



Date & time: Monday, 13 February 2017; 4:30p.m.

Venue: OEM1008, 10/F, OEN Hall Building, Ho Sin Hang Campus

Do Women Use Fewer Intensifiers than Men? Recent Change in the Sociolinguistics of Intensifiers in British English

Robert Fuchs

Very.

Yes, very very!

Abstract: Does the language of men and women differ, or are age and social status more important variables? Have these differences become smaller over time, as gender roles have become less rigid?

In this talk I will report the results of a study that investigated how age, gender, social class and dialect influence how frequently speakers of British English use intensifiers (e.g. *very*) in private conversations and whether this has changed over the last two decades. With data drawn from over 600 speakers and 4 M. words

included in the British National Corpus 1994 and 2014, it is the most comprehensive study of intensifier usage to date, taking into account 134 intensifier variants. Results show that, in most age groups and social classes, men use intensifiers less frequently than women, and gender differences have diminished to a very limited extent, notably for the middle class. Moreover, intensification rate has increased across the board over time. This could be due to a shift towards a stereotypically more feminine communicative style as the perception of gender roles has changed, a process by which the middle class might have been particularly affected.



Dr. Robert Fuchs recently joined the Department of English Language and Literature at Hong Kong Baptist University. One area of his research tracks the impact of the English language in countries and territories around the world, including India, Nigeria, Hong Kong and Germany. He has recently published a monograph on *Speech Rhythm in Varieties of English* with Springer, and is currently co-editing special issues of the journal *World Englishes* and the *International Journal of Learner Corpus Research*.