

Expressive *much*: the rise of a new expressive marker in American Soap Operas and beyond

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A new expressive marker has recently spread through televised and computer mediated communication. It consists of mostly syntactically independent noun phrases, adjectival phrases or verb phrases followed by *much*, as in

1. Holden: He who? Julia: **Jealous much?** (SOAP 6 2005 ATWT A B C)
2. (...) would be much better to have your fingerprints now. # Wow Christopher, **paranoid much?** What precisely is the difference between having you fingerprints taken and a photo (...) (GloWbE, IE G thejournal.ie)

So far, research on this structure is sparse, a notable exception is the semantically oriented study by Gutzmann & Henderson (2015). It has shown that semantically, the modified phrase has largely negative connotations, such as *jealous*, *bitter*, *dramatic* or *paranoid*. Structurally, we find that the modified phrase is typically extrasyntactic, and has rising intonation pattern, which in written language is typically represented by a question mark.

Concerning the origin of the structure, OED (s.v. *much*) observes that it has been popularized by the American movie and series *Buffy, the Vampire Slayer*, but also provides examples of more recent spreads into other media genres. The current study investigates the spread from American Soap Operas to contemporary international Englishes and assesses the qualitative and quantitative extensions of the structure.

In order to do so, the study determines usage and frequencies of the structure in SOAP, the Corpus of American Soap operas (Davies 2011-), which consists of 100 million words of transcripts of informal and highly informal language from 2001 to 2012, as well as the *GloWbE*, the *Corpus of Global Web-Based English*, containing 1.9 billion words of web-based English of different English varieties from around the world. The target structures are searched for within the corpus interface of the Brigham Young Corpus suite.

Results will show that in early attestations in the SOAP corpus, usage of the structure was distributionally, semantically as well as syntactically, narrow. Then expressive *much* has been adopted by users of the English language basically world-wide, but with preference for certain geographic areas and it has, predictably, expanded both qualitatively and quantitatively. The study will describe and analyse this expansion.

References:

- Davies, Mark. 2011-. *Corpus of American Soap Operas: 100 million words*. Available online at <https://corpus.byu.edu/soap/>.
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- Gutzmann, Daniel & Robert Henderson. 2015. 'Expressive updates much?' In Csipak, Eva & Hedde Zeijlstra (eds.), *Proceedings of Sinn und Bedeutung* 19. 266–283.
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