We can check it in the corpus *shur*: Framing the use of corpus and corpus methodologies through an investigation of the pragmatic marker *shur* in Irish English

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Resolved Question

Why does nearly everyone in Ireland say shur?

Has anyone else had or currently has this habit were you always have to add shur into every sentence you use? I have it, I say it now without even realising! What does shur actually mean anyway?

2 years ago

Best Answer - Chosen by Voters

Ah shur it doesn't matter.
What is often overlooked is what ‘real’ people using real language have to say about it (cf. McCarthy & Clancy, 2013)
The corpus perspective

• After all, what’s ‘in’ a corpus is ‘real people using real language’...

• Authentic, naturally occurring, spontaneous speech captured for analysis...

• What can we do using corpus tools?
• What possible pitfalls do we need to negotiate?
# LCIE Keywords

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Position</th>
<th>KeyWord</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>like</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td><em>shure</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>yeah</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>goin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>cause</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>tis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>d’you</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>now</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>kind</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>grand</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

BNC Spoken (10m) as reference corpus

Removing vocalisations and extralinguistic information
Shur, shure, sure?

- On the whole, transcribed as *shure* in LCIE – but not exclusively

- **Sure** = *shur/e*
- **Shur/e** = *sure*

- **Sure**: lexical, meaning certainty
- **Shur/e**: pragmatic marker
Frequency information

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>LCIE</th>
<th>SPICE</th>
<th>BNC (spoken)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1277 (shure, shur and sure)</td>
<td>194 (sure*)</td>
<td>11 (shur/e)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
# Frequency information

Normalised per million words

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>LCIE</th>
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<th>BNC</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1277</td>
<td>310</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Sure* in SPICE Ireland

• DMs in SPICE indicated by *...

• In SPICE, there are 167 sure* in the face-to-face conversations...

• This is equivalent to 897 sure* per million words...
Breakdown of SURE in LCIE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Genre types</th>
<th>Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>intimate</td>
<td>654</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>socialising</td>
<td>484</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>professional</td>
<td>112</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>transactional</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pedagogical</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Breakdown normalised per million words

**Genre types**

- Intimate: 2616
- Socialising: 1694
- Professional: 773
- Transactional: 139
- Pedagogical: 30

**Legend**: Intimate, Socialising, Professional, Transactional, Pedagogical
What do others say?

• This is used as a mitigator or hedge in initial position. Its most common pattern of use being *but shure*, used to soften the effect of *but* in the introduction of a counter point (O’Keeffe, 2011: 60).
Position of *shure* in LCIE

![Bar chart showing the position of *shure* in LCIE](image)
What do others say?

- Kallen (2006)
  - *Sure* usually precedes an assertion; new information presented as old, indirectly requesting agreement.

- Kallen and Kirk (2012)
  - *Sure* confirms presupposed knowledge – includes general knowledge, which is not the property of any specific individual in the conversation.
What do others say?

• Amador Moreno (2005)

• *Sure* has a range of functions – both emphatic and indexical – and can be used to mark causality, mockery, contrast and consensuality.
“Why does nearly everyone in Ireland say shur?”

• We can add flesh to the bones of our initial observations by using corpus data

• Can’t make any claims about “nearly everyone” but...

• *SURE* is salient in LCIE (Key Word)

• *SURE* is most frequent in the casual sphere (in LCIE and SP/ICE)
One final thing: *Shure* isn’t LCIE over 10 years old now?

- Home and Away Ireland...
- Currently 2007-2011– tagged and stored as corpus
- c. 200k (59 months of Blog)
- Larger research question: Investigating the language of a community of users of Irish English – they mark and reference the ‘world’ of Irish English
SURE

• 200k: 181 occurrences of *sure*

• 85/181 occurrences – *SURE*

• Approx. 400 occurrences of pragmatic marker *SURE* (normalised p/m)

• *Sure* murder is nothing special in Summer Bay
• *Sure* look at the fine pair of childbearing hips on her
Final observations

• Corpora offer authentic data – but in order to fully investigate the nuances of an item a fine-grained analysis is always necessary

• Can support intuitions and observations...and also reveal other patterns

• ...possibility of SURE in final position in the utterance – how might this be distinct (if at all)?
Why does nearly everyone in Ireland say shur?

Best Answer - Chosen by Voters

Ah shur it doesn't matter.

We beg to differ!