

Odd one out

Which of these is the odd one out?

→ “I am literally dying of thirst”

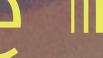
→ “Really, you need to watch out”

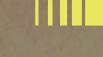
Literally

- of or pertaining to alphabetic letters
- in a literal manner or sense; exactly.
- used for emphasis while not being literally true.

Words on the move

→ Verily  Very

→ True  Truly

→ Real  Really

Gliding through time

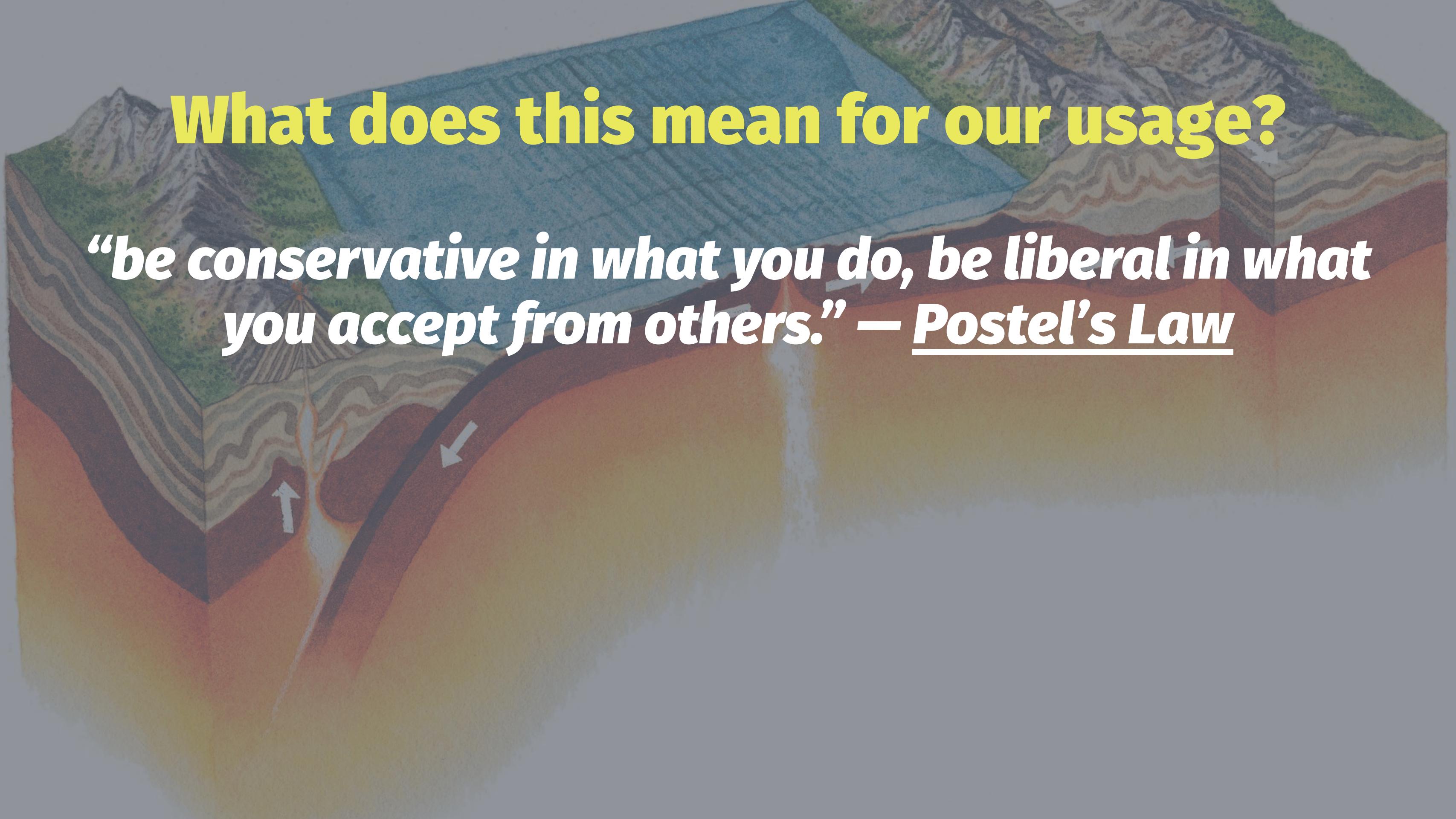
'when a word means “true” and it's used a lot, you can almost predict that, over time it will glide from meaning “truth” into meaning “very”. But the process can also go further than that, and that's where really comes in' – from ‘Words on the Move’

Model Pragmatic Modifiers

- Factuality: “Really”, “Very”, “Literally”
- Acknowledgement of others’ state of mind: “Totally”, “we’re totally gonna get that contract”
- Counterexpectation: “Even”, “he didn’t even bring a present”
- Easing: “LOL”, “I like you. Im pretty sure everyone else figured that out before you lol”

What does this mean for our usage?

→ Does this mean I can't tell anyone they are wrong anymore?



What does this mean for our usage?

“be conservative in what you do, be liberal in what you accept from others.” – Postel’s Law

Why English Won't—
and Can't—Sit Still
(Like, Literally)

PICADOR

WORDS *on the* MOVE

John McWhorter

Author of *The Power of Babel*
and *Our Magnificent Bastard Tongue*

"If you love language, you will love this book. You'll never think of language
in the same way again." —DEBORAH TANNEN, university professor and professor
of linguistics, Georgetown University, and author of *You Just Don't Understand*

More on this ...

- ["Words on the Move: Why English Won't - And Can't - Sit Still \(Like, Literally\)"](#)
- Covers everything mentioned here
- [Excerpt](#) also available

More on this ...

- "Spell It Out: The singular story of English spelling" by David Crystal
- Cover History of English spelling. Whatever you may think makes sense ... was likely an accident.
- If you are interested in straightforward explanations of language topics then anything by David Crystal is really good

'A must read' — Sunday Times Bestseller

SPELL IT OUT

The Singular Story
of English Spelling

—
DAVID
CRYSTAL

ROBIN DUNBAR

Grooming, Gossip and the Evolution of Language

'Dunbar startles us into re-examining many familiar aspects of ourselves.' *Observer*



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More on this ...

- ["Grooming, Gossip and the Evolution of Language"](#) by Robin Dunbar
- Speaking as “grooming”.