THE ORIGINS OF NOMINAL GRADABILITY

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Something we think we understand (Kennedy & McNally 2005, Rotstein & Winter 2001, others):

(1)   a. rather $\left\{\begin{array}{l}\text{transparent}\\ \text{straight}\\ \text{long}\end{array}\right\}$

           b. perfectly $\left\{\begin{array}{l}\text{transparent}\\ \text{straight}\\ ^{\#}\text{long}\end{array}\right\}$

           c. partly $\left\{\begin{array}{l}\text{transparent}\\ ^{\#}\text{straight}\\ ^{\#}\text{long}\end{array}\right\}$

Something we definitely don't understand:

(2)　a.　real $\left\{\begin{array}{l}\text{idiot} \\ \text{smoker} \\ \text{sportscar}\end{array}\right\}$

　　　b.　big $\left\{\begin{array}{l}\text{idiot} \\ \text{smoker} \\ {}^{\#}\text{sportscar}\end{array}\right\}$

　　　c.　utter $\left\{\begin{array}{l}\text{idiot} \\ {}^{\#}\text{smoker} \\ {}^{\#}\text{sportscar}\end{array}\right\}$

($^{\#}$indicates ill-formedness on a degree reading)

Big-picture questions:

- How does nominal gradability come about?
- What makes certain nouns more easily gradable than others?
- How do nouns differ from adjectives with respect to gradability?
- What does this reveal about gradability in general?

Guiding ideas:

- nouns are only indirectly gradable
- nouns lack a degree argument, but ...
- ... some are nevertheless associated with scales
- a major axis of variation among degree-modified nouns: how a scale is retrieved from a noun meaning

ROADMAP

- **Adnominal degree modifiers**
- Nominal gradability and degree arguments
- Prototypicality modifiers
- Size adjectives and their kin
- The *utter* class
- Broader considerations
- Conclusion

The modifiers in (3) are not actually (ordinary) adjectives (Morzycki 2009, de Vries 2010, Xie 2010; cf. Constantinescu 2011):

(3)
$$\begin{Bmatrix} \text{true} \\ \text{real} \\ \text{slight} \\ \text{total} \\ \text{utter} \\ \text{absolute} \\ \text{outright} \end{Bmatrix} \begin{Bmatrix} \text{disaster} \\ \text{idiot} \\ \text{magic} \\ \text{bullshit} \end{Bmatrix}$$

The size adjectives in (4) *are* adjectives, but doing something special:

(4) $\left\{\begin{array}{l} \text{big} \\ \text{huge} \\ \text{colossal} \\ \text{humungous} \\ {}^{\#}\text{small} \\ {}^{\#}\text{little} \\ {}^{\#}\text{diminutive} \end{array}\right\}$ idiot

Not the same meaning as homophonous adjectives:

- *true bullshit* would, on the usual meaning of *true*, be contradictory
- Daniel Dennett (in a 2003 TED talk): *real magic* is the kind that isn't real, and *fake magic* is the kind that is
- *total idiot* but not #*partial idiot*
- some don't even have adjectival homophones: *utter, downright, out-and-out, straight-up, outright*

No predicative use:

(5)   #That $\begin{Bmatrix} \text{disaster} \\ \text{idiot} \\ \text{magic} \\ \text{bullshit} \end{Bmatrix}$ is $\begin{Bmatrix} \text{true} \\ \text{real} \\ \text{utter} \\ \text{absolute} \\ \text{outright} \end{Bmatrix}$.

Even worse with *seem*, a classic diagnostic of adjective-hood:

(6)   #That $\begin{Bmatrix} \text{disaster} \\ \text{idiot} \\ \text{magic} \\ \text{bullshit} \end{Bmatrix}$ seems $\begin{Bmatrix} \text{true} \\ \text{real} \\ \text{utter} \\ \text{absolute} \\ \text{outright} \end{Bmatrix}$.

Can't support their own degree modification:

(7) #some $\left\{\begin{array}{l}\text{absolutely true}\\\text{completely real}\\\text{very utter}\\\text{quite absolute}\\\text{fully outright}\end{array}\right\}$ $\left\{\begin{array}{l}\text{disaster}\\\text{idiot}\\\text{magic}\\\text{bullshit}\end{array}\right\}$

Broadly similar facts in various other languages (additional examples welcome!).

Japanese:

(8)
$$\left\{\begin{array}{l} \text{mattaku-no} \\ \textbf{utter} \\ \text{kanzen-na} \\ \textbf{absolute} \\ \text{kanpeki-na} \\ \textbf{outright} \end{array}\right\}$$
baka
idiot

Japanese counterparts also lack a predicative use:

(9) #Ano-baka-wa $\left\{\begin{array}{l} \text{mattaku} \\ \textbf{utter} \\ \text{kanzen} \\ \textbf{absolute} \\ \text{kanpeki} \\ \textbf{outright} \end{array}\right\}$ -da .
     that idiot   **is**

'That idiot is utter/absolute/outright.'

Japanese counterparts also can't support their own degree modification:

(10) # $\left\{\begin{array}{l}\text{totemo} \\ \textbf{very} \\ \text{kanari} \\ \textbf{pretty} \\ \text{motto} \\ \textbf{more}\end{array}\right\}$ $\left\{\begin{array}{l}\text{mattaku-no} \\ \textbf{utter} \\ \text{kanzen-na} \\ \textbf{absolute} \\ \text{kanpeki-na} \\ \textbf{outright}\end{array}\right\}$ baka **idiot**

Adnominal degree words often have ad-adjectival cognates:

(11)   a. true $\sim$ truly
       b. real $\sim$ really
       c. utter $\sim$ utterly
       d. slight $\sim$ slightly
       e. absolute $\sim$ absolutely
       f. outright $\sim$ outright (e.g., *outright dead*)
       g. flat-out $\sim$ flat-out (e.g., *flat-out dead*)
       h. downright $\sim$ downright (e.g., *downright dead*)

So, these adnominal modifiers:

- syntactically & semantically distinct from ordinary adjectives
- analogous to degree morphemes in AP such as *more*, *very*, *less*, *really*

- ✔ Adnominal degree modifiers
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Nouns support more structurally complicated degree constructions too:

(12) a. Clyde is more phonologist than phonetician.
    b. Clyde is more of an idiot than Floyd.

(13) a. Clyde is a bigger idiot than Floyd.
    b. Clyde is as big an idiot as Floyd.

Reasons to think nouns have a degree argument:

- Nouns have specialized degree words.
- Nouns support comparatives and equatives.
- Gradability is crosscategorial (Sapir 1944, Bolinger 1972, Abney 1987, Doetjes 1997, others).

Slap on a degree argument and go home?

Nagging worry: nouns aren't **as** gradable as adjectives.

Bierwisch (1988a,b, 1989) suggests adjectives come in two flavors:

- dimensional adjectives: *tall*, *heavy*, *hot*
- evaluative adjectives: *stupid*, *ugly*, *lazy*

Crucial intuition: evaluative adjectives are 'less clearly delimited and less systematically structured' (Bierwisch 1988a).

Dimensional adjectives come in positive-negative antonym pairs:

(14) a.   tall $\longleftrightarrow$ short
      b. heavy $\longleftrightarrow$ light
      c.   hot $\longleftrightarrow$ cold
      d. deep $\longleftrightarrow$ shallow

Evaluative adjectives lack a single clear antonym:

(15) a. $\left\{\begin{array}{l}\text{brave, bold,}\\\text{courageous}\end{array}\right\}$ $\longleftrightarrow$ $\left\{\begin{array}{l}\text{cowardly, timid,}\\\text{fearful}\end{array}\right\}$

    b. $\left\{\begin{array}{l}\text{clever, bright,}\\\text{shrewd,}\\\text{intelligent,}\\\text{brilliant}\end{array}\right\}$ $\longleftrightarrow$ $\left\{\begin{array}{l}\text{stupid, idiotic,}\\\text{foolish,}\\\text{bone-headed}\end{array}\right\}$

    c. $\left\{\begin{array}{l}\text{pretty, beautiful,}\\\text{gorgeous, attractive,}\\\text{handsome}\end{array}\right\}$ $\longleftrightarrow$ $\left\{\begin{array}{l}\text{ugly, unattractive,}\\\text{hideous, repellant,}\\\text{grotesque}\end{array}\right\}$

    d. $\left\{\begin{array}{l}\text{lazy, indolent,}\\\text{unproductive}\end{array}\right\}$ $\longleftrightarrow$ $\left\{\begin{array}{l}\text{hard-working,}\\\text{industrious,}\\\text{workaholic}\end{array}\right\}$

Evaluative adjectives have minimal standards (in the Kennedy & McNally 2005 sense):

(16)   **dimensional**:
    a. Clyde is taller than Floyd.
       doesn't entail: Clyde is tall.
    b. This board is longer than that one.
       doesn't entail: This board is long.

(17)   **evaluative**:
    a. Clyde is stupider than Floyd.
       entails: Clyde is stupid.
    b. Clyde is lazier than Floyd.
       entails: Clyde is lazy.

Evaluative adjectives are compatible with *slightly* (a
diagnostic for minimal standards; Rotstein & Winter 2001):

(18)   a. #Clyde is slightly tall.
       b. #This board is slightly long.

(19)   a. Clyde is slightly stupid.
       b. Clyde is slightly lazy.

Bierwisch: Only dimensional adjectives have a degree argument and are directly gradable.

But evaluative adjectives are gradable too!

(20) a. Clyde is $\begin{Bmatrix} \text{uglier} \\ \text{stupider} \\ \text{braver} \\ \text{lazier} \end{Bmatrix}$ than Floyd.

b. Clyde is very $\begin{Bmatrix} \text{ugly} \\ \text{stupid} \\ \text{brave} \\ \text{lazy} \end{Bmatrix}$.

Bierwisch: a type shift makes these gradable indirectly.

Maybe nouns are (mostly) like evaluative adjectives?
Therefore:

- No degree argument.
- Not directly gradable.
- But gradable indirectly.

Most nouns lack a single clear antonym:

(21) a. $\left\{\begin{array}{l}\text{idiot, moron, cretin,}\\\text{halfwit, imbecile}\end{array}\right\} \longleftrightarrow \left\{\begin{array}{l}\text{genius, prodigy,}\\\text{mastermind}\end{array}\right\}$

b. $\left\{\begin{array}{l}\text{disaster, catastrophe,}\\\text{calamity}\end{array}\right\} \longleftrightarrow \left\{\begin{array}{l}\text{triumph, stroke}\\\text{of luck, godsend,}\\\text{boon}\end{array}\right\}$

c. $\left\{\begin{array}{l}\text{sportscar, race car,}\\\text{roadster}\end{array}\right\} \longleftrightarrow \left\{\begin{array}{l}\text{jalopy, clunker,}\\\text{lemon}\end{array}\right\}$

Straining slightly at the positive end. Not sure why.

Important systematic exception: nominalized dimensional adjectives:

(22) a. tallness $\longleftrightarrow$ shortness
    b. possibility $\longleftrightarrow$ impossibility
    c. heat $\longleftrightarrow$ cold(ness)
    d. depth $\longleftrightarrow$ shallowness

Nouns seem to have minimal standards:

(23) Clyde is $\left\{ \begin{array}{l} \text{a bigger idiot} \\ \text{more of an idiot} \end{array} \right\}$ than Floyd.
 entails: Clyde is an idiot.

(24) This is a bigger disaster than that is.
 entails: That is a disaster.

(25) This is (even) bigger bullshit than that is.
 entails: That is bullshit.

Often compatible with *slight* (which might be like *slightly*):

(26)   a. Clyde is a slight $\left\{ \begin{array}{l} \text{idiot} \\ \text{jerk} \end{array} \right\}$.

    b. There was some slight bullshit on page 12, but overall this paper is pretty reasonable.

Possible answer to why adjectives more suited to gradability than nouns:

- some adjectives are dimensional and have degree arguments
- no nouns are, so no nouns do

ROADMAP

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Project from here on: degree morphemes in the absence of degree arguments.

Real and *true* occur relatively freely (see also Constantinescu 2011):

(27)
$$\left\{ \begin{array}{l} \text{real} \\ \text{true} \end{array} \right\} \left\{ \begin{array}{l} \text{disaster} \\ \text{idiot} \\ \text{smoker} \\ \text{basketball fan} \\ \text{American} \\ \text{sportscar} \end{array} \right\}$$

Similar freedom in Japanese (*hontoo-no* 'real').

Analytical intuition: *real* and *true* use scales of prototypicality. A *real idiot* is an especially prototypical one.

Importance of prototypicality for nominal gradability not a surprise (Kamp & Partee 1995, Sassoon 2007a, de Vries 2010, Sassoon 2007b).

Prototypicality is a bit slippery. Predictions?

NPs with no prototypes (Kamp & Partee 1995) should be odd with *real*:

(28) Floyd is a $\left\{ \begin{array}{l} \text{real} \\ \text{true} \end{array} \right\}$ $\left\{ \begin{array}{l} ^{??}\text{male nurse} \\ ^{\#}\text{non-Methodist} \\ ^{\#}\text{resident} \end{array} \right\}$.

Real sportscar (roughly): 'very similar to the prototypical sportscar'.

Ingredients:

- **prototype** maps a noun denotation to its prototype
- **similar**$_c$ maps an individual and a prototype to the (maximal) degree of their similarity (in c)
- **standard**$_c(N)$ = the degree of similarity to a prototype sufficient to count as a member of extension of N (in c)
- $\gg_c$ is a vague 'considerably exceeds' relation

Real requires exceeding the standard considerably
(like *very*):

(29)   a. $\llbracket \textit{real} \rrbracket^c = \lambda f \lambda x$. $\mathbf{similar}_c(x, \mathbf{prototype}(f)) \gg_c$
$$\mathbf{standard}_c(f)$$

b. $\llbracket \textit{real sportscar} \rrbracket^c$
$= \lambda x$. $\mathbf{similar}_c(x, \mathbf{prototype}(\mathbf{sportscar})) \gg_c$
$$\mathbf{standard}_c(\mathbf{sportscar})$$

Unmodified noun:

(30) $\llbracket$ *the sportscar* $\rrbracket = \iota x[\textbf{sportscar}(x)]$

Assuming (31):

(31) $\textbf{sportscar}(x) \iff$
   $\textbf{similar}_c(x, \textbf{prototype}(\textbf{sportscar})) >$
   $\textbf{standard}_c(\textbf{sportscar})$

These are doubly ruled out:

(32)   a. #That sportscar is real.
       b. #a very real sportscar

Wrong category, wrong type.

Contrast with *more of a*, which is also relatively free:

(33) a. This is more of a $\left\{ \begin{array}{l} \text{disaster} \\ \text{idiot} \\ \text{smoker} \\ \text{basketball fan} \\ \text{American} \\ \text{sportscar} \end{array} \right\}$.

b. Floyd is more of a $\left\{ \begin{array}{l} \text{male nurse} \\ \text{non-Methodist} \\ \text{?resident} \end{array} \right\}$ than Clyde.

Suggests that *more of a* not about prototypes.

Potential problem?: a *real sportscar* might not be a *typical sportscar*.

Further possibilities:

- Spell out prototypicality intensionally?
- Or maybe this is all about intensionality rather than prototypicality (so, quantify over closest worlds with more stringent standards)?

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Degree readings of size adjectives (and *major*) more
restricted:

(34) $\left\{ \begin{array}{l} \text{big} \\ \text{huge} \\ \text{major} \end{array} \right\} \left\{ \begin{array}{l} \text{disaster} \\ \text{idiot} \\ \text{smoker} \\ \text{basketball fan} \\ {}^{\#}\text{American} \\ {}^{\#}\text{sportscar} \end{array} \right\}.$

The idea: no degree argument, but certain nouns **are**
inherently conceptually associated with scales.

Similar move necessary to reflect polysemy in adjectives:

(35) a. The US is bigger than Canada.   (population)
     b. Canada is bigger than the US.   (area)

Big's lexical entry must make available multiple dimensions:

(36)   **dimensions**(**big**) $=$
          {**size-by-population**, **size-by-area**, . . .}

Another notion of multiple dimensions in adjectives (Sassoon 2007b, 2013):

(37)   a. Clyde is happy in every way.
       b. Clyde is healthy except for the migraines.
          'healthy in every dimension except migraines'

Sassoon's one-dimensional adjectives:

(38)   #The table is long in all respects.

To be big, it is sufficient to exceed the standard on just one dimension.

Sassoon: this depends on the adjective (*healthy* requires all dimensions).

Standard assumption about simple adjectives: an unpronounced degree morpheme POS (Cresswell 1976, von Stechow 1984, Kennedy 1997, and many others). Possible implementation:

(39) $\llbracket \text{POS} \rrbracket^c = \lambda g \lambda x \, . \, \exists D \begin{bmatrix} D \in \textbf{dimensions}(g) \, \wedge \\ \mu(D)(x) \geq \textbf{standard}_c(D) \end{bmatrix}$

... where $\mu(D)$ is the measure function associated with the dimension D.

(40) $\llbracket \textit{Canada is } \text{POS } \textit{big} \rrbracket^c = \exists D \begin{bmatrix} D \in \textbf{dimensions}(\textbf{big}) \, \wedge \\ \mu(D)(x) \geq \textbf{standard}_c(D) \end{bmatrix}$

Nouns may specify dimensions too:

(41) a. **dimensions**(**basketball-fan**) =

$$\left\{ \begin{array}{l} \textbf{attention-devoted-to-basketball}, \\ \textbf{enthusiasm-for-basketball}, \\ \textbf{knowledge-about-basketball}, \\ \textbf{frequent-attendance}, \\ \vdots \end{array} \right\}$$

b. **dimensions**(**smoker**) =

$$\left\{ \begin{array}{l} \textbf{frequency-of-smoking}, \\ \textbf{enthusiasm-for-smoking} \\ \vdots \end{array} \right\}$$

For *chair*, though, it would be hard to articulate dimensions.
No salient gradable quality is sufficient to be a chair.

So, **dimensions**(**chair**) is undefined.

On its degree reading, *big* requires that the measure of an individual along a lexically-determined dimension be large (treating *big* as a degree head, even though it isn't one):

(42) a. $[\![\, big \,]\!]^c = \lambda f \lambda x \, . \, \exists D \begin{bmatrix} D \in \textbf{dimensions}(f) \, \wedge \\ \textbf{large}_c(\mu(D)(x)) \end{bmatrix}$

b. $[\![\, Clyde \ is \ a \ big \ smoker \,]\!]^c =$
$$\exists D \begin{bmatrix} D \in \textbf{dimensions}(\textbf{smoker}) \, \wedge \\ \textbf{large}_c(\mu(D)(\textbf{Clyde})) \end{bmatrix}$$

NB: Still no degree argument for nouns: $[\![\, smoker \,]\!]$ is $\langle e, st \rangle$; $[\![\, big \,]\!]$ is $\langle \langle e, st \rangle, \langle e, st \rangle \rangle$.

How does this ensure that (43a) entails (43b)?

(43) a. Clyde is a big smoker.
      b. Clyde is an smoker.

It doesn't. Could add requirement of exceeding standard by a large amount:

(44) $[\![$ *Clyde is a big smoker* $]\!]^c =$

$$\exists D \left[\begin{array}{l} D \in \textbf{dimensions}(\textbf{smoker}) \wedge \\ \textbf{large}_c(\mu(D)(\textbf{Clyde}) - \textbf{standard}_c(D)) \end{array} \right]$$

...but, a more interesting hypothesis:

(45)   On their degree readings, nouns have minimal
       standards.

If nouns are evaluative in Bierwisch's sense, expected, but not
explained.

As with *chair*, **dimensions**(**sportscar**) not defined. Rules out $^{\#}$*big sportscar* (on degree reading):

(46) $[\![^{\#}$*This is a big sportscar*$]\!]^c =$
$$\exists D \left[\begin{array}{l} D \in \textbf{dimensions}(\textbf{sportscar}) \wedge \\ \textbf{large}_c(\mu(D)(\textbf{this})) \end{array} \right]$$

(A worry: $^{\#}$*big bullshit*?)

ROADMAP

More restricted still:

(47) $\left\{\begin{array}{l}\text{utter}\\\text{complete}\\\text{total}\\\text{absolute}\\\text{outright}\\\text{flat-out}\end{array}\right\}$ $\left\{\begin{array}{l}\text{disaster}\\\text{idiot}\\^{\#}\text{smoker}\\^{\#}\text{basketball fan}\\^{\#}\text{American}\\^{\#}\text{sportscar}\end{array}\right\}$.

Japanese:

(48)
$$\begin{Bmatrix} \text{mattaku-no} \\ \textbf{utter} \\ \text{kanzen-na} \\ \textbf{absolute} \\ \text{kanpeki-na} \\ \textbf{outright} \end{Bmatrix} \begin{Bmatrix} \text{baka} \\ \textbf{idiot} \\ {}^{\#}\text{sutampu-zuki} \\ \textbf{stamp-lover} \end{Bmatrix}$$

What's special about *disaster*, *idiot*?

- Being a basketball fan is complicated.
- Being an idiot is simple.

Some nouns specify only one dimension:

(49) a. **dimensions**(**idiot**) = {**idiocy**}
      b. **dimensions**(**disaster**) = {**disastrousness**}

Utter presupposes that its noun is unidimensional:

(50) a. $\llbracket \text{\textit{utter}} \rrbracket^c$
     $= \lambda f \lambda x \, . \, \textbf{large}_c(\mu(\iota D[D \in \textbf{dimensions}(f)])(x))$

  b. $\llbracket \text{\textit{Clyde is an utter idiot}} \rrbracket^c$
     $= \textbf{large}_c(\mu(\iota D[D \in \textbf{dimensions}(\textbf{idiot})])(\textbf{Clyde}))$
     $= \textbf{large}_c(\mu(\textbf{idiocy})(\textbf{Clyde}))$

Requires that the measure of Clyde along the idiocy scale be large.

What goes wrong in $^\#$*utter smoker*?

- failure of presupposition
- there are multiple dimensions specified by *smoker*
- so $\iota D[D \in$ **dimensions**(**smoker**)$]$ is undefined

What goes wrong in *#utter sportscar*?

- same as in *#big sportscar*
- failure of presupposition
- there are no dimensions specified by *sportscar*
- so **dimensions**(**sportscar**) is undefined

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Accusation: You're simply equivocating about types!

- nouns don't have a degree argument
- but are 'associated' with a degree-based dimension

We could just stipulate dimensions lexically, as another level of meaning. Lexical entry:

(51)   a. **TRANSLATION**(*idiot*) = **idiot**
       b. **dimensions**(*idiot*) = {**idiocy**}

Comparable to the e.g. ordinary and focus semantic values
($[\![\cdot]\!]$, $[\![\cdot]\!]^{f}$).

But this would miss something:

- Dimensionality is a fact about the concept of idiocy, not the word *idiot* (or *basketball fan* etc.).
- Could we have a word just like *idiot*, but with different dimensions?

But *how* does one go from the concept 'idiot' to the dimension idiocy? One option:

- By exploiting orderings independently present in the model (Fine 1975, Kamp 1975, Klein 1980, 1982; probably what Bierwisch 1988a meant too).
- Doetjes et al. (2011) suggest that nominal gradability in general works this way.
- Does this get us any farther, though?

Standard criticism leveled against degree analyses of adjectives:

- If an adjective always has a degree argument, a null morpheme (POS) will often be needed to saturate it.
- But it seems to be null more often than not. Suspicious!
- More generally: truth conditions of the positive form based on the comparative.

Perhaps, a middle ground:

- Adjectives denote simple properties after all, but may be associated with dimensions.
- Dimensions come into play only when overt degree morphemes are present.
- Reflects what language seems to be telling us: to manipulate a degree argument, you have to **do** something to an adjective.

. . . but then we'd lose the adjective-noun type difference.

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- ∎ **Conclusion**

CONCLUSION

Summary:

- nouns support rich and varied array of degree modifiers
- only indirectly gradable
- some adnominal degree modifiers involve prototypicality scales (*real, true*)
- others involve scales provided indirectly by the noun
    - some presuppose a single scale (*utter, complete*)
    - others don't (*big, huge, major*)
- major axis of variation among adnominal degree modifiers: how they extract a scale from noun
- yields a typology of adnominal degree modifiers, and therefore also of nouns

Things I've said nothing about:

- scale structure
- expressive meaning (as in *a fucking goat*)
- extremeness (as in extreme adjectives like *gigantic*)

Big-picture issues:

- Where precisely does this leave adjectives?
- Independent diagnostics for dimensions?

GRATITUDE

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IS THIS REALLY ALL ABOUT SCALE STRUCTURE?

For adjectives, scale structure is crucial. How far would that have gotten us here?

- nothing here to suggest that scale structure isn't important for nouns too
- probably not relevant to presence or absence of a degree argument
- probably not relevant to *real*/*true*
- what about *big* vs *utter*?

Utterly may require upper-closed scales:

(52) $\left\{\begin{array}{l}\text{utterly}\\\text{completely}\\\text{absolutely}\end{array}\right\}$ $\left\{\begin{array}{l}\text{impossible/}^{\#}\text{possible}\\\text{closed/}^{\#}\text{open}\\\text{full/}^{\#}\text{empty}\end{array}\right\}$

Nominalizations:

(53) $\left\{\begin{array}{l}\text{utter}\\\text{complete}\\\text{absolute}\end{array}\right\}$ $\left\{\begin{array}{l}\text{impossibility/}^{\#}\text{possibility}\\^{?}\text{closure/}^{\#}\text{openness}\\\text{transparency/opacity}\\^{??}\text{fullness/emptiness}\end{array}\right\}$

But:

(54)　a. $\left\{\begin{array}{l}\text{utter}\\\text{complete}\\\text{absolute}\end{array}\right\}$ $\left\{\begin{array}{l}\text{idiot}\\\text{disaster}\end{array}\right\}$

　　b. $\left\{\begin{array}{l}\text{utterly}\\\text{completely}\\\text{absolutely}\end{array}\right\}$ $\left\{\begin{array}{l}\text{idiotic}\\\text{disastrous}\end{array}\right\}$

So: scale structure remains important, but probably not an account of the contrast.

EXTREMENESS

A class of cross-categorial degree modifiers that occur with 'extreme' predicates (Morzycki 2012):

(55)
$$
\begin{Bmatrix}
\text{outright} \\
\text{flat-out} \\
\text{straight-up} \\
\text{out-and-out} \\
\text{downright}
\end{Bmatrix}
\begin{Bmatrix}
\text{huge/}^{\#}\text{big} \\
\text{fantastic/}^{\#}\text{OK} \\
\text{excessive/}^{\#}\text{appropriate}
\end{Bmatrix}
$$

Are unidimensional degree modifiers actually just extreme?
Would explain #*utter heap*.

But nominalizations again:

(56) $\left\{\begin{array}{c}\text{complete}\\\text{absolute}\end{array}\right\}$ $\left\{\begin{array}{l}\text{impossibility}\\\text{transparency}\\\text{opacity}\\\text{fullness}\\\text{emptiness}\end{array}\right\}$

Are these really extreme (lexically or even wrt a particular context)?

Would this help with #*complete basketball fan*?

(57)   Clyde didn't see a fucking goat.

(58)   Clyde didn't see a(n) $\left\{ \begin{array}{l} \text{idiot} \\ \text{disaster} \\ \text{genius} \end{array} \right\}$.

(59)   Clyde thinks he saw $\begin{Bmatrix} \text{a fucking goat} \\ \text{that bastard Floyd} \end{Bmatrix}$.

(60)   Clyde thinks he saw a $\begin{Bmatrix} \text{absolute} \\ \text{utter} \end{Bmatrix}$ $\begin{Bmatrix} \text{idiot} \\ \text{disaster} \\ \text{genius} \end{Bmatrix}$.

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