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## Gradability in the nominal domain

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## Chapter 5

## CONCLUSIONS

This dissertation started out with the aim of identifying gradability in the nominal domain. In order to do that, a number of tests were gathered that had been proposed in the literature at some point or other. From an overview in chapter 1, section 2, it appeared that different tests yielded different results, which begged for a more in-depth investigation. This investigation was carried out in chapters 2-4, each of which has re-examined various environments that had been claimed to involve gradability in some way or another. In case after case, however, it turned out that the proposed diagnostics did not work in the expected ways, and that other factors were involved in creating the noted effects. In the end, we are left with a rather meagre picture of gradability and degree modification in the nominal domain, which is not parallel to what is found in the adjectival domain. In this concluding chapter we will summarise the results of the "tests" which have been examined (and re-analysed) and which have turned out to instantiate phenomena that are different from degree modification as we know it from the adjectival domain. We will also present the picture of "gradable nouns" that emerges from this investigation. Finally, we will discuss the implications this has for our understanding of gradability more generally, and specifically for the comparison between the nominal and adjectival domains. Although the examination of gradability in the nominal domain leads to a negative conclusion, not giving direct evidence that would provide a basis for choosing between theories for the representation of gradability, we will end with some speculations as to which approach might be best suited to capture the differences between nouns and adjectives with respect to gradability.

In chapter 2 two environments were examined that have been claimed to involve gradability, namely *N of an N* constructions (e.g. *that idiot of a doctor*) and the small clause complement of *seem* (e.g. *He seems a fool.*). It was argued that the distribution of nouns in these contexts is not determined by gradability – whether at the lexical or syntactic level – but by other factors which partly overlap with gradability and, under certain circumstances, create similar effects. In the case of *N of an N* constructions, it was shown that the necessary and sufficient condition for a noun to occur in the first slot of the structure is that it can express a value judgment. It was shown that gradable expressions and expressions that convey a value judgment constitute two distinct categories, though they may overlap to some extent, and that the strength of appreciation/ depreciation may lead to an interpretation that can be mistaken for a degree interpretation. In the second case, it was argued that *seem* is an epistemic verb that contains an evidential meaning component. The

restrictions on its small clause complement were shown to follow from a combination of two factors. One is the necessary compatibility with the uncertainty of assessment involved in the meaning of the verb. The other consists of certain restrictions as to what may be used as evidence based on which it can be evaluated whether a property holds. Gradable expressions were seen to represent only a subset of expressions that may occur in this environment. They generally make good complements given the vagueness they introduce. However, this is not enough, and it was seen that not all gradable expressions can occur in the small clause complement of *seem*. Consequently, these two environments were excluded as tests for gradability. The distribution of nouns in these contexts cannot be used as evidence in favour of positing a gradable structure in their semantics or of a degree projection in their syntax. The two case studies examined in this chapter have also shown how various factors may conspire so as to create the impression that gradability and degree are involved.

Chapter 3 focused on the study of *such*, for which a fundamental distinction had been proposed in the literature between a "kind" *such* and a "degree" *such*. We argued against this view and showed that the so-called "degree" *such* is not a degree operator. Its distribution is not limited to gradable nouns, nor is the interpretation in terms of degree. It was proposed instead that this *such* (which we labelled "internal" *such* so as to distinguish it from the usual anaphoric and deictic uses of the "kind" *such*) is also a case of a kind-referring expression, but that it imposes particular requirements concerning the construal of sub-kinds it can select, which accounts for the differences in distribution (and interpretation) with respect to the regular "kind" *such*. More precisely, it was argued that it selects salient sub-types that can be identified by natural consequences which are expressible by means of result clauses. Once again, nouns that are generally thought to be gradable turned out to be only a subset of the nouns that make available the required sort of sub-types, as they easily prompt sub-types delineated by a high degree of the property included in their meaning (e.g. "big idiot"-type) and which are associated with natural consequences that identify them (e.g. being a sub-type of idiot as defined by a high degree of idiocy can naturally determine one's chances of being hired, hence the acceptability of an example like *He's such an idiot that no one will hire him.*). In addition to gradable nouns, internal *such* can modify nouns used with a stereotypical (possibly figurative) interpretation and *situation*-type nouns. While in the case of nouns like *situation*, *way* etc. it is rather straightforward that they are non-gradable nouns, we also argued in this chapter that stereotypical nouns are not gradable either (whether inherently or by coercion). Consequently, it turned out that co-occurrence with *such* in exclamatives or with result clauses is not a test for gradability either, and cannot be used as evidence in favour of the existence of gradable structures in the semantics and/or syntax of nouns. It does not rule out, however, that some nouns may be associated with such gradable structures in the semantics, given that some effects are seen in the interpretation, namely in the way salient sub-types are made available by nouns like *idiot*, *courage* etc. In the last part of the chapter we briefly examined some related cases. *Wh*-exclamatives were shown not to offer a solid basis for distinguishing between lexically gradable and non-gradable nouns, while for *quite*-structures it was suggested that they need not be analysed as degree constructions at

all. An interesting case was presented by predicative partitive structures (e.g. *more of an idiot*), for which it turned out that they may well involve operations on orderings – interestingly enough, these are only available out of an indefinite NP predicate and may be understood in terms of typicality dimensions (in the sense of Sassoon 2007a,b).

Chapter 4 focused on a number of "degree adjectives". From the overview in section 2 of chapter 1, it appeared that the availability of modification by these adjectives on the relevant reading offered the most reliable test for gradability and the most promising candidates for adnominal degree expressions. However, the more detailed investigation of size adjectives, *real*-type adjectives and evaluative adjectives ended up disconfirming this hypothesis. The distribution and the interpretation of size adjectives, for example, do not support a degree analysis of these expressions. The facts instead support an alternative account in terms of (abstract) size of (instances of) properties. More precisely, it was shown that when they combine with nouns that denote or are defined in terms of instances of abstract properties (e.g. *big idiot*, *enormous generosity*, *huge blunder*), due to the type of object they measure (namely an instance of a property, or trope), they give rise to an abstract size interpretation. This mimics a degree interpretation, but we argued that it is arrived at in a different way, without the manipulation of a gradable structure that would be parallel to that of gradable adjectives. Interestingly, *big idiots* would correspond to a salient sub-type that internal *such* was seen to select in chapter 3; it now appears that to arrive at the relevant interpretation, manipulation of gradable structure is not needed. *Real*-type adjectives were a clear case of adjectives that can be shown not to be adnominal degree operators. *Real* and *true* were argued to be epistemic/ evidential adjectives. The apparent degree interpretation obtained was shown to be a result of the interaction between the evidential meaning of the adjective and the nouns that contain a gradable property in their meaning, such as *idiot*: intuitively, 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*. As for evaluative adjectives, it also seems that they do not require a degree analysis. An alternative, non-degree account is possible, namely one which capitalizes on their evaluative meaning, and derives the degree-like interpretation as an implicature, an effect of reinforcing the negative connotation of nouns. In sum, 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 not by operating on gradable structures in a way that would be similar to how degree modification applies to gradable adjectives, but by different mechanisms, which are independently attested and needed to account for other phenomena as well. The behaviour of "degree adjectives", therefore, turned out not to provide any conclusive evidence either in favour of the existence of gradable structure in the semantics or syntax of nouns that would be parallel to that of adjectives.

The investigation carried out in chapters 2-4 shows that in the nominal domain there are no grammatical phenomena that are exclusively sensitive to gradability and no expressions that perform the type of operations that are involved in degree modification as we know it from the adjectival domain, i.e. involving comparison of

degrees or operations on ordered sets (depending on the approach). In the nominal domain, we have not found expressions that are strictly restricted to co-occurring with a particular class of nouns, that one might want to call gradable, and where the degree-like interpretation is not brought about by different mechanisms. It has been shown that abstract size modification, for instance, offers a way of obtaining interpretations that mimic degree interpretations in the nominal domain. In other cases, a degree-like interpretation may arise as an effect of an evidential meaning, or comes about as an implicature arising from reinforcing evaluative connotations, or is mimicked by value judgmental expressions. Various environments or phenomena seem to interact with gradability, at least intuitively, such as epistemicity and evidentiality (cf. the case of the epistemic verb *seem* as well as *real*-type adjectives) or the delineation of sub-kinds. The latter was seen with internal *such* which makes use of salient sub-types (defined by natural consequences) that, in some cases, are delineated in a way that seems to make use of gradable structure, while in fact they are just the sort of sub-types that happen to be salient with this kind of nouns.

We have also not found any evidence in favour of the existence of adnominal degree heads or, more in general, of a syntactic projection dedicated to degree modification, i.e. a nominal DegP, parallel to what has been proposed for the adjectival domain. Take for example those elements that Morzycki (2009) argues to be degree heads and on the basis of which he argues in favour of the existence of a nominal degree structure: *real*, *true*, *complete*. On the one hand, these have been shown not to be degree operators. On the other hand, even if a degree analysis of these elements could be somehow accepted, there would still be a lack of parallel with the adjectival domain: their adverbial counterparts (as well as those of other adjectives, such as *terribly* etc.) behave syntactically as adjuncts, rather than as heads, in the adjectival domain (as indicated by e.g. extraction, adjacency, non-interference with head-movement etc. – cf. Doetjes 1997, Neeleman, van de Koot and Doetjes 2004).<sup>315</sup> As a result, it is not possible to maintain that the same items are involved, which may attach either to adjectives or to nouns (and which, function of the specific syntactic context may be spelled out slightly differently, i.e. *completely/terrible* etc. vs. *completely/terribly* etc., or without any morphological difference, as is the case of Dutch: *erg* 'terrible/y'). While in the adjectival domain items are found which function quite clearly as Deg heads syntactically, such as the comparative, superlative, equative morphemes etc. (cf. Corver 1997, Doetjes 1997, Neeleman, van de Koot and Doetjes 2004, Doetjes 2008 a.o.), we have not found evidence in favour of degree morphemes in the nominal domain. Reflexes of the existence of a nominal DegP structure cannot be found elsewhere either. In chapter 2, it was argued that the distribution of expressions in the small clause complement

<sup>315</sup> This is illustrated below with two Dutch examples, since the possible positioning of the complement to the left of the adjective enables us to check for the possibilities in placing the degree words with respect to the adjective. The example in (i.a) illustrates the impossibility of separating the degree heads *te* 'too' or *even* 'as' from the adjective, while (i.b) shows that this is possible when the modifier/ adjunct *erg* 'terrible/y' is used.

- (i) a. \*een {te/ even} van zijn moeder afhankelijke jongen  
       a too/ as of his mother dependent boy  
    b. een erg van zijn moeder afhankelijke jongen  
       a terribly of his mother dependent boy  
       'a boy terribly dependent on his mother'

of the verb *seem* is not determined by gradability – either at the lexical or syntactic level. Hence, the possible occurrence of a nominal expression in this environment cannot be taken as evidence in favour of the existence of a nominal DegP either (contra Matushansky 2002c). In sum, there is no evidence in favour of adnominal degree morphemes, i.e. of overt degree morphology, in the nominal domain which would motivate postulating the projection of a degree structure in the syntax.<sup>316</sup>

In sum, we have found no evidence that nouns have gradable structure that would be grammatically accessible and that would be parallel to that of gradable adjectives. The obvious question that arises is what this means for the status of nouns. Can we still talk about "gradable nouns"? In some sense, yes; though what gradability means for nouns now seems to be different from gradability in the adjectival domain. Looking at the intersection of all the phenomena examined in this dissertation, it can be noticed that certain nouns recur and give rise to particular types of interpretations which mimic the interpretations obtained in the adjectival domain by means of degree modification. However, as has been shown throughout the dissertation, the mechanisms which lead to these interpretations are not the same as those underlying degree modification in the adjectival domain.

The nouns that can be pointed to seem to fall into three classes, which all have in common the fact that they denote or are defined in terms of (instances of) properties. One class is that of nouns which denote abstract properties, whose instances have abstract size (e.g. *idiocy*, *courage*, *generosity* etc.). A second class contains nouns which denote sets of [+human] individuals characterized by such a property, such as *idiot*, which denotes the set of individuals characterized by their idiocy; other examples include: *fool*, *enthusiast*, *fan*, *blunderer* etc. The third class is that of nouns which denote sets of (more or less abstract) objects characterized by an abstract property, such as *blunder*, *mistake* etc.. Note that many of these nouns are related to gradable adjectives, or are derived from (activity or gradable) verbs or other ("gradable") nouns. As we have already seen, it is the interaction of these particular objects (i.e. instances of properties, or tropes) included in the meaning of certain nouns with certain modifiers (e.g. size adjectives) that leads to degree-like interpretations. This means, therefore, that gradability is not represented in the lexical semantics of nouns – whether in terms of a degree argument or in terms of an ordering, depending on the approach one might want to choose (see below for more discussion of this point) – and these nouns are of the same semantic type as regular nouns. (See also chapter 4, §2.4.2, for possible ways of implementing the intuition that under certain circumstances modifiers may target components in the internal semantic make-up of nouns.) Another result of the investigation in chapters 3 and 4 was to exclude stereotypical, figurative noun interpretations (e.g. *Julie is (such) a boy.*) from the realm of gradability, and also to distinguish them from nouns of the type *idiot*. Unlike "gradable" nouns like *idiot*, which denote sets of individuals characterized by a salient property (even though it may be a complex, multi-dimensional one, such as *idiocy*), the domain of stereotypical nouns is defined as an (unordered) set of (partly intersecting) properties stereotypically associated with N.

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<sup>316</sup> In addition, the postulation of this type of syntactic structure gives rise to a number of additional problems and complications in the system, such as its location within the extended nominal projection relative to other functional projections that are present and to other modifiers.

This makes it impossible to establish an ordering on the domain. It also makes them incompatible with size adjectives, for instance. However, in certain contexts, it is possible to single out just one property of the set, for example in the context of internal *such* with result clauses or in exclamatives. This places these nouns somewhere in between ordinary, non-gradable nouns and nouns like *idiot*. If we accept this picture, and still want to maintain that the three classes of nouns mentioned above are gradable nouns, then gradability turns out not to be a single homogeneous phenomenon.

What does all this mean for theories of gradability? Given the rather negative conclusion concerning gradability in the nominal domain that emerges from this investigation, we do not really have a basis for evaluating different approaches to gradability. However, if we assume a vague predicate (or degree-less) approach to gradability, we may have an interesting way to understand the difference between nouns and adjectives, as suggested by Constantinescu, Doetjes and Součková (2011). On a degree-less account, gradable adjectives are defined as vague predicates, whose domain is inherently ordered. As such, gradability is a matter of the presence of a (salient) ordering. Degree expressions such as *more* and *less* perform operations on these orderings (cf. Kamp 1975, Klein 1980, 1982, Larson 1988, Van Rooij 2008, to appear, Doetjes, Constantinescu and Součková 2011; see also chapter 1, §1.1.2, for more discussion). Within such a framework, we can interpret the (negative) results yielded by the investigation of gradability in the nominal domain, i.e. the lack of degree modification inside the noun phrase, as indicating that the relevant gradable structure, i.e. orderings, is not available with nouns. So while gradable adjectives denote sets of individuals that are ordered on the basis of a property (e.g. *idiotic* denotes a set of individuals ordered based on their idiocy), nouns do not introduce orderings. Instead, "gradable" nouns are those nouns that either denote sets of objects that have an abstract size, i.e. instances of properties, or are defined in terms of such an object, as indicated in the preceding paragraph. These sets, however, are not (inherently) ordered.<sup>317</sup>

This difference may be related to the claim sometimes found in the literature that, differently from adjectives, nouns are inherently and irreducibly multi-dimensional (cf. Wierzbicka 1986, Kamp 1975, and especially Sassoon 2007a). Sassoon (2007a) argues that adjectives are either uni-dimensional or can be interpreted as being uni-dimensional, and this is what makes them compatible with the comparative. Phrases introduced by *with respect to*, for instance, can be used to explicitly reduce a multi-dimensional adjective to a uni-dimensional interpretation.

(1) healthy with respect to blood pressure

Nouns, on the other hand, are inherently multi-dimensional and remain so; their dimensions cannot be accessed by grammatical operations, and they cannot be transformed into uni-dimensional objects either e.g. by adding a phrase introduced by *with respect to*, as shown in (2)a. As such an ordering can never be defined and

<sup>317</sup> This may also help us understand the difference between the figurative use of the noun *boy* and the adjective *boyish*. Although they seem to be very similar in meaning, the adjective, but not the noun, seems to enable an ordering of the individuals in terms of one characterizing property 'boyishness' (though it is a multi-dimensional one: one can be boyish e.g. with respect to looks or behaviour).

nouns cannot be used in (what Sassoon calls "within-predicate") comparatives, as in (2)b.<sup>318</sup>

- (2) a. #Tweety is a bird with respect to flying.  
b. #Tweety is {more/ less} (a) bird than Tan is.

Still, Sassoon argues that nouns too have gradable structures, and she uses "typicality" to refer to gradability in nominal concepts. She argues that nouns are associated with grammatically accessible ordering-dimensions which together help to measure the typicality of entities in the category. This claim is based on the observation that *with respect to*-modification and comparatives become available if "the nouns are slightly modified" or if the particle *of* is added to the comparative morpheme:

- (3) a. Tweety is a typical bird with respect to flying.  
b. A robin is more of a bird than an ostrich.

We would like to point out, however, that these slight modifications to the (bare) noun in fact make an essential difference.

In (3)a the ordering in terms of typicality only becomes grammatically accessible due to the insertion of the modifier *typical*, an adjective interpreted subjectively (as 'typical for a bird'). And the contrast with (2)a indicates this quite clearly. As pointed out by Constantinescu, Doetjes and Součková (2011), nouns may offer in principle all sorts of criteria to order the domain, but these orderings do not seem to be grammatically accessible. For instance, the domain of *boys* can, in principle, be ordered on the basis of height, but without the adjective *tall* explicitly added this ordering is not grammatically active. We have seen the same in the case of modification by size adjectives in chapter 4 (e.g. *big idiot*, *enormous generosity* etc.): once such a modifier is explicitly used, an ordering can be established and comparisons can be made; however, (abstract) size is not an inherent criterion for idiots/idiocy, generosity etc., just as it is not for boys or houses. It can become an ordering criterion only when a modifier is explicitly used.

The example in (3)b is even more revealing from a cross-categorial perspective on gradability. It was noted already in chapter 1 that expressions like *more*, *less* etc. have a cross-categorial distribution, as briefly illustrated again below, and get degree and quantity readings:

- (4) a. more intelligent  
b. to sleep more (than Peter)  
c. more wine (than water)/ more books (than pens)

When used in the nominal domain, these degree modifiers select mass and plural nouns and only give rise to quantity interpretations, whereby they measure or compare amounts of stuff or numbers of entities. Such expressions cannot be used within the noun phrase to directly modify the noun and get a degree reading, as

<sup>318</sup> The examples in (2) are from Sassoon (2007a).



illustrated by the ungrammaticality of (5)a, whose intended interpretation would be 'someone who is more idiotic', which contrasts with the perfect grammaticality of (5)c where *more* modifies the corresponding adjective and indicates a higher degree of the property. Similarly, in (5)b, *more* can only be interpreted as comparing the number of individuals that qualify as idiots; it does not have as a possible alternative interpretation one where *more* would compare individuals in terms of their degree of idiocy, i.e. 'people who are more idiotic than I thought'.

- (5) a. \*{a/ the} more idiot (than I thought)  
 b. more idiots (than I thought)  
 c. more idiotic (than I thought)

On the one hand, this type of distribution would be puzzling on the view that nouns have a similarly accessible gradable structure to adjectives. It is no longer so, however, if we assume that adjectives, but not nouns, introduce orderings on which degree expressions like *more* can operate. On the other hand, the fact that such expressions may combine with gradable adjectives (on a degree reading) and with mass and plural nouns (on a quantity reading) suggests that it is here that we find a parallel with respect to gradability between the adjectival and the nominal domain. Given that plural and mass expressions are generally analysed as partially ordered sets – ordered by the *part-of* relation (cf. Link 1983), then the presence of an ordering would account for the use of expressions such as *more*. It should be noted here that in fact older proposals found in the literature that nouns involve gradable structures in their semantics (and have defined nouns either as measure functions or as containing some sort of degree argument) have been motivated precisely by facts bearing on quantity-related interpretations and the distribution of quantity or measure phrases in the nominal domain (cf. Cresswell 1976, Krifka 1989, 1990).

Thus, an analysis of adjectival gradability in terms of orderings accounts for the grammatical similarity of quantity and degree.<sup>319</sup> It also allows a uniform analysis of these cross-categorical degree modifiers, as their interpretation can be parallel for the different categories.

But let us go back to example (3)b which indicates that *more* can be used with nouns, on a non-quantity reading, and which was used as an argument for Sassoon's claim that nouns have grammatically accessible ordering dimensions, namely in terms of typicality. This is in fact an instance of what we have called predicative partitive structures, which are significantly different structurally from e.g. (5)a and are rather restricted: the degree expression does not directly modify the noun, but occurs outside the noun phrase, on top of the indefinite article, mediated by the preposition *of*, and the modified NP has to be a singular indefinite predicate:<sup>320</sup>

- (6) a. He is more of an idiot than I thought.  
 b. \*They are more of idiots than I thought.

<sup>319</sup> Given extensions of this type of approach to the verbal domain (Bach 1986, Krifka 1989), the presence of an ordering would account for the use of expressions such as *more* in combination with verbs as well (cf. Doetjes, Constantinescu and Součková 2011).

<sup>320</sup> The example in (7) are from Bolinger (1972).

- (7) a. It is less of a telescope than I had hoped.  
 b. \*I bought less of a telescope that time.

It was shown above that typicality is not generally available as an ordering criterion for nouns. It seems, however, that, under certain conditions, predicative NPs may be re-analysed in terms of an ordering based on typicality. This is what happens in examples like (3)b, (6)a and (7)a. Importantly, it is the predicate *an idiot/ a bird/ a telescope* that is thus reinterpreted. The lexical noun itself, used as the head of a nominal extended projection, cannot be thus re-analysed – witness again the ungrammaticality of (5)a. Nouns are enter the derivation as multi-dimensional – they are inherently and irreducibly multi-dimensional: they characterize complex objects in terms of a number of different properties, none of which can be used as an ordering criterion.<sup>321</sup> It is only an already built-up predicate that can be re-interpreted and forced into a uni-dimensional interpretation which would enable an ordering. This sort of interpretation does not seem to be compatible with the argumental, referential use of noun phrases, as suggested by their restriction to the predicative position (cf. the contrast in (7)). When they do appear in argument positions, it is generally in intensional, non-referential contexts or contexts that allow for a predicative re-interpretation (cf. *I {need/ \*found} more of an expert for the job.* – see also chapter 3, §5.3, for discussion). Finally, this re-interpretation can only occur with singular indefinite predicates, not with plural ones (cf. the contrast between (6)a and (6)b). If plurals introduce orderings based on plurality, then this incompatibility suggests that the *part-of* relation destroys (the possibility of constructing) any other potential ordering that could be defined on the basis of the atoms. Hence, it makes it impossible to access/ construe the typicality scale, even in predicative contexts.

To sum up, on the one hand, the results of the investigation in this dissertation indicate that "degree modification" in the nominal domain in fact makes use of mechanisms that are different from those employed in degree modification in the adjectival domain. This suggests a fundamental difference with respect to the (accessibility of) gradable structures found in the two domains. On the other hand, cross-categorial degree modifiers like *more, less* etc. do not occur within the noun phrase, directly modifying the lexical noun; and when they do combine with NPs, they yield quantity readings only. These two aspects suggest that the only ordering that is grammatically accessible with nouns is that introduced by the *part-of* relation. This is an ordering that seems to be introduced at a higher level in the nominal structure (cf. Zamparelli 1998, Heycock and Zamparelli 2005, Schwarzschild 2006 for proposals that the relevant lattice structure based on an ordering in terms of the *part-of* relation becomes available higher in the DP structure, above the NP-level). At the lexical level, nouns do not introduce orderings, as they are and need to be inherently multi-dimensional. Only predicatively used noun phrases may, under specific conditions, introduce orderings in terms of typicality. All these facts seem to be straightforwardly accounted for by a theory that models gradability in terms of orderings: the parallel between nominal quantity and adjectival gradability, the lack

<sup>321</sup> In this, nouns differ from multi-dimensional adjectives. The latter can be either explicitly (by the use of *with respect to* phrases) or implicitly reduced to a uni-dimensional interpretation, which makes an ordering, and hence comparison, possible (see Sassoon 2007a for discussion).

of regular degree modifiers with (lexical) nouns, as well as the possible (but restricted) creation of an ordering in *more of an N* structures seem to be more easily and simply captured by such an approach than by a degree-based account. A vague predicate theory, therefore, seems adequate to describe and explain the differences and similarities that exist between the nominal and adjectival domains with respect to gradability. A fuller understanding of gradability and a more solid choice as to its representation requires further investigation of gradability across categories.