
| RESEARCH ARTICLE

Adjective Intensifiers in Najdi Arabic: A Case Study of Interviews on *Al-Liwan*

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| ABSTRACT

This study examines the use of Najdi Arabic adjective intensifiers in broadcast interview speech. Data were collected from six episodes of a Saudi television interview program (*Al-Liwan*) featuring three male and three female Najdi Arabic-speaking guests. Based on Quirk et al.'s (1985) classification of intensifiers (amplifiers, downtoners, and emphasisers), all instances where intensifying forms directly modified a gradable adjective were counted and analyzed. Within the corpus (totaling 8 hours 9 minutes), there were 69 instances of adjective intensifiers. Adjective intensifier tokens appeared in six forms, with *jiddan* 'very' and *marrah* 'so, very' the most frequently used; the least frequent adjective intensifiers were *tamāman* 'completely' and *wallah* 'truly'. Amplifiers dominated the data, especially boosters, with *jiddan* the most frequent, followed by *marrah*. Considering the social factor of gender, female Najdi speakers produced more intensifiers than males, a finding consistent with cross-linguistic gender patterns. Intensifiers were most commonly used with positive adjectives, followed by negative adjectives, while neutral adjectives occurred the least frequently. Regarding intensifier position, a contrast emerged: *jiddan* occurred predominantly in the post-adjectival position, whereas *marrah* was used predominantly in the pre-adjectival position, which is consistent with findings from previous studies on Najdi Arabic. Limitations of the study include the sample size and its focus on the semi-formal broadcast register. Future research using a larger sample could examine other popular Saudi television and radio programs. Studies could investigate the use of adjective intensifiers in Saudi television drama, which reflects Saudi culture through including Najdi and other Saudi dialects.

| KEYWORDS

Adjective intensifiers; Najdi Arabic; female; male; semantic polarity; syntactic position

| ARTICLE INFORMATION

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1. Introduction

Intensification is a feature of everyday speech that allows speakers to strengthen meaning and convey emphasis, evaluation, stance, and interpersonal alignment. In spoken discourse, intensifiers play a crucial role because they often arise in spontaneous communication, where speakers negotiate persuasion and emotional force in real time. Therefore, the study of intensifiers has become an important area of research in sociolinguistics and pragmatics. Bolinger (1972) defined intensifiers as "any device that scales a quality, whether up or down or somewhere between the two" (p. 17). Similarly, Quirk et al. (1985) argued that intensifiers modify the quality expressed by the adjective by placing it at a point between the two ends of a scale. Earlier, Stoffel (1901) distinguished between intensifiers, which strengthen meaning, and downtoners, which indicate a moderate degree of expression, based on the degree of intensity. This laid the foundation for the subsequent classification of degree modifiers.

Intensifiers occur in all languages and language varieties, including Arabic and its spoken dialects, and their forms vary across languages and varieties. The current study focuses on Najdi Arabic (NA), which has received comparatively little attention in research on intensifiers, with only a few studies conducted to date (cf. Alfuhaydi, 2024; Almosa, 2024). NA is one of the major regional dialects spoken in Saudi Arabia (Ingham, 1994). It is traditionally associated with the Bedouin and settled communities of the Najd region and is considered one of the more conservative Peninsular Arabic dialects, preserving several phonological and morphological features of Old Arabic that have been lost or altered in other Saudi and Gulf varieties (Ingham, 1994). It is spoken across a wide area of central Saudi Arabia, including in the capital, Riyadh, and in the Qassim region.

This study examines how Najdi speakers use intensifiers in broadcast interview data, focusing on a television interview program. This program features a combination of natural conversation and public performance, making it a valuable source of data for analyzing intensifiers.

The literature indicates that women use intensifiers more frequently than men. Jespersen (1922, p. 250) observed that “the fondness of women for hyperbole will very often lead the fashion concerning adverbs of intensity.” Similarly, Key (1975) reported that certain intensifiers are associated with women’s speech, while Lakoff (1975) identified the use of intensifiers such as *so* as a characteristic of women’s speech. The present study includes both male and female participants to examine whether any gender-based differences emerge in their use of intensifiers.

By investigating intensifiers in broadcast speech, this study contributes to the literature on spoken Arabic discourse in general and NA in particular. It also aims to demonstrate that NA intensifiers function not only as markers of degree but also as linguistic resources for constructing engagement and rhetorical force in public communication. In addition, the study examines whether the English-derived classificatory framework proposed by Quirk et al. (1985), which has been applied in previous variationist studies (cf. Alfuhaydi, 2024; Almosa, 2024; Alshaboul et al., 2022; Stratton, 2020), is applicable to the analysis of the current study.

To meet the objectives of the study, the following research questions are addressed:

- 1) Which adjective intensifiers do Najdi guests most frequently use on the Al-Liwan Saudi TV show?
- 2) Based on Quirk et al.’s (1985) classification (emphasizers, amplifiers, and downtoners), which types or categories of NA adjective intensifiers are most frequently used?
- 3) Are there any differences between male and female Najdi guests in their use of adjective intensifiers, in terms of frequency and/or preferred forms?
- 4) What is the semantic polarity (positive, negative, or neutral) of the adjectives modified by these intensifiers?
- 5) What is the syntactic position of NA adjective intensifiers (i.e., pre- or post-adjectival), and is this position affected by the form of the intensifier?

2. Theoretical Background

2.1 Intensifiers: An Overview and Definition

Intensifiers are difficult to define precisely, which Labov (1984, p. 43) attributed to their status as “a gradient feature” that often depends on other linguistic structures. Similarly, Benzinger (1971, p. 51) contended that “intensification is not an element of language which yields itself to simple definition and easy analysis.” This lack of consensus is due to two factors: first, the capacity of intensifiers to modify a wide range of syntactic categories and their grammatical heterogeneity make unified classification difficult (Paradis, 1997); second, the notion of intensification is conceptually imprecise and slippery (Labov, 1984; Napoli & Ravetto, 2017).

Scholars have used the closely related concept of gradability to explain intensification (Bolinger, 1972). In this approach, intensification is treated as a property of gradable adjectives, that is, adjectives that can be modified by intensifiers (e.g., *very cold*) and that occur in comparative constructions such as *colder* or *more comfortable* (Bolinger, 1972; Paradis, 2008; Quirk et al., 1985). Paradis (1997) pointed out that intensifiers need to be modified by a gradable head. In contrast, non-gradable adjectives do not permit intensification or comparison because they denote absolute or binary properties, such as *dead* (Paradis, 2008). Gradability is considered to be context-dependent and can shift diachronically; thus, it is not a fixed, clear-cut property (Buchstaller & Traugott, 2006; Paradis, 2008). Thus, intensification is not limited to semantic gradability. Moreover, intensifiers can operate pragmatically to convey the speaker’s stance or attitude toward the proposition (Besnier, 1990; Napoli & Ravetto, 2017). This explains why even non-gradable adjectives can be intensified by modal intensifiers or emphasizees, such as *wallah* ‘truly’ in NA. These differ from degree intensifiers in their semantic effects. According to Quirk (1972, p. 376), modal intensifiers add a “general highlighting effect” to adjectives.

In this study, intensifiers are defined as optional lexico-grammatical devices that speakers use in everyday speech to amplify, downtone, or emphasize the quality of adjectives (Alshaboul et al., 2022). This definition specifies the context of

intensification, which facilitates the application of variationist quantification methods, as discussed below. The intensifying function of intensifiers is achieved either by scaling the degree of the adjective upward or downward or by emphasizing it to express the speaker's commitment to the truth of its quality. These devices can belong to different grammatical classes, have various syntactic structures, and can be positioned before or after the adjective. This definition is based on the functional approach and semantic classification of intensifiers, following Quirk et al.'s (1985) model, which is adopted in this study. Intensifiers are categorized as a separate class based on their function of intensification. In addition, they are stratified based on the semantic effect they induce on the unit they modify (i.e., adjectives in this context) (Alfuhaydi, 2024).

Finally, an additional pragmatic and social dimension of the amplifier *marrah* is revealed by exploring how *marrah* intensification is stylistically enregistered as a feminine linguistic feature, alongside other linguistic features in digital discourse.

2.2 Classification of Intensifiers

Several taxonomies of intensifiers have been proposed, most of which distinguish between two dimensions: scaling up and scaling down (e.g., Bolinger, 1972; Paradis, 1997; Quirk et al., 1985). Others introduce a middle, moderate category, while Allerton (1987) classifies intensifiers according to their semantic compatibility with the adjectives they modify.

Most semantic categorization systems of intensifiers in the literature are based on the concepts of scale and scalarity, whereby lexical items are hierarchically ordered according to their relative degree of intensity (Paradis, 1997). A scale is structured by two semantic relations: contrast, whereby items are mutually distinguishable, for instance, *completely* is not equal to *very*, and similarity, which is established through the notion of entailment (e.g., if something is *completely dry*, it is also *very dry* (Paradis, 1997; Westney, 1986).

Quirk et al. (1985) identified three major classes of intensifiers: emphasizees, amplifiers, and downtoners. Emphasizers express "the semantic role of modality" (Quirk, 1972, p. 376) and function to reinforce the truth value of the clause or the part of the clause they modify, as in the examples *indeed*, *literally*, and *really* (Quirk et al., 1985). Amplifiers are degree intensifiers that increase the degree of a quality. They are divided into maximisers, which denote the highest point on the scale (e.g., *completely*), and boosters, which denote a high, but not the highest, point (e.g., *very*). Downtoners are degree intensifiers that reduce the intensity of a quality and are divided into four subtypes: approximators, compromisers, diminishers, and minimizers. Approximators demonstrate that the quality exceeds what is strictly relevant and carry an implication of truth denial (e.g., *nearly*); compromisers question the appropriateness of the quality while subtly lowering its force without denying its truth (e.g., *kind of*); and diminishers lower the degree of a quality (e.g., *a bit*) and often occur in a negative context (e.g., *not easy at all*) (Quirk et al., 1985).

This model is favored in variationist research for three reasons. First, it is widely used in comparable sociolinguistic studies such as Stratton (2020) and Almosa (2024), as it facilitates cross-study comparison. Second, its category structure is analytically manageable for both qualitative and quantitative research. Third, it classifies intensifiers that compete functionally with one another, indicating that members of one category compete against each other but not against members of another category (e.g., downtoners do not compete with amplifiers) (Stratton, 2020). Therefore, this classification was adopted as the primary analytical framework for the current study.

2.3 Linguistic Constraints

There are several linguistic constraints on intensifier use: their syntactic function, the semantic class of the adjective, the polarity of the adjective, and the position of the intensifier (i.e., before or after the adjective). Following Alshaboul et al. (2022), these constraints are considered in the current study because they have been widely examined in research on intensifiers in other languages (cf. Tagliamonte, 2008). Tagliamonte (2008) found that a higher frequency of intensifiers with predicative than attributive adjectives may indicate a more advanced level of delexicalization. Dixon (1977) identified five types of adjectives that collocate with certain intensifiers in some languages: human propensity, physical properties, value (e.g., *generous*), dimensions, and others. Similar to Partington (1993), Tagliamonte (2008, p. 376) suggested a correlation between "delexicalization and collocational behaviour: the more delexicalized an intensifier is, the more widely it collocates." Adjective polarity also influences intensifier use, with positive adjectives reported to trigger intensification more frequently than negative or neutral adjectives (Tagliamonte, 2008).

Intensification is also affected by the emotionality of adjectives. For instance, Tagliamonte (2008) reported that in English, *so* correlates with emotional meaning, whereas *very* correlates with non-emotional meaning.

The choice of intensifier is also affected by its position relative to the adjective. In Standard Arabic and Ammani Arabic, intensifiers usually follow the adjectives they modify (Alshaboul et al., 2022). Evidence from other Saudi Arabic varieties also suggests that position affects the meaning of adverbs. In a study of the Saudi Northern Region Dialect of Arabic (SNRDA),

AlShammiry (2016) showed that changing the position of an adverb relative to the constituent it modifies could alter its interpretation, with intonation further influencing the meaning.

The current study examines some of these linguistic constraints, including the semantic polarity of adjectives and their syntactic position, to compare the data against findings reported in the literature.

3. Previous Studies

Several studies have investigated intensifiers using television and other media data, particularly English-language media, with broadcast speech providing a valuable source of language in which intensifiers are used. For example, Tagliamonte and Roberts (2005) examined patterns of intensifier use in the US television sitcom *Friends* by analyzing all adjectives in the first eight seasons. *Very*, *really*, and *so* were the most frequent intensifiers, which is consistent with findings from other studies on contemporary English. Their analysis also showed that the primary intensifier *really* was used more frequently by female speakers, while *so* was the single most common intensifier, accounting for half of all intensifier tokens.

Similarly, Stratton (2018) examined the use of the intensifier *well* in a British TV program, finding that this was the most frequent intensifier, used exclusively by adolescent speakers. Other common boosters included *really*, *so*, *too*, and *very*. Syntactically, *well* intensified both regular and participial adjectives and occurred with both attributive and predicative adjectival heads. Together, the findings of Tagliamonte and Roberts (2005) and Stratton (2018) suggest that television speech not only reflects established patterns of intensifier use but also captures register- and age-specific innovations.

Beyond register, gender differences in intensifier use have also been investigated across languages. Rasekh and Saeb (2015) examined gender-based variation in Persian intensifier use in a four-hour corpus of recorded speech. Their findings showed that women used intensifiers more frequently than men, reinforcing broader observations in the literature that male and female speakers differ in their patterns of language use (cf. Lakoff, 1975).

In recent years, sociolinguistic research on Saudi Arabia has increased, covering topics such as dialect variation and change, language contact, and language attitudes (Al-Rojaie, 2023). However, studies examining intensifiers remain limited. A small but growing number of studies have investigated intensifier use in spoken Arabic dialects. Omar and Alotaibi (2017) explored the influence of geographic location on intensifier use in Egyptian and Saudi Arabic, considering the social factors of gender, age, and education through data collected from radio programs in Egypt and Saudi Arabia. Their findings revealed differences in the frequency, linguistic structure, and type of intensifiers, suggesting that geographic factors contribute to the linguistic diversity of Arabic dialects. Omar and Alotaibi (2017) argued that intensifiers in Egyptian and Saudi Arabic have different norms to the standard variety. Despite the increasing influence of social media on daily life, linguistic differences and varieties persist in the Middle East and North Africa. Omar and Alotaibi (2017) found that *jiddan* is the most frequently used intensifier in Egyptian Arabic and Saudi Arabic, while *awi* in Egyptian Arabic and *marrah* in Saudi Arabic were the next most common forms, both functioning as amplifiers with the same meaning as *jiddan*.

Alshaboul et al. (2022) investigated intensifier use in Ammani Arabic, examining the effects of both social and linguistic factors. The social variables considered were gender, education, and age, while the linguistic factors included adjective semantic class, intensifier position (pre- or post-adjectival), adjective function (attributive vs. predicative), and adjective polarity. Adopting Labov's (1972) variationist approach, the study explored how sociolinguistic variation in dialects can be structured. The data were drawn from 32 speakers, with a corpus comprising 15 hours of recorded speech. The study focused on the intensifier *'iktīr* 'very' and its variants [ʔiktī:r], [ʔiktī:r ʔiktī:r], and [dʒidan], which were extracted and coded for analysis. Goldvarb X was used to analyze variant distribution and frequency, as well as the statistical significance of variable use. The results showed that *'iktīr* was the most frequently used intensifier. None of the social factors examined (age, gender, and education) had a significant effect on intensifier use by Ammani Arabic speakers. However, *'iktīr* was found to be significantly associated with the semantic class of adjectives expressing "human propensity" and occurred more frequently in predicative constructions.

Alfuhaydi (2024) conducted the first variationist investigation of NA speakers' use of adjective intensifiers in Riyadh, examining both the linguistic and social factors affecting their distribution. Using interview data and Quirk et al.'s (1985) classification framework, the study identified 3,508 adjectives: only 540 (15.39%) of these were intensified. Amplifiers (e.g. *marrah* 'very') formed the most commonly used category, followed by emphasizees (e.g., *wallah* 'truly') and downtoners (e.g., *šwayy* 'a bit'). Boosters such as *marrah* 'very' within the amplifier category were used more often than maximisers such as *tamāman* 'completely'. Whereas amplifier use was strongly influenced by social factors, downtoner use was more closely associated with linguistic factors. Female speakers produced amplifiers more often than male speakers, and the two most frequent amplifiers, *marrah* and *jiddan*, exhibited different distributional patterns shaped by a range of social and linguistic factors. The findings also suggested that the booster *marrah* may have become enregistered as a marker of feminine speech. Existing research on Arabic dialects shows that intensifier choice and frequency are influenced by interactions among dialect-specific features, register, and speaker gender. Nevertheless, NA remains underexplored, with only a limited

number of prior studies investigating the use of intensifiers in spontaneous interview speech rather than in speech used in televised broadcasts.

Building on this limited body of previous research, the current study focuses on a new register, televised interview speech, using a participant sample consisting of both male and female speakers. The study aims to establish the frequency and distribution of NA adjective intensifier forms in broadcast speech, compare these patterns with those identified in spontaneous NA interview speech (Alfuhaydi, 2024), and examine whether there are similar patterns of intensifier use related to gender, semantic polarity, and syntactic position in this register to those reported in previous NA and cross-linguistic studies.

4. Methodology

4.1 Data Source

The corpus for the present study was drawn from *Al-Liwan*, a Saudi television interview program. It was first broadcast in 2019, and a new season has been shown every Ramadan since then. The program is hosted by Abdullah Al Mudaifer and broadcast on Rotana Khaleejiah. The show hosts prominent figures from Saudi Arabia and the broader Arab world, who share their personal and professional experiences in conversational interviews conducted in spoken Arabic. Among the guests are prominent figures from Najd who are NA speakers.

The study data were collected from this program because its interview-based format encourages spontaneous vernacular speech and the discourse context can elicit natural intensifier use (Bednarek, 2011). Similarly, Tagliamonte and Roberts (2005, p. 296) argued that media language reflects “what is going on in language, at least with respect to the form, frequency, and patterning of intensifiers.” For these reasons, media language was selected as the data source for this study. An additional advantage of using pre-existing broadcasts is that they help reduce the methodological challenge that Labov (1972) termed the Observer’s Paradox. Labov (1972, p. 209) defined this paradox as follows: “The aim of the linguistic research in the community must be to find out how people talk when they are not being systematically observed; yet we can only obtain these data by systematic observation.” Since the data collected from *Al-Liwan* guests were recorded independently of the current research and the guests were unaware that their speech would be analyzed to examine intensifier use, these recordings are considered sufficient for the study. The effect of the Observer’s Paradox proposed by Labov (1972) is less pronounced compared with direct data collection, where participants are aware that they are being observed.

4.2 Sample

In the current study, six episodes featuring six different guests (three males and three females) were analyzed. The guests had diverse professional backgrounds (i.e., media, print journalism, poetry, philanthropy, self-development, and academia), thereby ensuring topical variety. The episodes ranged in length from 1 hour 2 minutes to 1 hour 52 minutes, yielding a total of 8 hours 9 minutes of speech data. Table 1 summarizes the key characteristics of the sample.

Table 1. Key Characteristics of the Sample

Guest	Gender	Professional Background	Duration
1	Male	Media personality/journalist	1:38
2	Female	Philanthropist	1:02
3	Female	University academic	1:45
4	Male	Poet	1:52
5	Male	Newspaper editor-in-chief	1:50
6	Female	Self-development specialist	1:22
Total	3 Males 3 Females		8:09

Despite the small sample, the balanced gender composition permits a preliminary examination of gender variation to address research question 3 and provide a foundation for future research with larger samples.

4.3 Data Collection

All six episodes were obtained from the official Rotana Khaleejiah YouTube channel. Each episode was transcribed orthographically in Arabic script by the researcher. The transcripts were then systematically examined to identify all instances of adjective intensification, following Quirk et al.’s (1985) classification of intensifiers. Only adjective intensifiers were considered; tokens in which intensifier-like forms served different grammatical functions were excluded from the analysis. For instance, the following non-adjectival or non-intensifying uses were excluded during coding: *kaṭīr* used as a verb or noun modifier rather than an adjective intensifier; *tamāman* used as a verb modifier (e.g., intensifying a verb such as

'changed' rather than an adjective); *marrah* used with temporal or idiomatic meanings ('one time', 'again', or the alternating 'sometimes X, sometimes Y' construction) rather than as a degree intensifier; and *šwayy* used as a verb modifier (e.g., 'go back a little') rather than to modify an adjective. All coding decisions were made by the researcher, a native speaker of NA, with a second NA speaker rater consulted for selected tokens when necessary.

The following information was recorded for each retained intensifier token in the dataset: the speaker, the form of the intensifier used, the adjective it intensified, the semantic polarity of that adjective (i.e., positive, negative, or neutral), the broader sentential context, and the episode from which it was drawn. This information was entered into a structured Microsoft Excel spreadsheet, which was used for data analysis.

4.4 Data Analysis

The six transcripts contained 62,019 words in total. All adjective tokens in the corpus were identified, yielding 1,347 adjectives, which accounted for 5.1% of the data. Each adjective was examined to determine whether it was modified by an intensifier; across the six-episode corpus, 69 tokens modified by an adjective intensifier were retained for analysis. The low frequency of NA adjective intensifiers may be attributed to the semi-formal broadcast register; the guests, as public figures from diverse professional backgrounds, may have favored more measured, prestige-oriented speech. The extracted tokens were classified according to Quirk et al.'s (1985) taxonomy of adjective intensifiers, which distinguishes between emphasizers—modal intensifiers that reinforce the truth value of a proposition (e.g., *wallah* 'truly')—amplifiers, which scale adjectives upward and are subdivided into maximizers (e.g., *tamāman* 'completely') and boosters (e.g., *marrah* 'very'), and downtoners, which scale adjectives downward and include diminishers (e.g., *šwayy* 'a little'). The frequency and percentage occurrence of each form and category were calculated using Microsoft Excel. In addition to this quantitative analysis, a qualitative analysis was conducted for each token by examining the type of adjective modified, its semantic polarity, and the discourse function of the intensifier in context. A statistical analysis of these factors was then conducted.

5. Results/Findings

This section presents the findings from the analysis of adjective intensifiers produced by the six NA-speaking guests on *Al-Liwan*. The results are organized according to the five research questions.

5.1 The Most Frequently Used Intensifier Forms in the Data

The first research question concerned the intensifiers most commonly used by Najdi guests on the Saudi television program *Al-Liwan*. As shown in Table 2, a total of 69 intensifier tokens were identified in the data. *Jiddan* 'very' was the most frequently occurring intensifier (38 occurrences, 55.1% of all tokens). *Marrah* 'very/so' was the second most frequent (14 occurrences, 20.3% of all tokens), followed by *kṭīr* 'a lot/very much' (7 occurrences, 10.1% of all tokens). The remaining intensifiers occurred less frequently: *šwayy* 'a little' (5 occurrences), *tamāman* 'completely' (3 occurrences), and *wallah* 'truly / I swear by God' (2 occurrences). These findings contrast with Alfuhaydi (2024), who found that *marrah* was the most frequently used booster, followed by *jiddan*. Moreover, *jiddan* was the least used intensifier in Alshaboul et al.'s (2022) study on Arabic political speeches. The divergence between the findings of the current study and those of previous studies could be explained by the effect of register. Since *jiddan* is a shared word in Standard Arabic and NA while *marrah* is a colloquial form (Alfuhaydi, 2024), speakers in a televised setting may favor *jiddan* as the more prestige-oriented option. The findings of the current study are consistent with Omar and Alotaibi (2017), who found *jiddan* to be the most used Saudi intensifier alongside *marrah* in a radio talk show corpus. This supports the hypothesis that media registers favor the use of *jiddan*.

Table 2. Overall Use of Adjective Intensifiers in the Study Sample

No.	Adjective Intensifier	English Meaning	Category (Quirk et al., 1985)	Sub-category	Frequency	Percentage
1	<i>jiddan</i>	very	Amplifier	Booster	38	55.1%
2	<i>marrah</i>	very / so	Amplifier	Booster	14	20.3%
3	<i>kṭīr</i>	a lot / very much	Amplifier	Booster	7	10.1%
4	<i>šwayy</i>	a little / a bit	Downtoner	Diminisher	5	7.2%
5	<i>tamāman</i>	completely	Amplifier	Maximizer	3	4.3%
6	<i>wallah</i>	truly / I swear by God	Emphasizer	Emphasizer	2	2.9%
Total					69	100%

5.2 Distribution of Categories and Sub-Categories

The second research question inquired about the most frequent intensifier categories based on Quirk et al.'s (1985) taxonomy. As can be seen in Table 3, amplifiers were the most dominant category, accounting for 89.9% of all tokens. Downtoners were much less frequent, representing 7.2% of the sample, while emphasizers were the least frequent category at 2.9%. Within the amplifier category, boosters dominated, accounting for 95.2% of amplifier tokens, whereas maximisers only accounted for 4.8% of these tokens.

Table 3. Comparison Between the Different Categories of Adjective Intensifiers

Category	Sub-category	Forms	N	% of category	% of total (N=69)
Amplifier	Booster	<i>jiddan</i> (38) + <i>marrah</i> (14) + <i>kṭīr</i> (7)	59	95.2%	85.51%
	Maximiser	<i>tamāman</i> (3)	3	4.8%	4.35%
Downtoner	Diminisher	<i>šwayy</i> (5)	5	100%	7.25%
Emphasiser	Emphasiser	<i>wallah</i> (2)	2	100%	2.9%
Total			69	100%	100%

5.3 Gender Differences in the Use of Adjective Intensifiers

The third research question related to the distribution of adjective intensifiers according to gender; the results are presented in Table 4.

Table 4. Gender Differences in the Use of NA Adjective Intensifiers

Intensifier	Category	Male (N=29)	Male %	Female (N=40)	Female %
<i>Jiddan</i>	Amplifier	22	75.9%	16	40%
<i>Marrah</i>	Amplifier	4	13.8%	10	25%
<i>Kṭīr</i>	Amplifier	0	0%	7	17.5%
<i>Tamāman</i>	Amplifier	0	0%	3	7.5%
<i>Šwayy</i>	Downtoner	2	6.9%	3	7.5%
<i>wallah</i>	Emphasizer	1	3.4%	1	2.5%
Total		29	42%	40	58%

Female speakers used adjective intensifiers more than males and also tended to use amplifiers more frequently. However, both genders showed the same overall preference for *jiddan* and *marrah* as their first and second choices, respectively. Females also used *kṭīr* and *tamāman*. The downtoner *šwayy* and the emphasizer *wallah* were used by both genders, though occurrences were rare (*šwayy*: two male and three female tokens; *wallah*: one token per gender). Overall, female speakers produced 40 of the 69 tokens (58%), while male speakers produced 29 tokens (42%). This pattern is consistent with previous research showing that females use intensifiers more frequently than males (Jespersen, 1922; Lakoff, 1975; Rasekh & Saeb, 2015). Tagliamonte & Roberts (2005) attributed females' high use of amplifiers to the fact that females are more emotional in their speech. It is also consistent with Alfuhaydi's (2024) finding of female NA speakers' high use of amplifiers. However, it contradicts Alshaboul et al.'s (2022) finding of no gender difference in the case of Ammani Arabic. Because the current study only includes three speakers in each gender group, this finding should be interpreted as a preliminary observation and treated as a suggestive rather than confirmed, statistically robust gender effect.

5.4 Semantic Polarity of Intensified Adjectives

The fourth research question concerned the semantic polarity of intensified adjectives; Table 5 presents the distribution of tokens according to semantic polarity. The findings show that although positive adjectives accounted for the majority of tokens in the data (41 tokens; 59.4% of the total), the use of NA adjective intensifiers was not restricted to positive

adjectives. Adjective intensifiers were also used with negative adjectives, representing 33.3% of tokens, while five instances occurred with neutral adjectives, representing 7.2% of tokens.

Table 5. Semantic Polarity of Intensified Adjectives

Polarity	Frequency	Percentage
Positive	41	59.4%
Negative	23	33.3%
Neutral	5	7.2%
Total	69	100%

In the current data, *jiddan* was found to co-occur predominantly with positive adjectives. This pattern is illustrated in the following examples, in which the intensifiers are highlighted in bold font:

- (1) ʔana sawwēt barnāmij nājiḥ **jiddan** (Male speaker)
 I make-PFV-1SG program successful very
 'I made a very successful program.'

Marrah was found to occur with positive, negative, and neutral adjectives, as in the following examples:

- (2) fikrah **marrah** jamīlah hāḍi (Female speaker)
 idea very beautiful this-DEM
 'What a very beautiful idea this is!'
- (3) il-faraz kân-Ø **marrah** šaṣb (Male speaker)
 DEF-sorting be-PFV-3SG.M very difficult
 'The sorting/selection was very difficult.'
- (4) al-majāl kân-Ø mukhtalif, kân-Ø **marrah** mukhtalif (Female speaker)
 DEF-field be.PEV.3SG.M different, be.PEV.3SG.M very different
 'The field was different — it was so different.'

One instance of the intensifier *tamāman* occurred with the neutral adjective *mukhtalif* 'different' to describe a state, as shown in example (5). Alfuhaydi (2024) noted that *tamāman* is the closest Standard Arabic equivalent among Najdi maximisers. Similarly, Alshaboul et al. (2022) observed a tendency (unconfirmed statistically) for highly educated speakers to use *jiddan* slightly more frequently (7.5% vs. 3.8%), suggesting a broader pattern of educated speakers favoring shared intensifiers in formal contexts.

- (5) b-uslūb ṭānī mukhtalif **tamāman** (Female)
 in-manner other different completely
 'in another way, completely different.'

5.5 Position of NA Adjective Intensifiers

The fifth research question was about the syntactic position of NA adjective intensifiers in relation to the modified adjectives; Table 6 illustrates the results.

Table 6. Position of Intensifiers Relative to the Modified Adjectives

Intensifier	Category	Pre-Adj (N)	Pre %	Post-Adj (N)	Post %
<i>jiddan</i>	Amplifier	3	7.9%	35	92.1%
<i>marrah</i>	Amplifier	12	85.7%	2	14.3%
<i>kṭīr</i>	Amplifier	3	42.9%	4	57.1%
<i>tamāman</i>	Amplifier	0	0%	3	100%
<i>šwayy</i>	Downtoner	2	40%	3	60%

<i>wallah</i>	Emphasizer	1	50%	1	50%
Total		21	30.4%	48	69.6%

As shown in Table 6, the post-adjectival position was dominant, accounting for 48 occurrences (69.6% of the total). In contrast, pre-adjectival intensifiers were less dominant, representing 30.4% of tokens. This contradicts the findings of Alshaboul et al. (2022), who found pre-adjectival intensifiers to be more frequent. The discrepancy could be attributed to dialectal differences, as Alshaboul et al. (2022) examined Ammani Arabic, whereas the current study focuses on NA.

Notably, both *jiddan* and *marrah* occurred in pre- and post-adjectival positions. However, *jiddan* occurred more frequently in the post-adjectival position (35 occurrences, 92.1% of tokens), compared with only three pre-adjectival occurrences. Conversely, *marrah* was predominantly found in the pre-adjectival position (12 occurrences, 85.7% of tokens) and was less common in the post-adjectival position (2 occurrences, 14.3% of tokens). *Tamāman* occurred exclusively in the post-adjectival position. In contrast, *kṭīr* occurred in both positions in the expanded corpus, with three occurrences pre-adjectivally and four post-adjectivally; all pre-adjectival tokens were produced by a single female speaker. Of the five occurrences of the downtoner *šwayy*, two preceded the adjective and three followed it. The intensifier *wallah* occurred one time in each position. Considering the overall distribution of positions shown in Table 6, *marrah* accounted for the majority of all pre-adjectival tokens (57.1%), whereas *jiddan* accounted for the majority of all post-adjectival tokens (72.9%). The remaining pre-adjectival tokens were primarily contributed by *kṭīr* and *jiddan* (three tokens each), while the remaining post-adjectival tokens were distributed among *kṭīr*, *tamāman*, *šwayy*, and *wallah*.

Following Tagliamonte (2008), Alfuhaydi (2024, citing Almossa, 2024), reported a pre-adjectival preference for *jiddan* while noting that it retains its post-adjectival canonical position, possibly reflecting an earlier stage of delexicalization. This interpretation is consistent with the status of *marrah* as a more dialectal form and *jiddan* as a form shared between Standard Arabic and NA.

6. Conclusion

This study investigated the use of NA adjective intensifiers in the semi-formal broadcast context of the Saudi television program *Al-Liwan*. Data were collected from six episodes featuring three male and three female NA speakers. The study aimed to determine the frequency and percentage of NA adjective intensifiers and to address other research questions related to the most frequently used category, based on Quirk et al.'s (1985) classification. In addition, this study sought to determine the semantic polarity of the modified adjectives, as well as the syntactic position of the intensifiers. Gender differences were also examined. To accomplish this analysis, both quantitative and qualitative analyses were conducted.

The findings revealed that the data contained 69 tokens of adjective intensifiers. The amplifier *jiddan* was the most dominant, followed by *marrah*. This finding contrasts with Alfuhaydi (2024) and Almossa (2024), who examined NA naturalistic conversational data. The results also revealed that female speakers produced more intensifiers than males, which is consistent with cross-linguistic gender patterns (Jespersen, 1922; Lakoff, 1975) and Alfuhaydi's (2024) findings on NA. Additionally, the findings revealed that most of the modified adjectives were positive, with negative adjectives being less common. Five instances of neutral adjectives were observed. Generally speaking, since NA intensifiers modified positive, negative, and neutral adjectives, Najdi intensifiers can be considered as polarity-neutral scalar devices (Paradis, 1997; Quirk et al., 1985). In terms of the syntactic position of intensifiers in relation to the modified adjectives, the post-adjectival position was found to be more dominant than the pre-adjectival position. This contradicts the findings of Alshaboul et al. (2022) for Ammani Arabic, who reported that the pre-adjectival position was more dominant. This suggests a dialect-level difference that needs further investigation.

The present study has two main limitations. First, the corpus was limited to a single register and a small sample size, comprising six Najdi speakers and 69 tokens. Second, the gender comparison was limited to three males and three females, which permits only preliminary observations and does not allow for testing statistical significance. Future research should include a larger sample and examine other Saudi television programs or broadcasts. In addition, studying Saudi television drama is recommended to determine whether it accurately reflects a naturalistic way of speaking in the Saudi society it portrays.

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