Gradability in the nominal domain
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Chapter 4   "DEGREE ADJECTIVES"

1   Introduction

This chapter focuses on a phenomenon that is central to the topic of gradability in the nominal domain, namely modification by degree adjectives. From the discussion of gradability tests in chapter 1, the availability of modification by degree adjectives emerged as the seemingly most restricted environment sensitive to nominal gradability. The central question that this chapter addresses, especially in view of the negative conclusions of previous chapters in connection with other potential test for gradability, is whether degree adjectives are, indeed, a reliable test for gradability in the nominal system.

   To recall the basic observation, consider examples (1) and (2). The relevant interpretation of the adjectives considered is the one they receive in the examples given in (1). It seems that when they modify nouns that encode a gradable property in their lexical meaning they indicate that this property holds to a high degree. When they modify ordinary, non-gradable nouns, as illustrated in (2), these adjectives receive a different interpretation, namely their basic, literal interpretation: concrete physical size in the case of *big*, negative qualitative evaluation in the case of *terrible* or completeness in the case of *complete*.

(1)   a.   a big {idiot/ eater}
        b.   a terrible {coward/ bore}
        c.   a complete idiot

(2)   a.   a big {lad/ house}
        b.   a terrible {doctor/ idea}
        c.   a complete description

The interpretation of the adjective-noun combinations in (1) seems to parallel that of the corresponding adverb-adjective combinations illustrated in (3) below, in the sense that in all of these examples, the modifier contributes an indication of the high degree to which the property denoted by the modified expression holds.

(3)   a.   very idiotic

      b. terribly boring
      c. completely idiotic

In other words, the relation between the adjective and the noun it modifies seems to parallel the relation between a degree modifier and a gradable adjective. Therefore, the question that arises when faced with such examples is whether the adjectives in (1) indeed function as degree modifiers or operators in the nominal domain similarly to how the expressions in (3) are generally argued to function in the adjectival domain, and whether their distribution and interpretation can be taken as evidence in favour of the presence of a semantic gradable structure and of a DegP in the syntax of certain nouns. This is the question we will try to answer in this chapter.

As already noted in chapter 1, degree adjectives make up a rather heterogeneous class and their use is often collocational in nature, or, at least, they have a distribution that is marked by many lexical irregularities within English, as well as across English and Romance among otherwise similar adjectives. These idiosyncrasies must be acknowledged. However, if one puts them aside, certain patterns emerge quite clearly. In principle, there are three potential classes of candidates to the status of a degree adjective in the sense relevant here, which exhibit different properties. These are classes that were already illustrated in chapter 1, namely adjectives which in their basic, non-degree use refer to size (e.g. *big*, *huge*, *enormous* etc.), evaluative adjectives (e.g. *terrible*, *amazing*, *incredible* etc.), and the so-called adjectives of purity and veracity (e.g. *real*, *true*, *perfect* etc.). In this chapter, we will re-examine in more detail the distribution of these adjectives with respect to different types of nouns, as well as with respect to syntactic position (i.e. attributive vs. predicative uses). This investigation will result in a necessary reconsideration of the status of the alleged degree adjectives included in chapter 1. For example, *real* and size adjectives will be argued not to be degree operators, while for other adjectives it will also be shown that different analyses are possible. The behaviour of each class will be examined in turn.

Section 2 focuses on size adjectives. We will examine the distributional patterns of these adjectives and their consequences for possible analyses of the adjectives, as well for the use of such modification as a test for gradability. As it turns out, the facts here do not conclusively support a degree analysis, but rather favour an alternative account in terms of abstract size, on which the adjectives do not manipulate gradable structures that nouns would be assumed to have. Section 3 focuses on evaluative degree adjectives, a class which exhibits an even larger amount of lexical variation in terms of collocational restrictions. We will examine their distribution, and the differences they exhibit as compared to size adjectives, and conclude that, although at first sight they may be a better indication of gradability, they also show differences as compared to their adverbial counterparts that function as degree modifiers in the adjectival domain (e.g. *terribly* etc.). We therefore suggest an alternative way of deriving the degree-like interpretation. Section 4 re-examines the distribution and interpretation of *real*-type adjectives and argues for a different account of these adjectives: not as degree adjectives, but as adjectives whose semantic contribution is rather to be understood in terms of epistemicity/ evidentiality. Subsequently, we briefly consider totality adjectives such

as *complete*, *absolute* etc., which seem to be compatible both with an analysis as degree expressions, and with an analysis similar to that proposed for *real*-type adjectives. The main conclusion of this chapter will be that there is no clear evidence for the existence of adnominal degree operators/ modifiers in a parallel way to what is generally assumed for the adjectival domain.

2   Size adjectives

In this section we examine the first case of expressions that look like degree modifiers in the nominal domain, namely size adjectives, and show that the facts do not necessarily support an analysis of these adjectives as degree expressions, whether on a degree-based or a degree-less approach to gradability. In order to account for their syntactic and semantic behaviour it is not necessary to assume that they directly manipulate gradable structures (whether represented in terms of degrees or orderings). We will propose that an alternative analysis, which takes size adjectives to always be predicates of (abstract) size, can be extended to all cases and the sometimes peculiar combinatorics with the noun can be put down to mechanisms that are independently needed in order to account for non-intersective adjectives more generally. Modification by size adjectives turns out to differ from degree modification in the adjectival domain; even though the resulting interpretation is very similar, the mechanism by which it is brought about is different. This will also have consequences for our understanding of gradable nouns.

2.1   Distribution and interpretation

In this section we examine the distribution of size adjectives with respect to types of nouns, as well as the interpretation obtained in these contexts. Putting aside some distributional idiosyncrasies that will be briefly discussed towards the end of the section, it seems that adjectives like *big* can be used quite generally as modifiers of nouns that encode a gradable property in their lexical meaning.

In their basic, literal use, adjectives like *big*, *enormous*, *huge* etc. receive an interpretation in terms of concrete, physical size, as in (4). When they modify nouns which encode a gradable property in their lexical meaning, the adjectives seem to measure this property and, thus, contribute a (high) degree interpretation. This is illustrated in (5), where the adjectives are shown to modify gradable nouns, whether [+human] or [-human], count or mass.[220] For example, *a big idiot* is 'a very idiotic person'. In other words, the relation between the adjective and the noun it modifies seems to parallel the relation between a degree modifier (e.g. *very*) and a gradable adjective (e.g. *idiotic*, *foolish* etc.).

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[220]   Note, however, that with abstract mass nouns the adjective *great* is used in English, not *big*, while in the Romance languages there is no such difference: French *grand*, Romanian *mare* etc. will be used both with count and with mass nouns.

(4)   a big {lad/ house}

(5)   a.   a {big/ huge} {idiot/ beer-drinker/ football fan}
        b.   great courage/ immense pleasure
        c.   a huge blunder/ a gargantuan appetite/ a big mistake

As shown in chapter 1, nouns under figurative stereotypical interpretations (of the type found with internal *such*, for example – cf. chapter 3, §3.4) cannot be so modified by degree adjectives. The resulting interpretation of such adjective-noun combinations is fundamentally different: only the basic, literal meanings of the adjective and noun are available. Thus, in the examples in (6) below, the interpretation is in terms of concrete size, age or importance of actual boys, lawyers and palaces. These adjective-noun combinations cannot be used to describe someone who is very boyish, someone who is very lawyer-like or litigious, or a place which is very palace-like, in a way parallel to (5) above.

(6)   a.   a big boy
        b.   a big lawyer
        c.   a big palace

The facts are not always as clear-cut. A possible counterexample is given in (7), where it seems that *baby* can be used in its figurative meaning and intensified by *big*:

(7)   He is just a big baby.

However, this example may be understood as a conjunction: something like 'big (~grown-up) and a baby'. Alternatively, it might be that this meaning of *baby* has become lexicalized, i.e. it has become so conventionalized that it has developed into a separate lexical entry/item of the type *idiot* or *fool*. This seems to be confirmed by the fact that *baby* on this interpretation can also be modified by evaluative adjectives like *terrible*, which also otherwise fail to be compatible with nouns interpreted figuratively (see §3.1):

(8)   I am a terrible baby when it comes to pain.

This conclusion is also suggested by the fact that certain conventionalized epithets may also accept such modification, while epithetic uses relying more strongly on metaphorical interpretations resist it. The contrast is illustrated below:

(9)   a.   He's a big {bully/ jerk}.
        b.   #She's a big angel.

This seems to suggest that there is indeed a distinction among what may be called figurative, stereotypical interpretations of nouns. Some, like *boy*, denote (unordered and variable) sets of properties and for an individual to qualify as such they must

have one or more such stereotypical properties; in chapter 3 it was argued that these are not gradable meanings. Others, like *baby*, seem to have lexicalized as gradable nouns similar to *idiot*, in the sense that they denote a set of individuals characterized by one salient property, e.g. their immaturity for *baby* just like idiocy in the case of idiots. The latter type may be modified by size adjectives on the relevant reading. (see §2.4.1 for more discussion)

Having seen the types of nouns that can be modified by size adjectives on the relevant reading, a few remarks are in order concerning the adjectives themselves, and the variation found among them. First of all, while *big* is a rather 'neutral' adjective, adjectives like *huge, enormous, colossal* etc. encode a notion of extremeness in their lexical meaning and they have been treated as examples of 'extreme' adjectives in the literature (cf. Cruse 1986, Paradis 2001, Morzycki 2010). Most of the adjectives in the class that will be discussed in section 3, namely evaluative adjectives, are also 'extreme' adjectives in this sense (e.g. *terrible*); others seem to correspond to 'extreme degree modifiers' (cf. Morzycki 2010), i.e. degree modifiers that seem to occur only with expressions that are in some sense 'extreme' (e.g. *absolute – absolutely*). In other words, the distinction between neutral and extreme adjectives cross-cuts the classification of degree adjectives based on their basic meaning component – e.g. size, qualitative evaluation etc. However, the distribution of degree adjectives (with respect to types of nouns and to syntactic position, as well as their interpretation in these contexts) is differentiated along the lines of the latter, rather than the former, aspect of their meaning, as will become clearer once the other classes of degree adjectives are also considered in the coming sections. We will, therefore, continue to classify the adjectives based on their literal meaning, namely size vs. qualitative evaluation, and treat each of these classes in turn.

In addition to the general size adjectives considered so far, there are also some other dimensional adjectives which may be used to give rise to degree interpretations, such as *high* and *deep*. These, however, display a more idiosyncratic behaviour and seem to exhibit collocational restrictions in terms of an item-to-class selectivity. For example, *high* can be used with abstractions relating to anything scaled up, whether literally (e.g. *probability, visibility, pressure, intelligence*), or figuratively (e.g. *fury, indignation, temper, admiration, ambition, influence*) (Bolinger 1972).[221]

(10)   a.   high acclaim
         b.   *deep acclaim
         c.   deep disgrace
         d.   *high disgrace

Other idiosyncrasies are found among size adjectives. In English, for example, *great* and not *big* is used with abstract mass nouns (e.g. g*reat courage*, not: **big*

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[221]   See Bolinger (1972) for more discussion of the factors influencing the availability of modification by *high.*

courage).[222] In addition, unlike *big*, the rather similar adjective *large* cannot be used with a degree interpretation:

(11) ≠a large idiot

Morzycki (2009) suggests this is because *large* is not a size adjective in the same way *big* is; while general size adjectives like *big* are indeterminate in the sense that they can measure along a number of different types of scales (e.g. area, population, 'pure' size) among which also the abstract scale of degree size, the adjective *large* is lexically specified as only measuring physical size and does not have degrees in its domain. If this sounds more like restating the problem in different terms, it is in fact not easy to find a more explanatory account – it does seem to be a matter of lexical restriction. One might be tempted to think that the availability of 'degree measurement' is dependent on a general size-related meaning, such as the one *big* has, while *large* might be understood rather in more specific size-related terms, such as spaciousness or volume. This cannot be completely correct, however. A more specific meaning does not necessarily exclude the availability of a degree interpretation: in French, for example, the adjective *gros* meaning 'fat' or, in any case, making reference to volume, can give rise to degree interpretations, as illustrated below:

(12) a. un gros   con
          a   fat   idiot
          'a big idiot'
      b. un gros   mangeur
          a   fat   eater
          'a big eater'

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[222] Note also the rather collocational combinations of the adjective *heavy* with nouns in English, a collocation which persists across categories (see also van der Wouden 1994, 2011 for some remarks on collocations of this type.):
(i)   a. heavy {smoker/ drinker}
        a'. heavy reliance
        b. to {smoke/ drink} heavily
        b'. to rely heavily on something
(ii)   a. *heavy eater
        a'. ??heavy patience
        b. *to eat heavily
        b'. *to be heavily patient
While *big smoker*, *big drinker* and *great reliance* are not ruled out, they are clearly dispreferred as compared to the collocational combinations *heavy smoker* and *heavy drinker*: a simple search in the Corpus of Contemporary American English returns 2, 8 and 6 examples, respectively, of the former and 46, 64 and 146, respectively, of the latter (http://corpus2.byu.edu/coca/ consulted on 15.10.2011). In other cases, the differences are not as significant, but some preference still exists in favour of the more collocational combination as compared to the use of the more general adjective *big* – e.g. *heavy losses* vs. *big losses*. Note that the adjective *heavy* also enters collocations with other types of nouns that do not follow the same patterns as the types of nouns considered in this chapter – e.g. *heavy {rain/ snow/ traffic}* (also: *to {rain/ snow} heavily*). More corpus research might have very interesting insights to offer as to the possible patterns of distribution and interpretation, but we have to leave such investigation to future research and will rely from now on on data that is less collocational and idiosyncratic in nature.

We will, therefore, retain these as lexical idiosyncratic restrictions and put them aside in what follows. In spite of these idiosyncrasies, some patterns emerge quite clearly and it is on these that we will focus in the remainder of this chapter.

There are two relevant properties of size adjectives which need to be examined as they play a role in deciding what the most suitable account of size adjectives is. One is their syntactic distribution and associated interpretation, i.e. "the position generalization" (cf. Morzycki 2009). This will be discussed in the next section. The other one is the lack of low degree interpretations obtained by means of (small) size adjectives, or "the bigness generalization" (cf. Morzycki 2009), which will be discussed in §2.3.

2.2   Syntactic distributional patterns and their implications

This section examines the syntactic distribution of size adjectives on their degree reading and discusses its implications for possible approaches to these adjectives, in particular for their possible status as degree operators or modifiers. The initial observation that the relevant reading of size adjectives is restricted to the prenominal position has prompted Morzycki (2009) to analyse them specifically as degree modifiers. However, it will be shown in this section that, on the one hand, this restriction has relevant exceptions and that, on the other hand, the distributional pattern displayed by size adjectives is more generally found with non-intersective adjectives, and is mostly independent of gradability. Thus, analysing these adjectives as degree modifiers (either in terms of applying to a degree argument, or as degree functions that apply to an inherent ordering) amounts to a very specific analysis of a sub-class of non-intersective adjectives. It will be shown that the alternative analysis of the predicative cases, namely on in terms of predicates of abstract size (cf. the suggestion made by Morzycki 2009 for a subset of the cases), can in fact be extended to all cases, once we admit the existence of mechanisms that are independently needed. As such, the position generalization cannot be taken as an argument to maintain a degree analysis for any of the cases.

2.2.1   The position generalization and the degree analysis

The degree reading of size adjectives is normally restricted to the prenominal attributive position; this is impossible in predicative position or in the postnominal attributive position (cf. Siegel 1976, Bouchard 1998, 2002, Demonte 2008, Morzycki 2009 a.o.). This is shown by the following examples (taken or adapted from Morzycki 2009):

(13)   a.   a big idiot
         b.   That idiot is big.
         c.   an idiot bigger than anyone I know

In (13)a the adjective is used in the attributive prenominal position and receives the relevant degree interpretation. In (13)b-c, where the adjective is used predicatively and postnominally, the intended degree reading is not available. The adjective can only be interpreted in its literal meaning in terms of concrete size in these positions. The examples in (13)b-c are not about individuals who are idiotic to a high degree, but can only be about individuals who are literally, i.e. physically, big.

   This restriction on the syntactic position also correlates with the fact that such [A N] combinations entail that 'X is N', but not that 'X is A'. In addition, the fact that the two possible interpretations of these adjectives are distinct is indicated by the fact that one can be affirmed while the other is negated, without a contradiction ensuing (Morzycki 2009):

(14)   She's a big eater, though she's not (very) big.

   Morzycki (2009) takes this restriction on syntactic position, which he labels the "position generalization", as an argument in favour of the idea that these are degree modifiers. Given the degree reading that these adjectives give rise to and its restriction to the prenominal attributive position, an analysis of size adjectives as degree modifiers seems justified. In principle, such a view can be implemented either in a degree-based approach or in a degree-less one. In what follows we will sketch both types of approaches and their predictions, which turn out to be very similar.
   Morzycki (2009) proposes an analysis of gradable nouns and their modifiers which is framed within a degree-based approach to gradability, which, in a parallel fashion to the corresponding analyses put forth in the adjectival domain, makes explicit use of degrees. Morzycki argues that gradable nouns like *idiot* are lexically associated with scales and should be semantically defined in terms of degrees (see also Matushansky 2002b, Matushansky and Spector 2005, who make similar assumptions though on different grounds). Morzycki adopts a Kennedy-style analysis of gradability, in the sense that he assumes both gradable adjectives and gradable nouns to denote measure functions from individuals to degrees, i.e. type $<e,d>$ (cf. Kennedy 1999a,b, 2007a). This semantic understanding of gradability is also associated with a particular syntax. Just like gradable adjectives, gradable nouns are assumed to project a dedicated functional projection, Deg_NP, as part of their extended nominal projection. This hosts degree morphemes that turn the measure function into a regular predicate (type $<e,t>$) as needed. In the absence of an overt degree expression, a phonologically null operator *pos* is postulated, in full parallelism to what has been proposed for the adjectival domain. As for size adjectives like *big*, on their degree use, he analyses them as degree modifiers, which is motivated by the fact that they can take their own degree modifiers, as illustrated below; this indicates that they are phrasal rather than being degree heads themselves (as he proposes for other degree adjectives).[223]

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[223]   Similar facts obtain in other languages too, for example in French (contra Knittel 2005):

(i)		a.	un	{très/	si/	plus}	gros	con
			a	{very/	so/	more}	big	idiot
		b.	un	{très/	si}	grand	voyageur	
			a	{very/	so}	big	traveller	

(15)   a. George is a really big idiot.
        b. George is a bigger idiot than Dick is.

Semantically, he analyses them similarly to ad-adjectival measure phrases, namely as predicates of degrees (following Schwarzschild's 2005 proposal for measure phrases), i.e. type $\langle d,t \rangle$. In this use, size adjectives measure along a scale of degree size, just as in other cases they measure along scales of area, population, 'pure' size etc. In other words, size adjectives are indeterminate, and have degrees themselves in their domain. He therefore makes use of an abstract scale of degree size, onto which any degree can be mapped (cf. Bale 2006, 2008). In order to reflect the fact that *big* can measure both individuals and degrees, he ultimately adopts an ontology with a type *o*, which includes objects of both types (*e* and *d*). Hence the denotation of *big* is of type $\langle o,d \rangle$, and the type of its extended projection is of type $\langle o,t \rangle$. Syntactically, he proposes that size adjectives are located in the specifier of Deg$_N$P, whose head is occupied by a null operator, which is a version of the *Meas*-head proposed by Svenonius and Kennedy (2006) to account for AP-modifying measure phrases. The syntactic structure proposed by Morzycki (2009) is given in (16):

(16)
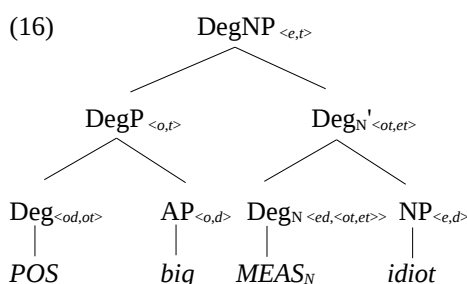
This account predicts the impossibility of size adjectives on their degree use in predicate position for two reasons, syntactic and semantic. First, they are connected with a particular functional projection which is part of the extended nominal structure, hence unavailable outside of the DP. Secondly, they are predicates of degrees and an argument of the right sort is no longer available to the adjective used predicatively. This is because the measure function, which is the denotation of the noun, must be first turned into an ordinary predicate before the noun can interact with other modifiers or functional elements within its extended nominal projection. So once the subject DP is fully built, there is nothing of the right type (namely defined in terms of *d*-arguments) that the degree adjective can be predicated of.

    Alternatively, the same intuition could be implemented in a degree-less approach to gradability, such as that proposed by e.g. Doetjes, Constantinescu and Součková (2011) and Doetjes (2009) (see chapter 1, §1.1.2.2 for more detailed discussion). On such an approach, gradability is not a matter of degrees but a matter of the presence of a (salient) ordering, and relations between degrees are not made use of in the semantics. Instead, degree structures are represented as relations between degree functions. Adopting such a view for the analysis of the facts discussed here would amount to analysing adjectives such as *big* as degree functions, similarly to degree

expressions like *very* in the adjectival domain. Accordingly, when *big* applies to a gradable noun like *idiot* it will result in a subset that includes individuals which are ordered relatively high in the domain of the noun. Just as degree expressions such as *quite*, *very* and *extremely* correspond to degree functions that are intrinsically ordered with respect to one another, an ordering that is independent of the specific adjective to which they apply, it may be conjectured that adjectives like *big* and *huge*, for instance, correspond to degree functions that are similarly ordered. That is, *huge* will always result in a more restrictive set than *big*. In other words, *huge* corresponds to a degree function that is more restrictive, or informative, than *big*: $\delta_{huge} \subset \delta_{big}$. Such an approach, which analyses these adjectives as degree functions, also predicts that the non-intersective reading should not be available when the adjective is used predicatively, and, hence, is applied to something of type $<e>$: the adjective needs to be adjacent to the noun which lexically provides the ordering on which the degree adjective operates, and to which it applies as a function to its argument.[224,225]

The two approaches, therefore, make very similar predictions with respect to the syntactic behaviour of size adjectives on their degree use, and both account for the position generalization.

2.2.2   Exceptions and an alternative account

As already noted by Morzycki (2009), there are a number of exceptions to the position generalization, as the examples below show:[226]

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[224]   Note also that analysing size adjectives as degree functions amounts to a very specific version of the analysis of non-intersective/ intensional adjectives as predicate modifiers as proposed by Siegel (1976). As such, they would be expected to be barred from the predicate position just as an adjective like *former* is:

(i)   a.   the former president
           b.   *the president is former

See §2.2.3 and §2.4.2 for more discussion.

[225]   Note that in the discussion of the predictions made by the two approaches we have been assuming that the subject DP is never of type $<d>$, which would allow the adjectives to occur predicatively on the relevant reading. This assumption will be made explicit when we propose the alternative account in the coming sub-sections. We take instead DPs such as *John's stupidity* to denote instances of properties (or tropes), and we take these to be abstract objects of type $<e>$ (cf. Moltmann 2003, 2004a,b, 2007, 2009, 2011). The same view may be extended to even more abstract objects such as those possibly denoted by nouns like *degree* (e.g. *The degree of responsibility was huge.*).

[226]   Similar cases are found in French (cf.also   Grossmann and Tutin 2005, Marengo 2005):

(i)   a.   Le problème   a   été   énorme   les premières   années.
           the problem   has been   enormous   the first   years
           'The problem was huge during the first years.'
    b.   L'échec   a   été   si   grand   que...
        the.failure   has been   so   big   that...
        'The failure was so big that...'

(ii)   a.   Ma joie/   Son   indifférence/   Sa générosité/   Sa gentillesse} était   grande.
          my joy/   his   indifference/   his generosity/   his kindness   was   big
          '{My joy/ His indifference/ His generosity/ His kindness} was great.'
    b.   Son   chagrin est immense.
        his sorrow is   immense
        'His sorrow is immense.'

(17) a. Harvey realized that the mistake was pretty big.[227]
      b. When I lived there over 5 years ago, the [stray and feral cat] problem was huge.[228]
      c. For Peter, that failure was big, maybe too big to overcome.[229]
      d. The success was huge.[230]
      e. The mess left behind was huge.[231]

(18) a. His sorrow was enormous.
      b. Her generosity was great.

In these examples, the interpretation of the adjectives does not seem to be distinct from that of their corresponding prenominal uses – e.g. *big problem*, *huge mess*, *enormous generosity* etc. The availability of the predicative use of degree adjectives seems to depend on the type of noun used as a subject. The cases considered before (cf. examples (13)), where the degree interpretation was seen to be restricted to the attributive prenominal position, were examples of [+human] nouns. The examples in (17)-(18) above, where the adjectives can occur predicatively, contain [-human] nouns, whether they are count nouns (e.g. *problem*, *mistake* etc.) or mass nouns denoting states, emotions or feelings, qualities (e.g. *sorrow*, *generosity* etc.).[232] The question then arises as to how these two types of patterns should be interpreted (and reconciled).

Morzycki (2009), for whom the position generalization is a necessary feature identifying degree adjectives as such, adopts the following position with respect to these facts. First, he argues that these are not instances of the 'degree use' of size adjectives; they are ordinary predicative adjectives whose interpretation is not in terms of degree, but in terms of size, though in a metaphorical or abstract sense, and only has a degree flavour because of the type of noun used. Secondly, he argues that not only are these not instances of the degree use of the adjective found in *big idiot*, but also that these nouns are not gradable, which, in the framework he adopts, translates as saying that they are not to be represented as being of the same semantic type as gradable adjectives (namely type $<e,d>$), while nouns like *idiot* are.

His first conclusion is correct, and it is, in fact, a necessary consequence of analysing these adjectives as degree expressions, as shown in the previous sub-section. On any type of approach to gradability, a degree operator or modifier would need to be adjacent to the noun which provides the gradable structure on which it

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[232] Note that the degree readings arise with abstract mass nouns when they refer to instances, not kinds, of properties. Thus, the relevant reading is only available in (i)a, while in (i)b, a generic sentence, this reading is not available, and only the regular qualitative reading of the adjectives *great* and *amazing* obtains, while the size adjective *huge* is odd.
(i)   a. John's patience is {great/ amazing/ huge}.
         b. Patience is {great/ amazing/ ??huge}.
This also confirms our analysis that such adjectives are predicated of instances of properties (see §2.4 for more discussion).

operates and in whose extended functional projection the DegP that hosts them is located. In other words, adnominal degree operators or modifiers can only appear in a prenominal configuration, and will be banned from the predicative position. Consequently, any predicative uses that appear to exist will need to be excluded as cases of degree modification and accounted for in a different way. Morzycki points out that some ordinary size readings of size adjectives have a roughly degree-like flavour because of the nature of the modified NP. He argues that these are not true degree readings but rather size readings that make reference to size along a possibly abstract dimension, one that may correlate with some intuitive sense of extremeness or severity. In his view, these uses, unlike true degree readings, seem to be in some important sense genuinely metaphorical. His main argument that such cases pattern with ordinary size readings rather than with degree readings is precisely that they fail to accord with the position generalization as they can occur in predicative position.

This seems indeed a plausible approach to the data in (17). When the subject is a [+human] individual-denoting nouns like *idiot* the predicative adjective attributes a property to the individual referred to by the subject DP. The only available interpretation then is in terms of physical size of the individual. When the subject is a [-human] noun which describes an (abstract) object via a property (e.g. *failure*, *mess*, *problem* etc.) or names a property (e.g. *sorrow*, *generosity* etc.), using an adjective like *big* predicatively results in an interpretation that seems indistinguishable from the degree reading obtained when it is used attributively (as in *big idiot*). The degree interpretation here is, however, only apparent and it is due to the way size adjectives are understood in the context of the particular types of nouns used, namely nouns which denote abstract objects, or instances of properties (cf. Nicolas 2004, 2010, Moltmann 2004a,b for such proposals concerning the semantics of abstract mass nouns). In sum, in some cases, due to the type of noun, size adjectives receive an interpretation which is very similar to the degree-reading, without the actual manipulation of degrees. The adjectives are not (and cannot be) degree modifiers, but regular descriptive adjectives that get an abstract size reading, which only mimics the degree interpretation.

However, objections may be raised in connection with Morzycki's second conclusion. Analysing the predicative uses as abstract size predicates, as suggested above, does not automatically entail that these adjectives can never function as degree modifiers when used attributively with these nouns. So these nouns could still in principle be gradable.[233] Nothing excludes the possibility that, when used as an attributive modifier of such nouns, a size adjective like *big* is ambiguous between an abstract size adjective (which can also be used predicatively) and a degree

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[233] There is some unclarity about his position with respect to cases like (i) below, where the subjects are abstract mass nouns. He suggests these are "expressions that seem to involve what might be called 'nominalized' degrees" and *big* (but also *small* – the importance of which will become clearer in §2.3) can measure their size (i.e. the size of degrees themselves) "though the results often have the stilted quality of circumlocutions".

(i)   {George's idiocy/ Clyde's enthusiasm for goat cheese/ Herman's dorkiness} is {big/ enormous/ substantial/ small/ tiny}.

But measuring the size of the degree is precisely what he claims such adjectives do when they are used attributively with nouns like *idiot*, where he argues they are degree modifiers (which are, by definition, restricted to occurring within the DP), which he analyses as predicates of degrees.

modifier within Deg$_N$P (which is restricted to the attributive use). When used attributively with these nouns (e.g. *enormous mistake*, *huge blunder*, *enormous generosity* etc.) it would be, however, almost impossible to distinguish between the two readings. The potential degree reading obtained in the attributive use and the abstract size reading, which is the only one available in the predicative use, would be indistinguishable. This would also explain the contradiction pointed out by Morzycki and illustrated in (19), and the contrast with (20), which contains a [+human] individual denoting noun and where the degree reading available in the attributive position is clearly distinct from the concrete size interpretation available in predicate position:[234,235]

(19)   a. #That mistake wasn't enormous, but it was an enormous mistake.
        b. #That problem wasn't huge, but it was a huge problem.

(20)   a. Gladys isn't very big, but she is a very big beer-drinker.
        b. Harry isn't enormous, but he is an enormous idiot.

Unlike with [+human] individual-denoting nouns, the two interpretations would be virtually indistinguishable with nouns denoting abstract objects characterized by a property or directly referring to such abstract properties, without actually ruling out the possibility that an actual degree modification use is possible for *enormous mistake*. In other words, what seems to make the difference between nouns like *idiot* and nouns like *mistake*, *blunder*, *generosity* (and to underlie the contrast illustrated above) is that the former have concrete size while the latter have abstract size. But is this enough to warrant that these classes of nouns should be assigned different semantic types (i.e. $<e,d>$ vs. $<e,t>$)?

Given the similarity between the abstract-size reading and the degree reading, the question arises whether the analysis proposed for the predicative cases discussed above could be extended to all cases. Or is there really evidence in favour of analysing size adjectives as degree modifiers in any of the cases (e.g. in examples like *big idiot*)?

We will argue that in fact there is no conclusive evidence to support an analysis of size adjectives as degree modifiers in any of the cases considered so far. In the next sub-section, we will show that the position generalization is not enough to analyse these adjectives as degree modifiers. This distributional pattern is generally found with non-intersective adjectives, independently of degree and gradability. This suggests that size adjectives should be considered within the broader context of non-intersective modification, and that an alternative account which makes use of mechanisms that are independently needed should be taken more seriously. This will be discussed in §2.4 after a discussion and rejection of another possible argument in

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[234]   The examples in (19)-(20)are from Morzycki (2009).
[235]   Note also that if the examples in (19) are made more parallel to (20), by choosing as a subject a different noun, which does not support the same sort of abstract size interpretation of the adjective, the same result as in (20) is obtained (i.e. no contradiction):
(i)   Their intervention was {not big/ small}, but it was / turned out to be a huge mistake!
         The war was small(-scale)/ short… but it was a huge/ terrible mistake.
(ii)   John is {not big/ small}, but he's a big idiot.

favour of a degree analysis of size adjectives, namely the "bigness generalization", in §2.3.

2.2.3   The broader picture: non-intersective adjectives

The position generalization is not enough to assume that these modifiers depend on the presence of gradable structures in the semantics and of a Deg$_N$P in the syntax. The restriction to the prenominal position is a property exhibited by a large number of adjectives which do not give rise to degree readings.

It has often been shown in the literature that certain adjectives (namely non-intersective ones) are either restricted to the prenominal attributive position, or if apparently the same adjective can appear in both positions (i.e. both prenominal, and postnominal and predicative) then the different positions correlate with distinct meanings. The first class is illustrated in (21) below by the English temporal intensional adjective *former*. The second type is instantiated by adjectives like *ancien* in French: in the prenominal use illustrated in (22)a, it is intensional and corresponds to the English adjective *former*, while when used in the postnominal and predicative positions, as in (22)b,c, it receives an intersective interpretation ('old, aged').

(21)   a. the former prime-minister
       b. *this prime-minister is former

(22)   a. une   ancienne église
           an   old   church
           'a former church'
       b. une   église   ancienne
           a   church   old
           'an old church'
       c. Cette   église   est ancienne.
           this   church   is old
           'This church is old.'

A similar case is represented by the class of subsective adjectives, such as those in (23), which give rise to the well-known intersective / non-intersective ambiguity. That is to say, when an adjective like *beautiful* is used prenominally, as in (23)a, the example can be interpreted either as 'Olga is a dancer and she is beautiful', i.e. intersectively, or as 'Olga is beautiful as a dancer' or 'Olga dances beautifully', which is a non-intersective interpretation. Such adjectives have been called subsective precisely because on their non-intersective interpretation, they license the inference that anything that is [A N] is an N, but not that it is A. Thus, (23)a on its non-intersective reading entails that Olga is a dancer (who dances beautifully) but not that she is a physically beautiful individual. Similarly, (23)b can have either a non-intersective interpretation, which is in fact the most salient one, on which it is about

someone who has been a friend for a long time, or an intersective interpretation, in which case it is about a friend who is aged.

(23)   a. Olga is a beautiful dancer.
        b. Peter is an old friend.

When used predicatively, the adjectives have been argued to no longer give rise to such an ambiguity; they only have an intersective interpretation.

(24)   a. That dancer is beautiful.
        b. That friend is old.   (Larson 1998: only intersective interpretation)

Degree adjectives do in fact feature among the examples of non-intersective adjectives discussed in the literature (e.g. Siegel 1976, Larson 1988, Bouchard 1998, 2002, Demonte 2008 a.o.). In Siegel (1976), for example, examples of degree adjectives are found both among the exclusively non-intersective adjectives (e.g. *blithering*, *utter*, *inveterate* etc.), and among adjectives which have both an intersective and a non-intersective interpretation (e.g. *big*, *heavy*, *true*, *absolute* etc.); in the latter case, the degree use we are interested in here corresponds to the non-intersective use of the adjective.

The pattern presented above is not without exception. Some non-intersective adjectives can occur in predicate position under certain circumstances, namely depending on the type of noun that is used as a subject, or if the relevant 'dimension' for interpretation is made salient enough in the context.

For example, notorious intensional adjectives such as *alleged in English* and *supposé* in French, which are normally ungrammatical in predicative position, become grammatical in the predicative position when the subject is an abstract mass noun like *communism*, as pointed out by Higginbotham (1985) and Bouchard (2002). What Higginbotham and Bouchard suggest is wrong with (25)a and (26)a is that it is a category mistake. With an appropriate argument, we obtain a legitimate predication, as in (25)b and (26)b.

(25)   a. *That Communist is alleged.
        b. His Communism was alleged.

(26)   a. *Ce   communiste est   supposé.
            this   communist   is   supposed
        b. Son   communisme est supposé.
            his   communism is   supposed

Similar facts have been noted in connection with the distribution of relational adjectives by Demonte (1999), Picallo (2002), McNally and Boleda (2004). Such adjectives do not generally make good predicates, as shown in (27)b. However, if the right noun is used as a subject, then the predicative use of the adjective becomes grammatical, as shown in (28)b. The particular type of noun required by these adjectives is different (McNally and Boleda argue that relational adjectives denote

properties of kinds, where kinds are modelled as entities, following Carlson 1977), but the mechanism seems to be the same: as soon as the right type of argument is provided, the predicative use of the adjective becomes possible.[236]

(27) a. El   Martí és arquitecte tècnic.   [Catalan]
          the   Marti is architect   technical
          'Marti is a technical architect.'
      b. #El   Martí és tècnic.
           the   Marti is technical

(28) a. una   malaltia pulmonar   [Catalan]
          a   disease   pulmonary
          'a pulmonary disease'
      b. La   tuberculosi pot   ser   pulmonar.
          the   tuberculosis can   be   pulmonary

In sum, the pattern discussed here is similar to the pattern we have seen displayed by size adjectives on the relevant reading, in that there is a large class of adjectives which are exclusively prenominal with certain types of nouns, while some types of nouns allow their predicative use as well. Given the generality of this pattern and its general independence from degree or gradability, we conclude that the position generalization is not an argument in favour of analysing nouns such as *idiot* on a par with gradable adjectives and size adjectives as degree modifiers; it cannot be taken as (conclusive) evidence in favour of the existence of a Deg_NP. Instead, it should rather be seen as an instantiation of a pattern more generally found with non-intersective adjectives and taken to suggest that there are more general mechanisms at work which should be considered in an account of size adjectives too. We would like to propose, therefore, that the analysis in terms of abstract size suggested for case like *the mess was huge* can be extended to cases like *big idiot* once one takes into account the independent existence of particular mechanisms of semantically and syntactically combining (non-intersective) adjectives and nouns. Before discussing this in more detail, we should, however, point out that Morzycki (2009) provides another argument in favour of a distinction between the degree use of size adjectives and their abstract size reading, and of a degree(-based) account of the former, namely the "bigness generalization". It is to a discussion of these facts that we turn in the next section.

2.3   The bigness generalization

There is a second set of facts that has been used as evidence in favour of a distinction between the degree use of size adjectives and their abstract size reading, in addition to the position generalization, namely what Morzycki (2009) labels the "bigness generalization". This refers to the general impossibility of using small size adjectives to modify nouns and give rise to a low degree interpretation, that would

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[236]   The examples in (27)-(28) are from McNally and Boleda (2004).

be the counterpart of the high degree interpretation obtained with size adjectives that predicate 'bigness'. Consider the examples below from Morzycki (2009):

(29)   a.   George is a {big/ enormous/ huge/ colossal/ mammoth/ gargantuan} idiot.
       b.   George is a {*small/ *tiny/ *minuscule/ *microscopic/ *diminutive/ *minute} idiot.

The [A N] combinations in (29)b cannot be interpreted in terms of 'being idiotic to a low degree', in a parallel way to (29)a, which is interpreted as 'being idiotic to a high degree'. If they are acceptable, then they can only receive the concrete size interpretation, not the degree interpretation, i.e. he is both small and an idiot.[237] In sum, while adjectives that predicate bigness (i.e. upward monotonic size adjectives) systematically and productively license degree readings, adjectives that predicate smallness generally do not.

    Morzycki takes the bigness generalization to only apply to degree readings of size adjectives. Therefore, examples like the following, where the adjectives predicating small size receive an interpretation that parallels the interpretation of their 'big' counterparts, in the sense that they seem to express low degree, are not treated as counterexamples:[238]

(30)   a.   a {small/ tiny/ minuscule/ microscopic/ diminutive/ minute} mistake
       b.   a small lie

This is because, on his account, these are not gradable nouns, and when size adjectives modify them they are not instances of the degree use of these adjectives, but regular size predicates that simply get an abstract interpretation due to the type of nouns. His other argument in favour of this position was that, unlike nouns like *idiot*, nouns like *mistake* fail to conform to the position generalization (cf. discussion in §2.2.2).

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[237]   Note that small size adjectives may be used with a different interpretation, namely to express positive or negative evaluation, similarly to an expressive expletive like *damned* (cf. also Bolinger 1972):
(i)   a.   a little rascal
        b.   such a little fool
This use of *little* is also similar to diminutives which are used to suggest cuteness with favourable nouns – e.g. *She's a little angel, she is!*, depreciation with unfavourable ones – e.g. *you little rascal/ he's a dirty little coward* (examples from Bolinger 1972).
Note also the following contrasts in French provided by Johan Rooryck (p.c.):

(ii)   a.   un gros   menteur   [degree]
             a   fat   liar
             'a big liar'
        b.   un petit   menteur   [depreciation/negative evaluation]
             a   little   liar
             'a little liar'

(iii)   a.   Il   est un gros   menteur,   vraiment   le   roi   des   menteurs.
             he   is   a   fat   liar   indeed   the king   of.the   liars
             'He's a big liar, the king of liars really!'
        b.   #Il est un petit   menteur,   vraiment   le   roi   des   menteurs.
             he   is   a   little   liar   indeed   the king   of.the   liars

[238]   The examples in (30)a are from Morzycki (2009).

In what follows we will show how Morzycki accounts for the bigness generalization within a degree-based analysis and what the predictions and problematic aspects of this approach are. Importantly, the predicted correlation between the position generalization and the bigness generalization will be shown not to hold; hence such facts cannot be taken to directly support the particular account proposed by Morzycki. We will suggest an alternative way of approaching the facts which takes the bigness generalization to be an instantiation of a more general property of the nouns for which it holds, namely the lack of meaning neutralization.

Morzycki (2009) takes the bigness generalization to define the degree use of size adjectives, in an absolute way, along with the position generalization discussed in §2.2.1, and to support his particular degree-based analysis of gradable nouns and size adjectives. On his account the restrictions on the available types of degree modification by means of size adjectives are brought about in part by the underlying syntax that is proposed and in part by how the scale structure of the size adjective interacts with the semantics of degree measurement. Only *big*-type adjectives will be able to occur in the particular configuration in which they can modify gradable nouns as only they will make a difference to the positive unmodified noun (where *pos* is used). Let us see how this comes about.

Recall from the discussion in §2.2.1 that on Morzycki's account gradable nouns like idiot are taken to be of semantic type $<e,d>$ and to project a Deg_NP in the syntax. Syntactically, size adjectives are analysed as specifiers of Deg_NP. Semantically, they are analysed roughly on a par with ad-adjectival measure phrases because "both measure phrases and size adjectives predicate of a degree that it has a certain minimum size". Pursuing the parallel with the adjectival domain, he proposes that they are introduced by a nominal counterpart of the *Meas*-head assumed by Svenonius and Kennedy (2006) for AP-modifying measure phrases. Some complications arise here, however: while AP-modifying measure phrases do not give rise to an entailment to the positive form of the adjective, i.e. they receive a neutral interpretation, as shown in (31), size adjective do imply that 'x is N', i.e. the non-neutral or standard-related interpretation is preserved, as shown in (32).

(31)   a.   He's 1.50m tall.
       b.   He's tall.

(32)   a.   He's a big idiot.   →
       b.   He's an idiot.

This leads him to assume that the nominal *Meas*-head responsible for introducing size adjectives not only introduces the minimum requirement, but also the standard, just like *pos*. Thus, $Meas_N$ requires that the individual satisfy the gradable predicate (noun) to a degree that (i) is at least as great as the smallest degree that satisfies the size adjective, or rather the DegP projected by the size adjective, and (ii) is at least as great as the standard for the gradable noun. The denotation of $Meas_N$ is given in (33) and the corresponding syntactic structure is repeated in (34):

(33) $[[Meas_N]] = \lambda G \lambda M \lambda x\ [\text{MIN}\{d : d \in \text{SCALE}(G) \wedge M(d)\} \leq G(x) \wedge sG \leq G(x)]$
(where M is a measure phrase consisting of a size adjective, $\text{SCALE}(G)$ is the scale (ordered set of degrees) associated with a particular gradable noun G, and MIN picks out the smallest degree on that scale that satisfies M)

(34)
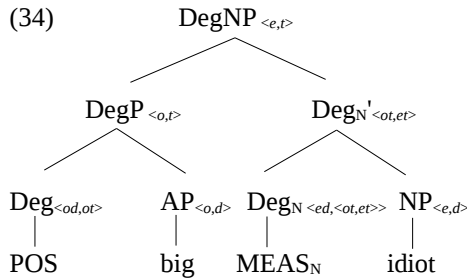
Let us now see how he excludes *small*-type adjectives. If *small* is used instead of *big*, this will amount to requiring that (i) the degree of that individual's idiocy be at least as great as the smallest that meets the smallness standard and that (ii) the individual meet the standard for idiocy. It is in computing the minimum (i.e. the first requirement) that a problem arises. Morzycki states the problem as follows. There is a minimum degree on the idiocy scale: d_0, corresponding to 'not idiotic at all'. There can be no smaller degree than this, so this will be the maximum on the smallness scale. Thus, irrespective of what the standard for smallness is, it will always be the case that d_0 is small enough to meet it. Therefore, the minimum computed for small idiot will always be the same: d_0.[239] But to say that the individual's idiocy must meet or exceed d_0 is to say nothing at all. Since d_0 is the minimum of the idiocy scale, every degree of idiocy meets or exceeds it. That means that the requirement will always be trivially satisfied.[240] And all that remains of the denotation is its second part, namely that the individual must meet the standard for idiocy. But this is the same denotation that would have been arrived at without the adjective, with [*pos* N]. So modification by small-size adjectives on a degree interpretation will be blocked.[241]

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[239] Morzycki's (2009) treatment of d_0 as being the maximum on the smallness scale and, therefore, always meeting the standard for smallness wherever it may be fixed, is not unproblematic. The adjective *small*, just like other negative dimensional adjectives such as *short, shallow* etc., normally requires/ presupposes that the objects measured *have some* of the respective property or dimension, for example a general physical extension, or some, non-zero height or length in the case of *short*, or some depth in the case of *shallow* (cf. Bierwisch 1989, Kennedy and McNally 2005). Such adjectives will not apply to objects that have no (i.e. zero) physical extension, no height/ length or no depth. Similarly, a size of zero means not having a size, so it cannot be included on any linguistic scale that measures size. They may have a lower-closed scale conceptually, but they cannot reach the zero point due to this presupposition. In a parallel way, then, we would not expect the standard of smallness to be met by d_0. In addition, even if we accept the relevance of d_0 (and even try to accommodate that it represents a value that is not an actual zero), it is not quite clear that this degree, which is the maximum on the scale of smallness, will be the minimum degree that satisfies the standard for smallness.

[240] At this point his choice to treat size adjectives as measure phrases introduced by a dedicated *Meas*-Deg-head which introduces this minimum requirement becomes crucial.

[241] See de Vries (2010) for a different analysis, also framed in a degree-based approach, but defining gradable nouns as being of type $<d,<e,t>>$ and deriving the impossibility of using small size adjectives

On this account, therefore, the explanation of the bigness generalization rests on rather particular and not unproblematic assumptions about the semantic and syntactic make-up postulated for the [A N] combination. But even putting aside such considerations, the analysis cannot be sustained: the predicted correlation between the bigness generalization and the position generalization, which are supposed to define the degree use of size adjectives and distinguish it from their abstract size reading, is empirically contradicted.

On the one hand, there are cases for which the position generalization does not hold, as illustrated again in (36), and which would be excluded from the domain of gradability by Morzycki, but which also show resistance to modification by small size adjectives, as illustrated in (35):[242]

(35)   a.   un {grand/ *petit}   courage   [French]
               a   big/   small   courage
         b.   a {huge/ *small} mess   [English]

(36)   a.   Son   courage   était   grand.   [French]
               his   courage   was   big
         b.   The mess they left behind was huge.   [English]

On the other hand, there are also cases which conform to the position generalization, as shown by the unavailability of the relevant reading in (38), and which are taken by Morzycki to be gradable nouns and to allow the degree use of size adjectives, but for which the bigness generalization does not seem to hold:[243,244]

(37)   a.   un {grand/   petit} mangeur   [French]
               a   big/   small eater
         b.   a {big/ small} stamp-collector   [English]

(38)   a.   Ce   mangeur est {grand/   petit}.   [French]
               this   eater   is   big/   small
         b.   That stamp-collector is {big/ small}.   [English]

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from the monotonicity properties of positive vs. negative adjectives and their interaction with the gradable structure of the nouns.

[242]   cf. Van den Velde (1996) for this observation in connection with abstract mass nouns denoting properties.

[243]   In addition, as Morzycki (2005) notes, adjectives predicating small size seem to be better in the comparative and superlative, i.e. the contrasts seem less clear, though he points out that the effect does not go away completely:
(i)   a.   Floyd is a {bigger/ ?smaller} idiot than Clyde is.
          b.   Floyd is the {biggest/ ?smallest} idiot I know.

[244]   Here are some attested French and English examples:
(i)   a.   Les différenciations individuelles vont apparaître à travers les comportements alimentaires (certaines personnes mangent plus ou moins vite), les prises alimentaires (gros mangeurs, petits mangeurs) et la perception des odeurs et des saveurs.
               (http://www.inpes.sante.fr/OIES/alimentation_atoutprix/pdf/05manger.pdf)
               'Individual differences will show up in eating behaviour (certain people eat more or less quickly), the intake of food (big eaters, small eaters) and the perception of smells and tastes.'
          b.   "She didn't eat very much supper, he said. I don't think she did." […] "Oh, she ate enough. She's just a small eater." (Corpus of Contemporary American English)

This shows that the bigness generalization does not characterize in an absolute way those cases that Morzycki would take to be instances of the degree use of the adjective and of gradable nouns, while also holding for nouns and adjectives that he excludes from the realm of gradability. In other words, there is no complete correlation between the bigness generalization and the position generalization. As such, these facts cannot be taken as evidence in favour of distinguishing between the degree use of size adjectives and their abstract size reading and as support for the particular degree-based analysis he proposes. In addition, these facts also correlate with another observation, namely that the nouns which resist modification be *small* can never really be neutralized.

Nouns that obey the bigness generalization, do so systematically: neutral readings do not occur in any context. For example, when the noun is used inside comparative or interrogative constructions like *He is a bigger idiot than his brother* or *How much of an idiot is he?*, it still entails that *He is an idiot*. In other words, it seems that this high degree, or standard-related, meaning is always part of the meaning of the noun and cannot be removed. This suggests that it should be made part of the lexical meaning of these nouns, rather than being 'detached' and placed in the syntax, as in Morzycki's (2009) degree-based account, where it is taken to be a fact about the internal semantics of the extended nominal projection (as it is made part of a particular type of operator, *Meas*, that occupies the head of Deg_NP). We suggest instead that this should be taken to be a fact about the lexical semantics of the nouns. As a general principle, if a meaning is entailed in all the uses of an item, then it is part of its lexical meaning (cf. Rappaport-Hovav 2008, Rappaport-Hovav and Levin 2010).

Thus, idiots are individuals characterized by a high degree of idiocy, i.e. individuals whose idiocy is big[245]. Individuals whose idiocy is small will not qualify as idiots. Translating it in terms of scales, this means that, even though in theory an idiocy scale may be conceived of that starts at an absolute 0, i.e. at the point corresponding to 'not idiotic at all' or 'no idiocy at all', it does not seem that this is also the linguistically relevant scale for *idiot* (contrary to what Morzycki 2009 assumes): the domain of the noun *idiot* seems to include only individuals that have some idiocy to start with. It should also be noted that not all nouns are alike. For example, while nouns which categorize [+human] individuals based on a gradable property like *idiot* seem to presuppose that the individuals have quite a high degree of the property, other nouns, especially those derived from activity verbs, are more neutral.[246] Among abstract mass nouns there is also variation. Nouns referring to physical dimensions (e.g. *length*, *height*) are neutral. But there are also others which are derived from adjectives and seem to be based on the non-neutral, or standard-related, meaning of the adjective (e.g. *tallness*). These, however, do not seem to be

[245] As will become clearer in §2.4, we understand "idiocy" here as referring to an instance of a property or trope (cf. Moltmann 2004a,b, Nicolas 2004, 2010). Tropes are a sort of individuals, but they are dependent individuals (cf. *Mary's idiocy*, *John's happiness* etc.) (see Moltmann 2003, 2004a,b, 2007, 2009, 2011 for properties of tropes). As compared to concrete objects like chairs or boys that have concrete physical size, tropes have abstract size. The use of the term 'degree' in our description of the meaning of nouns in this paragraph should, therefore, not be taken literally, i.e. in the sense it is generally understood in the literature assuming a degree-based approach to gradable adjectives, which is also the sense in which it is understood in Morzycki (2009) (cf. also chapter 1 for more discussion).

[246] These results will be confirmed by the data discussed in section 4.

gradable (e.g. ??*big[ger] tallness*, and even: ??*more tallness*). Among 'evaluative' abstract mass nouns there is also some variation – cp. *courage* in (35) to *comfort*, which may be modified by *small* (e.g. *It was small comfort to know that we were being backed by that group.* – Bolinger 1972). There is also variation among nouns denoting abstract objects characterized by a property – cp. *mess*, *blunder* and *mistake*, *problem*.[247]

This variation in encoding what might be called a standard-related interpretation,[248] and the persistence of this sort of interpretation throughout the uses of certain nouns, is most easily relegated to the lexicon. It is not clear how a *pos*-based approach, which 'externalizes' the standard and places it in the syntax, could capture these facts straightforwardly. On the one hand, it seems to replicate in the syntax information which is already lexically encoded. On the other hand, it would require further complicating the semantics of all potential adnominal degree expressions in a way that would lose the parallel with degree modification in the adjectival domain (cf. the case of *Meas* above).[249] Placing this aspect of the interpretation of gradable nouns in their lexical semantics, the way a degree-less approach would, seems to capture the facts better and to offer a simpler account.

To conclude, the bigness generalization cannot be taken as an argument in favour of distinguishing between the degree use of size adjectives and their abstract size reading or as evidence in favour of adopting a degree-based account which treats nouns like *idiot*, but not *blunder*, semantically on a par with gradable adjectives, and assumes the existence of a Deg$_N$P. This means that the suggestion made in §2.2.2-2.2.3 that the analysis in terms of abstract size could be extended to all cases (i.e. to *big idiot* as well) can be maintained. This view will be detailed in the next section.

2.4   Size adjectives are always size adjectives

The facts discussed so far concerning the distribution and interpretation of size adjectives do not support an analysis as degree expressions. It was shown (cf. §2.2.3) that size adjectives pattern with non-intersective adjectives more generally.

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[247]   (Certain) gradable nouns seem to be somewhat similar to partial adjectives in that they require some minimal amount of the property (as compared to dimensional abstract nouns which start applying from an absolute zero), but they may differ in the size of this interval/ amount: for some it may need to be very high – e.g. *idiot*, *mess*.

[248]   If we were to think in terms of (types of) scales and standards (cf. Rotstein and Winter 2004, Kennedy and McNally 2005), we could say that with nouns the "standard" may not only coincide with the maximum or minimum of a scale or be calculated with respect to a norm, but there seems to be a lot more variation.

See Kennedy (2007a) for a proposal of how to relate the type of standard and the type of scale (which accounts for the differences between relative and absolute adjectives), and McNally (2011) for some criticism, and a different proposal which relies on the types of properties adjectives denote and the strategies for calculating whether they apply or not; the latter seems better suited to account for example for those cases where adjectives have absolute standards which do not coincide with the maximum or minimum of the scale.

We will, however, not pursue a description of gradable nouns in these terms here.

[249]   But see Bierwisch (1989) for a type of degree-based approach designed specifically to account for the differences between dimensional and evaluative adjectives, including the difference concerning the way in which they relate to a standard.

The alternative account we have suggested is to take size adjectives as simply being size adjectives and to re-analyse all cases of the so-called 'degree' use as instances of an abstract size interpretation. Their sometimes peculiar way of combining with nouns can be understood as making use of mechanisms generally available to non-intersective modification. In §2.4.1 we will present the alternative approach to size adjectives. In order to account for the exclusively attributive uses, we need a more general theory of non-intersective adjectives. This is why in §2.4.2 we will provide some background on possible approaches to non-intersective adjectival modification, which will serve to suggest possible directions one could take in order to account for size adjectives too, though the choice of the exact mechanism to will be mostly left open for future research to settle.

2.4.1   Abstract size

On the view we would like to put forth, the apparent degree reading of size adjectives is always simply an abstract size reading (cf. discussion in §2.2.2). In these uses, the adjective still measures size, but in this case it is the size of instances of properties rather than that of objects that have concrete spatial dimensions; hence, the abstract nature of the measuring involved. Let us first consider the predicative uses which have been the first ones to be dealt with in this way. In predicate position, the relevant interpretation will arise when the subject is an object of the right sort, for example an abstract mass noun like *patience*, *generosity* etc. We take such nouns to denote instances of properties (cf. Moltmann 2004a,b, Nicolas 2004, 2010).[250] When an expression is used whereby their size or volume is to be measured, that will be understood in terms of the degree to which the property holds. Similar effects are also found with other adjectives too, as illustrated below:[251]

(39)   a.   His patience is sufficient for this job.
        b.   The safety of the roads in the Czech Republic is satisfactory.
        c.   The length of this board is {satisfactory/ sufficient}.

Nicolas (2010) discusses such effects on the interpretation of abstract mass nouns while maintaining that they still basically denote instances of properties. Consider the following example from Nicolas (2010):

(40)   Julie's love for Tom was greater than her love for Fred.

Nicolas argues that sentences like (40) compare two instances of love using an ordering relation associated with the adjective *great*. Given the vague meaning of

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[250]   The view of abstract mass nouns that we are adopting here is also compatible with Chierchia's (1984) theory. He analyses nominalizations like *goodness* (e.g. *Goodness is good*) as entity correlates of properties, a sort within type *<e>*, similar to Carlson's (1977) kinds. As has already been pointed out, however, the relevant readings of size adjectives occur in the context where the nominal does not have a kind reading, but refers to an instance of a property, i.e. a particular of an entity correlate of a property (just as an "ordinary" individual/ object is a particular of the kind) – recall the contrast illustrated earlier: #*Generosity is enormous* vs. *Mary's generosity was enormous*.
[251]   The examples in (39) are from Constantinescu and Součková (2007).

great, this may then be understood as comparing the two instances of love using an ordering relation associated with the noun *love* and the verb *to love*. Hence the possibility of a paraphrase in terms of degree: 'the degree to which Julie loved Tom was greater than the degree to which she loved Fred'. (p. 16) In other words, the basic denotation of these nouns need not be, and is not, actually defined in terms of degrees (contra Tovena 2001, for example). What the paraphrase in terms of degree reflects is just one among several possible ways of understanding the application of certain modifiers or predicates to instances of properties.[252]

This sort of interpretation will not, however, be available when the DP subject of the adjectival predicate denotes a [+human] individual (e.g. *that idiot*). In such cases, the interpretation will be in terms of physical size – this is the only interpretation that makes sense when applying a size adjective to an individual. This accounts for the unacceptable examples in (13)a-b, which contrast with those in (17)-(18), as well as for the non-contradictory examples in (20), which contrast with (19).[253]

When used prenominally with these nouns, the adjectives can be interpreted in a similar way to the cases where they modify property-denoting nouns. The difference is that here the property with respect to which they are interpreted is part of the internal semantic make-up of the noun (e.g. *idiocy* in the case of *idiot*). As far as we can tell, with property-denoting nouns, the adjective could apply in either of two ways, without that having a visible effect on the interpretation. Note again that with such nouns the interpretation obtained in the attributive and predicative uses of the adjective will not be distinguishable, hence the contradictory statements in (19).

The generalization of this account in terms of abstract size is also best supported by the distribution of size adjectives – in particular by the facts related to figurative meanings that were pointed out in §2.1. It was shown that size adjectives cannot generally be used to modify nouns used with figurative interpretations, though there also seem to be some counterexamples. Two relevant examples are repeated below for convenience.

(41)   a.   #Julie is a big boy.
        b.   He is just a big baby.

It was suggested there that the relevant interpretation of *baby* may have lexicalized into a gradable noun of the *idiot*-type. Here is how we may now understand the difference between nouns like *boy* and nouns like *baby*. On the one hand, as argued in chapter 3, on their stereotypical, figurative interpretation, nouns like *boy* denote sets of various properties that are stereotypically associated with boys. (Some of) these may intersect, and they make up an unordered set. In order to qualify as Ns, in this sense of N, individuals must have one or more such stereotypical properties. In general, they have a relatively large number of them. But sometimes having just one

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[252] See also section 3 where a different type of interpretation of abstract mass nouns will show up (namely as facts).
[253] This type of interpretation will also be available when the adjective is used attributively with these nouns (i.e. *idiot*), which leads to an ambiguity in these cases, an ambiguity which does not arise with e.g. property-denoting nouns.

such property, if it is a very salient one, may be sufficient.[254] This is not unexpected given that the stereotypicality of the properties may vary in the sense that they are more or less important in deciding whether a given individual is, figuratively speaking, an N or not. On the other hand, we would like to suggest that nouns like *baby*, have lexicalized as nouns of the *idiot*-type, in the following sense. They probably originally had a figurative interpretation of the type discussed above, but subsequently the set of stereotypical properties has been 'collapsed' and has come to be lexically encoded as one property, though a possibly complex, multi-dimensional one, such as 'immaturity'. In other words, *baby* has undergone a lexical change and is not represented as a set of individuals that all have a number of stereotypical properties of babies, but rather as a set of individuals characterized by their immaturity, similarly to a noun like *idiot*, which denotes a set of individuals characterized by their idiocy. This makes it possible to use a size adjective, as it can now apply to this one characterizing property inside the meaning of the noun.

We would like to point out again that talking about the degree of a property in these cases is just a convenient paraphrase. This is understandable given that the meaning introduced by size adjectives in these contexts is very similar to meanings obtained by degree modification in the adjectival domain. However, the mechanism by which these meanings are obtained is different. We have argued that in all the relevant cases the size adjective applies to an instance of a property or trope. These are objects (i.e. we take them to be of type <*e*>) of a particular sort. Among the properties that distinguish tropes from other sorts of objects, we mention here the fact that they are dependent (i.e. they depend on another individual in which they are located – e.g. *Mary's happiness*, cf. Van de Velde 1996, Moltmann 2004 a,b, 2011) and that they have abstract size (for more details on tropes, see Moltmann 2003, 2004a,b, 2007, 2009, 2011). Gradable nouns, therefore, are those nouns that either denote sets of such abstract objects, which have an abstract size (e.g. *idiocy*, *courage* etc., i.e. nouns that denote properties, whose instances have abstract size), or that denote sets of [+/-human] individuals defined in terms of such an object (e.g. *idiot*, a noun that denotes a set of individuals characterized by their idiocy). It should be noted, however, that size is not an inherent ordering criterion for nouns: abstract size is not one for the gradable nouns discussed here (e.g. *idiocy*, *courage* etc., *blunder*, *problem* etc., *idiot*, *smoker* etc.), just as concrete size is not for concrete nouns like *boy* or *house*. It may come to be a possible ordering criterion, once an explicit modifier is added (e.g. *big idiot*, *huge problem*, *great courage* etc.. just like *tall boy*, *big house* etc.). This makes an ordering, hence comparison, possible – as in example (40) from Nicolas (2010) discussed earlier.

The mechanism by which, in their attributive use, size adjectives can access a property inside the lexical meaning of nouns like *idiot*, is one that is independently needed in the construal of other non-intersective adjectives, as discussed in §2.2.3., and may be formally implemented in several ways. This is something that requires an independent, generalized account. However, offering a theory of non-intersectivity would go well beyond the scope of this thesis. In the next sub-section,

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[254] It is, probably, this possibility of singling out just one property of the set (which was seen happening in the context of internal *such* with result clauses or in exclamatives) that places these nouns somewhere in between ordinary, non-gradable nouns and nouns like *idiot*, which encode one salient proeprty in their meaning (and which are generally considered to be gradable).

we will only briefly suggest some possible directions given the existing proposals in the literature on non-intersective adjectives that will be reviewed in the first part of the sub-section.

2.4.2   Non-intersective uses of abstract size adjectives

In this section we will consider some possible ways of approaching the exclusively attributive uses of size adjectives (e.g. *a big idiot*) where they target a property inside the meaning of the noun. In order to do this, we will first review some of the main existing accounts of non-intersective adjectives, and the differences between intersective and non-intersective adjectives.

There are several types of approaches in the literature. Some assign two different semantic (and syntactic) types to intersective and non-intersective adjectives (such as Siegel 1976). Others argue that the different behaviour is actually due to there being different semantic types of nouns and, accordingly, extend the argument structure of the noun in order to account for the different types of interpretations adjectives give rise to in combination with (certain types of) nouns (Larson 1998). Finally, there are accounts which posit richer lexical structures for nouns (Pustejovsky 1995, McNally 2006, as well as Bouchard 1998, 2002).

Probably the best known analysis of the intersective/ non-intersective ambiguity illustrated in (23) above and repeated below for ease of reference, is Siegel's (1976) doublet analysis of adjectives.

(42)   a. Olga is a beautiful dancer.
        b. Peter is an old friend.

Siegel proposes that the ambiguity reflects a fundamental semantic and syntactic dichotomy holding among adjectives. One class is that of non-intersective adjectives (or non-intersectively interpreted adjectives). These are analysed as underlyingly nominal modifiers, which combine with common nouns to form new common nouns. Semantically, they are properties of properties, rather than properties of individuals (i.e. predicate modifiers), so they are of type $<<e,t>,<e,t>>$, and combine with the noun as function to argument. This means that they combine with characteristic functions of sets to form new characteristic functions; in other words, they combine with a property to form a new, modified property (hence, they are reference-modifying in Bolinger's 1967 terminology). In the usual Montagovian way, they invoke intensions (hence the term 'intensional adjectives'). The second class is that of intersective adjectives. Semantically, intersective adjectives are of type $<e,t>$ (i.e. simply characteristic functions) and are extensional (or referent-modifying in Bolinger's 1967 terms).[255] When they combine with a noun, the semantic result is predicate conjunction, which can be expressed through λ-abstraction. Their attributive use is accounted for through a mechanism of relative clause reduction (for details, see Siegel 1976).

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[255] More precisely, taking into account intensions, non-intersective adjectives are of type $<<s,<<s,e>,t>>,<<s,e>,t>>$, and intersective ones of type $<<s,e>,t>$.

While some adjectives are assigned exclusively to one of these two classes (e.g. *aged* is only intersective, *former* – always intensional), a large number of items are assumed to belong to both, which is the source of the intersective / non-intersective ambiguity. For Siegel this is a case of homophony between two semantically distinct elements. Thus, a single phonetic form like *old* or *beautiful* actually corresponds to a "doublet" *old₁/ old₂* or *beautiful₁/ beautiful₂*, respectively, and this yields ambiguity. Adjectives like *big* are also such cases: they are treated as ambiguous between a non-intersective use (i.e. the degree use) and an intersective one (i.e. the interpretation descriptive of size). The degree-less approach to size adjectives (cf. discussion in §2.2.1), which amounts to proposing a distinction between the degree adjective *big*, which is analysed as a degree function (hence, a predicate modifier), and the predicative size adjective *big*, is, therefore, directly comparable to Siegel's analysis of adjectives.

Although this type of analysis can account, for example, for the entailment facts (i.e. that on the non-intersective interpretation [A N] fails to entail that 'NP is A'), it also faces certain problems. First, as Larson (1998) points out, this approach postulates an ambiguity for a lot of adjectives, which is difficult to justify. Secondly, as McNally and Boleda (2004) and Partee (2010, in press) observe, the predicate modifier analysis also makes it hard to explain why the putatively non-intersective reading is sometimes available even when the adjective is used predicatively, and, hence, is applied to something of type <*e*>. Such behaviour is even exhibited by privative adjectives like *fake* (as in *That gun is fake*), as well as other intensional adjectives like *alleged* (recall the examples in (25)-(26) in §2.2.3).

Differently from Siegel (1976), Larson (1998) proposes that the intersective/ non-intersective ambiguity should not be blamed on the adjective, but on the noun. He suggests that the ambiguity involves what the adjective is modifying (e.g. the individual or the dancing) rather than something in the lexical semantics of the adjective itself. Thus, he argues for treating adjectives, including the subsective ones, uniformly as type <*e,t*>, and proposes that some nouns have an event argument *e* which can be modified directly by the adjective, just as its standard entity argument usually is.[256] The two readings of an adjective like *beautiful* in *a beautiful dancer* in (23)/(42) above are thus correlated with whether the adjective modifies the noun's entity or event argument. In addition, he proposes that the event argument can be bound by a (generic) quantifier by the end of the derivation (see Larson 1998 for details). In the same vein, McNally and Boleda (2004) propose re-analysing relational adjectives intersectively, as properties of kinds: they posit that all common nouns have an implicit kind argument, which is related to the individual-sort argument typically associated with nouns via the Carlsonian realization relation R (cf. Carlson 1977). The effect of modification by a relational adjective is to restrict the kind described by the modified noun to one of its sub-kinds. Subsequently, the kind argument gets saturated by a contextually-determined kind. Thus, a noun phrase like *arquitecte tècnic* 'technical architect' in (27) ends up denoting a property of individuals which can then be applied to an argument like *Martí*.

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[256] Larson (1998) takes the nominal *dancer* to apply to pairs of individuals <*x,e*> such that *x* is the agent of *e*, where *e* is a dancing event.

Such approaches predict the difficulty of using these adjectives predicatively (on the relevant interpretation, where the adjective has more than one) and present it as a matter of sortal mismatch, i.e. if the subject of the copular sentence does not denote an object of the right sort, the adjective cannot be used predicatively. However, if the argument of the adjective is of the right sort (e.g. if the subject of a relational adjective does plausibly denote a kind), then the predication will be acceptable, as in (28)b. Therefore, this type of approach seems better suited to also capture the possible predicative uses of such adjectives.

However, this sort of approach, which moves to an intersective semantics for at least some of the non-intersective adjectives, entails providing a much more fine-grained semantics for nouns. As McNally and Boleda (2004) note, such analyses result in a very extended argument structure for nouns. This proliferation of arguments also brings about a consequent proliferation of covert operations that are required to properly bind those arguments in the absence of overt expressions that have this function, such as the covert generic operator postulated by Larson (1998) to bind a noun's event argument.[257,258] McNally and Boleda (2004) and McNally (2006) suggest that once argument lists get too long, an alternative, more highly structured representation, such as that proposed by Pustejovsky (1995),[259] starts to look more appealing as it allows us to distinguish those variables which have syntactic consequences from those which do not (i.e. those which license discourse referents from those which generally do not).

An alternative approach is proposed by Bouchard (1998, 2002). Bouchard argues that the semantic part of the entry of a common N (e.g. *mammal*) is a network of interacting elements (or functions): (i) a characteristic function f which provides the property that interprets the N;[260] (ii) a specification for a time interval i, which tells us at what moment f holds; (iii) an indication of the possible world w which allows us to know whether f holds in the "actual" world or in some other imagined world in which f is not necessarily false; and (iv) a variable assignment function g, that allows us to determine the truth value of the final formula by associating each variable with a particular entity in the model. On this account, the combination of an adjective and an N actually always results in an intersective interpretation. The difference between the traditional intersective and non-intersective (interpretations

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[257] McNally (2010) also points out that it is not clear what kind of event the event-argument of nouns in Larson's analysis stands for – e.g. *dancer* vs. *cup, recipe* etc. As for McNally and Boleda's analysis, she notes that it uses an ad hoc composition rule, but one that could be generalized to diverse cases of modification.

[258] Note that the same criticism can be extended to degree-based approaches to nominal gradability, i.e. approaches which postulate explicit degree arguments in the semantics of gradable nouns (which are defined either as of type $<d,<e,t>>$ as in Matushansky 2002b, or of type $<e,d>$ as in Morzycki 2009) and which, consequently, have to postulate a covert operator, *pos*, that will bind the degree argument of a gradable noun, or to turn the measure function into a predicate, in the absence of overt degree expressions in order to. This a possibly undesirable consequence.

[259] We will not discuss Pustejovsky's (1995) Generative Lexicon theory here, as it would require entering a completely different framework that we will not make use of in the rest of this chapter. We refer the interested reader to Pustejovsky (1995 and subsequent work), as well as to McNally (2006), Saint-Dizier (2001) etc. for more discussion on criticisms of GL and possible ways of countering them, and Asher (2007) for an alternative theory.

[260] Bouchard defines this, following Kamp and Partee (1995), as "a measure of the degree to which an object falls in the extension of a given concept".

of) adjectives is recast in the following terms. In some cases, the meaning of the adjective intersects with the whole network of the meaning components of the N; this is the traditional intersective interpretation. In other, specifically determined cases, the adjective intersects with only one of these components in particular; this is the case of the traditional non-intersective adjectives.[261] In French (and other Romance languages) this correlates with the prenominal use of the adjective; when in postnominal or predicative position, the adjective cannot access these internal subparts of N, but can only modify the N as a whole. What modification relation can be defined crucially depends on the meaning of the adjective (i.e. what kind of feature it can modify), and the meaning of the N (i.e. what features it has).[262] For example, a temporal adjective like *future* or *former* (e.g. *the future president* or *former senator*) is compatible with the interval of time i (and results in the interpretation 'someone characterized as a president/ senator at an interval of time in the future/ past); *false* (e.g. *a false eyelash*) is compatible with the possible world w; *alleged* (e.g. *an alleged communist*) with the value assignment function, and an adjective like *perfect* (e.g. *a perfect scoundrel*) with the characteristic function f. When a noun phrase built from the same adjective and the same N can receive more than one interpretation, it is because the adjective is in a position to combine with different components of N.

This approach seems to offer an elegant and quite straightforward way to capture non-intersective (uses of) adjectives. However, it is not completely clear how to formally represent these meaning components and their interaction with modifiers, nor is it always obvious which meaning component is modified by a given adjective.

To conclude, the theories on non-intersective adjectives discussed in this section have in common the search for ways to capture the intuition that non-intersective adjectives modify something inside the meaning of the noun. They differ significantly in the chosen formalization of the mechanisms whereby the adjective can target such a meaning component, though, even in this respect, we have seen that two main directions exist: either to treat non-intersective adjectives differently from intersective ones and take them to act as functions on the nouns they combine with, or to treat adjectives uniformly and enrich the structure of the noun, elements of which non-intersective adjectives can be predicated of. With this much background information, we may now consider some possible directions to take in order to account for the behaviour of size adjectives.

Our understanding of size adjectives probably resonates most obviously with the type of approach proposed by Bouchard (1998, 2002) to account for non-intersective adjectives. On this approach the prenominal adjective is in a position to target an internal element in the semantic make-up of a noun. A size adjective on its degree reading would target the characteristic function f which provides the property that

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[261]   His theory allows an adjective to modify only a subpart of N, but, differently from e.g. Pustejovsky 1995, he does not allow modification of elements internal to the characteristic function f providing the property that interpretes N, but only modification of N itself, as well as *i, w, g*. "These are not context-dependent notions like qualia, but general, nondefeasible subparts that all nouns have". In this way, he "avoids the problem of multiple polysemy created by the defeasibility of the qualia structures and sublexical semantic features" (Bouchard 2002).

[262]   There is some unclarity on this point. While at first Bouchard argues that the four components are present in the lexical semantics of all nouns, he later on suggests that nouns may actually differ in their actual semantic make-up.

interprets the N – e.g. *idiocy* in the case of *idiot*. This is in fact how Bouchard himself analyses examples such as *a big eater*, as illustrated in (43) for French:

(43)   a.   un {mangeur/   fumeur/   buveur}   gros
              a   eater/   smoker/   drinker   fat
              'a fat eater/ smoker/ drinker'
       b.   un gros   {mangeur/   fumeur/   buveur}
              a   fat   eater/   smoker/   drinker
              'a {big/ heavy} {eater/ smoker/ drinker}'

According to Bouchard, the basic meaning of *gros* is 'surpasses the norm in volume'. In (43)a, the adjective modifies the whole network of the N, and indicates that the individuals denoted surpass the norm in volume, size being the most salient feature of volume. By contrast, in (43)b the adjective only intersects with the characteristic function of the N, and, therefore, says that the norm in volume is surpassed qua eater, smoker or drinker. By inference, then, it is interpreted with respect to food, smoking and drinking, respectively.

     The view of size adjectives we have proposed here may also be implemented in a Larsonian type of semantics, whereby the adjective would be predicated of an (implicit) argument of the noun.[263] This argument would be an instance of a property that defines an individual as N – e.g. *idiocy* in the case of *idiot*. When applied to it, the size adjective would give rise to the same interpretation as in examples like *huge stupidity/ his stupidity was huge*. This sort of argument would then be somewhat similar to the content of the characteristic function *f* from Bouchard's theory as well as to that of the 'attribute' given by the N in Higginbotham (1985).

     It is important to point out (again) that, although the meaning introduced by size adjectives in these contexts is very similar to meanings obtained by degree modification in the adjectival domain, the mechanism by which these meanings are obtained is different. In those approaches to gradability that make use of degrees, the semantics of adjectives is basically defined in terms of a comparison of degrees. Take, for example, the *pos*-operator that is generally postulated for the positive, unmodified form of adjectives and which is responsible for introducing the non-neutral interpretation. The positive form of an adjective like *tall* will be interpreted

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[263]   Larson (1998) in fact raises the question whether the same type of analysis that he proposes to account for event-modifying adjectives (e.g. *beautiful dancer* or *former president*) could be applied to account for adjectives such as *utter* or *complete* (as in *an utter/ complete fool*) etc. He notes that these adjectives are also behaving "adverbially", but the semantics is not event modification, but rather degree modification, as the relation between the adjective and the noun parallels that between a degree modifier and an adjective. He leaves open the question of how precisely to accommodate these forms, simply speculating that "just as we must posit a hidden event parameter in *dancer* to accommodate *beautiful dancer*, we may ultimately be forced to posit a hidden degree parameter in *fool* to accommodate *utter fool*." (Larson 1998:10). The way he talks about it suggests that this argument would indeed be similar to the sort of degree argument defined in degree-based approaches to gradable adjectives. In a sense, then, this anticipates the extension of degree-based approaches to gradable nouns, as proposed by Matushansky (2002b), Matushansky and Spector (2005), and, most explicitly, Morzycki (2009). These analyses propose to define gradable nouns in terms of explicit degree arguments, i.e. either of type $<d,<e,t>>$ or of type $<e,d>$. However, as discussed throughout this section, such an account cannot be applied to size adjectives, which involve something different from degree modification as we know it from the adjectival domain. As for adjectives like *complete*, we will examine them in §4.5.2.

roughly as being 'tall to a degree *d* which is greater than or equal to the standard degree' (see also chapter 1, §1.1). Nothing like this (i.e. comparison of degrees) is involved in the case of modification by size adjectives. In all the relevant cases the size adjective is predicated of an instance of a property or trope, i.e. an object of type *<e>*, which is part of the meaning of the noun, and results in a size reading, as usual – it is just abstract due to the particular nature of the object involved. This is completely parallel to how a non-intersective adjective like *old* in *an old friend* is interpreted as applying to the property defining the N, namely the 'friendship', and measuring the length of the friendship in time. Once an explicit modifier like *big* or *old* is introduced, this makes an ordering, hence comparison (of idiots and friends, respectively), also possible (recall also example (40) from Nicolas (2010) discussed in the preceding sub-section).

More work is needed to decide on the best analysis of the non-intersective uses, but this is an issue for a more general theory of non-intersective adjectives. Be that as it may, it seems that this type of approach, which capitalizes on differences among nouns while treating size adjectives in the same way in all cases, offers a simpler account, as well as making use of mechanisms that would be independently needed.

2.5 Concluding remarks

The facts examined in this section concerning the distribution and interpretation of size adjectives do not seem to support an analysis as degree modifiers, semantically or syntactically. Instead, they seem to favour an analysis which treats them as size adjectives across the board and attributes the apparent degree reading to an abstract size interpretation which arises when the adjective meaning applies to a particular type of object, namely an instance of a property. Although the resulting interpretation is very similar to meanings obtained by degree modification in the adjectival domain, the mechanism by which it is brought about is different. The relevant reading obtains with nouns that denote abstract properties whose instances have abstract size (e.g. *idiocy*, *courage* etc.), or with nouns that denote sets of individuals (concrete or abstract, human or non-human) that are characterized by such a property (e.g. *idiot*, *blunder* etc.). This is, therefore, the picture of gradable nouns that emerges from the discussion in this section.

This means that, so far, we have no good evidence in favour of the existence of adnominal degree modifiers or of an explicit gradable structure in the semantics or syntax of these nouns that would be completely parallel to that of adjectives. As for the more general implications this has for using the distribution of these adjectives as a test for gradability, again, we are left with inconclusive evidence, although we may still maintain that the observed meaning effects arise with a limited class of nouns – namely those which encode a gradable property in their lexical meaning, and this may still be used as an indication of the gradable status of these nouns.

3 Evaluative adjectives

In this section we examine a class of adjectives which is generally taken to include both adjectives which in their basic use express qualitative evaluation, such as *terrible*, *awful*, *dreadful* etc., and adjectives which express amazement, such as *incredible*, *amazing*, *extraordinary* etc. (cf. Paradis 2000, Nouwen 2005, 2011a, Morzycki 2008b, Schwager 2009, de Vries 2010). As briefly illustrated in the introduction to this chapter, as well as in chapter 1 (§2.2), these adjectives can be used to modify gradable nouns (e.g. *a terrible fool*, *an unbelievable weirdo* etc.) and seem to give rise to high degree readings, parallel to the use of their adverbial counterparts in the adjectival domain (e.g. *terribly foolish*, *unbelievably weird* etc.). The nouns they can be used to modify in the relevant degree sense are generally a subset of the nouns that can be modified by size adjectives. For reasons of space, in what follows we will restrict our attention to *terrible*-type adjectives. (For remarks on *amazing*-type adjectives, see Nouwen 2005, 2011a, de Vries 2010;[264] see also Katz 2005, Nouwen 2005, 2011a, Morzycki 2008b for analyses of the corresponding adverbs). The adjectives in this class seem to display more lexical idiosyncrasies as compared to the class of size adjectives examined in section 2, as well as to their adverbial counterparts. However, a number of clear patterns seem to hold, both in terms of their distribution with respect to types of nouns and in terms of their distribution with respect to syntactic position. Some of the restrictions that can be observed in their distribution also turn out to be quite systematic, and may therefore play a role in the analysis these adjectives should be given. At first sight, their distribution and interpretation makes these adjectives likely candidates for the status of adnominal degree modifiers. But it will be shown in this section that the facts may also support an alternative analysis of these adjectives which capitalizes on their evaluative interpretation, which we take to be an expressive sort of meaning, and does not involve the manipulation of gradable structures.

3.1 Distribution, interpretation and the degree analysis

In this sub-section we will examine the basic facts about the distribution and interpretation of evaluative adjectives, which seem to suggest that they may be analysed as degree modifiers, similarly to their adverbial counterparts, which have been analysed as degree modifiers in the adjectival domain (cf. Doetjes 1997, Katz 2005, Nouwen 2005, 2011a, Morzycki 2008b etc.).

To start with, the following series of examples illustrate the basic, literal use of the adjective, which describes the objects denoted by the modified nouns in terms of negative quality, whether that is a [+human] individual as in (44)a, or a [-human], mass or count, concrete or abstract object, as in (44)b-c.

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[264] The interested reader may also consult Schwager and Castroviejo-Miró 2008 and Schwager 2009 for an analysis of *amazing* (though not in the context of gradable nouns, but only in its use as main clause predicate of nominal exclamatives – e.g. *It's amazing the people that come here!*).

(44)   a.   a terrible {guy/ doctor}
   b.   terrible {news/ behaviour}
   c.   a terrible {place/ story/ idea}

Now consider the following series of examples, which contain gradable nouns of various types:

(45)   a.   a terrible {braggart/ fool/ bore}
   b.   terrible {nonsense/ negligence}
   c.   a terrible {shame/ mess}

In these examples, the adjective seems to contribute a high degree interpretation. For example, *a terrible fool* is understood to be 'a terribly foolish person'. In other words, the relation between the adjective and the noun it modifies seems to parallel the relation between a degree modifier (e.g. *terribly*) and a gradable adjective (e.g. *foolish*). The question we would like to answer in this section is whether this is indeed how evaluative adjectives function.

All the adjectives in this class encode a notion of extremeness in their lexical meaning, i.e. they are 'extreme' adjectives (cf. Cruse 1986, Paradis 2001, Morzycki 2010). Such adjectives have been argued either to indicate the ultimate point of the scale in terms of which they are conceptualised (Paradis 2000, 2001), or to involve degrees which exceed the contextually provided set of salient degrees, or which go "off-the-scale", so to say (Morzycki 2010). What seems to underlie the degree use of these adjectives, similarly to their adverbial counterparts, is a loss of lexical meaning in favour of retaining only the high degree component (cf. Doetjes 1997, Paradis 2000).[265] And even in that component there has been some change, or reduction: the adjectives have lost their inherent superlativity or relation to the extreme, end-point of a scale, and have simply come to indicate high degree (cf. Paradis 2001).

Returning to the distribution of evaluative adjectives, similarly to *big*-type adjectives, they cannot generally be used to modify in a degree sense nouns used figuratively. The examples below, which contain nouns that in other contexts were shown to receive figurative, stereotypical interpretations, cannot be modified by *terrible* on the intended reading:

(46)   a terrible {lawyer/ clown/ boy}

The nouns in (46) can only be interpreted in their basic, literal meaning and the adjective *terrible* receives its basic, qualificational interpretation: the examples say something about the negative quality of the individuals – either in terms of general personal quality, or qua the role expressed by the N (as with *lawyer* or *clown*). The nouns cannot receive figurative interpretations so that the examples would be interpreted as being about individuals who are terribly litigious, or manifesting clown-like behaviour, or behaving in a very childish way, without being an actual

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[265]   In fact, the original meanings of *awful*, *dreadful*, *horrible*, *terrible* were 'awe/ dread/ horror/ terror-causing'. This seems to have been weakened to 'something very bad' (cf. Paradis 2000), or, rather, to have become less specific.

lawyer, clown or child. However, as also discussed in the previous sub-section, some nouns, such as *baby*, can be used in their figurative meaning and intensified by *terrible*, as illustrated in (47). Given that such modification is generally not possible, this seems to confirm the suggestion made in §2.1 and §2.4.1 (cf. examples (7), (9)a and (41)b), namely that this meaning of *baby* has become lexicalized, and the noun is thus similar now to nouns of the type *idiot*.

(47)   a. I am a terrible baby when it comes to pain.
        b. He is being a terrible baby about it.

So far, based on their distribution and interpretation, it would seem that evaluative adjectives are good candidates to the status of degree expressions that would fulfil in the nominal domain the same function as their corresponding adverbs in the adjectival domain. The distribution of these adjectives with respect to syntactic position seems to offer further support to such a view.

The examples in (48) suggest that the degree(-like) interpretation of these adjectives is restricted to the prenominal attributive position.

(48)   a. a terrible idiot
        b. That idiot {is/ seems} terrible.

In (48)b, where the adjective is used predicatively, the intended reading found in (48)a is not available. The adjective can only receive its basic, literal interpretation, whereby the individual in question (who is an idiot) is attributed a general negative qualitative evaluation.

In fact, these adjectives seem to be more strictly restricted to the prenominal attributive position on the degree reading than size adjectives, and to resist more stubbornly the predicative use under the relevant interpretation. Although the distinctions are not always very clear-cut, the degree(-like) interpretation does not seem to be present in predicate position even when the subject is one of the nouns that allowed the predicative use of size adjectives on an interpretation that was not distinguishable from the one obtained in the attributive prenominal position (cf. §2.2). Consider the following examples:

(49)   a. They left behind a {terrible/ awful} mess.
        b. The mess they left behind was {terrible/ awful}.

There is a contrast here between the prenominal and predicative uses, even though it may be somewhat less clear than in (48), at least at first sight. While (49)a can clearly (and easily) be interpreted in a way parallel to 'terribly messy', where the messiness is emphasized or intensified, (49)b is perceived to be more neutrally descriptive of the situation as being qualitatively negative – either because of the way it is or because of its consequences etc. Perhaps surprisingly, the contrast is even clearer with abstract mass nouns:

(50)   a. his {terrible/ awful} {negligence/ ignorance}
        b. His {negligence/ ignorance} was {terrible/ awful}

While the degree interpretation is available in (50)a where the adjective is used attributively, (50)b is interpreted as 'the fact that he was {negligent/ ignorant} was terrible' or 'the way in which his {negligence/ ignorance} was manifested was terrible' (probably due to the consequences etc.). This is not surprising. As has been noted in the literature, abstract mass nouns denoting properties can be interpreted as facts in addition to being interpreted as concrete manifestations of properties, i.e. instances of properties (cf. Van de Velde 1996, Moltmann 2004a,b, Nicolas 2002, 2004, 2010 a.o.). However, an interpretation in terms of the high degree of the property (i.e. 'he was {terribly/ very} {negligent/ ignorant}') does not seem to be accessible. This may be a surprising result given that a prominent property of abstract mass nouns has been argued to be their giving rise to an interpretation in terms of degrees, as the unmarked option, in a variety of contexts (cf. Van de Velde 1996, Tovena 2001) – this is also what was seen in section 2 in the context of size adjectives. This is important as it may tell us something not only about the meaning of the adjective, but also about the meaning of this type of nouns more generally. The absence of the degree interpretation in this context might be taken to suggest that this is not the basic denotation of such nouns and that, in those contexts where a paraphrase in terms of degrees is available, it arises either as the result of some sort of coercion, or as an alternative way of understanding the application of certain modifiers or predicates to instances of properties (cf. also discussion in Nicolas 2010 and in §2.4). This confirms the conclusions reached in §2.4, where the latter view is taken in the analysis of size adjectives. The possible paraphrase of (50)b in terms of a fact may reflect a similar process. If an instance of a property is *terrible*, that may be because of the particular way in which it is manifested and the consequences it has, or because of the mere fact of its existence, the latter resulting in a fact interpretation. This means that we can maintain an unambiguous semantics for the nouns, as denoting instances of properties, and view the other possible or apparently different interpretations as ways of understanding particular modifiers or predicates in the context of these objects.[266]

In sum, the distribution of evaluative adjectives on the relevant interpretation with respect to types of nouns (i.e. inherently gradable) and to syntactic position (namely, strictly prenominal) suggests that they may be analysed as adnominal degree modifiers (cf. Nouwen 2011a for a suggestion in this sense, and de Vries 2010 for an explicit proposal),[267] similarly to to their adverbial counterparts, which have been analysed as degree modifiers in the adjectival domain (cf. Doetjes 1997, Katz 2005, Nouwen 2005, 2011a, Morzycki 2008b etc.).[268] This view could be

[266] An interpretation in terms of facts may also be an actually distinct interpretation arising as the result of coercion; this might be the case when such nouns occur as arguments to verbs like *acknowledge*, *admit* etc.
[267] Recall that in being strictly prenominal, evaluative adjectives differ from size adjectives, which were seen to be able to occur in predicate position on the relevant reading when the subject is a noun of the right sort. This also means that an alternative account such as that proposed in §2.4 for size adjectives would not be applicable to evaluative adjectives. But see next sub-section for a different proposal.
[268] Note that on Morzycki's (2008b) account degree intensification is not included in the actual lexical meaning of these adverbs; they are taken to denote properties of propositions and combine with adjectives through the mediation of a phonologically null degree operator [R]. They are interpreted as arguments of this invisible degree morpheme and perform a widening of the domain of salient degrees; this is how degree intensification comes about.

implemented either within a degree-based or a degree-less approach to gradability. Both approaches would make similar predictions about the syntactic behaviour of these adjectives: if they involve operations on the gradable structure of a noun (and are possibly hosted by a dedicated functional projection – cf. Morzycki 2009, de Vries 2010), then they can only occur in this particular configuration, i.e. prenominally (see similar discussion in §2.2.1).

Further examination of the distribution and interpretation of evaluative adjectives, however, brings up some problems for the view that evaluative adjectives are degree expressions that would fulfil in the nominal domain the same function as their corresponding adverbs in the adjectival domain. In particular, evaluative adjectives are subject to restrictions that are not found with their adverbial counterparts. In the next sub-section, we will consider some additional data and suggest an alternative account of evaluative adjectives.

3.2   Some additional facts and an alternative account

Based on the distribution and interpretation facts considered in the previous sub-section, it would seem that evaluative adjectives are good candidates for the status of adnominal degree expressions, similarly to their adverbial counterparts. However, some additional facts shed some doubt on this view. It will be shown in this sub-section that evaluative adjectives in fact differ from the corresponding adverbs insofar as they are subject to certain (systematic) restrictions that their adverbial counterparts lack. In addition, as also discussed in §2.2, the restriction to the prenominal position is not enough to assume that they are degree modifiers. Based on the observed restrictions, we will suggest an alternative account, which capitalizes on their evaluative meaning.

The most notable feature of the distribution of *terrible*-type adjectives, and one which may play a significant role in deciding on their analysis, is probably their restriction to negative nouns.[269] This is suggested by the following contrast:[270]

(51)   a.   an awful mess
        b.   a terrible bore

(52)   a.   ??an awful pleasure
        b.   ??a terrible {genius/ beauty/ joy}

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[269]   It should also be noted that there is quite a large amount of idiosyncratic behaviour (i.e. cases of individual collocational, even idiomatic, A-N combinations) among the adjectives in this class on the relevant reading, in addition to the (rather systematic) restrictions that have been discussed above. For example, the adjective *dreadful* can easily be used on the relevant interpretation with nouns like *coward* or *bore*, but it is somewhat less normal with *fool*, and even less so with *weirdo*, and while it is common to talk about *a dismal failure*, it is less so to talk about *dismal mistakes*, though this is not completely excluded either (see Bolinger 1972 for more examples of this sort). (cf. also Nouwen 2005, 2011a and de Vries 2010 for similar remarks on *amazing*-type adjectives – e.g. while *an unbelievable weirdo* is fine on the relevant reading, *an unusual/ surprising weirdo* cannot receive this interpretation.)

[270]   Example (52)a is from Paradis (2000).

In this respect, they differ from the corresponding adverbs, which are compatible with adjectives irrespectively of their polarity, or connotations:

(53) a. awfully kind
      b. terribly nice

On the one hand, this may suggest that the adverbs may have undergone a more drastic process of semantic bleaching and abstraction and are, thus, more grammaticalised than the corresponding adjectives, which retain the negative connotation. On the other hand, it shows that the facts are not completely parallel in the nominal and adjectival domains. This suggests that it is not the case that, in *a terrible N* and *terribly A*, *terrible/y* is the same lexical item with the same meaning, i.e. a degree modifier, only differing in shape depending on the syntactic environment in which it is inserted (i.e. nominal vs. adjectival or verbal).

This sort of restriction in the distribution of evaluative adjectives may in fact suggest an alternative way of understanding (and analysing) them. When the negative evaluative adjective modifies a noun with a negative connotation, this results in "boosting" the negative connotation of the noun. This indirectly results in intensifying the property to which the negative connotation is associated.[271] For example, if someone is said to be both *an idiot*, which attributes a property which is generally evaluated as being negative, and *terrible* (as one), i.e. being additionally negatively evaluated, results in a reinforcement that ultimately is taken to bear on the property attributed to start with (i.e. the idiocy). If he is said to be *a terrible idiot*, it will be inferred that this is because he is very idiotic, rather than just average. In other words, the reported degree interpretation may not be due to the actual truth-conditional semantics of the adjectives that would operate on the degree structure of the modified noun. Instead, it may simply arise as an effect of this 'boosting', i.e. as an implicature, in the context of nouns that lexically encode a property that has a negative connotation and that also happens to be gradable.

This view, which capitalizes on the (negative) evaluation contributed by the adjective, finds some additional support. First of all, while not generally able to modify nouns used figuratively (recall the examples in (46)), *terrible* may, at least to some extent, co-occur with nouns used with this sort of interpretation in *N of an N* constructions, which were argued in chapter 2 to be environments which require an interpretation in terms of a (typically negative) value judgment:

(54) a. (what) a box of a house
      b. a terrible box of a house
      c. ??That house is a terrible box.

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[271] We may add here cases of intensification achieved by semantic repetition, such as those illustrated in (i) – we talk about semantic repetition here given that all lunatics are crazy, and all mistakes are bad (cf. Bolinger 1972):
(i)   a. crazy lunatic
       b. bad mistake

Secondly, other nouns, whose epithetic use is based on an originally figurative interpretation also allow such modification, though judgments sometimes vary among speakers (unlike with nouns like *idiot* or *fool*):

(55)   a.   I guess they figured if the lights were too strong, the patrons would see
           what a terrible wreck the theater was and not come back.[272]
       b.   (?)His house was a terrible pigsty.

One way of approaching such data, would be to think that, since *terrible* independently tends to modify nouns with a negative connotation, it is also likely to show up when such nouns are used figuratively. However, this would predict a much wider distribution with figurative uses than is actually found. Alternatively, as suggested above for *baby*, it may be that these uses have become conventional meanings for some nouns (e.g. *wreck* and *pigsty* have come to simply mean something like 'mess' or 'messy place'), but not for all, or not for all speakers – hence the variation. The latter hypothesis seems to be supported by the possible co-occurrence of such adjectives with typical, conventional epithet nouns like *bastard* etc.

(56)   He's a terrible {bastard/ bully}.

Finally, expressives (e.g. expletives like *fucking, damned* etc. by which a speaker may signal a marked emotional attitude to what is said, and interjections like *man, boy, gosh*) have also been shown to interact in similar ways with gradable expressions (cf. Nouwen 2005, 2011a, McCready 2005, 2009).

These facts support the alternative view of evaluative adjectives suggested here, which capitalizes on their subjective evaluative interpretation. It may be assumed that they have an expressive meaning and involve some notion of general qualitative evaluation. Expressive meaning has been most prominently analysed in relation to expressions like *the jerk* or *fucking, damn* etc., whose main function is to display some kind of evaluative attitude or emotion. Potts (2005) takes them to be expressions which convey conventionally implicated content, and he develops a multidimensional logic for dealing with conventional implicatures (CIs). Such expressions, therefore, are interpreted in a separate dimension from that of truth-conditional or at-issue meaning. Cruse (1986), Aoun, Choueiri and Hornstein (2001), Corazza (2005), and Potts (2005) assume that expressives are always speaker-oriented, regardless of syntactic position. Our evaluative adjectives, however, are not exclusively speaker-oriented; shifts in perspective are allowed, as suggested by (57), where the opinion can be attributed to the subject of the report and not to the speaker. But the adjective need not be speaker-oriented even when it is not syntactically embedded, as suggested by (58), where the evaluation can be attributed to the subject.

(57)   a.   Lina said that a terrible idiot had given her a hard time at the tax office.

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[272]   Source: *Growing up Latino. Reflections on Life in the United States*, H. Augenbraum and I. Stavans (eds.), available at http://books.google.com/books.

b. Lina didn't know if that terrible mess would bother anyone.
c. Lina thought that no one would accept that terrible nonsense.

(58)   Lina was looking in disbelief at the terrible mess they'd left behind...

The possibility that expressives be non-speaker-oriented has been acknowledged in the recent literature (cf. Amaral, Roberts and Smith 2007, Harris and Potts 2009 a.o.) and has led to a somewhat different view. Harris and Potts (2009), for example, propose that the source of non-speaker-oriented readings of expressives is the interaction of a variety of pragmatic factors; in general, these interactions favour speaker-orientation, but other orientations are always in principle available, regardless of syntactic configuration. They thus propose enriching Potts's (2005) multidimensional view of semantic composition with a theory of perspective taking in context such as Giannakidou and Stavrou (2008) and Lasersohn (2005). This way of relativizing the evaluation to a judge could also capture the facts illustrated above for evaluative adjectives. But there is a quirk. Built into Potts' (2005, 2007) theory are the following two claims: (i) expressive content never applies to expressive content, and (ii) no lexical item contributes both an at-issue and a CI-meaning. Our view of evaluative adjectives seems to go counter to these claims. If we say that evaluative adjectives reinforce a negative connotation in the meaning of the nouns they modify, that suggests that the nouns themselves may involve an expressive meaning component; that, however, cannot be their only content – they clearly also contribute an at-issue meaning. This contradicts claim (ii). Moreover, saying that the evaluative adjectives modify this meaning of the noun implies that expressive content should be able to modify expressive content, which contradicts claim (i). It should be pointed out, however, that these two claims have been challenged. Gutzmann (2008) proposes that both expressive modifiers of expressives (e.g. *that fucking bastard Jones*) and mixed expressives (e.g. *cur* 'dog + expressing a negative attitude') do in fact exist. He consequently proposes extending the logic by adding new type definitions and corresponding composition rules. This extended logic could also deal with our evaluative adjectives.

   Finally, note that this account can also capture the syntactic distribution of evaluative adjectives. In the previous sub-section it was shown that evaluative adjectives are restricted to the attributive, prenominal position on the relevant reading. It was accepted in that context that this restriction may be taken as an argument in favour of analysing these elements as degree expressions. However, as pointed out in §2.2, this distributional pattern is typical of non-intersective, non-predicative adjectives more generally, and is not necessarily connected to gradability or degree. In §2.2 we discussed several examples which showed that the prenominal attributive position seems to make available a particular way of combining the adjective and the noun that enables the former to access a component internal to the meaning of the latter. There is also another class of cases that exhibit such a restriction to the prenominal attributive position: subjective, speaker-oriented or expressive modifiers are strictly prenominal (cf. Laenzlinger 2005, Morzycki 2008a, Potts et al. 2009 a.o.). Some examples are given below (if the predicative uses are at

all acceptable, they have a completely different meaning). This is precisely the class of adjectives to which our evaluative adjectives belong.

(59)   a.   this {fucking/ damned} dog   [English]
       a'. This dog is damneded.
       b.   ce {sacré/   pauvre}   prof   [French]
            this bloody/ poor   teacher
            'this {bloody/ poor} teacher'
       b'. Ce   prof   est {??sacré/ pauvre}.
            this teacher is   holy/ poor
            'This teacher is {?holy/ poor}.

In sum, the additional facts considered in this sub-section, as well as a reconsideration of facts introduced in the previous sub-section, suggest that evaluative adjectives may be analysed as evaluative, expressive modifiers of nouns. On this view, the apparent degree reading comes about indirectly, as an implicature, due to the reinforcement of the negative connotation of the noun by the adjective.

3.3   Concluding remarks

At first sight, their non-intersective behaviour in terms of syntactic distribution and the associated interpretation makes evaluative adjectives likely candidates for the status of degree expressions, which would fulfil in the nominal domain the same function that is fulfilled in the adjectival domain by their adverbial counterparts. However, the particular restrictions on their distribution, which bring out differences with respect to their adverbial counterparts, shed some doubt on this view, and suggest an alternative approach which capitalizes on their evaluative nature. They involve an evaluative, expressive meaning. This can also explain their restriction to the prenominal attributive position, as well as the apparent degree interpretation, which is seen as a result of the "repetition" of an evaluative connotation associated with the property encoded in the meaning of the modified nouns. In other words, evaluative adjectives of the *terrible*-type need not be analysed as actual degree modifiers. The apparent degree interpretation may not necessarily be brought about by a mechanism in which gradable structures are actually manipulated, but it may rather simply be an implicature that arises due to the interaction between the negative evaluation contributed by the adjective and the negative connotation of the noun. Although the facts are not completely conclusive and do not clearly overrule one or the other account (e.g. one may find ways to save the degree account), the alternative view may be favoured if one also considers the general lack of evidence for the existence of other adnominal degree modifiers/ operators, which will become even clearer once we examine adjectives of veracity and totality in the next section.

4   Adjectives of veracity

This section turns to an examination of another category of adjectives which have been argued to function as degree adjectives (cf. Bolinger 1972, Morzycki 2009), namely adjectives of veracity like *real* and *true*. We will show that they do not in fact (need to) operate on gradable structures, and argue that their semantic contribution can be best understood in terms of epistemicity/ evidentiality. Consequently, they cannot be taken to provide evidence for the existence of adnominal degree morphemes. We will propose that this view can be extended to other adjectives as well, namely adjectives like *sheer*, *pure* and *perfect* (see §4.5), and will end this part of the chapter with a suggestion that adjectives which express totality (e.g. *complete*, *total*, *absolute* etc.) can be approached in a similar way.

4.1   The distribution and interpretation of *real*

This section focuses on the distribution and interpretation of the adjective *real*, which has been claimed to be a degree adjective (cf. Bolinger 1972, and especially Morzycki 2009, who argues that it is an adnominal degree morpheme). However, upon closer scrutiny, it turns out that its distribution (and interpretation) is rather different from that of a degree expression. The discussion in this section will, therefore, set the scene for the alternative proposal which will be put forth in §4.2, and which will be subsequently extended to the adjective *true* in §4.3.

To start with, consider the following sets of examples.

(60)   a.   That's a real gun.
       b.   That gun is real.

(61)   a.   That guy is a real idiot.
       b.   #That idiot is real.

These examples show that the adjective *real* exhibits two different distributional patterns which correlate with two different interpretations. In (60) *real* can be used both attributively and predicatively with the same interpretation. In both cases *real* is interpreted as antonymous to *fake*, a privative adjective which, notoriously, entails that the objects are not Ns, as well as of other modifiers, such as *toy* and 'constitutive material' modifiers, which also entail that the objects are not Ns, but "representations/ models of N" (cf. Partee 2010, in press). So the gun in question may be contrasted with a fake gun, or a toy or plastic gun. The examples in (61) illustrate a different pattern and interpretation. The example in (61)a, where *real* is again used attributively, is not about a 'non-*fake*' idiot. Instead the adjective seems to emphasize that the property denoted by the noun indeed holds of the individuals in question. The corresponding predicative use attempted in (61) is not possible. The interpretation *real* gets in (61)a is not available in predicate position. (It is also not very natural to interpret (61)b as saying that the idiot is not fake, so the example

remains odd even on this interpretation which is in principle available.) While the distribution and interpretation of the 'non-*fake*' use of *real* is quite straightforward, the 'other' *real*, the one illustrated in (61), is more intriguing. This is the *real* that will be the focus of this section.

Examples like (61) have been argued to involve a degree use of the adjective *real* (Bolinger 1972, Morzycki 2009). Mozycki (2009) analyses it as an adnominal degree morpheme which occupies the Deg_N-head position of the Deg_NP projected by a gradable noun, as shown in (62).[273]

(62)

$$Deg_NP_{<e,t>}$$

$$Deg_{N<ed,et>} \qquad NP_{<e,d>}$$

real   *idiot*
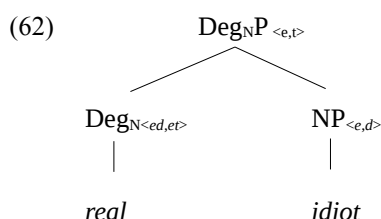
Such an account predicts the impossibility of this element to appear in predicate position. This is because semantically it needs to operate on a degree argument (or, within the particular theory of gradability adopted by Morzycki, to take a measure function as their argument) and because syntactically it is linked to the Deg_NP, which is part of the extended nominal projection of a gradable noun, and hence unavailable outside of the DP. As for the interpretation, he proposes that the semantics of this expression may be understood as being similar to that of *very* in the adjectival domain. (Surprisingly, in fact, he does not mention its direct adverbial counterpart *really*.)

However, upon closer consideration of the data, this view is faced with serious problems. Next to uses with 'gradable nouns', such as the ones in (61) above, *real* can be used with non-gradable nouns as well. In what follows, we will discuss and analyse the data concerning the distribution and interpretation of *real*. We will show that, on the one hand, there is no reason to offer different analyses for the two types of cases, and that, on the other hand, the facts do not support an analysis of *real* as a degree expression in any of the cases; its semantics cannot be reduced to degree.

The examples below show that *real* can modify non-gradable nouns:

(63) a. That's a real sports car.
       b. That's a real bird.

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[273] Morzycki (2009) provides an additional argument in favour of the idea that *real* and *true* (as well as *absolute*, *complete*, *total*) are heads, differently from size adjectives, which, as already discussed in he argues to be degree modifiers. This has to do with the fact that, unlike size adjectives, these other adjectives do not allow their own degree modification, which is, however, allowed on their literal use, as illustrated in (i):
(i)   a.   #a {very/ quite/ fairly/ rather} {total/ complete/ absolute/ utter} idiot
      b.   a {very/ quite/ fairly/ rather} complete description
In §4.4 we will propose an alternative explanation.

These examples can receive the 'non-*fake*' interpretation illustrated in (60), so that the individuals in question may be contrasted, for example, with toy cars or plastic birds. But they can also be interpreted similarly to the examples in (61), in the sense that it is emphasized that the individuals in question have the properties characteristically associated with cars or birds (in the speaker's view). For example, (63)a may be used about a car with a powerful engine (as opposed to a *mini smart*), and (63)b could be used with reference to an eagle (as opposed to a kiwi bird).

Real can also modify nouns that receive figurative, stereotypical interpretations (it "embraces metaphorical extensions", Bolinger 1972), as illustrated below. In this respect it differs from other adjectives, e.g. size adjectives or evaluative adjectives, which have been seen not to be able to modify such nouns on the relevant interpretation.[274,275]

(64)   a. He is a real lawyer, the way he goes about proving his case.
       b. This boy is a real clown.
       c. Their new place is a real palace.
       d. This place is a real pigsty.

What these examples say is that the speaker has good reasons to ascribe the objects in question to categories defined by properties stereotypically associated with lawyers, clowns, palaces or pigsties, although they are not actual lawyers, clowns, palaces or pigsties. These noun interpretations were already discussed in chapter 3 (§3.4) in the context of internal *such* as well as in section 2 of this chapter, where it was shown that they should not be considered gradable.

Finally, even when it modifies gradable nouns, it seems to manipulate the meaning in a way that is not dependent of gradability. Take nouns derived from activity verbs, such as *eater*, *smoker* etc. Though examples like *a real eater* may sound a bit odd at first when uttered out of the blue, they certainly do occur, as shown in (65).

(65)   a. Someone like Orson Welles – a bon viveur and a real eater.[276]
       b. My buddy and dining companion is over 200 pounds and a real eater.[277]

In these examples, *eater* seems to receive a high-degree interpretation – they are about people who 'indeed eat a lot'. But this is presumably just an effect of the fact that *real* emphasises that they undoubtedly belong to the category of 'eaters'. The fact that what matters for making modification by *real* possible is being able to establish a category to which an individual is said to certainly belong is also suggested by the facilitating role of contrast illustrated in (66).

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[274] Example (64)a is from Bolinger (1972).
[275] The adjectives *veritable* and *regular* are also compatible with metaphorical interpretations, the former in formal, and the latter in non-formal register (see Bolinger 1972 and Lakoff 1973 for discussion):
(i)   He is a {veritable/ regular} lawyer, the way he goes about proving his case.
[276] Source: http://www.thefreelibrary.com/Your+Life[...]a0194167703
[277] Source: http://local.yahoo.com/info-30688478-presto-pizza-italian-restaurant-trattoria-miami-beach

(66)   "I'm not a salad girl," she said. "I'm a real eater."[278]

A contrast is expressed here between two classes. The first is that of people who eat scarcely or only 'light' food, and, in opposition to that, *a real eater* is used to describe someone who eats all sorts of food, and who would, therefore, in the speaker's opinion, meet the requirements for clearly qualifying as an *eater*.

To sum up, it has been shown that the adjective *real* has two uses: one on which it is the antonym of *fake*, and another one where it seems to emphasize that the property denoted by the noun holds of an individual (including figurative interpretations of nouns). That the two uses are indeed distinct is also indicated by the fact that they may be juxtaposed without that leading to a contradiction:[279]

(67)   Their place is not a real palace, but it's a real palace!

It has also been shown that the other *real* cannot be regarded as a degree adjective as it has a much wider distribution and its interpretation does not seem to involve or be reducible to degree. In the next sub-section we will propose an alternative analysis, in terms of evidentiality, and show that it can account for the data discussed here.[280]

4.2 *Real* as an epistemic/ evidential adjective

In this sub-section we will try to make a bit more precise our view of the semantic contribution of the 'other' *real*, which we propose is to be understood in terms of epistemicity and evidentiality throughout. We will henceforth be referring to the relevant *real* as 'evidential *real*'.

Recall that in the preceding sub-section it was shown that *real* has two distinct uses. We would like to first briefly present here a particular analysis of its basic 'non-*fake*' use, namely that proposed by Partee (2010, in press), since we will subsequently suggest that the interpretation of its evidential counterpart involves a mechanism that performs, in some sense, quite the opposite sort of operation. Partee proposes that the use of modifiers like *real* and *true* triggers the coerced expansion of the denotation of the noun to which the adjective is applied. This enables her to re-analyse privative adjectives like *fake* as subsective. She argues that such coercion can be motivated by treating the constraints on possible adjectives meanings as presuppositions that must be satisfied by any use of an adjective; the corresponding coercion may then be seen as a form of presupposition accommodation. Thus, while normally in the absence of a modifier like *fake* or *real* all guns are understood to be

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[278]   Source: http://www.nytimes.com/2003/05/28/dining/miss-labelle-s-kitchen-hot-sauce-and-gold-lame
[279]   Intonation seems to play a role in disambiguating the meaning in each case: the first occurrence of *real* in (67) carries heavy stress, while in the second part of the sentence it is *palace* which is stressed (*real* may be stressed too, but less than in the first case). It was also noted in chapter 3 that intonation (stress) may be needed to disambiguate the interpretation of nouns that may be used figuratively.
[280]   In more recent work Morzycki argues that *real* and *true* do not involve a degree semantics, but involve scales of prototypicality (Morzycki 2011). As will emerge from the discussion in this and the next sub-section it is not prototypicality that is relevant, but something different; this is why we will not investigate this proposal in more detail here.

real guns, in examples like (68) the denotation of *gun* and *fur* is expanded so as to include both fake and real guns and fur, respectively.[281]

(68)   a. Is that gun real or fake?
        b. I don't care if that fur is fake (fur) or real (fur).

Partee points out that without the coerced expansion of the denotation of the noun, not only would *fake* be privative, but the adjective *real* would always be redundant (a property also noticed in passing by Lakoff 1987 – apud Partee 2010, in press.). She notes that since this is always necessary with privative and "tautologous" modifiers, there might even be something in their lexical semantics that particularly indicates the need to shift the head to which they apply. At any rate, this shift enables one to interpret the [Adj+N] predicate in such a way that both its positive and negative extensions are non-empty (cf. Kamp and Partee's 1995 "Non-Vacuity Principle").

We suggest that, on the evidential use of *real*, the domain is affected in quite the opposite sense, namely it is, in some sense, narrowed down. The speaker seems to divide up the domain normally covered by N into those objects that, according to him/ her, undoubtedly have the properties associated with N and, hence, fall into the positive extension (and are, therefore, *real Ns*) and those that do not. This may also explain the fact that speakers report that the use of this adjective seems to imply a contrast, to involve the presence of some assumed alternatives.

It is important to note that the notion of "reality" involved in the interpretation of *real* is not to be understood in terms of "absolute truth" (so that it is not the case that the object has in the actual world all the properties it can have in any accessible possible world). Rather it is relativized to the speaker's beliefs. That is, *x is a real N* says that 'in the speaker's belief world *x* is [in the positive extension of] N'. When using *real*, the speaker emphasizes that s/he has good reasons to describe *x* as an N because *x* clearly displays the characteristics which typically define N in his/her opinion. We have here, then, an evidential component, which provides the basis for the epistemic certainty with respect to the categorization performed. Our view of *real* is similar to what Paradis (2003) argues for its adverbial counterpart *really*, namely that its use is conditioned by the speaker's wish to qualify an expression epistemically with a judgement of truth as perceived by the speaker. This speaker-dependence is also noted by Bouchard (2002) in his analysis of the French counterpart of *real*, *réel*. Bouchard argues that prenominal *réel* modifies the characteristic function (i.e. the property defining the noun – cf. §2.4.2 for more discussion of this approach). Thus, in *un réel besoin* 'a real need' the adjective is argued to apply to the characteristic function and to indicate that it applies exactly, that all the properties required by it are verifiable, so *un réel besoin* is 'something which is truly a need'; it also indicates that the authentication is done by the speaker (unlike with an adjective like *authentique* 'authentic, genuine'). He also points out that it is only when used prenominally that the adjective is in a position to modify an

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[281]   Note that on a subsective reanalysis of these adjectives (on which they are similar to e.g. *skilful*) it is no longer unexpected that they can can appear in predicate position (cf. also *{John/ This violinist} is skilful.*), while this would be problematic if they were non-intersective non-subsective.

internal subpart of the noun meaning in this way. Indeed, as already indicated at the beginning of §4.1, unlike its 'non-*fake*' counterpart, evidential *real* entirely resists the predicative use.[282] We take this total lack of predicative use to indicate that it is indeed an instance of an exclusively non-intersective non-predicative (i.e. intensional) adjective in the sense of Siegel (1976). It participates in construing the property that the NP will denote – and, in doing so, it brings in an epistemic and evidential component, redefining, in a way, based on the speaker's view, what counts as an N.

We are now in a position to also explain the apparent degree interpretation *real* has been claimed to have in the context of gradable nouns. This comes about as a result of the interaction between the 'evidential' *real* and the gradable nouns, i.e. nouns whose domains are saliently defined by a gradable property. When *real* is used to modify a noun like *idiot*, a division of the domain is performed, as indicated above, into those individuals that the speaker has no doubt fall into the positive extension (i.e. 'are *real* idiots') and those that do not (i.e. 'are not *real* idiots'). The former set, of individuals to which the [gradable] property undoubtedly applies, will end up containing the individuals to which the property applies to a high degree, as these constitute the clearest cases of idiots.

As for the sort of properties that count for *a real N* to hold, it seems that this adjective is rather indifferent to the objective, definitional characteristics that confer actual category membership, as shown by the availability of figurative uses of nouns. The kind of properties that count are rather properties which happen to be characteristic of category members though they do not (necessarily) confer category membership. In other words, properties that merely normally hold of N in view of what people believe, or expect, an individual of a particular class, nationality, profession etc. to be like (hence: stereotypical properties). This correlates with the subjective character of *real*; the relevant "definitions" are filtered through the speaker's expectations and view of the world. In a sense then, we can say that it is by using *real* that the speaker makes 'X is an N' true (under either interpretation of N, literal or metaphorical).

This view of *real* naturally invites a comparison with *such*, which was shown in the previous chapter to also be compatible with nouns under a stereotypical, possibly figurative, interpretation. The question then arises whether the two expressions are to be treated in the same way. A quick comparison suggests that there are differences in distribution (and interpretation) between the two. *Real* seems to have a wider distribution:

(69)   a.   #That's such a car!
        b.   #That's such a table!
        c.   #That's such a bird!

(70)   a.   That's a real car!

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[282]   Note that in this respect it also differs from size adjectives, which were seen to occur predicatively if the subject is of the right sort. The nouns in (i), for example, allow the predicative use of size adjectives on the relevant reading. However, even with such nouns, *real* can only be understood in its 'non-*fake/ pretended*' use.

(i)   His {courage/ sorrow} was real.

      b. Now, that's (what I call) a real table!
      c. That's a real bird.

In chapter 3 (§3.4) it was suggested that simple objects like cars, chairs, tables etc. are not easily associated with stereotypical images, which would enable the construal of the type of denotation that internal *such* would be compatible with. That is, there are no stereotypical properties available that could enable the inherent structuring of their domain into distinct salient sub-types identifiable by natural consequences that internal *such* could pick out. Hence the unacceptability of the examples in (69)a,b. It was also shown that internal *such* is not compatible with a prototypical interpretation, since prototypical properties do not allow one to distinguish among different salient sub-types that can be associated with natural consequences; this rules out the example in (69)c. *Real* is different from internal *such*. It does not require the existence of inherent salient sub-types identifiable by natural consequences – so one does not need a basis for construing and discriminating among such sub-types. What *real* does is to narrow down the domain to those objects which clearly fulfil the criteria in the speaker's opinion. Hence, it is not necessarily properties that can distinguish among salient sub-types (identifiable by natural consequences) that are needed, but any characteristics that undoubtedly qualify the object, in the speaker's view, as a clear case of N – e.g. size or engine quality for a car, size and/or material for a table etc.

    To conclude, *real* has been argued to involve an epistemic/ evidential semantics: it says that the individuals in question undoubtedly qualify as Ns in the speaker's view. In the next sub-section this type of analysis will be extended to the adjective *true*.

4.3   Extending the analysis: the case of *true*

Like *real*, *true* has been claimed to be a degree adjective (cf. Bolinger 1972, Morzycky 2009). However, in this section we will show that the distribution and interpretation of this adjective does not support such a view either and that, instead, an epistemic/ evidential analysis like the one proposed above for *real*, can account for the facts.

    To start with, just like in the case of *real*, we should distinguish between two uses of *true*. Consider the following two sets of examples:

(71)   a. That is a true statement.
        b. That statement is true.

(72)   a. That professor is a true genius.
        b. #That genius is true.

In (71) *true* can be used both attributively and predicatively on the same interpretation: in both examples it is understood as the opposite of *incorrect* or *false*. The attributive use of *true* in (72)a receives a different interpretation: the example is

not about a genius that is not false. Just like *real* in (61)a, *true* here seems to emphasize that the property denoted by the noun indeed holds of the individual in question: 'the professor is indeed a genius'.[283] This sort of interpretation is not available in the predicative use attempted in (72)b. It is also not easy to interpret (72)b as saying that the genius is correct (or, perhaps loyal?), so the example is odd. Therefore, *true* also exhibits two different distributional patterns which correlate with two different interpretations.

It is the exclusively prenominal use of *true* that is of interest to us here. Just like evidential *real*, this *true* has been argued to be a degree adjective – cf. Bolinger 1972, and especially Morzycki 2009, who analyses it as an adnominal degree morpheme which occupies the Deg$_N$-head position of the Deg$_N$P projected by a gradable noun (see discussion in §4.1 and the representation in (62) above).

However, just like in the case of *real*, such a view is faced with problems: like *real*, *true* also has a distribution that is not limited to gradable nouns, and its interpretation is not in terms of degree. The examples in (73) show that *true* can modify non-gradable nouns like *doctor*, *symphony* etc. Differently from *real*, it does not accept figurative interpretations of the type illustrated in (64). The entity described by *true* must belong to the actual category that is named by N and is then described as typical of its essence, and in this sense it seems to involve prototypicality (cf. Bolinger 1972, Morzycki 2011). Thus, while in (64)a he may be just a student, in (73)a he must be a lawyer by profession.[284]

(73)   a. He is a true lawyer, a credit to his profession.
        b. A true doctor would not prescribe that kind of treatment.
        c. It was a true symphony.
        d. I had a true vacation.
        e. That's a true generalization.

This shows that the semantics of *true* cannot be reduced to degree. In addition, the fact that *true* is exclusively prenominal on the relevant reading is also not enough reason to posit that it is a degree morpheme, which operates on a measure function and is projected as the head of a nominal DegP, as argued by Morzycki (2009). Instead, just like in the case of *real*, we take the lack of predicative use to reflect the fact that the relevant *true* is an exclusively non-intersective non-predicative (i.e. intensional) adjective in the sense of Siegel (1976), which participates in construing the property that the NP will denote and brings in an epistemic/ evidential meaning component in the process. We propose, therefore, that *true* should be analysed in a similar way to evidential *real*. In what follows we will present our alternative account of *true*, as well as pointing out the differences with respect to *real*.

As we have just seen, the conditions on its use are, however, somewhat different from those applying to *real*: *true* requires *x* to be an actual N to start with (it is not

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[283]   Note that this interpretation is also available in (71)a, though maybe not very natural or salient: 'that is something which is indeed a statement'. But, crucially, it is never available in predicate position – not in (72)b, nor (71)b.
[284]   The examples in (73)a-d are from Bolinger (1972), while (73)e is based on an example from Siegel (1976).

compatible with figurative interpretations) and then describes it as typical of its essence (cf. Bolinger 1972). In other words, *x is a true N* if *x* does not lack any of the essential components of an N. This can be understood as follows. First, the requirement that *x* be an actual N to start with may be seen as a condition that X has the characteristics which all Ns must have (in all possible worlds), i.e. the core, definitional properties of Ns (cf. McCready and Ogata 2007 for this definition of core properties). This may be defined as a presupposition on the use of *true*. Secondly, by the use of *true* it is said (or emphasised) that there is no doubt that X has all the essential characteristics of Ns, or that it satisfies all that is objectively required of an N. Take the examples in (73)a,b, for instance. They seem to imply that the individual is (not) a good lawyer/ doctor. This suggests that, with nouns denoting professions, the quality of the job performance, according to scientific and/or moral standards, plays a role. This is a salient dimension associated with profession nouns, so much so that doing one's job properly becomes one of the essential criteria in evaluating the appropriate application of *a true N* description.[285] Let us now see how this way of defining *true* helps us understand its distribution and interpretation, as well as the differences with respect to *real*.

As far as the modification of nouns that are generally taken to be gradable is concerned, the mechanism that creates the impression of a (high) degree interpretation is similar to the interaction of *real* with these nouns. There is also some difference between the two, however, in that examples with *true* seem to be more neutral, or objective, than those with *real* – e.g. *a real genius* vs. *a true genius*. This probably has to do with the fact that *true* comes with the condition that the individual in question is an actual genius, and has to have all the essential characteristics of an N. Hence the intuition that *a true genius* seems to simply say that *x* has (reached) 'genius-status'. With *real*, it is a qualification that simply holds in the speaker's belief world (though the speaker also has good reasons to make the qualification). Thus, there is an impression of a more objective evaluation with *true*, and of a more subjective one with *real*.

Furthermore, this way of defining *true* may also help us make more sense of the fact that *true* cannot modify just any noun, as shown by (74). Based on the difference in acceptability between examples like (73)a,b above and (74)a-b, Bolinger (1972) suggests that *true* is restricted to gradable nouns and "semantically rich" non-gradable nouns. According to him, the semantic enrichment of the nouns in the former set of examples comes from their social implications. Given the definition of *true* proposed above, a way to understand these facts would be in relation to the second condition. Namely, certain nouns, such as those in (74), may lack a set of (objective) salient, essential characteristics that could offer speakers a basis for evaluating whether an X belongs to the positive extension of (*true*) N.[286]

(74) a. ?He's a true farmhand.
       b. ?That is a true telescope.
       c. ??That's a true car.

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[285] Recall that similar effects have been encountered with profession nouns in other contexts too (e.g. in *wh*-exclamatives, with *quite* etc.).
[286] Examples (74)a,b are from Bolinger (1972).

There is here, however, also a puzzling difference concerning the (un)acceptability of the same noun with *real* vs. *true*. Compare, for example, the unacceptable (74)c with the acceptable (63)a/(70)a above. We conjecture that what makes the latter acceptable, unlike the former, is that speakers can come up with (sets of) 'subjective', possibly non-essential, non-definitional attributes that would make the object qualify as *a real car* in their view. Such characteristics, however, do not count towards qualifying an object as *a true car*, given the definition above.

Finally, the presence vs. absence of a subjective, speaker-oriented component in *real* vs. *true* may also explain the compatibility of the former, but not the latter, with epithets:[287,288]

(75)   a {real/ #true} {cry-baby/ pussy/ wanker/ angel}

To sum up, it has been argued in this section that the adjective *true*, just like *real*, has a semantics that is to be understood in terms of epistemicity/ evidentiality. In the next sub-section we will discuss some consequences and add some more evidence favouring this analysis over a degree analysis of *real* and *true*.

4.4   Additional evidence and consequences

It has been argued in this section that *real* and *true* should be given an analysis in terms of evidentiality/ epistemicity, rather than a degree analysis. All the evidence from the distribution and interpretation of these adjectives points in favour of the former, rather than the latter analysis. We will now discuss some additional evidence in favour of the epistemic/ evidential analysis, as well as some advantages.

First of all, the distribution of *real* and *true*, on the relevant reading, is not limited to the class of gradable nouns, i.e. it is not determined by the existence of a gradable structure in the nouns they modify. If one wanted to maintain that *real* and *true* are degree morphemes, then all the examples in (63)-(64), (70) which contain nouns that are not inherently gradable would have to be treated as cases of scalarity coercion. Unlike other "degree adjectives", *real* would, then, be able to coerce the meaning of an otherwise non-gradable noun into a gradable one – a difference not easy to explain. However, this view of the meaning of these nouns is not correct: whether interpreted figuratively or not, they do not have gradable meanings.

In addition, it has been shown that the essence of the interpretation of *real* and *true* is not in terms of an object being ranked high in an ordering with respect to the

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[287]   This view of *real* resonates with the way Den Dikken (2006) characterizes examples like *He's a real schoolmaster!*, namely as epithetic uses. This epithetic use is similar to the interpretation the noun receives in *N of N* constructions, which he claims are based on an (often metaphorical) comparison that is always evaluative – e.g. *that schoolmaster of a man*. Here schoolmaster stands for a set of (typically negative) properties that schoolmasters are stereotypically thought to have. In fact, many of the nouns that were seen to be able to occur in the first slot of the *N of N* construction in chapter 2 (section 2) accept modification by *real*.

[288]   Not all speakers perceive a big difference between the two adjectives in the use illustrated in (75), though most do – and the less conventionalized or common the epithet, the less acceptable *true* is. It may be, however, that for some speakers *true* has become more similar to *real*, which, given our proposal, would mean that it has lost the condition that the individuals be actual Ns.

degree to which a property holds. Rather (it is emphasized that) the respective properties undoubtedly hold. The only distinction that needs to be made is a two-way distinction between those objects that (in the speaker's opinion) qualify as N and those that do not. In other words, we are dealing here with an inflexible, two-way partition of the domain. This may still be viewed as a scale, if one wanted to, but it would be just a two-valued scale, and nothing would be gained from looking at things in this way. The fact that the adjectives impose a non-graded division of the domain is reflected in the fact that they are non-gradable, and do not accept degree modification on the relevant reading, as illustrated below. So while Morzycki (2009) takes their resistance to degree modification as an indication that they are degree heads, we take it as a direct reflection of their semantics.

(76) a.   #a {very/ quite/ fairly} real {idiot/ palace/ car}
      a'. #a {very/ quite/ more} true {genius/ lawyer/ vacation}
      b.   a {very/ quite} real problem   [not fake/ imaginary]
      b'. a {very/ fairly/ absolutely} true statement   [correct/ not false]

It was also shown that the fact that a degree interpretation appears to obtain in combination with a noun which encodes a gradable property in its meaning is an effect of the particular interaction between the semantics of the evidential adjective and that of the noun. It is not a distinct interpretation associated with a distinct lexical item that would manipulate a gradable structure, i.e. an adnominal degree morpheme.[289]

Moreover, an evidential analysis seems better suited to account for the type of distinction we find between *real* and *true*: they differ in terms of the type of evidence that plays a role in deciding whether an individual qualifies as an N, not in terms of scalar information as might be expected on a degree account.

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[289] In view of the conclusions reached in this section about the adjectives *real* and *true*, it would be interesting to (re-)examine their adverbial counterparts too.

The view expressed by Morzycki (2009) for the adjectives *real* reflects the position expressed in connection with its adverbial counterpart *really* by Kennedy and McNally (2005). They suggest that there are two distinct uses of *really* – intensifier and propositional. Their main argument in favour of this view is that examples such as (i) below are ungrammatical on the degree modifier use of *really* and are only ok on the 'propositional' adverbial use as in: *I really was very surprised*.
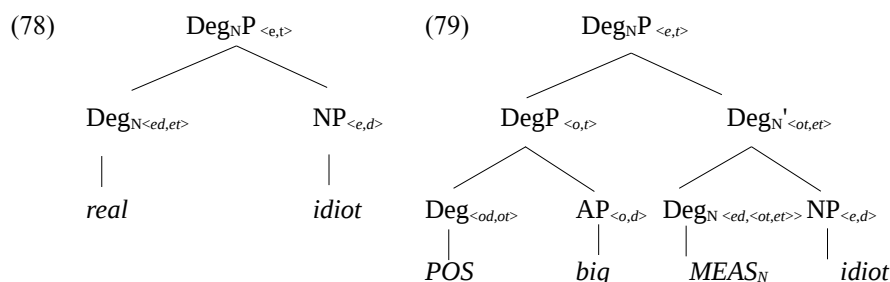
(i)   I was really very surprised.

They conclude that (distinct) degree modifier recursion (of the type: **very quite surprised, *quite really surprised, *really very surprised* etc.) is not allowed. The only type of degree modifier recursion allowed requires identity of degree modifiers (as in *very very surprised, quite quite hungry, really really tall*), which leads them to believe that this phenomenon involves a type of reduplication at the lexical level, the output of which is a degree modifier with a semantic type identical to that of *very*. However, the view taken by McNally and Kennedy (2002) on *well* also suggests an alternative view of *really*. Kennedy and McNally (1999, 2005) treat *well* as ambiguous between a degree reading and a quality reading. McNally and Kennedy (2002) propose instead an unambiguous analysis of *well* which derives the attested readings as a result of *well* applying to different variables in the semantic make-up of the participial adjectives (their analysis is cast in a GL framework – cf. Pustejovsky 1995). This account opens the path for a similar approach to *really*.

It would be interesting to see whether a unified analysis of all the uses of *really* and *truly* can be found – one that would be centred around notions of epistemicity/ evidentiality, and that would derive the possible differences in interpretation from their semantic interaction with the elements they combine with, which seems to correlate with syntactic position.

There is an additional set of facts that seem to support an evidential rather than a degree analysis. This has to do with the possible co-occurrence and relative order of "degree" adjectives. Examples may be found where *real*-type adjectives and size adjectives co-occur and the former precede the latter: *[real [big N]]*. This is illustrated below with French examples in order to avoid the problem that in English *real* is homonymous between an adjective and an adverb; on the latter use it could then be interpreted as a degree modifier of the other adjective following it, i.e. *[[real(ly) big] idiot]*, which is not the structure we are after here.

(77) a. un vrai gros {con/   fumeur}
          a   real   fat   idiot/   smoker
          'a real big {idiot/ smoker}'
      b. *un gros vrai {con/ fumeur}
          a   fat   real   idiot/ smoker

Such facts are predicted to be impossible on a degree analysis, especially in the particular implementation proposed by Morzycki (2009). Recall that in this analysis *real/ vrai* is a degree morpheme occupying the Deg_N-head position of the nominal Deg_NP projected by a gradable noun, as in (78), while *big/ gros* is a degree modifier hosted in the Spec of the Deg_NP whose head is occupied by a phonologically null $Meas_N$ operator, as illustrated in (79).

(78) $Deg_NP_{<e,t>}$

    $Deg_{N<ed,et>}$ $NP_{<e,d>}$

    real   *idiot*

(79) $Deg_NP_{<e,t>}$

    $DegP_{<o,t>}$ $Deg_N{'}_{<ot,et>}$

  $Deg_{<od,ot>}$ $AP_{<o,d>}$ $Deg_{N<ed,<ot,et>>}$ $NP_{<e,d>}$

  POS   *big* $MEAS_N$ *idiot*

In such an analysis there is no room for (the) two degree adjectives to co-occur, syntactically or semantically, and result in the structure *[A [A N]]*. Firstly, Morzycki argues that *real* has a semantics similar to *very*, while size adjectives are treated on a par with measure phrases and are licensed by a dedicated type of Deg-head. Secondly, they must be related to expressions defined in terms of degree arguments. But once one such element has been used, an expression of the right type is no longer available. Even if this semantics could be overruled and the two were somehow made compatible and allowed to co-occur,[290] one would expect the degree modifier (*big*) to precede the Deg-head (*real*), contrary to fact. However, once *real* is analysed as an epistemic/ evidential adjective, as proposed here, rather than as a degree adjective, the co-occurrence problem disappears. As for the ordering, it

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[290]   For a discussion of the (im)possible co-occurrence of degree expressions (especially in the adjectival domain), see Neeleman, van de Koot and Doetjes (2004).

seems to be more generally the case that epistemic/ evidential/ speaker-oriented expressions are placed high in the structure, to the left of other modifiers (cf. Cinque 1994, 2010, Scott 1998, 2002, Laenzlinger 2000, 2005 etc. for the order of adjectival modifiers within the extended nominal projection, and: Cinque 1999, 2004, Ernst 2002, 2007 a.o. for the placement of adverbs in the clausal structure).

To conclude, in this section we have studied the adjectives *real* and *true* and have argued that they are not degree operators, but that they are epistemic/ evidential modifiers. Consequently, they cannot be taken to provide evidence for the existence of degree structures in the nominal domain that would be parallel to those in the adjectival domain. In the remainder of this section we will examine another set of adjectives which we suggest can be approached in a similar way.

4.5   Similar cases

4.5.1   *Sheer, pure, perfect*

In this sub-section we will briefly examine a few more adjectives (*sheer*, *pure*, *perfect*), which have been claimed to be degree adjectives. It will be shown that the distribution and interpretation of these adjectives does not support such a view, and that they should be approached along similar lines as proposed above for *real* and *true*.

Bolinger (1972) notes that *sheer* (in the relevant sense) is only used as an intensifier of gradable nouns.[291] The examples below illustrate its compatiblity with nouns that are generally considered to be gradable.

(80)   a.   sheer {terror/ nonsense/ folly/ malice/ stupidity}
         b.   (the) sheer {delight/ joy/ beauty/ bliss}
         c.   I think it is sheer genius to invent such a thing.[292]

However, the following examples suggest that *sheer* is in fact not restricted to gradable nouns, but is compatible with a rather wider range of nouns.[293,294]

(81)   a.   by sheer {accident/ coincidence/ will}

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[291]   In addition, the unacceptability of the example in (i), in contrast with those in (80)a would seem to suggest that *sheer*, like *utter*, also prefers nouns which have a negative connotation (cf. Bolinger 1972). However, one also finds examples where *sheer* modifies nouns which in fact have positive connotations, as illustrated in (80)b-c.
(i)   *sheer acceptance
Sheer can also be used to modify nouns referring to (physical) dimensions, such as *size, volume, weight (of numbers)* etc.:
(ii)   We were overwhelmed by the sheer volume of work.
[292]   Source: http://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/
[293]   It was noticeable in our searches of the British National Corpus that a lot of the DPs containing the adjective *sheer* are definite. In addition, in many of the examples *sheer* appears within PPs of the type illustrated in (81)a,c, which are equivalent in interpretation to the PP (without the adjective) modified by the corresponding adverb (or by the adverb *purely*): *{sheerly/ purely} by accident*.
[294]   Examples (81)b-c are from the British National Corpus.

     b. sheer {labour/ personality/ quality of performance/ survival}
     c. in sheer play and frolic
     d. the sheer task of learning Clifford's speeches...

Pure has a similar distribution. It is compatible with gradable nouns, as illustrated by (82), but it is not restricted to modifying such nouns, as indicated by the acceptability of the examples in (83) which contain non-gradable nouns:

(82)   pure {negligence/ bliss/ delight/ genius}

(83)   a. pure socialism
     b. a pure accident
     c. by pure coincidence

It may be concluded from these data that the adjectives *sheer* and *pure* are not degree adjectives.[295] Rather they seem to say that the objects satisfy only and all the criteria for qualifying as N. They are, indeed, compatible with nouns which encode in their meaning properties that are, intuitively, gradable. The interaction of their meaning with that of nouns that denote gradable properties results in an interpretation that may be (mis)taken for a degree one – similarly, in some sense, to what happens when the adjective *real* combines with a gradable noun.

    Finally, consider the adjective *perfect*. In its literal use, *perfect* describes an object in terms of (aesthetic or other) perfection, being accomplished etc., as illustrated in (84). By contrast, in (85), the interpretation is different. *A perfect idiot*, for example, is not an individual who is perfect. It is an individual to whom the description *idiot* applies perfectly, an individual in whom all the attributes of the N are clearly present (cf. also Bouchard 2002, Demonte 2008).[296]

(84)   a perfect body

(85)   a. a perfect idiot
     b. perfect {happiness/ idiocy}

The latter type of interpretation is restricted to the prenominal attributive position. In predicate position, this interpretation is not available; only the basic,

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[295] The same seems to hold of their adverbial counterparts too: they are not used as degree modifiers (given that they can modify non-gradable adjectives, e.g. *technical*). Their meaning is something like 'only, exclusively, simply'. (Though *sheerly* seems to be less used than the adverbial counterparts of other adjectives considered in this section, examples may be found.)
(i)   On a sheerly technical plane, the projections used for the backgrounds were very effective, particularly in the third act, where a sunset faded most convincingly. (1988 October 21, George Grass, "WagnerVision", *Chicago Reader* on http://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/sheerly)
[296] See Sauerland and Stateva (2007) for an analysis of its adverbial counterpart, *perfectly*, as a scalar approximator (i.e. an expression which resets the granularity parameter for the evaluation of the modifiee, in this case to the finest granularity, similarly to expressions like *completely* and *exactly*) which also contains an intensional component, in the sense that an expression like *perfectly dry* makes reference to a desired point of reference (in spite of the existence of examples like *perfectly awful* where perfection cannot be related to desirability).

descriptive interpretation is available, which accounts for the oddness of example (86).

(86)   #This idiot is perfect.

Importantly, this interpretation of *perfect* is not restricted to gradable nouns, as suggested by the examples below:

(87)   a. a perfect solution
        b. a perfect example of...

This may be clearer in the Romance languages, where the prenominal position is unambiguously associated with the relevant, non-intersective interpretation, as illustrated below with examples from Demonte (2008):

(88)   a. una   perfecta solución   [Spanish]
            a   perfect   solution
            'a perfect solution'
        b. la   solución perfecta
            the   solution perfect
            'the perfect solution/ the solution which is perfect'
        c. La   solución es perfecta.
            the   solution is perfect
            'The solution is perfect'

The example in (88)a denotes something which is perfect as a solution, a solution in all respects, while the examples in (88)b-c are about solutions which belong to the set of perfect objects or acts (cf. Demonte 2008).

We conclude from such data that *perfect* is not limited to modifying gradable nouns and that it is not, therefore, a degree adjective. In examples like (85), (87), (88)a, it is simply a non-intersective adjective whose semantic contribution is to indicate that the object in question fulfils all the criteria for N-hood. In Bouchard's (2002) terms, it applies to the characteristic function (i.e. the property defining the N) and indicates that it is perfectly filled, that it fits perfectly, that all the attributes of the N are clearly present. When it modifies a gradable noun, it may indirectly result in a high degree interpretation, similarly to what we have seen with the adjectives *true* and *real*; but such an interpretation is not obtained by direct manipulation of the gradable structure in the way degree operators give rise to degree readings in the adjectival domain.

This way of understanding *perfect* immediately raises the question of what the status of adjectives like *complete*, *total*, *absolute* etc. is, given that all these adjectives and/or their adverbial counterparts have generally been treated on a par. It is to a brief examination of these adjectives that we turn in the next sub-section.

4.5.2   Complete & co.

In this sub-section we will examine the distribution and interpretation of adjectives such as *complete*, *total*, *absolute*. These adjectives and/ or the corresponding adverbs have been treated in the literature either as maximality modifiers (Kennedy and McNally 2005, Morzycki 2009) or as extreme degree modifiers (Morzycki 2010) or both (Rotstein and Winter 2004, both uses are also noted by Kennedy and McNally 2005). As it turns out, however, the facts do not require an analysis of these adjectives as degree expressions. An alternative analysis, on which they are in fact more similar to *real* and *perfect*, as discussed above, may be envisaged; this view will be sketched in the second part of the section.

Similarly to the adjectives examined before (e.g. *real*, *perfect* etc.), the adjectives *complete*, *total* and *absolute* seem to have two types of uses. On one use they can combine with arbitrary nouns and are descriptive of completeness of the object (mereological or otherwise). Thus, in (89), *complete* is used to describe an object as having all of its parts, while *absolute* means something like 'free of imperfection or relativity or relation to something else'.

(89)   a. a complete {set of publications/ description}
       b. an absolute measure

By contrast, in (90), the adjectives seem to say something about the extent to which the property denoted by the noun holds of the objects in question, in a parallel way to their adverbial counterparts modifying an adjective (e.g. *completely idiotic*)

(90)   a. a complete idiot
       b. a total mess

The nouns in (90) are nouns which encode gradable properties in their meaning. More examples of this type are given in (91).

(91)   a. a {complete/ total/ absolute/ utter} {idiot/ dork/ stranger}
       b. (a) {total/ complete/ absolute/ utter} {mess/ chaos/ mayhem/ disgrace/ nonsense/ joy/ confidence/ bliss}

The examples in (92) show that certain gradable nouns (e.g. nouns derived from activity verbs like *eater*, *smoker* etc., as well as other gradable nouns, such as *fan*, *enthusiast* etc.) resist modification by these adjectives:[297]

(92)   #a {complete/ utter} {cheese eater/ smoker/ jazz enthusiast/ fan of curling}

There are two directions to go in search for an explanation of this difference, which reflect the two types of proposals that have been made in the literature analysing these adjectives and/ or their adverbial counterparts as degree expressions. One possible view is that they are maximality modifiers, which can only modify

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[297]   Some of these examples are taken from Morzycki (2009, 2011).

expressions associated with scales that are upper closed and have a maximum standard (Hay, Kennedy and Levin 1999, Kennedy and McNally 2005). The other one is that they express very high degree (Rotstein and Winter 2004, Kennedy and McNally 2005) and are only compatible with expressions that encode a notion of extremeness in their meaning (Morzycki 2010). In what follows we will examine each option in turn.

A maximality interpretation seems to be at work in examples like (93)-(94), as also indicated by the possibility of replacing these adjectives by maximality modifiers like *full* and *100%*. The unacceptability of some of the examples in (93) and those in (94) would then be due to the impossibility of assigning a maximum bound to the respective properties.[298]

(93)   a.   {complete/ total/ full} {certainty/ *uncertainty}
       b.   {complete/ 100%} {purity/ *impurity}
       c.   complete {visibility/ invisibility}

(94)   a.   *{full/ complete/ total} {patience/ impatience}
       b.   *{complete/ 100%} {strength/ weakness}

This is confirmed by the availability of modification by the adverb *almost*, as illustrated in (96). *Almost* can typically modify expressions associated with upper-closed scales and an absolute maximum standard (including maximality degree modifiers in the adjectival domain such as *completely*), as illustrated in (95) (cf. Paradis 2001, Rotstein and Winter 2004, Kennedy and McNally 2005).[299] The same maximality interpretation is also indicated by the availability of modification by exception phrases in (97):[300]

(95)   a.   This rod is almost straight.
       b.   It was almost completely dark .

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[298]   The nominal data in (93) seems to replicate the pattern found in the adjectival domain. Kennedy and McNally (2005) show that maximality modifiers (*100%, completely, fully*) are acceptable with positive adjectives only if they use a scale with a *maximal* element, and with negative adjectives only if they use a scale with a *minimal* element:
(i)   Open scale pattern
           a.   ??completely {tall/ deep/ expensive}
           b.   ??completely {short/ shallow/ inexpensive}
(ii)   Lower closed scale pattern
           a.   ??completely {bent/ wet}
           b.   completely {straight/ dry}
(iii)   Upper closed scale pattern
           a.   completely {certain/ safe/ pure}
           b.   ??completely {uncertain/ dangerous/ impure}
(iv)   Closed scale pattern
           a.   completely {full/ visible}
           b.   completely {empty/ invisible}
[299]   The same holds of the literal use of the adjectives:
(i)   The library is fortunate to have an almost complete set of these publications.
           (http://www.macmillandictionary.com/dictionary/british/complete)
[300]   The examples in (97) are from the Corpus of Contemporary American English.

(96)   a. almost complete {certainty/ invisibility}
        b. almost utter {darkness/ futility}

(97)   a. Then silence. Utter, complete silence except for the ticking of the mantel
            clock counting down the seconds that were left in her life.
        b. Electricity and lights are fed down to the men, who have lived in utter
            darkness, except for occasional use of their helmet lamps.

    Such modification is, however, not acceptable in all the cases where *complete* is
used (cf. the examples in (90) above):

(98)   ??an almost {complete/ utter} idiot

This would be puzzling on the view that here too *complete* would mark maximality
and *idiot* would be associated with an upper-closed scale. In addition, application of
other tests that indicate whether an expression is associated with an upper-closed
scale and has a maximum standard yields negative results with nouns like *idiot*. For
example, Kennedy and McNally (2005) show that an assertion of *x is A* entails that *x*
has a maximal amount of *A*-ness, i.e. that nothing can be more *A* than *x*. This
explains the contradictions illustrated in (99). Unlike the sentences in (99), however,
the one in (100), with the noun *idiot*, is not contradictory:

(99)   a. #The paper is complete. I just have to write the conclusion.
        b. #The plant is dead, though one part of it still appears to be alive.

(100)   John's an idiot, though he's quite smart when it comes to computers.

Another test consists of entailment patterns in comparatives: the comparative of a
maximum-standard adjective generates a negative entailment to the unmarked form,
as illustrated in (101), where the sentence in (a) entails the one in (b). By contrast,
the sentence in (102)a, where *idiot* is used inside of a comparative structure, does
not entail the one in (102)b.

(101)   a. The floor is drier than the countertop. →
        b. The countertop is not dry.

(102)   a. John is {more of an idiot/ a bigger idiot} than George.
        b. George is not an idiot.

A final test, meant to determine the type of absolute standard (minimum or
maximum) is based on the entailment patterns obtained when proportional modifiers
are used: if the adjective has a maximum standard, these entail *X is not adj*, as in
(103), while if the adjective has a minimum standard, then it is entailed that *X is adj*,
as in (104). If this test is applied to a noun like *idiot* (to the extent to which it accepts
proportional modifiers), it again does not pattern with maximum-standard
expressions: the sentence in (105)a does not entail the negative sentence in (105)b.

(103) a. The glass is partially full.   →
      b. The glass is not full.

(104) a. The door is half open.   →
      b. The door is open.

(105) a. John is {partially/ somewhat (of)} an idiot.
      b. John is not an idiot.

In sum, *idiot* does not pattern with expressions associated with upper-closed scales that have maximum standards.

There is, however, an alternative to interpreting the use of *complete* in examples like (90)-(91), namely to take it as the adjectival counterpart of the high degree modifier use of *totally* and *completely* illustrated in (106) (cf. Rotstein and Winter 2004, Kennedy and McNally 2005, Morzycki 2010):[301]

(106) I'm totally intrigued by bowling.

Kennedy and McNally show that the true maximality use and the high degree use (similar to *very* or *extremely*) are distinguished by their entailments. A maximality use entails that the end of the scale has been reached, as shown by the fact that (107)a is a contradiction, while the non-maximality, high degree use carries no such entailment, hence the acceptable continuation of (107)b:

(107) a. #The line is totally straight, though you can make it straighter.
      b. I'm totally intrigued by bowling, and Kim is even more intrigued by it than I am.

If this test is applied to the cases of adjectival modification of nouns, the result is similar to (107)b rather than (107)a: the sentence in (108) is not contradictory. In other words, modification by *complete* in these cases patterns with the high degree use of its adverbial counterpart, rather than with a maximality use.

(108) John is a {complete/ total} idiot, {but/ and} Bill is even more of an idiot!

This also means that the difference in acceptability between the examples in (91) and (92) cannot be attributed to a difference in scale structure, namely there would be no maximum on the scale associated with *smoker*, but that there would be one on the scale of *idiot*.

In §2.3 it was suggested that nouns which categorize individuals based on a gradable property already encode high degree in their meaning. What the availability of modification by adjectives like *complete* may now be taken to further indicate is that nouns like *idiot*, unlike nouns such as *eater* or *fan*, encode very high degree, or

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[301] Kennedy and McNally (2005) suggest that this use might have originated in a hyperbole or metaphor based on something that was originally literally interpreted along the lines of 'all of me is intrigued by bowling', for example.

'extremeness', in their meaning.[302,303] They would thus be similar to the so-called 'extreme' adjectives already mentioned in §2.1 and §3.1 (e.g. *fantastic*, *wonderful*, *fabulous*, *gorgeous*, *tremendous*, *huge*, *gigantic*, *enormous*, *minute*, *tiny* etc.) (cf. Cruse 1986, Paradis 2001, Morzycki 2010). Someone would qualify as an idiot if s/he shows a very high degree of stupidity, not just a minimal lack of intelligence. Interestingly, in fact, Morzycki (2010) includes the corresponding adjective, *idiotic*, in the class of lexically extreme adjectives. One of the characteristics of this class of adjectives that has been highlighted in the literature is precisely that they can be modified by totality modifiers like *absolutely*, *totally* etc. (Cruse 1986, Paradis 2001, Morzycki 2010), as well as by other 'extreme' degree modifiers like *simply*, *positively*, *flat-out*, *downright*, *outright* etc. (Morzycki 2010). It is therefore not unexpected that nouns like *idiot* would be compatible with the corresponding adjectives: these nouns would be 'extreme' gradable nouns and the adjectives would be the adnominal counterparts of extreme degree modifiers. Other extreme degree modifiers can also modify nouns like *idiot*, as observed by Morzycki (2010), which strengthens the parallel between such nouns and extreme adjectives.

(109) Clyde is a {flat-out/ downright/ full-on/ straight-up} idiot.

In sum, the adjectives *complete*, *total* etc. seem to behave in quite a parallel way to their adverbial counterparts in terms of the interpretations available and the types of expressions they may modify.[304] Does this mean that they should be analysed as degree expressions? This is the view put forth by Morzycki (2009) who analyses them as degree heads (similarly to how he analyses *real* – cf. discussion in §4.1 and §4.4).[305] We would like to suggest that this is not a necessary conclusion. An alternative account, more similar in nature to the approach taken in previous sections to adjectives like *real* and *perfect*, may be available.

In order to get a better understanding of these adjectives, we should also examine their syntactic distribution and compare their attributive and predicative uses.

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[302] Paradis (2000) also notes that gradable nouns "tend to be hyperbolic".

[303] Similar variation is found in the adjectival domain – cf. Bierwisch (1989) who makes a distinction between dimensional gradable adjectives such as *tall* and evaluative adjectives, of which extreme adjectives are in fact a sub-class. Evaluative adjectives, for instance, generally resists neutralization (unlike dimensional adjectives), but there is, in addition, a lot of variation among different lexical items or sub-classes of adjectives.

[304] Note also that while Kennedy and McNally (2005) take the two uses of the corresponding adverbs as distinct, other works propose unified analyses for the two and derive the differences from the interaction with the (scalar) properties of the modified elements (cf. Rotstein and Winter 2004, Morzycki 2010).

[305] Morzycki's (2009) analysis is set within a degree-based approach to gradability. But an analysis of *complete* as a degree expression could also be implemented in a degree-less approach. The question that would arise on such an approach, if it is accepted that these modifiers are sensitive to scale structure (at least on some of their uses), is how to capture the scalar properties of expressions, more precisely the absolute ones. This is a criticism that has been raised more generally against degree-less approaches to gradability (see e.g. Kennedy 2007a). Suggestions have been made, however, in the literature of how this can be captured. Wheeler (1972), for example suggests that for absolute adjectives the comparison class is everything. McNally (2011) suggests a characterization of the relative/absolute distinction focusing on the nature of the properties that adjectives contribute, the role that adjectives play in classifying individuals according to their manifestation of these properties, and the strategies for classification that may be involved (namely classification by similarity, and classification by rule). Such a view could be made use of within a degree-less approach to gradability.

Complete-type adjectives seem to be restricted to the prenominal attributive position, on the relevant reading. In the predicate position, only their basic, descriptive meaning is available, if one exists, hence the results are more or less odd or plainly ungrammatical (cf. Bouchard 1998, 2002, Demonte 2008, Morzycki 2009 a.o.):

(110) a. a complete set of publications
       b. The set was complete.

(111) a. a {complete/ absolute/ total/ utter} idiot
       b. That idiot {is/ seems} {complete/ #absolute/ #total/ *utter}.

Analysing them as degree expressions, whether on a degree-based or on a degree-less approach, predicts this type of syntactic behaviour. On a degree-based approach, they need to operate on expressions defined in terms of degree arguments, and these will not be available when the adjective is used predicatively. In addition, they are linked to a particular projection within the DP; therefore they must appear in a prenominal configuration (cf. Morzycki 2009 who analyses them as degree heads just like *real*). Similarly, on a degree-less approach, these elements will be treated as degree functions that need to apply to the noun and operate on the ordering encoded in its meaning, hence they will be restricted to the prenominal attributive position. But, as discussed in §2.2.3, the restriction to the prenominal position is more generally characteristic of non-intersective adjectives, and cannot be taken as a solid argument in favour of analysing these elements as degree expressions. At any rate, the discussion of the syntactic distribution here will be focused on finding more clues as to the interpretation of these adjectives and their interaction with nouns, which may already suggest an alternative account, rather than directly arguing against a degree analysis.

In contrast with (111), examples like the following, where a noun intuitively associated with an upper-closed scale is used (cf. the examples in (96)-(97) above), are both acceptable and do not seem to exhibit a difference in interpretation:

(112) a. complete certainty
       a'. utter silence
       b. My certainty was complete.
       b' The silence was utter.[306]

There are two possible ways of interpreting these data. One would be to say that, if these examples contain the normally exclusively prenominal adjective illustrated in (111), then this shows that it may be used predicatively, on the relevant interpretation, if the right sort of noun is used as a subject. The other option would be to take it to suggest that it is in fact the literal completeness adjective (cf. (110)) that is used in both cases, namely (112)a-a' and (112)b-b'. In other words, the maximality modifier (e.g. (96)-(97), (112)) would in fact be the same as the descriptive adjective which denotes completeness and which can also be used

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[306] Source: Corpus of Contemporary American English

predicatively in other cases (e.g. (110)), but, similarly to what we have seen with size adjectives, due to the nature of the noun it would result in an abstract interpretation. In order to decide, we will also look at the behaviour of *complete* in combination with other nouns (e.g. nouns that also allowed the predicative use of size adjectives). This seems to support the second type of account of (112).

A comparison of the prenominal and predicative use of these adjectives with nouns that denote non-human objects characterized by a property turns out to be quite revealing. Consider the following examples:

(113) a. The workshop was a complete failure.
       b. The failure was complete.

The success or failure of a workshop may depend on multiple aspects such as the quality of the talks, the atmosphere, the contacts established, the quality of the organisation etc. If the workshop fails in any of these respects that the speaker considers most important, then a sentence like (113)a may be felicitously uttered. In other words, that would be salient enough an indication that the situation qualifies as a failure; it would be sufficient for it to be a clear case of failure in the speaker's view. This may also be why speakers often report that this is in fact an "exaggeration". In contrast, sentence (113)b requires the workshop to have failed in all respects and is used with more difficulty in a "partial" scenario. In other words the predicative *complete* predicates literal completeness with reference to the mereological structure (component parts or aspects) of the object which is being described as a failure. Therefore, if *the failure is complete*, that means that it is a subset of 'complete things' in the sense that it is something which has failed in all respects, all of its aspects has been afflicted, while *a complete failure* is complete as a failure (cf. also Demonte 2008), i.e. it fulfils all the criteria for qualifying as a failure.[307,308]

This is the interpretation we would like to propose the exclusively prenominal *complete* always contributes. Like *perfect*, then, *complete* would apply to the

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[307] This difference in interpretation seems to be confirmed by examples like the following (from the British National Corpus), where abstract nouns are used as subjects. Consider (i)b, for instance, where it is clear that even the last thing went wrong and this made the situation be miserable in all respects.
(i)   a.   My Christmas happiness was complete.
        b.   But Roper was the only Ballyshannon attacker to get his name on the score sheet, and when
            he failed to tie the game up with that late penalty the misery was complete for De La Salle.
        c   Clouds shut out the stars; their solitude was complete.
[308] The contrast may be illustrated more clearly in Romance languages where the non-intersective interpretation is more strictly restricted to its prenominal position, while the postnominal and predicative positions exhibit the intersective, literal interpretation of the adjective. This is shown below for Spanish (examples from Demonte 2008):

(i)	a.	un	completo	fracaso		a'.	el	total	desacuerdo	[Spanish]
		a	complete	failure			the	total	disagreement	
		'a complete failure'					'the total disagreement'			
	b.	El	fracaso	es	completo.	b'.	El	desacuerdo	es	total.
		the	failure	is	complete		the	disagreement	is	total
		'The failure is complete.'					'The disagreement is complete.'			

Thus, if the disagreement is complete, as in (i)b', then they disagree in all respects, while *el total desacuerdo* denotes an act of disagreeing which is such that it represents a clear case of disagreement (Demonte 2008:83).

characterizing property included in the meaning of the noun, and it would say that the properties displayed by the individual in question match this definition. This also correlates with its restriction to the prenominal position: it is only in this configuration that it can target this internal component of meaning of the noun (i.e. the characteristic function, cf. Bouchard 2002, but also, though in a different framework, Siegel 1976 etc.), and indicate that the criteria defining it are exhaustively satisfied in the speaker's opinion. The "speaker-oriented" *complete*-type adjectives are, therefore, parallel to adjectives like *real* and *perfect*, as analysed in the preceding sections. In what follows we will sketch this view and and show how it can account for the distribution and interpretation of these adjectives.

Note first that "all the criteria" should not be taken literally. Consider again nouns like *failure*, *idiot* etc. Such nouns denote objects or individuals characterized by a property that is multi-dimensional (cf. Sassoon 2007a for relevant discussion of multi-dimensionality).[309] Adjectives like *complete*, on the relevant interpretation, say that, in the speaker's view, this (complex) characterizing property applies; this makes it similar to adjectives like *real*. However, it is not necessary that the object actually satisfy the property in absolutely all respects. In other words, these adjectives are not maximality (or exhaustivity) operators over the sets of dimensions or criteria that make up the property included in the meaning of the noun. Let us briefly review the arguments in favour of this view. First of all, the discussion of (113)a above has shown that it may be enough if the characterizing property is clearly manifested in a way or aspect that is particularly salient contextually or in an aspect that is most important to the speaker (e.g. popularity or quality of talks for a workshop in the case of *complete failure*). That seems to offer a sufficient basis for the speaker to conclude that s/he is dealing with a case that fully matches the definition of N (e.g. *a failure*). Secondly, this view of the speaker-oriented *complete* is also supported by the non-contradictoriness of examples like *John's a total idiot, though he's quite smart when it comes to computers*.[310] Finally, *complete* cannot be modified by

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[309] The presence of a multi-dimensional property may in fact be a condition on the use of *complete*, and this might explain the difference in acceptability between *a complete idiot* and **a complete smoker*. In the latter case, what makes someone a smoker is simply the quantity of smoking, and under these circumstances the application of *complete* does not make sense.

[310] It should be noted that proportional modifiers are not very natural or common with the noun *idiot*, as might be expected if we were dealing with a closed scale that made it compatible with *complete*. When found such modifiers seem to be rather the result of a play upon words, taking advantage of the availability of modification by *complete* and the actual totality use of *complete* (on which it would form a series with proportional modifiers like *half*), or maybe (in some cases) retaining the closed scale that was associated with *idiot* in its initial (now obsolete) use to refer to someone with psychological disabilities. Some examples are given in (i). Note also that *a half idiot* is not 'half as idiotic' as compared to 'a complete idiot'; nor is it necessarily someone who is less idiotic than *a complete idiot*, as suggested by (ii). This also confirms our proposal that the speaker-oriented *complete* is not a maximality (or exhaustivity) operator over the dimensions that make up the characterizing property.

(i)   a.   He's not a complete idiot, but only a half idiot.
              (http://forums.mangafox.com/threads/Character-Discussion-Thread?p=2953100)
     b.   He has been variously described as dim-witted, coarse and ignorant, a half idiot, a madman, and a lunatic. (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hon_Yost_Schuyler)

(ii)   a.   I wonder, is a half idiot worse than a regular idiot? No, really. Think about it.
              (http://www.csharphelp.com/forum/topic/breaking-thru-to-sharp)
     b.   A: Hey Dr. Chipmunk, when you call Mr. Lincoln a "half idiot" what do you mean? B: I mean he is so stupid that he fails to qualify as a full fledged idiot, or in other words, he would have to get smarter to be an "idiot". (http://www.wordnik.com/words/)

almost in these examples. We will conclude, therefore, that for a *complete N* to hold, on the relevant interpretation, the characterizing property must be exhibited saliently enough for the speaker to conclude that that the individual in question fully qualifies as an N. So these adjectives are quite strongly speaker-dependent, similarly to what we have seen with *real*.[311]

The literal completeness adjectives, on the other hand, which may also occur predicatively, do impose an actual completeness requirement. When the adjective is predicated of a concrete object with clear, concrete parts (e.g. *set*, *description*, *collection* etc., but also a noun like *idiot*, which denotes a [+human] individual with body parts), the interpretation is in terms of it having all of its mereological parts – e.g. (89), (110), and the only possible, though odd, reading of (111)b. When it is predicated of a more abstract noun, either a noun denoting a property (e.g. *misery*) or one denoting an (abstract) object characterized by a property (e.g. *failure*), this translates as the object satisfying the property in all its aspects. For example, if *the failure is complete* then the failure must cover all of the aspects of the object referred to (e.g. the parts or aspects of a workshop all need to have failed). When the adjective is applied to an expression that inherently involves a finite set of strict criteria for application (cf. McNally 2011 for this view of absolute adjectives, which may be extended to nouns that are intuitively associated with an upper-closed scale), this will result in the maximality interpretation – e.g. (96), (97) and (112).[312] In all these cases, *complete* may be modified by *almost* and by exception phrases.

This view of the "speaker-oriented" adjectives of the *complete* family, which makes them more similar to *perfect* and *real*, may also help us understand their possible co-occurrence with epithets:[313] in the speaker's view the individuals in question satisfy all the necessary criteria for qualifying as Ns (here, again, what is necessary and sufficient to qualify as such is relative to the speaker's belief world).[314]

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[311] Just as in the case of *real* and evaluative adjectives, we should probably refer to an agent or a judge (in the sense of Lasersohn 2005), rather than necessarily the actual speaker, given that these expressions can, for example, be embedded, and so allow shifts in perspective.

[312] Note that *utter* does not seem to be able to modify nouns denoting concrete objects and result in a concrete maximality/ completeness interpretation of the type found with *complete* in examples like (89), (110), and (111)b, on the only possible, though odd, reading of this example. *Utter* seems, therefore, to have lost its original literal meaning, which was descriptive of outermost locations in space (cf. Bolinger 1972), and to have only retained an abstract aspect of the meaning in terms of 'reaching the (far) end, i.e. maximum'. This may explain why it seems to be restricted to nouns denoting abstractions. Otherwise, however, it displays the same patterns of distribution and interpretation as the adjective *complete*, as already illustrated at various points in this sub-section. This includes the maximality interpretation (which correlates with the availability of modification by *almost* and exception phrases, and with the possible occurrence in predicate position); the only peculiarity is that it is generally only found with rather abstract nouns – e.g. (97) and (112); other examples of this type include *(an) utter absence/ lack/ stillness/ loss/ isolation/ blackness/ solitude/ transformation* etc.

[313] Differently from *real*, *complete* does not seem to be compatible with figurative, stereotypical interpretations of nouns, but is rather limited to their literal interpretations, though it can also modify epithets – but it is rather the conventionalized ones (e.g. *bitch*, *crap*) (cf. relevant discussion in §2.1).

[314] The adjective *utter* seems to display a preference for nouns that have a negative connotation, as shown by the unacceptability of (i), in contrast with (90) above, as well as with examples such as (114), where *garbage* and *rubbish* are used to convey a clearly negative evaluation, rather than (simply) attributing a gradable property.
(i)   ??an utter genius
However, examples can also be found where *utter* modifies nouns with neutral or positive connotations (example (ii)a is from The British National Corpus, (ii)b is from Paradis (2000), and (ii)c-d were found

(114) a. {total/ complete/ utter} {garbage/ rubbish/ crap}
      b. a complete bitch

In sum, it has been proposed in this sub-section that the "speaker-oriented" *complete* need not be analysed as an adnominal degree expression. Instead, its contribution seems to be similar to that of adjectives like *perfect* or *real*, in the sense that it applies to the property defining N and indicates that it is fully satisfied by the individual in question in the speaker's opinion. As discussed above, this does not mean that the object described has to manifest the property in absolutely all respects, or in all of its aspects; the object needs to display the defining property saliently enough for the speaker to be able to judge it as clearly qualifying as an N.

4.6   Concluding remarks

This section has studied a number of adjectives which have been argued to be adnominal degree expressions (cf. Morzycki 2009 for an explicit analysis of *real*, *complete* etc. as adnominal degree morphemes). It has been shown here, however, that *real* is in fact not a degree operator, but is best treated as an epistemic/ evidential adjective. A similar analysis can be extended to adjectives like *sheer* and *perfect*. As for totality adjectives like *complete*, it has been shown that they may also be given an alternative analysis, on which they do not directly manipulate gradable structures but are treated more similarly to *real* and *perfect*. The main consequence of this section is that the evidence for adnominal degree morphemes has been shown to become even more scarce, and that availability of modification by these adjectives is excluded as a test for gradability.

5   Conclusions

In this chapter we have examined a number of adjectival modifiers which had been argued to be degree modifiers or operators in the nominal domain. The result we have arrived at after these several case studies is that, in fact, they provide no clear

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on the internet):
(ii)   a. It is an utter delight all the way, especially for travellers on foot with time to linger, but perhaps not for nervous motorists.
      b. complete and utter joy
      c. Now this is utter genius!
      d. utter perfection
      e. an utter mystery
Note that the modified nouns tend to be [-human], abstract mass nouns – compare, in particular, (ii)c to (i) above. A count use is, however, also possible, as in (i)a.
    Paradis (2000) remarks that in the majority of cases the other adjectives also co-occur with negative nouns (in her BNC-based corpus study), but they are not restricted to such environments, as also apparent from the examples in (90) above.

evidence in favour of an explicit gradable structure in the semantics or syntax of nouns that would be parallel to that of adjectives.

First of all, these modifiers are not (always) restricted to what one would want to call gradable nouns, which indicates they do not depend on gradability. Secondly, although the interpretations obtained are often very similar to those obtained in the adjectival domain by means of degree modification, they are in fact arrived at by different mechanisms. In the case of size adjectives, it was shown that they are always used as modifiers predicating size. When they combine with nouns that denote or are defined in terms of instances of abstract properties, due to the type of object they measure, they give rise to an abstract size interpretation. This mimics a degree interpretation, though it is arrived at in a different way, without the manipulation of a gradable structure. In the case of evaluative adjectives, it was shown that the degree(-like) interpretation may may simply arise as an implicature, as an effect of reinforcing negative connotations of nouns. Adjectives like *real* and *true* were probably the clearest cases where a degree analysis could not apply. They have been analysed here as epistemic/ evidential adjectives; in their case the apparent degree interpretation obtained is a result of the interaction between the evidential adjective and the nouns that contain a gradable property in their meaning such as *idiot*. This is because the more idiotic one is, the less doubt there will be about the individual qualifying as an idiot. A similar approach was suggested for adjectives like *pure, perfect* and even *complete*. All of these, therefore, turn out to be 'fake degree modifiers'. They may give rise to degree-like interpretations; however, these are arrived at by various other mechanisms, which are in fact independently needed, without the direct manipulation of a gradable structure. Such a gradable structure does not seem to be grammatically accessible to adjectival modifiers. In chapter 5, we will discuss the implications of these findings for the status of nouns and the status of gradability in the nominal domain, for the parallel or lack thereof with the adjectival domain, as well as for the representation of gradability more generally.

To conclude, the investigation in this chapter provides no evidence for the presence of gradable structure in the semantics and syntax of nouns. Even if in certain contexts, they may give rise to particular interpretations that resemble interpretations obtained by means of degree modifications in the adjectival domain, these are arrived at through different mechanisms. If one were to take these as an indication of the 'gradable' status of the nouns in the context of which such interpretations are obtained, then what gradability means for nouns seems to be different from gradability in the adjectival domain. This conclusion only comes to confirm the results yielded by the previous two chapters.