant at $p > 0.001$. However, the difference between native speakers' and Swedish learners' written texts (6 670 vs. 7 018) is also statistically significant (at $p < 0.01$). Swedish learners appear to use approximately 4% more adjectives per 100 000 words in their argumentative writing. This cannot reasonably be explained by influence from spoken language, since the frequency of adjectives is lower in the spoken corpora, not higher.

In the spoken corpora, on the other hand, the frequency of adjectives per 100 000 words is quite similar. The slight difference is not statistically significant. In other words, Swedish learners use adjectives as frequently as native speakers in conversation in English. The difference in total number of occurrences between Swedish learners' and native speakers' spoken English is mainly due to the difference in size between the two spoken corpora (see section 3.1.2.2).

4.1.1.2 Variation: type/token ratio

We now know the total number of adjective tokens used in each corpus, and we have compared the frequency per 100 000 words between the corpora. However, we do not yet know the nature of this quantity of adjectives, such as the number of adjective types or the most frequently used types. In order to calculate the number of different adjectives used in the corpora, both modified and unmodified, the edited machine-tagged version has been used, for practical reasons.[58] Word variation may then be calculated by using the type/token ratio (cf., e.g., Granger & Wynne 2000), i.e. the quotient (multiplied by 100) that results from dividing the number of different types of modified adjectives by the number of tokens (the total number of adjectives occurring).

Table 4.2. Type/token ratios: all adjectives

Corpus	Types	Tokens	Type/token ratio
SWE wr	1 971	11 617	17.0
NAT wr	1 922	10 681	18.0
SWE sp	516	2 746	18.8
NAT sp	761	4 594	16.6

As Table 4.2 shows, the type/token ratio is rather similar between the corpora, although somewhat lower in the spoken native-speaker corpus and higher in the spoken learner corpus. The high ratio of the spoken learner corpus (18.8) suggests a more varied use of adjectives in the Swedish learners' spoken English, but it should be noted that native speakers use more types than Swedish learners (761 vs. 516), and that the low number of tokens in the Swedish texts (2 746) increases the type/token ratio. Similarly, Swedish learners use slightly more adjective types in their written texts, while native speakers have a higher type/token ratio, due to their lower number of tokens. In other words, the type/token ratio is not very informative in isolation, but may serve as an indication that needs additional facts for a more balanced interpretation.

[58] Due to the time-consuming work of manually counting the adjectives, only tokens were counted. The machine-tagged version, however, could easily display the number of types.

4.1.1.3 Most frequent adjectives

Before narrowing down the focus to the degree-modified adjectives, the most frequent adjectives will be presented; see Tables 4.3 and 4.4, based on the edited machine-tagged version.

As an adjective may, for instance, be frequently modified in one corpus and unmodified but not necessarily infrequent in another, the following list for the written corpora, and the corresponding one for the spoken corpora, may illuminate the differences in frequency of modified adjectives between the corpora.

Table 4.3 includes the twenty most frequent adjectives (comparative and superlative forms excluded), with the exception of the Swedish column, which includes 21 items in order to avoid drawing the line between two equally frequent adjectives (*hard* and *true*).

Table 4.3. Most frequent adjectives: written corpora

SWE wr	tokens	NAT wr	tokens
new	315	*good*	140
Swedish	295	*important*	135
different	270	*single*	131
important	249	*new*	128
good	226	*different*	121
able	149	*able*	118
great	148	*European*	109
human	130	*public*	109
modern	123	*human*	100
possible	120	*national*	87
old	100	*strong*	86
cultural	90	*great*	85
difficult	90	*old*	77
political	88	*certain*	72
certain	86	*common*	71
economic	83	*British*	69
environmental	79	*high*	68
social	74	*young*	67
long	72	*equal*	65
hard	68	*true*	64
true	68		

As can be seen from Table 4.3, the most frequent adjectives in argumentative essay writing seem to be rather similar, regardless of whether the writer is a Swedish advanced learner or a native speaker. Among the top ones, we find *new, good, important, different, able, human, great, old*, etc., although the frequency is higher in the learner corpus. Some adjectives are particularly frequent in one of the two corpora, however, such as *public, single* and *strong* in the native corpus. Other especially frequent adjectives in the native corpus are *black, white, sexual, effective, legal, genetic, ethical* and *biological*. The majority of these are most likely topic-related, as there are, for example, 66 occurrences of *public school* in the essays written by American students and 82 occurrences of *single* + *Europe, market, European* and *currency* in the essays written by British students. Many of the American essays discuss premarital sex, adoption and social differences

between black and white people, topics that also explain the high frequency of the adjectives *black, white, sexual*, *ethical*, *biological*, etc. The adjective *human* does not seem to be confined to any particular topic, but is used in a variety of subjects. The Swedish advanced learners particularly frequently use *Swedish*, *modern, possible* and *environmental* in their argumentative essays. *Poor* and *happy* are two other frequent adjectives in the learner corpus, although not appearing in Table 4.3. The adjective *Swedish* is especially frequent in essays about the integration of immigrants and *modern* collocates with, for example, the nouns *society* (31 occurrences) and *technology* (19 occurrences) in essays discussing, for example, religious movements, whether and how to celebrate Christmas, and environmental problems, the last-mentioned topic also contributing to the high frequency of *environmental*. However, topics do not seem to account for the high frequency of *strong* and *effective* in the native corpus, and *poor* and *happy* in the written learner corpus.

The most frequent adjectives (comparative and superlative forms excluded) in the spoken corpora are shown in Table 4.4. Again, in order to avoid drawing the line between two or more equally frequent adjectives, the limit is not set at twenty types, but at 21 and 22, respectively.

Table 4.4. Most frequent adjectives: spoken corpora

SWE sp	tokens	NAT sp	tokens
nice	157	*good*	343
good	150	*nice*	190
different	146	*different*	179
Swedish	72	*right*	118
big	60	*big*	112
small	57	*difficult*	62
beautiful	53	*interesting*	61
long	53	*long*	61
happy	47	*bad*	60
hard	47	*great*	53
interesting	43	*whole*	49
old	41	*happy*	48
sure	37	*beautiful*	44
difficult	33	*real*	44
bad	28	*sure*	44
young	28	*main*	42
new	24	*brilliant*	38
right	23	*amazing*	36
important	22	*new*	36
funny	21	*small*	32
real	21	*true*	32
		young	32

Table 4.4 shows that the Swedish learners and the native speakers share many adjectives among the most frequent ones, such as *nice, good, different, big, right*, *difficult*, *interesting* and *new*. Some of these adjectives are also frequent in the written corpora, in particular *good*, *different* and *new* (cf. Table 4.3). *Nice* and *big*, on the other hand, seem to be more typical of the spoken texts. In addition, as shown in Table 4.3, the learners' written texts include the adjectives *difficult* and *long* among the most frequent, while the native speakers' written texts do not. In Table 4.4, however, we note that *difficult* and *long* are frequent in both spoken corpora. Thus, the high frequency of *difficult* and *long* in the learners' written texts may be an indication of a tendency to transfer some spoken-

language features to written texts. Obviously, other reasons are also possible for this difference, such as the topic of the essay or other contextual factors.

4.1.1.4 Statistically significant frequency differences

The frequency differences between Swedish learners and native speakers shown in Tables 4.3 and 4.4 are not always statistically significant, i.e. they cannot safely be regarded as non-coincidental. For instance, the differences in frequency between native speakers' and Swedish learners' use of the adjectives *able, human, old, certain* and *economic* are not big enough to be statistically significant, and are thus likely to be coincidental (the null hypothesis). Some adjectives, however, are used so much more frequently by the learners that the difference is significant. They will here be referred to as "overused", without normative implications, as stated earlier (cf. section 3.2.1). Others are used significantly more frequently by the native speakers, here referred to as "underused" by the learners, again in a purely statistical sense and without prescriptive implications.

Statistically significant differences have been calculated by means of the SIGIL Corpus Frequency Test Wizard (see Figure 3.1), which normalises the raw number of occurrences into relative frequency and specifies the level of significance in $p < 0.05$, $p < 0.01$ or $p < 0.001$, of which the last-mentioned one indicates the highest significance. In Tables 4.5 and 4.6, adjectives with statistically significant differences between the corpora (learner overuse or underuse in relation to native speakers) are presented. Adjectives with similar frequency are thus not included in these tables. The adjectives are ordered from the highest number of tokens to the lowest in the corpus with the highest frequency, i.e. the Swedish-learner corpus in Table 4.5 and the native-speaker corpus in Table 4.6. The limit is set at the first 40 adjectives with statistically significant differences in use (the first 20 overused and the first 20 underused adjectives) between the corpora.

Table 4.5. Adjectives with statistically significant overuse in the written learner corpus, in relation to native speakers

Adjective	Tokens in SWE wr	Tokens in NAT wr	Statistical significance
new	315	128	***
Swedish	295	0	***
different	270	121	***
important	249	135	***
good	226	140	***
great	148	85	***
modern	123	35	***
possible	120	61	***
cultural	90	12	***
difficult	90	40	***
political	88	55	**
environmental	79	5	***
general	62	28	***
natural	56	23	***
impossible	55	27	**
poor	53	17	***
aware	51	28	*
happy	50	19	***
rich	44	12	***
afraid	40	11	***

* = $p < 0.05$, ** = $p < 0.01$, *** = $p < 0.001$

Table 4.5 shows that the top most frequent adjectives in the written learner corpus – i.e. *new*, *Swedish*, *different*, *important* and *good* – which (with the exception of *Swedish*) are also the most frequent adjectives in the native-speaker written corpus, are used significantly more frequently than by the native speakers. In other words, at the top of this table it is not the choice of adjective that distinguishes learner use from native speaker use, but the higher frequency of the very same adjectives. The reasons for the adjectives of this table being especially frequent in the written learner texts are unclear, but it may be speculated that some of them are topic-related, as indicated earlier. Possibly, this includes *modern, cultural* and *environmental* (discussed in section 4.1.1.3), to

which we may add *natural*, used mainly when the topic concerns environmental issues and in collocations with the noun *resources*, but also in texts about astrology, new technology and immigration.

The differences in frequency are obviously not only a matter of overuse, but learners may also underuse a number of adjectives, in the sense that the native speakers display a considerably higher frequency of certain adjectives than the Swedish learners. The twenty most underused adjectives are presented in Table 4.6.

Table 4.6. Adjectives with statistically significant underuse in the written learner corpus, in relation to native speakers

Adjective	Tokens in SWE wr	Tokens in NAT wr	Statistical significance
single	19	131	***
European	55	109	***
public	46	109	***
national	35	87	***
strong	36	86	***
British	5	69	***
equal	38	65	**
nuclear	20	61	***
sexual	3	57	***
black	19	56	***
effective	7	53	***
white	11	52	***
physical	9	47	***
legal	8	47	***
genetic	2	47	***
medical	11	44	***
ethical	3	39	***
biological	4	38	***
wild	4	35	***
emotional	6	34	***

* = $p < 0.05$, ** = $p < 0.01$, *** = $p < 0.001$

As earlier mentioned, many of the underused adjectives are also most likely topic-related, such as *single, European, public, British* and *sexual*, while others seem to be of a more general character, e.g. *strong*, *national* and *effective*. Also, it is noticeable that native speakers more frequently use adjectives ending in *–al*, viz. *national, equal, sexual, physical, legal, medical, ethical, biological* and *emotional*. The Swedish learners do not only use fewer, but also other types of adjectives that end in *–al*, viz. *cultural, political, environmental*, *general* and *natural*.

In spoken texts, a great many adjectives are equally frequent in learner and native-speaker corpora, but there is a statistically significant difference in the frequency of a number of adjectives in these corpora, too. These are shown in Table 4.7. As statistical significance is based on frequency per 100 000 words and the spoken corpora differ in size, the number of tokens may be smaller in the learner corpus but still overused in comparison with the native-speaker corpus.

Table 4.7. Adjectives with statistically significant overuse in the spoken learner corpus, in relation to native speakers

Adjective	Tokens in SWE sp	Tokens in NAT sp	Statistical significance
nice	157	190	**
different	146	179	**
Swedish	72	7	***
small	57	32	***
beautiful	53	44	***
happy	47	48	*
hard	47	19	***
old	41	30	***
important	22	14	**
perfect	16	5	***
free	14	6	**
general[59]	13	5	**
angry	12	2	***
abstract	11	0	***
single	9	3	*
crazy	8	3	*
afraid	7	1	*
suspicious	7	0	**
wild	7	2	*
ordinary	6	0	**

* = $p < 0.05$, ** = $p < 0.01$, *** = $p < 0.001$

Some of the adjectives in Table 4.7 are overused not only in spoken learner English, but also in the written learner corpus, viz. *different, Swedish, important, general, happy* and *afraid*. Others are typically overused in the spoken learner corpus, such as *nice, beautiful, small, hard, old, perfect* and *free*.

We may relate the overuse to the topic dealt with in the texts, for example the frequent use of *happy* and *beautiful* in the picture description (see section 3.1.2.2), but as all students are given the same alternative topics to discuss, the topic cannot in itself be the sole reason for the learners' over- or underuse. The

[59] Most uses of *general* are found in the adverbial phrase *in general*, in which *general* may be regarded as adjectival (cf., e.g., *CDO*) or as a noun (cf., e.g., *OED* online).

native speakers also use *happy* and *beautiful* in their picture description, but they account for only about 50 per cent of the occurrences, while the rest of them are used in other contexts, such as descriptions of specific environments. In the Swedish-learner corpus, on the other hand, the majority of the occurrences of *happy* and *beautiful* are found in the picture description, i.e. there is a clear correspondence between the adjectives *happy* and *beautiful* and this part of the interview. The adjective *angry* is also found mainly in the picture description (8 occurrences out of 12), and the use of *abstract* is directly related to the recurring discussions about art in the free discussion.

Some adjectives, however, are used to a larger extent by the native speakers, i.e. they are underused by the Swedish learners, and the 20 most frequent ones (in the native speaker corpus) are shown in Table 4.8.

Table 4.8. Adjectives with statistically significant underuse in the spoken learner corpus, in relation to native speakers

Adjective	Tokens in SWE sp	Tokens in NAT sp	Statistical significance
good	150	343	**
right	23	118	***
great	16	53	*
main	8	42	**
brilliant	3	38	***
amazing	5	36	**
foreign	2	28	**
awful	2	24	**
massive	0	19	**
weird	2	18	*
full	2	17	*
major	0	16	**
national	0	14	**
social	1	14	*
attractive	1	14	*
dead	1	13	*
busy	0	12	*
incredible	0	10	*
odd	0	9	*
primary	0	9	*

* = $p < 0.05$, ** = $p < 0.01$, *** = $p < 0.001$

In this table, it is worth noting that *good* and *great* are underused by learners in the spoken corpus, while overused in the written learner corpus (cf. Table 4.5). This may suggest a misunderstanding of the level of formality of these adjectives. However, it seems unlikely that the Swedish learners view the adjective *good* as particularly formal. Rather, the overuse of *good* in written learner texts is probably a matter of inadequate register awareness, or lack of more formal synonyms. For example, *very good teacher, good status* and *good knowledge* may be replaced by *highly competent teacher*, *high status* and perhaps *profound* or *thorough knowledge*. The underuse of *good* in the learners' spoken English, on the other

hand, may be due to the considerably higher frequency of *nice*, which to some extent "replaces" the adjective *good*.

The high frequency of *right* in the native-speaker corpus is mainly due to the phrase *that's right,* which seems especially typical of the native speakers. Furthermore, there seem to be several "strong" (most of which would classify as *limit* or *extreme* adjectives (cf. section 2.1.2.1) among the ones used more frequently by the native speakers, typically *brilliant*, *amazing, awful, massive, full, major* and *incredible*. The learners, on the other hand, more frequently use *beautiful, perfect, crazy* and *wild*, as can be seen in Table 4.7. The native speakers' use of the adjective *attractive* partly "replaces" the learners' use of *beautiful*, as 10 out of 13 occurrences are found in the picture description.

4.1.1.5 Summary

In the material investigated, the Swedish learners use adjectives more frequently in their argumentative writing than the native speakers of English. The five most frequent adjectives in Swedish learner writing are *new*, *Swedish*, *different*, *important* and *good*, which are very similar to the five most frequent adjectives in native writing, i.e. *good*, *important*, *single*, *new* and *different*. As *Swedish* and *single* are highly topic-related in the written corpora, we may temporarily disregard these two adjectives and state that the most frequent adjectives are the same in learner and native writing. An important difference, however, is the significantly higher frequency of these adjectives in the learner corpus.

In the spoken corpora, too, the most frequent adjectives are very similar in the learner and native-speaker corpora. In order of decreasing frequency, the Swedish learners' most frequent adjectives are *nice*, *good*, *different*, *Swedish* and *big*, while the native speakers' are *good*, *nice*, *different*, *right* and *big*. *Nice* and *different* are overused by the learners, while *good* and *right* are underused. The high frequency of *right* in the native corpus is mainly due to the numerous occurrences of the pragmatic marker *that's right*. Also, "strong" adjectives – such as *brilliant, amazing, incredible, massive* and *awful* – seem to be generally underused in the learner corpus.

4.1.2 Degree-modified adjectives

Having accounted for the overall use of adjectives in the different corpora, we now move on to the degree-modified adjectives, the focus of the study. Here, manual selection and calculation has proved the most suitable method, as each particular case of modifier + adjective has to be taken into consideration and checked for relevance for the investigation.

This section has the same structure as 4.1.1, beginning with an account of the frequency of degree-modified adjectives, followed by variation in terms of type/token ratios and the most frequent items, and concluding with statistically significant differences between native speakers and learners.

4.1.2.1 Frequency

In Table 4.9, the total number of degree-modified adjectives is shown, together with their percentage of all adjectives and their frequency per 100 000 words, based on the manually calculated version. As earlier mentioned, adjectives in the comparative and superlative as well as un-modifiable adjectives are included in the calculation of all adjectives, since the gradability of adjectives can change and adapt to different contexts and, consequently, is not readily assigned to each individual occurrence. Hence, the percentage of modified adjectives, shown in Table 4.9, is not an indicator of how many adjectives are modified out of the total number of *modifiable* adjectives, but of adjectives in general, except for the categories excluded, as mentioned in section 4.1.1., e.g. quantifiers, determiners, ordinals and discourse markers.

Table 4.9. Frequency of degree-modified adjectives in the four main corpora

Corpus	Degree-modified adjectives (raw occurrences)	% of all adjectives	Frequency /100 000 words
SWE wr	641	5.6	395
NAT wr	471	4.4	291
SWE sp	801	27.4	1 115
NAT sp	1 378	28.4	1 141
Total	**3 291**		

As shown in Table 4.9, the adjectives in the written texts are much more rarely degree-modified than the adjectives in the spoken corpora. While a mere 4–6 per cent of the adjectives in the written corpora are degree-modified, almost a third of the adjectives in the spoken corpora come with degree modification. The higher frequency of adjective modification in spoken texts also agrees with Biber et al.'s (1999:545) findings, which suggests that these differences are to be expected. Similar to the overall use of adjectives (section 4.1.1), Swedish learners follow the same pattern as native speakers with a higher frequency of adjective modification in spoken English.

However, if we combine Tables 4.1 and 4.9, we may conclude that the Swedish learners show a tendency both to use more adjectives and to modify adjectives more often than the native speakers in their written production (the difference in frequency of degree-modified adjectives in the written corpora is statistically significant at $p < 0.001$). This difference is not seen in the spoken corpora, in which learners and native speakers use degree modification of adjectives to a similar degree. The very slight difference between the two spoken corpora has no statistical significance. In this case, contrary to the Swedish learners' higher frequency of adjectives in their written production, we may consider the possibility of influence from spoken language, as this register shows a higher frequency of adjective modification.

In Chapter 5, these similarities and differences will be further looked into, for example with regard to the type of modification used and whether the differences found can be referred to general or individual use.

4.1.2.2 Variation: type/token ratio

After the brief account, in the preceding section, of the degree-modified adjectives with respect to number of tokens and frequency per 100 000 words, a few words should be said about the number of degree-modified adjective types, making it possible to calculate the type/token ratio and compare word variation between the corpora.

As it may be expected that learners' vocabulary is more restricted than that of native speakers, or that fewer types are used by learners in order to save effort and increase speed in their spoken language production (which is, of course, the case in native-speaker production as well but perhaps not to the same degree), it should be of interest to see if there are differences in word variation between the corpora. In Table 4.10, the type/token ratios of the degree-modified adjectives in the corpora are shown.

Table 4.10. Type/token ratios: degree-modified adjectives

Corpus	Types	Tokens	Type/token ratio
SWE wr	316	641	49.3
NAT wr	253	471	53.7
SWE sp	274	801	34.2
NAT sp	425	1 378	30.8

Table 4.10 shows that the Swedish learners, although using more adjective modification and more adjective types (316 types vs. 253 in the native-speaker texts), vary their modified adjectives less (49.3) than the native speakers (53.7) in their written production, which agrees with the expectations expressed above. Somewhat surprisingly, however, the Swedish learners show more variation of degree-modified adjectives in their spoken English (34.2) than the native speakers do (30.8). However, the number of types in relation to tokens decreases as the number of words increases, as there are only a limited number of words to use in a language. Thus, since the spoken native corpus is larger than the spoken Swedish-learner corpus (see section 3.1.2.2), the difference in type/token ratio may be size-related. The raw number of types is still higher in the native-speaker corpus (425) than in the Swedish-learner corpus (274).

In the next section, the most frequent degree-modified adjective types used will be briefly accounted for.

4.1.2.3 Most frequent degree-modified adjectives

Tables 4.1 and 4.9 have shown that the Swedish learners differ from the native speakers with regard to how often adjectives are used and modified in their written texts. Also, the variation of degree-modified adjectives is lower in the written learner texts, but higher in the spoken ones, in relation to native-speaker texts. As pointed out above, however, there are more degree-modified adjective types in the written learner corpus than in the written native corpus, and fewer degree-modified adjective types in the spoken learner corpus than in the spoken native corpus. Therefore, to get a clearer view of the usage, we will compare the most frequent degree-modified adjectives in the corpora, as shown in Tables 4.11 (written corpora) and 4.12 (spoken corpora). In Table 4.11, degree-modified adjectives with fewer than five occurrences have been excluded.

Table 4.11. Most frequent degree-modified adjectives: written corpora

SWE wr	tokens	NAT wr	tokens
important	31	*important*	21
different	27	*strong*	15
good	21	*good*	12
new	17	*different*	10
difficult	13	*impossible*	10
educated	8	*effective*	8
hard	8	*difficult*	7
aware	7	*applicable*	6
interesting	7	*male*	6
large	7	*accepted*	5
popular	7	*available*	5
bad	6	*high*	5
easy	6	*low*	5
happy	6	*rare*	5
high	6	*true*	5
impossible	6	*weak*	5
connected	5		
dangerous	5		
dependent	5		
likely	5		
negative	5		
poor	5		
simple	5		
successful	5		
true	5		
worried	5		

As readily seen, the most frequently modified adjective in the written corpora is *important*. As the essays are meant to be argumentative, supporting and proving the writer's point, *important* is certainly a natural adjective to use. It is almost exclusively reinforced in both corpora (see further Appendix IV).

Table 4.11 also shows that *good*, *different* and *difficult* are among the most frequently modified adjectives in both Swedish and native-speaker texts, whereas the Swedish learners alone include *new*, *educated* and *hard* among the most

frequently modified adjectives (at least eight occurrences). The native speakers, on the other hand, seem to prefer to modify the adjectives *strong* and *effective*, amongst others. These two adjectives are also generally underused by the Swedish learners (cf. Table 4.6).

It is also noticeable that the number of different types of modified adjectives of at least five occurrences is higher in the learner corpus. This is likely to be due to the higher number of degree-modified adjectives in total (641 in the learner corpus vs. 471 in the native corpus) and of types of degree-modified adjectives in total (316 in the learner corpus vs. 253 in the native corpus).

In the spoken corpora, where the number of occurrences of modified adjectives is considerably higher than in the written corpora, the frequency limit is set at eight occurrences, for reasons of space. The most frequent degree-modified adjectives in the spoken corpora are found in Table 4.12 (in order of decreasing frequency).

Table 4.12. Most frequent degree-modified adjectives: spoken corpora

SWE sp	tokens	NAT sp	tokens
good	71	*good*	161
nice	65	*nice*	79
different	40	*different*	46
small	20	*bad*	34
happy	18	*interesting*	35
big	17	*difficult*	33
beautiful	16	*happy*	30
interesting	16	*big*	23
hard	12	*amazing*	19
pleased	12	*interested*	17
friendly	11	*friendly*	15
difficult	10	*impressed*	14
long	10	*funny*	13
interested	8	*hot*	13
nervous	8	*weird*	13
warm	8	*impressive*	12
		small	12
		long	11
		beautiful	10
		strange	10
		sure	10
		lucky	9
		pleased	9
		warm	9
		hard	8
		high	8

As shown in Table 4.12, the adjectives *good*, *nice* and *different* are the three most frequently modified ones in the spoken corpora, regardless of whether the speakers are native or Swedish learners. It is worth noting that all of the frequently modified adjectives in the learner corpus are also found among the most frequent modified adjectives in the native corpus, except the adjective *nervous*, which is learner-specific. Also, there is greater variation to be found among the most frequently modified adjectives in the native-speaker corpus,

where *bad, amazing, impressed, funny, weird, impressive, strange, sure, lucky* and *high* are also included.

Obviously, the choice of adjectives is, to some extent, influenced by the genre and context of the text production. While the written texts are argumentative – hence the most frequently modified adjective *important* (cf. above) – the choice of adjectives in the spoken texts is affected by the topic discussed, the kinds of questions posed and the individual character of the interviewee, to mention a few important parameters. The high frequency of the degree-modified adjective *happy* in the spoken corpora, for instance, is found to be related to the "picture description" part of the interview (cf. section 4.1.1.4), in which the reaction of the portrayed lady is described (see section 3.1.2.2), as in the following extract.:

(4:1) we have a: woman who's getting er her portrait painted . and I think she's **not very happy** about the way she looks . cos she goes up and . comments about it . and then the painter . changes a few things .. and she seems much more happy about it (SWE sp 01)

In example (4:2), the fact that the interviewer uses the adjective *small* may have affected the student's use of it as well:

(4:2) <A> so you grew up in a **small** town is that <X> </A>
<B> <breathes> (eh) actually I was born in Gothenburg </B>
<A> all <overlap /> right </A>
<B> <overlap /> (mm) <tuts> and I moved to a **very very small** <starts laughing> village <stops laughing> when I <overlap /> was (em) . </B>
<A> <overlap /> (uhu) </A>
<B> oh four . years old <breathes> and now as a grown-up I moved to this (eh) . Lilla Edet it's a **small** place too a **small** town . I like **small** <starts laughing> towns <stops laughing> </B> (SWE sp 33)

On an individual level, finally, there may be preferences for a certain adjective, e.g. *different*, as in this extract:

(4:3) <B> it's **very different** in **different** places </B>
<A> yeah </A>
<B> and also the people that's one thing that Swedes <swallows> don't really know the= .. they they can ask me about Americans how they are just like you did now </B>
<A> yes </A>

<B> and . it it depends on where they live actually <overlap /> their so di= their </B>
<A> <overlap /> (mm) </A>
<B> lifestyles are so **different** and (eh) . the way they think </B>
<A> (mm) </A>
<B> is **different** </B> (SWE sp 14)

In the next section, frequency differences that are statistically significant are presented, to be used as a basis for some further discussion in Chapter 5.

4.1.2.4 Statistically significant frequency differences

Most differences in individual degree-modified adjective frequencies between learner and native-speaker corpora are so small as to be statistically non-significant, thus likely to be coincidental. However, a few of the modified adjectives show statistically significant differences between learners and native speakers, as accounted for in Tables 4.13–16 below. Tables 4.13 and 4.15 list the adjectives used more frequently in the learner corpora, i.e. overused by the learners, whereas the adjectives in Tables 4.14 and 4.16 are used more frequently in the native-speaker corpora, i.e. underused by the learners. The adjectives are ordered from higher statistical significance to lower, and within each level of statistical significance from the highest number of tokens to the lowest in the corpus with the highest frequency.

Table 4.13. Degree-modified adjectives with statistically significant overuse in the written learner corpus

Modified adjective	Tokens in SWE wr	Tokens in NAT wr	Statistical significance
different	27	10	**
new	17	4	**
educated	8	1	*
interesting	7	0	*

* = p < 0.05, ** = p < 0.01, *** = p < 0.001

As Table 4.13 shows, *different, new, educated* and *interesting* are modified significantly more often in the written learner corpus. The frequent modification of *different* and *new* is particularly significant, probably due to the higher number

of tokens compared to the relatively few occurrences of *educated* and *interesting*. Comparing these results with Table 4.3 and Table 4.5, we note that *different* and *new* are overall more frequent as well as more often modified in the written learner corpus. They are modified by some ten different modifier types, the most frequent of which are *very [different], totally [different], entirely [new]* and *completely [new]*. However, there does not seem to be any direct relation between this overuse and the topic of the essays.

An equal number of modified adjectives are significantly underrepresented in the written learner corpus, i.e. underused, as shown in Table 4.14:

Table 4.14. Degree-modified adjectives with statistically significant underuse in the written learner corpus

Modified adjective	**Tokens in SWE wr**	**Tokens in NAT wr**	**Statistical significance**
strong	2	15	**
effective	1	8	*
applicable	0	6	*
male	0	6	*

* = p < 0.05, ** = p < 0.01, *** = p < 0.001

Table 4.14 shows that *strong, effective, applicable* and *male* as modified adjectives are underrepresented in relation to the native-speaker corpus. In the latter corpus, they appear in collocations with both wide applicability, e.g. *very strong* and *very effective*, and narrow applicability, such as *directly applicable* and *all male*. The difference in frequency of modification of *strong* stands out in particular. As Table 4.6 shows, *strong* and *effective* are also generally more frequent in the written native-speaker corpus, i.e. without modification.

In the spoken corpora, only two adjectives are used significantly more frequently by the learners, as shown in Table 4.15.

Table 4.15. Degree-modified adjectives with statistically significant overuse in the spoken learner corpus

Modified adjective	Tokens in SWE sp	Tokens in NAT sp	Statistical significance
small	20	12	**
beautiful	16	10	*

* = p < 0.05, ** = p < 0.01, *** = p < 0.001

As can be seen from Table 4.15, *small* and *beautiful* are more frequently modified by the learners. Both these adjectives are also found to be overall more frequent in the spoken learner corpus (see Table 4.7). The most frequent modifiers used with *small* and *beautiful* in the spoken learner corpus are *very* and *so*.

Degree-modified adjectives with significantly higher frequency in the spoken native corpus, i.e. underused in the spoken learner corpus, are shown in Table 4.16.

Table 4.16. Degree-modified adjectives with statistically significant underuse in the spoken learner corpus

Modified adjective	Tokens in SWE sp	Tokens in NAT sp	Statistical significance
bad	5	34	**
good	71	161	*
amazing	2	19	*
lucky	0	9	*

* = p < 0.05, ** = p < 0.01, *** = p < 0.001

Table 4.16 shows that the native corpus contains significantly more occurrences of the modified adjectives *bad*, *good, amazing* and *lucky*. The high frequency of modified *bad* in the native corpus is partly due to the native use of the phrase *not too bad*, which occurs 16 times. Another significant difference between natives and Swedish learners is the use of the collocation *really good*, which occurs 70 times in the native corpus and only 14 times in the Swedish learner corpus, an important factor for the difference in the use of modified *good*.

If we compare the written corpora with the spoken ones, it is noticeable that only two adjectives are overused in the spoken learner corpus, despite the fact

that there are a great many more modifier-adjective occurrences in the spoken corpora, giving a higher probability of statistical significance. This further underlines the relative similarity between the two spoken corpora.

4.1.2.5 Summary

Summing up, Swedish learners modify adjectives more frequently in their written texts in comparison with native speakers, a feature that may reflect spoken language features. The most frequent modified adjectives in the written learner corpus are *important*, *different*, *good*, *new* and *difficult*, all of which, except *difficult*, are also the most frequent adjectives used overall. The native speakers' top modified adjectives in written texts are *important*, *strong*, *good*, *different* and *impossible*. Modified *different* and *new* are overused by Swedish learners, while modified *strong* is underused.

In the spoken corpora, the adjectives most frequently modified by the learners are *good*, *nice*, *different*, *small* and *happy*. The top three in the native-speaker corpus are identical, i.e. *good*, *nice* and *different*, followed by the modified adjectives *bad* and *interesting*. Modified *small* is overused by the Swedish learners, while modified *good* and *bad* are underused. *Nice*, *different* and *happy* are overused overall but not when modified. The higher frequency of modified *bad* and *good* in the native-speaker corpus is mainly due to the frequent phrases *not too bad* and *really good*.

4.2 Modifiers

Having accounted for the use of adjectives in the four corpora, overall and with degree modification, we will now focus on the subordinate constituent of the adjective phrase, i.e. the modifier. As in sections 4.1.1 and 4.1.2, this section will account for the frequency of modifiers, both as a group and individually, their variation and most frequent types, as well as the statistically significant differences in frequency between native and learner corpora.

4.2.1 Frequency

Since modified adjectives and their modifiers are two halves of the same modifier-adjective combinations that form the basis of this study, the number of raw occurrences and frequency per 100 000 words of degree modifiers will, of course, be the same as those in Table 4.9 ("Frequency of degree-modified adjectives in the four main corpora"), as shown in Table 4.17:

Table 4.17. Frequency of degree modifiers in the four main corpora

Corpus	Degree modifiers (tokens)	Frequency /100 000 words
SWE wr	641	395
NAT wr	471	291
SWE sp	801	1 115
NAT sp	1 378	1 141
Total	**3 291**	

As was shown in Table 4.9, there is no significant difference between the two spoken corpora with regard to the frequency of adjectives overall or degree-modified adjectives; this also applies to the frequency of adjective modifiers. In the written corpora, however, the higher frequency of all kinds of adjectives in the learner corpus is significant. Even more so is the learners' higher frequency of modified adjectives and, consequently, adjective modifiers (395/100 000 vs. 291/100 000 words). Thus, while the learners' use of adjective modification in written text is more frequent than that of native speakers (to be further discussed in section 5.2), the frequency of adjective modification in spoken corpora is strikingly similar between learners and native speakers.

The differences found in Table 4.17 give reason to look further into the more frequent use of adjectives and modifiers in the learners' written texts. Before that, however, we will consider the variation of modifiers, the most frequent ones used and differences in the frequency of individual modifiers between learner and native corpora.

4.2.2 Variation: type/token ratio

As the modifier tokens have been accounted for in the previous section, the number of modifier types will here be presented and used as a basis for calculating the type/token ratio as an indication of word variation between the corpora.

As already shown (Table 4.10), the type/token ratio of degree-modified adjectives lies between around 30 in the spoken corpora and around 50 in the written ones. It may be expected that the modifiers are not as varied as the modified adjectives, since modifiers tend to be function words to a much higher degree than do adjectives, which are normally words with explicitly lexical content.[60] We may also expect lower variation in the spoken corpora, as written language can be revised and more carefully planned, whereas spoken language needs to be quick and effective. In Table 4.18, Swedish learners and native speakers are compared with regard to the type/token ratio of modifiers in written and spoken English, respectively.

Table 4.18. Type/token ratios: degree modifiers

Corpus	Types	Tokens	Type/token ratio
SWE wr	94	641	14.7
NAT wr	99	471	21.0
SWE sp	53	801	6.6
NAT sp	81	1 378	5.9

As expected, modifiers vary to a considerably lower degree than adjectives, with a ratio of approximately 6–7 in the spoken corpora and around 15–20 in the written ones. The higher degree of variation in the written corpora was also expected, although the number of tokens is considerably higher in the spoken ones. This means that a large number of tokens belonging to a few modifier types are used in the spoken corpora. Interestingly, Table 4.18 also shows that Swedish learners follow the same pattern as in their use and variation of adjectives, displaying lower word variation than native speakers in their written

[60] For example, Bolinger (1972:18) states that "if there are function words, *very* is surely one of them".

texts (14.7 vs. 21.0), but somewhat higher variation in their spoken texts (6.6 vs. 5.9). The ratio of modifier variation in the written learner corpus (14.7) is particularly low, which means that this is the most salient difference from the type/token calculation of both adjectives and modifiers. However, the difference seems to be due to the learners' more frequent use of modifiers (i.e. the number of tokens) rather than fewer types. As the number of types and the size of the written corpora are very similar between learners and native speakers, the difference therefore lies in more frequent use rather than less word variation.

4.2.3 Most frequent modifiers

As Tables 4.11 and 4.12 have presented the most frequent degree-modified adjective types, the most frequent modifiers in each corpus are worth some attention. These are shown in Tables 4.19 (written corpora) and 4.20 (spoken corpora) below. Frequencies of less than five occurrences have been excluded.

Table 4.19. Most frequent degree modifiers: written corpora

SWE wr	tokens	NAT wr	tokens
very	217	*very*	168
quite	37	*so*	22
totally	26	*highly*	19
extremely	25	*quite*	18
highly	21	*extremely*	16
so	20	*all*	12
rather	19	*directly*	9
completely	17	*rather*	9
really	16	*completely*	7
a bit	14	*widely*	7
fairly	14	*fully*	6
almost	13	*particularly*	6
more or less	10	*relatively*	6
entirely	9	*somewhat*	6
not so	9	*a bit*	5
not very	9	*easily*	5
absolutely	7	*especially*	5
fully	6	*perfectly*	5
seemingly	6	*readily*	5
NEG[61] *very*	6	*really*	5
closely	5	*truly*	5
comparatively	5		
strictly	5		

Table 4.19 shows that *very* is by far the most frequent adjective modifier in the written corpora. This modifier – along with *quite*, *extremely, highly, rather*, *so, completely, really, a bit* and *fully* – is shared by both learners and native speakers, but some of the frequencies may be significantly different. The Swedish learners also seem to prefer, e.g., *totally, fairly, almost, more or less, entirely, not so, not very, absolutely* and *seemingly*, whereas the native speakers more frequently use the modifiers *all, directly, widely, relatively, somewhat, easily, especially, particularly, perfectly* and *readily*.

[61] "NEG" represents all types of negation except *not* (placed immediately before the adverb), as in *she doesn't look very happy, I never was very good at* and *I don't think she's very comfortable.*

The most frequent degree modifiers in the spoken corpora are shown in Table 4.20.

Table 4.20. Most frequent degree modifiers: spoken corpora

SWE sp	tokens	NAT sp	tokens
very	274	*very*	330
really	100	*really*	257
so	69	*quite*	239
quite	56	*so*	95
a bit	44	*a bit*	84
not very	37	*not very*	31
not that	24	*just*	27
kind of	19	*not too*	27
sort of	18	*sort of*	25
pretty	17	*pretty*	21
not so	14	*NEG very*	18
NEG very	13	*absolutely*	17
a little bit	12	*completely*	16
completely	7	*fairly*	13
not too	7	*NEG too*	12
rather	7	*particularly*	12
absolutely	6	*just so*	11
extremely	6	*rather*	11
totally	5	*totally*	10
NEG so	5	*all*	8
NEG too	5	*kind of*	8
		not quite	7
		a little bit	5
		a lot	5
		not that	5

Not very surprisingly, Table 4.20 shows that *very* is the most frequently used adjective modifier also in the spoken corpora. However, two more modifiers are also strikingly frequent in the native-speaker corpus, viz. *really* and *quite*. The top six modifiers are the same in both spoken corpora (*very, really, so, quite, a bit* and *not very*), but further down the corpora start to diverge a little. For example,

learners use *not that, kind of, not so* and *a little bit* more frequently than native speakers, while native speakers use, e.g., *not too* and *fairly* more frequently. Other shared modifiers are *sort of, pretty, NEG very, completely, not too, rather* and *absolutely*. This gives a hint of the differences we might find in a comparison of frequency per 100 000 words between the corpora. However, further calculations are necessary in order to pinpoint the differences with statistical significance.

4.2.4 Statistically significant frequency differences

A number of modifiers with significant differences in frequency can be listed, as shown in Tables 4.21 and 4.22. The modifiers are ordered from higher statistical significance to lower, and within each level of statistical significance from the highest number of tokens to the lowest in the corpus with the highest frequency.

Table 4.21. Degree modifiers with statistically significant overuse in the written learner corpus

Modifier	Tokens in SWE wr	Tokens in NAT wr	Statistical significance
totally	26	4	***
very	217	168	*
quite	37	19	*
really	16	5	*
fairly	14	4	*
more or less	10	1	*

* = $p < 0.05$, ** = $p < 0.01$, *** = $p < 0.001$

As can be seen from Table 4.21, there is one particularly overused modifier in the written learner corpus, viz. *totally*. The learners use it for modifying a range of adjectives, although *totally different* is especially frequent with six occurrences. The collocations with *totally* are not, generally speaking, un-English (all are found in the BNC except two, which can, on the other hand, be found on English websites). However, there may be combinations of *totally* plus adjective in the learner corpus that give an impression of making up an "unnecessary" or too informal kind of modification for an academic essay (cf. section 4.3). This possibility is further explored in sections 5.2.1.2 and 5.2.2.

Also significantly overused, but to a lesser degree, are *very, quite, really, fairly* and *more or less*. The overuse of these modifiers may also indicate that the learners use more informal language in their written texts, a matter that needs further comparison with the spoken native corpus.

The modifiers which are underused, i.e. significantly more frequent in the native corpus, are shown in Table 4.22.

Table 4.22. Degree modifiers with statistically significant underuse in the written learner corpus

Modifier	Tokens in SWE wr	Tokens in NAT wr	Statistical significance
all	3	12	*
directly	1	9	*

* = p < 0.05, ** = p < 0.01, *** = p < 0.001

Only two modifiers are used significantly more frequently in the native speakers' written texts, viz. *all* and *directly*. The few occurrences of *all* as adjective modifier in the learner corpus are more or less set phrases, such as *all alone* and *all well and fine*, which shows that the student in question is familiar with the idiomatic use of this modifier, but it is still quite limited. In the native corpus, *all* is combined in particular with *male/female* and *black/white*, as in *an all female dorm* or *an all black school*, but also with *important* and *powerful*. *All* is also used in the spoken native corpus, where it is combined more freely, as in *all drab, all insulted, all self-contained, all modern. Directly* is mainly used with *applicable* in the native corpus, a collocation that is absent from the learner corpus.

In the spoken corpora, which provide considerably more occurrences of adjective modifiers than the written ones, there are also somewhat more modifiers with statistically significant differences in use between the corpora, especially underused modifiers, as seen in Tables 4.23 and 4.24.

Table 4.23. Degree modifiers with statistically significant overuse in the spoken learner corpus

Modifier	Tokens in SWE sp	Tokens in NAT sp	Statistical significance
very	274	330	***
not that	24	5	***
kind of	19	8	***
not so	14	4	***
not very	37	31	**
a little bit	12	5	**

* = p < 0.05, ** = p < 0.01, *** = p < 0.001

As Table 4.23 shows, Swedish learners use *very, not that, kind of, not so, not very* and *a little bit* more frequently, to a degree that is statistically significant. Obviously, the combination of *not* and *that*, *so* or *very* forms an important part of the overrepresented modifiers in the spoken learner corpus. This is further discussed in section 5.3.2.2.

The learners' overuse of *kind of* should probably be viewed in the light of known differences between British and American English. As *kind of* is used more frequently in American English (cf. Biber et al. 1999:562) and the native speakers of the spoken corpus are all British, we cannot refer to the overuse of *kind of* in the learner corpus as "un-native" without further comparison. Such a comparison may include, for instance, the total frequency of *sort of* and *kind of* in both corpora, as well as the occurrences in a corpus of spoken American English, used as reference. For such comparison, see section 5.3.2.2.

It may seem counter-intuitive that the lower number of occurrences of *very* in the learner corpus results in a significant overuse in relation to the native corpus, but this is due to the larger number of words in the native corpus. The frequency per 100 000 words is 381 in the learner corpus and 273 in the native corpus, which gives a statistically significant overuse of *very* by the learners. As Table 4.21 shows, *very* is also overused in the written learner corpus, which implies a general overuse of this modifier by the Swedish advanced learners, in spoken as well as written English.

Some modifiers are, instead, underused by the Swedish learners, i.e. they are used more frequently by the native speakers, to a statistically significant degree. These are shown in Table 4.24.

Table 4.24. Degree modifiers with statistically significant underuse in the spoken learner corpus

Modifier	Tokens in SWE sp	Tokens in NAT sp	Statistical significance
really	100	257	***
quite	56	239	***
just	4	27	**
fairly	0	13	*
just so	0	11	*

* = p < 0.05, ** = p < 0.01, *** = p < 0.001

The native speakers, as Table 4.24 shows, use *really, quite, just, fairly* and *just so* to a significantly higher degree than the Swedish learners. The most common collocations (cf. section 4.3) in the native corpus of these modifiers are (in order of decreasing frequency): *really good, really nice, quite difficult, quite good, quite nice, quite interested, quite interesting, really interesting* and *just amazing*. *Fairly* and *just so* are combined with different adjectives in all occurrences. As *quite*, *really* and *fairly* are underused in spoken learner texts, while overused in written learner texts (cf. Table 4.21), it seems that the Swedish learners have misjudged the level of formality of these modifiers. As with the overuse of *kind of* (see above), however, the underuse of *quite* – a modifier that is more frequent in British English (cf. Biber et al. 1999:561) – needs to be seen in relation to spoken American English, as will be done in section 5.3.2.1.

It is noticeable in Tables 4.23 and 4.24 that, although the two spoken corpora show many similarities (concerning frequency of modified and unmodified adjectives, frequency of modifiers, variation of adjectives and modifiers, and most frequent types of modified adjectives and modifiers), they also show the highest number of statistically significant differences in individual modifiers, and the highest number of overused and underused items with a high level of statistical significance (p < 0.001). As pointed out earlier, this may partly be due to the larger number of occurrences in the spoken corpora, as more data will increase the probability of statistically significant frequency differences. Still, some interesting details can be observed. For instance, the modifiers which are overused in the spoken learner corpus are all – with the exception of *very* – attenuators or hedges, viz. *not that, kind of, not so, not very, a little bit* and *NEG*

so, while the majority of the underused modifiers in the spoken learner corpus are reinforcers, viz. *really, just, just so* and, to some extent, *quite*. This suggests "over-attenuation" and "under-reinforcing" in the learners' spoken English, a tendency further discussed in section 5.3.

4.2.5 Summary

Summing up, we know from section 4.1.2 that the Swedish learners modify adjectives more frequently than the native speakers in their written output. The most frequent modifiers in the written learner corpus are *very*, *quite*, *totally*, *extremely* and *highly*, and in the native speaker corpus *very, so, highly, quite* and *extremely*. The Swedish learners overuse the modifiers *totally, very, quite, really, fairly* and *more or less* in their written texts, and underuse *all* and *directly*. In the spoken corpora, the five most frequent modifiers are identical in both learner and native speech, viz. *very, really, so, quite* and *a bit*. The native speakers, however, use *quite* more frequently than *so*. Frequencies per 100 000 words show that Swedish learners overuse *very* and combinations of negation and *that*, *so* or *very*, while underusing *really*, *quite, just, fairly* and *just so*.

4.3 Collocations

Collocations of modifiers and adjectives have been exemplified earlier in this chapter, illustrating some of the differences or similarities in frequency. We will now focus on the most frequent modifier-adjective collocations in the four corpora, as well as giving a few infrequent, but salient examples.

Analysing how modifiers and adjectives combine in the four corpora may give further insight into the differences and similarities found when studying adjectives or modifiers separately. It is of interest, for example, if an adjective used more frequently by native speakers is part of a "narrow" collocation – i.e. a combination in which one or both constituents combine with a restricted range of items – such as *directly applicable* or *readily available*; if conventions of semantic prosody are disregarded by the learners; and if the items combined belong to different levels of formality, as in *jolly formal* (cf. Paradis 1997:66).

4.3.1 Frequent collocations: written corpora

The most frequent collocations involving modifiers and adjectives in the four corpora are shown in Tables 4.25 (written texts) and 4.26 (spoken texts). Collocations with at least three occurrences have been included, those with the lowest frequency (3–4 occurrences) mainly for illustration.

Table 4.25. Most frequent modifier-adjective collocations in written corpora

SWE wr		**tokens**	**NAT wr**		**tokens**
very	*important*	23	*very*	*important*	14
very	*good*	10	*very*	*strong*	10
very	*difficult*	8	*very*	*good*	8
very	*different*	7	*directly*	*applicable*	6
totally	*different*	6	*readily*	*available*	5
very	*hard*	6	*very*	*difficult*	5
closely	*connected*	5	*all*	*male*	4
highly	*educated*	5	*fully*	*integrated*	4
very	*interesting*	5	*very*	*competitive*	4
very	*simple*	5	*widely*	*accepted*	4
entirely	*new*	4	*all*	*female*	3
quite	*different*	4	*easily*	*accessible*	3
very	*large*	4	*extremely*	*important*	3
completely	*different*	3	*highly*	*respected*	3
completely	*new*	3	*very*	*big*	3
extremely	*difficult*	3	*very*	*dangerous*	3
poorly	*educated*	3	*very*	*effective*	3
quite	*convinced*	3	*very*	*long*	3
quite	*sure*	3	*very*	*low*	3
very	*high*	3	*very*	*popular*	3
very	*likely*	3	*very*	*powerful*	3
very	*personal*	3	*very*	*rare*	3
very	*popular*	3	*very*	*real*	3
very	*similar*	3	*very*	*significant*	3
very	*unfortunate*	3	*very*	*specific*	3
			virtually	*impossible*	3

Unsurprisingly, considering the fact that *very* is the most frequent modifier (see Table 4.19) and *important* the most frequent adjective (see Table 4.11) in the written corpora, Table 4.25 shows that *very important* is the most frequent modifier-adjective collocation in both written corpora. The collocation is more frequent in the learner corpus, but the difference is not statistically significant. *Very good* and *very difficult* are also frequent in both written corpora, while *very strong* seems to be primarily a native-speaker collocation. As seen in Table 4.13, the higher frequency of *different* in the learner corpus is statistically significant. Table 4.25 shows that *different* collocates with a number of frequent modifiers in the learner corpus – *very different, totally different, quite different* and *completely different* – combinations that constitute a majority of the 27 occurrences of this adjective (cf. Table 4.11). It is interesting to note that *different* is not found among the most frequent collocations in the written native-speaker corpus. As mentioned in section 4.1.2.4, there does not seem to be any relation between the topic treated in the learner essays and the use of *different* with degree modification. The use is spread across topics and essays, thus not restricted to a few individuals.

In addition to *very strong*, some of the relatively frequent collocations in the native-speaker corpus are interesting in that they do not appear at all in the learner corpus. Those are, e.g., *directly applicable, readily available, all male/female, fully integrated, very competitive, widely accepted, extremely important* and *highly respected*, most of which may be considered as relatively "narrow" collocations, i.e. they consist of items that are restricted to a few adjectives or modifiers rather than widely applicable and versatile. Earlier studies have shown that this type of collocation is avoided by learners (cf. Granger 1998b:150 and Lorenz 1999:128; cf. also section 2.3), to be further discussed in section 5.2.2.

There are also collocations with the more versatile, "all-purpose" modifier *very* found to be frequent in the native corpus while absent from the learner texts. Those are *very big, very powerful, very real, very significant* and *very specific*.

A more thorough collocational analysis may be performed through a *collostructional* analysis (cf. Gries & Stefanowitch 2004) of the modifiers and adjectives in the study. This would give a full, more in-depth account of the preferred combinations of the modifiers and adjectives used. With the specific, more restricted scope of the present study, however, it has been deemed sufficient to exemplify and discuss alternative modifiers or adjectives used in the corpora, in cases where there are interesting differences or similarities.

4.3.2 Some special cases: learners' written texts

In general, the Swedish learners manage modifier + adjective collocations fairly well; they do not seem to combine modifiers and adjectives in highly unidiomatic ways. Conventions of semantic prosody are normally followed: *perfectly* is combined with the positive adjective *good*, *totally* with negative adjectives such as *impossible* and *irrelevant*, and *a bit* with, e.g., *stupid* and *prejudiced*. However, a few combinations may be regarded as somewhat less felicitous, e.g. *a bit flexible* and *a bit anxious* in (4:4) and (4:5):

(4:4) There is nothing wrong with doing it the traditional way with the regular Christmas package, but if you are just **a bit flexible**, why not do something different this year? (SWE wr UG-55.2)

(4:5) According to me, the only category of human beings we could and we should feel **a bit anxious** for, are the present generation of children. (SWE wr LND-03.3)

According to a native-speaker informant (Börjesson 2006:25f.), the combination of *a bit* and the positive adjective *flexible* gives the rhetorical question in (4:4) a "very sarcastic tone," which is presumably not the writer's intention. The informant also states that the way *a bit anxious* is used in (4:5) "makes it sound 'as if you do not care much'" (2006:25). Other combinations involving *a bit* which may appear slightly unidiomatic, or unusual, are, e.g., *a bit glorifying* and *a bit outnumbered*.

Totally is sometimes used with positive adjectives in the written Swedish-learner corpus, as in *totally free*, *totally new* and *totally assimilated*, which may be regarded as somewhat unconventional, at least in written, more formal style.

An unequal degree of formality between modifier and adjective is also relatively rare in the written learner corpus. The relatively formal modifier *highly*, for example, is idiomatically used with adjectives such as *important*, *controversial*, *technological*, *intellectual* and *unsatisfactory*, and with *–ed* forms such as *urbanised*, *qualified* and *industrialised*. Another example is the informal modifier *just*, which is idiomatically combined with *great*, *right* and *perfect*.

However, a few cases in the Swedish-learner written corpus show slightly strange-sounding collocations, such as *completely headless*, *fully alone* and *scaringly clear*. *Completely headless*, used attributively in *decades of completely headless agricultural programs* (SWE wr LND-43.7) is probably a result of L1 transfer,

considering the ability of the Swedish word *huvudlös* ('headless') to function both literally and in a figurative sense.[62] *Scaringly clear* also seems to be a case of transfer from the Swedish collocation *skrämmande tydlig(t)* into a non-existing modifier (**scaringly*), while *fully alone* does not seem to have any obvious correspondence to Swedish expressions.

4.3.3 Frequent collocations: spoken corpora

The most frequent modifier-adjective collocations in the spoken corpora are shown in Table 4.26. As the spoken corpora have a higher frequency of adjective modifiers, the limit has been set somewhat higher than in Table 4.25. Thus, collocations with at least five occurrences in the learner corpus and six in the native-speaker corpus have been included, to be able to show 20–25 collocations without having to draw the line in the middle of a group of collocations with the same frequency.

[62] Cf., e.g., "320 kronor för sex timmars parkering […] – Det är ju huvudlöst, säger Ulf Johansson, 55" ('320 SEK for six hours' parking […] – Well that's headless, says Ulf Johansson, 55'), in which case *huvudlös(t)* may also be modified by, e.g., *fullständigt* or *helt* ('completely' or 'downright') (*GT/Expressen* online 2 October 2012).

Table 4.26. Most frequent modifier-adjective collocations in spoken corpora

SWE sp		tokens	NAT sp		tokens
very	*nice*	34	*really*	*good*	70
very	*good*	22	*very*	*good*	39
really	*good*	14	*really*	*nice*	32
really	*nice*	13	*very*	*nice*	20
very	*different*	9	*not too*	*bad*	16
very	*interesting*	9	*quite*	*difficult*	15
very	*friendly*	8	*quite*	*good*	15
very	*happy*	7	*quite*	*nice*	15
very	*hard*	7	*very*	*different*	15
very	*small*	7	*very*	*interesting*	11
completely	*different*	6	*quite*	*interested*	10
quite	*good*	6	*quite*	*interesting*	10
very	*beautiful*	6	*really*	*interesting*	9
very	*big*	6	*just*	*amazing*	8
not very	*good*	5	*very*	*difficult*	8
not very	*happy*	5	*very*	*impressive*	8
really	*interesting*	5	*not very*	*good*	7
so	*beautiful*	5	*not very*	*happy*	7
so	*nice*	5	*particularly*	*good*	7
so	*small*	5	*really*	*friendly*	7
totally	*different*	5	*very*	*big*	7
very	*proud*	5	*a bit*	*worried*	6
			quite a	*good*	6
			quite a	*long*	6

As Table 4.26 shows, the spoken corpora diverge somewhat more than the written ones, for example in that the top collocation of the learners' corpus is *very nice*, while the native speakers' most frequent modifier-adjective collocation is *really good*,[63] i.e. neither the modifier nor the adjective is the same. As we have seen in Tables 4.24 and 4.23, *really* is significantly more frequent in the spoken native corpus and *very* is significantly more frequent in the spoken learner

[63] Biber et al. (1999:545), however, covering a wider range of spoken texts, find that the most frequent reinforcer-adjective collocations in British English conversation are *very good* and *very nice*, followed by *really good* and *really nice*.

corpus, which corresponds with the result of Table 4.26 above. Although *very nice* is the most frequent collocation in the spoken learner corpus, there is no overuse of modified *nice* in it (cf. Tables 4.15 and 4.16). There is, however, an underuse of modified *good*, which seems to be mainly related to the many occurrences of *really good*, *very good* and to some extent *quite good* in the native-speaker corpus. Notwithstanding these differences between learners and native speakers, we can conclude from Table 4.26 that the four most frequent modifier-adjective collocations are the same combinations of *really* and *very* with *nice* or *good* in both spoken corpora, although they occur in different order.

Further, Table 4.26 shows that *quite*, which is underused by the learners (see Table 4.24) in relation to the native-speaker corpus, is used especially in combination with *difficult, good, nice, interested* and *interesting*. Also, two fairly strong collocations in the native-speaker corpus are *not too bad* and *just amazing*. The lack of these two collocations in the learner corpus illustrates a first impression that the learners do not necessarily produce unidiomatic or un-English collocations, but nor do they use all the common, native-sounding ones.

In sum, *very important* is the most frequent collocation in the written corpora. *Very good* and *very difficult* are also among the most frequent collocations in both written corpora. However, while the native speakers frequently use *very strong*, the Swedish learners seem to prefer *very different* or *totally different*. Fairly strong and "narrow" collocations are also found in the native corpus, such as *directly applicable* and *readily available*.

In the spoken corpora, combinations of *very* or *really* with *good* or *nice* form the majority of the most frequent collocations. *Quite* is found in several of the most frequent collocations in the native corpus, as well as *not too bad* and *just amazing*, which are very scarce in the spoken learner corpus.

4.4 Distribution across categories: reinforcers and attenuators

As Chapter 2 has illustrated, many modifiers are not easily categorised, due to their ability to change their function according to context, prosody, speaker intent, etc. *Quite different*, for example, can mean 'rather different' or 'completely different'. Diminishers such as *pretty*, *rather*, *fairly* and *quite* may also be used in understatements with a boosting function, but the transcribed words

deprived of the speaker's intonation and gestures are generally insufficient for the interpretation of the understatement. *A bit* may be categorised as a diminisher and *sort of* as a moderator or compromiser (cf., e.g., Quirk et al 1985:598), depending on the terminology used, but *she's a bit weird* and *she's sort of weird* are very similar statements, in that they both tone down a face-threatening act, and so these modifiers could perhaps be placed in the same category. Modifiers may also have more than one clear-cut function or meaning in one particular use, such as *really* or *just*, which have a sentence-modifying function that tends to change into – or towards – a word constituent modification when placed right before the adjective, e.g. *really interesting, just fantastic*.

Assigning modifiers to functional categories is, therefore, a task of some arbitrariness, and so the result can only give an approximation of their distribution. In this respect, a first distinction is made between reinforcers (e.g. *totally different, very good*) and attenuators (e.g. *almost dead, kind of strange, somewhat special, hardly visible*), the distribution of which is seen in Table 4.27. The number of occurrences has been normalised to frequency per 100 000 words.

Table 4.27. Distribution of reinforcers and attenuators

Corpus	Reinforcers	/100 000 words	Attenuators	/100 000 words
SWE wr	467	*287*	174	*107*
NAT wr	379	*234*	92	*57*
SWE sp	512	*713*	289	*402*
NAT sp	860	*712*	518	*429*

In the spoken corpora, as shown in Table 4.27, the frequency of reinforcers is very similar between learners and native speakers, and there is a slightly lower frequency of attenuators in the learner material. However, this difference is too small to be statistically significant and may be regarded as basically coincidental. In the written corpora, on the other hand, the difference is highly significant ($p < 0.001$) in the frequency of attenuators and fairly significant ($p < 0.01$) in the frequency of reinforcers. In other words, the Swedish learners' written English has a higher frequency of reinforcers than native speakers' texts, but more distinctively, the learners' written texts contain considerably more attenuators

(107/100 000 words) than native speakers' written texts (57/100 000 words). We know from Table 4.21 that the Swedish learners overuse the attenuators *quite*, *fairly* and *more or less* in their written texts, but there may be a range of other attenuators that contribute to this difference in frequency in relation to native-speaker texts, a possibility that will be further investigated in section 5.2.1.1.

Reinforcers and attenuators may be further divided into subcategories (cf. section 2.2.3), the distribution of which may cast further light on the differences accounted for in Table 4.27. The following account draws on the terminology and categorisations applied by Bolinger (1972), Quirk et al. (1985) and Allerton (1987) (see section 2.2.4). The following subcategories are used as exemplified by adjectives occurring in the four main corpora used in this study):

Reinforcers:

- Maximizers:
  totally alien, completely erroneous, altogether unhealthy, fully integrated, all alone, absolutely unacceptable, just gorgeous, quite obvious, etc.
- Boosters:
  very difficult, a lot different, so great, highly effective, really friendly, extremely important, particularly painful, etc.

Attenuators:

- Approximators:
  almost illusionistic, virtually impossible, nearly infallible, practically non-existent, not quite sure, *not a hundred per cent confident*, etc.
- Moderators:
  quite weak, rather abstract, kind of interested, sort of modern, good enough, relatively inexpensive, seemingly peaceful, fairly easy, etc.
- Diminishers:
  a bit steep, a little homesick, slightly different, not very fair, not too happy, somewhat vague, partly responsible, etc.
- Minimizers:
  hardly noticeable, not at all natural, in no way newsworthy, etc.

The number of occurrences has been normalised to frequency per 100 000 words and statistically significant differences are given.

Table 4.28. Distribution of subcategories: written corpora

Category	SWE wr		NAT wr		Significance
	Raw	/100 000 words	Raw	/100 000 words	
Maximizers	90	*55*	51	*31*	** (O)
Boosters	*377*	*232*	328	*203*	n.s.
Approximators	17	*10*	18	*11*	n.s.
Moderators	88	*54*	41	*25*	*** (O)
Diminishers	65	*40*	30	*19*	*** (O)
Minimizers	4	*2*	3	*2*	n.s.

* = p < 0.05, ** = p < 0.01, *** = p < 0.001, n.s. = not significant, (O) = overuse, (U) = underuse

As can be seen from Table 4.28, there is a statistically significant difference between learners and native speakers in the frequency of maximizers, moderators and diminishers in the written corpora. It appears that Swedish learners overuse maximizers, moderators and diminishers in relation to native speakers. The most frequent maximizer in the learner corpus is *totally* (cf. Table 4.19), followed by *completely, entirely, absolutely* and *fully*. Frequent moderators in the written learner corpus are *fairly, more or less, quite* and *rather*, which are all also used by the native speakers, but to a much lesser degree. Frequent diminishers in the written learner corpus are *a bit* and variants of the combination of negation + *very* or *so*. Approximators and minimizers, however, are relatively small categories and are used with similar frequency in both learners' and native speakers' written texts. Boosters – the most extensively used category – are also employed to a similar extent in both corpora.

Table 4.29 shows the distribution of subcategories in the spoken corpora.

Table 4.29. Distribution of subcategories: spoken corpora

Category	SWE sp		NAT sp		Significance
	Raw	/100 000 words	Raw	/100 000 words	
Maximizers	27	*38*	91	*75*	** (U)
Boosters	485	*675*	769	*637*	n.s.
Approximators	6	*8*	10	*8*	n.s.
Moderators	107	*149*	301	*249*	*** (U)
Diminishers	172	*239*	203	*168*	*** (O)
Minimizers	4	*6*	4	*3*	n.s.

* = $p < 0.05$, ** = $p < 0.01$, *** = $p < 0.001$, n.s. = not significant, (O) = overuse, (U) = underuse

According to Table 4.29, even though there is no statistically significant difference in the overall use of reinforcers in the spoken corpora (cf. Table 4.27), the relatively few occurrences of maximizers in the learner corpus (27) give a statistically significant difference in relation to the native-speaker corpus. This underuse is probably due to the high frequency of the maximizers *absolutely*, *just* and *completely* in the spoken native corpus. Moderators, overused by the learners in the written texts, are, by contrast, underused in the learners' spoken English. This is most likely due to the very high frequency of the moderator *quite* in the spoken native corpus, but the native speakers' use of *sort of* and *fairly* probably contributes to this difference as well. It seems, furthermore, that diminishers are overused in both written and spoken texts by the Swedish learners. In the spoken learner corpus, the most frequent diminishers are, as in the written texts, *a bit*, *a little bit* and variants of negation + *very*, *that* or *so*. These are also frequent in the native-speaker corpus, but in relation to the total number of words the frequency is higher in the Swedish-learner corpus. Boosters, approximators and minimizers are, as in the written corpora, used to a similar extent.

Summing up, Swedish learners appear to use diminishers (in particular *a bit* and negation + *very*, *that* or *so*) more frequently than native speakers in both written and spoken texts. Further, moderators (especially *fairly*, *more or less*, *quite* and *rather*) are more frequent in written learner texts, while less so in spoken learner texts (especially *quite* and *fairly*). Also, Swedish learners overuse maximizers (e.g. *totally*) in written texts, while underusing them (e.g. *absolutely*, *completely* and *just*) in spoken texts.

4.5 Summary of main findings

This chapter has accounted for the use of adjectives and modifiers in the four main corpora in terms of overall frequency, type/token ratio, most frequent items and statistically significant frequency differences between the corpora. The main findings concerning adjective use in the *written* corpora were:

- In their argumentative writing, the Swedish learners use approximately 4% more adjectives and modify adjectives 36% more frequently than the native speakers of English.

- The most frequent adjectives are the same in both learner and native-speaker written corpora (with two exceptions closely related to the essay topic), viz. *different, good, important* and *new*. The frequency of these adjectives, however, is significantly higher in the learner corpus.

- The most frequent degree-modified adjectives in the written corpora that learners and native speakers have in common are *different*, *good* and *important*. The learners also frequently modify *new* and *difficult* while the native speakers more frequently modify *strong* and *impossible*. The Swedish learners' use of modified *different* and *new* is significantly higher, while their use of modified *strong* is significantly lower, than in the written native-speaker corpus.

When the two *spoken* corpora were compared, the result was somewhat different. With regard to adjective use, these were the main findings:

- In the spoken corpora, adjectives are used to the same extent, and also modified to the same extent.

- The most frequent adjectives are the same in spoken learner and native-speaker texts (with the exception of *Swedish* in the learner corpus and *right* in the native corpus), viz. *big, different, good* and *nice*. However, the frequencies of *nice* and *different* are significantly higher in the learner corpus, while the frequency of *good* is significantly lower.

- The most frequent degree-modified adjectives in the spoken corpora that learners and native speakers have in common are *different*, *good* and *nice*. Learners also frequently modify *small* and *happy,* while native speakers more frequently modify *bad* and *interesting*. The Swedish learners' use of modified *small* is significantly higher, while their use of modified *good* and *bad* is significantly lower than in the native-speaker written corpus.

Comparison of the use of modifiers in both *written* and *spoken* texts gave the following result:

- The Swedish learners overuse the modifiers *totally, very, quite, really, fairly* and *more or less* in their *written* texts, and underuse *all* and *directly*.

- The Swedish learners overuse *very* and combinations of negation and *that*, *so* or *very* in their *spoken* texts, and underuse *really*, *quite, just, fairly* and *just so*.

Comparison of the *collocations with modifiers and adjectives* identified in the corpora resulted in the following findings:

- The most frequent collocations in the *written* corpora that learners and native speakers have in common are *very important, very good* and *very difficult.* The native speakers also frequently use the collocation *very strong*, while the Swedish learners seem to prefer *very different* or *totally different.*

- Some "narrow" collocations, such as *directly applicable* and *readily available*, are found only in the *written* native-speaker corpus.

- The collocations *not too bad* and *just amazing* are highly frequent in the *spoken* native-speaker corpus, while scarce in the spoken learner corpus.

When the *modifier subcategories* were compared, the main findings were:

- The Swedish learners use *diminishers* (in particular *a bit* and negation + *very*, *that* or *so*) more frequently than native speakers in both written and spoken texts.

- In written texts, Swedish learners overuse *maximizers*, in particular *totally*, and *moderators*, especially *fairly*, *more or less*, *quite* and *rather*. In spoken texts, both these categories are underused.

In sum, Swedish advanced learners are in many respects similar to native speakers in their use of adjective modifiers, but there are certain notable differences worth more detailed consideration. They will be addressed in the next chapter, where the results accounted for in Chapter 4 are further analysed and discussed.

5. Analysis and further discussion

5.1 Introduction

The previous chapter accounted for the main quantitative results of the comparative study, with regard to Swedish learners vs. native speakers and spoken vs. written texts, showing the most frequent adjectives and modifiers occurring in each corpus and the statistically significant differences found between frequencies of adjectives and their modifiers. In this chapter, the differences and similarities will be discussed in some more depth, with a more qualitative focus, paying attention to the most salient results of Chapter 4.

The first part of the chapter begins with a section on the Swedish learners' generally higher frequency of modifiers of adjectives in their written texts, followed by a discussion of the overuse[64] of certain categories, viz. moderators, diminishers and maximizers. It is concluded by some remarks on the overuse of the boosters *really* and *very* vs. the underuse of *directly* in the learners' written production.

The second part focuses on the two spoken corpora, which were found to show many similarities on a general level, but revealed differences in the use of certain subcategories. The Swedish learners' underuse of maximizers and moderators and overuse of diminishers are discussed, and the differences between the native speakers' and the learners' use of *very* and *really* in their spoken English are analysed towards the end of this section.

In the third part, the results are discussed in a wider perspective, especially with regard to informality in written texts and near-nativeness in the Swedish learners' speech production.

[64] As pointed out earlier, the terms "overuse" and "underuse" are here used in the sense of 'using a markedly higher or lower frequency of' in relation to the native-speaker corpus used for the comparison, without any normative implications.

5.2 Written texts in comparison: Swedish learners' higher frequency of adjective modifiers

It was shown in Chapter 4 that, similar to the German learners in Lorenz' study (1999:217), the Swedish advanced learners in the study tend to modify adjectives more frequently than the native speakers in their written texts. Lorenz suggests that this difference in relation to native speakers is a way of trying to convince the reader, using emphasis and textual density rather than sentence structure in presenting given and new information in an effective manner (cf. 1999:212). Similarly, Hyland & Milton (1997:191) propose that using adverbs is a safer way of "approximating to an academic discourse" than trying to find an appropriate verb, and thus easier for inexperienced writers:

> Adverbs may be easier for novice writers to manipulate with assurance. Not only are they far more common in speech than writing [...], but they are syntactically more mobile in clause structure and offer clear scalable distinctions [...]. This allows writers to boost or hedge their commitment with some confidence […].

It may be hypothesised that native speakers make more use of intensive adjectives, such as *brilliant*, *horrific* or *excellent*, whereas learners can be expected to have a less varied vocabulary, compensating for this by using modifiers instead, e.g. *extremely good* or *very bad*. However, this idea is rejected by Lorenz (1999:216), who finds corpus evidence of the opposite; for example, the learners in his study use far more lexical variants along the *small–big* dimension (Lorenz 1999:216). His conclusion is supported by the Swedish-learner corpus of this study, which by no means shows a lack of strong or emphasising adjectives. Among the most frequent, we find, e.g., *great, obvious, perfect, enormous, horrible, huge* and *fundamental*.

Further, we may ask whether the more frequent use of modifiers is a general tendency or restricted to a few individual writers. If only a minority of the Swedish learners overuse adjective modification, we cannot speak of a general tendency but rather of a limited use due to individual idiosyncrasy. A survey of the distribution of modifiers has, therefore, been made, presented in Figure 5.1. The X axis shows the frequency of modifiers and the Y axis the percentage of the essays for each interval of modifier frequency. As the individual essays differ in length, containing approximately 500–1 500 words each, the frequency is

normalised to occurrences per 1 000 words, giving a value that is not as far from the real number as frequency per 100 000 would have been in this case.

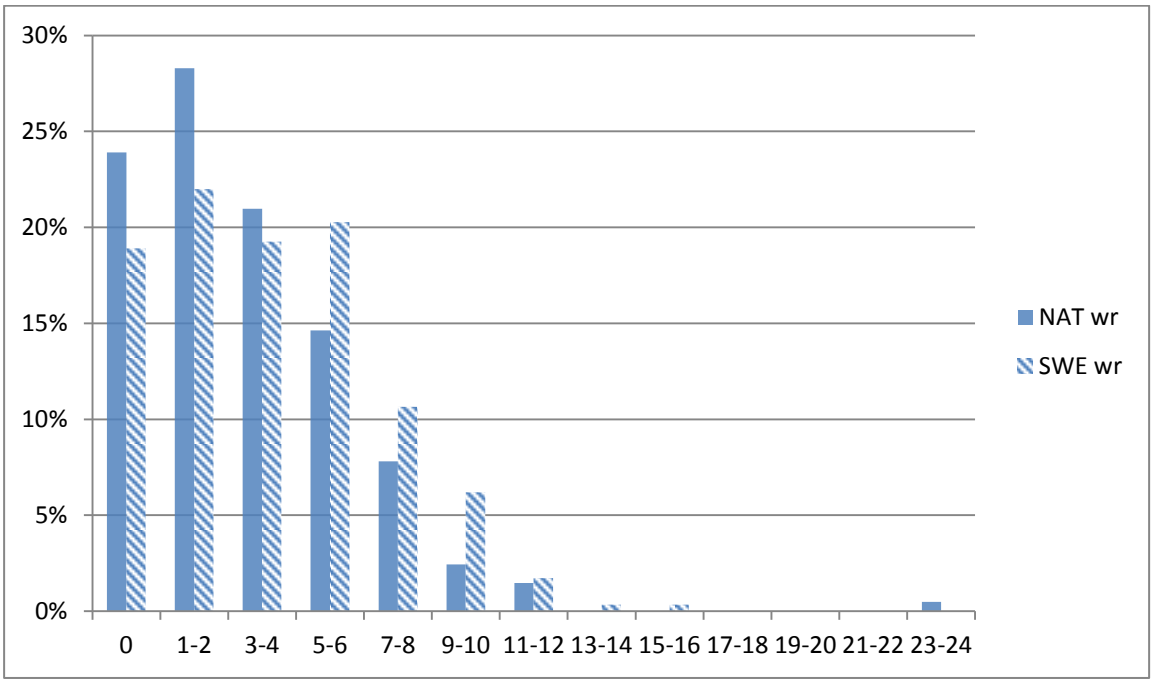

Figure 5.1. Frequency of adjective modifiers per 1 000 words in the written corpora

Figure 5.1 shows that in both corpora, the main use of modifiers lies between 1–2 and 5–6 occurrences in the majority of essays, i.e. not only in a few individual cases. The overuse, i.e. higher frequency, in the learner texts is found mainly in the use of 5–10 modifiers per 1 000 words, rather than being restricted to essays with very high frequency, i.e. more than 13 modifiers per 1 000 words. Thus, we may conclude that the higher frequency of modifiers in the written learner corpus is a general, rather than individual, feature.

A comparison with the spoken corpora (cf. Table 4.9) shows that the adjectives are modified to a considerably higher degree than in the written corpora, which suggests that the learners' written texts are more similar to spoken English in this regard. When we look at the results from Table 4.21, we note that the overused modifiers in the learners' written texts are *totally, very, quite, really, fairly* and *more or less*. Of these, *very*, *quite* and *really* are also among the most frequent modifiers in spoken learner English, where *totally*, *fairly* and *more or less* are relatively infrequent (cf. Table 4.20). However, all these modifiers (except *more or less*) are more frequent in spoken than in written *native* English, suggesting that Swedish learners' written English is influenced by native spoken language, perhaps more so than by their own spoken English.

In the next section, these differences will be discussed in more detail, mainly from the perspective of modifier categories.

5.2.1 Overuse of specific modifier categories

On a more detailed level, we note that the Swedish learners, like German ones (cf. Lorenz 1999), overuse both reinforcers and attenuators in their written texts, and that the overuse of attenuators is the most conspicuous. It seems that this is due to a significantly higher frequency of moderators and diminishers (cf. Table 4.28), while the use of approximators and minimizers is similar between the learners and the native speakers. Approximators and minimizers are also considerably less frequent in the corpora. Furthermore, we may conclude that the overuse of reinforcers by the Swedish learners is due to maximizer overuse only (see Table 4.28), while boosters are used by learners and native speakers to a similar extent. Thus, while German learners overuse boosters (cf. Lorenz 1999:216) and French learners underuse them (cf. Granger 1998b:149), the Swedish learners in the study have a frequency of boosters similar to the native speakers. However, two individual boosters are significantly overused by the Swedish learners in their written texts, viz. *very* and *really*. The overuse of reinforcers in the written learner corpus, both as a category and in terms of individual modifiers, is further discussed in sections 5.2.1.2 and 5.2.1.3. The next section will focus on the overuse of moderators and diminishers.

5.2.1.1 Overuse of moderators and diminishers

As previously shown in Table 4.28, the Swedish learners overuse moderators and diminishers in their written production, compared to the native-speaker texts. The overuse of moderators seems to be related to a significantly more frequent use of the modifiers *fairly*, *more or less* and *quite* in the learner corpus (cf. Table 4.21), while there are no individual diminishers overused to a statistically significant degree. The diminishers with the highest frequency in relation to the native-speaker corpus, however, are *a bit, not very, not so* and *NEG very*. Other attenuators, including low-frequent ones (such as *slightly, a little, a little bit* and *not that*), may certainly also contribute to the general overuse of this category. Therefore, attenuators as a group will be analysed before the individual overused diminishers and moderators.

First, a comparison with the distribution of attenuators and reinforcers in the spoken corpora may be relevant, in order to find possible reasons for the overuse of attenuators in written learner production. Table 4.27 shows the frequency per 100 000 words of these two main categories in the four corpora, and in Figure 5.2 the frequencies are repeated as percentages of the total number of adjective modifiers, for a more illustrative view of the distribution.

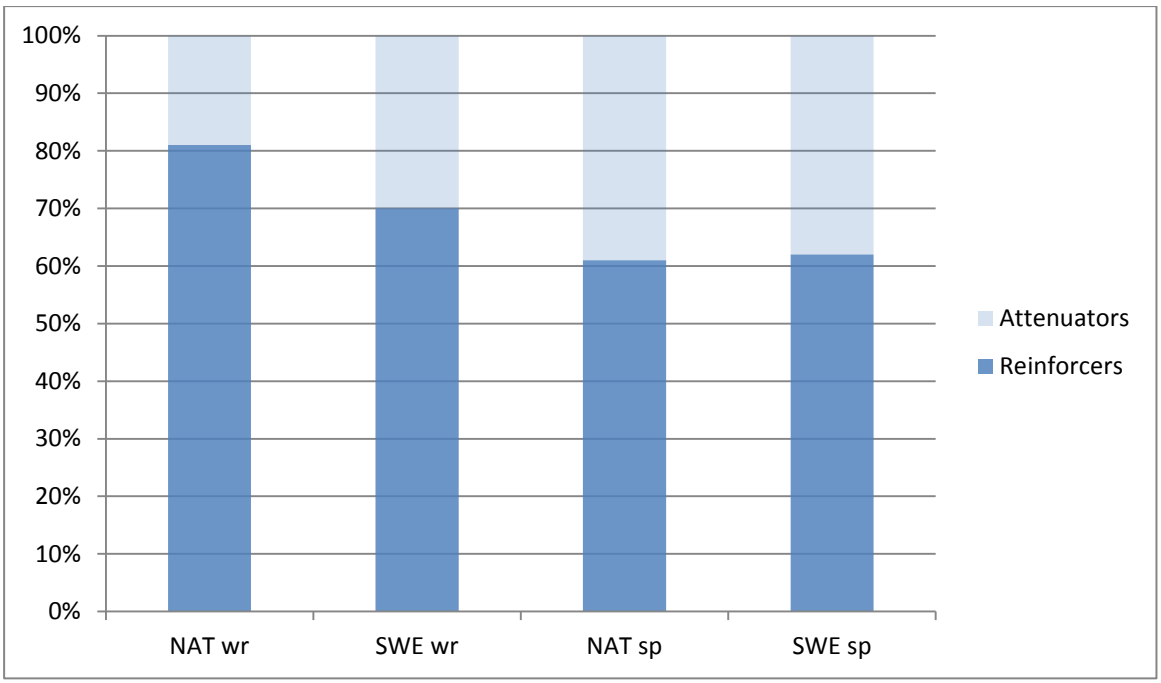

Figure 5.2. Distribution of reinforcers and attenuators in the four corpora

As Figure 5.2 shows, the proportion of attenuators in the Swedish learners' written English (30%) is more similar to the spoken corpora (38 and 39% respectively) than to the written native-speaker corpus (19%). The higher proportion of attenuators in the spoken native corpus forms a contrast to the much lower frequency of attenuators in the native speakers' written production. The learners, on the contrary, do not seem to distinguish to the same extent between their written and spoken texts, i.e. they use a more similar proportion of attenuators in both registers. Thus, both the higher frequency of modifiers in general and the higher frequency of attenuators in the Swedish learners' written production may be seen as indications of influence from spoken language. However, we still do not know if the same types of attenuators are used in both written and spoken production or if adjustments are made specifically for the genre of argumentative writing.

As in the previous section, we may also want to determine whether the use of attenuators is evenly spread across the group of speakers or restricted to a few individuals. From 290 learner essays, 155 had no attenuators, 101 had one, 27 had two, 6 had three and 1 essay had four attenuators. In other words, there is no excessive use of attenuators in a few essays, unless, of course, we consider three or four attenuators per essay excessive. Instead, the majority of attenuators are spread over a third of the learner essays and we may regard this as due to general, rather than individual use.

Many attenuators may be used as hedges, in particular diminishers (*slightly, a bit, a little, not very*, etc.) and moderators (*kind of, sort of, more or less, rather,* etc.), which are also the largest groups of attenuators used in the corpora. Thus, the learners' overuse of attenuators perhaps forms part of a tendency among learners or students to hedge more than native or professional writers, as earlier observed by, e.g., Crismore et al. (1993:58), Isaksson-Wiberg (1999), Agerström (2000) and Ädel (2006:90f.). Agerström (2000:39) argues that lack of experience makes students use more hedges because they "feel less authorized to make a claim". He also claims, however, that Swedish students have insufficient "pragmatic awareness" (p. 39). A third aspect brought up in these studies is "cultural differences", more specifically that the teaching instructions or writing conventions are different between Swedish, Finnish or Finland-Swedish[65] students and, on the other hand, American or British students (cf., e.g., Crismore et al. 1993 and Connor 1996:47ff.). Isaksson-Wiberg (1999:63) points out that the American model for argumentation is more of a pro and con type, whereas Finland-Swedish students are taught a more balanced way of argumentation. Agerström (2000:39) supports this view, arguing that while American students are "generally told to take a stance," Swedish students are instead "generally asked to show a more balanced view." Written discourse conventions, Atkinson (1991:57ff.) points out, may be as socially constrained as spoken discourse conventions – such as rhetorical principles and directness conventions – and thus hard to acquire for a non-native speaker who does not share the intuitive knowledge that results from extensive exposure to the language in question.

This could indeed explain the higher frequency of possible hedges in Swedish-learner writing. However, before drawing any conclusions about the connection

[65] The Finland-Swedes are native speakers of Swedish, making up an often bilingual minority in Finland.

between the Swedish learners' higher frequency of attenuators and possible insecurity, lack of pragmatic awareness or differences in writing instructions, we will look at the specific overused attenuators in the material.

Since the German learners in Lorenz' (1999) study also overuse attenuators in their written production, it may be interesting to compare the two learner groups in terms of specific attenuators. With the help of Lorenz' (1999:281f.) compilation of frequencies per 200 000 words of adjective modifiers used by German learners, it is possible to make an approximate comparison of the use of attenuators between Swedish and German learners.[66] If we compare the two largest subcategories of attenuators, i.e. moderators and diminishers, we find that the German learners more frequently use the attenuators *not too, not that, not very, not so, pretty*, *quite* and *rather* in their written output, while they use *a bit*, *fairly* and *more or less* less frequently, in comparison with the Swedish learners. The result of this comparison suggests that the higher frequency of *quite*, *rather*, *not very* and *not so* in the written learner texts is more likely to be a general learner phenomenon rather than specific to Swedish learners (or, perhaps, typical of Swedish and German learners), while the higher frequency of *a bit*, *fairly* and *more or less* is more likely to be typical of Swedish learners (and possibly other learners except for German ones). Comparisons with more learner groups are needed, of course, in order to draw any firm conclusions on this matter.

However, the learners' own spoken English does not seem to be the source of transfer for spoken language features to written production with regard to attenuation, at least not on a lexical level. The spoken learner corpus does not involve frequent use of *quite*, *fairly* and *more or less* (overused by the learners in their written production). It makes use of typical conversational vagueness markers, such as *kind of, sort of* and *like* (cf. Biber et al. 1999:1045), which are not transferred to the written texts. Instead, as shown earlier, the learners written texts include *fairly*, *quite, rather, more or less* and different forms of negation + *very* and *so*. While probably aware of the inappropriateness of the discourse markers *kind of, sort of* and *like* in formal writing, it is possible that the learners trust the more formal-sounding attenuators *fairly*, *quite, rather* and *more or less* to be suitable for university essays. This implies that the learners make clear lexical distinctions between spoken and written production, although not fully equipped with the tools for writing academic English.

[66] Lorenz' compilation comprises material from both advanced learners and teenage students, making the Swedish and German corpora not entirely comparable.

If the learners' spoken English is not the source of the overused attenuators in their written production, the native speakers' spoken English may be, quite like the general overuse of modifiers, as indicated at the beginning of 5.2. Nearly all the most frequent diminishers and moderators in the written learner corpus (*quite, rather, a bit, fairly*, *more or less, not so* and *not very*) are found to be more frequent in the native speakers' spoken texts, than in their written production. The greatest difference is found in the use of *quite*, *a bit* and *not very*, which are up to thirty times as frequent in the spoken native corpus, while *fairly* and *not so* are only two to three times as frequent in the spoken native texts.[67] However, *rather* is not in general a very frequent modifier in native texts, and *more or less* as adjective modifier is absent from the native corpora. It seems, thus, that only some of the attenuator overuse may be due to influence from native speakers' spoken English (*quite*, *a bit*, *not very, fairly* and perhaps *not so*), while the higher frequency of other items arguably derive from other sources. For instance, the Swedish learners' written or spoken L1 may influence their use of *more or less* (Sw. *mer eller mindre*) and *not very/not so* (possible variants of Sw. *inte så*). A comparison with GSM, a corpus of spoken native Swedish (see 3.1.2.3.2), shows that *inte så* is a highly frequent adjective modifier in young people's spoken Swedish, with a frequency of 124/100 000 words, which lies between the frequency of *so* and *quite* in the native-speaker spoken corpus.

Although not all overused attenuators appear to derive from the spoken register, hedging as a strategy is perhaps transferred from spoken language, but expressed by different lexical means. Indeed, we may hypothesise that learners are more insecure, and so use more vagueness markers, but it seems unlikely that advanced students should let this type of insecurity shine through in their essay writing. It seems more reasonable that they lack "pragmatic awareness" than that they "feel less authorized to make a claim," as argued by Agerström (2000). The matter of cultural differences in terms of writing traditions is also interesting. If cultural differences are an important factor for the use of attenuators, it seems likely that we would find differences between AmE and BrE speakers. The result of such a difference could place the Swedish learners' frequency of hedges in a different light. For this purpose, a calculation of moderators and diminishers in BrE essays, compared with AmE essays only, was conducted, the result of which is shown in Table 5.1.

[67] In Biber et al. (1999:567), however, *fairly* is found to be more frequent in academic prose than in BrE or AmE conversation.

Table 5.1. Moderators and diminishers in American, British and Swedish-learner essays

Essays	Moderators and diminishers /100 000 words
AmE essays	36.9
BrE essays	93.0
Swedish-learner essays	94.2

Despite the fact that the British material consists of no more than 18 260 words, it is noteworthy that when the Swedish learners are compared to British speakers only, there is no overuse of moderators and diminishers by the Swedish learners (the small difference is not significant), hence no over-hedging in terms of adjective modification either. The result seems to cast doubt on the idea of differences being due to the learners' insecurity, pragmatic unawareness or over-informality, and tentatively suggests that there is in fact a cultural similarity between British and Swedish speakers that may be reflected in a more frequent use of softening devices. In Waller (1993:259), the British native speakers claim that understatement is typical of native speakers; however, we should not rule out the possibility that Swedes are also inclined to understate.[68] Some of the overused attenuators in the Swedish learners' written texts are, indeed, used in a way that indicates understatement, e.g.:

(5:1) Waiting for the World Revolution seems **a bit far fetched** at the moment (SWE wr UG-17.2)
(5:2) Greed is known as one of the mortal sins, and it is **fairly easy** to understand why. (SWE wr UV-0008.3)
(5:3) It is **fairly obvious** that a great number of people are not content with their seemingly comfortable materialistic lives. (SWE wr LND-08.2)

68 Lorenz (1999:193), however, commenting on German learners' use of *a bit, a little* and *a little bit*, claims that German learners are aware of the understating effect of using diminishers, thereby achieving a reinforcing or intensifying effect. However, he does not think that the more frequent use of downtoners among learners is due to the learners being more prone to understatement, but rather that they have learnt these downtoners as fixed phrases.

In the examples above, it seems likely that the writer thinks it is more than just *a bit far-fetched* to wait for the world revolution, that it is in fact *very easy* to understand why greed is one of the mortal sins and more than *fairly obvious* that the people are not content with their lives. This, however, is a matter of reasonable speculation, as we cannot know the writer's thoughts for sure. The use of litotes, however, in which an "unwanted" adjective is exchanged for the negation of its opposite, may be an important factor related to the overuse of *no* or other negation + *very*, *so* and perhaps *that* in the learner corpora. It should be mentioned that the frequency of these combinations is higher than in the native corpus but the difference is not statistically significant, as in the spoken learner corpus. Some examples of litotes in the written learner corpus are:

(5:4) My sister-in-law is **not very fond** of cooking (SWE wr UG-43.2)
(5:5) it is relaxing to watch a **not so serious** programme (SWE wr LND-38.7)
(5:6) This is, of course, **not** a **very good** reason to study (SWE wr UG-99.2)
(5:7) it has **not** been **entirely easy** to put into practice (SWE wr LND-10.3)

A possible reason for using hedging devices is to show negative politeness towards the reader, i.e. minimising imposition on the addressee (cf. Brown & Levinson 1987), in this case the examining teacher. In Examples (5:8) – (5:10), the understating modifier (*not all that* and *NEG very*) helps soften the underlying criticism that may otherwise be too strong:

(5:8) it is **not all that good** to blame 'the society' when something goes wrong (SWE wr UG-52.2)
(5:9) Judging from what the politicians say in TV they do **not** appear to be **very well-informed** (SWE wr LND-02.9)
(5:10) Their process of assimilation has **not**, so far, been **very successful**. Some critics even call it a failure. (SWE wr LND-10.2)

Finally, it should be noted that there are specific moderators and diminishers used exclusively in one of the corpora. Only the native speakers use, e.g., the diminishers *mildly*, *partially* and *somehow*, and the moderators *roughly* and *supposedly*. Only the learners, on the other hand, use diminishers like *not all that, a little bit* and *not particularly*, and the moderators *basically*, *comparatively* (five occurrences), *kind of* and *reasonably*. Also, there are non-significant differences that may be worth mentioning: the native speakers have a higher frequency of *relatively* and *somewhat*, while the Swedish learners use *rather* and *seemingly* more

frequently than the native speakers. The learners' preference for *comparatively* over *relatively* is perhaps unexpected, as *relatively* is similar to Swedish *relativt*, formally and semantically, whereas *comparatively* translates into *jämförelsevis*, with no obvious formal similarity between the two words. However, it is possible that this is in fact the reason for the preference of *comparatively*. A tentative suggestion is that the Swedish learners, in their ambition to "sound English", may discard the Swedish-sounding (and looking) *relatively*, opting for the longer and more dissimilar *comparatively*.

5.2.1.2 Overuse of maximizers

In section 4.4, Table 4.28 shows that the overuse of reinforcers in the written learner corpus is due to a significantly ($p < 0.01$) higher frequency of maximizers, while the frequency of boosters is similar between the two written corpora. This result differs somewhat from the French learners of Granger's (1998b) study, who underused boosters, while there was no significant difference in the use of maximizers. On the other hand, the relation between boosters and maximizers is similar in the Swedish and French learner corpus, in that maximizers are used more frequently than boosters in comparison with native speakers.

Interestingly, maximizers are significantly underused in the spoken Swedish-learner corpus. In Table 5.2, the frequency of maximizers in all four corpora is shown.

Table 5.2. Frequency of maximizers in the four corpora

Maximizers / 100 000 words			
NAT wr	31.5	**NAT sp**	75.4
SWE wr	55.4	**SWE sp**	37.6

As shown in Table 5.2, the difference in the frequency of maximizers in native speakers' written and spoken text is quite distinct (31.5 vs. 75.4), whereas the Swedish learners seem to use maximizers not only with a more similar frequency in both written and spoken production (55.4 vs. 37.6), but the frequency is even higher in the learners' written text, contrary to the native speakers.

Against the background of earlier studies' discussion about over-hedging, in which it was suggested that the learners were insecure, inexperienced and feeling "less authorized to make a claim" (Agerström 2000:39), the frequent use in this

study of maximizers in learner writing is somewhat surprising. We may view the overuse as "over-zealousness", as a result of compensating for lack of skills in writing argumentative texts in a second language. "Anxious to make an impression and conscious of the limitations of their linguistic repertoire," Lorenz (1998:56) suggests, "they might feel a greater need than native speakers to stress the importance – and the relevance – of what they have to say." Still, there is no overuse of boosters in the written Swedish-learner corpus, but merely of maximizers. Also, the question remains as to why the Swedish learners *underuse* maximizers in the spoken corpus. Is the overuse of maximizers perhaps related to the genre of argumentative writing?

The underuse of maximizers in the learners' spoken texts is further analysed in section 5.3.1, whereas this section will deal mainly with the overuse of maximizers in the learners' written corpus. As in earlier sections, a first step is to examine whether the frequent use of maximizers in the written learner corpus seems to be a general feature, or based on a few individuals. A calculation shows that 22% of the essays contain 1–3 maximizers, while the remaining 78% do not contain any maximizers at all. Thus, a minority of the essays contain maximizers, which suggests individually-based use, rather than general. However, the frequency is low and the maximizers are evenly distributed: 49 of these essays contain only one maximizer, 13 essays have two maximizers and in three essays there are three maximizers. Considering this, we may perhaps speak of a general tendency in a specific group of learners.

Next, we may look at the types of maximizers used in the corpora. We know that *totally* is overused by the Swedish learners (cf. Table 4.21), but the general overuse may well be due to more than one specific maximizer. We also know that *all* is underused (cf. Table 4.22), which suggests that the difference between learners and native speakers is not solely a matter of quantitative dissimilarities; there may also be qualitative distinctions that need to be considered. Hence, the maximizers occurring in the two written corpora are shown in Table 5.3, exemplified with some of the collocations used.

Table 5.3. Maximizers in the written corpora

Maximizer	NAT wr/ 100 000 words	Examples	SWE wr/ 100 000 words	Examples
absolutely	2.5	*absolutely ridiculous, absolutely wrong*	4.3	*absolutely essential, absolutely necessary*
all	7.4	*all male, all black, all important, all powerful*	1.2	*all alone, all well and fine*
altogether	-		1.2	*altogether dull, altogether unhealthy*
completely	4.3	*completely different, completely erroneous*	9.8	*completely different, completely new, completely wrong*
entirely	1.2	*entirely ethical, entirely unfounded*	4.3	*entirely new, entirely distressing*
fully	3.7	*fully integrated, fully involved*	3.1	*fully accepted, fully alone, fully aware*
just	-		1.8	*just great, just perfect, just right*
overall	0.6	*overall destructive*	-	
perfectly	1.9	*perfectly logical, perfectly natural*	-	
purely	0.6	*purely economic*	-	
quite	3.1	*quite clear, quite obvious*	4.3	*quite sure, quite clear, quite impossible*
simply	1.2	*simply amazing, simply impossible*	-	
strictly	1.2	*strictly male, strictly scientific*	2.5	*strictly hypothetic, strictly religious*[69]
totally	2.5	*totally abandoned, totally limited, totally unacceptable*	15.4	*totally different, totally dependent, totally new, totally inadequate*
whole	0.6	*whole new*	0.6	*whole new*
wholly	0.6	*wholly responsible*	-	

[69] *Strictly* in *strictly religious*, however, may be argued to be more of a manner adverb ('religious in a strict way'), also conveying a very high degree ('extremely religious') rather than a maximum value of religiousness, i.e. in which there is no room for alternative views. In the two contexts of the corpus, however, a maximizing function can be interpreted: *To celebrate Christmas in a* ***strictly religious*** *and traditional way would […] be the ultimate way to celebrate* and *I do not think it is neccessary to keep Christmas a* ***strictly religious*** *tradition* (SWE wr-UG-0044.2).

In Table 5.3, the Swedish learners' overuse of *totally*, which is statistically significant, is quite obvious. We may also note the higher frequency of *completely* and perhaps also of *absolutely* and *entirely* in the learner corpus. Furthermore, the learner corpus contains three raw occurrences of *just* + ADJ (1.8/100 000 words), a maximizer that is absent in the written native-speaker corpus and used only in spoken texts. The native speakers, on the other hand, have two occurrences of *simply* + ADJ, which may be viewed as a more formal equivalent of *just*. They also use *purely* and *wholly*, both absent from the learner corpus. In the learner corpus, two occurrences of *altogether* + ADJ are also found, which does not occur in the native-speaker corpora. *All* is the only significantly underused maximizer, with 12 tokens in the native corpus and 3 in the learner corpus (cf. Table 4.22). The more frequent use of *all* in the native corpus, however, seems to be partly due to the essay topics (cf. the high frequency of e.g. *black* and *white*; section 4.1.1.3), as this maximizer in the majority of occurrences modifies *male* (4), *female* (3), *black* (1) and *white* (1), combined with the nouns *team*, *institution*, *dorm* (in the case of *male* and *female*) and *school* (in the case of *black* and *white*). *All* is also used to modify *European*, *important* and *powerful*, whereas the learners use *all* in *all alone* and *all well and fine*.

The question of influence from spoken language in the learners' written production is, again, relevant; a comparison of maximizer frequencies between written and spoken corpora is shown in Table 5.4.

Table 5.4. Maximizers /100 000 words: written and spoken corpora

Maximizer	NAT wr	SWE wr	NAT sp	SWE sp
absolutely	2.5	4.3	14.1	8.4
all	7.4	1.8	6.6	4.2
altogether	-	1.2	-	-
completely	4.3	9.8	13.3	9.7
entirely	1.2	4.3	-	1.4
fully	3.7	3.1	0.8	1.4
just	-	1.8	22.4	5.6
overall	0.6	-	-	-
perfectly	1.9	-	-	-
purely	0.6	-	-	-
quite	3.1	4.3	5.0	-
simply	1.2	-	-	-
straight	-	-	0.8	-
strictly	1.2	2.5	-	-
totally	2.5	16.0	8.3	7.0
whole	0.6	1.2	0.8	-
wholly	0.6	-	-	-

Table 5.4 shows that *just* is the most frequent maximizer in the spoken native-speaker corpus (22.4/100 000 words). In view of this and its absence from the written native-speaker corpus, the three occurrences of maximizer *just* in the written learner corpus seem particularly misplaced, or out of style; we may conclude that expressions like *just great, just perfect* and *just right* simply do not belong to the genre of academic writing. The native speakers also seem to use *absolutely*, *completely* and *totally* more frequently in their spoken texts, while the learners show higher frequencies of these maximizers when the two written corpora are compared. Although they are used to some degree in the native speakers' written production, this difference suggests that the learners' higher frequency of *absolutely*, *completely* and *totally* in their written texts is due to influence from spoken native English. In general, *absolutely* and *totally* are sparingly used by native speakers in academic text (fewer than 50 occurrences per million words) and *completely* is also relatively rare (fewer than 100 occurrences per million words) in both academic text and conversational English (Biber et al. 1999:565ff.). Still, they seem to be preferred by non-native speakers. Granger

found that *totally* and *completely* were used 2.5 times more often by French learners than by native speakers. She explains this by their being "'all-round amplifiers' or safe bets" (Granger 1998:148),[70] i.e. they can combine with a relatively wide range of adjectives without sounding strange. The especially high frequency of *totally* in the Swedish-learner corpus may, at least partly, be due to L1 transfer. *Totalt* ('totally') is a useful Swedish maximizer – collocating with, e.g., *väck* ('gone'), *ointresserad* ('uninterested') and *värdelös* ('worthless'). However, it is not particularly formal in comparison with, e.g., *fullständigt* ('completely'), *komplett* ('completely', 'downright') or *alltigenom* ('thoroughly'). It is also possible that *absolutely*, *completely* and *totally* sound more formal to learner ears than they really are. In view of the fact that the Swedish learners seem to distinguish between written and spoken production in several ways, there is clearly an ambition among them to sound more formal in written texts.

Another possible example of this aspiration is the more frequent use of *altogether* and *entirely*, two maximizers that can hardly derive from a more informal register. It is possible that the Swedish learners are attracted by the formal character and "Englishness" of these modifiers, thus using them more often than native speakers would. When it comes to favourite expressions, this phenomenon may be comparable with Hasselgren's (1994) "lexical teddy-bears", i.e. words "we feel safe with" (p. 237) and so regularly use, "stripped of the confidence and ease we take for granted in our first language." A different perspective, however, is that advanced learners are likely to have built up more confidence and are keen to use what they believe are formal, "English-sounding" words. Occasionally, this may be a choice more overconfident than safe, since their use may be so frequent as to appear un-English. Rather than a teddy-bear, the overconfidence may be compared to "the new toy effect," or to wearing sunglasses – it makes you look cool until you wear them indoors as well, where there is no sun. The result may be that the words or phrases in question, "instead of providing the presumably intended reinforcing effect, give an impression of insecurity and a strong wish to fit in", as noted by Ask (2007:152, my translation).

The native speakers show slightly more variation in their choice of maximizers than the Swedish learners, using, e.g., *purely*, *wholly* and *simply*. As mentioned

[70] Also, Richards & Sampson (1972:14) state that "words with broad semantic extension may become overused in preference to more specific vocabulary learned later."

before, *simply* may replace the informal *just* in some cases, as in *simply perfect* instead of *just perfect*.

Finally, the maximizers *fully*, *strictly* and *quite* are used to a similar extent between native speakers and learners, with the exception of a higher frequency of maximizer *quite* in the spoken native corpus. This may be due to the fact that the native speakers are British, and British English more often than American English uses *quite* with a maximising function (cf. Biber et al. 1999:568), as in *quite clear, quite right*, etc.

The majority of the learner-produced collocations with maximizers are idiomatic. However, some collocations may be regarded as un-typical for the genre of academic writing, or reinforcing the adjective may be considered unnecessary or superfluous. For example, the learner-produced *fully alone*[71] seems quite unusual for the genre, and *totally warped* may exemplify unnecessary reinforcement, although the combination can be found, for example in English web pages. As *totally*, or at least a high frequency of *totally*, tends to give an informal character to the text, the many learner-produced occurrences of, e.g., *totally different* and *totally new*, although not unidiomatic, suggest that variation with, e.g., *completely*, *wholly* or *quite* would improve the text stylistically.

5.2.2 Overuse of *very* and *really* versus underuse of *directly*

Earlier studies of learners' use of degree modifiers have shown, on the one hand, that German learners overuse all degree modifiers, including boosters (Lorenz 1999:198f.). Lorenz suggests that the reason is that "learners tend towards 'information overcharge'" (p. 217). French learners, by contrast, have been found to underuse boosters (Granger 1998b:149). More specifically, French learners underuse what Granger refers to as "stereotyped combinations" (cf. "narrow" collocations; section 2.3) and "creative combinations". Lorenz and Granger compared their learners' output with somewhat differently composed native-speaker corpora, which may have affected the result. Their findings nevertheless display interesting similarities to those emerging from the comparison between Swedish learners and native speakers of English in the present study. The Swedish learners are not found to overuse boosters as a

[71] However, the Swedish-learner corpus also contains the stylistically more appropriate collocation *all alone*.

category (cf. Table 4.28), but there are statistically significant differences in the frequencies of the individual boosters *very*, *really* and *directly*: *very* and *really* are overused in the written learner corpus and *directly* is underused.

As the frequency of boosters is similar between the Swedish learners' and the native speakers' written English, this raises the question of which boosters "replace" the overused *very* and *really* in the native speakers' texts. The material shows that Swedish learners have a higher frequency of not only *very* and *really*, but also of *extremely, highly* and *closely*, while native speakers, apart from *directly*, more frequently use *so, widely, particularly, easily, especially, readily* and *truly* (boosters having fewer than five occurrences are excluded). The differences between these other boosters are not statistically significant, but may show patterns worth noting. The examples of their collocations (including both significantly and non-significantly underused boosters) are presented in Table 5.5.

Table 5.5. Swedish learners' collocations with underused boosters in the written corpora[72]

Booster	NAT wr /100 000 words	Examples	SWE wr /100 000 words	Examples
directly	5.6	*directly applicable, directly effective*	0.6	*directly related*
easily	3.1	*easily accessible, easily identifiable*	1.8	*easily accessible, easily comprehensible*
especially	3.1	*especially careful, especially important*	1.2	*especially important, especially serious*
particularly	3.7	*particularly interested, particularly weak*	2.5	*particularly common, particularly dangerous*
readily	3.1	*readily available*	-	-
so	13.6	*so concerned, so embarrassing*	11.7	*so awful, so cruel, so obvious*
truly	3.1	*truly amazing, truly happy, truly kind*	1.8	*truly altruistic, truly successful*
widely	4.3	*widely accepted, widely known, widely opposed*	1.2	*widely enforced, widely known*

[72] Table 5.5 displays boosters of at least five occurrences in the native-speaker written corpus. Boosters having fewer than five occurrences used exclusively in the written native corpus are: *all that, all too, awfully, clearly, decidedly, drastically, extraordinarily, far, fatally, greatly, innately, outrageously, overly, plain, predominantly, sharply, shockingly, soaking, strongly, terribly, that, too, ultimately, uncomfortably* and *unrealistically*. Boosters having fewer than five occurrences used exclusively in the written learner corpus are: *a lot, amazingly, blissfully, dead, disappointedly, ever so, extra, fiercely, genuinely, heavily, mighty, most, real, remarkably, scaringly (sic), sizzling, so much, terrifyingly, tremendously, undeniably, usually, very much* and *wonderfully*.

As Table 5.5 shows, most boosters only show lower frequency in the learner corpus, whereas one (*readily*) is completely absent. There are also relatively frequent collocations in the native-speaker corpus that are either infrequent (*easily accessible*) or absent (*directly applicable, readily available* and *widely accepted*) in the learner corpus.

Easily is not frequently used by the Swedish learners, but correctly combined with *accessible* and two other adjectives ending in *–ible* (*comprehensible* and *attainable*). Similarly, *widely* is used sparingly but correctly as a modifier of *known* and another *–ed* form, viz. *enforced*. Thus, the learners seem perfectly able to come up with idiomatic combinations with these boosters. The booster *so*, being versatile in its functions (cf. section 2.4.4.1), is more difficult to compare. Possibly, the high proportion of essays written in American English affects the frequency of this modifier (cf. Biber et al. 1999:565). However, considering that different criteria for distinguishing degree-modifying *so* from other types of *so* may have been used here and in other studies, and that the difference in frequency is small and statistically not significant, we should perhaps not attach too much importance to this difference.

Among the seemingly native-specific boosters and collocations, we find *readily*, which collocates with *available* in all five occurrences in the native-speaker corpus. Interestingly, *readily* is not used once in the Swedish-learner corpus, but 15 occurrences of unmodified *available* are found. Exclusively native are also the collocations *directly applicable* and *directly effective*. *Applicable* has two occurrences in the learners' texts, both of them unmodified, and *effective* occurs once, in the collocation *very effective*. A third native-specific collocation is *widely accepted*. In the learner corpus, *fully accepted* occurs twice, but no other collocations with *accepted* are used. With the exception of *readily*, this indicates that it is not the modifier itself, nor the adjective, to which the learners appear unaccustomed, but the specific combinations of the modifier and adjective. *Readily available, directly applicable, directly effective* and *widely accepted* are more or less "tight", "strong" or "narrow" collocations, expressing manner as well as degree and therefore more descriptive than the more unambiguously degree-modifying *very, really, extremely* and, to some extent, *highly* (*highly unlikely* but not *highly educated*), which are more frequent in the learner corpus. The lexical skills needed for the use of modifiers with "tighter" collocational range are, therefore, greater. Indeed, as shown above, the Swedish advanced learners use some of these collocations actively, such as *easily accessible* and *widely known*, while others remain unfamiliar or are not yet transferred from passive knowledge

to active usage.[73] However, the learners' use of *easily accessible* may be due to the fact that this collocation, unlike, e.g., *readily available*, can be translated verbatim into Swedish *lättillgänglig*. In this text, therefore, the use of *widely known* may be considered more advanced, as this collocation may be assumed to have been acquired through exposure, rather than via direct transfer in the form of literal translation from Swedish. The literal Swedish lexical equivalent of *widely known* would be the less common, stylistically marked *vida känd*; a more common Swedish translation would be *allmänt känd* ('generally known').

In view of the Swedish learners' low-frequent or absent use of the collocations discussed above, the overused boosters *very* and *really* fit well into Granger's (1998b:148) category of "all-round modifiers" or "safe bets", as well as the maximizer *totally* (cf. section 5.2.1.2). They presumably require less effort[74] to use than the "narrow" or "tight" collocations (cf. Granger 1998b), for Swedish as well as other learners.

The overuse of *very* may reflect lack of variation and "unnecessary" reinforcing (cf. Lorenz 1999). In examples (5:11) and (5:12), *very* may well be replaced by another, more idiomatic, modifier (i.e., the use of *very* reflects lack of modifier variation):

(5:11) They are a **very underestimated** and important part of the ecosystem (SWE wr LND-16.5)
(alternative modifier e.g. *grossly, seriously, greatly* or *substantially*, found with *underestimated* in BNC)

(5:12) The result was some creative and **very memorable** scenes (SWE wr LND-44.7)
(alternative modifier e.g. *particularly* or *truly*, found with *memorable* in BNC)

In examples (5:13) and (5:14), *very* may well be omitted, i.e. the use of *very* reflects "unnecessary" reinforcing:

[73] Larsen-Freeman & Long (1991:26) point out that "learners will often not reveal to researchers their entire linguistic repertoire; rather, they will use only those apects in which they have the most confidence. They will avoid the troublesome aspects through circumlocution or some other device."
[74] When narrow collocations are fully acquired as "chunks", however, the effort can be expected to be smaller as the usage is becoming automatised (cf., e.g., Goldman-Eisler 1958:67, Altenberg & Eeg-Olofsson 1990:2 and Carter & McCarther 2006:169).

(5:13) The search for unity and togetherness can make us **very vulnerable** to people who try to deceive us. (SWE wr UG-15.2)

(5:14) I mean: it is **very natural** when you go to a country on vacation; that you try to conform to their rules and speak in their language. (SWE wr UG-08.2)

The phrasing in examples (5:13) and (5:14) is just as effective – or even more so – with the adjectives *vulnerable* and *natural* standing on their own, without being reinforced by *very*.

Furthermore, there are cases where the whole adjective phrase can be omitted by rephrasing the sentence. In example (5:15), *very important* is an unnecessary repetition of *most essential*, and can be removed by, for instance, making the second sentence a subclause.

(5:15) I think the most essential thing is that immigrants learn Swedish fluently. It is **very important** so they can communicate with Swedes and function in our society. (SWE wr LND-07.1)

With subclause:

I think the most essential thing is that immigrants learn Swedish fluently, so that they can communicate with Swedes and function in our society.

The "wordiness"– a feature noted in earlier studies of learner texts (cf., e.g., Waller 1993:233 and Ringbom 1993:302) – of example (5:15), to which the adjective phrase *very important* contributes, can be further reduced by replacing the metadiscoursal *I think* by *must* or *should*. Also, the sentence can be stylistically improved by replacing the vague word *thing* by, for instance, *aim* or *concern*, *so* by *in order to* and *can* by *be able to*:

The most essential aim/the major concern must be that immigrants learn Swedish fluently, in order to be able to communicate with Swedes and function in our society.

Examples (5:13), (5:14) and (5:15) demonstrate how the (mis)use of adjective modifiers can contribute to textual density in learner writing (cf. Lorenz 1999:212), and how a more effective sentence structure, as well as lexical choices,

may reduce redundancy and repetition, and perhaps also adapt the text stylistically to the genre of argumentative or academic writing.

The use of *really* as adjective modifier in the written learner corpus may also reflect lack of variation, as in examples (5:16) and (5:17):

(5:16) Not until the mass of people actually start to listen to these extremists do we have a **really dangerous** situation. (SWE wr LND-22.9)
(alternative modifier e.g. *highly* or *extremely*, found with *dangerous* in BNC)

(5:17) To make a profit on religion is **really unsavoury** (SWE wr UV-03.3)
(alternative booster e.g. *truly*, *indeed* or an attenuator used in an understating sense, e.g. *rather*, *somewhat*, found with *unsavoury* in BNC)

However, no examples of adjective-modifying *really* occurring in the written learner corpus were found to be clearly superfluous, in the sense of unnecessary reinforcing. In a few occurrences, an alternative adjective may replace both *really* and the adjective used:

(5:18) I think that not getting a job that satisfies your wants and wishes, when you have a higher education, would be **really sad**. (SWE wr LND-19.7)
(alternative adjectives e.g. *discouraging, disappointing, unsatisfactory*)

The main reason for the significant difference found between learners' and native speakers' use of *really* in the written texts, however, is most likely the informal status of this modifier. Although *very* occurs less frequently in native-speakers' texts than in learner texts, it is a highly frequent and useful adjective modifier in formal as well as informal language. Adjective-modifying *really*, on the other hand, appears to be avoided in the native speakers' formal language (cf. Table 4.21).

5.2.3 Summary

Like the German learners in Lorenz' (1999) study, the Swedish advanced learners in the present investigation use adjective modifiers in their written texts to a higher degree than the native speakers of the LOCNESS corpus. The higher frequency mainly involves the use of maximizers (in particular *totally*), moderators (in particular *fairly*, *more or less* and *quite*), diminishers (e.g. *a bit, not*

very, not so and *NEG very*), and the boosters *very* and *really*. An important reason for the higher frequency may be, as pointed out by Lorenz (1999), a type of textual density that results from using "wordy" or redundant language rather than more effective sentence structure. The Swedish learners may also hedge more than the native speakers, at least in comparison with the American students, or be more inclined to use understatement or negative politeness. Other reasons for the more frequent use of softening devices may be influence from spoken language or different writing traditions. It may also be related to the fact that English is not their L1, and so they may feel insecure or in a position of lower status (e.g. with regard to educational level or age) than the teacher assessing the essay.

The more frequent use of modifiers in general may also be due to influence from spoken English or Swedish, as some modifiers or combinations of modifiers and adjectives can be regarded as typically informal. The learners do not seem to simply transfer features from spoken language, however. Rather, they appear to confuse the degree of formality of some modifiers, in that they seem to choose what they believe is formal vocabulary, as may be concluded from the observed differences between the learners' written and spoken English. The higher frequency of *very* and *really* in the Swedish learners' written texts is most likely due to their collocational versatility, which outranks that of more advanced, "narrow" collocations, such as *readily available* and *directly effective*. This may lead to less variation and an excessive degree of informality, making the text stylistically inconsistent.

5.3 Spoken texts in comparison: general similarities and specific differences

As pointed out in Chapter 4, the two spoken corpora show similar results, between Swedish learners and native speakers, in terms of general adjective and modifier frequency, as well as in the distribution of reinforcers and attenuators. Indeed, this similarity may suggest that Swedish learners' spoken skills are greater than their written proficiency.

When the subcategories were compared, however, it was found that there were significant differences in the use of maximizers, moderators and diminishers, and

between the individual boosters *very* and *really*. As opposed to the results from the written corpora, Swedish learners seem to underuse maximizers and moderators in their spoken English, whereas diminishers, as in the written corpora, are overused. In addition, *very* is overused by the learners whereas *really* is underused in relation to the native speakers. In this section, these differences will be further discussed.

5.3.1 Underuse of maximizers

Table 5.2 showed that the frequency of maximizers in the spoken learner corpus 37.6/100 000 words) is half of that observed in the native-speaker corpus (75.4/100 000 words). A calculation of the statistical significance shows that this difference is fairly significant ($p < 0.01$); cf. Table 4.29. In particular, the maximizer *just* is underused, mainly due to the frequent collocation *just amazing* in the native-speaker corpus. In this section, the material will be discussed with regard to the maximizers and their collocations in the spoken corpora.

Repeating relevant parts of Table 5.4, a comparison of the maximizer frequencies in the spoken corpora is presented in Table 5.6.

Table 5.6. Maximizers /100 000 words: spoken corpora

Maximizer	NAT sp	SWE sp
absolutely	14.1	8.4
all	6.6	4.2
completely	13.3	9.7
entirely	-	1.4
fully	0.8	1.4
just	22.4	5.6
quite[75]	5.0	-
straight	0.8	-
totally	8.3	7.0
whole	0.8	-

As Table 5.6 shows, the greatest difference is found in the use of *just*, which is almost four times as frequent in the native corpus. *Absolutely*, *all*, *completely* and *totally* are also used with a higher frequency in the native corpus, although not significantly so. The native speakers also use *quite*, *straight* and *whole* as maximizers.

The collocations of the three most frequent maximizers in the native-speaker corpus, viz. *just*, *absolutely* and *completely,* are shown in Table 5.7.

[75] To correctly identify the maximizer *quite*, as distinct from moderator or booster *quite* (see section 2.4.2), more context is needed and the occurrences presented here are, at least partly, therefore based on my subjective and intuitive selection. For example, I have assumed that the Swedish learners rarely use maximizer *quite* in their spoken English, while assuming that the British speakers are more likely to do so. Thus, the same collocation, for example *quite happy* or *quite obvious*, may have been classified as maximizer in the native-speaker corpus but as moderator or booster in the Swedish-learner corpus.

Table 5.7. Collocations with the three most frequent maximizers of the spoken native-speaker corpus

	NAT sp	**SWE sp**
just	*amazed (2), amazing (9), beautiful, brilliant, captivating, fantastic, freezing, gorgeous, great (2), hopeless, huge, spectacular, [like] stony-faced, terrible, unbelievable* and *weird (2)*	*amazed, fine, great* and *soaking*
absolutely	*amazing (4)*, *beautiful, brilliant, fantastic, flabbergasted, horrible, huge, incredible (2), mad, petrified, roasting, starving* and *sure*	*delicious, brilliant, dreadful, fantastic, lovely* and *true*
completely	*dead, different (4), exposed, fictional, foreign (2), gorgeous, horrible, new (2), wild* and *wrong (2)*	*different* (6) and *into*

In Table 4.8, it was shown that the adjectives *great*, *brilliant*, *amazing*, *weird* and *incredible* are significantly underused in the spoken learner corpus, and other adjectives of this type, i.e. those that can be modified by maximizers, are more frequent in the spoken native corpus, such as *huge*, *terrible* and *unbelievable*. Possibly, there is a correlation between the underuse of these adjectives and the underuse of maximizers in the learners' spoken texts. As can be observed from Table 5.7, there is greater variation of adjectives in the native-speaker corpus, and many of these adjectives are completely absent from the Swedish corpus, such as *incredible, gorgeous, unbelievable, petrified, roasting, starving, captivating* and *spectacular*. Thus, it seems likely that the Swedish learners' vocabulary is less varied, or that they do not use some of it actively.

It is possible that the reasons for the underuse of maximizers are culturally based, i.e. it may be "typically Swedish" and "lagom" ('not too little, not too much') not to "burst out" in overly emphatic evaluations, but rather keep to a more controlled middle ground. Contradictory to this, however, is the fact that Swedish by no means lacks emphatic expressions with modified adjectives. In the spoken native Swedish corpus GSM, for example, the maximizer *helt* ('entirely') is used 68 times per 100 000 words, a frequency that corresponds to the fifth

most frequent modifier in the spoken native-speaker corpus of this study. Other frequent Swedish maximizers are, for instance, *totalt* ('totally'), *fullkomligt* ('perfectly') and *helt och hållet* ('entirely'), and boosters indicating a very high degree include *väldigt* ('enormously') (82/100 000 words in GSM), *skit-*/*sket-* ('dead') (28.5/100 000 words in GSM) and *fruktansvärt* ('terribly') (8/100 000 words in GSM).

Differences in speaker personality may, of course, also affect the occurrence of maximizers. While one student is outgoing and emphatic, another may express less enthusiasm in his or her language, or for some other reason prefer to use or not use maximizers and the adjectives with which they collocate.

However, a third possible reason is connected to the fact that the Swedish students are L2 English speakers. The emotional involvement needed for evaluations expressed by maximizers and their collocating adjectives is probably sometimes rather strong. Considering how difficult it can be to argue or be angry with someone in a second language (or, at times, in your first language as well), the strength of the expression related to the maximizer + ADJ construction is likely to require both skill and confidence in a non-native speaker. Compared to using hedging modifiers or discourse markers such as *you know*, *like* and *sort of*, in which the Swedish learners show good skills, expressions like *just amazing*, *completely gorgeous* or *absolutely incredible* require that the speaker "let go a little" of his or her control, thus taking the risk of losing face and possibly even appearing ridiculous. Presumably, it is easier for a learner to produce maximizers in writing, which could then be an important reason for the overuse of maximizers in the learners' written texts (cf. Table 4.28 and section 5.2.1.2).

5.3.2 Underuse of moderators and overuse of diminishers

When the spoken corpora were compared, it was noted that there was a similar frequency of reinforcers and slightly lower frequency of attenuators in the learner corpus, but the difference was too small to be significant (cf. Table 4.27). However, in the comparison of the subcategories (cf. Table 4.29), it was found that moderators were underused in the spoken learner corpus, while diminishers were overused. The underuse of moderators seemed to be mainly due to the native speakers' frequent use of *quite* and *fairly* (cf. Table 4.24), while the overused diminishers were represented by *not that, not so, not very, NEG so* and *a little bit* in the learner corpus (cf. Table 4.23).

5.3.2.1 Underuse of *quite* and *fairly*

The underuse of *quite* should perhaps be related to the fact that spoken BrE normally has a higher frequency of this modifier than spoken AmE (cf. Biber et al. 1999:567f.), a difference that suggests that the lower frequency in the learner corpus is not necessarily un-English, but perhaps un-British. If compared with the *Santa Barbara Corpus of spoken American English*, the Swedish learners' frequency of *quite* (77.9/100 000 words) is found in between the British speakers of this study (197.1/100 000 words) and the American speakers of the SBC (3.2/100 000 words). However, the spoken native-speaker corpus of this study and *SCB* are differently composed, which may affect the result. While LOCNEC and LINDSEI contain the same type of interviews with people commenting on trips, plays, people, etc., the *SCB* consists of conversations of many different kinds which do not involve evaluation to such a high degree. Most likely this results in a lower frequency of both adjectives and modifiers. Still, the fact that *quite* is less frequent in spoken American English needs to be taken into consideration for the comparison of native speakers and Swedish learners.

The use of *fairly* as a degree modifier of adjectives, in spoken or written registers, respectively, is somewhat differently described in grammars. While Biber et al. (1999:567f.) find that *fairly* is used mainly in academic writing and not usually in conversational English, Carter & McCarthy (2006:129) note that *fairly* is "much more frequent in informal spoken contexts than in formal writing." A search of *fairly* in the BNC suggests that the latter of these grammars is the more accurate: in academic text, *fairly* is used approximately 77 times per million words, especially frequent in collocations such as *fairly common, fairly clear* and *fairly obvious*, while the frequency in spoken English is 112 per million words, with collocations such as *fairly easy*, *fairly good* and *fairly high* being the most frequent.

Although the underuse of *quite* in the learner corpus should be viewed in the light of the different frequencies of this modifier in BrE and AmE, both *quite* and *fairly* may be understood as formal by the learners, which could be an equally important reason for the overuse of these modifiers in the written learner corpus (cf. section 5.2.1.1).

5.3.2.2 Overuse of *not that/so/very*, *a little bit* and *kind of*

The overuse of diminishers in the spoken learner corpus seems to be mainly due to negated *that*, *so* and *very*, as well as the NP *a little bit*. As discussed in section 5.2.1.1, the frequent use of *not that, not so, not very*, etc., in the learner corpora may be an indication of a preference for using litotes, or understatement, among the Swedish learners. Certainly, the native speakers frequently use the same structures with negated modification rather than straightforward un-negated and possibly blunt assessments. However, the frequency of these constructions, i.e. *not*/NEG + *very/so/that*, etc., is significantly higher in the spoken learner corpus. It is possible that the native speakers vary their expressions more, thus producing a lower frequency of these particular constructions. In the picture description, where many of the learner-produced occurrences of *not/NEG + very/so/that* are found, the native speakers sometimes express the portrayed lady's reaction to the first painting without a modifier, as in:

(5:19) she stands up sees the picture she isn't Ø happy with it (NAT sp E03)

or, frequently, with the verb *like*, as in:

(5:20) the lady er is criticising er the portrait she obviously doesn't like it (NAT sp E06)

or, less frequently, with a positively modified adjective, as in:

(5:21) obviously she's not very pleased with it . she's rather displeased so erm (NAT sp E07)

However, these types of constructions are also found in the learner corpus, and cannot be referred to as native-specific, but are possibly more frequent in the native-speaker corpus.

An important factor may be the frequent use of the diminisher *inte så* in native Swedish. As mentioned in section 5.2.1.1, this modifier is found to have a frequency of 124/100 000 words in the GSM corpus of spoken native Swedish, which lies between the frequencies of *so* and *quite* in the native-speaker spoken corpus. It is possible that *inte så* is literally translated into *not so* as well as *not very* and *not that*. If so, this may be a case of L1 transfer, both on a lexical and a semantic level.

The Swedish learners' preference for *not that* is particularly salient, being used more than eight times as frequently as in the native-speaker interviews. Thus, it might be regarded as the most un-English or unidiomatic of the [*not* +] variants. However, the uses found in the material do not appear strikingly unidiomatic. Compare, e.g., (5:22) – (5:25):

(5:22) <A> that's difficult to paint of course . the sea </A>
<B> yeah it can be . that's . sort of . the[i:] (eh) . <breathes> that's the good thing about it . it's it **not that easy** </B>
(SWE sp 43)

(5:23) I could be a teacher anywhere I think it's **not that important** the important thing is to have ... a a great job
(SWE sp 02)

(5:24) <A> <overlap /> what sort of things did you (er) expect to find there you know which you had heard about </A>
<B> well (er) (er) <starts laughing> poor hotels <stops laughing> </B>
<A> <overlap /> (uhu) </A>
<B> <overlap /> yeah the buildings being . I dunno well **not that nice** <laughs> </B>
<A> no <\A>
<B> no so . and also the food not being like . anything special <\B>
(SWE sp 04)

(5:25) she is **not that satisfied** with the picture I think
(SWE sp 24)

In view of the perfectly acceptable examples above, we may conclude that it is the high frequency in relation to the native-speaker material that stands out, rather than the collocations per se. There is no evident explanation for the frequent use of *not that*. We may, however, consider the possibility that learners wish to avoid Swedish-sounding expressions, and so choose *not that* more frequently than *not so* (cf. the preference of *comparatively* over *relatively* in section 5.2.1.1). Arguably, as the overuse is a result of the difference in frequency between the two spoken corpora, we may as well ask why the native speakers have such a low frequency of *not that*, considering the idiomaticity of the uses found in the Swedish-learner corpus. This is indeed even more difficult to explain. The corpus material shows, however, that native speakers prefer the variant *not too*. This diminisher is used 22.4/100 000 words in the native-speaker

corpus, but only 9.7 times per 100 000 words in the learner corpus. The difference is not statistically significant, but nevertheless interesting since it is the only [*not* + adverb] construction that is more frequent in the spoken native-speaker corpus. Among the [NEG + adverb] constructions, NEG *too* is also the only variant that is more frequent in the native-speaker corpus.

Similarly, the higher frequency of *a little bit* in the spoken learner corpus has no obvious reason. *A bit* is used to an equal extent in both spoken corpora and *a little* is quite infrequent, used only twice in each corpus. The synonyms *slightly* and *somewhat* are mainly found in the written corpora. We may consider the possibility that the highly frequent use of the Swedish adjective modifier *lite* in spoken Swedish (138/100 000 words in GSM) has influenced the use of *a little bit*, making *a bit* more like Sw. *lite* with the addition of *little* (=*lite*).[76]

As mentioned in Chapter 4, the learners' overuse of *kind of* needs to be related to the normal frequency of this adjective modifier in spoken AmE, as it has been shown that *kind of* is more frequent in spoken AmE than in spoken BrE (cf., e.g., Biber et al. 1999:562) and the native corpus of this study consists of British speakers only. The *Santa Barbara Corpus of spoken American English* (SBC) was therefore searched with regard to adjective-modifying *kind of* and *sort of*, and compared with the two spoken corpora of this study, giving the result shown in Table 5.8.

Table 5.8. Frequency of kind of *and* sort of *in the spoken corpora, in comparison with the SBC*

Modifier	**SWE sp /100 000**	**NAT sp /100 000**	**Am-NAT sp (SBC) /100 000**
sort of	25.1	20.7	2.8
kind of	26.4	6.6	13.3
Total	**51.5**	**27.3**	**16.1**

As earlier noted, the SBC is not fully comparable to the spoken corpora of this study, which means that we cannot draw any immediate conclusions about the

[76] The Swedish preference for this modifier is illustrated in the lyrics of a song written by the Swedish singer-songwriter Lykke Li, born in 1986: *I think I'm a little bit, little bit / A little bit in love with you / But only if you're a little bit, little bit / Little bit in la-la-la-la-love with me.*

lower frequency of the total of these two modifiers in the American corpus. However, it is noticeable that *kind of* is considerably more frequent than *sort of* in the SBC, and that the opposite is true of the British corpus. The Swedish learners, however, use both modifiers with similar frequency. More importantly, the frequency of *sort of* and *kind of* taken together is significantly higher in the learner corpus, both in relation to the British corpus and to the SBC.

The higher frequency of *kind of* in the learner corpus may be due to hesitation, i.e. dysfluency in the learners' speech, as this modifier – like *sort of* – tends to take on a function as "planner" or "filler". Alternatively, it is possible that the learners in fact hedge more for some reason; cf. the discussion in section 5.2.1.1. As pointed out earlier (cf. section 2.4.6), it is often difficult to establish the function of *kind of* and *sort of* in the spoken corpora, which most likely results in a certain margin of error, even though the aim has been to exclude hesitation markers. The equal share of *sort of* and *kind of* in the learner corpus also suggests that the Swedish students are influenced by both varieties of English.

5.3.3 Overuse of *very* versus underuse of *really*

Unlike the learners' written production, in which *very* and *really* are both overused in relation to the native speakers' texts, only *very* is overused in the learners' spoken English, while *really* is underused. Both differences are highly significant (cf. Tables 4.23 and 4.24). Although the SBC is differently composed from the spoken corpora of the LINDSEI project, a comparison between the three of them may be of interest. The frequencies of *very* and *really* in the spoken learner corpus, the spoken native-speaker corpus (British speakers only) and the SBC are shown in Table 5.9.

Table 5.9. Frequency of very *and* really *in the spoken corpora, in comparison with the SBC*

Modifier	**SWE sp /100 000**	**NAT sp /100 000**	**Am-NAT sp (SBC) /100 000**
very	381.3	273.3	76.3
really	139.2	212.0	81.1

The lower frequencies in the SBC are most likely due to the variety of texts included in this corpus, often of the non-assessing type. Nevertheless, Table 5.9 shows that the British speakers use *very* more frequently than *really*, whereas in the American corpus *really* is slightly more frequent than *very*. Table 5.9 also shows that the difference between the use of *very* and *really* in both native-speaker corpora is fairly small in comparison with the Swedish-learner corpus, in which *really* is considerably less frequent than *very*.

The frequent use of *very* in the learner corpus is quite expected, as earlier studies have shown that learners tend to overuse this flexible, easy-to-use reinforcer (cf. Granger 1998b:151). *Really*, on the other hand, has been found to increase in use among young native speakers, at the expense of *very* (cf. Tagliamonte 2008). It is possible, then, that the Swedish learners do not keep up with the native-speaker development towards a more frequent use of *really*, in line with Miemois (1993:16), who argues that "it is natural that languages change among native speakers and innovations reach non-native speakers much later – if ever". Also, Lorenz (1999:27) points out that "it is […] a matter of intense interest whether learners can remain 'up-to-date' in their acquisition of intensifiers. They are, after all, potentially short-lived and may – to reiterate Bolinger's words – 'quickly grow stale and need to be replaced'". This is true especially in spoken language and among younger people.

We may hypothesise, therefore, that the Swedish learners who have stayed longer than their peers in an English-speaking country would use fewer *very* and more *really*. To test this hypothesis, a so-called ANOVA test was performed with the help of the statistics programme *R* (http://www.r-project.org), in which it was tested whether the number of months spent in an English-speaking country had a significant influence on the use of *very* and *really* among the Swedish students. This gave the result shown in Table 5.10.

Table 5.10. Results of an ANOVA test of significance between months spent in an English-speaking country and the use of very *and* really *in the spoken corpora*

	P-value	**Significance**
very vs. months in English-speaking country	0.21	n.s.
really vs. months in English-speaking country	0.35	n.s.

n.s. = non-significant

As can be seen in Table 5.10, none of the relations above proved to be statistically significant, as the p-value needs to be 0.05 or less in order to show significance. In other words, we cannot assume a relation between the use of *really* and *very* and students' length of stay in an English-speaking country, despite the fact that nearly 40 per cent of the students spent at least one year in total in an English-speaking country. If we single out the students who stayed at least two years, however, there is a slight tendency to use fewer occurrences of *very*, and the four interviews with no occurrences of *very* were all made with students who stayed longer than one year in an English-speaking country. As in Table 5.10, however, none of these results are statistically significant.

The collocations with *very* and *really* are similar between the corpora. The four most frequent ones are combinations with *good* or *nice*, followed by *very different* and *very interesting*. *Friendly* and *big* are also among the adjectives most frequently modified by *very* or *really*. These are all adjectives that we would intuitively suppose to be frequent in everyday conversation. There are differences between the corpora, however, in terms of which combination is used most often. While the Swedish learners' top collocation is *very nice*, the native speakers' most frequent one is *really good*. In Table 5.11, the most frequent combinations with *really* and *very* are shown, together with statistically significant differences between the corpora.

Table 5.11. Most frequent collocations with really *and* very *in the spoken corpora*

NAT sp	/100 000 words	SWE sp	/100 000 words	Significance
really good	58	*very nice*	47	*** (O)
very good	32	*very good*	31	n.s.
really nice	27	*really good*	19	*** (U)
very nice	17	*really nice*	18	n.s.
very different	12	*very different*	13	n.s.
very interesting	9	*very interesting*	13	n.s.
really interesting	7	*very friendly*	11	-
very difficult	7	*very happy*	10	-
very impressive	7	*very big*	8	n.s.
really friendly	6	*really interesting*	7	n.s.
very big	6			

* = p < 0.05, ** = p < 0.01, *** = p < 0.001, n.s. = non-significant, (O) = overuse, (U) = underuse

As Table 5.11 shows, *very nice* is significantly overused by the learners, while *really good* is significantly underused in relation to the native-speaker corpus. It seems likely that the higher frequency of *nice* (cf. Table 4.7) and *very nice* is due to the topic of the conversations in the corpus. The speakers in GSM discuss music and rarely use *nice*, corresponding to Sw. *trevlig/-t/-a*, but very frequently use *good*, i.e. Sw. *bra*, when describing songs, artists or music genres. When, on the other hand, trips, countries, people and other experiences are discussed in the learner corpus, both *good* and *nice* are used with a high frequency.

To get a clearer view of the modification of the highly frequent adjectives *good* and *nice*, a spine plot was created, again with the help of the programme *R*. The result is shown in Figures 5.3 and 5.4.

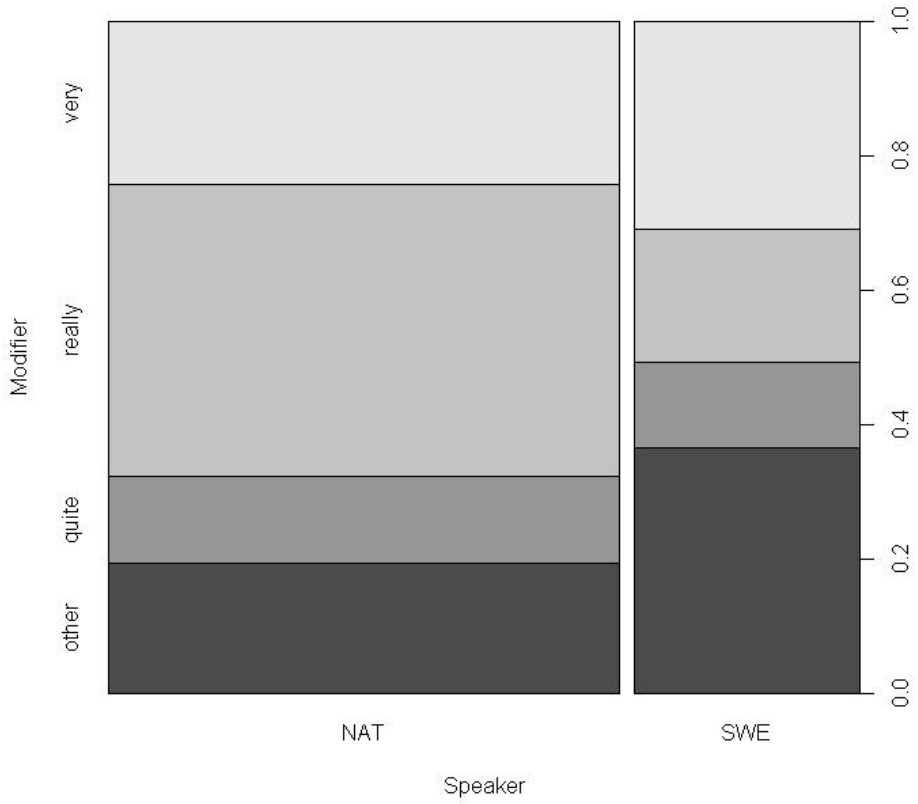

Figure 5.3. Spine plot of the modification of good *in the spoken corpora*

The width of the bars in this figure shows the quantity of occurrences, which is higher in the native-speaker corpus, partly due to its greater size, but also because of the higher frequency of modified *good* per 100 000 words. The figure also shows the considerably larger proportion of *really good* in the native-speaker corpus, and that the Swedish learners have a greater share of "other" (i.e. other than *very*, *really* or *quite*) modifiers of *good*. Among these are *not very, not that* and *not so*, earlier mentioned as more frequent in the learner corpus.

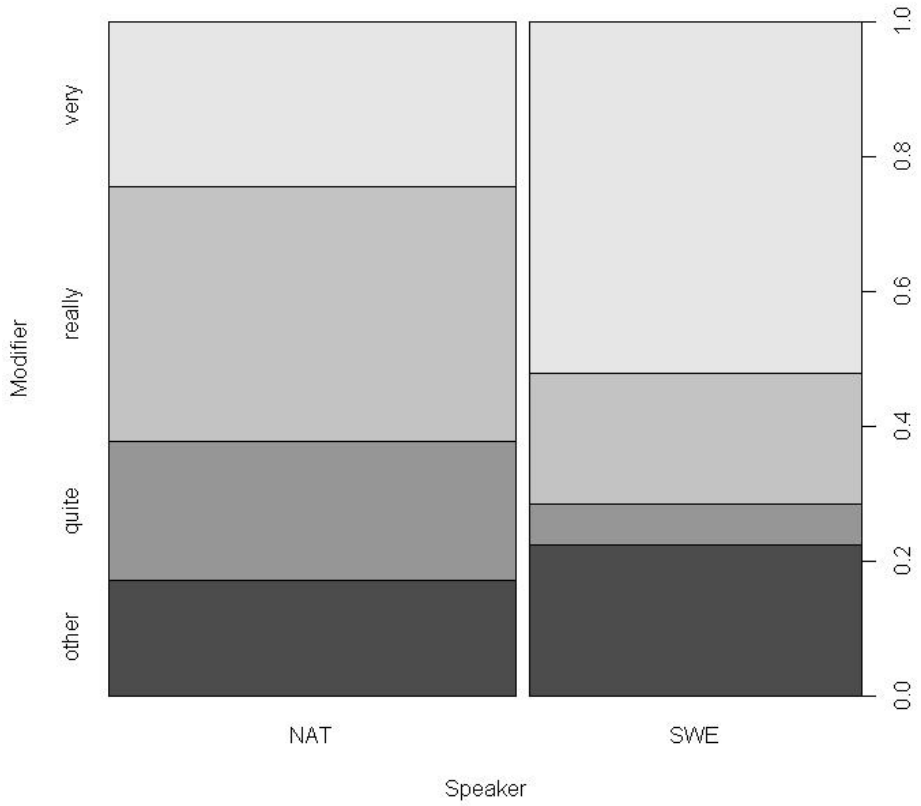

Figure 5.4. Spine plot of the modification of nice *in the spoken corpora*

The difference in width of the bars in Figure 5.4 is smaller than in Figure 5.3, due to the fewer occurrences of modified *nice* in relation to modified *good* in the native-speaker corpus. Figure 5.4 clearly shows the large proportion of *very nice* in the Swedish-learner corpus, as well as the relatively small share of *quite nice*. It is also noticeable that in the native-speaker corpus *really* is the main modifier of *nice*, as well as the main modifier of *good* (cf. Figure 5.3).

5.3.4 Summary

The two spoken corpora – Swedish learners vs. native speakers – have proved to be very similar on a general level, with regard to the frequency of adjective modifiers and the proportion of reinforcers vs. attenuators. When the subcategories and individual modifiers were compared, however, the spoken corpora were found to differ. While the Swedish learners overused diminishers (in particular *not that, not so, not very* and *a little bit*), the moderator *kind of* and

the booster *very*, the most significant difference was their underuse of maximizers (e.g. *just*), moderators (mainly *quite*) and the booster *really*. There was also a generally lower frequency of the type of adjectives that may be modified by maximizers in the learner corpus.

Possible reasons for the Swedish learners' underuse of maximizers have been discussed, including cultural aspects (the stereotypical image of an even-tempered Swede, reluctant to express feelings too strongly) and individual differences, as well as difficulties in expressing highly emphatic evaluations as an L2 speaker, requiring both skill and confidence. Furthermore, the learners may have misunderstood the degree of formality of some modifiers, which could explain the underuse of *quite* and *fairly* in spoken learner English and their overuse in the learners' written production (cf. section 5.2.1.1). A third reason discussed was some type of transfer from the frequent Swedish modifiers *inte så* and *lite*, which may account for the overuse of *not so/that/very* and *a little bit*, perhaps in combination with a stronger tendency to use litotes or understatement among the Swedish learners. Some differences, such as the higher frequency of *kind of* and lower frequency of *quite*, may be related to the fact that the native-speaker corpus is all British, while the Swedish students are influenced by both American and British English. Finally, the difficulty of keeping up with ongoing changes, especially in young native speakers' English, may be another reason for the underuse of *really* and overuse of *very*.

5.4 A wider perspective on Swedish advanced learners' adjective modification

In the course of the presentation and previous discussion of the results, a few themes have appeared intermittently. Firstly, the informal features of the learners' written text have resulted in less nativelike production than in the case of the spoken learner texts, which have shown many similarities to the native speakers' spoken production. Secondly, we have noted a tendency in the learners' spoken production to hedge or understate rather than being highly emphatic, which may possibly be due to the speech situation or the individual character of the speaker. This makes the question of nativelikeness, and what it implies,

somewhat problematic.[77] In this section, these themes are discussed at some greater length.

5.4.1 Informality in written language

When adjective modification was compared between the written corpora of this study, it emerged that Swedish learners differ from native speakers in more or less the same way as German or French learners do (cf. Lorenz 1999 and Granger 1998b), i.e. they show a generally higher frequency of adjective modifiers and of attenuating modifiers in particular. The learners all overuse *very* and *totally* and both German and Swedish learners overuse *quite*, *rather*, *not very* and *not so*. We may assume that these shared features are less likely to be due to L1 transfer since the learners have different mother tongues; rather, they are more likely to be characteristic of learner English in general.

However, the possibility of transfer – of a semantic or collocational kind – should perhaps not be altogether dismissed, as there are highly frequent Swedish equivalents of these modifiers. For example, *inte så* ('not so, not that') (cf. section 5.4.2), *totalt* ('totally') and *ganska* ('rather', 'quite') are found with some regularity in the GSM corpus (cf. 3.1.2.3.2). There are also German equivalents, such as *nicht so (freundlich), total (komisch)* and *ziemlich (gut),* and French, e.g. *pas si (grave), totalement (différent), assez (bon)*. It is difficult to ascribe these uses exclusively to either general learner strategies or transfer – most likely their frequent use is caused by a combination of the two, and perhaps by other factors as well.

As concluded earlier in this study, the differences noted above contribute to a more informal style than that used by the native speakers. This conclusion is based mainly on the following features of the Swedish learners' written texts:

- Formal language is intermingled with features of informal, conversational language, for example:
    - a higher frequency of modifiers in general
    - a higher frequency of attenuators in general
    - a higher frequency of informal types of modifiers, e.g. *totally, really* and *more or less*

[77] For an in-depth discussion of nativelikeness, see Graddol (2003).

  - a higher frequency of other modifiers that are not inherently informal, but contribute to an informal style, or impression, when used frequently, e.g. *very, completely, quite, fairly, not very, not so*, as well as in specific collocations, e.g. *completely headless, very irritating, very nice*

  The frequencies are not, however, as high as in the learners' spoken output.

- The Swedish learners seem to regard some informal modifiers as formal (as indicated by the underuse of those modifiers in spoken English), e.g. *quite* and *fairly*. This suggests a misunderstanding of the level of formality of these modifiers.

- The Swedish learners do not fully master the creative use of modified sentence structure – such as changing word order to focus on specific parts of a sentence, to make the text effective and varied – but add words to the text that lead to redundancy and repetition (cf. also Lorenz 1999:212). This is related to the overuse of modifiers and may be one of the most important factors underlying frequency differences.

- The Swedish learners' active vocabulary seems to be insufficient, in that – unlike the native speakers – they hardly ever use modifiers of the type *directly* and *readily*, which belong mostly to written language, collocate with a narrow range of adjectives, and contribute both to a more varied and more specific language. Instead, *very* is often used, which leads to a higher frequency of this modifier (cf. above) and a more informal style.

It is noteworthy that the features of informality related to the use of modifiers and adjectives in the learners' written texts form part of a larger picture, showing that learners (Swedish and others) are not as familiar with the genre of academic writing as the native speakers appear to be. This has been shown in various

learner-corpus studies.[78] However, even though some typically informal modifier + adjective collocations are found in the written learner corpus, such as the non-standard or colloquial *just great, real dangerous, dead drunk* or *mighty glad*, the Swedish learners do not generally "write as they speak" (cf. section 1.4). The differences found between the written and spoken learner corpora are clear enough to refute such a view:

- The learners' written texts contain a higher frequency of adjectives than their spoken texts (cf. Table 4.1).
- The learners' most common adjectives (cf. Tables 4.3 and 4.4), degree-modified adjectives (cf. Tables 4.11 and 4.12) and modifiers (cf. Tables 4.19 and 4.20) differ between written and spoken texts.
- The learners' spoken texts contain a higher frequency of degree-modified adjectives than their written texts (cf. Table 4.9).
- The learners' written texts show greater lexical variation, with regard to both adjectives and modifiers, than their spoken texts (cf. Tables 4.10 and 4.18).
- The learners' spoken texts contain typically informal or conversational features, such as *sort of*, *kind of* and *like*, whereas other moderating modifiers are chosen for written texts, such as *fairly*, *quite* and *rather*.

The first four of these differences between learners' written and spoken production agree with the differences found between the native-speaker corpora, while the last one reflects the assumed misunderstanding of the level of formality of *fairly* and *quite*. Whether or not in full agreement with the native-speaker corpora, they show that the learners are generally aware of the fact that spoken

[78] The difference in the level of formality between learners' and native speakers' written texts has been noted by, for example, Hyland & Milton (1993:192) and Ädel (2006). Ädel finds that Swedish learners more frequently use metadiscourse features in their writing, which leads to more pronounced writer visibility, e.g. by using phrases like *in my opinion* and *I think*. The learners' use of *I think* has also been analysed and discussed by, e.g., Hyland & Milton (1997:197f.), Ringbom (1998:44), Aijmer (2001) and Boström Aronsson (2005). Further, the lack of register awareness in learner writing is noted by, e.g., Miemois (1993:16), Altenberg & Tapper (1998:92) and Hasselgård (2009). Waller (1993:200, 261) states that learners mix formal and informal features in their texts, which gives an impression of non-nativeness, Granger & Rayson (1998:130) find features of orality and involvement in learners' written production, and Wiberg (2000:77f.) emphasizes that Swedish texts show many similarities to spoken language.

English and academic writing are separate genres. Individual students may indeed produce written texts which are highly similar to spoken, as shown in the extract below:

(5:26) You can't deny your background and get away with it. Many Swedes actually think that when you are in Rome you should do as the Romans do. Well, I don't think that you have to do as the Swedes just because you're in Svedala. But to be a complete stranger to your new country, where you might be spending the rest of your life, that clearly can't work either. No, you imbibe what you like of the new ways you meet and combine that with the good stuff from your old country. You give some, you take some and simply integrate. (SWE wr LND-09.1)

As can be inferred from this extract, the writer is quite fluent and at ease with informal English. Traits of sophisticated vocabulary can also be discerned, as in the use of the verb *imbibe*. The adjectives used here are common, everyday ones rather than formal and academic: *complete, new, new, good, old*.

However, the learner texts may also show a clear ambition to write in a more formal style:

(5:27) For a policy to be feasible the government, which implemented the policy, has to spend some time and effort on informing the people involved. But for a policy to be successful, working on a group of people, the immigrants, with such a varied set of characteristics, different nationalities, different culture, different religious beliefs just to mention a few, but also highly important factors to be taken into account, this seems to be logically impossible to carry out. And to satisfy the other group of citizens, the government's policy has to consider all of their rights and needs and combine these factors with the strenuous task of combining that with the aid to help the immigrants to adjust. (SWE wr LND-02.1)

In this extract, the challenge seems to be to use effective sentence structure that makes the text easier to read, rather than maintaining a formal style. Before commenting further on this text, a comparison with a sample from the spoken learner corpus is shown in (5:28).

(5:28)<B> <tuts> I lived in two different houses first I I used to stay with three (eh) anarchists </B>
<A> <overlap /> (uhu) </A>

<B> <overlap /> or two because I really wanted to you know live with English people and everything I thought that was really cool but <tuts> they never did the washing up and they never cleaned and (em) </B>
<A> so that was anarchy </A>
<B> <overlap /> it was and the guy who owned the place he had three cats and he didn't want to give them (erm) </B>
<A> <overlap /> <laughs> </A>
<B> . you know anti flea thingy because he thought it was (eh) cruel to the cats and to the fleas and everything </B>
<A> <overlap /> <laughs> </A>
<B> <overlap /> so I had like fleas in my bed </B>
<A> <overlap /> <laughs> </A>
<B> <overlap /> <laughs> so after a month I moved out and I moved in with a with a family and they were: religious . but very nice but their house they were <tuts> they were Christians .. they were in a . (em) . sort of (em) evangelical church . they were really nice <tuts> their house was so tidy and there was no mould anywhere and it was you know flowers and everything that was really nice </B>
<A> nice change </A>
<B> nice change and they were very nice as well so I really liked that .. (mm) </B>
(SWE sp 19)

These last two learner extracts, i.e. the written vs. the spoken one, indicate how the learners clearly distinguish the genres from each other. While the written extract contains the rather formal adjectives *feasible, successful, varied, different, important, impossible* and *strenuous*, the spoken text sample includes generally more informal adjectives: *different*, *cool*, *cruel*, *religious*, *nice* (five occurrences), *evangelical* and *tidy*. *Highly* is used as modifier in the written text, whereas the spoken text contains *really*, *very* and *so* as modifiers, also appearing more frequently (cf. Table 4.17). Other features of spoken language are also used, such as discourse markers (*you know, like, and everything* and *sort of*) and the approximate noun *thingy*.

A general awareness of differences between written and spoken language can thus be observed, as well as a high proficiency in oral production. However, the extracts also illustrate that the academic written style may be problematic or perhaps even unknown to some students. As this study has shown, the general frequencies of adjectives and modifiers, as well as the types of adjectives and modifiers used, point to features of informal language in the learners' written texts. Here, I will briefly discuss possible reasons for the Swedish learners' relative

informality in written texts and their lack of familiarity with the genre of academic writing.

Firstly, a contributing factor to the non-nativelike informality in academic essays probably involves different teaching strategies or insufficient attention to formal writing in Swedish schools (cf. Altenberg 1998:92). Indeed, the communicative approach emerging in the 1970s and leading to a devaluation of formal grammar teaching in favour of meaning and communicative purpose (cf., e.g., Tonkyn 1994:3 and Doughty & Williams 1998:3f.) has been the main strategy in both L1 and L2 teaching in the last few decades, both in Sweden and other countries. Granger & Rayson (1998:130), for example, find the greater emphasis on speech due to the communicative approach to be one reason for the informal character of French learners' writing. In line with Krashen's (1985) "Input Hypothesis", which claims that comprehensible input is both necessary and sufficient for successful second language acquisition, playing down the significance of grammar instruction (Yip 1994:124 and Ohlander 1999), the communicative approach has sometimes been taken to imply that "grammar doesn't matter" (Little 1994:101). A possible consequence of this strategy is that writing skills came to be regarded as somehow less important than oral proficiency, in turn resulting in a lack of awareness of the difference between spoken and written language, including genre awareness.

However, the idea that grammar is unimportant is refuted by several SLA researchers who find that learners who receive formal instruction outperform those who do not (Ellis 1990:171) and that both grammar and communicative meaning are equally necessary (Hasan & Perrett 1994:204). The communicative approach should rather imply focusing on communication as a point of departure for the study of form when necessary, i.e. instruction should draw learners' attention to form in the context of meaningful communication (cf. Williams & Evans 1998:139).

The fact that American students seem to separate spoken language style from written more clearly than Swedish advanced learners (as well as French and German ones) may thus, at least partly, be the result of different teaching strategies in American and European schools. In her study of Swedish learners' and American native speakers' written production, Wiberg (2000) sets out to investigate whether teaching strategies indeed differ between Swedish and American schools, and if such differences may explain the spoken language features observed in Swedish learners' texts. She finds, on the one hand, that the instructions at university level are very similar, but that Swedish learners

nevertheless write in a more conversational style (pp. 74ff.). On the other hand, she states that pre-university teaching in Sweden is more "liberal" and may even *recommend* using, for example, a more involved or personal style including frequent use of first-person pronouns (pp. 76f.). Wiberg concludes that "it seems that the Swedish students have been allowed to keep a rather conversational style of writing to a greater extent than the Americans" (p. 78).

This suggests that American schools may provide a more deliberate line of education, where pre-university studies prepare for university studies in a more consistent way. Certainly, this assumed consistency may be related to the fact that American students keep practising their L1, while their European peers are being taught a second language. However, in a recent study, Ask (2007) investigates the L1 writing experience and development of Swedish university students with different backgrounds, finding that there is often an educational gap between pre-university and university studies in Sweden, as students' qualifications do not, in practice, correspond to the expectations of universities.[79] Ask further states that the newly admitted university student may experience a degree of "culture shock" when faced with this gap (pp. 55ff., 101). The students in her study experience that their pre-university teaching of Swedish has not fully prepared them for the task of academic writing at university level (p. 113). The gap becomes even more evident, Ask (2007:175) points out, due to the effects of the Swedish upper secondary school reform in 1994,[80] one aim of which was to enable more students to study at university level. This resulted in an increase of university students with more heterogeneous linguistic backgrounds than previously, presenting a pedagogical challenge to university teachers (cf. Ask p. 162). However, after some time at the university students may actually become aware of what constitutes academic writing as well as the genre differences between this and conversational language. A student in Ask's (p. 99, my translation) study describes the nature of these differences, and thus the essential problem in relation to effective writing, including the avoidance of redundancy and repetition:

[79] A perceived decline in general language skills was also widely debated in the spring of 2013, a discussion initiated a few years earlier by teachers at Uppsala University. The teachers claimed that many of their students had a severely limited vocabulary in Swedish and a shallow or erroneous word comprehension. The problems were found to be most conspicuous in writing (*Språktidningen* Aug 2013: 38, 41).

[80] For an evaluation of the reform (SOU 1997:107), see http://www.regeringen.se/content/1/c6/02/52/18/c94681db.pdf.

> There is perhaps more "fluff" in conversational language. And in "Academish" fewer words are used, but on the other hand the words are more complicated. Because in academic circles, it's important to be as clear as possible, and for this there are special words that mean only what you want to say, for which you might have needed several sentences to explain in normal conversational language.

It may be assumed, then, that the lack of experience in formal L1 writing and the educational gap observed between pre-university and university studies in Sweden may also affect the study and written production of English as a second language. Writing skills and genre awareness are not likely to be confined to one language, as these are general language skills rather than specific to one language. Thus, it seems that the informality in Swedish advanced learners' written English forms part of a larger picture, showing the joint effects of pedagogical tendencies and government policy.[81]

Another presumably important factor in the "informalisation", or "colloquialisation", of written language is the increasing influence from the media, which, as pointed out by Johansson (2013:134), may be more important than the educational system. The increasingly personal and informal language used in the media is part of a general, long-term tendency away from a standardised language norm, Josephson (2004:44) declares, a process beginning as early as the Second World War, with everyday language broadcast on the radio.[82] One effect of this development has been that the "distant" written language and the "near" spoken language have been brought closer to each other (Johansson 2013:131f.), accelerated by extensive communication via digital media. This, however, happened after the written corpus of this study was compiled and so cannot be referred to as an important factor in this case. Within the context of the present study, it is important to note, nevertheless, that the "informalisation" of public language does not necessarily imply writing in the same way as one speaks (cf. 1.4 and earlier in this section). For example, work in

[81] For further discussion of the role of the university and the dilemma arising from the university teachers' ambition to maintain the academic writing traditions while society is changing as more and more people are expected to have an academic education, see Ask (2007:162, 166f., 175).

[82] To some extent, the daily papers have replaced high-culture literary work as the linguistic and stylistic model, but these, in line with the tabloid press, may provide low linguistic quality, as stated by Lomheim (2007). Proof-readers are continuously disappearing from the editorial staff (cf., e.g., Schulman 2008 and http://www.resume.se/nyheter/media/2007/09/24/aftonbladet-fasar-ut-korrl) and the journalistic texts show tendencies towards a more informal and individual style.

progress by Tagliamonte[83] shows that young people have no problems separating the styles of text messages and essay writing: "young people are fluidly navigating a complex range of new written registers – from formal traditional TXT [formal written language] to funky playful SMS – and they command them all." Rather, the accessibility of social media makes it possible for anyone with a computer or a smart phone to write for the general public, making an important difference to the spread of the written word and to the relaxation of one prevailing standard norm. Johansson (2013: 140, my translation) states:

> In social media, a large number of individuals publish a great amount of text which has not passed via the gate-keeping that previously characterized the printed word. Most likely, the language in social media will gradually affect the standard variety towards a successively greater instability.

Based on the above discussion, the most relevant factors accounting for the informality of Swedish learners' written production thus appear to be:

1. Language teaching strategies based on the communicative approach, with the main focus on oral production and communicative content rather than form. This strategy may have resulted in a lower awareness of differences between spoken language and written, academic style, as well as the appearance of spoken language features in the learners' academic essays, such as a higher frequency of adjective modification and overuse of informal and all-round modifiers such as *totally*, *really*, *very* and *quite.*

2. A knowledge gap between upper secondary school and higher education. This factor seems to be closely related to the increase of university students, which has resulted in a more heterogeneous student intake as regards writing skills and/or genre awareness. This may be an important factor for students' misunderstanding of the level of formality of, e.g., *quite* and *fairly*, and for their lack of skills in using sentence structure variation and narrow-range collocations (e.g. *directly applicable, readily available*) to produce a more varied and effective written language.

[83] Paper presented at the ICAME conference in Oslo, 1-5 June, 2011. See also Tagliamonte & Denis (2008).

3. "Informalisation" of public language. The increasing informality of media language, as well as Swedish public language at large, may result in students' getting the impression that there is no immediate reason to learn how to write more formal texts. The model for formal language, i.e. the daily newspapers, is no longer as formal as it used to be.

In view of the situation just outlined, the importance of students being exposed to different genres in writing and of being given the chance to practise them thoroughly needs to be stressed.[84]

5.4.2 The speech situation, the individual and near-nativeness

As the results have shown, the Swedish learners use adjectives and modifiers to the same extent as the native speakers in their spoken English, and the proportion between reinforcers and attenuators is also similar between the two spoken corpora, indicating that Swedish learners are more nativelike in speaking than in writing. This may, indeed, be expected from the relatively pronounced focus on oral production in Swedish language education, discussed in the previous section, as well as from the large amount of extramural English experienced by Swedish learners (cf. Sylvén 2006 and Sundqvist 2009). Apparently, it may also explain the higher degree of informal features in the learners' written production (cf., e.g., Granger & Rayson 1998:130). However, when the comparison of the spoken corpora was taken to a more detailed level, the following differences were found:

- The native speakers, more frequently than the Swedish learners, use maximizers, especially *just*
- The native speakers, more frequently than the Swedish learners, use *quite* and *fairly* (cf. the Swedish learners' overuse of these modifiers in written texts; see Table 4.21) while the Swedish learners more frequently use *kind of*
- The Swedish learners, more frequently than native speakers, use *not that, not so, not very* and *a little bit*

[84] In fact, work in this direction is under way, as stated by Ask in *Språktidningen* (Aug 2013): a new Swedish course in upper secondary school, focusing on scientific texts and compulsory for students who want to study at the university was introduced in the autumn of 2013 (p. 44).

- The native speakers use *really* more frequently and *very* less frequently than the Swedish learners

Taken together, at a more general level, the differences between Swedish learners' and native speakers' spoken English, with regard to the use of modified adjectives, seem to indicate that Swedish learners less frequently use highly expressive and forceful modifiers (i.e. maximizers), while overusing softening or hedging devices (i.e. diminishers). Further, they tend to avoid *quite* and *fairly*, while overusing them in their written texts, preferring *kind of* as a moderator in their spoken production. Finally, Swedish learners seem to overuse the booster *very* at the expense of *really*.

When discussing possible reasons for the differences in the use of maximizers and diminishers between native speakers and Swedish learners, at least two alternatives may be considered. One involves lower language proficiency, implying that Swedish advanced learners lack the necessary vocabulary and collocational skills to produce maximizer + adjective pairs in the same way as native speakers. Maximizers, as opposed to boosters, display relatively restricted collocational patterns. Only certain types of adjectives (limit and extreme adjectives; see section 2.1.2.1) normally combine with maximizers, which may present difficulties for the L2 speaker and lead to avoidance strategies. *Quite* and *fairly,* however, seem to be underused due to misjudgment of their level of formality, considering the fact that they are *overused* in the Swedish learners' written texts (cf. 5.2). It is also possible that *quite* (and to some degree *fairly*) is avoided due to its complicated range of functions. Depending on tone of voice, lexical and situational context, etc., *quite* can express 'more than a little but not a lot', 'in fact pretty much' or 'completely' (see 2.4.2). However, this somewhat contradicts the overuse of these modifiers in the learners' written corpus.

The higher frequency of diminishers, mainly *not that, not very, not so* and *a little bit*, could perhaps be attributed to direct or "semantic" [85] transfer (cf.

[85] As noted in 5.4.1, *not that* and *not so* can both be translated into Swedish *inte så* (see, for example, Norstedts 2000). *Not very*, however, does not translate verbatim into Swedish *inte så*, but rather *inte (så) mycket*. However, *inte (så) mycket* is not normally used as modifier of gradable adjectives: **inte (så) mycket söt* ['pretty'], **inte (så) mycket vänlig* ['friendly']. A suitable translation into Swedish of *not very pretty* or *not very friendly* is, therefore, *inte så söt* and *inte så vänlig*, alternatively *inte speciellt* ['especially']/*särskilt* ['particularly']/*vidare* ['too', 'particularly'] *söt/vänlig*. Hence, the label "semantic transfer" is chosen here for the suggested explanation of the overuse of *not very* among Swedish learners, although there is no verbatim correspondence between *very* and Swedish *så*. For different types of transfer, see also Jarvis & Pavlenko (2008).

section 5.4.1) from, basically, conversational Swedish, in which *inte så* ('not so') and *lite* ('a little') are highly frequent as adjective modifiers. The question remains, however, why Swedish advanced learners more frequently than native speakers use softening modification, and seem to avoid highly emphatic expressions in their speech.

Thus, the second possible reason suggested here is that the differences discussed are related to the speech situation, either the specific circumstances of the interviews, or the general insecurity that quite naturally results from being a non-native speaker. It has been argued that Swedish advanced learners' written argumentative English is affected by insecurity and a sense of insufficiency, hence the frequent use of hedges and tentativeness in their essays (cf. Agerström 2000:39 and Ädel 2006:90f). It is perhaps not a far-fetched conclusion that Swedish advanced learners' use of softening devices, including adjective diminishers, is increased by the stress of the interview situation, while strongly emphatic expressions, including maximizers and totality adjectives, are avoided.

As pointed out in 3.3.4.2.2, the interview room, a small and windowless recording studio, may have had a negative effect on the interviewees' confidence and level of ease. The interviewer and interviewee were seated on opposite sides of a table, and the student was asked to speak directly into the microphone. Possibly, a pair of armchairs, placed closer to each other in a decorated, airy room and a hidden microphone might have resulted in a more relaxed atmosphere, which could have affected the frequency of softening or emphatic modifiers. Furthermore, in most of the interviews the interviewer was a male, native-speaking teacher in his sixties, while the majority of the students were female and in their twenties. This difference in age, gender and academic status may have contributed to the observed differences in adjective modification as well. In a conversation with native speakers of an equal age, gender and academic status, the learners' frequency of, for example, maximizers might have been quite different.

Also, it may be hypothesised that Swedes in general hedge more and maximise less than British people, suggesting some type of pragmatic transfer of Swedish conversational habits or strategies. However, without a reference study of Swedish students being interviewed in their mother tongue, any assumption of a "typically Swedish" conversational strategy will have to remain a mere speculation.

If the differences are due to insufficient linguistic skills, the results may be used to suggest certain pedagogical implications with the aim of increasing

learners' vocabulary and, in particular, to improve their collocational knowledge with regard to maximizers and adjectives. If, on the other hand, the speech situation is the main reason for the discrepancy between the Swedish and the native corpora, we need to ask whether teaching L2 English should include encouraging students to be more nativelike by changing their "conversational style". This appears slightly problematic, especially considering the possibility that native speakers' production might change radically if they were exposed to a situation that would make them equally nervous or insecure.

Normally, we associate nativelike spoken production with good fluency, using a "proper" amount of discourse and hesitation markers in the "right" places, good pronunciation, automatised language use, etc. If, then, appearing more nativelike is a question of changing one's behaviour or personality, for example into being more emphatic or expressive – having surmounted the difficulties of grammatical accuracy and fluency – would we be willing to adopt such a strategy? Indeed, we may recall having made such attempts when speaking to foreigners in their language, but to what extent should we integrate such an aim in ESL teaching? Is it even possible to reach this goal?

A natural consequence of such considerations is posing the question of how important it is to be as nativelike as possible. There are, certainly, both advantages and disadvantages to appearing nativelike. A questioning attitude towards near-nativeness is expressed by Nickel (1985:150), who asks, with regard to the use of discourse and hesitation markers:

> How, for instance, could one ever seriously hope to be able to integrate the enormous range of discourse phenomena, including silence fillers and phatic signals, into FL teaching? And, again, are not many of those phenomena as, for instance, stuttering, in some types of English speech typically native-speaker privileges?

The word *privileges* here indicates that learners not only cannot acquire the features described, but *should* not. There are also recommendations for pronunciation, which tend to be somewhat subjective: learners are recommended to avoid, for example, pronouncing *fence* with a *t*, [fen(t)s] (Wells 2008:567), while a constant avoidance of, for example, intrusive "r" may make the non-native speaker stand out as too formal and less nativelike (cf. Wells 1982:284). Some native speakers will probably recall the inappropriateness felt when, for instance, a non-native speaker uses swear words a little too often or in the

"wrong" place – some errors may be more difficult to accept than others. On the other hand, learners may be expected to make mistakes, Nickel (1985:152) points out, or they will run the risk of appearing too correct for the native speaker:

> One should, perhaps, not exclude the possibility of a native speaker, especially of a language which is highly complex like English, having a feeling of inferiority if there is too much correctness in the non-native's performance, which, of course, would be deleterious for the communication process.

The subjectivity of reasoning along the lines just illustrated calls for a more objective and less normative standpoint as regards pedagogical implications concerning how emphatic or hedging learners should be.

The question of a near-native target in foreign language learning also needs to be related to the present situation of English around the world, in which L2 speakers of English outnumber native speakers (cf., e.g., Crystal 2003:107ff.), and the communicative purpose may be very different from one speaker to another.[86] Graddol (2003:211), for example, argues that the function of English in Europe is changing: "European citizens learn and use English in order to communicate with European nationals from all countries and not just with native speakers." If the person we address in our conversation is a non-native speaker, it may seem somehow pointless to appear as nativelike as possible: does the speaker or listener benefit from this, or does it even have an adverse effect on the communication? It seems likely that content, rather than form, is in focus in such a situation. Hence, idiomatic language production would become less important. The non-native to non-native communication is indeed so common that Warschauer (2000:511) predicts a "shift of authority to non-native speakers and dialects", mainly due to socioeconomic factors, and argues that the teaching of English as a second or foreign language should focus less on British or American English and more on English as a lingua franca (ELF) (p. 515) (cf. also Pakir 1999:108, 112):

[86] However, as pointed out by Graddol (2003), it is difficult to establish the number of L1 or L2 speakers in a geographical area, as the speakers may differ in how they view their nativeness or non-nativeness; questions such as "what is a native speaker?" and "where do we draw the line between second language and foreign language?" further complicate the census. Moreover, the distinction between second and foreign language is becoming less relevant (cf. Crystal 2003:109), due to "an increasing number of fluent speakers of English who do not conform to the traditional definition of L2 speaker and who are excluded from most estimates of L2 usage" (Graddol 2003:216).

> in the 21st century there will be a growing basis for learners around the world to view English as their own language of additional communication rather than as a foreign language controlled by the "Other". Teachers would do well to exploit this situation by creating opportunities for communication based on the values, cultural norms and needs of learners rather than on the syllabi and texts developed in England and the United States.

This view reflects the unique situation in which English is now finding itself, providing an interesting contrast to other languages taught in Swedish schools, such as French, German or Spanish, where the majority of users are native speakers.

Teaching English as a lingua franca seems somewhat complicated, however, as a context is needed in which the less native-specific features of the language are to be used. Limits would have to be drawn between general characteristics of the language and geographically/culturally-based ones. Alternatively, if a ready-made lingua franca is to be taught, which version should be chosen? In addition, native-speaker English and English as lingua franca are not the only alternatives to choose from. Schneider (2012:2f.) describes established, non-native varieties of English, which have "developed local forms and characteristics, so that not infrequently people enjoy using [them] in 'their own' way" – a kind of English positioned in between lingua franca and the variety used by native speakers.

The above discussion is also applicable to the results of the present study, which has used differences in frequency – especially statistically significant ones – to indicate where Swedish learners diverge from native speakers, employing the terms *overuse* and *underuse* in a non-normative sense. As stated in Chapter 3, however, any comparison with native-speaker corpora implies using these as a norm – albeit a problematic one – and making native speakers the "ideal", as well as pointing out how nativelike the non-native speakers are. Therefore, we should ask ourselves what nativeness is and in what way students need to be nativelike in order to reach their target. In other words, the discussion will necessarily touch on a normative perspective. Pedagogical implications are further complicated by the close relationship between differences in frequency and individual or contextual differences in the speech situation. While it may be plausible to suggest higher or lower frequencies of certain items in order to make learners' English appear more nativelike, it may be more difficult to accept the strategy of proposing a change towards, for instance, more emphatic language or less hedging expressions, due to the close relation to the speaker's personality.

With this in mind, the most suitable approach seems to be presenting students with relevant linguistic and sociolinguistic facts from several perspectives and let them form their own target. If fruitful, this strategy will make students aware of the possible reactions to their language production and how to avoid misunderstandings, thus leading to improved communication.

6. Summary and conclusion

6.1 Introduction

This final chapter provides, in the first place, a fairly detailed summary of the study accounted for in the previous chapters, including the aims of the study, the corpus material used and the method employed, as well as the main quantitative and qualitative findings (6.2). It is followed by a discussion of some pedagogical implications that may be considered in light of the results of the study, mainly with regard to the importance of genre awareness and extended vocabulary knowledge, with special reference to certain relatively restricted collocations involving modifiers and adjectives (6.3). Towards the end of the chapter, some suggestions are given for further research in view of the findings of this study (6.4).

6.2 Summary

6.2.1 Background and aims

Swedish advanced learners' use of modifiers and adjectives (e.g. *hardly noticeable, slightly exaggerated, seemingly bright, almost extinct, very costly, completely different*) mirrors various linguistic and pragmatic skills, such as having an extensive vocabulary, using collocations (closely related to automatised language and fluency), having an idea of the possible effects on the addressee of hedging vs. emphatic language, as well as being aware of and confident with different types of texts or genres. Also, as some modifiers tend to change quickly as their effect wears off and "frequent use is apt to weaken the sense of a word" (Stoffel 1901:1), their use may give an indication of how well advanced learners manage to keep pace with ongoing developments of the language.

This study set out to describe the use of different types of modifiers and adjectives, in both written and spoken Swedish-learner corpora, comparing the results to similarly composed native-speaker corpora. The comparison was made with reference to a) frequency of modifiers and adjectives, b) distribution across different categories of modifiers and c) collocations involving modifiers and adjectives. A further aim was to suggest and discuss possible reasons for the differences found, expressed as *overuse* and *underuse*, without normative implications, relating them to register or style awareness, vocabulary skills, sense of idiomaticity and L1 transfer. An additional, subordinate aim was to consider possible pedagogical implications with reference to the results of the study.

6.2.2 Defining and classifying adjectives and modifiers

Before quantifying and analysing the corpus material, it was necessary to identify both adjectives and modifiers, discussing borderline cases and deciding where to draw the line for inclusion in the study (Chapter 2). A relatively broad perspective was adopted, guided by the possible presence of a degree-modifying function, including, for example, semantically complex modification and modifiers with ambiguous scope. Some types of modification, however, were excluded for being too "specific" (e.g. *two inches long*), modifying comparison rather than the adjectival quality (e.g. *a bit longer*) or expressing a development (*increasingly popular, more and more difficult*) rather than being reinforcing.

In the study of adjective modification in advanced-learner vs. native-speaker corpora, it was also considered useful to apply some type of categorisation of modifiers, as the comparison of categories would complement the analysis of modifiers as a whole or as individual types. Therefore, some previous attempts at categorising degree modifiers were discussed, where a useful main distinction was found between "scalar" (cf. Allerton 1987:19), and "totality" modifiers (cf. Paradis 1997:28), the first category comprising modifiers indicating the degree of intensity of the adjectival quality on an imagined scale, whereas the second includes those combining with "limit" or "extreme" adjectives (cf. Paradis 1997). These are the "maximizers", which "highlight the perfect match with a maximum or a boundary" and the "approximators", which "indicate that a gradable property falls short of that maximum or that boundary," (Paradis 2008:321). Another useful distinction is made between amplifying or reinforcing modification on the one hand and downtoning or attenuating on the other (cf.

Quirk et al. 1985:589f, Paradis 1997). These are further divided by Quirk et al. (1985:589ff.) into six subcategories, which are the ones mainly used for this study.

As the focus of the study was the adjective phrase (AP) consisting of modifier + adjective, the combination of the two elements is a matter of obvious interest. In discussing the issues related to the combination, the term "collocation" was used, disregarding the frequency of the combination for the definition of the term; most often the term is used with reference to combinations that appear with a certain frequency (cf., e.g., Sinclair 1991:170 and Stubbs 1995:23, 2001:29), i.e., recurrent combinations. The restrictions or preferences related to these combinations make important knowledge for learners of English, as misuse may lead to "foreign-sounding" or unidiomatic language, or unintended effects on the reader or listener.

Some factors influencing the collocations of modifiers and adjectives referred to were the type of gradability (scalarity vs. totality), negative or positive connotations (semantic prosody), formal vs. informal style, as well as conventionally "narrow" collocations (e.g. *directly applicable, readily available*), the confident use of which requires a higher degree of exposure and, in turn, contributes to fluency due to their automatising effect. As previous learner studies have shown that learners use fewer narrow collocations than native speakers (cf., e.g., Granger 1998b:152f. and Howarth 1998:169, 177), the Swedish learners of this study were expected to do the same.

Chapter 2 is concluded by a section on somewhat more problematic cases of ambiguity or vagueness that arose in the process of collecting data from the corpora. More specifically, these were the borderline cases between adjectives and verbs (*–ed* and *–ing* forms), different categories of modifiers (*quite, pretty, fairly, rather* and *perfectly*), modification and reference or comparison (*so, too, enough*), modification and subject-referring (*all*), modifiers and other functions and scopes, viz. discourse markers (*sort of, kind of, you know, like*), focusers (*just, simply*) and markers of modality (*really*), and, finally, between the semantic areas of degree and manner, i.e. between modifying an adjective or a verb (*well*).

6.2.3 Material and method

The following corpora were used:

- the written Swedish-learner corpus SWICLE, a component from the *International Corpus of Learner English* (cf. Granger 1993);
- its reference corpus LOCNESS, the *Louvain Corpus of Native English Essays* (De Cock et al. 1997), a written native-speaker corpus;
- the spoken Swedish-learner corpus LINDSEI-SW, a component from the *Louvain International Database of Spoken English Interlanguage* (Gilquin et al. 2010);
- its reference corpus LOCNEC, the *Louvain Corpus of Native English Conversation* (Gilquin et al. 2010), a spoken native-speaker corpus.

The corpora used were chosen due to their comparability and manageable size. They were also compiled relatively recently (during the 1990s and beginning of 2000, respectively). Especially the written ones have previously been used in various other studies of learner English (both Swedish and other), thus making it possible for the results to contribute to the larger picture of research on Swedish and other advanced learners' English.

However, there are certain factors affecting the comparability of the corpora, discussed in Chapter 3. Comparison as method, using native-speaker corpora as norm, is also briefly discussed in this chapter.

The material was searched both computationally and manually. Calculating the occurrences and normalising them to frequencies per 100 000 words in the quantitative study made it possible to identify over- and underrepresentation of certain adjectives or modifiers, and of different categories of modifiers. The identification of overuse and underuse was based on calculations of statistical significance of the differences in frequency between the corpora. The frequency of the most common collocations was also calculated, enabling a comparison of highly frequent combinations of modifiers and adjectives.

Other corpora were also consulted for secondary reference, viz. SBC (*Santa Barbara Corpus of Spoken American English*) for comparison with spoken American English, GSM (*Gymnasisters Språk- och Musikvärldar* ['The Language and Music Worlds of Upper Secondary School Students']) for investigating the likelihood of transfer from spoken Swedish, and the BNC (*British National Corpus*) for a comparison with a more extensive selection of collocations.

The corpus study involved a basically quantitative approach to the modifier and adjective use in the four corpora, followed up by a more in-depth, qualitative analysis using the quantitative results as a point of departure. A wider perspective

is taken towards the end of Chapter 5, focusing on informality in written learner texts and near-nativeness in spoken learner texts.

6.2.4 Main findings

It was found that the Swedish advanced learners' written texts contain approximately 4% more adjectives and almost 36% more adjective modifiers per 100 000 words, than native speakers' written texts. The modified adjectives *different* and *new* were overused, whereas *strong* was underused in the Swedish learners' written texts. The modifiers overused in the Swedish learners' written texts were *totally, very, quite, really, fairly* and *more or less*, while *all* and *directly* were underused. The collocations *very different* and *totally different* were found to be more frequent in the Swedish learners' written texts, but in comparison with the native-speaker texts, the difference was not statistically significant. Examples of collocations used exclusively by the native speakers include *directly applicable, readily available, all male/female, fully integrated, widely accepted, extremely important* and *highly respected.*

In the spoken texts, adjectives and modifiers were used to a similar extent in both learner and native-speaker corpora. However, the modified adjective *small* was overused, whereas *good* and *bad* were underused, in the Swedish learners' spoken texts. The modifiers overused in the Swedish learners' spoken production were *very* and combinations of negation and *that, so* or *very*, while the modifiers *really, quite, just, fairly* and *just so* were underused. The collocation *very nice* was overused in the learners' spoken texts, while *really good*, *quite difficult* and *not too bad* were underused.

When categories of modifiers were compared between learner and native-speaker corpora, it was found that the Swedish learners used diminishers (in particular *a bit* and negated variants of *very*, *that* and *so*) more frequently in both their written and spoken English. However, moderators (especially *quite*, *fairly* and *more or less*) and maximizers (especially *totally*) were overused in the learners' written texts, while underused in their spoken English (especially the moderators *quite* and *fairly* and the maximizer *just*).

In the qualitative study, possible reasons for the differences found were discussed, beginning with the higher frequency of modifiers in the learners' written texts. A survey of the modifier frequency in the individual learner essays was made, to clarify whether the overuse was general or confined to a few

students. It was found to be a general phenomenon, concentrated to the boosters *very* and *really*, as well as the overused categories (diminishers, moderators and maximizers).

The overuse of diminishers and moderators was found to be restricted to the comparison with the American essays, while the frequency of these categories was similar in the British ones. Thus, possible reasons discussed for the overuse of diminishers and moderators included a previously found learners' tendency to hedge more than (in particular, American) native speakers (cf., e.g., Crismore et al. 1993:58), possibly due to a sense of inferiority and lack of pragmatic awareness, as well as inexperience concerning English written discourse conventions (cf. Agerström 2000:39).

The more frequent use of modifiers and, especially, attenuators (e.g. diminishers and moderators), is also characteristic of spoken language (cf. Biber et al. 1999:1044f.). However, it was found that the Swedish advanced learners did not seem to transfer attenuators from their spoken English to their written, but rather from native speakers' spoken English (e.g. *quite, a bit, not very, fairly*) and from written or spoken Swedish (e.g. *more or less, not very, not so*). The overuse of maximizers could also be partly referred to influence from native-speaker spoken English, in particular the more frequent use of *totally, completely, absolutely* and *just* (with a maximising function).

The Swedish learners were not "over-boosting" in their written texts, but the two boosters *very* and *really* were overused in relation to the native speakers' essays. It was found that the native speakers, more frequently than Swedish learners, used other boosters, such as *directly, widely, particularly, easily, especially* and *truly*. Some of them formed relatively narrow collocations, such as *directly applicable, readily available* and *widely accepted*, which were scarce or absent in the learner corpus.

The comparison of the spoken corpora revealed that Swedish learners underused maximizers and moderators, while they overused diminishers in their spoken English. It was shown that Swedish learners used fewer totality adjectives (which may be modified by maximizers) in general, which may well be connected with the lower frequency of maximizers. One suggested reason for the lower frequency of maximizers (and, perhaps, of totality adjectives in general) was the lack of confidence presumably needed for expressing strong, emphatic evaluation, such as *just amazing* or *absolutely brilliant*. Instead, the learners' overuse of diminishers pointed to a preference for litotes or hedging, most likely combined with L1 transfer from Swedish *inte så* ('not so') and *lite* ('a little'). The

underuse of moderators, on the other hand, was possibly due to the typically British, highly frequent use of *quite*, as well as a wrongly assumed formal character of both *quite* and *fairly*, overused in the learners' written texts.

Learners' preference of *very* over *really* was mainly attributed to the difficulty of keeping up with new tendencies in young native speakers' speech, in this case the increase of *really* at the expense of *very* (cf. Tagliamonte 2008), although other possible reasons were considered. In particular, the Swedish learners frequently used *very nice* while the native speakers preferred *really good*.

The informality of the Swedish learners' written texts was also discussed further in Chapter 5. The learners generally distinguish between written and spoken texts, but the written texts are still too informal for the academic genre. Different writing styles could be observed, however, such as good, fluent informal English on the one hand, and formal, but somewhat clumsily structured text on the other, showing that genre awareness as well as writing skills can be improved.

Possible reasons considered for the informality of the learners' written texts were different teaching strategies and insufficient attention to formal writing in Swedish schools, as well as the increasing influence from the media, indicating a tendency away from a standardised language norm (cf. Josephson 2004).

Obviously, the focus on oral production in Swedish language education in recent years has resulted in students being, by international standards, fairly proficient speakers of English with good fluency and a relatively good command of idiomatic expressions. This is supported by the similarities found in the frequency of modifiers and adjectives, as well as the proportion of reinforcing vs. attenuating modification, between the learner and the native-speaker corpora investigated. Nevertheless, the differences found, mainly in the use of maximizers and diminishers, may point to underlying factors relating to the interview situation rather than lack of skills. In this context, therefore, the question of near-nativeness goes beyond matters of vocabulary, grammar, fluency and pronunciation, and into the areas of personality and social behaviour.

6.3 Some pedagogical implications

In view of the results found and observations made in this study, a few pedagogical implications may be considered. This means, however, that the

borderline between a descriptive and a prescriptive view will be somewhat blurred. As Leech (1998:xx) points out, "Prescription comes into the picture […] when we ask how […] corpus findings are to be interpreted for pedagogical purposes." Thus, although this study has aimed to be descriptive, indicating the differences found between the Swedish-learner and native-speaker corpora, it is nevertheless these differences that form the basis for the pedagogical strategies suggested. With this somewhat contradictory point of departure, the following discussion about pedagogical implications will be kept on a fairly general level, although it is sometimes necessary to refer to specific uses or words.

The picture is further complicated by the fact that the implications arrived at are based on the assumption that producing nativelike English is the target of the Swedish learners, which may well not be the case. First, considering the widespread use of non-native English around the globe, the target may be closer to some other type of frequently used English. Secondly, the varying quality of the texts written by the native speakers of this study, here used as a norm for written academic English, suggests that they may not be the ideal for Swedish learners, as pointed out in Chapter 3. Rather, the target may be texts written by professional native-speaker writers (cf. section 6.4). Indeed, this can perhaps be regarded as undermining the pedagogical implications considered, as they are based, for better or for worse, on the comparison with the native-speaker texts in this study.

As has been shown, the differences between learners' and native speakers' written English are somewhat greater than those between the spoken corpora. This, as already noted, may be viewed as a possible consequence of the relatively pronounced focus on spoken language in Swedish schools, among other factors discussed in Chapter 5. Thus, the comparison between the written corpora seems to indicate that more attention should be paid to Swedish learners' awareness of different genres and registers and the distinctive character of formal, written language. Many students may not have become acquainted with academic text before studying at the university, needing more exposure to this type of text to be able to produce it, presumably already in compulsory school and definitely in upper secondary school. The particular aspects of academic language, pointed out by, e.g., Carter & McCarthy (2006:266–294), such as the packaging of information in condensed structures, typically around the noun phrase, or, as other learner studies have shown, the impersonal style created by using, for instance, the passive voice or third person reference (e.g. *this essay highlights …*) and avoiding expressions like *I think*, obviously need to be given more attention.

Thus, increased awareness is necessary with regard to the differences between written and spoken English, formal and informal language and academic vs. non-academic texts. Specifically, in order to reduce the superfluous or repetitive use of certain modifiers, an extended vocabulary and knowing how to vary sentence structure would seem to be relevant in this connection. The ability to rearrange a sentence, placing the focus on a certain part of it without necessarily using or repeating emphasising words would most likely promote a more varied and effective written style. Not least, students need to increase their "collocational awareness", combining modifiers and adjectives idiomatically, adding to their vocabulary such modifiers as are typical of an academic style, such as *directly* and *readily*, in combination with, e.g., *applicable* or *available*, as well as extending their use of those already familiar to them, e.g., *all (important, powerful)* or *widely (accepted, opposed)*.[87]

Although the results from the comparison of learners' and native speakers' spoken English were similar on a general level, they also indicate that Swedish learners should be made aware of the frequent use by native speakers of certain expressions comprising maximizers (other than *totally,* frequently used by the learners) and *totality* adjectives, such as *just amazing* or *absolutely fantastic*. It may also be fruitful to clarify the different functions and uses of *quite*, both in British and American English, as well as making learners aware of the level of formality of this modifier and others, e.g. *fairly*. Finally, learners should probably also be made more aware of the increasing use of adjective-modifier *really* in informal conversation.

When proposing the use of a specific word or expression, however, there is always a risk of losing the overall perspective of the student's language awareness, which may result in a particular use tilting over into conspicuous overuse. A more fruitful strategy, presumably, is to aim for an increased general awareness of the spoken language and its amount of variation, in order to sharpen learners' linguistic tools and make them more widely applicable. Increased variation and awareness of different shades of meaning will most likely lead to more accurate expressions and improved comprehension, i.e. more effective communication. Moreover, the ability to vary one's language according to the addressee will give a stronger sense of in-group membership and further facilitate communication. A

[87] As pointed out earlier (section 5.4.1, footnote), Ask (2013:44) notes that the new curriculum for Swedish upper secondary school includes a Swedish language course focusing on scientific texts, compulsory for students who want to study at the university. This change may bring interesting results in a few years' time, providing useful material for a diachronic study of possible cause and effect.

wider spectrum of speech styles is, of course, also important for communication with people outside one's personal sphere, such as the authorities, employers, strangers, etc.

In sum, the results indicate that, to become even more advanced, Swedish advanced learners of English will benefit from a greater awareness of "style" in a wide sense, i.e. of features typical of spoken vs. written language, informal vs. formal, and non-academic vs. academic texts, not least with regard to collocational patterns. This will demand more exposure to and thus familiarity with different types of text, well before university level. In this connection, the crucial importance of reading – and listening, in the case of spoken English – cannot be in doubt.

6.4 Further research: some suggestions

During the process of determining and counting the relevant modifier-adjective pairs studied in this work, some interesting cases of ambiguity presented themselves, some of which may warrant further study. For instance, more attention may be paid to the interaction between the semantic areas of degree and modality (e.g. *certainly true*), and also between degree and manner (e.g. *clearly visible*). Degree itself, of course, is also a highly interesting topic, including different types of gradability of adjectives, e.g., of adjectives modified by maximizers and approximators (*[almost] identical, [absolutely] appalling, [completely] impossible*, etc.), or the *partly–wholly* type of gradation (e.g. *partly responsible, wholly practical*). Also, the fuzzy area between verbs and adjectives, represented by *–ed* and *–ing* forms (e.g. *analysed, accepted, intoxicating, captivating*) may warrant further scrutiny. In addition, this study has pointed to some aspects of the different functions of *so*, *too* and *enough*, and the link between their comparative/referential function (e.g. *too good to be true*) and degree modification, another worthwhile field of inquiry.

The result of the comparison made in this study, between Swedish advanced learners of English and native-speaker students with regard to their use of adjective modifiers, has shown some important differences in genre and style awareness. More specifically, Swedish learners tend to have difficulty maintaining a formal, academic style in writing. The differences found were due to, among other things, the overuse of certain informal features in written texts

and the underuse of formal modifiers with restricted collocational behaviour. However, as pointed out earlier, it has been necessary to consider the fact that the written native-speaker texts were used as a kind of comparative norm, although not entirely fulfilling the criteria of the written ideal. For example, the native-speaker texts contain occasional inaccuracies in spelling and grammar and may lack structural refinement or complexity, which implies that the "norm" should be taken with a pinch of salt (cf. Ch. 3 and 6.3). A possible extension of this study is, therefore, to use a reference corpus with professional native-speaker writers' texts as a norm. It would then also be of interest to compare the native-speaker students' production with that of professional writers, in order to distinguish features linked to differences in age, educational level and experience as writers. However, such differences between the corpora may be regarded as a disadvantage (cf. Lorenz 1999:14). An alternative approach would be to compare the results with top-grade native-speaker students (cf. MICUSP), thus reducing differences in age, educational level and experience while using a norm that is likely to be closer to a perceived ideal.

As learners' lack of genre awareness may be a general phenomenon, rather than specific to their English writing, it would also be of great interest and relevance to use their L1 writing as reference material. This would make it possible to distinguish the features directly related to English as a second language from students' general writing characteristics, as evidenced in their L1.

Considering the fact that LOCNEC is all British, the norm for the comparison of the spoken corpora is regionally based, and differences found may be related to regional differences between British and, e.g., American English. An American version of LOCNEC, if at all feasible, might amplify the picture of spoken learner English and more accurately highlight features of non-nativeness in the learners' spoken English, as opposed to features merely typical of American English.

In addition, the "informalisation" of public language and the increasing influence of social media in recent years has most likely affected students' written language since the ICLE corpus was compiled. Thus, an interesting complement to this study would be a diachronic study in which Swedish advanced learners' written academic language of today is compared with the corpus from the 1990s. Moreover, recent studies have shown that the tendency towards more informal written language is by no means restricted to Swedish, but can be observed in present-day English as well (cf. Leech et al. 2009:20). Thus, a comparative study

of today's written production by native speakers and Swedish advanced learners may in fact show less prominent differences with regard to level of formality.

Also, as language changes quickly, especially young speakers' informal and conversational language, not least on the Internet, the language used in blogs, chat rooms and social media most certainly provides an extensive area for research. Consequently, investigating how adjectives are used, reinforced or softened in this type of language makes up another possible line of development.

Further, the results of this study may be added to those of previous studies of Swedish advanced learners, based on the same corpora (e.g. Ringbom 1998, Altenberg & Tapper 1998, Aijmer 2001, 2002a, 2004, 2009 and 2011, Eriksson 2004, Boström Aronsson 2005, Ädel 2006, Herriman 2007 and Mondor 2008), contributing to what may amount to, in certain respects, a typical "Swedish advanced learner profile". In turn, such a profile might pave the way for improved teaching and a better understanding of the process of language acquisition at an advanced level.

Finally, as this study has focused on Swedish learners, conclusions about L1 transfer as opposed to other, more general learner strategies are necessarily somewhat limited. The perspective may be widened by the inclusion of one or several other learner corpora, comparing the results of this study with, for example, those of French, German or Spanish advanced learners of English. In this way, cross-linguistic aspects of the matters investigated in this study could be further illuminated.

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Appendices

Appendix I. Corpus extract codes

After each corpus example used in the thesis, a code follows indicating from which essay or interview the extract is taken. The examples from the written corpora are also coded with reference to the university where the essay was produced. Appendix I explains the abbreviations used.

A. SWICLE (SWE wr):
UG = University of Gothenburg (95 essays)
LND = University of Lund (193 essays)
UV = University of Växjö (9 essays)

B. LOCNESS (NAT wr):
1. ESEE = British university students' writing (32 essays)
Argumentative essays on 'A single Europe: A loss of sovereignty for Britain'
Not exams
Not rigidly timed - +/- 1 hour

2. US = American university students' writing
US-MRQ = Marquette University (46 essays)
Untimed essays
Argumentative
Reference tools used
US-IND = Indiana University at Indianapolis (27 essays)
Argumentative
US-MICH = University of Michigan (43 essays)
Timed essays
Argumentative
No reference tools used
US-SCU = University of South Carolina (53 essays)
Untimed essays
Argumentative
US-PRB = Presbyterian College, South Carolina (4 essays)
Untimed essays
Argumentative
Reference tools used (library documentation – books, journals)

C. LINDSEI-SW (SWE sp): All interviews were performed at the University of Gothenburg, Sweden.

D. LOCNEC (NAT sp): All interviews were performed at the University of Lancaster, UK.

Appendix II. Transcription guide

Appendix II explains the transcription conventions for LINDSEI and LOCNEC (for a more detailed description, see Gilquin et al. 2010: 13ff).

<A>	beginning of interviewer's turn
</A>	end of interviewer's turn
<B>	beginning of interviewee's turn
</B>	end of interviewee's turn
.	pause (up to a second)
..	pause (1–3 seconds)
…	pause (longer than 3 seconds)
<overlap/>	overlapping speech
<X>	unclear syllable
<XX>	two unclear syllables or words
<XXX>	three or more unclear words
(er), (eh), etc.	filled pauses
(mhm), (uhu), etc.	backchannelling
:	syllable lengthening
=	unfinished, truncated word
<?>	uncertain transcription

Appendix III. Modifier + ADJ combinations: complete list

This appendix presents the total number of adjective modifiers of the study (3,291) and their distribution between reinforcing and attenuating modification (Table III.1), as well as a complete list of the modifier + ADJ occurrences used (Table III.2).

Table III.1. Total number of adjective modifiers (tokens) in the four corpora

Corpus	Reinforcers	Attenuators	Total
SWE wr	467	174	**641**
NAT wr	379	92	**471**
SWE sp	512	289	**801**
NAT sp	860	518	**1 378**
Total	**2 218**	**1 073**	***3 291***

Table III.2 shows the complete selection of modifier + ADJ occurrences in the four main corpora, presented in alphabetical order. After each entry, the corpus in which the occurrence was found and the number of occurrences (no figure equals 1 occurrence) are indicated. Where the modifier is positioned after the adjective, this is indicated with "POST". "NEG" are negative expressions other than *not* placed immediately before the modifier. Hesitation and discourse markers appearing between the modifier and the adjective (spoken corpora only) are put in brackets. In some cases, more than one adjective is included with the modifier (e.g. *pretty cold and wet*). This is due to my interpretation of the modification as affecting both adjectives.

Table III.2. Modifier + ADJ occurrences in the four corpora SWICLE, LOCNESS, LINDSEI-SW and LOCNEC.

a bit ambivalent	SWE wr
a bit angry	SWE sp 2
a bit anxious	SWE wr
a bit Arabic	SWE sp
a bit ashamed	NAT wr
a bit bitter	SWE sp
a bit boring	SWE sp
a bit confused	SWE sp 2
a bit crazy	SWE sp
a bit curly	SWE sp
a bit different	SWE sp
a bit difficult	SWE sp 3
a bit disappointed	SWE sp
a bit (sort of) disjointed	NAT sp
a bit exaggerated	SWE wr
a bit expensive	SWE sp
a bit far-fetched	SWE wr
a bit (you know) flattering	SWE sp
a bit flexible	SWE wr
a bit glorifying	SWE wr
a bit (I don't know) homesick	SWE sp
a bit hypocritical	NAT wr
a bit insure	SWE sp
a bit ironical	SWE wr
a bit (erm) isolated	SWE sp
a bit long	SWE sp 2
a bit nervous	SWE sp
a bit of a claustrophobic	NAT sp
a bit old	SWE sp
a bit out-dated	SWE wr
a bit outnumbered	SWE wr
a bit prejudiced	SWE wr
a bit rather ridiculous	NAT sp
a bit ridiculous	NAT wr 2
a bit rude	NAT sp
a bit sad	SWE sp, NAT sp
a bit scary	SWE sp 2
a bit sceptic	SWE sp
a bit sceptical	NAT sp
a bit serious	SWE sp
a bit (sort of) shaking	SWE sp
a bit shaky	SWE sp
a bit silly	SWE sp 2
a bit slow	NAT sp
a bit small	NAT sp
a bit small-minded	SWE sp
a bit soppy	NAT sp
a bit (sort of) square and grey	NAT sp
a bit steep	NAT wr
a bit stupid	SWE wr
a bit superficial	NAT sp
a bit surprised	SWE sp
a bit suspicious	SWE sp
a bit Swedish	SWE sp
a bit tedious	NAT sp
a bit tricky	NAT sp
a bit twisted	SWE wr
a bit ugly	NAT sp
a bit unfair	NAT sp 2
a bit unusual	SWE sp 2
a bit upset	SWE sp 2, NAT sp
a bit useless	NAT sp
a bit vain	SWE sp
a bit weird	NAT sp 3
a bit windy	NAT sp
a bit worried	SWE wr 2, NAT sp 6
a little bit afraid	SWE sp
a little bit anonymous	SWE sp
a little bit bored	SWE sp
a little bit claustrophobic	NAT sp
a little bit crazy	SWE sp
a little bit creepy	SWE sp
a little bit cross-eyed	NAT sp
a little bit different	SWE wr, SWE sp 2
a little bit harsh	SWE wr
a little bit nervous	SWE sp
a little bit not used to	SWE sp
a little bit personal	NAT sp
a little bit sad	NAT sp
a little bit shabby	SWE sp

a little bit strange	SWE sp
a little bit surprised	NAT sp
a little bit suspicious	SWE sp
a little different	NAT sp
a little homesick	SWE sp
a little odd	NAT sp
a little rough	SWE wr
a little tired	SWE sp
a little uppity	NAT wr
a little worried	SWE wr
a lot different	SWE wr, NAT sp 5
absolute delicious	SWE sp
absolutely amazing	NAT sp 4
absolutely beautiful	NAT sp
absolutely brilliant	SWE sp, NAT sp
absolutely dependent	SWE wr
absolutely dreadful	SWE sp
absolutely essential	SWE wr
absolutely fantastic	SWE sp, NAT sp
absolutely flabbergasted	NAT sp
absolutely helpless	SWE wr
absolutely horrible	SWE wr, NAT sp
absolutely huge	NAT sp
absolutely incredible	NAT sp 2
absolutely lovely	SWE sp
absolutely mad	NAT sp
absolutely necessary	SWE wr
absolutely petrified	NAT sp
absolutely riddled	NAT wr
absolutely ridiculous	NAT wr
absolutely roasting	NAT sp
absolutely starving	NAT sp
absolutely sure	SWE wr, NAT sp
absolutely true	SWE sp
absolutely unacceptable	NAT wr
absolutely vital	SWE wr
absolutely wrong	NAT wr
all alone	SWE wr
all black	NAT wr
all Chinese	NAT sp
all dark	SWE sp
all different	NAT sp
all drab	NAT sp
all English	SWE sp
all European	NAT wr
all female	NAT wr 3
all good	SWE wr
all important	NAT wr
all insulted	NAT sp
all male	NAT wr 4
all mixed up	NAT sp
all modern	NAT sp
all powerful	NAT wr
all self-contained	NAT sp
all straight	SWE sp
all terrible	NAT sp
all well and fine	SWE wr
all white	NAT wr
all that bad	NAT wr
all too important	NAT wr
all too pressing	NAT wr
almost alone	SWE wr
almost ancient	SWE wr
almost appalling	NAT wr
almost extinct	SWE wr
almost illusionistic	SWE sp
almost immediate	NAT wr
almost impossible	SWE wr 2, SWE sp, NAT wr
almost inconceivable	SWE wr
almost incredible	SWE wr
almost inevitable	SWE wr
almost inherent	NAT wr
almost non-existent	SWE wr
almost pathologic	SWE wr
almost photographic	SWE sp
almost restricted	SWE wr
almost taboo	SWE wr
almost unlimited	SWE wr
altogether dull	SWE wr
altogether unhealthy	SWE wr
amazingly convenient	SWE wr
awfully high	NAT wr
basically demythologized	SWE wr
bit damp	SWE sp
bit different	SWE sp
bit wet	SWE sp
bitterly cold	NAT sp
blissfully unaware	SWE wr
bloody knackering	NAT sp

boiling hot	SWE sp
brand new	SWE wr, NAT wr, NAT sp
bright red	NAT sp
certainly interesting	NAT sp
certainly pertinent	NAT wr
certainly true	SWE wr, SWE sp
clearly defined	NAT wr
clearly inhibiting	NAT wr
clearly present	NAT wr
close to impossible	SWE wr
closely bonded	NAT wr
closely connected	SWE wr 5
closely linked	NAT wr
comparatively equal	SWE wr
comparatively new	SWE wr
comparatively small	SWE wr
comparatively untouched	SWE wr
comparatively well-functioning	SWE wr
completely dead	NAT sp
completely dependent	SWE wr
completely different	SWE wr 3, SWE sp 6, NAT wr, NAT sp 4
completely equal	NAT wr
completely erroneous	NAT wr
completely ethical	NAT wr
completely exposed	NAT sp
completely false	NAT wr
completely familiar	SWE wr
completely fictional	NAT sp
completely foreign	NAT sp 2
completely gorgeous	NAT sp
completely harmless	SWE wr
completely headless	SWE wr
completely horrible	NAT sp
completely impossible	NAT wr
completely into	SWE sp
completely isolated	SWE wr
completely natural	SWE wr
completely new	SWE wr 3, NAT sp 2
completely recyclable	NAT wr
completely satisfied	SWE wr
completely static	SWE wr
completely true	SWE wr
completely unknown	SWE wr
completely wild	NAT sp
completely wrong	SWE wr, NAT sp 2
dead drunk	SWE wr
dead small	NAT sp
decidedly hesitant	NAT wr
deep rooted	NAT wr
deeply bred	NAT wr
deeply entrenched	NAT wr
deeply in love	NAT sp
deeply rooted	SWE wr 2
directly applicable	NAT wr 6
directly effective	NAT wr 2
directly related	SWE wr, NAT wr
disappointedly silent	SWE wr
drastically different	NAT wr
easily accessible	SWE wr, NAT wr 3
easily attainable	SWE wr
easily comprehensible	SWE wr
easily identifiable	NAT wr
easily tolerable	NAT wr
enormously fast	NAT wr
enormously religious	SWE wr
enormously rich	SWE wr
enough POST easy	SWE wr
enough POST evil	NAT wr
enough POST friendly	NAT sp
enough POST good	SWE sp, NAT sp
enough POST quick	NAT wr
entirely different	SWE sp
entirely distressing	SWE wr
entirely easy	SWE wr
entirely ethical	NAT wr
entirely good	SWE wr
entirely new	SWE wr 4
entirely satisfactory	SWE wr
entirely true	SWE wr
entirely unfounded	NAT wr
especially careful	NAT wr
especially heated	NAT wr
especially important	SWE wr, NAT wr
especially large	NAT wr
especially serious	SWE wr
especially true	NAT wr
ever so happy	SWE wr
exceptionally hot	NAT sp

extra efficient	SWE wr
extra hard	SWE wr
extraordinarily helpful	NAT wr
extremely addictive	SWE wr
extremely advanced	SWE wr
extremely ambiguous	NAT wr
extremely awkward	SWE wr
extremely beautiful	NAT wr
extremely conservative	SWE wr
extremely dangerous	SWE wr
extremely difficult	SWE wr 3, NAT wr
extremely distressed	NAT wr
extremely drunk	SWE sp
extremely efficient	NAT wr
extremely expensive	NAT wr
extremely good	NAT sp
extremely handsome	SWE wr
extremely happy	SWE wr
extremely hard	SWE wr
extremely helpful	SWE wr
extremely high	SWE wr 2
extremely hot	SWE sp
extremely impersonal	SWE wr
extremely important	NAT wr 3
extremely long	SWE sp, NAT wr
extremely loud	SWE sp
extremely miserable	NAT sp
extremely negative	NAT wr
extremely nutritious	SWE wr
extremely objective	SWE wr
extremely odd	NAT wr
extremely perceptive	SWE wr
extremely poor	SWE wr 2
extremely sadistic	NAT wr
extremely selfish	SWE wr
extremely shy	SWE sp
extremely sick	NAT wr
extremely stimulating	SWE wr
extremely strong	SWE wr
extremely stupid	SWE sp
extremely time-consuming	NAT wr
extremely unfair	SWE wr
extremely unnecessary	SWE wr
extremely widespread	NAT wr
fairly conservative	SWE wr
fairly cultured	NAT sp
fairly devious	NAT sp
fairly dull	NAT sp
fairly easy	SWE wr, NAT wr
fairly free	NAT sp
fairly generous	SWE wr 2
fairly good	SWE wr
fairly hard	NAT sp
fairly high	NAT wr
fairly intellectual	SWE wr
fairly interested	NAT sp
fairly law-less	SWE wr
fairly limited	SWE wr
fairly long	SWE wr
fairly modern	NAT sp
fairly new	SWE wr 2
fairly obvious	SWE wr 2
fairly quiet	NAT sp
fairly relaxed	NAT sp
fairly simple	NAT sp
fairly small	SWE wr, NAT sp
fairly strong	NAT wr
fairly successful	NAT wr
fairly universal	NAT sp
fairly wide	NAT sp
far different	NAT wr
far outnumbered	NAT wr
fatally ill	NAT wr
fiercely proud	SWE wr
freezing cold	SWE sp
fully accepted	SWE wr 2
fully alone	SWE wr
fully aware	SWE wr
fully incorporated	NAT wr
fully integrated	NAT wr 4
fully involved	NAT wr
fully mature	SWE wr
fully recovered	NAT sp
fully satisfied	SWE wr
fully symmetrical	SWE sp
generally afraid	SWE wr
generally high	SWE wr
generally touristy	NAT sp
genuinely happy	SWE wr
genuinely Swedish	SWE wr

greatly influential	NAT wr
greatly reduced	NAT wr
hardly able	SWE sp
hardly aware	SWE wr
hardly dressed	NAT wr
hardly noticeable	SWE wr
heavily burdened	SWE wr
heavily influenced	SWE wr
heavily involved	NAT sp
highly advanced	NAT wr
highly contradictory	NAT wr
highly controversial	SWE wr
highly cultural	SWE wr
highly developed	SWE wr 2
highly educated	SWE wr 5
highly effective	NAT wr 2
highly emotional	NAT wr
highly important	SWE wr 2
highly individualized	NAT wr
highly industrialized	SWE wr
highly intellectual	SWE wr
highly interpretable	NAT sp
highly intoxicating	NAT wr
highly justified	SWE wr
highly likely	NAT wr
highly non habit-forming	NAT wr
highly organized	NAT wr
highly personalized	NAT wr
highly publicized	NAT wr 2
highly qualified	SWE wr, NAT wr
highly respected	NAT wr 3
highly scientific	SWE wr
highly skilled	SWE wr
highly socially oriented	NAT wr
highly stressful	SWE wr
highly technological	SWE wr
highly unlikely	NAT wr
highly unsatisfactory	SWE wr
highly urbanised	SWE wr
immensely enjoyable	NAT sp
immensely limited	NAT wr
immensely popular	SWE wr 2
in a (sort of) way POST fantastic	SWE sp
in a way POST different	SWE sp
in a way POST good	NAT sp
in no way newsworthy	NAT wr
incredibly attractive	SWE wr
incredibly bad	SWE wr
incredibly fast	NAT wr
incredibly impressive	NAT sp
incredibly low	NAT sp
incredibly useful	NAT wr
incredibly vague	SWE wr
incredibly vain	NAT sp
indeed antiquated	SWE wr
indeed equal	SWE wr
indeed frightening	SWE wr
indeed human	NAT wr
indeed supreme	NAT wr
indeed time-saving	SWE wr
innately whole	NAT wr
intensely difficult	NAT sp
just amazed	SWE sp, NAT sp 2
just amazing	NAT sp 9
just beautiful	NAT sp
just brilliant	NAT sp
just captivating	NAT sp
just fantastic	NAT sp
just fine	SWE sp
just freezing	NAT sp
just gorgeous	NAT sp
just great	SWE wr
just great	SWE sp, NAT sp 2
just hopeless	NAT sp
just huge	NAT sp
just nice	NAT sp 2
just perfect	SWE wr
just right	SWE wr
just soaking	SWE sp
just spectacular	NAT sp
just (like) stony-faced	NAT sp
just terrible	NAT sp
just unbelievable	NAT sp
just weird	NAT sp 2
just so beautiful	NAT sp
just so cute	NAT sp
just so different	NAT sp
just so eager	NAT sp
just so fascinating	NAT sp

just so good	NAT sp
just so hot	NAT sp
just so miserable	NAT sp
just so nice	NAT sp
just so packed together	NAT sp
just so wonderful	NAT sp
kind of a dangerous	NAT sp
kind of (like) American dry black	NAT sp
kind of criminal	SWE sp
kind of (like) desert like	NAT sp
kind of embarrassing	SWE sp
kind of exotic	SWE sp 2
kind of false	NAT sp
kind of friendly	NAT sp
kind of fun	SWE sp 2
kind of funny	SWE sp
kind of good	SWE sp
kind of go-through	SWE sp
kind of hopeless	SWE sp
kind of influenced	SWE sp
kind of interested	NAT sp
kind of involved	SWE sp
kind of laid back	SWE sp
kind of lazy	SWE wr
kind of neutral wishy-washy	NAT sp
kind of nice	SWE sp
kind of open-minded	SWE sp
kind of optimistic	NAT sp
kind of rough	SWE sp
kind of sceptic	SWE sp
kind of set in their ways	SWE sp
kind of taboo	SWE wr
kinda golden	SWE sp
loosely structured	NAT wr
lots different	NAT sp
maybe I don't know POST snobbish	SWE sp
mighty glad	SWE wr
mildly pleasant	NAT wr
more or less blind	NAT wr
more or less broken	SWE wr
more or less distinct	SWE wr
more or less dormant	SWE wr
more or less fair	SWE wr
more or less famous	SWE wr
more or less frightening	SWE wr
more or less general	SWE wr
more or less laissez-faire	SWE wr
more or less law-less	SWE wr
more or less unknown	SWE wr
more than all right	SWE wr
more than rational	NAT wr
more than reasonable	SWE wr
most efficient	SWE wr
most likely	NAT wr
much different	SWE wr, NAT wr 2
nearly dead	NAT wr
nearly impossible	NAT wr 2
nearly infallible	NAT wr
NEG all that stigmatized	SWE wr
NEG at all POST difficult	SWE sp
NEG particularly attractive	NAT sp
NEG particularly good	NAT sp
NEG particularly influenced	NAT wr
NEG quite sure	NAT sp
NEG so annoyed	SWE sp
NEG so dependent	NAT wr
NEG so different	SWE sp
NEG so difficult	SWE wr, NAT wr
NEG so good	SWE sp
NEG so happy	SWE sp
NEG so sad	SWE sp
NEG so strange	SWE wr
NEG so wrong	SWE wr
NEG that active	SWE sp
NEG that big	NAT sp 2
NEG that difficult	NAT sp
NEG that important	SWE sp
NEG that nervous	SWE sp
NEG that nice	SWE sp
NEG too accurate	NAT sp
NEG too bad	NAT sp 2
NEG too believing	NAT sp
NEG too different	SWE sp
NEG too downhearted	NAT sp 2
NEG too exciting	SWE sp
NEG too good	NAT sp
NEG too happy	SWE sp, NAT sp

NEG too impressed	NAT sp 2
NEG too nice	NAT sp
NEG too pleased	SWE sp 2
NEG too worthwhile	NAT sp
NEG totally unfulfilled	SWE wr
NEG very attractive	NAT sp
NEG very comfortable	SWE sp
NEG very different	SWE wr
NEG very distant	SWE sp
NEG very easy	NAT sp
NEG very good	SWE wr, NAT sp 2
NEG very happy	SWE sp 2, NAT sp 4
NEG very high	NAT sp
NEG very impressed	NAT sp
NEG very interested	SWE wr
NEG very nice	SWE sp, NAT sp
NEG very particular	SWE sp
NEG very pleasant	SWE sp, NAT sp
NEG very pleased	SWE sp, NAT sp
NEG very religious	SWE wr
NEG very satisfied	SWE sp
NEG very secure	SWE sp
NEG very Spanish	NAT sp
NEG very spoilt	NAT sp
NEG very successful	SWE wr 2
NEG very warm	NAT sp
NEG very well-informed	SWE wr
NEG at all POST good	NAT sp
not at all POST pleased	SWE sp
not (at all) that nice-looking	SWE wr
not a hundred percent confident	NAT sp
not a lot different	NAT sp 2
not a really scary	SWE sp
not a very accurate	SWE sp
not a very big	NAT sp
not a very good	SWE sp
not a very JCR (kind of person)	NAT sp
not all that good	SWE wr 2
not all that popular	SWE wr
not at all large	NAT wr
not at all natural	NAT sp
not at all POST good	SWE sp
not at all POST strict	NAT sp
not clearly known	NAT wr
not entirely sure	NAT sp
not entirely true	SWE wr
not especially Jewish	SWE sp
not exactly humane	NAT wr
not exactly pleased	NAT sp
not extremely interested	SWE sp
not fully developed	NAT wr
not highly political	NAT sp
not particularly clean	NAT sp
not particularly good	NAT sp
not particularly interested	SWE wr
not particularly into	NAT sp
not quite certain	SWE sp
not quite good	NAT sp
not quite pleased	SWE sp
not quite ready	NAT wr
not quite real	NAT sp
not quite right	NAT sp
not quite so obvious	NAT sp
not quite so wonderful	NAT sp
not quite sure	SWE sp, NAT sp 3
not quite true	NAT sp
not so bad	SWE wr, NAT sp 2
not so big	SWE sp 2
not so common	SWE sp
not so easy	SWE wr
not so emotional	NAT wr
not so emotionally (sort of) wound up	NAT sp
not so friendly	SWE sp
not so good	SWE sp 3
not so jaded	NAT wr
not so keen	SWE sp
not so lofty	SWE wr
not so long	SWE wr
not so lucky	NAT sp
not so nice	SWE sp
not so serious	SWE wr
not so strange	SWE wr 2, SWE sp
not so stressed	SWE sp
not so sure	SWE sp
not so used to	SWE wr
not so warm	SWE sp 2
not so well-off	SWE wr

not terribly keen	NAT sp
not that accustomed	SWE sp
not that (er) assertive	SWE sp
not that bad	NAT sp
not that big	SWE wr, SWE sp
not that confident	SWE wr
not that delicious	SWE sp
not that easy	SWE sp 2
not that exciting	SWE sp
not that funny	SWE sp
not that good	SWE sp 3, NAT wr, NAT sp 2
not that good-looking	SWE sp
not that high	SWE sp
not that huge	SWE sp
not that important	SWE sp
not that interested	NAT sp
not that nice	SWE sp 3
not that obvious	SWE sp
not that stuck up	SWE sp
not that satisfied	SWE sp
not that simple	NAT wr
not that small	SWE sp
not that sure	NAT sp
not that traumatic	SWE sp
not that violent	SWE sp
not the most perfect	SWE sp
not too bad	SWE sp, NAT sp 16
not too bothered	NAT sp
not too different	SWE sp
not too distant	NAT sp
not too fond of	SWE sp
not too good	SWE wr, SWE sp 2
not too great	NAT sp
not too happy	NAT sp 2
not too hot	SWE sp
not too impressed	NAT sp
not too keen	NAT sp 2
not too real	SWE sp
not too serious	NAT sp
not too sure	NAT sp 2
not very bad	SWE sp
not very beautiful	NAT sp
not very big	NAT sp
not very commercial	NAT sp
not very deep	SWE wr
not very different	SWE sp
not very dominant	SWE sp
not very easy	SWE wr
not very fair	NAT wr
not very flattering	NAT sp
not very fond	SWE wr
not very forward	SWE sp
not very funny	NAT sp
not very good	SWE wr, SWE sp 5, NAT sp 7
not very happy	SWE sp 5, NAT sp 7
not very helpful	SWE sp, NAT sp
not very important	SWE wr
not very impressive	NAT sp
not very interested	SWE sp 4
not very interesting	SWE sp. NAT sp
not very large	SWE wr
not very likely	SWE wr 2
not very nervous	SWE sp
not very nice	SWE sp, NAT sp
not very old	SWE sp
not very pleasant	NAT sp
not very pleased	SWE sp 2, NAT sp 2
not very popular	SWE sp
not very realistic	SWE sp
not very romantic	SWE wr
not very satisfied	SWE sp 2
not very serious	SWE sp
not very small	SWE sp 2
not very smart	SWE sp 2
not very strict	NAT sp
not very strong	NAT wr
not very substantial	NAT wr
not very talented	SWE sp
not very tall	SWE sp
not very true	NAT sp
not very well behaved	NAT sp
not very well known	NAT sp
not very well played	NAT sp
not very very religious	SWE sp
not wholly unlikely	SWE wr
obviously impressed	NAT sp
obviously Turkish	NAT sp
only too willing	NAT sp

outrageously discriminatory	NAT wr
overall destructive	NAT wr
overly strong	NAT wr
partially nude	NAT wr
particular Jewish	SWE sp
particularly bad	NAT sp
particularly common	SWE wr
particularly dangerous	SWE wr
particularly enjoyable	NAT sp
particularly good	NAT sp 4
particularly good or bad	NAT sp 2
particularly interested	NAT wr
particularly keen	NAT sp
particularly low	NAT wr
particularly nice	NAT sp
particularly numerous	SWE wr
particularly painful	NAT wr
particularly weak	NAT wr
particularly worried	SWE wr
particularly vulnerable	NAT wr
partly illusive	SWE wr
partly responsible	NAT wr
partly understandable	SWE wr
perfectly good	SWE wr, NAT wr 2
perfectly healthy	NAT wr
perfectly logical	NAT wr
perfectly natural	NAT wr
plain stubborn	NAT wr
poorly educated	SWE wr 3
practically immeasurable	NAT wr
practically impossible	NAT wr
practically non-existent	NAT wr
predominantly white	NAT wr 2
pretty annoyed	NAT sp
pretty bad	NAT sp 2
pretty big	SWE sp 2
pretty blank	SWE sp
pretty cheap	SWE sp
pretty cold and wet	NAT sp
pretty damaging	NAT wr
pretty depressing	NAT sp
pretty different	SWE sp
pretty difficult	SWE sp, NAT sp
pretty easy	SWE sp
pretty excited	SWE sp
pretty fast	NAT sp
pretty flexible	SWE sp
pretty good	SWE sp, NAT sp 4
pretty gruesome	NAT sp
pretty high	SWE sp
pretty impressive	NAT sp
pretty interesting	NAT sp
pretty mad	SWE wr
pretty much stuck	NAT sp
pretty much used to	NAT sp
pretty pleased	SWE sp, NAT sp
pretty (sort of) revealing	SWE sp
pretty satisfied	SWE sp
pretty scared	NAT sp
pretty small	SWE sp 2
pretty spoilt	SWE sp
pretty stupid	SWE sp
pretty successful	NAT sp
pretty sure	NAT sp
pretty upset	NAT sp 2
pretty warm	NAT sp
probably true	SWE sp, NAT wr
purely economic	NAT wr
quite strong	SWE wr
quite a big	SWE sp 2, NAT sp 2
quite a compact	NAT sp
quite a complex	SWE sp
quite a dark	NAT sp
quite a different	NAT sp
quite a distinctive	NAT sp
quite a dry	NAT sp
quite a good	SWE sp 3, NAT sp 6
quite a horrible	SWE sp
quite a long	SWE sp 4, NAT sp 6
quite a moody	NAT sp
quite a new	NAT wr
quite a nice	SWE wr, SWE sp, NAT sp 2
quite a personal	NAT sp
quite a practical	NAT sp
quite a pretty	NAT sp
quite a sad and touching	NAT sp
quite a serious	SWE wr
quite a short	SWE sp 2

quite a small NAT sp
quite a smouldering NAT sp
quite a wide NAT sp
quite an arty NAT sp
quite an attractive NAT sp
quite an early NAT sp
quite an efficient SWE wr
quite an important SWE sp
quite an ugly NAT sp
quite an usual NAT sp
quite accepting NAT sp
quite accurate NAT sp
quite amazing NAT sp 2
quite amusing NAT sp 2
quite appropriate NAT wr
quite astonished SWE wr
quite attractive NAT sp
quite backwards NAT sp
quite bad SWE sp, NAT sp
quite big NAT sp 4
quite boring NAT sp
quite bossy NAT sp
quite careful NAT sp
quite central NAT sp
quite certain SWE wr
quite cheap NAT sp
quite childish SWE sp
quite clear SWE wr 2, NAT wr 2, NAT sp
quite clever NAT sp
quite cold NAT sp
quite common SWE sp 2, NAT wr
quite compact NAT sp
quite complicated NAT sp 2
quite considerable NAT sp
quite contented SWE wr
quite convinced SWE wr 3
quite correct NAT sp
quite dangerous NAT sp 2
quite derogatory NAT sp
quite different SWE wr 4, SWE sp 3, NAT wr, NAT sp 2
quite difficult NAT sp 15
quite disciplined NAT sp
quite disgusting NAT sp
quite disheartening NAT sp
quite distinctive NAT sp
quite easy NAT sp 4
quite eerie NAT sp
quite effective NAT wr
quite enjoyable NAT sp
quite excited NAT sp
quite exciting NAT sp
quite expensive NAT sp
quite famous SWE wr, SWE sp, NAT sp
quite fascinating SWE sp
quite feminine NAT wr
quite firm NAT sp
quite flat NAT sp
quite flexible NAT sp
quite fortunate NAT sp
quite fraught NAT sp
quite freaky NAT sp
quite free SWE sp
quite friendly SWE sp
quite frightening NAT sp
quite frustrating SWE wr
quite fun NAT sp 2
quite funny SWE sp, NAT sp 2
quite furious SWE sp
quite good SWE wr, SWE sp 6, NAT sp 15
quite hair raising NAT sp
quite happy NAT sp 6
quite hard SWE sp, NAT wr, NAT sp
quite heavy NAT sp
quite helpful SWE sp, NAT sp 2
quite high NAT sp
quite homely NAT sp
quite honest NAT sp
quite horrible SWE sp, NAT sp
quite horrified NAT sp
quite ill NAT sp
quite important NAT sp 2
quite impossible SWE wr
quite impressed NAT sp 11
quite interesting SWE wr, SWE sp, NAT sp 10
quite into NAT sp 2

quite irritaring	SWE sp
quite isolated	NAT sp
quite law abiding	NAT sp
quite light headed	NAT sp
quite lonely	SWE sp 2
quite long	NAT sp 2
quite lost	SWE wr
quite lucky	NAT sp
quite messed up	SWE sp
quite middle-aged	SWE sp
quite modern	NAT sp
quite natural	SWE wr 2
quite near	NAT sp
quite negative	SWE wr 2
quite nervous	SWE sp
quite nice	SWE sp 3, NAT sp 15
quite normal	SWE wr
quite obvious	SWE sp 2, NAT wr 2
quite odd	SWE wr, NAT sp
quite pleasant	SWE wr, NAT sp
quite pleased	NAT sp
quite positive	NAT sp 2
quite practical	NAT sp
quite predictable	NAT wr
quite pressurised	NAT sp 2
quite prim and proper	NAT sp
quite profitable	NAT wr
quite proud	NAT sp
quite rare	NAT wr, NAT sp
quite ready	NAT sp
quite recent	SWE wr
quite relaxed	SWE sp, NAT sp
quite relevant	NAT sp
quite remarkable	NAT wr
quite resemblant	NAT sp
quite rough	SWE wr
quite rude	SWE sp, NAT sp
quite scaring	NAT sp
quite scary	NAT sp
quite secretive	NAT sp
quite seedy	NAT sp
quite shaken up	NAT wr
quite shocking	NAT sp
quite short	SWE sp
quite shy	NAT sp
quite sick	NAT sp
quite significant	NAT wr
quite skilled	NAT sp
quite small	SWE sp 2, NAT sp 2
quite (sort of) understanding and helpful	NAT sp
quite spectacular	NAT sp
quite steep	NAT sp
quite straight	NAT sp
quite strange	NAT sp
quite strict	NAT sp
quite strong	NAT sp
quite sure	SWE wr 3
quite surprised	SWE sp, NAT sp 2
quite surprising	NAT sp
quite tall	NAT sp
quite thin	NAT sp
quite true	NAT sp 2
quite typical	SWE wr
quite understandable	SWE wr
quite upset	NAT wr
quite urgent	SWE wr
quite used to	NAT sp
quite usual	SWE sp
quite vain	NAT sp
quite violent	NAT sp
quite warm	NAT sp 4
quite weak	NAT wr
quite weak-willed	NAT sp
quite well qualified	NAT sp
quite well recognised	NAT sp
quite worrying	NAT sp
quite young	NAT sp
quite quite amusing	NAT sp
quite quite (sort of) arid	NAT sp
rather a big	NAT sp
rather a vain	NAT sp
rather abstract	NAT wr
rather artistic	SWE wr
rather bizarre	NAT sp 3
rather cheap	SWE sp
rather clean	NAT wr
rather complicated	SWE wr
rather content	SWE sp
rather depressing	SWE wr

rather difficult	SWE sp
rather displeased	NAT sp
rather egoistic	SWE wr
rather exciting	SWE wr
rather exhausting	SWE wr
rather expensive	SWE wr
rather faithful	NAT sp
rather faulty	NAT wr
rather good	SWE sp 2
rather hard	NAT wr, NAT sp
rather important	NAT wr
rather individualized	SWE wr
rather intact	SWE wr
rather interesting	SWE wr
rather intimate	NAT wr
rather intriguing	NAT wr
rather ironic	SWE wr
rather large	SWE wr
rather miserable	NAT sp
rather misleading	NAT wr
rather new	SWE wr
rather nice	SWE sp
rather nice-looking	SWE wr
rather old	SWE wr
rather selfish	SWE wr
rather short	SWE wr
rather significant	NAT sp
rather straightforward	SWE wr
rather tired	SWE sp
rather undemocratic	NAT wr
rather unique	SWE wr
rather violent	NAT sp
readily available	NAT wr 5
real big	NAT sp
real dangerous	SWE wr
really amazing	SWE sp, NAT sp 3
really amusing	NAT sp
really appealing	SWE wr
really attractive	NAT sp
really awful	NAT sp
really awkward	NAT sp
really bad	SWE sp, NAT sp 5
really beautiful	SWE sp 4, NAT sp 4
really big	SWE sp 3, NAT sp 2
really bilingual	NAT sp
really (.) blurry	SWE sp
really bored	NAT sp
really boring	NAT sp
really boring and depressing	NAT sp
really brash	NAT sp
really bright	SWE sp, NAT sp
really brilliant	NAT sp
really cheap	SWE sp, NAT sp
really child orientated	NAT sp
really clean	SWE sp
really clever	NAT sp
really close	SWE sp, NAT sp
really really close	SWE sp
really cold	SWE sp
really confident	NAT sp
really constricting	NAT sp
really convenient	NAT sp
really cool	SWE sp 2, NAT sp 3
really dangerous	SWE wr
really demanding	NAT sp
really depressing	NAT sp 2
really different	SWE sp, NAT sp
really difficult	SWE wr, SWE sp, NAT sp
really disheartened	NAT sp
really easy	SWE sp, NAT sp
really effective	NAT sp 2
really enjoyable	NAT sp
really essential	SWE wr
really exciting	SWE wr, NAT sp
really exotic	SWE sp
really fanatic	NAT sp
really fed up	NAT sp
really friendly	NAT sp 6
really (sort of) friendly	NAT sp
really frightening	NAT sp
really frustrating	NAT sp
really fun	NAT sp 3
really funny	SWE sp, NAT sp 3
really glad	NAT sp
really good	SWE wr, SWE sp 11, NAT wr, NAT sp 68
really greasy	SWE sp
really great	SWE sp
really grey and dull	NAT sp

really (sort of) grim and grotesque	NAT sp
really handy	NAT sp
really happy	SWE wr, SWE sp, NAT sp 3
really hard	SWE sp 4, NAT sp 4
really heavy	NAT sp
really hectic	NAT sp
really helpful	NAT sp
really high	NAT sp
really horrible	SWE sp, NAT sp
really hot	SWE sp, NAT sp 3
really icy	NAT sp
really important	SWE wr, NAT sp
really impressed	NAT sp 2
really impressive	SWE sp, NAT sp
really incredible	NAT sp
really interesting	SWE sp 5, NAT sp 9
really into	SWE sp, NAT sp
really irritating	SWE sp
really kind	SWE sp
really light	SWE sp
really long	NAT sp
really loud	NAT sp
really lovely	NAT sp 2
really lucky	NAT sp 4
really luxurious	SWE sp
really mad	SWE sp
really miserable	NAT sp
really naive	NAT sp
really nervous	NAT sp
really nice	SWE sp 12, NAT sp 30
really noisy	NAT sp 2
really obvious	NAT sp
really occupied	SWE sp
really odd-smelling	NAT wr
really old	NAT sp
really organised	NAT sp
really peculiar	NAT sp
really pissed off	NAT sp
really pleased	SWE sp
really poor	SWE wr, NAT sp 2
really posh	SWE sp, NAT sp
really pretty	NAT sp
really proud	SWE sp, NAT sp
really quick	NAT sp
really realistic	SWE sp
really rich	NAT sp
really right or wrong	SWE wr
really sad	SWE wr, NAT sp
really (sort of) sad	NAT sp
really scared	NAT wr, NAT sp
really scary	SWE wr 2, SWE sp, NAT sp
really slow	NAT sp
really slow and laid back	NAT sp
really small	NAT sp
really solid and fixed and everything	NAT sp
really spicy	NAT sp
really spoiled	SWE sp
really strange	NAT sp 4
really strong	NAT wr
really stupid	SWE sp, NAT sp
really sunny	NAT sp
really sweet	NAT sp 2
really tense	NAT sp
really tiny	NAT sp
really tired	SWE wr SWE sp 2
really ugly	SWE sp, NAT sp
really uncomfortable	NAT sp
really unsavoury	SWE wr
really upset	SWE sp 2
really versatile	NAT sp
really warm	SWE sp 2, NAT sp 2
really weak	NAT wr
really weird	SWE sp, NAT sp 4
really well behaved	NAT sp
really weird	NAT sp
really wild	NAT sp
really worth	NAT sp
really young	NAT sp
really really annoyed	SWE sp
really really big	SWE sp
really really detailed	SWE sp
really really frustrated	SWE sp
really really good	SWE sp 3, NAT sp 2
really really happy	SWE sp
really really hot	SWE sp
really really impressive	SWE sp

really really nasty	NAT sp
really really nice	SWE sp, NAT sp 2
really really old	SWE sp
really really open	SWE sp
really really proud	SWE sp
really really rich	SWE wr
really really spicy	SWE sp
really really talented	SWE sp
really really well done	NAT sp
really really young	NAT sp
reasonably fair	NAT sp
reasonably okay	SWE sp
reasonably quiet	SWE wr
reasonably well-informed	SWE wr
relatively close	NAT sp
relatively easy	NAT wr
relatively inexpensive	NAT wr
relatively low	SWE wr
relatively male	NAT wr
relatively minor	NAT wr
relatively new	SWE wr
relatively prejudiced	NAT sp
relatively short	SWE wr
relatively weak	NAT wr
relatively young	NAT wr
remarkably low	SWE wr
roughly similar	NAT wr
scaringly clear	SWE wr
seemingly bright	SWE wr
seemingly comfortable	SWE wr
seemingly different	SWE wr
seemingly growing	SWE wr
seemingly incomprehensible	SWE wr
seemingly negative	SWE wr
seemingly peaceful	NAT wr
severely injured	SWE wr
severely restricted	NAT wr
sharply divided	NAT wr
shockingly low	NAT wr
simply amazing	NAT wr
simply impossible	NAT wr
sizzling hot	SWE wr
slightly (sort of) ashamed	NAT sp
slightly different	NAT wr, NAT sp 2
slightly exaggerated	SWE wr
slightly lost	SWE wr
slightly mad	NAT sp
slightly wary	SWE wr
so accessible	NAT sp
so advanced	NAT wr
so aggressive	NAT sp
so amazing	SWE sp, NAT sp
so Americanised	NAT sp
so angry	SWE sp
so awful	SWE wr
so bad	SWE wr 2, NAT sp
so beautiful	SWE sp 5, NAT sp
so big	SWE wr, NAT sp
so busy	NAT sp
so cheap	NAT sp
so clear	NAT sp
so close	NAT sp 4
so cold	SWE sp, NAT sp
so colourful	SWE sp 2
so commercial	NAT sp 2
so complicated	SWE sp, NAT wr
so concerned	SWE sp, NAT wr
so confusing	SWE sp, NAT sp
so conscious	SWE sp
so cool	NAT sp
so (sort of) crowded	NAT sp
so cruel	SWE wr
so cut off	NAT sp
so daunting	NAT sp
so dear	NAT wr
so defining	NAT sp
so dependent	SWE wr
so depressing	SWE sp
so different	SWE wr, SWE sp 4, NAT sp 4
so difficult	NAT sp
so disappointed	SWE sp
so disliked	SWE wr
so diverse	SWE sp 2, NAT sp
so eager	NAT wr
so easy	NAT wr, NAT sp
so embarrassing	NAT wr
so engrossed	NAT sp
so essential	SWE wr

so expensive	NAT sp 2
so famous	SWE sp
so fascinating	SWE sp
so flat	SWE sp
so flushed	SWE wr
so fragile	NAT sp
so friendly	NAT sp 4
so frustrated	NAT sp
so frustrating	NAT sp
so fun	SWE sp
so funny	NAT wr, NAT sp 5
so generous	NAT sp 2
so good	SWE sp 3, NAT sp
so great	NAT wr, NAT sp
so happy	NAT sp 2
so hot	NAT sp 2
so huge	SWE sp
so humid	NAT sp
so important	SWE wr 2, NAT wr
so impoverished	SWE wr
so impressed	SWE sp, NAT sp
so inexpensive	NAT wr
so inspired	SWE wr
so (you know) insulated	NAT sp
so interested	NAT sp
so interesting	SWE sp, NAT sp 2
so into	SWE sp
so kind	NAT sp
so laid back	SWE sp
so lifting	NAT sp
so loud	NAT sp
so modern	NAT sp
so much alike	SWE wr
so mysterious	NAT sp
so naive	NAT sp
so nervous	SWE sp, NAT sp 2
so new	NAT wr
so nice	SWE sp 5, NAT sp 5
so obvious	SWE wr
so old	SWE sp, NAT wr, NAT sp
so open	SWE sp
so overcast	NAT sp
so overwhelming	SWE sp
so perfect	SWE sp
so poor	SWE sp
so popular	SWE wr
so posh	SWE sp
so powerful	SWE wr
so precious	SWE wr
so professional	SWE sp
so proud	NAT wr
so quiet	SWE sp
so rampant	NAT wr
so rare	NAT wr
so realistic	NAT sp
so regimented	NAT sp
so relaxed	NAT sp
so relaxing	SWE sp
so relieved	NAT sp
so religious	SWE sp
so remote	SWE wr
so righteous	NAT wr
so romantic	NAT sp
so scared	NAT wr
so scaring	NAT sp
so shy	SWE sp, NAT sp
so simple	NAT wr
so slow	NAT sp
so small	SWE sp 5, NAT sp
so sorry	SWE sp
so spoilt	SWE sp
so strange	SWE sp 2
so (..) strange	SWE sp
so strong	SWE sp
so stupid	NAT sp 2
so submissive	SWE wr
so tense	NAT sp
so tidy	SWE sp
so tragic	NAT wr
so unfriendly	NAT sp
so unreal	SWE sp
so unresponsive	NAT sp
so upset	SWE sp, NAT wr
so used to	SWE sp, NAT sp 4
so useful	NAT wr
so versatile	NAT sp
so violent	NAT sp
so warm	SWE sp
so weird	SWE sp

so windy and cold	NAT sp
so wrong	SWE sp
so fairly nervous	SWE sp
so fairly professional	SWE sp
so very bad	NAT sp
so very lively	SWE sp
soaking wet	NAT wr, NAT sp
somehow different	NAT wr
somehow protected	SWE sp
somewhat controversial	NAT wr
somewhat cynical	SWE wr
somewhat dejecting	SWE wr
somewhat different	SWE wr, SWE sp
somewhat obsessed	NAT wr
somewhat reasonable	NAT wr
somewhat strong	NAT wr
somewhat true	NAT wr
somewhat vague	NAT wr
somewhat vain	SWE sp
sort of <X> passionate	NAT sp
sort of American	SWE sp
sort of amused	NAT sp
sort of bad	NAT sp
sort of big	NAT sp
sort of Caucasian	NAT sp
sort of central	NAT sp
sort of chapelly	NAT sp
sort of (like) cheap	NAT sp
sort of (like) childish	NAT sp
sort of classic	NAT sp
sort of claustrophobic	SWE sp
sort of (like) confident	NAT sp
sort of cultural	NAT sp
sort of (I don't know) cultural	NAT sp
sort of disappointed	SWE sp
sort of down trodden	NAT sp
sort of dry	SWE sp
sort of emancipated	SWE sp
sort of free	SWE sp
sort of good	SWE sp
sort of idealistic	NAT sp
sort of light weight	NAT sp
sort of linguistic	NAT sp
sort of modern	NAT sp
sort of modernistic	SWE sp
sort of normal	NAT sp
sort of Norwegian	SWE sp
sort of open	SWE sp
sort of orange	SWE sp
sort of political	SWE sp
sort of real	SWE sp
sort of realistic	SWE sp
sort of separate	NAT sp
sort of stereotyped	SWE sp
sort of subtle	NAT sp
sort of sweet	SWE sp
sort of technical	NAT sp
sort of tropical	SWE sp
sort of unregimented	NAT sp
sort of white	NAT sp
sort of (like) whole	NAT sp
sort of wild and crazy	SWE sp
straight theatrical	NAT sp
strictly divided	SWE wr
strictly hypothetical	SWE wr
strictly male	NAT wr
strictly religious	SWE wr 2
strictly scientific	NAT wr
strictly traditional	SWE wr
strongly opposed	NAT wr
stupidly hot	NAT sp
supposedly professional	NAT sp
supposedly sovereign	NAT wr
supposedly united	NAT wr
tediously boring	NAT sp
terribly afraid	SWE sp
terribly cold	SWE sp
terribly distorted	NAT wr
terribly English	NAT sp
terribly exhausting	SWE sp
terribly modern	NAT sp
terribly sick	SWE sp
terribly tragic	NAT sp
terribly wrong	NAT wr
terrifyingly common	SWE wr
terrifyingly real	SWE wr
that bad	NAT sp
that desperate	NAT sp
that different	NAT sp

that good	SWE sp
that pretty	SWE sp
that realistic	NAT sp
that simple	NAT wr
that superstitious	SWE sp
that young	SWE sp
the slightest curious	SWE wr
too bad	NAT wr 2
totally abandoned	NAT wr
totally absorbed	SWE wr
totally alien	NAT wr, NAT sp
totally alienated	SWE wr
totally assimilated	SWE wr
totally bizarre	NAT sp
totally defenseless	NAT sp
totally dependent	SWE wr 2
totally different	SWE wr 6, SWE sp 5, NAT sp
totally false	NAT sp
totally free	SWE wr
totally helpless	NAT sp
totally ill at ease	NAT sp
totally impossible	SWE wr
totally inadequate	SWE wr
totally incomprehensible	SWE wr
totally innocent	SWE wr
totally irrelevant	SWE wr
totally lifeless	NAT sp
totally limited	NAT wr
totally new	SWE wr 2
totally Swedish	SWE wr
totally unable	SWE wr
totally unacceptable	NAT wr
totally unknown	SWE wr
totally unregimented	NAT sp
totally unregulated	SWE wr
totally warped	SWE wr
totally weird	NAT sp
totally wrong	SWE wr
tremendously expensive	SWE wr
tremendously important	SWE wr
truly altruistic	SWE wr
truly amazing	NAT wr
truly apparent	NAT wr
truly educated	NAT wr
truly happy	NAT wr
truly kind	NAT wr
truly pathetic	SWE sp
truly relevant	SWE wr
truly successful	SWE wr
uncomfortably high	NAT wr
undeniably true	SWE wr
unrealistically thin	NAT wr
unusually large	SWE wr
vaguely similar	NAT sp
very accurate	NAT sp
very active	SWE wr
very affected	NAT sp 2
very affectionate	SWE sp
very aggressive	SWE sp
very alarming	NAT wr
very alive	SWE sp
very all-round	SWE sp
very American	NAT sp
very angry	SWE sp 2, NAT sp
very annoyed	SWE wr
very appealing	SWE wr
very applicable	NAT sp
very apprehensive	NAT wr
very athletic	SWE sp
very atmospheric	NAT sp
very aware	SWE wr
very bad	SWE wr 2, SWE sp
very basic	NAT wr
very beautiful	SWE sp 6, NAT sp
very beneficial	NAT wr
very big	SWE sp 5, NAT wr 3, NAT sp 7
very black and white	SWE sp
very blurry	SWE sp 2
very boring	SWE wr, NAT wr
very British	NAT sp
very bumpy	NAT sp
very busy	NAT wr, NAT sp 2
very capricious	NAT wr
very careful	NAT sp 2
very caught up	NAT sp
very centralised	NAT wr
very cerebral	SWE wr
very cheap	SWE sp 2, NAT sp 2

very childish SWE sp
very claustrophobic NAT sp 2
very clear cut NAT sp
very clever SWE wr, NAT sp 2
very close SWE wr, SWE sp
very closed SWE wr
very cold SWE sp, NAT sp
very comfortable SWE wr, SWE sp
very comical NAT sp
very coming up SWE sp
very common SWE wr, SWE sp
very competitive NAT wr 4
very complete NAT sp
very complex SWE wr, NAT wr
very complicated SWE sp, NAT wr
very conceited SWE wr
very concerned SWE wr
very confusing NAT sp
very conscious SWE sp
very contagious NAT wr
very controversial SWE wr, NAT wr 2
very convenient SWE wr 2, NAT sp
very convincing SWE wr
very corrupt SWE wr
very cost-efficient NAT wr
very costly SWE wr
very credible NAT wr
very critical SWE wr
very crowded SWE wr, SWE sp
very curious SWE wr, SWE sp
very curly SWE wr
very dangerous SWE wr, NAT wr 3
very Danish NAT sp
very dark NAT sp
very dark and moodsome NAT sp
very deep SWE wr 2
very definite SWE wr
very delicate SWE wr 2
very demanding NAT sp
very dependent NAT wr
very depressed SWE sp
very depressing SWE wr, NAT sp 2
very detailed SWE sp
very devastating NAT wr
very different SWE wr 7, SWE sp 8, NAT wr 2, NAT sp 15
very difficult SWE wr 8, SWE sp 3, NAT wr 5, NAT sp 8
very diplomatic SWE sp
very distinctive NAT sp 2
very disturbing NAT wr, NAT sp
very dominant SWE sp
very doubtful SWE sp, NAT sp
very dramatic SWE wr
very dubious SWE wr
very dull SWE wr 2
very easy SWE wr, SWE sp 3, NAT wr
very edge of the seat NAT sp 2
very effective SWE wr, NAT wr 3, NAT sp
very egocentric SWE sp
very eloquent SWE wr 2
very emotional SWE wr
very emotive NAT sp 2
very encouraging SWE wr
very enjoyable NAT sp
very equal SWE wr
very equivocal SWE wr
very ethnocentric NAT wr
very European NAT sp
very exact SWE wr
very exaggerated SWE wr
very excited SWE sp
very exciting SWE wr, NAT sp 2
very expensive SWE wr, SWE sp 2, NAT wr 2, NAT sp 2
very famous NAT sp 2
very fascinating SWE sp
very fast SWE wr
very flashy SWE sp
very flat NAT sp 2
very flattering NAT sp
very fluent SWE sp
very fond SWE wr
very forbidden SWE sp
very fortunate SWE wr
very free SWE sp
very frequent SWE wr
very friendly SWE sp 7, NAT sp
very frightening SWE wr

very fun SWE sp 3
very functional SWE sp, NAT wr
very funny SWE sp, NAT sp
very general SWE sp 2
very gentle NAT sp
very glad SWE wr
very glamorous NAT sp
very good SWE wr 10, SWE sp 21, NAT wr 8, NAT sp 37
very great NAT wr
very green SWE sp, NAT sp 2
very grey NAT sp
very handy NAT sp
very happy SWE wr 2, SWE sp 7, NAT wr, NAT sp 4
very hard SWE wr 6, SWE sp 7, NAT wr 2, NAT sp 5
very harsh SWE wr, NAT wr
very heavy SWE sp, NAT sp
very hectic SWE wr
very helpful NAT wr, NAT sp
very (sort of) helpful and supportive NAT sp
very high SWE wr 3, SWE sp 2, NAT wr 2, NAT sp 5
very hot SWE sp 2, NAT sp 5
very humid NAT sp 2
very idle SWE wr 2
very ignorant NAT wr
very ill SWE sp, NAT sp
very imaginative SWE wr
very impersonal NAT wr
very important SWE wr 23, SWE sp 4, NAT wr 14, NAT sp 11
very impressed SWE sp 2, NAT sp 5
very impressing SWE sp
very impressionable NAT wr 2
very impressionist SWE sp
very impressive SWE sp, NAT sp 8
very in vogue NAT sp
very inadequate NAT sp
very inappropriate SWE sp
very infectuous SWE wr
very influential SWE sp, NAT wr
very interested SWE sp, NAT wr, NAT sp 3
very interesting SWE wr 5, SWE sp 8,
very intimidating SWE wr
very into SWE sp
very irritating SWE wr
very isolated SWE wr, NAT sp
very (kind of) jolly NAT sp
very keen SWE wr, NAT sp 2
very laid back SWE sp
very large SWE wr 4, NAT wr 2
very lazy NAT sp
very light SWE sp
very likely SWE wr 3, NAT wr
very logical NAT wr
very lonely SWE sp
very long SWE wr, SWE sp 3, NAT wr 3, NAT sp
very loose NAT wr
very loud SWE sp 2, NAT sp 2
very low SWE wr 2, SWE sp 3, NAT wr 3
very lovely NAT sp
very lucky NAT sp 2
very lush NAT sp
very mad NAT sp
very (eh) magnificent SWE sp
very masculine NAT wr
very meek SWE sp
very melancholy NAT wr
very memorable SWE wr
very (sort of) middle-eastern NAT sp
very miserable NAT sp
very modern SWE wr
very modest SWE wr
very narrow SWE sp 2
very narrow-minded SWE wr
very natural SWE wr, NAT wr
very negative SWE wr 2
very nervous SWE sp
very new NAT wr
very nice SWE wr 2, SWE sp 34, NAT sp 20
very north NAT sp
very obvious SWE wr, NAT wr
very odd NAT sp 4
very old SWE wr 2, SWE sp 2,

	NAT sp 2
very old-fashioned	SWE wr
very open	SWE sp 4
very opposite	NAT wr
very organised	SWE sp, NAT wr, NAT sp
very painful	NAT wr, NAT sp
very particular	NAT sp
very passive	SWE sp
very patient	NAT wr
very patriotic	NAT wr
very personal	SWE wr 3, NAT wr
very plain	SWE sp
very pleasant	SWE wr
very pleased	SWE sp 3, NAT sp 3
very poignant	NAT sp
very polite	SWE sp
very poor	SWE wr 2, SWE sp, NAT sp 2
very poor and humble	NAT sp
very popular	SWE wr 3, SWE sp 2, NAT wr 3, NAT sp 2
very positive	SWE wr, SWE sp, NAT wr
very possible	NAT wr
very powerful	SWE sp, NAT wr 3
very prejudiced	SWE wr
very pretty	NAT sp
very problematic	SWE wr
very profitable	NAT wr
very promising	SWE wr
very proud	SWE wr, SWE sp 5, NAT wr 2, NAT sp 4
very punctual	SWE sp
very quick	SWE wr
very quiet	NAT sp 2
very rare	SWE wr 2, NAT wr 3, NAT sp 2
very rationed	NAT sp
very real	NAT wr 3
very realistic	NAT wr
very (I guess you could say) realistic	SWE sp
very recent	NAT wr
very relaxed	NAT sp
very relaxing	NAT sp
very relieved	NAT wr
very reserved	NAT sp 3
very respectable	NAT wr
very rich	SWE wr, SWE sp 2, NAT wr, NAT sp 4
very romantic	NAT sp
very romanticized	SWE wr
very rude	SWE wr
very sad	SWE wr, NAT sp
very scary	SWE sp, NAT wr
very sceptic	SWE wr
very sceptical	SWE sp
very sensitive	NAT wr 2
very separate	NAT sp
very serious	SWE wr, SWE sp
very (you know) sexist	NAT sp
very shocked	SWE sp, NAT wr, NAT sp
very short	SWE wr, NAT sp
very short of people	NAT sp
very sick	NAT wr
very significant	NAT wr 3, NAT sp
very similar	SWE wr 3, SWE sp 2, NAT wr, NAT sp 3
very simple	SWE wr 5, NAT wr
very sketchy	SWE sp
very slight	SWE wr
very sloppy	NAT sp 2
very small	SWE wr 2, SWE sp 7
very smooth and fluid	NAT sp
very smug	NAT sp
very soft	NAT wr
very solemn	NAT sp
very solitary	SWE sp
very sophisticated	SWE wr
very sorry	SWE wr, NAT wr
very sound	NAT wr
very Spanish	NAT sp 2
very specific	NAT wr 3
very stable	SWE sp
very starchy	NAT sp
very straight	SWE sp, NAT sp
very strange	SWE sp, NAT sp 5
very strenuous	SWE sp
very stressful	SWE sp, NAT wr, NAT sp
very strict	SWE wr, SWE sp,

	NAT sp
very striking	NAT sp
very strong	SWE sp 2, NAT wr 10, NAT sp
very successful	SWE wr 2, NAT wr
very surprised	SWE sp, NAT wr
very sympathetic	NAT sp
very taken aback	NAT sp
very tantalising	SWE sp
very tasty	NAT sp
very tear-jerking	NAT sp
very technical	SWE wr, NAT wr
very tense	NAT sp
very thick	SWE sp
very thin	NAT wr
very time-consuming	NAT wr
very timid	NAT wr
very tiny	NAT sp
very tired	SWE sp
very topical	SWE wr 2
very tough	SWE sp 2
very (sort of) touristy	SWE sp
very traumatic	NAT sp
very troubled	NAT sp
very true	NAT wr 2, NAT sp
very typical	NAT wr
very ugly	SWE sp 3, NAT wr
very uncomfortable	SWE wr, SWE sp, NAT wr
very underestimated	SWE wr
very unfair	SWE wr, NAT sp
very unfortunate	SWE wr 3
very unfriendly	NAT sp
very unique	NAT wr
very unlucky	SWE wr
very unrealistic	NAT wr
very unreliable	SWE wr
very upset	NAT wr
very upsetting	NAT sp
very useful	SWE wr 2, NAT sp
very vague	SWE wr 2
very valid	SWE wr
very valuable	NAT sp
very various	SWE sp
very viable	NAT wr
very violent	SWE sp, NAT sp 2
very vulnerable	SWE wr
very warm	SWE sp 2, NAT sp
very weak	SWE wr, NAT wr
very weary	NAT sp
very weird	NAT sp 2
very welcome	SWE wr
very well done	NAT sp
very well filmed	NAT sp
very well worked out	NAT sp
very wet	NAT sp 2
very white	SWE sp
very wide	SWE wr, SWE sp, NAT wr
very wild	SWE sp
very wise	SWE wr 2
very worried	SWE wr
very young	SWE wr 2, SWE sp, NAT wr, NAT sp
very very beautiful	SWE sp
very very big	SWE sp
very very cheap	SWE sp
very very cold	NAT sp
very very dark	NAT sp
very very different	SWE sp
very very disappointed	SWE sp
very very effective	NAT sp
very very famous	SWE sp
very very friendly	SWE sp
very very friendly	NAT sp
very very funny	NAT sp
very very good	SWE sp, NAT sp 2
very very happy	NAT sp
very very interested	SWE sp
very very interesting	SWE sp
very very lucky	NAT sp
very very nice	SWE sp
very very organised	SWE sp
very very proud	NAT sp
very very sad	NAT sp
very very shy	SWE sp
very very sick	NAT sp
very very small	SWE sp
very very straight	SWE sp
very very touristy	NAT sp

very very traditional	NAT sp
very very warm	SWE sp
very very versatile	NAT sp
very very wild	SWE sp
very much against	SWE sp, NAT sp
very much angled	SWE wr
very much aware	SWE wr 2
very much interrelated	SWE wr
very much into	NAT sp
very much POST noticeable	SWE sp
very much POST true	SWE sp
virtually accepted	NAT wr
virtually impossible	SWE wr, NAT wr 3
virtually tied	NAT sp
wancker crazy	NAT sp
well aware	SWE wr 2, NAT wr 2
well nigh impossible	NAT wr
well thought-out	NAT wr 2
well worth	SWE wr, NAT sp 2
whole new	SWE wr 2, NAT wr, NAT sp
wholly responsible	NAT wr
widely accepted	NAT wr 4, NAT sp
widely enforced	SWE wr
widely known	SWE wr, NAT wr
widely opposed	NAT wr
widely viewed	NAT wr
wonderfully accurate	NAT sp
wonderfully warm	SWE wr

Appendix IV. Collocations with the most frequently modified adjectives

Appendix IV shows the collocations – in both the written and the spoken corpora – with the most frequently modified adjectives (at least five occurrences in the written corpora and at least seven occurrences in the spoken corpora), using either the Swedish advanced learners as a point of reference (Tables IV.1 and IV.3) or the native speakers (Tables IV.2 and IV.4). Where the native speakers are used as a point of reference, however, the adjectives that are frequent in both corpora are not repeated (e.g. *important*, *different* and *good* in the written corpora).

In Table IV.1, the most frequently modified adjectives in the written *learner* corpus are used as a point of departure.

Table IV.1. Collocations with most frequently modified adjectives: Swedish advanced learners' written corpora in comparison with native speakers

Adjective	SWE wr		NAT wr	
	Reinforcers	Attenuators	Reinforcers	Attenuators
important	very (23), highly	not very	very (14),	rather
SWE 31	(2), so (2),		extremely (3), all,	
NAT 22	especially, really,		all too, especially,	
Total 53	tremendously		so	
different	very (7), totally (6),	a little bit,	much (2), very	slightly,
SWE 27	quite (4),	seemingly,	(2), completely,	somehow
NAT 10	completely (3), a	somewhat,	drastically, far,	
Total 37	lot, much, so,	NEG very	quite	
good	very (10), all,	not all that (2),	very (8), perfectly	not that
SWE 21	entirely, perfectly,	fairly, not too, not	(2), really	
NAT 12	really	very, quite, NEG		
Total 33		very		
new	entirely (4),	fairly (2),	brand, so, very,	quite a
SWE 17	completely (3),	comparatively,	whole	
NAT 5	totally (2), whole	rather, relatively		
Total 22	(2), brand			
difficult	very (8), extremely	NEG so	very (5), extremely	NEG so
SWE 13	(3), really			
NAT 7				
Total 20				
educated	highly (5)	poorly (3)	truly	

SWE 8 NAT 1 Total 9				
hard SWE 8 NAT 4 Total 12	very (6), extra, extremely	-	very (2),	quite, rather
aware SWE 7 NAT 2 Total 9	well (2), very much (2), fully, very	hardly	well (2)	-
interesting SWE 7 NAT 0 Total 7	very (5)	quite, rather	-	-
popular SWE 7 NAT 3 Total 10	very (3), immensely (2), so	not all that	very (3)	-
bad SWE 6 NAT 3 Total 9	so (2), very (2), incredibly	not so	too (2), all that	-
easy SWE 6 NAT 4 Total 10	very	enough, NEG entirely, fairly, not so, not very	so, very	fairly, relatively
happy SWE 6 NAT 2 Total 8	very (2), ever so, extremely, genuinely, really	-	truly, very	-
high SWE 6 NAT 5 Total 11	very (3), extremely (2)	generally	very (2), awfully, uncomfortably	fairly
impossible SWE 6 NAT 10 Total 16	quite, totally	almost (2), close to, virtually	completely, simply	virtually (3), nearly (2), almost, practically, well nigh
connected SWE 5 NAT 0 Total 5	closely (5)	-	-	
dangerous SWE 5 NAT 3	extremely, particularly, real, really, very	-	very (3)	-

Total 8				
dependent	totally (2),	-	very	NEG so
SWE 5	absolutely,			
NAT 2	completely, so			
Total 7				
likely	very (3)	not very (2)	highly, most, very	-
SWE 5				
NAT 3				
Total 8				
negative	quite (2), very (2),		extremely	
SWE 5	seemingly			
NAT 1				
Total 6				
poor	extremely (2), very	-	-	-
SWE 5	(2), really			
NAT 0				
Total 5				
simple	very (5)	-	so , that, very	not that
SWE 5				
NAT 4				
Total 9				
successful	very (2),truly	NEG very (2)	very	fairly
SWE 5				
NAT 2				
Total 7				
true	certainly, entirely,	NEG completely,	very (2), especially	probably,
SWE 5	undeniably	not entirely		somewhat
NAT 5				
Total 10				
worried	particularly, very	a bit (2), a little	-	
SWE 5				
NAT 0				
Total 5				

In Table IV.2, the most frequently modified adjectives in the written *native-speaker* corpus are used as a point of departure, with the exception of the ones already shown in Table IV.1.

Table IV.2. Collocations with most frequently modified adjectives: native-speakers' written corpora in comparison with Swedish advanced learners

Adjective	SWE wr		NAT wr	
	Reinforcers	Attenuators	Reinforcers	Attenuators
strong NAT 15 SWE 2 Total 17	extremely	quite	very (10), overly, really	fairly, not very, somewhat
effective NAT 8 SWE 1 Total 9	very	-	very (3), highly (2), directly, quite	NEG directly
applicable NAT 6 SWE 0 Total 6	-	-	directly (6)	-
male NAT 6 SWE 0 Total 6	-	-	all (4), strictly	relatively
accepted NAT 5 SWE 2 Total 7	fully (2)	-	widely (4)	virtually
available NAT 5 SWE 0 Total 5	-	-	readily (5)	-
low NAT 5 SWE 4 Total 9	very (2), remarkably	relatively	very (3), particularly, shockingly	-
rare NAT 5 SWE 2 Total 7	very (2)	-	very (3), so	quite
true NAT 5 SWE 5 Total 10	certainly, completely, entirely, undeniably	not entirely	very (2), especially	probably, somewhat
weak NAT 5 SWE 1 Total 6	very	-	particularly, really, very	quite, relatively

In Table IV.3, the most frequently modified adjectives in the spoken *learner* corpus are used as a point of departure.

Table IV.3. Collocations with most frequently modified adjectives: Swedish advanced learners' spoken corpora in comparison with native speakers

Adjective	SWE sp		NAT sp	
	Reinforcers	Attenuators	Reinforcers	Attenuators
good SWE 71 NAT 161 Total 232	very (22), really (14), so (3), that	quite (9), not very (5), not so (3), not that (3), rather (2), enough, kind of, NEG at all, NEG so, NEG very, not too, pretty, sort of	really (70), very (39), particularly (6), extremely, just so, so	quite (21), not very (7), pretty (4), NEG very (2), not that (2), enough, NEG at all, NEG particularly, NEG too, not particularly, not quite, in a way
nice SWE 65 NAT 79 Total 144	very (35), really (13), so (5)	quite (4), not that (3), kind of, NEG very, not so, not very, rather	really (32), very (20), so (5), just so, particularly	quite (17), NEG too, NEG very, not very
different SWE 40 NAT 46 Total 86	very (9), completely (6), totally (5), so (4), quite (3), entirely, really	a little bit (2), a bit, bit, in a way, NEG so, NEG too, not too, not very, pretty, somewhat	very (15), a lot (5), completely (4), so (4), quite (3), all, just so, lots, really, that, totally	a bit (4), not a lot (2), slightly (2), a little
small SWE 20 NAT 12 Total 32	very (8), so (5)	not very (2), pretty (2), quite (2), not that	very (5), dead, really, so	quite (2), a bit, fairly
happy SWE 18 NAT 30 Total 48	very (7), really (2)	not very (5), NEG very (2), NEG so, NEG too	very (5), really (3), so (2)	not very (7), quite (6), NEG very (4), not too (2), NEG too
big SWE 17 NAT 23 Total 40	very (6), really (4)	not so (2), pretty (2), quite (2), not that	very (7), really (2), real, so	quite (6), NEG that (2), not very, NEG very, rather a, sort of
interesting SWE 17 NAT 35 Total 52	very (9), really (5), so	not very, quite	very (11), really (9), so (2), certainly	quite (10), not very, pretty
beautiful SWE 16	very (7), so (5), really (4)	-	really (4), absolutely, just,	not very

NAT 10 Total 26			just so, so, very	
hard SWE 12 NAT 8 Total 20	very (7), really (4)	quite	very (5)	fairly, quite, rather
pleased SWE 12 NAT 9 Total 21	very (3), really	NEG too (2), not very (2), NEG very, not at all, not quite, pretty	very (3)	not very (2), NEG very, not exactly, pretty, quite
difficult SWE 10 NAT 33 Total 43	very (3), really	a bit (3),NEG at all, pretty, rather	very (8), intensely, really, so	quite (15), a bit (5), NEG that, pretty
friendly SWE 10 NAT 15 Total 25	very (8)	not so, quite	really (7), so (4), very (2)	enough, kind of
long SWE 10 NAT 11 Total 21	very (3), extremely	quite a (4), a bit (2)	really, very	quite [a] (8), a bit
nervous SWE 8 NAT 3 Total 11	so, so fairly, very	a bit, a little bit, NEG that, not very, quite	so (2), really	-
warm SWE 8 NAT 9 Total 17	very (3), really (2), so	not so (2)	really (2), very	quite (4), NEG very, pretty
easy SWE 7 NAT 7 Total 14	very (3), really	not that (2), pretty	really, so	quite (4), NEG very
hot SWE 7 NAT 13 Total 20	really (2), very (2), boiling, extremely	not too	very (5), really (3), so (2), exceptionally, just so, stupidly	-
important SWE 7 NAT 4 Total 11	very (4)	NEG that, not that, quite an	very, really	quite (2)
interested SWE 7 NAT 17 Total 24	very (2)	not very (4), not extremely	very (3), so	quite (10), fairly, kind of, not that
open	very (4), really,	sort of	-	-

SWE 7 NAT 0 Total 7	so			
proud SWE 7 NAT 7 Total 14	very (5), really (2)	-	very (5), really	quite

Table IV.4 shows the most frequently modified adjectives in the spoken corpora, using the *native-speaker* corpus as a point of departure, excluding the collocations already shown in Table IV.3.

Table IV.4. Collocations with most frequently modified adjectives: native speakers' spoken corpora in comparison with Swedish advanced learners

Adjective	SWE sp		NAT sp	
	Reinforcers	Attenuators	Reinforcers	Attenuators
bad NAT 35 SWE 5 Total 40	really, very	not too, not very, quite	really (5), particularly, so, so very, that	not too (16), NEG too (2), not so (2), pretty (2), a bit, not that, quite, sort of
amazing NAT 19 SWE 2 Total 21	really, so	-	just (9), absolutely (4), really (3), quite (2), so	-
impressed NAT 14 SWE 3 Total 17	very (2), so	-	very (5), really (2), obviously, quite, so	NEG too (2), NEG very, not too
funny NAT 13 SWE 5 Total 18	really, very	kind of, not that, quite	so (5), really (3), very (2)	quite (2), not very
weird NAT 13 SWE 2 Total 15	really, so	-	really (5), just (2), very (2), totally	a bit (3)
impressive NAT 12 SWE 3 Total 15	really (2), very	-	very (8), incredibly, really	not very, pretty

strange NAT 10 SWE 6 Total 16	so (3), very	a little bit, not so	very (5), really (4)	quite
sure NAT 10 SWE 2 Total 12	-	not quite, not so	absolutely	not quite (3), not too (2), NEG quite, not entirely, not that, pretty
lucky NAT 9 SWE 0 Total 9	-	-	really (4), very (3)	not so, quite
high NAT 8 SWE 4 Total 12	very (2)	not that, pretty	very (5), really	NEG very, quite
cold NAT 7 SWE 5 Total 12	freezing, really, so, terribly, very	-	very (2), bitterly, so	a bit, pretty, quite
odd NAT 7 SWE 0 Total 7	-	-	very (4)	a bit, a little, quite
sad NAT 7 SWE 2 Total 9	-	a bit, NEG so	really (2), very (2)	a bit, a little bit, quite a