

The Linguistic Proceedings Series  
Year 2025, Volume 16, Issue 2

E-ISSN: 2529-1092  
DOI: 10.36505

# Proceedings Linguistics 2025 Paris 17th International Conference on Linguistic Research and Applications

Series Editor  
Antonis Botinis



The International Linguistic Society



**Proceedings Linguistics 2025 Paris**  
17<sup>th</sup> International Conference  
on Linguistic Research and Applications

Institut National des Langues et Civilisations Orientales

22-24 October 2025  
Paris, France



The International Linguistic Society

Proceedings Linguistics 2025 Paris  
17<sup>th</sup> International Conference on Linguistic Research and Applications

Published by The International Linguistic Society  
Electronic edition  
Proceedings Linguistics 2025 Paris  
Athens, Greece  
Online ISSN: 2529-1092  
DOI: <https://doi.org/10.36505/TheLinguisticProceedings/2025/17/02>  
Copyright © 2025 The International Linguistic Society

## Foreword

---

Welcome to the Linguistics 2025 International Conference on Linguistic Research and Applications. This hybrid event enables us to meet once again in Paris in person, thanks to the generous hospitality of Inalco, while also welcoming participants joining us online from around the world.

As an international forum for linguists across career stages, the Society is devoted to advancing the study of language through rigorous research and its diverse applications. We encourage both early-career and established researchers to engage in discussion and exchange on current developments in linguistics and related disciplines.

The origins of our conference series date back to 2006 in Athens, where the first Workshop on Experimental Linguistics (ExLing) was held under the auspices of ESCA (European Speech Communication Association), now ISCA (International Speech Communication Association). In subsequent years, the workshop was hosted in cities including Paris, Saint Petersburg, and Lisbon. In 2009, the ExLing Workshop evolved into the annual ExLing Conference with the establishment of the International Society of Experimental Linguistics (ExLing Society).

In 2024, on the occasion of ExLing 2024 Paris, the ExLing Society was restructured as the International Linguistic Society. This development reflects our vision of hosting multiple conference series throughout the year, ensuring continuous opportunities for scholars to submit their work and participate in Society events.

This volume contains the proceedings of Linguistics 2025 Paris. In line with the conference's scope, the papers presented here address core areas of linguistics as well as a range of applied and interdisciplinary perspectives.

We extend our sincere thanks to all participants of Linguistics 2025 Paris, to our keynote speakers Ad Neeleman and Greville Corbett, and to colleagues from the International Advisory Committee, the Review Committee, and the Organising Committee for their invaluable contributions to the success of this conference.

Antonis Botinis  
The International Linguistic Society

## Contents

---

<i>Unraveling bilingual identity construction in different contexts</i> .....	1
Esma Kot Artunc, Seyma Kokcu	
<i>AI vs. human (automatic) speech recognition: silence-replacement paradigm as a diagnostic</i> .....	5
Yahya Aldholmi	
<i>Spatial analysis of hand positions in French cued speech (L-fPC)</i> .....	9
Brigitte Bigi	
<i>On the multifunctionality of literally in American English youth speech</i> .....	13
Martina Busetta, Castrenze Nigrelli	
<i>Text segmentation affects oculomotor reading behaviour and reading comprehension</i> .....	17
Daria Chernova, Anastasiia Ladnova, Elizaveta Sadovaia	
<i>Disagreement as an interactional resource for affiliation in South Korean conversation</i> .....	21
Kyoungmi Ha	
<i>Women leading linguistic change: sociolinguistic reflexes of modernization in multilingual societies</i> .....	25
Amani Jaber	
<i>Exploring the impact of CLIL on high school learners' Spanish L1 vocabulary production</i> .....	29
Marina González de San Pedro Jiménez	
<i>An experiment on 'cute' vowels in Japanese</i> .....	33
Gakuji Kumagai	
<i>The role of deixis in multi-verb sequences in English</i> .....	37
Noriko Matsumoto	
<i>Digital vitality assessment: a comparative study of Brajbbasba and Kumaoni</i> .....	41
Anurag Mittal	
<i>The role of linguistic input in language development among children with hearing loss: a narrative review</i> .....	45
Charikleia Nicolaidou, Paris Binos	
<i>Language attitudes and child-directed speech in Bangladeshi Bangla</i> .....	49
Poroma Subha Mostafiz, Michael Ramsammy	
<i>The development of growth mindset in the Japanese EFL discussion task</i> .....	53
Momoko Okazaki	
<i>Linguistic differences in humour: a feature-based comparison between human and AI-generated jokes</i> .....	57
Freya Pan	
<i>Improving intelligibility of time-scale compressed speech for visually impaired and sighted listeners</i> .....	61
Panagiotis Pantalos, George P. Kafentzis, Anna Sfakianaki, Yannis Stylianou	
<i>Prayers as forms of speech act modification in Saudi Hijazi Arabic</i> .....	65
Israa Qari	

---

<i>Word perception errors of children and adults in noise and quiet</i> .....	69
Anna Sfakianaki	
<i>Language, cognition, and poetics of solitude in Dylan Thomas</i> .....	73
Jaya Shrivastava	
<i>Vocabulary diversity of reading materials at the beginning of primary school</i> .....	77
Katarina Aladrović Slovaček	
<i>Experimental evidence on requests in English varieties from the perspective of local grammars</i> .....	81
Mengkai Wang	
<i>Island effects and amelioration by resumption in Hong Kong English: an auditory acceptability- judgement study</i> .....	85
Mengkai Wang	
<i>How dipping-tones evolve: a case study of Jin Chinese</i> .....	89
Yang Wei	

# On the multifunctionality of *literally* in American English youth speech

Martina Busetta, Castrenze Nigrelli  
University of Palermo, Italy

<https://doi.org/10.36505/TheLinguisticProceedings/2025/17/02/004/000690>

## Abstract

The aim of this study is to investigate, from both a qualitative and quantitative perspective, the multifunctionality of the adverb *literally* in present-day American English youth speech, in order to better understand the ongoing semantic change involving this adverb. Drawing from authentic spoken data taken from a teenage podcast, the analysis explores how *literally* is used beyond its prototypical literal meaning (i.e. ‘in a literal sense’) and develops a wide range of new functions, supporting the hypothesis of an ongoing grammaticalization process along with increasing subjectification.

Keywords: *literally*, grammaticalization, subjectification, American English, youth language

## Introduction

In recent years *literally* has grown in frequency, and its semantic value has become a matter of debate within both academic studies and popular discourse. Previous studies on *literally* illustrate its development as the result of grammaticalization (or pragmaticalization; cf. Erman and Kotsinas 1993) — i.e., the process by which a word gradually shifts from a lexical to a grammatical function (Traugott 2003: 645) — in ways similar to other adverbs, such as *really* and *actually*, among others. In fact, the original meaning of the adverb at issue (i.e. ‘in a literal sense’) turns out to be partially blurred, giving way to new semantic and discourse functions that reflect increased (inter)subjectivity, i.e. involving speaker-based (or interpersonal) functions.

In more traditional accounts, *literally* is described either as a *subjunct* — i.e. a reinforcing adverb — or as a *disjunct*, i.e. a metalinguistic comment (Quirk *et al.* 1985: 583-589; 617-620). They also label some modern uses as “absurd”, especially when *literally* is used with non-literal meanings (e.g. *I literally split my sides laughing*; Quirk *et al.* 1985: 619).

Powell (1992) and Israel (2002) are among the first scholars to analyze the modern uses of *literally* as part of an ongoing process of semantic change from “orthodox” to “unorthodox” meanings, interpreting this development as a «natural semantic extension of its basic metalinguistic meaning» (Israel 2002: 423; cf. Powell 1992 on the «attitude of aptness»). More recent studies, including works by Calhoun (2013), Bueno-Amaro (2022), and Aijmer (2023), confirm this kind of development from a corpus-based perspective (see also Park 2016).

While recent empirical studies have mostly focused on British English (e.g. Bueno-Amaro 2022, Aijmer 2023), our analysis aims to bring new insights into the development of *literally* in American English, focusing on informal conversation among young speakers. Our dataset consists of 23 episodes of *LOL Podcast*, specifically those published between September 14 and November 30, 2024. The show, aimed at a teenage audience, is hosted by five young Americans aged between 15 and 24. The corpus, therefore, consists of spontaneous, face-to-face, informal conversations, covering everyday topics. Two digital tools, i.e. *Filmot* and *Sketch Engine*, were employed to search, manage, and analyze the textual data. Each occurrence of *literally* was examined in terms of syntactic distribution, scope, and semantic-pragmatic function in context.

### Data analysis and discussion

It is worth noting that across the 23 selected episodes, *literally* occurs 327 times. This indicates a remarkably high frequency of *literally* in our corpus, especially considering that its semantic shift is a rather recent phenomenon. Although this finding aligns with recent studies on *literally* (cf. Bueno-Amaro 2022; Aijmer 2023), its high frequency in the present data appears even more striking and represents evidence for its grammaticalization, a process which is related to and driven by frequency.

As shown in Table 1, *literally* exhibits a syntactic scope increase in its wide range of combinatorial patterns. Such a syntactic flexibility also reflects its functional versatility, thus entailing a grammaticalization process.

Table 1. Distribution of *literally* according to syntactic scope and combinatorial patterns.

Syntactic context	VP	NP	AdjP	PP	AdvP	Sub. clause	(Semi) independent	Stand alone	Null
Tokens	143	35	11	13	29	8	43	11	34

The combination with verb phrases (VP) remains the most common syntactic combination (143×) for *literally*, consistent with previous research, and is typically associated with its use as an emphasizer (see analysis below). A modest preference is observed for semi-independent uses (43×) — i.e. syntactically detached occurrences of *literally*, appearing at the sentence periphery or in an interpolated position, carrying no propositional meaning and having global scope over the discourse as a whole — along with 11× fully stand-alone occurrences. These findings support the idea of an ongoing grammaticalization of *literally*, pointing toward more (inter)subjective functions.

The textual analysis confirms a considerable functional versatility of *literally*. Compared to previous studies, in our dataset *literally* shows a wider and more nuanced range of functional layers. Some functions of *literally* are less subjective and relate to its prototypical metalinguistic value (i.e. metalinguistic operator, de-

emphasizer, metalinguistic emphatic operator), while others reflect the speaker's subjectivity and procedural-discourse level (i.e. truth emphasize, focalizer, intensifier, rhetorical emphasize, illocutionary emphasize, pragmatic and response marker). For reasons of space, only some among the most relevant ones are discussed here (see Busetta and Nigrelli, forthcoming).

The original semantic value of *literally* ('in the truest sense of the word, non-metaphorically') aims to disambiguate any potential metaphoric or hyperbolic interpretation. In the present dataset, however, this core metalinguistic meaning is frequently intertwined with other senses and becomes partially blurred. For instance, *literally* occurs as a de-emphasizer and mitigator of a statement (i.e., 'simply', 'nothing else than'), when used to reduce the action's relevance or the speaker's commitment, as in (1):

(1) Cash: I **literally** just play the drums.

In (2), *literally* operates as a metalinguistic emphatic operator, connecting literal accuracy with more subjective meanings such as mirativity, surprise or shock, which represents an intermediate stage along the (inter)subjectification cline (cf. Bueno Amaro 2022: 286). In (3), instead, *literally* is used as a mere truth emphasize: the utterance requires no disambiguation and *literally* simply conveys plain emphasis and the speaker's commitment and emotional involvement.

(2) Maverick: We almost died (group laughter). **Literally**, I kid you not. Worst honeymoon ever!

(3) Kate: I **literally** can't wait. I really can't.

Additionally, *literally* can function as a focalizer when it asserts the identity of two arguments. In (4) *literally* does not express metalinguistic accuracy nor truth emphasize: its primary role is to focalize the identity between, on the one hand, the gymnastic pose performed by Harper, to which *that* refers, and the phrase *how you do it*.

(4) Harper: That's **literally** how you do it (showing a gymnastics pose).

*Literally* also operates as a rhetorical emphasize, strengthening hyperbolic or metaphorical statements for expressive or stylistic purposes, functioning as «a way of appreciating the non-literal» (cf. Powell 1992: 345). In several cases, *literally* functions as an illocutionary emphasize, as in (5), reinforcing the illocutionary force of the speech act, which is commissive in this case.

(5) Cash: She is making this up now.

Kate: No, I **literally** swear. I'm not.

This function can be interpreted as a bridging context within the (inter)subjectification cline, as it links the subjective emphasis with more hearer-oriented and pragmatic functions. Indeed, moving beyond its illocutionary uses, in the sample *literally* is also used as a discourse-pragmatic marker (cf. Aijmer

2023 for British English), i.e. a syntactically independent and semantically bleached operator, used for various interactional purposes (e.g., follow-ups, agreement, floor-holding). Involving the interpersonal level (i.e. intersubjectification, in the narrow sense), this use of *literally* points to an advanced stage of grammaticalization, in which *literally* functions primarily as a pragmatic operator (i.e. pragmaticalization) rather than a subjectivity-related modifier (for further details see Busetta and Nigrelli, forthcoming).

Overall, the analysis of *literally* in *LOL Podcast* has provided new and significant evidence on its semantic shift. Its notably high frequency in the present corpus, along with its remarkable syntactic flexibility and scope increase, and its wide range of semantic-pragmatic functions, support the idea of an ongoing grammaticalization and (inter)subjectification process undergone by *literally*.

## References

- Aijmer, K. 2023. Looking at grammaticalization from the perspective of short-time changes in real time. In De Smet, H., Petré, P., Szmrecsanyi, B. (eds.) *Context, Intent and Variation in Grammaticalization (Trends in Linguistics: Studies and Monographs 365)*, 19-46. Berlin, Boston: De Gruyter Mouton.
- Bueno-Amaro, J. 2022. Variation, change, and grammaticalisation in Tyneside teen talk: a sociolinguistic study of intensification and emphasis. PhD Thesis, School of English Literature, Language and Linguistics, Newcastle University.
- Busetta, M., Nigrelli, C. forthcoming. *Literally as a Discourse-Pragmatic Marker: A Case of Pragmaticalization*.
- Calhoun, K. 2013. "Literally" speaking: Language, Prescriptivism, and Ideology. Senior Honors Thesis, South Carolina Honors College.
- Erman, B., Kotsinas, U. -B. 1993. Pragmaticalization: the case of *ba'* and *you know*. *Studier i modern språkvetenskap* 10, 76-93. Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell International.
- Israel, M. 2002. *Literally speaking*. *Journal of Pragmatics* 34 (4), 423-432.
- Park, S. 2016. *Literally does not always mean literally: A corpus-based diachronic study on literally as an intensifier*. SNU Working Papers in English Linguistics and Language 14, 124-142. Seoul National University.
- Powell, M.J. 1992. Folk theories of meaning and principles of conventionality: Encoding literal attitudes via stance adverbs. In Lehrer, A., Kittay, E. F. (eds.), *Frames, fields and contrasts*, 333-354. Hillsdale, NJ: Erlbaum.
- Quirk, R., Greenbaum, S., Leech, G., Svartvik, J. 1985. *A Comprehensive Grammar of the English Language*. London and New York: Longman.
- Traugott, E. C. 2003. Constructions in grammaticalization. In Joseph, B., Janda, R. (eds.), *The handbook of historical linguistics*, 624-647. Oxford: Blackwell.