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Degree modifiers of adjectives in spoken British English

Carita Paradis

Lund
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Press

To Herbert, Jon and Hedvig

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Lund, March 1997

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1 Introduction

1.1 Preliminaries

Expressions of degree are conspicuous elements in human communication. This is illustrated in the following example, where four friends are involved in a conversation. One of them, a male teacher, is telling a story about something that happened to him in a junk shop[1]:

(1–1) so so so [s] so [s] so so I wandered !\in to 'this# to this j\/unk shop# and [i] and enquired the 'price of :f\/ire 'buckets# and [:m] and [aen :n] the "man said a !!p\ound# I thought that was **ex:tremely** :r\easonable# for for for an'tique f/ire 'buckets# and and 'so so the the the b\idding was was :\opened# by saying **g\osh#** that seems **an 'awful :l\/ot** for 'fire 'buckets# and then this 'man took **ex!c\/eptional** ex'ception to it# he was **im!m\ensely** :h\/airy# and **im!mensely** \/aged# and **im^m\/ensely** dr\unk# I`ve never seen :\anyone '**quite so** dr\unk# [wi] with [kla] y\ou know# [:m] . the thing a'bout these ":c\ans of :b\eer# they`ve got a **!very** sm\all 'hole in the 'top# h\aven`t they# when you peel it /off# and so it`s "**!t\erribly** ":t\erribly 'difficult to !sp\ill them# :\isn`t it# well he was ":spilling it '**like** "**!b\illyo#** [m] **what what a** "!t\alented 'man# and [:m] and and [ae] he obviously took [ekseksh] ex:c\eption to 'being ":h\aggled 'with# and and and and "f\ixed me# with an **extremely** ":[pj?] w\ell no# for someone 'who had im:b\ibed **quite so m/uch# very very** p\iercing st\are# he l\ooked at 'me and said# y\ou look 'like a ":Barclay 'card !h\ippie# now that`s a 'phrase I`ve "!n\ever 'heard be!f\ore# and it went "**!straight to the "b\one#** you kn/ow apart from the 'fact that I :hadn`t 'got a "!B\/arclay 'card# I thought it was an "\excellent 'phrase# so I "fl\ed# (4.4.1345)

The story-teller describes this event to amuse his friends. He makes use of a large number of emphatic expressions which enhance the force of certain parts of his story.[2] He wants to highlight the extraordinary details about the bidding and about the looks and behaviour of the seller. As we can see, the story is full of hyperbolic expressions which make the story funny. For instance, the seller is not only hairy, aged and drunk, but *immensely* hairy, *immensely* aged and *immensely* drunk. Also, he has a *very very* piercing stare and he is spilling beer *like billyo.* There are no attenuating or hedging items, such as *fairly, a bit,* or *rather,* in this extract. Attenuators would be out of place in that they would take the sting out of the event, and there is no reason at all for the story-teller to hold back the story.

[1] Example (1–1) is taken from the London Lund Corpus of Spoken English. See Section 2.1 for more information about the corpus and Appendix 1 for a key to the various prosodic symbols. I have omitted diacritics considered irrelevant for the example. Laughs and back-channel items uttered by the other participants are omitted for the same reason. The purpose of the example is to illustrate various types of degree modification in real language. It should be noted that not all the types in the example are included in the present study. Also, the example contains both simple items, e.g. *extremely,* and more complex structures with embedded degree modification, e.g. *an awful lot.*

[2] A number of these reinforcing items are given in bold for ease of reference. The selection is not intended to be exhaustive. There are other elements that have a strengthening effect, e.g. *imbibe* instead of the more neutral *drink*.

The extract demonstrates not only the frequency of reinforcing expressions in informal speech but shows also that intensification can be expressed by a range of different words and structures. Most of them are degree adverbs modifying adjectives, e.g. *extremely reasonable, immensely hairy, very small, terribly difficult.* There are also adjectives which have a degree function, as in *an awful lot, take exceptional exception,* quantifying items, such as *a lot, much,* and exclamatory devices, as *what a talented man* and *gosh,* stereotyped expressions of comparison, e.g. *like billyo,* or metaphorical hyperboles, such as *it went straight to the bone.* These expressions all have an intensifying effect on some part of the discourse. However, it is debatable whether all of them are really manifestations of degree.

The words that the expressions of degree modify are in some way gradable, involving a feature which can vary in strength. For instance, something can be more or less *reasonable, difficult* or *piercing,* and somebody can be more or less *hairy, aged* or *drunk.*

The adverbs *extremely, very, terribly, immensely* definitely have the effect of intensifying the adjectives they modify, but there is also another very important side to them. On the one hand, they are used to give specification of degree but they also show involvement and in that respect add to the emotive and subjective dimension of the discourse. These functions are not of equal importance in the different reinforcing expressions of this story. For instance, the quantifiers *a lot* and *much* appear less emotive than *extremely, very, terribly* and *immensely. What* in *what a talented man* is mainly used in an emotional exclamation to show involvement. Actually, it is questionable whether there is an element of degree in it at all, or whether it is solely an emotive intensifier. In other words, the reinforcing effect comes out of its exclamatory force. This illustrates the potential polyfunctionality associated with manifestations of degree.

Apart from the lexical means mentioned above, there are also syntactic and prosodic means of intensification. For example, repetition is used to strengthen the force of an expression. *Terribly, terribly difficult* is more difficult than just *terribly difficult.* Even more emphasis is given to an expression by the combination of polysyndeton and repetition as in *immensely hairy and immensely aged and immensely drunk*

Finally, intonation is the marker of intensity *par excellence.* When a reinforcer is made prominent by means of intonation, the force of the word it applies to is strengthened, e.g. *exTREMELYly reasonable* as opposed to *extremely REAsonable.* There seems to be a tendency towards a harmonious relation between intonational and lexical expressiveness, in that strongly reinforcing words seem to co-occur with prosodic prominence (Appendix 1 provides a key to the prosodic symbols). As the prosodic mark-up shows, most of the expressions of degree in (1–1) are made prominent by stress, by step-up in pitch, by a nuclear tone or by combinations of these.

1.2 Presentation of the study

It was claimed in the very first sentence of this chapter that manifestations of degree are conspicuous in human communication. To this statement we could have added that manifestations of degree are perhaps even more conspicuous in speech than in writing, since speakers have not only lexical means at their disposal but also prosodic means of reinforcement and attenuation.[3] It is the interplay between the semantic role of degree modifiers and intonation that makes it particularly interesting to study them in speech.

This thesis sets out to explore the semantic properties of some English degree modifiers and the adjectives they apply to, the impact of intonation, and their use in spoken British English as represented in the London-Lund Corpus (henceforth LLC), which, at the time of writing, remains the only publicly available corpus that is prosodically analyzed. Twenty-three modifiers, reinforcing as well as attenuating, were selected on the basis of their frequency in LLC (for a definition of degree modifier see Section 1.5, and for details on the extraction of the data see Section 2.3). The items are: *a bit, a little, absolutely, almost, awfully, completely, entirely, extremely, fairly, frightfully, highly, jolly, most, perfectly, pretty, quite, rather, slightly, somewhat, terribly, totally, utterly, very.*

A general introduction to the study of degree modifiers of adjectives will be given in the present chapter, while Chapter 2 reports on the distribution of the selected degree modifiers in LLC.

Chapter 3 deals with the semantics of degree modifiers and the adjectives they combine with. The assumption is that certain semantic features of adjectives constrain the type of degree modifier that can make an eligible match with the adjective. For a successful and efficient combination the semantic features of the two items of the phrase have to harmonize. The main concern of the chapter is to show how this harmony is achieved.

Chapter 4 examines the prosodic properties of combinations containing a degree modifier and an adjective. Again the assumption is that prosodic meaning and lexical meaning must harmonize for optimal effect. The nature of this harmony is investigated in the same chapter. Chapter 5, finally, provides a conclusion of the main aspects of the study.

[3] Speech and writing represent different genres and exhibit different styles within which we are likely to find differences as to frequency, range of types of degree modifiers and range of tokens of degree modifiers. Variation with respect to register will not be investigated in this study, however. Example (1–1) represents one type of language which invites the use of degree modifiers, but the London-Lund Corpus comprises texts from various types of communicative situation (see Section 2.2). The use of degree modifiers may also vary in speakers according to age, social class, regional dialect and pure idiosyncrasies, but these aspects are also beyond the scope of the present study.

1.3 Degree modifiers and grammar

There is no consensus regarding the labelling of the lexical items discussed in this study. Various terms and various ways of categorization are encountered in the literature. The difficulties associated with the categorization and the labelling of these items are due to the complexity and fuzziness that characterize them:

• It is difficult to define the notion of degree in itself and also in relation to quantification and modality.

• The items are grammatically versatile, i.e. they appear in different forms and they are able to modify a whole range of different types of phrases.

Most linguists seem to agree that degree and quantification are two notions that have measurement in common. The close relation between degree and quantification is evident from the labelling of degree words in previous studies. Sweet (1891:124) recognizes a class of adverbs of degree (quantity),[4] which modify adjectives, adverbs, verbs, and occasionally nouns. Bresnan (1973) and Bosque (1993) conflate degree and quantification, while Jackendoff (1977) makes a distinction between the two notions. He specifically points out that adjectives cannot take quantifiers, whereas nouns can. Adjectives can only take degree words. Quirk et al (1985), too, restrict the term 'quantifier' to modification of nominals, e.g. *many pigs, much doubt.*

Vermeire (1979:13) describes the relation between degree and quantification in terms of countability and precision. His position is that degree and quantification can be kept distinct by assigning different levels of abstraction to them. Both degree and quantification involve measurement, but they differ with respect to precision. Real quantity, in its literal sense, requires countable units and can be expressed numerically, whereas quantity that applies to uncountable units merges into degree. Also, different situations require different degrees of exactness. One situation may call for precise measurement. It may be necessary to know that the temperature is 40°. In other situations it may be sufficient to say that it is *extremely hot.*

In the context of degree modification of adjectives, quantification in Vermeire's sense is less common and restricted to matters of, for instance, heat and length, e.g. *3 cm long.* But there is a whole range of less precise expressions of degree, such as *terribly* (nice), *a bit* (tired). According to Vermeire's description of the relations that hold between degree and quantification, the lexical items of this study are all of the type that come under 'degree'. They typically apply to uncountable units and many of them are characterized by imprecision.

[4] Sweet does not specify the relation between degree and quantity. I assume from his way of writing 'degree (quantity)' that he regards degree as a subset of quantity. The fact that degree and quantity have something in common is thus indicated, but not expanded upon.

Furthermore, degree modifiers tend to be subjective in character and show involvement on the part of the speaker. For instance, Halliday (1985:82) subcategorizes degree adverbials under mood adjuncts, and Bolinger (1972:61) includes modal adverbs such as *really, truly, certainly* in his treatise on degree words. The present study is not specifically concerned with the role of modality but with that of degree, and items which tend to be primarily modal, such as *really, truly* have not been included (cf. Quirk et al 1985:447).

The label 'degree' will be used irrespective of whether degree is superordinate to quantification or vice versa. Degree in this study is to be taken as a non-numerical specification of quantity/degree which potentially encompasses modality. On the one hand, the lexical items of the study are used to give specifications of degree and, on the other, they are conveyors of speaker attitudes. The semantic features of degree and modality are capable of getting on well together without creating ambiguity.

The interpretation of degree modifiers, like all words, is context dependent. Some of the items have a number of different functions in different contexts, e.g. *quite, rather, very,* while others are less versatile, such as *completely, entirely, slightly.* Consider examples (1–2) to (1–5):

(1–2) I found his behaviour *rather* strange.

(1–3) I'm not doubting her ability to do it, *rather* her preparedness.

(1–4) Steven would *rather* go swimming than riding.

(1–5) I do think the concert was very good, don't you? –*Rather!*

In (1–2) *rather* is a modifier of the adjective *strange.* It expresses a moderate degree of the adjectival property of 'strangeness'.[5] In (1–3) *rather* has nothing to do with degree. It is a contrastive reformulatory conjunct (Quirk et al 1985:639), whose function is to make overt reference regarding the selection of the preferred description *her preparedness* in opposition to the contrasting element *her ability.* In (1–4) *rather* is a quasi-coordinator (Quirk et al 1985: 982). It is similar to *rather* in (1–3) in that there is an element of preference in both cases. Finally, in (1–5) *rather* is an old-fashioned response item expressing agreement. Obviously, *rather* has several different functions. It performs different roles depending on its structural and semantic environment. As has already been pointed out, only *rather* in its capacity as a degree modifier of adjectives is of interest in the present study.

Secondly, in addition to the label 'degree', a grammatical label is needed to specify their structural characteristics. Halliday (1985:27) points out that 'there are in principle two significant ways of labelling a linguistic unit. One is to assign it to a morphological class; the other is to assign function to it'. From the point of view of formal class, degree modifiers are not easily definable. They exhibit various forms,

[5] Actually *rather* can also be interpreted as a reinforcer of the adjective *strange*. The interpretation of *rather* as a modifier of degree is highly sensitive to contextual clues and intonation (see Section 4.3).

e.g. *completely*, which is a an adverb derived from an adjective, *quite*, which is non-derived, at least from a synchronic point of view, and *a bit*, which is formally a noun phrase. It is obviously not possible to refer them to a particular word-class category. Also, from a syntactic point of view, they cause problems in that they can modify different phrasal types. Consider examples (1–6) to (1–9):

(1–6) She is a *very* nice lady. (AP)
(1–7) It was *quite* a sight. (NP)
(1–8) They were *much* in love with each other. (PP)
(1–9) I *totally* agree with you. (VP)

Degree words occur in different syntactic contexts, but they are notionally related in that they all specify a degree of some property of the element they apply to. Some degree modifiers go with a whole range of different phrases, while the use of others is more restricted. For instance, *very, pretty, fairly* are specialized in the role of modifiers of adjectivals.[6]

Linguists use different labels for items which modify verbs and items which modify adjectivals. Table 1–1 shows the terminology used in four different linguistic works.

Table 1–1 Various ways of labelling degree modifiers of adjectivals and verbs

Source	Modifier of adjectivals	Modifier of verbs
Halliday 1985	submodifier	mood adjunct
Quirk et al 1985	modifier	subjunct
Allerton 1987	intensifier	adverb of degree
Collins 1990	submodifier	adverb of degree

Evidently, there is little consistency regarding the labelling of degree words. In general it could be said that some are word-class labels ('adverb of degree'), while others are functional labels ('modifier', 'adjunct', 'subjunct', 'intensifier'). The term 'modifier' is only used in the context of adjectivals by these linguists. Allerton differs from the others in using the term 'intensifier' in connection with adjectivals only.

In addition to the terms in Table 1–1, it should be pointed out that Quirk et al (1985) also use the label 'intensifier', but they employ it as an umbrella term for all kinds of degree words except quantifiers,[7] while Allerton regards intensifiers as a

[6] By 'adjectivals' is meant adjectives proper, participles used as adjectives and gradable adverbs, most of which are derived from adjectives.

[7] 'Intensifier' is an awkward and misleading term. Intensification is a concept which implies reinforcement. The class of degree words referred to by both Allerton and Quirk et al consists not only of reinforcers but also of attenuators. For that reason, I have discarded the term 'intensifier'. ('Intensifier' is also used by Bolinger (1972) and Vermeire (1979) in the same way as Quirk et al.)

subgroup of the class of adverbs of degree. In his terminology, 'adverb of degree' is both an umbrella term and a term for certain modifiers of verbs. Neither Halliday nor *Collins* make use of a label to indicate the kinship between degree modification of adjectives and degree modification of verbs.

It seems reasonable to establish a term that covers all kinds of lexical items that specify the degree of another element, irrespective of form and grammatical function. As Bolinger rightly points out (1972:15f), it is important that linguistic theory views parts of speech in a more flexible way. Shared characteristics have to be foregrounded, so that the fundamental kinship between different elements comes into focus. Therefore, the term 'degree modifier' will be used here as an umbrella term for all forms and functions of the degree words. Degree modifiers are structurally optional, but when they occur, they require the presence of a head. They have an intimate relationship with the head, since they are semantically licensed by a gradable feature in the modified head (Travis 1988, Paradis 1994).

1.4 Degree modifiers and meaning

The selected degree modifiers[8] are all identified as modifiers of degree in lexicographic works. The entries and examples below are drawn from *Collins Cobuild English Language Dictionary* (henceforth COBUILD), where synonyms are given for all the entries, except for *somewhat, extremely* and *very* (in its maximizing, 'absolutely' sense). I have indicated this information gap with a question mark (?) in the list below.

ABSOLUTELY	*totally:*	That's an *absolutely* fascinating piece of work.
	quite:	He forced himself to lie *absolutely* still.
COMPLETELY	*totally:*	He was *completely* bald.
PERFECTLY	*completely, absolutely, totally, utterly:*	This is a *perfectly* normal baby.
ENTIRELY	*totally:*	McGovern had told them something *entirely* different.
UTTERLY	*absolutely, totally, completely:*	On the other side of the island, the view was *utterly* different.

[8] Section 1.5 outlines criteria for selection.

QUITE	*entirely:* *rather, relatively:*	You're *quite* right. He was *quite* young.
TOTALLY	*overall:*	A *totally* new situation arose.
ALMOST	*practically:*	I had *almost* forgotten about the trip.
VERY	*extremely* (superordinate): ?:	That's *very* nice of you. ... the *very* latest techniques.
TERRIBLY	*frightfully, very* (superordinate):	It's *terribly* important.
EXTREMELY	?:	He played an *extremely* important part in the revolution.
AWFULLY	*terribly, very* (superordinate):	He was an *awfully* good rugby player.
FRIGHTFULLY	*awfully:*	I'm *frightfully* sorry.
MOST	*highly, extremely, very* (superordinate):	The film is *most* disturbing.
HIGHLY	*very:*	The report is *highly* critical of these policies.
JOLLY	*extremely, very:*	We provide a *jolly* good service, I think.
FAIRLY	*pretty:*	It's *fairly* complicated.
RATHER	*somewhat:* *very* (superordinate):	I'm *rather* puzzled by this question. The company thought I did *rather* well.
PRETTY	*kind of:*	I'm *pretty* certain she enjoys it.
SLIGHTLY	*a bit:*	White wine should be *slightly* chilled.
SOMEWHAT	?:	My own part was fascinating, if *somewhat* alarming.

A BIT	*slightly:*	He was *a bit* deaf.
A LITTLE	*a bit:*	It was, however, *a little* disappointing.

The treatment of the various degree modifiers in this dictionary is not consistent. In some cases a superordinate is given together with a synonym, e.g. for *terribly*, and sometimes only a superordinate is given, e.g. for *very*. Moreover, *extremely* is referred to as the superordinate of *very*, and *very* as the superordinate of *terribly, awfully, most* and *rather*.[9]

When we look at this list of degree modifiers, it becomes clear that there are subgroups of synonyms. *Absolutely, completely, perfectly, entirely, utterly,* one of the entries for *quite,* and *totally* express maximum force, and most of them are used as synonyms for one another in the list. In the same way *very, terribly, extremely, awfully, frightfully, most, highly* and *jolly* are employed as synonyms for one another. The subgroups can be said to form paradigms of modifiers which express roughly the same degree (see Sections 1.6.4 and 3.5.1 for a discussion of the term 'paradigm').

The picture of the attenuating modifiers is not as clear as for the reinforcing modifiers with respect to whether they can be further subcategorized, and, if they can, what the subgroups are. According to COBUILD, *pretty* is a synonym of *fairly,* but the meaning of *pretty* is not rendered with a degree modifier. *Kind of* is given as a synonym for *pretty*.[10]

The list makes an interesting starting-point for a study of degree modifiers. It raises several questions concerning the meanings of and the lexical relations between the members of the category. It also raises questions about why there are so many variants that indicate the same degree, and whether these variants are interchangeable. Moreover, for some modifiers more than one entry is given. This applies to *absolutely, quite, very* and *rather*. The two entries for *absolutely* refer to the same maximizing degree. The others are rendered by two different values of degree, which reveals a certain amount of flexibility. It is reasonable to assume that the flexibility depends on the type of adjective they combine with:

(1–10) The teacher was *quite* young.
(1–11) I'm *quite* sure.

[9] These entries do not seem to be based on a consistent analysis of lexical relations. For instance, I do not see why *very* is a superordinate of *terribly, awfully* and *most* but not of *frightfully* and *jolly,* and why it is a superordinate of *rather* but not of *pretty,* or what the difference is in the relation between *highly* and *very,* since *very* is considered a synonym of *highly*.

[10] However, if we look up *pretty* in the *Longman Dictionary of the English Language, rather* and *very* are given as synonyms for *pretty*.

In (1–10) *quite* indicates a moderate degree of 'youth', whereas in (1–11) it is a maximizing degree modifier, meaning something like 'absolutely'. Out of context it is impossible to say what *quite* means.[11]

A related but more delicate problem is whether *quite* has the same scaling force on different kinds of adjectives. Consider examples (1–12) and (1–13):

(1–12) The room is *quite* beautiful.
(1–13) The film was *quite* good.

It is difficult to judge whether the two instances of *quite* in (1–12) and (1–13) have the same force on the adjective they apply to. It should be noted, however, that *quite* is a particularly problematic word. *Collins* (1990:94) categorizes *quite* as an attenuator, Leech and Svartvik (1994:113) categorize it as a reinforcer and Quirk et al (1985:446, 599n) categorize it both as a reinforcer and as an attenuator.

Intonation may be helpful in the interpretation of such expressions. It may even be crucial for the interpretation of some degree modifiers. The speaker can highlight the aspect of degree by various intonational strategies which may influence the scaling force of the modifiers:

(1–14) the room is QUITE new
(1–15) the room is quite NEW

When *quite* is made prominent, as in (1–14), it seems as if it is a clear attenuator, whereas when the tone goes on the adjective, as in (1–15), the effect of *quite* is rather on the reinforcing side.

This section has touched upon some intriguing problems related to the interpretation of degree modifiers and the lexical relations between the various items of the category. Contextual factors, such as the collocating adjective and prosody, seem to be crucial for their interpretation. Aspects concerning the relation between relevant semantic features of adjectives, semantic features of degree modifiers and intonation are therefore the main focus of this study. Some of the modifiers, e.g. *quite* and *rather*, appear to be more dependent on contextual clues than others, e.g. *totally* and *completely*. Moreover, it is true of at least the *very*-group and the attenuators that their scaling force can only be adequately interpreted in an environment where we can make context-based inferences about the relevance and applicability of the expression.

After this general disussion of the interpretation of degree modifiers we will now be more specific and define the category.

[11] This is so in the case of *very* too. It means 'absolutely', with adjectives in the superlative, e.g. *the very smartest, the very best*, but it means 'extremely' with adjectives in the base form, e.g. *very good, very smart*. The reason for the two interpretations of *rather* indicated by COBUILDis not evident.

1.5 Degree modifiers defined

In broad terms, degree modifiers can be defined as elements which modify another element with respect to degree. It is obvious that this definition of degree modifier is not specific enough to be used in delimiting the category for a study of this kind. As has already been pointed out in Sections 1.3 and 1.4, most of the modifiers which are regarded as degree modifiers by most scholars have parallel functions. These parallel functions are governed by the speaker's intentions and various syntactic, semantic, prosodic and contextual factors help the receiver disambiguate the various interpretations.

First, a syntactic restriction was placed on the study, i.e. only degree modifiers of adjectives were included, since degree is commonly associated with the class of adjectives (see Section 3.2). Another reason was that it is necessary to restrict the variables and establish a couple of constants in order to be able to decipher the important traits that govern the use and interpretation of degree modifiers.

Having established a syntactic constant, it became clear that some semantic specification was also required. In the context of degree modifiers of adjectives there is a modality function which co-occurs with the role of degree to a greater or lesser extent. Quirk et al (1985:485ff) describe this parallelism by saying that degree modifiers are concerned with the assessment of a gradable constitutent and they are similar to modality modifiers such as *really* and *truly* in semantic effect. Modality modifiers and degree modifiers shade off into one another.

Biber (1988:240) points out that the function of the lexical class of reinforcers is not only to indicate a certain degree, but they also 'indicate in positive terms, the reliability of the proposition'. Holmes (1984b:48ff) states that reinforcers can be used for non-propositional functions in that they may convey both modal and affective meaning. Modal meaning is speaker-oriented and has to do with the speaker's judgement of the degree of certainty of what he/she is saying. Affective meaning, on the other hand, is listener-oriented and refers to the use of reinforcers by speakers to show solidarity with the listener. Similarly, she claims that apart from the lowering effect that attenuators have on the word they apply to, they have a modal function of marking uncertainty with respect to the proposition as well as an affective function of showing deference vis-à-vis the hearer. They are regarded as 'hedges' by Holmes (1984a, 1984b) and other scholars such as Lakoff (1972) and Hübler (1983).

Obviously, there are modifiers which have a semantic effect similar to that of degree modifiers but which are primarily modal and affective, e.g. *really, so.* In some contexts, in particular with scalar adjectives such as *nice* and *good,* their effect is similar to that of degree modifiers, such as *very, extremely, terribly,* e.g. *really nice, so good.* Also, the semantic effect of *just* may be similar to *absolutely* in sentences such as: 'It is *just* marvellous' (Aijmer 1985). *Sort of* and *kind of* sometimes have a very similar effect to moderators, e.g. 'I'm *sort of* happy' (Aijmer 1984). Yet, in most previous work on degree modifiers, scholars are not explicit about what criteria

have been used for the inclusion of degree modifiers into the category of degree. Some of them take their role as degree modifiers for granted and instead discuss their various levels of membership in the category, e.g. Vermeire (1979),[12] while others are not at all concerned with delimiting the category as such, e.g. Bolinger (1972) and Allerton (1987).[13]

The delimitation of the category of degree modifiers in the present study is based on a prosodic-semantic equivalence criterion. A simple frame was used in order to sift away modifiers whose primary function is modality. A modifier is defined as a degree modifier if the degree meaning is predominant when it is used with contrastive focus, i.e. when the nucleus is on the modifier. Consider the following examples:[14]

(1–16) A: did you say he was NICE
B: he was VEry nice

A: did you say he was MAD
B: he was comPLEtely mad

A: did you say he was HAPpy
B: he was FAIRly happy

A: did you say he was SURE
B: he was QUITE sure

These modifiers all have a clear degree reading in the examples in (1–16). Contrastive focus assignment, i.e. nucleus placement on the modifier, is used because it clearly draws out the degree interpretation (see Section 4.2.2). Let us now instead put *really, so, sort of* and *just* into the frame:

(1–17) A: did you say he was NICE
B: he was REALly nice

[12] Vermeire does discuss other related or coexisting aspects such as quantification and modality, but his conclusion is that we have to accept fuzziness. There are no criteria which are rigid enough to provide clear-cut borderlines (1979:77).

[13] Bäcklund (1973) takes the membership of some of the modifiers for granted, e.g. *almost, rather, quite,* while he establishes criteria for the level of membership of other modifiers, e.g. *frightfully, absolutely, mildly.* He makes use of two criteria to account for the prominence of the degree component in the modifier. For instance, he argues that *awfully* in *awfully good* has a stronger component of degree than *awfully* in *awfully pale* or *awfully weird.* His reason for this is that in combination with *pale* and *weird, awfully* is generated on the basis of its corresponding adjective, while this is not the case with *good.* The explanation of how these criteria should be applied and how they work is not altogether clear.

[14] The upper-case letters indicate the placement of the nucleus.

A: did you say he was TALL
B: he was SO tall

A: did you say he was NICE
B: he was SORT of nice

A: did you say he was MARvellous
B: he was JUST marvellous

In (1–17) *really* and *so* are still ambiguous. *Really* is ambiguous between modality, meaning something like 'in truth', and a degree of reinforcement similar to *very*. *So* is ambiguous between identification and degree. Identifier *so* could be clarified by: *He is about so tall* as compared to the intensifier interpretation: *He is so tall, you can't imagine* (see Bolinger 1972:176 for an extensive discussion of the identifier and the intensifier interpretation of *so*). In the case of both *really* and *so*, more contextual clues are needed to disambiguate the interpretation.

In this same frame *sort of* is not ambiguous. The literal meaning of *sort of* is highlighted. The function of *sort of* is to indicate that *nice* is to be understood as referring to some way of being nice. It functions as a hedge as to manner or aspect. The same is true of *just*. When the nucleus goes on *just*, the reading is that of a predominant role of focusing and restricting. In combination with *marvellous* the utterance becomes nonsensical. Thus, a semantic-prosodic equivalence criterion has been used in order to determine the membership of the category of degree modifier. *Really* and *so* have not been included, since they are ambiguous in these utterances. The degree aspect is not predominant. *Sort of* and *just* are not ambiguous in contrastive focus. They are simply not associated with degree at all.[15] All the degree modifiers which pass the semantic-prosodic equivalence criterion and which occur in the corpus more than ten times in combination with adjectives in the positive were finally selected.

1.6 The structure of the category of degree modifier

There are both differences and similarities among the members of the category of degree modifiers. They are similar in that they all indicate a certain graded value of the item they apply to. They are different in that they indicate different values of some feature of the item they modify. This section presents four models of the internal structure of the category of degree modifiers.

[15] Also, these four marginal degree modifiers freely modify other degree modifiers.

some of them were *rVeally* quite clever	(2.12. 390)
it's *sort of* quite h\armless	(1.4.876)

Normally, degree modifiers do not modify one another, e.g. *?very fairly good*, except for *almost*, which can submodify maximizers, e.g. *almost entirely true*. They may, however, reduplicate for the purpose of reinforcement, e.g. *very, very good*.

1.6.1 The scale model

The members of the category appear to be related to one another in a scalar fashion from modifiers which indicate a highly reinforcing value to items which indicate an attenuating position, e.g. *completely* > *very* > *fairly* > *slightly*. On this view the internal structure of the category of degree modifiers is comparable to the scalar structure of quantifiers, such as *all* > *many* > *some* > *a few* > *no*, or to expressions of frequency, such as *always* > *often* > *sometimes* > *rarely* > *never*.[16]

However, strictly formal definitions of scalar relations between lexical items involve problems. These problems have received considerable attention in the literature (Lyons 1977:288-89; Lehrer and Lehrer 1982; Cruse 1986:192ff; Westney 1986:333-54). Westney, in particular, discusses the general problems involved in determining lexical scales. He points out that the two most important criteria for scalar relations are incompatibility and the principle of scalar ordering. In both cases entailment is used as a test for whether the criteria apply or not.

Lyons (1977:288–89) notes that the incompatibility criterion is based upon contrast within similarity, and he defines a scale as a serially ordered, many-member set of incompatible gradable items.[17] Contrast is self-evident, if non-equivalence is established between items. The degree modifiers given as examples above are contrasting in that *completely* is not the same as *very*, *very* not the same as *fairly*, and *fairly* not the same as *slightly*. At the same time, they are similar in that they specify degree. Westney (1986:340) points out that no obvious similarity criterion exists. Entailment offers a possibility, since entailment must involve semantic similarity. In other words, if something is 'completely different' it would entail that it is also 'very different', 'fairly different' and 'slightly different'.[18]

The second criterion, the principle of ordering, is interdependent and inseparable from the incompatibility criterion in that the requirement for an ordering principle is based on entailment relations, which is also the case for the similarity part of the incompatibility criterion. In a relation such as that holding between quantifiers, *all* > *many* > *some* > *a few* > *no*, the scalar entailment is assumed to be a chain of entailments. This is most clearly demonstrated in the case of quantifiers. *All* entails *many*, *many* entails *some* and so on. Westney notes that if demonstrability of entailment is to apply in the strict sense between the various members of a set, the re-

[16] A zeroiser could of course have been added to the list of degree modifiers. For example, *not at all* would be equivalent to *no* and *never* in the quantifier and frequency scales. A real zeroiser would obligatorily involve an element of negation, either *not* on its own or a reinforced *not at all*. I have chosen to leave negation out, since it applies to all kinds of adjectives, although with different implications.

[17] Lyons points out that incompatibility is to be distinguished from unrelatedness. In a certain sense, a 'rose' and a 'pig' are incompatible, since a *rose* denotes a flower and a *pig* an animal. However, there is little point in discussing their lexical relation in terms of incompatibility, since the sense of *rose* cannot delimit the sense of *pig*.

[18] Westney (1986:348) points out that although entailment is essentially a relation between propositions, it can also be made to apply to lexical items.

quirements are that the members of the set are organized in a scalar fashion, and in this scalar relation no items can come between A, B, and C, and no paradigmatic variants are possible unless they are total synonyms. Thus, when entailment in the strict sense is applied to a scalar set it means that where A is true, B is true, and where B is false, A is false, i.e. all the stronger items entail the weaker items (Westney 1986:348).[19]

Westney's discussion suggests that scales regarded in the strict sense as paradigmatically closed systems with fixed ordering, demonstrating quantity implicatures, are rare. He comes to the conclusion that quantifier scales are the most strictly scalar ones. Less strictly scalar relations might be phenomena that include items that are ordered in a linear fashion such as ranks, e.g. military ranks, and gradable antonyms, such as *hot* and *cold* (Horn 1989:240-44).

There are several problems involved in the designation of degree modifiers as a scalar set. Do scales necessarily consist of a finite set of members? How do we delimit the membership of the scale? Do degree modifiers such as *rather* and *fairly, terribly* and *very* belong to the same scale? Are some of them synonyms and as such do they indicate exactly the same degree? If they belong to different scales, how many scales are there? The complex and fuzzy nature of degree modifiers makes it difficult to pin-point the differences and the similarities between certain modifiers. Lexical scales are thus generally unjustifiable. It is not possible to define a scale of degree modifiers in the strict sense, as can be seen in the various treatments of modifiers surveyed in Sections 1.6.2–1.6.4.

1.6.2 Quirk et al

Quirk et al (1985:445) divide degree modifiers of adjectives into two distinct groups. There are degree modifiers which scale upwards from an assumed norm, e.g. *a very funny film* as compared to *a funny film*, and there are degree modifiers which have a lowering effect in that they scale downwards from an assumed norm, e.g. *a fairly long road* compared with *a long road*.

Quirk et al's model for degree modifiers of verbs is basically a binary structure too, where the degree node has two branches, viz. that of 'amplifiers' and that of 'downtoners' (see Figure 1–1). Then a more delicate subdivision of amplifiers and downtoners is made into 'maximizers' and 'boosters' on the one hand, and 'approximators', 'compromisers', 'diminishers', and 'minimizers' on the other. The subdivision is based on the semantic roles of the degree modifiers. It should be noted that this subdivision is made only for degree modifiers in their capacity as subjuncts. No reason for the different treatment of degree modifiers of adjectives is,

[19] Westney points out that this evidence is provided by the necessary condition of entailment, but there is no way of demonstrating a scalar set which is strict enough to serve as a sufficient condition, since entailment can be used to demonstrate various types of lexical relationships, such as definitional, hyponymous and scalar relations (ibid. 348f, Cruse 1986: 93). Scalar relations are not to be subsumed under hyponymy. A scalar relation involves a number of serially ordered incompatible elements, while a hyponymous relation is not characterised by incompatibility.

however, given, which is surprising, since the same organization applies in a similar way in both environments (Quirk et al 1985:589–603, cf. 445–47)[20]. The application of the various subgroups to adjectives is demonstrated in Section 1.6.4.

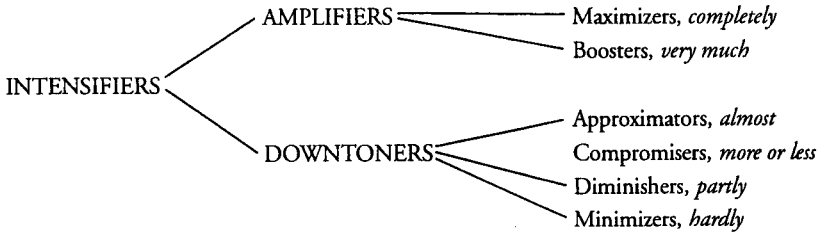

Figure 1-1 Quirk et al's (1985) subdivision of degree modifiers of verbs

According to Quirk et al, maximizers denote the upper extreme on the scale and boosters denote a high degree on the scale. Approximators serve to indicate that the item which the degree modifier applies to expresses more than is relevant. Compromisers have only a slight lowering effect and tend to call in question the appropriateness of the item concerned. Diminishers scale downwards and roughly mean 'to a small extent'. Finally, minimizers, according to their view, are negative maximizers, meaning '(not) to any extent'.

At some superficial level these groups are considered to form a scale, but on closer investigation, it is clear that there is no consistent inherent structure. There does not seem to be a fixed order between approximators and compromisers, for example. Quirk et al specify neither the various positions of the subgroups, nor their mutual relations.

1.6.3 Allerton

Allerton (1987) presents a different classification of degree modifiers. His classification is based on degree modifiers of adjectives.[21] There is no attempt to analyze the relations between the various groups of degree modifiers, neither in terms of a scale nor in terms of a branching hierarchy. Instead, his contribution to the description of degree modifiers is a classification where four subgroups are distinguished according to the gradable feature involved. His classification can be summarized as follows.

[20] Like Quirk et al, most researchers in this area recognize the basic dichotomy between modifiers which point out an increasing value and modifiers which point out a decreasing value (Stoffel 1901, Borst 1902, Kirchner 1955, Cliff 1959, Spitzbardt 1965, Biedermann 1970, Bolinger 1972, Bäcklund 1973, Vermeire 1979).

[21] These roles are related to corresponding semantic features of the adjective. The properties of the adjective will be dealt with in Section 3.3.

1. **Scalar modifiers** indicate different parts of a mental scale of degree which ranges from immeasurably high to zero, e.g. *extremely, very, pretty, rather, fairly, somewhat, slightly, not at all.* Within this group Allerton distinguishes boosters, moderators, diminishers and zeroisers, which correspond to Quirk et al's subgroups, except for their maximizers. In this group Allerton also includes the comparatives *more* (or *-er*), *most* (or *-est*), *less* and *least,* and *too.*

2. **Telic modifiers** relate the actual degree of the modified item to the degree required for some purpose and place it above or below that mark, e.g. *easily, barely, only, just, hardly, virtually, nearly.*

3. **Absolutive modifiers** indicate that the degree of the modified item is 'superlative', e.g. *absolutely, utterly, totally, entirely.* Absolutive modifiers combine with 'superlative' types of adjectives. This group corresponds to Quirk et al's maximizers.

4. **Differential modifiers** indicate the difference of degree between the item being described and some reference point. They include *far, much, a lot, marginally, slightly, a bit* in combination with comparatives.

Allerton's and Quirk et al's models differ in their basic approach. Allerton's subclassification is based on various semantic features that correspond to the names of the groups. These subclasses are not interrelated. Quirk et al's subclassification is based on the intensifying force of the various groups.

There are further differences between the two models. Allerton's scalar modifiers include Quirk et al's boosters, compromisers, diminishers, minimizers, and the various markers of the comparative and the superlative forms, and *too.* Quirk et al do not deal with comparatives and superlatives at all in the context of degree modifiers of adjectives. They treat them in a special section, where they deal with adjectives and adverbs in the comparative, and they do not discuss them in terms of amplifiers and downtoners. *Too* is quite simply regarded as an amplifier in Quirk et al. What Allerton regards as telic modifiers, Quirk et al regard as approximators, e.g. *virtually, nearly,* and minimizers, e.g. *hardly, barely.* Allerton's absolutive modifiers are equivalent to what Quirk et al refer to as maximizers. Finally, what Allerton calls differentials is a group of degree modifiers which modify comparatives. Modifiers of comparatives are not classified as a separate group of intensifiers in Quirk et al.

Moreover, Allerton's model takes the properties of the collocating adjectives into consideration. He dismisses Quirk et al's model precisely because they overlook the fact that the collocating items are gradable in several different ways. Allerton maintains that the semantic complexity of adjectives places restrictions on the choice of degree modifiers. He criticizes previous scholars for their treatment of the notion of gradability, which he claims is applied by them in too general a way, when they

suggest that some adjectives are gradable and can therefore take degree intensifiers and have a comparative form, while others are nongradable. Allerton points out that this view is clearly an oversimplification, 'because, for instance, both *very* and *absolutely* express degree, and yet we find *very surprising, absolutely amazing* but hardly ?*absolutely surprising* or ?*very amazing*'. There is clearly a need for a more subtle classification.

1.6.4 The present model

Three models of the internal structure of the class of degree modifiers have been presented so far:

- the scalar model
- Quirk et al's branching/classifying model
- Allerton's classification

I will propose a fourth model which is influenced by all three of them. Firstly, I postulate that degree modifiers form five different paradigms[22] of modifier, the members of which express more or less the same degree (as has already been suggested in Section 1.4).

Secondly, the grading force expressed by the members of the five paradigms forms a scale, or rather a cline, ranging from strongly reinforcing modifiers to strongly attenuating modifiers.[23]

Thirdly, in combination with adjectives, i.e. in context, the use of degree modifiers is constrained by the semantic features of the collocating adjective on two dimensions: totality and scalarity. The relation between the semantic features of the adjective and its modifier has to be harmonious.

The modifiers are conceptualized as occupying different positions on this con-

[22] The term 'paradigm' is adopted from Nevalainen (1991). She uses the term for focusing adverbials. Her motivation for using the term is that it establishes the basic contrast between paradigmatic and syntagmatic dimensions. I agree that it may be worth establishing this contrast, even though context is always involved in the interpretation. Also this contrast is not as clear when dealing with degree modifiers, since their existence is determined by the adjective they combine with. Nevertheless the notion of paradigm is of importance as a way of grouping items, even though it should be kept in mind that the syntagmatic relations are crucial for the paradigmatization of degree modifiers.

[23] The two terms 'reinforcer' and 'attenuator' are employed in the present study. 'Reinforcer' is Allerton & Cruttenden's (1978:162) term for degree modifiers which have a strengthening function. Quirk et al's term 'amplifier' can be used as a synonym for 'reinforcer'. 'Intensifier' would be another possible term. It is a bit awkward, however, since some linguists use 'intensifier' to denote the whole category, whilst others use it for degree modifiers of adjectives, in both cases both for reinforcing and attenuating modifiers. 'Attenuator' is preferred to Quirk et al's 'downtoners'. The directional meaning of 'downtoner' is awkward with certain scalar adjectives, e.g. *bad*, because the direction is upwards rather than downwards. Consider Figure 1–2:

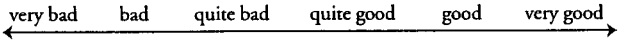

Figure 1–2 Direction of reinforcement and attenuation of *bad* and *good*

Quite has an attenuating effect on the strength of *bad*. On the scale of merit the level of *bad* is pushed upwards rather than downwards. For this reason, I use 'attenuator' in preference to Quirk et al's 'downtoner'. Allerton & Cruttenden's 'detractor' would be another possible term.

tinuum. The word *scale* is, however, not to be taken in its technical sense, since, in the case of degree modifiers, it is not possible to find truth-conditional criteria that satisfy a formal definition of a scale in the strict sense, as has already been pointed out in Section 1.6.1. The scale referred to here is a mental model, on which the degree modifiers form a continuum from maximum force to minimum force. Maximizers exhibit the strongest degree of reinforcement followed by boosters. Moderators and approximators are just slightly attenuating, whereas diminishers have a stronger attenuating force (see Table 1-2).

The moderators, *quite, rather, pretty* and *fairly*, are not always attenuators, but I have categorized them as such for practical reasons. Their scaling potential will be further discussed in Section 4.3. Again, it is important to note that the degree modifiers do not have fixed positions of degree. Their interpretation is sensitive to contextual factors. Some degree modifiers seem relatively stable, whereas the interpretation of others is more flexible.

Table 1–2 The imagined scale of degree modifiers from the strongest to the weakest

REINFORCERS	
Maximizers	*quite, absolutely, completely, perfectly, totally, entirely, utterly*
Boosters	*very, terribly, extremely, most, awfully, jolly, highly, frightfully*
ATTENUATORS	
Moderators and Approximators	*quite, rather, pretty, fairly, almost*
Diminishers	*a (little) bit, a little, slightly, somewhat*

The terms 'maximizer', 'booster', 'approximator' and 'diminisher', are Quirk et al's (1985, originating from Bolinger 1972), and the term 'moderator' is Allerton's (1987). The members of the various subgroups that form the cline, e.g. the maximizers *completely, totally, absolutely*, are cognitive synonyms (see Section 3.5).

If we take a closer look at the type of grading involved in the different paradigms of the category of degree modifiers, we can see that they fall into two subsets. One subset involves grading in terms of totality, and the other subset involves scaling (see Chapter 3). Both among scalar degree modifiers and totality modifiers there are those that reinforce and those that attenuate some value of the adjective in question (see Table 1-3). This basic difference is missing in all the three models described in this section.

Table 1–3 Totality modifiers and scalar modifiers combined with levels of degree

DEGREE	TOTALITY MODIFIERS		SCALAR MODIFIERS	
REINFORCER	maximizer	*completely (full)*	booster	*very (tired)*
ATTENUATOR	approximator	*almost (full)*	moderator	*rather (tired)*
			diminisher	*slightly (tired)*

The present model recognizes the same levels of degree as Quirk et al's does, except for minimizers. However, it also recognizes that there is a basic distinction between certain degrees of totality, which are tied up with an 'either-or' conception of some feature of the modified item, e.g. *completely full*, and degrees on a scale which do not involve an 'either-or' conception but a scalar conception, e.g. *very tired* (see Section 3.3). This means that the occurrence of the different types of degree modifiers is ultimately conditioned by gradable features in the adjective. The relevant properties of the adjective will be examined in Chapter 3. The degree modifiers that are investigated in the present study are distributed among the subgroups as in Table 1–4.

Table 1–4 The different members of the five paradigms of degree modifiers divided into totality modifiers and scalar modifiers, reinforcers and attenuators

TOTALITY MODIFIERS		
Reinforcers	maximizer	*quite, absolutely, completely, perfectly, totally, entirely, utterly*
Attenuators	approximators	*almost*

SCALAR MODIFIERS		
Reinforcers	boosters	*very, terribly, extremely, most, awfully, jolly, highly, frightfully*
Attenuators	moderators	*quite, rather, pretty, fairly*
	diminishers	*a (little) bit, slightly, a little, somewhat*

It should be noted that there are two readings of *quite:* one as a maximizer and one as a moderator. Maximizer *very* is not included here, since there were too few occurrences in LLC. Despite the two entries for *rather* in COBUILD (Section 1.4), it will be categorized as a moderator for reasons which will be presented in Section 3.5.1.

1.7 Aims

This chapter has introduced the topic and scope of the study, together with a discussion of previous work in the field and relevant theoretical considerations. It concludes with a more specific statement of aims:

(1) To describe the use of degree modifiers of adjectives in spoken English on the basis of the London-Lund Corpus in terms of frequency, collocability,[24] and intonation (Chapters 2–4).

(2) To provide a semantic analysis of these degree modifiers and the various types of adjectives they combine with and, in doing so, to account for the influence that the semantic features of the degree modifiers and the adjectives have on one another (Chapter 3).

(3) To describe the interplay between intonational meaning, discoursal meaning, attitudinal meaning, and the lexical meanings of the degree modifiers (Chapter 4).

[24] The term 'collocation' is used to refer to combinations of actual lexical items. In this study the collocates of the different degree modifiers are the actual lexical items that combine with them. The term 'collocation' is thus not to be taken in its strict sense referring to a higher than random frequency of certain combinations.

2 Degree modifiers in the London-Lund Corpus

2.1 Introduction

The purpose of the present chapter is to give a description of the London-Lund Corpus (LLC) and to account for the frequencies of the various degree modifiers, both the distribution of the individual lexical items and the frequencies of the different paradigms as outlined in Chapter 1. Also, this chapter reports on the distributional differences between speech and writing as represented in LLC and the Lancaster-Oslo/Bergen corpus (LOB) respectively. The reason for using LLC, i.e. a corpus of spoken English, is that it is natural to take authentic speech as the starting-point as well as a source of material for a study of the semantics, the prosody and the use of a class of words in which most of the members are typical of the spoken language.

2.2 Material

LLC consists of half a million words of spoken British English.[1] It comprises both dialogue and monologue. Within dialogue a distinction is made between conversation in private and public discussion. The most common type of conversation is face-to-face conversation. The corpus also includes telephone conversations. Many of the face-to-face conversations and all the telephone conversations are surreptitiously recorded, that is, one or more of the participants in the conversation did not know of the recording. The purpose was to get at impromptu spoken language in its most natural form.[2] Public discussion, which includes broadcast interviews and panel discussions, is dialogue heard by an audience that does not participate in the discussion.

Within monologue a distinction is made between spontaneous and prepared monologue. Spontaneous monologue is relatively unplanned and in that respect it shows similarities to conversation. It includes commentaries on sport events and state occasions, demonstrations of experiments and speeches in parliamentary debates. Prepared monologue is nearer the written language, but it retains opportunities for improvisation and spontaneity in not being read from a script. Prepared monologue includes sermons, lectures, political speeches and addresses by lawyers. These monologues have been prepared to be spoken. There is also a special type of monologue, represented by letter dictation, which is 'language spoken to be written'.

The complete version of LLC was used in the present study (Greenbaum & Svartvik 1990:14). However, the parts of the texts which are not prosodically

[1] For a more detailed description of the corpus, see Greenbaum & Svartvik (1990).

[2] All the surreptitiously recorded face-to-face conversations, except S 3.7, have been published in Svartvik & Quirk (1980).

marked are neither included in the total number of words of the corpus, nor considered in the study. The complete version comprises 100 computerized texts, each text consisting of 5,000 words. The information provided for each text is illustrated by the following extract:

Text S.1–2: Conversations between equals
Text S.1.3 (1965)
A female undergraduate, c. 36
B female undergraduate, c. 30
c male undergraduate, c. 36

Speakers denoted by upper case letters have been surreptitiously recorded, while lower case letters indicate that the speaker was aware of the recording taking place. The task of the people who knew of the recordings was to keep the conversation going. Their contribution has not been prosodically marked. The oldest text was recorded in 1953 (S.2.1) and the most recent is from 1987 (S.6.9b). There are, however, just a few texts from the fifties and the eighties. The main body of the corpus is from the seventies.

The prosodic transcription involves the following features: tone unit boundaries (including subdivision into subordinate tone units), onsets (the first prominent syllable in a tone unit), placement of nucleus, direction of nuclear tones (falls, rise-falls, rises, fall-rises and levels), boosters (i.e. relative pitch levels), two degrees of pause (brief and unit pauses alone or in combination) and two degrees of stress (normal and heavy).[3] Other features that are indicated are simultaneous talk and contextual comments such as laughs, coughs, telephone rings, etc. Appendix 1 gives a list of the prosodic notation used in the corpus. A short illustration of a portion of text is given below:

A I`m ^not - ^\oh#
A ^th\anks#
A ^not really :c\omfortable# ·
A ^like th/is#
b ^[/m]# - - -
b you got a ^c/old#
A - "^n\o# ·
A just a ^bit !sn\iffy#
A cos I`m - I "^\am c/old#
A and I`ll ^be all right 'once I`ve warmed \up# -
A do I ^l\ook as though I`ve got a :c/old#
b no I ^thought you s\ounded as if you were

[3] For further details on the prosodic transcription, see Section 4.1.1.

A ^[\m]# - - -
A ((I ^always d\o a bit actually#))
A ^chr\onically#
b - - - ^there you /are#
A - - - ^\oh#
A ^s\uper#
b - - - ^pull your ch\air up _close if you w/ant# - (1.3.8)

The reading of the texts is impeded by the large number of diacritic marks. In order to facilitate the task of the reader, I have only retained the notation necessary for the purpose of the example.

As is the case with all corpora, there are both advantages and disadvantages with using LLC.[4] One advantage is that the corpus is carefully composed in that it contains spoken language of different kinds. There is dialogue and monologue, and there are further subclasses of spoken language. Information is given about the type of text, the participants, their mutual relations, and year of recording. It is homogeneous in that all of the participants are speakers of educated British English.[5] However, the main advantage of the corpus is the detailed prosodic transcription. This makes it possible to describe intonational patterns based on a relatively large amount of data. Various claims about the naturalness of intonation based on intuition can be confirmed or disconfirmed by corpus-derived material.

A disadvantage with LLC is its age – the majority of the recordings were made over twenty years ago. The time factor is an inherent problem in all corpus compilation, and particularly so in the case of a carefully composed and prosodically transcribed corpus such as LLC. For my purposes, however, the fact that most of the material derives from the seventies is of less importance, since the main focus is on general questions of intonation and semantics, which are not likely to be sensitive to the flux of time in such a short perspective. What may be more sensitive to the time factor as well as factors concerning speakers, setting, etc., is lexical collocations. New trends in collocational patterns are the very source of semantic shifts in a diachronic perspective. Lexical collocation is one aspect of this study, but not the most important one. In this study, the combinations of degree modifiers and adjectives are primarily analyzed at a relatively abstract level, which is less sensitive to time and setting. Had collocability been the main issue, a large and more recent corpus would have been essential.

Another disadvantage is that the corpus is not very big. This fact inhibits the reliability and validity of investigations of relatively rare linguistic phenomena.

[4] LLC is the only publicly available corpus of English conversation with detailed prosodic transcription. For a list and brief descriptions of various computerized corpora of English, see Aijmer & Altenberg (1991).

[5] There is one speaker of American English in text S.2.5, but his contribution is not included in the total number of words of the text, nor is his contribution prosodically analyzed.

Thirdly, although the gender of the speakers is indicated, it is not really possible to use it for statistical investigations, since the contributions of female and male speakers are not computed relative to the total number of words (Paradis 1995:74).

Finally, the speakers are mainly educated middle-class speakers of British English. This homogeneity can for many purposes be an advantage instead of a disadvantage. Again, for the present study this is of minor importance. All kinds of data and all methods place restrictions on investigations. What is important to keep in mind in analyzing the results is what these restrictions are, and in what way they might influence the results.

2.3 Extracting data

To start with, various works on degree modifiers were consulted in order to survey the field; these were, above all, Bolinger (1972), Quirk et al (1985), *Collins* (1990) and Altenberg (1991). From these was selected a large number of modifiers that were considered worthy of further investigation, a guiding principle being to include rather than discard.

The second stage was to concordance each item in LLC. The final selection comprised all the degree modifiers which passed the semantic-prosodic equivalence criterion (see Section 1.5), and which occurred more than ten times in combination with adjectives in the positive in the corpus. Twenty-three modifiers were found to pass the test: *a bit, a little, absolutely, almost, awfully, completely, entirely, extremely, fairly, frightfully, highly, jolly, most, perfectly, pretty, quite, rather, slightly, somewhat, terribly, totally, very, utterly.*

A database was subsequently established, with fields for text and tone unit identification, a sample containing the immediate context round the modifier, which in practical terms means the line in which the modifier occurs. Each modifier in its context was analyzed and classified according to the form of the adjective, e.g. participial, comparative form, the prosody of the adjective phrase, and one field was designated for the actual lexical items, e.g. *tired, bold, pretty.* The organisation of the material in fields in a database facilitated searches and calculations of various kinds throughout the study.

2.4 Speech and writing

This section presents the distribution of the various degree modifiers in LLC. The figures for the selected modifiers are compared to the figures for the same modifiers in LOB, which is a corpus of written British English.[6] The purpose of the compari-

[6] All the texts in LOB are from 1961. For more information on LOB, see Johansson et al (1978). The degree modifiers were mechanically retrieved from LOB by their tags. Due to the limitations of the tagging system it was not possible to deal with *most* mechanically, since the superlative marker had the same tag in the corpus. Therefore, *most* had to be extracted manually.

son is to see whether there are any differences between spoken language as it is represented in LLC and written language as represented in LOB regarding these particular degree modifiers selected from the spoken corpus on the basis of frequency. LOB consists of one million words, as compared to half a million in LLC. Therefore, the figures for the occurrences of degree modifiers in LLC have been doubled in Table 2–1.

Table 2–1 Frequency of occurrence of degree modifiers of adjectives in LLC and LOB

Degree modifier	LLC (x2)	LOB	%[7]
awfully	50	0	100
a bit	292	4	99
jolly	50	1	98
frightfully	22	1	96
terribly	178	10	95
absolutely	242	26	90
a little	70	15	82
totally	68	15	82
rather	540	119	82
pretty	172	40	81
very	2 946	754	80
quite[8]	844	219	79
fairly	168	54	76
completely	112	44	72
extremely	118	54	69
perfectly	86	42	67
slightly	82	44	65
entirely	46	31	60
utterly	20	15	57
most	94	117	45
somewhat	26	41	39
almost	62	107	37
highly	30	78	28

The table shows that the majority of the modifiers are more common in spoken English than in written English, as represented in these two corpora. Some occur

[7] The fourth column gives the frequency of occurrence for the degree modifier in LLC as a percentage of the total number of occurrences in both corpora.
[8] The figures for *quite* here apply to both maximizer *quite* and moderator *quite*.

only or almost only in LLC, e.g. *awfully, a bit, jolly, frightfully, terribly.* Only *most, somewhat, almost* and *highly* occur more often in LOB.

2.5 The distribution of degree modifiers in LLC

This section examines the distribution of degree modifiers by paradigm in LLC.

2.5.1 Reinforcers

The distribution of the members of the paradigm of maximizer is shown in Table 2–2 below. The figures in the column for 'maximizer +adjectives', and in the corresponding columns in the following tables in this section, involve adjectives in the positive only. Adjectives in the comparative and superlative are included in the column for 'maximizers in other contexts' and the corresponding columns for the other paradigms. This column also includes combinations with any other word class.

Table 2–2 The distribution of maximizers in LLC

MAXIMIZER	maximizers + adjectives	maximizers in other contexts	Total
quite	161	128	289
absolutely	121	44	165
completely	56	20	76
perfectly	43	13	56
totally	34	13	47
entirely	23	37	60
utterly	10	4	14
TOTAL	448	259	707

There are 448 maximizers in combination with adjectives. There are 259 additional occurrences in combination with all other items, such as adverbs, verbs, nouns. The maximizers combine with adjectives in about 75% of the cases, except for *entirely* and *quite,* which only combine with adjectives in 38% and 56% of the cases respectively. *Entirely* mainly combines with verbs as in (2–1):

(2–1) I *entirely* agree (5.4.1336)

The most common maximizers are *quite* and *absolutely. Quite* is the most versatile of the modifiers. It has three interpretations, the maximizer interpretation, the moderator interpretation and the equalizer interpretation (Paradis 1994). Maximizers and moderators are both included in this study, whereas equalizers are

not. Equalizers were not taken into consideration at all because they do not apply to adjectives, and their function is rather one of focusing than one of degree.[9]

(2–2) be *quite* c\ertain# that you hold it very d\/efinitely there# (1.1.513) [Maximizer]
(2–3) it`s got *quite* high m/ountains# (10.8. 64) [Moderator]
(2–4) I still {d\o*n'*#}# really *qu\/ite* know# whether he h\ad nasty designs# (2.12.1055) [Equalizer]

The majority of the equalizers are response items, meaning 'precisely', 'exactly' (see example (2–5) below). Like *quite, absolutely* is used as a response item. There are 20 cases of *absolutely* as a response item in LLC, but they are not included among the figures in Table 2–2 either.[10]

(2–5) A: I still s\ay# that at least the students in this classical b/ackground# will have read s\ome S/eneca#* in the or\iginal#
B: *qu\ite#* /\m#
A: which gives them an idea of a s\ampling# d\oesn`t it#
B: *absol\utely#* (1.4 1152)

The distribution of the members of the paradigm of boosters is shown in Table 2–3.

Table 2–3 The distribution of boosters in LLC

BOOSTER	boosters + adjectives	boosters in other contexts	Total
very	1 464	719	2 183
terribly	89	13	102
extremely	59	6	65
most	47	5	52
awfully	25	8	33
jolly	25	8	33
highly	15	10	25
frightfully	11	1	12
TOTAL	1 735	770	2 505

[9] Of all the occurrences of *quite* as a lexical item in LLC, the moderators represent 49%, the maximizers 34% and the equalizers 17%. *Quite* as a response item (as in 2-5) is categorized as an equalizer. Equalizers mainly occur as response items (63%) or together with elements other than adjectives. Equalizers favour negated contexts (73%). *Quite* as a moderator occurs in 99% of the cases in assertive contexts. None of the four moderators are normally compatible with negation, except in contrastive focus, e.g. *?He is not quite NICE.* (for an extended discussion on discoursal meaning, focus and presuppositions, see Section 4.2.2), but *He is not QUITE nice, he is VERY nice. Quite,* the maximizer, occurs in assertive contexts in 79% of the cases.

[10] Occurrences of degree modifiers used as response items, i.e. when they are used in isolation without a head, are not included in this study at all.

The number of 'boosters + adjective' is more than four times the number of maximizers. This is due to the highly exploited item *very*. Otherwise, the frequencies of the rest of boosters and the maximizers are more or less comparable in the selected material. The lexical items of this paradigm are almost always boosters only. Apart from being a booster, *very* can be a maximizer and *most* can be the periphrastic superlative marker and a quantifier (e.g. *in most cases*). The boosters are mainly modifiers of adjectives. They have an even stronger link to adjectives than most of the maximizers. *Extremely, terribly, most* and *frightfully* occur with adjectives in about 90% of the cases, *awfully* and *jolly* about 75%, *very* in 67% and *highly* in 60%.

2.5.2 Attenuators

The only member of the approximator paradigm that had ten or more tokens in combination with adjectives in the corpus was *almost*. As Table 2–4 shows, *almost* only modifies adjectives in (21%) of the cases.

Table 2–4 The distribution of the approximator *almost* in LLC

APPROXIMATOR	approximator +adjectives	approximator in other contexts	Total
almost	29	106	135

The distribution of the members of the paradigm of moderators is shown in Table 2–5.

Table 2–5 The distribution of moderators in LLC

MODERATOR	moderators + adjectives	moderators in other contexts	Total
quite	261	168	429
rather	260	123	383
pretty	86	26	112
fairly	84	37	121
TOTAL	691	354	1 045

There are 691 moderators of adjectives in the corpus. *Quite* and *rather* are the most common ones in the corpus. They occur with adjectives in 61% and 68% of the cases respectively. Normally, degree modifiers are adjacent to the element they modify. In the case of *quite* and *rather*, they are also capable of applying to a premodifying adjective in a noun phrase but being located outside the noun phrase, i.e. in front of the indefinite article. Consider examples (2–6) and (2–7):

(2–6) She is a *quite /rather* unusual person.

(2–7) She is *quite/rather* an unusual person.

The interpretations of *quite* and *rather* in these two positions have been discussed in the literature. For instance, Stoffel (1901:62 and 142) and Borst (1902:103) maintain that when *quite* precedes the article it is not a word-modifier but a sentence-modifier and it is then chiefly used in a modal sense. Bolinger (1972:137) partly agrees with this reasoning and says that 'position relative to the indefinite article was seen as a main indication of the shift from modifier of the sentence as a whole, or at least of a larger segment of it, to modification of the degree word alone'. Then he goes on to say that 'somehow along the way the indefinite article has ceased to separate the two functions consistently, with the result that *quite a* and *a quite* /.../ form an alternating pattern with so slight a difference in meaning that outside factors may decide the choice.'

Quite as a moderator occurs with adjectives in 261 cases out of 429. In 177 of these cases, *quite* occurs in adjective phrases which function as predicative complements, and 84 of the occurrences apply to attributive adjectives, where *quite* is either adjacent to the adjective (13/84) or occurs in front of the whole noun phrase (71/84).[11]

Rather applies to an adjective attribute in a noun phrase in 118 cases. It occurs in front of the indefinite determiner in 20 cases out of 118 (17%), while in 98 cases (83%) it is immediately adjacent to the attributive adjective, which is a reversal of the corresponding figures for *quite*.[12]

According to Bolinger, the different positions of *rather* reflect its transition from sentence-modifier to word-modifier:

(2–8) (Rather) it (rather) has (rather) been (rather) bothering me.

(Bolinger 1972: 221)

Each highlighted *rather* in (2–8) indicates a potential position for *rather*. Bolinger maintains that in the initial position *rather* is unambiguously 'identifying' (or what I would call preferential, see Section 3.5.2), and in the second position it is more likely to be 'identifying'. In the third position, it is more likely to be a degree modifier, and in the fourth position it definitely is a degree modifier. According to Bolinger, *rather* has to penetrate the verb phrase, i.e. getting past the auxiliaries to get its degree reading. A similar movement is that of *quite* and *rather* penetrating the noun phrase for a more unambiguous degree interpretation.

[11] Vermeire's (1984:304) findings concerning the position of *quite* relative to the indefinite article support my figures for *quite* occurring more often before the indefinite article than after it. Vermeire's investigation is based on language which is 'written to be spoken', i.e. texts drawn from plays. One reason for this preference may be that many of the collocating adjectives are monosyllabic, and *quite* does not combine in a natural way with such adjectives when there is no article between *quite* and the adjective (Bolinger 1972:138ff).

[12] Contrary to my findings concerning the location of *rather* in application to attributive adjectives, *Collins Cobuild English Usage* (1992:567) maintains that *rather* is more commonly used in front of the determiner than after it. An explanation for this statement may be that my material is purely spoken and their material is mainly written and that the *a rather* construction is more informal and typically spoken. However, again my findings agree with Vermeire's (1979:339).

Fairly and *pretty* are exploited to the same extent in the corpus. As an adverb *pretty* can only modify with respect to degree, and it can only modify adjectives and adverbs. *Pretty* applies to adjectives in 77% of the cases. Like *pretty*, *fairly* also modifies only adjectives (69%) and adverbs, but unlike *pretty*, it may have an 'emphasizer' function with verbs (Quirk et al 1985:583):

(2–9) the D/uke# has a further sm\iling c/omment {for the K/ing of Ne'pal#}#
as with his {\uniform} *fairly* gl\/ittering in the sun# he ret=urns#
t\/o the royal ladies# (10.7.794)

The degree force of the moderators is puzzling. The problem probably lies in their moderating function, which requires flexibility. Therefore, I will return to them and devote more space to them than to other modifiers, in particular as far as intonational aspects are concerned (see Sections 4.2.4–4.2.8 and 4.3).

Finally, the distribution of the diminishers is shown in Table 2–6.

Table 2–6 The distribution of diminishers in LLC

DIMINISHER	diminishers + adjectives	diminishers in other contexts	Total
a (little) bit	122	126	248
slightly	33	36	69
a little	26	68	94
somewhat	11	7	18
TOTAL	192	237	429

As the table shows, *a bit* is the most common of the diminishers. The figures for *a bit* also include *a little bit*. *A bit* occurs in 49% of the cases with adjectives, while the corresponding Figure for *slightly* is 48%, for *a little* 27% and for *somewhat* 61%. These percentages are low as compared to most of the other degree modifiers.

A bit serves as a good illustration of the development of a degree word from an original concrete meaning, as in (2–10). Consider the following examples (2–11, 2–12, 2–13) of the function of *a bit* in combination with different heads, which clearly shows the close relationship between the concrete and the metaphorical interpretations of *a bit*.

(2–10) and then we walked *a bit* (2.7.1445)
(2–11) I'd heard *a bit* of a talk on the radio (2.14. 382)
(2–12) which gives one *a bit* of peace of mind (3.7.575)
(2–13) she does get *a bit* baffled (2.14. 497)

2.6 Summary

This investigation into the distribution of the types and tokens of degree modifiers of adjectives showed that the selected degree modifiers were more common in the spoken data (LLC) than in the written data (LOB). Some occurred exclusively or almost exclusively in LLC, e.g. *awfully, a bit, jolly, frightfully, terribly* and *absolutely*. The majority of the degree modifiers were more common in LLC. Only four of the degree modifiers were more frequent in LOB, i.e. *highly, almost, somewhat* and *most*.

Moreover, with respect to the distribution of the various types of degree modifiers of adjectives it is shown that there are more types of reinforcers (15) than of attenuators (9) in LLC. Also, there are more than twice as many tokens of reinforcers than of attenuators. However, this difference is mainly due to the highly exploited item *very*. There are, all in all, 2 183 reinforcers (of which *very* contributes with 1 464 tokens) as compared to 912 attenuators.

We now proceed to a closer examination of the semantic properties of the selected degree modifiers.

3 Semantics

3.1 Introducing the problem

It is obvious that there is an intimate relationship between a degree modifier and its head, since the function of the degree modifier is to reinforce or attenuate a variable feature in the element it applies to. The traditional view is that typical adjectives imply a variable property and are therefore gradable. Such adjectives can be modified with respect to degree and have a comparative form, e.g. *very nice, nicer,* while others are nongradable and can take neither degree modifiers, nor the comparative form, e.g. **very divorced, *more divorced.*

It was pointed out in Section 1.6.3 that this picture is clearly an over-simplification, since not all gradable adjectives can be combined with all degree modifiers. There are constraints on the possible combinations of degree modifiers and gradable adjectives. It is possible to say *absolutely amazing,* while *?absolutely nice* is strange. Likewise, *quite sufficient* is a perfect match, while *?very sufficient* is awkward. *Fairly old* is fine, but *?almost old* is unnatural.[1] The question which arises from this is whether these constraints are predictable or not. It is the aim of the present chapter to seek an answer to this question.

It seems natural to assume that adjectives which are conceptualized in terms of an unbounded range on a scale, e.g. *nice,* or in terms of an extreme point, e.g. *amazing,* or a limit, e.g. *sufficient,* select different types of degree modifiers. *Nice* is scalar and it is therefore natural that such an adjective selects modifiers which are capable of indicating a subrange on the scale of 'niceness', e.g. *very nice, fairly nice. Amazing* and *sufficient,* on the other hand, both involve reference to something extreme and absolute and, therefore, require modifiers which can reinforce the extreme point or the absolute limit, e.g. *absolutely amazing, quite sufficient.*

This chapter starts with a general discussion of gradability, followed by a discussion of the gradability of adjectives and a presentation of previous work on the subject. Against this background a classification of gradable adjectives will be suggested based on Allerton (1987). The classification will then be tested against a number of criteria of gradability which serve to elucidate the different conceptualizations of the adjective types. The underlying hypothesis both for the classification of adjectives and their combinatory potential is that the conceptualization of the members of each type of gradable adjective is decisive for its choice of degree modifiers. The analysis of the various types of adjectives in combination with degree modifiers will form the basis for a model of the relationship between degree modifiers and adjectives which accounts for the constraints

[1] The problem concerning various types of ambiguity with respect to gradability has been discussed in the literature by scholars such as Abraham (1984:12f), Kato (1986:178), Sweetser (1991:10).

that govern the combinatorial possibilities between degree modifiers and adjectives. Finally, the actual use of degree modifiers with adjectives in LLC will be examined and the validity of the model as well as the predictability of the constraints will be discussed.

3.2 Gradability

Manifestations of degree have traditionally been associated with adjectives and with adverbs derived from adjectives, and the concept of degree has traditionally been dealt with in terms of whether an adjective can undergo comparison or not. Gradability has thus primarily been associated with these two grammatical classes of words. This view was challenged by Sapir (1949) and Bolinger (1967, 1972), who claim that gradability is not only a feature of adjectivals, but also of nouns and verbs. Bolinger illustrates the fundamental kinship between the gradability of verb phrases and noun phrases (3–1) and between the gradability of adverbs and adjectives (3–2) by transformations that link the two pairs.

(3–1) wasting time so is bad — such time-wasting is bad
(3–2) walking so slow — such slow walking

(Bolinger 1972:15f)

The possibility for certain words to be the focus of exclamatory utterances has been used as evidence of a gradable word by other scholars, e.g. Gnutzmann (1975). Consider the following examples:

(3–3) How *nice*!
(3–4) What a *man*!
(3–5) How I *admire* him!

Gnutzmann (1975:421f), however, argues against Bolinger's and Sapir's view that gradability is a purely semantic phenomenon. His position is that although gradability is a semantic feature, it is not completely detached from grammar, since it is only adjectives and adverbs associated with adjectives that can undergo grading, not verbs and nouns. Gnutzmann's support for this claim is the suggestion that it is not the noun and the verb that are graded in expressions such as (3–4) and (3–5), but an underlying adjective and adverb respectively, as for example in (3–6) and (3–7):

(3–6) What a {*nice/good-looking/terrible/...*} man!
(3–7) How {*much/...*} I admire you!

However, Gnutzmann posits that gradable adjectives too are to be understood as 'It

is *Intensifier Adjective*', which means that the interpretation of exclamatory utterances with adjectives is constrained by an unexpressed degree word, as in (3–8):

(3–8) It is {*very/extremely/...*} nice

To use exclamatory expressions as evidence of gradability as Gnutzmann does is problematic in that, firstly, they only apply to scalar adjectives (see Section 3.3.2), i.e. to a special semantic type of gradable adjective and, secondly, if the adjective is graded by a modifier, it has to be a reinforcing modifier. Consider examples (3–9) to (3–13):

(3– 9) How *nice*!
(3–10) How *very nice*!
(3–11) ?How *fairly nice*!
(3–12) ?How *sober*!
(3–13) ?How *completely sober*!

Nice is a scalar adjective and as such it is natural in exclamatory utterances. It is also natural in the same sort of expressions when it is premodified by the booster *very* in (3–10), but not with a moderator such as *fairly* in (3–11). *Sober*, meaning 'not drunk' is gradable but it is not a scalar adjective proper. It is associated with a limit, which scalar adjectives are not. *Sober* is awkward in exclamatory utterances, both unmodified (3–12) and reinforced (3–13).[2] This means that there are gradable adjectives too, such as *sober*, which are incompatible with exclamatory expressions. What is supposed to be a criterial test of the semantic feature of gradability and its associated grammatical structure is thus not valid for a certain type of gradable adjective such as *sober* and others of a similar kind, e.g. *possible, identical.*

I agree with Sapir and Bolinger in their claim that gradability is altogether a semantic phenomenon. All gradable words involve a feature which we perceive as variable in intensity or extent, and which therefore can be attenuated or reinforced, either by scalar or totality modifiers. In our search for a valid characterization of gradability of adjectives we will need a number of different criteria to be able to describe the complex nature of gradability. In that characterization the possibility for adjectives to occur in exclamatory *how*-expressions is one piece of evidence for a gradable feature of a scalar type.

3.3 Adjectives and gradability

From degree in general, we now proceed to examine degree in the case of adjectives.

[2] If *sober* is used in an exclamatory construction such as (3–12) and (3–13), it may be interpreted as irony, meaning the opposite ('how drunk!') or it could be an expression of surprise that somebody is sober for once.

In this and the following sections a typology of adjectives will be suggested. But let us first take a look at various descriptions of the class of adjectives in the literature.

Quirk at al (1985:403ff) describe the class of adjectives in terms of typicality. They consider four features crucial for typical adjectives. Two of these four features have to do with the fact that they are gradable, namely (i) typical adjectives can undergo comparison or, more exactly, they can occur in the comparative and in the superlative, and (ii) a typical adjective can be premodified by *very*.[3] These two characteristics are both evidence of the fact that there is a scalar feature in the adjective. It should be pointed out, however, that the two criteria represent two sides of the same coin. If an adjective can undergo comparison, it can also be modified by *very*, and vice versa.

In *Collins* (1990:65ff) adjectives are not described in terms of typicality. Instead, the class of adjective is divided into two main types, qualitative adjectives, which involve a gradable feature, and classifying adjectives, which are nongradable. Qualitative adjectives are said to identify a quality that something or somebody has, such as *sad* in *a sad story*, *pretty* in *a pretty girl*, *small* in *a small child*, and they are said to be gradable, in that there can be more or less of the quality in question. Like Quirk et al, *Collins* identifies a gradable adjective by the possibility of submodification by scalar modifiers such as *very* and *rather*, and by the possibility for these adjectives to occur in the comparative and the superlative.

Classifying adjectives, on the other hand, are said to identify the class that something belongs to. *Financial* in the case of *financial help* is used as an example of a classifying adjective. *Financial* has the function of classifying *help*. There are various kinds of *help* and *financial help* is one of them. Furthermore, they are described as being nongradable, i.e. they can be neither attenuated nor reinforced, and they cannot undergo comparison.

Also, it is pointed out in *Collins* that one and the same lexical item may vary with respect to gradability. In some contexts adjectives which are typically classifying can acquire a gradable reading. For instance, in the phrase 'the *emotional* needs of children', *emotional* is classifying and nongradable. It can neither undergo comparison, nor be modified by a degree modifier. However, in the phrase *an emotional person*, *emotional* is qualitative and gradable. It has a comparative and a superlative form, and it can be used with *very*. A person can be *very emotional*, or '*more* emotional than somebody else'. Their examples suggest that what makes the reading of the adjective gradable or nongradable depends on the noun it modifies.

In her book on classifying adjectives, Warren (1984) presents a model of the relationship between the adjective and the noun to which it applies. She states that in order to uncover the nature of the adjective, we must be familiar with both the denotation of the adjective and with its relation to the noun it qualifies. Her se-

[3] The other two features are concerned with the possibility for an adjective to be used in attributive function and in predicative function.

mantic analysis involves two components, 'referential content' and 'relator'. Consider Figure 3–1:

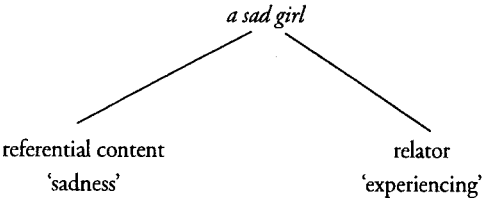

Figure 3–1 Warren's (1984) semantic model of the meaning of an adjective

The meaning of *sad* in *a sad girl*, is analyzed in two components and spelled out as 'x experiences sadness'. There is thus an opaque relation, which the language user at some level has to be aware of in order to fully understand the phrase.[4]

Warren points out that there are many adjectives which are polysemous between being classifying and characterizing, like *musical instrument* and *musical child*, *criminal court* and *criminal assault*, *nervous breakdown* and *nervous man*. Her semantic model of adjectives is capable of explaining what constitutes the polysemy of such adjectives as *musical*, *criminal* and *nervous* in terms of differences in their relation to the noun they apply to. Consider the elements of *nervous* in *a nervous breakdown* and *a nervous man* in Figure 3–2.

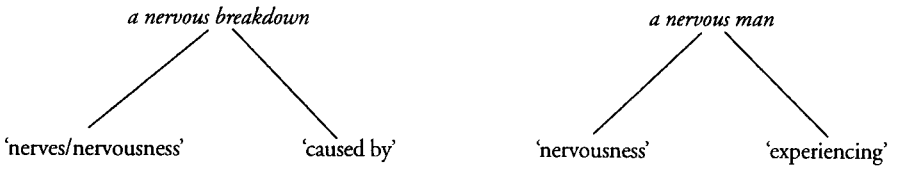

Figure 3–2 The semantic elements of *nervous*

[4] Warren's model of the meaning of adjectives involves a paraphrase of the noun phrase in question, whereby two semantic elements are revealed, one overt referential ('sadness') and one covert relational ('experiencing'). She found that there is a limited number of recurring covert relations, all of which may occur with classifying adjectives, but only a limited number of them with characterizing (descriptive) adjectives. Warren also points out that the division of adjectives into two groups is partly syntactic in that classifying adjectives are typically non-predicating, e.g. 'a *pictorial* atlas', ?'the atlas is *pictorial*', while characterizing adjectives are typically predicating, 'a *dusty* room', 'the room is *dusty*', and partly semantic in that classifying adjectives are invariably nongradable and therefore resistant to modification of degree, e.g. ?'a *very* pictorial atlas', while characterizing adjectives in most cases can take degree modifiers, e.g. 'a *very* dusty room'. Classifying adjectives are reference-modifying and restrictive; characterizing adjectives are referent modifying and normally non-restrictive.

A nervous breakdown can be spelled out as 'x is caused by nerves', and *a nervous man* as 'x experiences nervousness'. *Nervous* in *nervous breakdown* is classifying. It is reference-modifying in that it restricts the application of *breakdown. A nervous breakdown* is a breakdown among other types of breakdowns, e.g. *financial breakdown. Nervous* in *a nervous man* is non-reference modifying, i.e. it does not restrict the application of *man,* but it gives extra information about the person in question. Polysemy in an adjective can be said to be due to differences in at least one of the two main semantic parts of adjectives, i.e. in the referential content and/or in the relator.

Let us now go a step further and extend this discussion of polysemy to cover differences regarding semantic features in adjectives of a more subtle order, i.e. within monosemy. Given the right context, the following adjectives are all classifying and nongradable: *classical ballet, daily paper, available money, Russian man, symphonic orchestra, wooden chair.* Some of them can, however, be coerced into a gradable reading and the presence of a degree modifier may serve to confirm such a reading, e.g. 'the money is now *quite* available', 'the man is *very* Russian', 'the chair is *a bit* wooden'. Although it is possible to get a gradable reading out of these adjectives, it is clear to speakers of English that they are all basically nongradable, or to put it differently, they have a nongradable bias. Used with degree modifiers, they are either to be interpreted in a jocular fashion as is the case with *wooden,* or in a special, more specific way as is the case for *Russian* meaning 'Russian style'.

Polysemous adjectives, such as *nervous,* as well as the different readings of *Russian,* as in 'a *Russian* man' and 'a *very* Russian man', involve a difference in the interpretation of the gradable feature of the adjectives. In the case of *Russian,* there has to be an explicit indication such as *very,* which suggests that *Russian* out of context is biased towards nongradability. If the shift towards a gradable reading is to be successful, there has to be an explicit marker in the context to indicate the modulation. In the above examples, *Russian* has two readings, rather than two meanings. Polysemous adjectives are zeugmatic when they are co-ordinated, while this is not the case for biased adjectives.

(3–14) ?The man was nervous, and so was his breakdown. (POLYSEMY)

(3–15) The man is Russian, and so is the vodka. (MONOSEMY)

In terms of Warren's model it could be said that the zeugma created in (3–14) is due to the differences in the relational component in *nervous breakdown* and *nervous man.* The reason why the sentence with *Russian* does not create a zeugma can also be explained within Warren's model. Since both the referential content of *Russian* and the relator is the same for both *Russian man* and *Russian vodka,* a *Russian man* and *Russian vodka* can be paraphrased in the same way, i.e. by 'x comes from Russia'.

Naturally, and in line with this, a degree modifier can be added without creating any problems, and in the case of a polysemous adjective it will still be zeugmatic.

(3–16) ?The man was very nervous, and so was his breakdown.
(3–17) The man is very Russian, and so is the vodka.

When *nervous* combines with *man,* it has a relator which allows grading, but when *nervous* combines with *breakdown,* it has a relator which is not compatible with gradability and so is resistant to modification of degree, shown by (3–16). *Russian,* on the other hand, is so frequently associated with one particular relator, i.e. 'come from', which does not allow gradability, that it has a bias towards nongradability. However, since it can take a relator involving resemblance, which is compatible with grading, a reading as the one in (3–17) can be prompted. Thus, *nervous* is polysemous between a gradable/characterizing and a nongradable/classifying meaning, while *Russian* is monosemous and basically nongradable but can undergo contextual modulation.

Returning to my concern with establishing criteria for gradability in adjectives, it was noted (above) that the comparability of adjectives and the possibility of submodification by means of scalar modifiers, e.g. *very,* have been found to have limited value in that they are criterial only for a certain type of gradable adjective. There are many adjectives which do not occur in the comparative or the superlative but nevertheless occur with degree modifiers, although not with degree modifiers of the type *very.* One such adjective is *identical,* which can be modified with respect to totality by means of maximizing and approximating modifiers such as *totally* and *almost. Identical* is thus not gradable in the sense that *good* is, since it cannot be compared (**more identical, *most identical*) and since it is restricted to certain degree modifiers.

Allerton (1987:20) takes such adjectives as *identical* into consideration and presents a more delicate classification of gradable adjectives. First, he distinguishes three basic types of gradable adjectives. These three basic adjective classes correspond to his degree modifier classes, presented in Section 1.6.3 of this book. They are:

(a) SCALAR, e.g. *big, bright, pretty*
(b) TELIC, e.g. *sufficient, cooked, perceptible*
(c) ABSOLUTIVE, e.g. *huge, scorching, gorgeous*

He goes on to point out that this division is not sufficient. It needs refining, since adjectives have such complex meanings vis-à-vis gradability and vis-à-vis the type of degree modifier they can co-occur with. The relationship between intensifier classes and adjective classes is not simply a one-to-one relationship. Many adjectives can combine with more than one class of degree modifier. Allerton therefore refines his

model in the following way:

(d) SCALAR-TELIC, e.g. *warm, late, noticeable*
(e) SCALAR-ABSOLUTIVE, e.g. *different, beautiful*
(f) TELIC-ABSOLUTIVE, e.g. *boiling (hot), dead, possible*
(g) SCALAR-TELIC-ABSOLUTIVE, e.g. *dark, successful, acceptable*

The latter four types of gradables thus co-occur with the two or three correspondingly named degree intensifier classes.

Following Allerton, I will assume that there are three basic types of adjectives. I will keep the term 'scalar adjectives' for the subgroup that corresponds to Allerton's category with the same name. I will, however, rename the other two groups. The group that corresponds to Allerton's 'absolutives' will be called 'extreme adjectives' instead, since I do not think it could be claimed that they are absolute.[5] Finally, 'telic adjectives' will be called 'limit adjectives'. These adjectives are all associated with a limit. Telic denotes something which has a clear terminal point and a goal, which is not necessarily the case with all the adjectives I wish to refer to as 'limit adjectives'. Nevertheless, the types of adjectives which go into the three groups seem to be the same as Allerton's.

There will be a more thorough discussion of the adjectival types presently, but it must first be pointed out that in subcategorizing adjectives with respect to gradability I am not concerned with the lexical items *per se*, but with typical uses of these adjectives. This is important to note, since a subcategorization of lexical items could erroneously imply that adjectives have stable interpretations, and that is not the case. The lexical items given as examples in the following sections are representatives of a certain type of gradability. The actual lexical items which collocate with the degree modifiers in LLC will be presented in Section 3.6. The interest will then be transferred to the concrete lexical level of degree modifiers and adjectives in use.

3.3.1 Classification of gradable adjectives

The theoretical approach to the analysis of adjectives and degree modifiers employed in this chapter is basically cognitive. Inspired by scholars such as Lakoff (1987), Langacker (1987), Taylor (1989), Cruse (1995) and Cruse & Togia (1996), I assume that meanings of linguistic expressions arise by the activation of conceptual patterns in the cognitive system. They do not stem from some autonomous linguistic device. Lexical items map onto certain concepts and conceptual patterns in a cognitive network. In each and every case it is the context, i.e. the linguistic and pragmatic context, which evokes the relevant conceptual pattern and determines the preferred interpretation. Following Cruse & Togia's (1996) treatment of adjectives, I take it that the conceptual network is built up by domains. The domains are

[5] These adjectives are called implicit superlatives by Cruse (1986:216f).

of two kinds, a content domain and a schematic domain (or mode of construal). Content domains involve meaning proper and mirror our perception of the world, while the schematic domain imposes a specific configurative frame on the content. Gradability belongs in the schematic domain, i.e. it is a mode of construal.

Since the present study is restricted to adjectives which possess a gradable feature, a first division has to be made between gradable and nongradable adjectives (Table 3–1). This division is based on whether the adjective can combine with degree modifiers or not. Gradable adjectives combine in a natural way with degree modifiers, e.g. *very good, completely dead, absolutely terrific,* whereas nongradable adjectives normally reject degree modifiers, e.g. *?very classical, ?completely daily, ?quite symphonic.* Henceforth, only gradable adjectives will be taken into consideration.

Three types of gradable adjectives will be distinguished, based on Allerton's three-way categorization. They are **scalar adjectives, extreme adjectives** and **limit adjectives** (Table 3–1). Allerton's motivation for such a categorization of gradable adjectives is based on the observation that the members of each of these three groups combine with the members of the three correspondingly named degree modifier classes. I will assume his classification but try to analyze the reasons for the matching of degree modifiers and adjectives. My hypothesis is that the conceptualization of the members of each type of adjective constrains the choice of degree modifiers.

In order to elucidate the conceptualization of the three types of adjectives a closer examination of the semantic features which characterize them is necessary. Therefore, four criteria relevant to gradability in adjectives will be distinguished and matched against six adjectives representing each type (18 gradable adjectives altogether).

Table 3–1 Semantic division of adjectives into gradables and nongradables, and the subdivision of the gradables into scalar, extreme and limit adjectives

GRADABLES			NONGRADABLES
scalar adjectives	extreme adjectives	limit adjectives	
good	*excellent*	*true*	*classical*
fast	*huge*	*sober*	*daily*
long	*minute*	*sufficient*	*available*
difficult	*terrific*	*dead*	*Russian*
nasty	*disastrous*	*identical*	*symphonic*
interesting	*brilliant*	*possible*	*wooden*

The eighteen gradable adjectives in Table 3–1 will be examined according to the following four criteria:

1 The possibility to occur in the comparative and the superlative.
2 The possibility to fill the *x* slot in *How x is it?*
3 The possibility to fill the *x* slot in *How x!*
4 The type of oppositeness involved.

In search of a typology of gradability in adjectives, I found that the types of adjectives also differ in terms of the proportions of criterial features and evaluative-attributive features (Warren 1992:19).[6] Most limit adjectives have what Warren calls fixed reference, for example in *identical* the feature of 'identity' fixes the application of *identical*. Speakers agree on both the meaning of the word and the application of it. In the case of attitudinal words we may agree about the meaning, but not necessarily about its application. For instance, we may agree about the meaning of *good*, but *a good book* for one person may be *a bad book* for somebody else. Evaluative features have free reference and therefore indicate the speaker's judgement. Criterial features predominate in limit adjectives, but there may also be a feature of attitude in them. For example, in *true* or *sober* there is a connotation of a positive attitude. Scalar adjectives and extreme adjectives are predominantly attributive-evaluative in that the speaker determines how they should be applied, i.e. it is up to the speaker to apply the adjective to some noun and some situation.[7]

In cognitive terms we assume, then, that the various adjectives have a content part and a schematic part (Cruse & Togia 1996). The schematic part accounts for the mode of gradability. Most adjectives, if not all, have a biased reading of gradability. For instance, the biased reading of *true* is as a limit adjective (= 'not false'), and so is the biased reading of *clear* (= 'not unclear'). However, there is a difference between the two adjectives in that *true* has a strong bias towards its limit reading, but still the gradability can be changed, whereas *clear* is more easily coerced into a scalar mode of construal. It is the content part that governs the bias for the one or the other mode of construal, i.e. the unbounded 'more-or-less' or the bounded 'either-or'. The content part and the mode of construal jointly contribute to our conceptualization of the adjective and it is the mode of construal that selects the type of degree modification.

The three different subgroups will be discussed separately in Sections 3.3.2–4.

[6] It should be pointed out that Warren does not connect criterial features and evaluative-attributive features with various types of gradability.

[7] Katz (1972:254) divides adjectives into relative and absolute adjectives. Relative adjectives comprise my scalar and extreme adjectives. With relative adjectives the deductions 'This car is fast. Therefore, it is a fast object ' and 'This is a huge house. Therefore, it is a huge object' are wrong. Absolute adjectives comprise limit adjectives, e.g. 'This is a dead woman. Therefore, it is a dead being' and the deduction is right. Cruse (1986:199) points out that the meaning of absolute adjectives such as *dead* is not called into question by the fact that there are situations when it is difficult to decide which term is appropriate.

Section 3.3.5 deals with contextual modulation, i.e. the possibility for adjectives to map onto different types of gradability modes of construal. Section 3.3.6 presents a model of the relationship between the degree modifier and the adjective and discusses the constraints on combinations. Finally, the relevant features and the classification will be summarized in Section 3.3.7.

3.3.2 Scalar adjectives

In this section the four criteria for gradability will be applied to the six items selected as examples of scalar adjectives, namely *good, fast, long, difficult, nasty, interesting.* The first criterion concerns the comparability of adjectives. Scalar adjectives are comparable. That is they occur in the comparative and the superlative, e.g. *good, better, best; long, longer, longest; interesting, more interesting, most interesting.* Two referents can thus be compared with one another by means of a scalar adjective, e.g. 'This car is *faster* than that car'. Two referents can also be compared for equality, e.g. 'This car is *as fast as* that car'.

Even when they are not explicitly comparative in form, scalar adjectives are relative and interpreted comparatively. *It is long* is to be understood to mean 'longer than X' or 'longer than I like it to be', where X is some implicit reference point on the scale of length (Sapir 1949). There is no fixed value of scalar adjectives, rather they cover a range of the quality involved. This range varies with the referent and/or the standard that the speaker bases his judgement on. For example, *fast* in *a fast aeroplane* is not likely to have the same range as *fast* in *a fast car.* The assumed level occupied by *fast* on the abstract scale is different for an aeroplane and a car. The ranges differ according to the properties of the referent. *A fast car,* for example, may be understood as meaning something like 'fast for a car' or 'faster than an ordinary car'. Such judgements are based on some generally accepted norm (Bierwisch 1967:10, Leech 1974:101f, Lyons 1977:274). However, judgements of the range for scalar adjectives can also be subjective and speaker-oriented. For instance, a car may be fast for some people and in some situations, whereas it may be regarded as slow for others and/or in other situations.

The second criterion concerns the possibility for an adjective to occur in the question 'How x is it?'. This question applies in a natural way to inherently scalar adjectives. It elicits a scalar answer, which indicates a certain range of degree that is more specified than the adjective itself, e.g. 'How *good* is the book?' – 'It is *very* good'; 'How *difficult* was the exam?' – '*Quite* difficult'; 'How *long* is your skirt?' – 'It is *rather* long'. The ability to enter into the question 'How x is it?' is another indication that an adjective is inherently scalar.

The third criterion concerns the possibility of the adjective to occur in exclamatory expressions. All scalar adjectives can be used in such frames, e.g. *How good!, How fast!, How interesting!*

The fourth criterion concerns the type of relationship of oppositeness involved. Scalar adjectives have antonyms, and the opposite members of our scalar adjectives

are the following: *good-bad, fast-slow, difficult-easy, long-short, nasty-nice, interesting-boring.* Cruse (1986:204) defines antonymy in the following way:[8]

- Antonyms are fully gradable, i.e. they occur in the comparative and they go with scalar degree modifiers.
- The members of a pair denote degrees of some variable property such as length, speed, weight, accuracy etc.
- When intensified the members of a pair move in opposite directions along the scale representing degrees of the relevant variable property. Thus, *very heavy* and *very light*, for instance, are more widely separated on the scale of weight than *fairly heavy* and *fairly light.*
- The terms of a pair do not strictly bisect a domain: there is a range of values of the variable property, lying between those covered by the opposite terms, which cannot properly be referred to by either term. As a result, a statement containing one member of an antonym pair stands in a relation of contrariety with a parallel statement containing the other term. Thus, *It's long* and *It's short* are contrary, not contradictory, statements. Furthermore, the statement *It's neither long nor short* is not paradoxical, since there is a region on the scale of length which exactly fits this description, the pivotal region (cf. Sapir's term 'zone of indifference').

Expressed in cognitive terms, it could be said that scalar adjectives, such as *long* or *short*, (see Figure 3–3) are implicit comparatives when the antonymic mode of construal is mapped on to scalar adjectives. If you talk about *a long way* or *a long pen*, the opposite *short* is automatically evoked. *Long* and *short* compare the length of some referent to an assumed norm, which is not objectively measurable but is related to the referent as judged by the speaker. A schematic scale concept of relative 'longness' and 'shortness' is the mode of construal that goes with antonymic pairs.[9]

From the above discussion it is clear that we conceptualize scalar adjectives as occupying a range along a scale. Figure 3–3 illustrates the mental model of the scale of length.

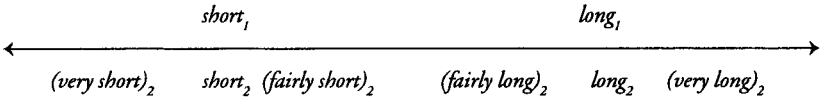

Figure 3–3 The conceptualization of the scalar adjectives *short* and *long*

[8] This is not an exact quotation from Cruse, and the comment on 'zone of indifference' is my addition.

[9] *Long* differs from *short* in that it can be interpreted outside the mode of antonymy. It is then associated with 'length', which is impartial with respect to polarity and oppositeness, as opposed to 'longness'. When *long* is within antonymy, it is an implicit comparative associated with 'longness'. *Short* can only be interpreted within the antonymic mode of construal. *Short* is always implicitly comparative. It is always associated with 'shortness'.

Short$_1$ ranges over the part of the scale of length which represents 'shortness', and *long*$_1$ correspondingly ranges over 'longness'. The two parts of the scale of length can be further specified and restricted by the use of degree modifiers. For instance, *very long*$_2$ occupies only a part of the scale of 'longness'. When *short* and *long* are reinforced or attenuated by degree modifiers, the unmodified *short*$_2$ and *long*$_2$ are conceived of as occupying a range in the middle of the scale of 'shortness' and 'longness' respectively, while for example *very long*$_2$ occupies the upper part and *fairly long*$_2$ the lower part and vice versa on the scale of 'shortness', where *fairly short*$_2$ occupies the upper part and *very short*$_2$ the lower part. This interpretation of *short*$_2$ and *long*$_2$ as occupying subranges is only possible in contrast to other subranges, for example, *very long*$_2$, as in (3–18).

(3–18) A: how long was your coffee break yesterday
B: well, it wasn't VEry long, but I admit it was LONG

Scalar adjectives combine with scalar degree modifiers. The sample of adjectives in Table 3–1 collocates with most of the boosters in this study, viz. *most, extremely, awfully, terribly, frightfully, highly, jolly, very.* There are, however, collocational constraints of a different nature that make the following combinations awkward: *?most good, ?highly good, ?most fast, ?highly fast, ?most long, *highly long, *jolly long, *jolly difficult, *highly nasty, *jolly nasty.* Such collocational restrictions will be discussed in Section 3.6. *Interesting* is the only adjective which combines with all of the degree modifiers. As for the moderators, *quite, rather, pretty* and *fairly*, all combinations in the sample of adjectives are possible. The diminishers *slightly, somewhat, a bit* and *a little* are awkward with *good* and *interesting*, whereas they combine naturally with *fast, long, difficult* and *nasty.*

To sum up this section, scalar adjectives have the following characteristics. They can occur in the comparative and the superlative forms. It is the inherent relativity that allows for the comparability of the adjectives. Relative meanings can be compared with one another according to different standards. We conceive of them as occupying a range on an imaginary scale. This state of affairs allows for the appropriateness of asking 'How x is it'? The answer to that question yields a more specific range on that same scale, e.g. 'How long is it'? –'It is *extremely* long' or –'It is *fairly* long'. This question may also yield an answer that takes an explicit standard of comparison as the basis for the judgement, i.e. 'It is longer than it used to be', or 'It is the longest one I have seen'. Scalar adjectives are also natural in exclamatory expressions such as 'How *nasty* of him!'. Their mode of oppositeness is antonymy. They are inherently comparative vis-à-vis their antonyms. The particular mode of construal that underlies our conceptualization of adjectives such as *good, fast, long, difficult, nasty*, and *interesting* forms the basis for the selection of scalar degree modifier, such as *very, awfully, fairly, slightly.*

3.3.3 Extreme adjectives

Just as scalar adjectives can be said to be implicit comparatives, extreme adjectives can be described as implicit superlatives, since they express a superlative degree of a certain feature (Cruse 1986:216ff). The extreme adjectives selected as examples are: *excellent, huge, minute, terrific, disastrous, brilliant.*

Extreme adjectives are conceptualized as occupying the outer parts of a mental scale. An example of such a scale is the scale of merit, where the superlatives *excellent* and *terrible* can occupy the positive and the negative extremes of the scale with the implicit comparatives *good* and *bad* in between. Another example is the scale of size, where *small* and *big* are nested within the pair *minute* and *huge.*

The relation between the extreme adjectives and the items nested within is, however, not only a matter of four items occupying different parts of a mental scale, as this may seem. The picture is more complicated than that. According to Lehrer & Lehrer (1982:488), there are two ways of interpreting implicit superlatives in relation to implicit comparatives. On the one hand, *excellent* can be considered a hyponym of *good,* and *terrible* a hyponym of *bad.* Hyponymy is based on taxonomic relations, forming a hierarchy. For instance, *good* is a superordinate of a number of adjectives denoting positive evaluation, e.g. *excellent, great, fine.* Lehrer & Lehrer (1982:488) make use of one-way entailment and the '*not only*-test' in diagnosing the relation of hyponymy. The one-way entailment works as follows: 'x is excellent' entails that 'x is good', whereas the converse, i.e. 'x is good' does not entail that 'x is excellent', hence *excellent* is a hyponym of *good.* The '*not only*-test' works in the following manner: 'This wine is not only *good,* it's *excellent*' and 'That's not only a *car,* it's a *Cadillac*', since a hyponym will mean everything the superordinate means plus something more.

Lehrer & Lehrer also say that on the other hand the relationship between an implicit superlative and an implicit comparative can be modelled on a scale, where the members are incompatible elements. The incompatibility interpretation is demonstrated by the following sentence: 'This wine is not *good,* it's *excellent*'.[10]

According to Lehrer & Lehrer, both the hyponymy interpretation and the scale interpretation are possible. However, the hyponymy interpretation is preferable, since, as they say, it passes the '*not only*-test'. The '*not only*-test' does not apply to true incompatibles, i.e. to members of a scale.[11]

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[10] This is a case of a contradiction in terms, which may get a meaningful interpretation with jocular overtones in an appropriate context.

[11] The criteria used for determining hyponymy are both problematic. First, as has already been pointed out in Section 1.6.1, entailment is only helpful to a certain extent, since entailment is also used for defining scales. Second, it is true that the '*not only*-test' does not work for true incompatibilities, but the question is whether Lehrer & Lehrer's assumption that these elements are true incompatibilities is correct. Extreme adjectives are clearly organized in a scalar fashion. It is not possible to delimit their application on the mental scale. They shade off into one another and the higher-value item technically includes the lower levels, i.e. if something is *excellent* it is also *good.* They do not really pass the incompatibility test. This wine is not *good,* it is *excellent*' requires a special interpretation as a kind of figure of speech, which is not the intended result in formal testing. This type of scale shows similarities to Fauconnier's (1975) pragmatic scales, the interpretations of which are contextually induced.

I agree with Lehrer & Lehrer that there are two possible interpretations of the relation between *good* and *excellent*. However, I do not agree that one of the interpretations is invariably preferable. In my view there are two possible interpretations of *good*. One *good* is the superordinate, the other *good* is one of the members of the scale. Consider Figure 3–4.

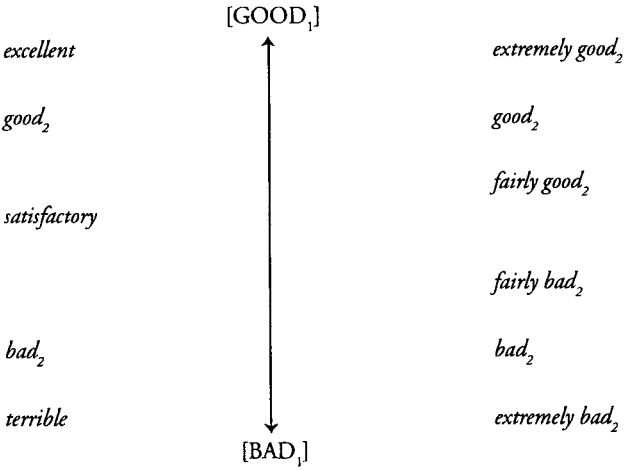

Figure 3–4 The combined scale-hyponymy relation of *good* and *bad*

Figure 3–4 illustrates the superordinate relation of GOOD$_1$ and BAD$_1$ vis-à-vis the other adjectives. GOOD$_1$ applies to the positive half of the evaluative scale and BAD$_1$ to the negative half. It also shows that the adjectives, *excellent, good$_2$, satisfactory, bad$_2$, terrible,* apply to different, much more restricted, ranges on the imaginary scale. It should also be noted that the modified instances of *good* and *bad* cover different ranges on the scale as compared to the corresponding items on the left in the Figure. This means that in the case of judgements of merit, language users can choose their expressions from either of the two systems.

For the purpose of this study, it suffices to say that we conceptualize extreme adjectives as occupying an extreme position on a mental scale. This way of conceptualizing them has certain implications for the type of gradability involved. Extreme adjectives will be tested against the four criteria in the same way as the scalar adjectives in order to ascertain what features they have in common and where they differ.

The first criterion concerns the comparability of the adjective. Opinions diverge as to the comparability of extreme adjectives. Some speakers reject comparative constructions, such as ?*A is more excellent than B*, and ?*A is as excellent as B* or

superlatives such as *?A is the most excellent of them all*, while others find such constructions perfectly acceptable. The reason for the awkwardness of extreme adjectives in the comparative and the superlative is that they already indicate a 'fixed' degree. Bolinger (1967:4) points out 'that comparability is a semantic feature coextensive with "having different degrees" or associated to items which are "susceptible of being laid out on a scale"', but, he adds (ibid:6), 'the fondness of exaggeration pulls many of the adjectives representing these extremes off their perches and comparing them (i.e. comparing their non-extreme meaning) then becomes possible: *a more perfect union*'.

Secondly, the question *How x is it?* is awkward in the context of extreme adjectives, e.g. *?How excellent is it?*, *?How minute is it?*. The reason why these questions are strange is that the 'superlativeness' that is implicit in the adjectives already indicates a more or less precise degree, i.e. the superlative degree. They do not refer to a range in the same way as scalar adjectives do, but indicate the extreme point on a scale.

On the other hand, extreme adjectives are natural in exclamatory expressions, e.g. *How terrific!*, *How huge!*. The reason is that extreme adjectives in exclamatory expressions indicate the degree implied by such utterances, i.e. 'a very high degree'.[12]

The fourth criterion concerns the kind of oppositeness involved. Extreme adjectives differ from typical scalar antonyms in that they do not represent a range on a scale, and in that they are not fully comparable. However, like scalar adjectives, extreme adjectives are contrary elements. There is a pivotal region (Cruse 1986:205) lying between the pair, which need not be referred to by either of the members. 'It is neither *excellent*, nor *terrible*' is conceivable since there is a region on the mental scale that may correspond to this description. The same is true of the scalar adjectives: 'It's neither *good*, nor *bad*' Logically, this is the most important trait with respect to the type of oppositeness involved. For this reason I regard extreme adjectives as antonymic, even though they do not comply with all the characteristics of typical antonyms presented in Section 3.3.2.

Extreme adjectives are generally resistant to scalar degree modifiers, e.g. *?slightly excellent*, *?fairly excellent*, *?very excellent*, *?extremely excellent*, except for *most*, e.g. *most excellent*, *most terrific*, *most disastrous*, and *most brilliant*, but not **most huge* and **most minute*. Cruse (1986:216) says that one characteristic of extreme adjectives is that they combine with *absolutely*, e.g. *absolutely excellent*, *absolutely huge*, *absolutely minute*. However, they are not only combinable with *absolutely* but also with other maximizing modifiers, e.g. *quite marvellous*, *utterly disastrous*, and *totally brilliant*. Also, it is possible to combine some of them with *almost*, e.g. *almost brilliant*, *almost terrific*, *almost disastrous*, but what happens then is rather a case of contextual modulation in which the extreme adjective is conceptualized in terms of 'either–or', i.e. as a limit adjective instead (see Section 3.3.5). Both extreme adjec-

[12] As has been mentioned in Section 3.2, a scalar adjective in 'How *x*!' -expressions comes with an implicit booster, e.g. *How {very/terribly...} nice!*

tives and maximizers represent the ultimate position. This inherent superlativity in both elements explains why they combine in a harmonious way. The function of the maximizers is to reinforce the extreme position of the adjectives.

The superlativity of extreme adjectives and the consequent conceptualization of them as occupying an extreme point explains their resistance to combining with scalar modifiers, such as *very, slightly, fairly.* Scalar modifiers indicate a range above or below an assumed mean value. Extreme adjectives are already at the top or the bottom of that scale (see Figure 3–4). The superlativity also explains the resistance to attenuation, since the speaker has already committed himself/herself to using an adjective which indicates an ultimate position.[13]

3.3.4 Limit adjectives

The third type of adjectives are limit adjectives. The selected items in Table 3–1 are *true, sober, sufficient, dead, identical* and *possible.* They differ from scalar adjectives and extreme adjectives in that they are associated with a limit and conceptualized in terms of 'either-or'. Something is either *true* or *not true,* and somebody is either *dead* or *not dead, sober* or *not sober* and so on. We perceive *death, truth,* and *sobriety* as having crossed a limit of criterial nature. In principle there is no arguing about what these adjectives mean. As has already been pointed out, once speakers agree on their meaning, they also agree on the application of the adjectives to a certain referent. For example *a dead body* is *a dead body* for all speakers, since there is not only consensus as to the meaning of *dead,* but also to its application. Scalar adjectives and extreme adjectives are predominantly evaluative-attributive. Even though speakers interpret evaluative adjectives in the same way, they may not agree on their application. A *fair* assessment for one person may be an *unfair* assessment for somebody else, even though they agree on the meanings of *fair* and *unfair.*

To avoid confusion, it is important to repeat that the lexical items discussed here are used as examples of the actual type of adjective and that a great many limit adjectives are susceptible to being laid out on a scale as well, e.g. *very true, very possible, pretty sober.*[14] They are, however, biased towards being limit adjectives, since scalar readings of these adjectives have to be explicitly indicated by means of, for example, degree modifiers. The adjectives used as examples in each group are used as examples of the particular characteristic feature discussed, which in this case is the limit feature and the type of gradability represented by that feature. Shifts to scalar senses will be dealt with in Section 3.3.5. Let us now look at the characteristics of limit adjectives in terms of the four criteria used for the categorization of adjectives with respect to gradability.

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[13] To use an attenuator with an extreme adjective is not impossible but creates a clash in the same way as it would do to use the falling-rising tone to indicate uncertainty together with a maximizer (see Section 4.2).

[14] As a lexical item, a polysemous adjective such as *nervous* (Figure 3–2) would occur among scalar gradables and among nongradables. As has already been pointed out, polysemy is different from the ability to map on to different gradability modes. The ability to respond to contextual modulation applies to each meaning, of a lexical item.

Firstly, limit adjectives are not comparable. They do not occur in the comparative or the superlative, e.g. *?truer, ?the truest, ?deader, ?the deadest.* This is an effect of their absolute meaning. Limit adjectives cannot be compared to different standards, since they are not relative. Secondly, limit adjectives are awkward in the question How x is it?, e.g. *?How sufficient is that*?, *?How identical are they*? The reason is that they are not normally viewed in terms of a range, i.e. in terms of 'more-or-less', but in terms of 'either-or'. The question is therefore irrelevant. Thirdly, limit adjectives reject exclamatory expression, e.g. *?How dead!, ?How identical!, ?How sober!.* The reason is that there is no high or extreme degree of limit adjectives in terms of a scale.

Finally, there is a logical difference between scalar adjectives and extreme adjectives on the one hand and limit adjectives on the other with respect to their conceptualization in relation to their opposites. Scalar adjectives and extreme adjectives have an antonymic relation to their opposites. Limit adjectives, on the other hand, are absolute and divide some conceptual domain in two distinct parts. A limit adjective stands in a relation of true incompatibility to its opposite element. For instance, something that is *true* cannot be *false,* and vice versa. This type of lexical opposition is called 'complementarity'. Cruse (1986:198–204) makes use of two diagnostic tests to identify a 'complementary' adjective.

- If we deny that one term applies to some situation, we effectively commit ourselves to the applicability of the other term. For instance, *this is not true* entails that *this is false.* A statement containing one member of a complementary pair stands in a relation of contradiction to a parallel statement containing the other term.
- Complementaries can also be diagnosed by the anomalous nature of a sentence denying both terms: **This is neither true nor false.*

It deserves to be pointed out that pairs of opposites are not always from the same group of adjectives. For example, a limit adjective can also form a pair with a scalar adjective, e.g. *sober* as opposed to *drunk* (see Section 3.3.5).

Because of their 'either-or' conceptualization, limit adjectives do not select scalar degree modifiers, e.g. *?fairly dead, ?extremely true.* However, they can combine with totality modifiers, e.g. *perfectly true, completely dead, almost possible, quite sufficient,* since these modifiers are associated with completeness. This fact explains why they harmonize with maximizers. Also, limit adjectives can be approximated by *almost.* The reason for this is again the existence of a limit that has to be transgressed in order for the adjective to apply. To conclude, limit adjectives appear to be the least typically gradable type of adjectives. They are not comparable, they do not exhibit different degrees, they cannot be used in exclamatory expressions, but they can be reinforced and attenuated with respect to the limit they are associated with.

3.3.5 Contextual modulation

As has been repeatedly pointed out in the previous sections of this chapter, adjectives cannot be rigidly categorized as either gradables or nongradables, or as exclusively scalar, extreme or limit adjectives, because there is a great deal of flexibility in the semantic make-up of adjectives, allowing for modifications. My analysis is based on the assumption that people conceptualize a system of various types of gradability. This system is a stable part of our cognitive apparatus. However, language users are not tied down to the system. There is a great deal of freedom in how to use the system. It is exactly this basic system in combination with the freedom of use that makes language flexible and adaptable to all kinds of situations and intentions. It makes it possible for us to view the world in different ways for different purposes, for example, in terms of various figures of speech, such as metaphor, litotes, irony.

Two types of semantic difference in adjectives have been discussed in Section 3.3, namely polysemy and contextual modulation. Polysemous adjectives have different meanings which are conventionalized. Contextual modulation takes place within monosemy, i.e. a contextually modulated adjective may in a certain context take on a particular reading, which deviates from its established or biased meaning but does not necessarily leave any permanent traces.

Some adjectives have a very strong bias towards one or the other reading, e.g. *pictorial, sufficient, pleasant,* whereas others can take on more than one disguise, e.g. *clear, certain, new,* and others again seem to be used for less conventional purposes. For instance, out of context *true* will be interpreted in terms of an 'either-or' conception. However, given the right context, *true* can easily be coerced into a scalar reading, for example by the addition of a degree modifier as in *very true.* The presence of *very* in the context of *true* invalidates the limit reading of *true* and prompts a scalar reading. Contextual modulation seems to be more common in the direction from limit to scalar, e.g. *sober* > *fairly sober, clean* > *very clean, certain* > *very certain, possible* > *very possible.* This is natural, since it is probably easier to disregard existing limits than to create *ad hoc* boundaries.

Since contextual modulation takes place within one meaning, it follows that polysemy and contextual modulation are not mutually exclusive. An adjective can very well be both polysemous and contextually modulated with respect to the feature of gradability. Let us consider the adjective *sober* as an example. *Sober* is polysemous in the following expressions: *A sober man* may mean either 'somebody who is not drunk' or 'somebody who is serious and thoughtful'. *Sober* thus differs with respect to its referential content. Also, there is a difference with respect to the relator in the two interpretations of *a sober man.*

The first meaning ('not drunk') can be spelled out as 'x experiences sobriety'. *Sober* is then an adjective which is associated with a limit which cannot be transgressed. This *sober* is biased towards a limit reading. Nevertheless, it can undergo contextual modulation and take on a scalar reading as in 'The next day they were all

rather sober'. By the addition of *rather* the adjective is coerced into a scalar reading. The second meaning of *sober*, i.e. 'x possesses a tendency towards seriousness', meaning 'x is serious and thoughtful', is an inherently scalar adjective, which can undergo comparison and be modified by scalar degree modifiers. This means that the phrase 'a *very* sober man' is ambiguous between the meaning 'very thoughtful' and a jocular, scalar reading of the 'not drunk' meaning of *sober*, which might be interpreted as the opposite 'very drunk'. This possibility of modulation without altering the meaning proper of the adjective is common in language. It reveals that there is a continuum between complementarity and contrariety in language use. The concepts of complementarity and contrariety themselves are clear-cut and in no way fuzzy, but there is a potential for language users to expand the expressiveness of language by exploiting the system rather than being constrained by it, and this potential has infinite possibilities in its wake.

In cognitive terms it could be said that what creates this continuum is the possibility for lexical items to map on to different concepts in various ways. Privatives like *sober* (= 'not drunk') map on both to the mode of complementarity ('either-or') and to the mode of contrariety ('more-or-less'), as shown in Figure 3–5.

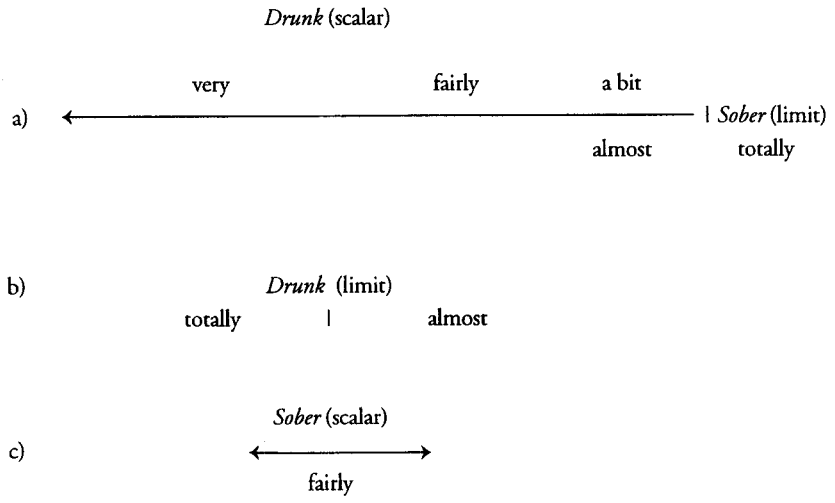

Figure 3–5 The conceptualization of *drunk* and *sober* in terms of scalar and limit

Figure 3–5 is a model of our conceptualization of the opposite pair *drunk* and *sober*. *Drunk* is essentially a scalar adjective and *sober* a limit adjective. This is illustrated in a). *Sober* represents the zero-point of the scale of 'drunkenness', and the vertical bar indicates the limit. However, both *drunk* and *sober* can undergo modulation into

another mode of construal, *drunk* into a limit adjective, as in b), and *sober* into a scalar adjective as in c). Cruse & Togia (1996) refer to pairs such as *drunk* and *sober* as 'hybrid anto-complementary' adjectives', since they are not fully-fledged antonyms nor fully-fledged complementaries. As a result, *drunk* is capable of combining with maximizers (*totally*), boosters (*very*), moderators (*fairly*), diminishers (*a bit*) and approximators (*almost*), and *sober* takes moderators (*fairly*), approximators (*almost*) and maximizers (*completely*).[15]

There seems to be a general tendency towards shifts in the direction of scalar interpretations. That is, it is more common for limit adjectives *very true*, extreme adjectives *rather disastrous* and also nongradables *terribly Swedish* to get a scalar reading than for scalar adjectives to get a nonscalar reading. *Drunk* is an example of a scalar adjective which can map onto an 'all-or-none' mode of construal.

3.3.6 A model of semantic bidirectionality

In the previous sections a classification of adjectives has been presented based on an analysis of the characteristic features of three types of gradable adjectives. The covert features which underlie the three types of adjectives explain why certain types of adjectives harmonize with scalar modifiers and others with totality modifiers. However, it has also been repeatedly pointed out that many adjectives can combine both with totality modifiers and scalar modifiers, e.g. *absolutely/very certain, absolutely/very true, fairly/perfectly good.* These examples show that the adjectives have a potential of being conceived of either in terms of a scale, or in terms of a point or a limit.

Although many adjectives seem to be flexible with respect to their mode of gradability, I assume that most adjectives have a more or less clearly biased interpretation with respect to gradability. When an adjective is not modified by a degree modifier, it is naturally conceived of in its biased mode.[16] For instance, in a restricted context such as *I am certain, certain* is clearly to be interpreted as 'not uncertain'. This conceptualization is confirmed in combination with totality modifiers, such as *absolutely certain* and *almost certain*, but in combination with scalar modifiers, such as *very certain* and *fairly certain*, a scalar interpretation is drawn out. In the case of the scalar interpretation, which is not the biased interpretation, this state of affairs has to be explicitly expressed, for example, by means of a scalar degree modifier. From this follows the importance of the degree modifier in determining the interpretation of the adjective.

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[15] It deserves to be pointed out that *fairly sober, almost sober* and *a bit drunk* may describe the same degree of 'drunkenness'. Either of the expressions may be chosen for different reasons. If *fairly sober* or *almost sober* is chosen, the speaker might want to express the situation in positive terms, whereas if *a bit drunk* is chosen the description becomes more negative, unless it is used as an understatement for *very drunk*. When the option of a choice is given, people tend to prefer evaluatively positive words. This is a phenomenon observed by Boucher and Osgood (1969) and it gave rise to the Pollyanna Hypothesis.

[16] However, in order to be able to be sure about the biased reading of polysemous adjectives, the noun to which the adjective applies has to be known for the relevant interpretation (see Section 3.3). Otherwise, it is not possible to interpret adjectives, such as *musical, criminal, nervous.*

The choice of mode of construal is determined by the speaker's intention. It is the task of the receiver to pick out the relevant interpretation. In cases of uncertainty, the receiver will have to rely on contextual clues, e.g. a degree modifier, for the relevant interpretation. If there is an explicit degree modifier, it will disambiguate the interpretation. This does not mean that anything goes. Some adjectives have a clear and strong bias towards one mode of construal. Adjectives with a strong bias for one type of gradability are highly resistant to modulation, e.g. *?very sufficient, ?absolutely pleasant, ?terribly brilliant, ?totally nice, ?extremely pictorial.* These adjectives have to be put in a contextual straitjacket to get a different interpretation. Dual interpretation with respect to gradability is more easily retrievable with other adjectives, e.g. *absolutely clear, very clear.* The relationship between the adjective and its degree modifier can be illustrated as in Figure 3–6.

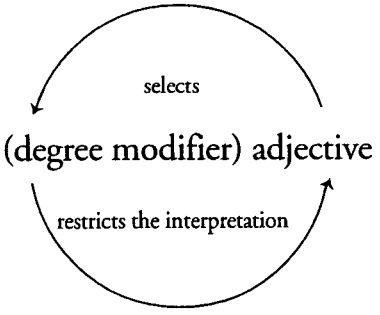

Figure 3–6 The bidirectionality of semantic pressure between degree modifiers and adjectives

The Figure shows how both the adjective and the degree modifier exert semantic pressure on one another. The pressure is provided by the availability of a gradable feature in the adjective which is identifiable by the degree modifier. The modifier in turn restricts the interpretation of the adjective, i.e. what mode of gradability it maps onto. Thus, the adjective selects a degree modifier which in turn constrains the conceptualization of the gradability of the adjective definitively (see also Paradis 1994:164).

3.3.7 Summary

In Section 3.2 the general notion of gradability was discussed and in Section 3.3 the gradability of adjectives in particular. Three types of adjectives were distinguished based on their modes of construal. The differences between the types were discussed according to four criteria for gradable features. The hypothesis that the different modes of construal are decisive for the choice of degree modifier was supported. The most important feature regarding the selection of type of degree modifier is whether the adjective is conceptualized in terms of an unbounded range, a point or a limit. Two major groups of adjectives were distinguished, scalar adjectives and limit adjectives, and one minor group, extreme adjectives, which has traits of both scalar and limit adjectives.

Scalar adjectives which are conceptualized as a range on a scale select scalar degree modifiers, i.e. boosters (*very*), moderators (*fairly*) and diminishers (*a bit*). The function of scalar modifiers is to specify a subsection of the range of the adjective in question. Scalar adjectives are predominantly evaluative, i.e. the application to a certain referent is subjective.

Limit adjectives are associated to a limit and they select totality modifiers, i.e. maximizers (*totally*) and approximators (*almost*). Limit adjectives are not associated with a scale but are conceptualized in terms of 'either-or'. The adjective either applies in a certain situation or it does not. Maximizers are used to reinforce the precision of the observation. The function of the approximator is to indicate that the property of the referent in question falls short of the limit implied by the meaning of the adjective. Limit adjectives are typically criterial in nature, i.e. the application to a certain referent is not based on a subjective position.

Extreme adjectives are much more indeterminable vis-à-vis gradability than scalar adjectives and limit adjectives. They could be said to represent a mix between scalar and limit adjectives. They are similar to scalar adjectives in that they are conceptualized according to a scale, but they differ in that they do not represent a range of a scale, but rather an ultimate point. Extreme adjectives are similar to limit adjectives in that they do not represent a range, but they differ in that they are not associated with a limit of criterial nature. They are typically strongly evaluative. Extreme adjectives are not conceptualized in terms of 'more or less', nor in terms of 'either-or', but rather have traits of both. In contrast to scalar and limit adjectives, extreme adjectives prefer degree modifiers which indicate an ultimate point, either in terms of totality, preferably *absolutely, utterly, quite* (maximizer), and the scalar indicator of superlativity *most*. Attenuation is generally odd with extreme adjectives.

Table 3–2 summarizes the results of the investigation in terms of how the three types of adjectives responded to the four criteria and what degree modifiers they select.

Table 3–2 Criteria for the division of adjectives into scalar adjectives, extreme adjectives and limit adjectives and the types of degree modifiers they combine with

Defining features	Scalar adjectives	Extreme adjectives	Limit adjectives
Comparison	yes	yes/no	no
'How x is it?'	yes	no	no
'How x!'	yes	yes	no
Oppositeness	antonymy	antonymy	complementarity
Degree modifiers	Scalar modifiers	Totality modifiers	Totality modifiers
	boosters	maximizers	maximizers
	moderators	+ *most*	approximators
	diminishers		

Apart from showing the complexity of the gradable features in the three groups, Table 3–2 also shows that there is a cline of gradability from typical gradable adjectives to the least typical gradable adjectives, which border on nongradability. The most typical of the gradable adjectives are scalar adjectives, which comply with all the criteria traditionally used for gradability.

Extreme adjectives are indeterminate between scalar and limit. They are marginally comparable, perfect in exclamatory expressions and conceptualized as the ultimate point on a scale. Moreover, like scalar adjectives they are mainly evaluative, which is a corollary of their conceptualization against a scale, i.e. their implicit comparativity and implicit superlativity.

Limit adjectives are criterial and only marginally gradable. Their only qualification for inclusion in the category of gradables is the fact that limit adjectives can take degree modifiers, which is unusual with nongradables.

Finally, as has been pointed out many times, adjectives show a great deal of flexibility with respect to gradability. They readily take on a different reading vis-à-vis gradability. This is particularly the case with non-scalar adjectives. Non-scalar adjectives are more susceptible to contextual modulation than scalar adjectives. This tendency applies to both extreme adjectives (*terribly huge*) and limit adjectives (*fairly sober*), and in fact also to nongradables (*very Russian*). This inclination towards scalarity and evaluative meanings is not unnatural, since it is easier to disregard limits and be less precise, than to express oneself in a stringent and absolutely precise way.

3.4 Degree modifiers: modes of construal and content

Degree modifiers, like adjectives, are conceptualized against a content domain and a schematic domain. Unlike adjectives, the content domain of degree modifiers is backgrounded in favour of a predominant schematic domain. In traditional terms, the two word classes differ in that adjectives are lexical words, while degree modifiers are function words. A predominant schematic domain is a characteristic of function words. There are, however, differences among function words too, in this case within the class of degree modifiers, with regard to the content part in that some degree modifiers are semantically bleached, such as *very, quite, rather,* whereas others have a clear content component, such as *completely, totally, a bit, slightly, terribly, awfully.* But in spite of this difference, they are all similar in that it is the degree function that is their *raison d'être.*[17]

Schematically, degree modifiers map onto two different modes of construal, that of totality (the 'either-or' conception) and that of scalarity (the 'more-or-less' conception). For convenience, Table 1–3 is here reproduced as Table 3–3.

[17] As has already been pointed out in Section 1.3, degree modifiers are multi-functional, but we will exclusively refer to them in their capacity as degree modifiers.

Table 3–3 Totality modifiers and scalar modifiers combined with levels of degree

DEGREE	TOTALITY MODIFIERS		SCALAR MODIFIERS	
REINFORCER	maximizer	*completely (full)*	booster	*very (tired)*
ATTENUATOR	approximator	*almost (full)*	moderator	*rather (tired)*
			diminisher	*slightly (tired)*

Maximizers and approximators map onto the totality construal, and boosters, moderators and diminishers map onto the scale construal. Section 3.3 discussed various types of gradability in adjectives and the influence of the type of gradability on the selection of degree modifiers. Explanations in terms of our conceptualization of the various gradable features involved were given for the matching of adjective types and types of degree modifiers. It was found that the choice of degree modifier depends on the mode of construal of the adjective in terms of a range on a scale (scalar adjectives), an extreme point on a scale (extreme adjectives) or limit conception (limit adjectives). Scalar adjectives, such as *nice, bad, fast,* select scalar modifiers. Extreme adjectives, such as *brilliant, disastrous, marvellous,* select maximizers and the superlative booster *most,* and limit adjectives, such as *true, possible, sober,* select totality modifiers.

It was also found that adjectives readily undergo contextual modulation, i.e. they map onto different modes of construal and they can do so without becoming polysemous. The selectional restrictions on the choice of degree modifier derive from the mode of construal against which the adjective is projected. The mode of construal of the adjective is of primary importance in the selection of the schematically dominated degree modifiers. If the speaker decides to change the mode of construal of the adjective from the biased mode, this has to be indicated in the context. One possibility is then to use a degree modifier to match the intended mode, and the degree modifier restricts the interpretation of the adjective. It should be pointed out again that some adjectives have a strong bias towards its type of gradability, whereas the interpretation of others is more indeterminate between different modes of construal. This in turn may depend on the degree to which the content property involved is variable.

In Section 3.5 the focus will be on degree modifiers, and the main issue concerns the lexical relations between the members of each of the five paradigms, maximizer, booster, approximator, moderator and diminisher, in terms of 'sameness' and 'difference'. It will be argued that the members of each paradigm are cognitive synonyms in that they involve the same function or mode of construal. This relation accounts for the sameness between the modifiers of the paradigms. The differences between the members of each paradigm are to be found in the content domain they map on to and, consequently, in their various lexical collocational preferences. The actual combinations of degree modifiers and adjectives as represented in LLC will be

discussed in Section 3.6. This section will serve to confirm the hypothesis concerning the selectional restrictions that govern the relationship between degree modifiers and adjectives and to test the predictability of the model of semantic bidirectionality.

As has been said before, the awkwardness of combinations such as *?very impossible, ?terribly marvellous, ?totally long,* can be explained in terms of the mismatch of the modes of construal of the adjective and the modifier. Scalar modifiers do not harmonize with the mode of construal of limit and extreme adjectives, and totality modifiers do not harmonize with scalar adjectives. Such constraints caused by the type of gradability associated with the adjective in question are generalizable. However, there are also more specific collocational preferences, which are of a different type. Lexical combinations (collocations) are sometimes governed by stylistic considerations. For instance, *awfully charming* is a good match, since both the adjective and the modifier are emotionally loaded to a rather high degree, whereas *?jolly formal* may seem strange, since *jolly* is an informal modifier used with more emotive adjectives. For evaluative reasons, *?slightly good* is regarded as strange by many people, since *slightly* is somehow associated with negativity or excess (this aspect will be further discussed in Section 3.6.5). Thus, the claim is that the selection of degree modifiers is governed by a principle of harmony both on the level of similarity with respect to the mode of construal, and at the lexical level where stylistic and attitudinal considerations are taken into account. After this introduction to degree modifiers, the following section will outline the relations between them in terms of lexical properties.

3.5 Synonymy

It was suggested above that the degree modifiers form five different paradigms based on their various functions as degree modifiers in terms of their mode of construal vis-à-vis totality and scalarity and vis-à-vis the degree they represent. The members of each paradigm stand in a relation of synonymy to one another. In common parlance synonymy refers to words which have the same meaning, but this definition needs some refinement. The following sections deal with the type and the degree of synonymy that the members of the paradigms represent.

Synonymy is a lexical relation between two or more lexical forms that have the same meaning and are substitutable for each other in a given context. The substitutability criterion for synonymy can be expressed as follows: x is synonymous with y, if x has the same truth value as y, or in other words, if x is true, y is true and if y is false, x is false and vice versa. This definition of synonymy is not delicate enough. According to Cruse (1986:265–91; 1992b:286–304), synonymy is not an 'all-or-none' business, but a matter of degree. He distinguishes between three degrees of synonymy. For each of these degrees a requirement on the substitutability criterion is added. The requirements serve to account for the level of necessary sameness and permissible difference for the types of synonymy.

The highest level is referred to as absolute synonymy, which is defined as substitutability under the constraint of contextual normality, i.e. x and y are synonyms, if they are equinormal in all contexts. This is a very strict constraint which requires complete equivalence both with respect to their descriptive and non-descriptive meaning. There are probably not many lexical items, if any, which satisfy this very strict requirement.

The next level, cognitive synonymy, is a more realistic conception. Cruse defines cognitive synonymy in terms of truth-conditions, i.e. in terms of mutual entailment. X and Y are cognitive synonyms iff f(x) —> f(y) and f(x) <— f(y). In other words, if x is true, y is true and vice versa, and if x is false, y is false and vice versa. This requirement of truth-conditional equivalence is less strict than the above condition of equinormality in all contexts in that it allows for differences as to non-descriptive features of meaning. Words which count as cognitive synonyms are, for example, *continue/go on; father/dad; die/kick the bucket.*

The lowest level of synonymy distinguished by Cruse is that which holds between plesionyms. Plesionyms differ from cognitive synonyms in that they yield sentences with different truth-conditions, i.e. they are not mutually entailing.[18] In other words, plesionyms differ with respect to minor descriptive features, whereas the differences between cognitive synonyms involve non-descriptive features of meaning. It is possible to assert one item of a pair of plesionyms and deny the other without being paradoxical. Example (3–19) illustrates the appropriateness of the two plesionyms *fog* and *mist,*[19] and example (3–20) correspondingly illustrates the awkwardness of the cognitive synonyms *daddy* and *father.*

(3–19) There isn't a *fog.* There is a *mist.*
(3–20) ? He isn't my *daddy.* He is my *father.*[20]

Also, *more exactly* normally combines with pairs of lexical items which differ with respect to minor descriptive traits. Consider *fog/mist* and *daddy/father* again in examples (3–21) and (3–22) respectively.

(3–21) There is a *fog* today – or, more exactly, a *mist.*
(3–22) *He is my *daddy* – or, more exactly, my *father.*

[18] However, if the plesionyms are at the same time in a hyponymous relation there may be unilateral entailment, e.g. *He was executed —> He was killed, He was killed -/-> He was executed.* This aspect again illustrates the general problems involved in the demonstrability of entailment. As has been mentioned before, entailment can be used for several types of lexical relations, e.g. definitional, synonymous, hyponymous, and scalar.
[19] Other examples of plesionyms are *tap/rap, fearless/brave, pretty/handsome* (Cruse 1986:285).
[20] The utterance could of course be used in the sense 'I don't call him my daddy, I call him my father'.

If, however, two lexical items exceed the limit of permissible difference the result is odd as in (3–23):

(3–23) *I saw a *dog* in the street - or, more exactly, a *cat*.

Example (3–23) is a case of non-synonymy. *Dog* and *cat* have surpassed the limit of permissible difference. The line between plesionymy and non-synonymy may be hard to draw. Plesionymy gradually shades off into non-synonymy.

In sum, synonymy is a lexical relation which holds on the paradigmatic axis, and the basic principle in defining synonymy is that the items are substitutable for each other in a certain slot in a proposition. In order to make the definition of synonymy sufficiently explanatory, Cruse has added restrictions to the substitutability criterion. Such restrictions, whether in terms of equinormality, truth-conditions or contrastive modulations, i.e. the addition of a '*more exactly*-phrase', reveal the degree of equivalence among lexical items. In the next section, Cruse's criteria will be applied to the degree modifiers in order to establish the degree of synonymy involved between the members of each of the paradigms. Two questions will be addressed: (i) What features constitute the necessary resemblance between them? (ii) What are the differences?

3.5.1 Sameness

It has been suggested in this thesis that the degree modifiers of adjectives form five different paradigms and that the items within each paradigm are synonyms:

Table 3–4 The five paradigms of degree modifier

TOTALITY MODIFIERS		SCALAR MODIFIERS		
Maximizers	Approximators	Boosters	Moderators	Diminishers
absolutely	*almost*	*awfully*	*fairly*	*a bit*
completely		*extremely*	*pretty*	*a little*
entirely		*frightfully*	*quite*	*slightly*
perfectly		*highly*	*rather*	*somewhat*
quite[21]		*jolly*		
totally		*most*		
utterly		*terribly*		
		very		

The answer to the question regarding what features make us perceive them as synonyms is that they have a function of indicating a certain degree within a certain type of schematic domain. Maximizers are used within a mode of construal which is

[21] *Quite* in the paradigm of maximizer means 'entirely' and as a moderator it means 'rather'.

associated with an 'either-or' conception, e.g. *perfectly true, absolutely terrific, completely wrong*. The function of maximizers is to reinforce the validity of the limit or point conception of the adjective in question. Approximators are also mapped onto the 'either-or' mode of construal, but their role is to indicate that the properly denoted adjective falls short of the expected limit, e.g. *almost right*.

Boosters, moderators and diminishers are all conceptualized against a mode of 'more-and-less' of some property of the adjectives they apply to. Boosters indicate more on a scale, e.g. *highly intelligent, very good, terribly interesting*. Moderators approximate an average range on a scale. Bolinger (1972:17) says that they 'occupy the middle of the scale, often trying to look both ways at once'. I agree with Bolinger, but I will classify them as attenuators with a hedging function. The reason for regarding them as attenuators is that they are awkward in *How x!*- expressions, e.g. *?How pretty nice!, ?How quite nice!, ?How fairly nice!, ?How rather nice!*[22] However, they all readily lend themselves to litotes (Hübler 1983:73). This inclination makes them vague and susceptible of being interpreted as both attenuators and potential reinforcers. For instance, *quite good* may be attenuating or slightly reinforcing depending on the contextual conditions and on intonation (see Section 4.2.4–4.2.8 and 4.3). By using the term 'moderator' I want to cover their complicated nature of being capable of both attenuation and reinforcement. Speakers use moderators both in order to fix the relevant range of the adjective to a moderate level, and at the same time hedge their bets and leave space for adjustments.

The point of departure for diminishers is a lowest possible degree of a certain property and a bit up from that zero-position, e.g. *a bit drunk* (see Figure 3–5). Diminishers differ from moderators in this respect. Also, diminishers may imply excess, e.g. 'It's *a bit* long' (see Section 4.2.2) and like moderators they lend themselves to litotes. Consider example (3–24), where an overt change of degree modifier from a diminisher into a maximizer takes place in the course of the conversation:

(3–24) but it it it's *a bit unn\erving #*
you kn/ow #
there were situ\/ations #
where occasionally I'd say something f\unny #
and five people would l\augh # and \I'd laugh #
and these tw\o #
the phil\osophy lady #
and the other {n\ameless} s\ubjectless lady #
just sat and st\ared at me #
absolutely unn\erving #
this was \awful # [23]

(1.3.474)

[22] All attenuators are awkward in 'How x!' expressions, e.g. '?How *slightly* tired!' (see Section 3.2).
[23] The relevant phrases in example (3–24) are in italics to facilitate the task of the reader.

In order to count as synonyms, the degree modifiers have to share, if not all, at least a number of semantic features crucial to their status as one of the members of the paradigm. Identity of meaning, i.e. absolute synonymy, is obviously not a relation that holds between the members of the paradigms.

Therefore, let us start by looking at them from the level of cognitive synonymy. For instance, *fairly, pretty, quite* and *rather* all respond to the question: 'How x is it?' and they indicate a moderate degree of an adjectival property.[24]

(3–25) – How good is the film?
– It is QUITE good.
– It is RAther good.
– It is PREtty good.
– It is FAIRly good.

The four modifiers of degree indicate roughly the same degree of the property of 'goodness'. The indicated degree is vague and subjective which justifies them as synonyms. It is in fact the very function of these modifiers. The definition of cognitive synonyms in terms of entailment and truth (see Section 3.5) predicts that if we assert one item and deny the other item, the result will be paradoxical. Consider examples (3–26) and (3–27).

(3–26) ?It was RAther dirty, not QUITEdirty.
(3–27) It was VEry dirty, not QUITEdirty.

The assertion of *rather dirty*, and the denial of *quite dirty* in (3–26) is paradoxical and consequently in agreement with the prediction for cognitive synonyms in such an entailment structure. This is not the case for *very* and *quite* in (3–27). They are not cognitive synonyms and the result of the denial of one of them and the assertion of the other is acceptable. In the same way members of the paradigm of maximizers, approximators, boosters and diminishers are paradoxical in the frame 'x but not y':

(3–28) *The story was ABsolutely true, but it was not enTIREly true.
(3–29) *The man was TERRibly sad, but he was not EXTREMEly sad.
(3–30) *I was SLIGHTly disappointed, but I was not a BIT disappointed.

If members from different paradigms are inserted in this frame, the result is no longer paradoxical. See example (3–27) above and (3–31) and (3–32) below.

[24] Nucleus placement is marked by small capitals.

(3–31) The story was not ABsolutely true, but it was ALmost true.
(3–32) I was not TERRibly disappointed, but I was SLIGHTly disappointed.

All the adjectives were tested in this way and found to comply with the entailment test, and we can therefore conclude that the items within the five paradigms are cognitive synonyms.[25]

The reason why we perceive the members of the different paradigms as synonyms is that they have the same function. The definition of cognitive synonymy with respect to function words such as degree modifiers reveals that the synonymy of the members of the various paradigms is based on the function they have in common, i.e. to maximize, to boost, to moderate, to approximate and to diminish as indicated by the term used for each paradigm. In cognitive terms it could be said that the members of each paradigm share the mode of construal and the degree indicated within this mode. The backgrounded content domain may very well differ, and in fact quite extensively so, and still be within the limits of permissible difference, since this conceptual part is not crucial from a truth-conditional point of view.

The next section focuses on these various content differences between the members of each paradigm. It is assumed that these differences have repercussions on collocational preferences, emotive force and level of formality. Differences between the members of the various paradigms may also be due to slight differences in the degree of reinforcement and attenuation, which may be caused by features in their subdued content domain. Perceived differences between opaque words like *quite* and *rather* may emanate from their various etymologies, still lingering in the background and influencing their interpretation.

3.5.2 Difference

Above it was argued that the members of each of the five paradigms are cognitive synonyms. Cognitive synonymy is a relation which does not imply equinormality (complete interchangeability) in all contexts, but allows for minor differences of meaning which do not influence the truth condition of the proposition in which they occur. Degree modifiers are primarily function words, and as such they represent a mode of construal. It is the mode of construal that accounts for the sameness of the members of the paradigms. The perceived differences are therefore to be found in the backgrounded content domain, whether in terms of a slight difference of their force or with respect to the attitudinal interpretation of the word.

Degree modifiers derive from words with a descriptive function (lexical words), but have undergone a process of grammaticalization and so have become function words, i.e. they have developed from open-class lexical items, e.g. *complete, total, awful, high, pretty, a bit* into lexicogrammatical markers. Traugott (1982) describes

[25] Plesionymy is ignored in this investigation. I agree with Cruse (1992b), where he notes that what was called plesionymy in Cruse (1986) has not been adequately characterized.

the process of grammaticalization in terms of Halliday's functional grammar. She has developed a semantic-pragmatic model of lexical change which involves a development of content words, which serve a propositional function, into function words, which serve textual and expressive functions. Her model predicts that semantic change normally proceeds towards more subjective functions, i.e. from propositional to textual/expressive functions.[26] The process of grammaticalization is often talked about in terms of semantic attrition (Lehmann 1985:303–18). But, subjectivization of meanings can be interpreted as the opposite, i.e. not as attrition but as enrichment, since a meaning aspect that previously had to be contextually implied has now been lexicalized (Traugott 1988:407–11).

The members of the paradigm of maximizers all have a content component which is descriptively clear, except in the case of *quite*. *Absolutely, completely, entirely, perfectly, totally* and *utterly* are derivations of adjectives which indicate completeness. This purely descriptive function has lent itself to an intensifying function. *Quite* is not transparent in the same way as the other maximizers. Therefore, it might be rewarding to take a brief look at the etymology of *quite* (*OED* s.v. *quite*, Stoffel 1901:38ff). *Quite* comes from the Romance adjective *quit* which was introduced into Middle English at an early period. In those days *quit* meant 'freed', 'released'. Chaucer used the form *quytly*, in which the notion of release was still present. But, during this period, it was also used in the sense of 'entire', 'entirely'. From the beginning of the 18th century we have both the meaning of 'entirely', and a modal modifier meaning 'actually', 'really'. From the sense of 'really', 'actually', a weakened sense developed, meaning 'rather', 'to a moderate degree', and those two senses are often difficult to distinguish according to the *OED*. The etymological tracing shows the relation between *quite* and completeness, and it also reveals a modal tinge, which is probably more prominent with the moderator meaning of *quite* which will be discussed later on in this section.

Thus, what all the maximizers have in common is that they indicate completeness. However, there are differences among them on the attitudinal dimension. *Completely, entirely, totally* and *quite* appear to be more matter-of-fact, whereas *absolutely, perfectly* and *utterly* are more subjectively oriented.

[26] This process is supported by Ungerer's (1988) analysis of English adverbials in terms of scopal and propositional syntax. His position is that scopal adverbials, which compare to Traugott's textual and expressive functions, have developed from propositional adverbials (which compare to Traugott's propositional function). According to Lehmann (1985:306), grammaticalization involves a reduction of weight (phonological and semantic attrition) and variability of a linguistic sign (obligatorification and positional fixation). This process also increases the cohesion of a linguistic sign with other signs (paradigmatization). In the view of Lehmann's definition, degree adverbs have undergone grammaticalization to a certain extent in that they have become semantically, but not phonologically bleached. They are positionally fixed to occur before the adjective they apply to. They have formed a paradigm. In Lehmann's terms, degree modifiers represent only a relatively grammaticalized category. They have not as yet gone as far as to become cliticized, nor are they obligatory. (Nevalainen (1991:12) analyses the grammaticalization and paradigmatization of focusing adverbials, which most likely share many traits with the development of degree modifiers.)

The approximator *almost* obviously consists of the elements *all* and *most*. The development of the meaning 'nearly' originates from the meaning 'mostly all', 'nearly all' to 'very nearly' (*OED* s.v. *almost*). *Almost* is relatively neutral with respect to emotive meaning.

The members of the paradigm of boosters are similar in that they have an intensifying effect on the scalar feature of the adjective. The selected members are all derivations of adjectives, except *most*. Even though the original descriptive content is backgrounded in their function as degree modifiers, the basic adjectival meaning is often reflected in their use. First, there are the modifiers derived from the adjectives *awful* ('causing awe'), *frightful* ('causing fright') and *terrible* ('causing terror'). The hyperbole of these expressions add to the effect of reinforcement and emotiveness. *Extreme, most* and *high* are more emotionally neutral, but lexically transparent in that they originally represent a high and superlative point on a scale. *Jolly* comes from the adjective *jolly*, which has positive connotations, meaning something like 'full of high spirits', 'cheerful' (*OED* s.v. *jolly*). This positive feature is likely to show up in the collocating adjectives.

Very is not transparent in the same way as the other boosters. It is both the most common and most bleached booster. Stoffel (1901: 28–34) states that *very* as an intensive in front of adjectives did not come into use until the 16th century. In Middle English *very* was used as an adjective meaning 'true', 'genuine', 'real'. He argues that *very* has developed into an empty word and taken on a purely grammatical function. Originally, *very* was used as an adverb expressing absoluteness of a quality, i.e. it meant 'completely', 'entirely', 'quite', but it very soon became used in a weakened sense of merely a high degree, which is its usual force in Modern English. Nowadays the old sense is preserved in the use of *very* in front of superlatives, e.g. *the very best story*.[27] Otherwise, present-day *very* has lost its modal interpretation. However, it is interesting to note that its diachronic development is very similar to that of *quite* in that there has been a weakening of its grading force.

The members of the paradigm of moderators are comparatively obscure in their use as degree modifiers. Therefore, they all require a diachronic account. The development of *quite* has already been outlined among the maximizers.

Rather was originally an adjective or adverb in the comparative, meaning 'sooner', denoting precedence in time, priority in nature, and priority in choice (*OED* s.v. *rather*; Stoffel 1901:131–47). This is the preferential use of *rather*. The meaning 'somewhat' is recent. It did not become common until the middle of the 18th century. In this sense it first appeared before a comparative degree, where it could have originated in an ellipsis as illustrated in 'her consternation was greater *rather than less*, than his had been' (Stoffel 1901:136). Stoffel thinks that the awkwardness

[27] The maximizer *very* is not included in this study because the number of tokens in the corpus is fewer than ten.

of having *than* twice in the same sentence led to the omission of *than less* and prefixation of *rather* to *greater*. In contemporary English there are in principle two main functions of *rather*: preferential *rather*, in which *rather* can be replaced by *sooner, instead* or *more willingly*, and the degree word *rather*.

Pretty originates in the Old English adjective *prettig*, meaning 'cunning', which later developed into 'clever', and 'nice'. During the 17th and 18th centuries it came to mean 'moderately great'. This meaning remains today in *a pretty kettle of fish* and *a pretty penny*. As an adverb it was in common use in the 18th century in its modern meaning, i.e. 'to a considerable extent', 'in a moderate degree', 'quite', or equivalent to 'very', and it is and has always been solely a qualifier of adjectives and adverbs (*OED* s.v. *pretty*, Stoffel 1901:147–153).

Fairly has its origin in the Old English adjective *fæger*, meaning 'beautiful'. It has also been used as a manner adverbial in different shades of meaning in different contexts, e.g. 'elegantly', 'candidly', 'respectfully', 'properly', 'by proper and lawful means', 'softly', 'clearly'. As early as Middle English, it was used as an intensifier and an emphasizer, meaning 'completely', 'quite', and 'actually', 'positively', 'really'. As a downtoner meaning 'moderately', it was first used in the 19th century (*OED* s.v. *fair, fairly*; Borst 1902:62). Nowadays, *fairly* has retained its emphasizing capacity in combination with verbs, e.g. 'The children *fairly* flew up and down the corridor', whereas as an attenuator it applies to adjectives and adverbs, e.g. 'I was *fairly* upset about the whole thing'.

It seems reasonable to assume that the differences between *quite, rather, pretty* and *fairly* are to be accounted for by the backgrounded content involved. *Quite* contains a notion of 'completeness'. This notion becomes clear in, for example, 'The laundry is *quite* dirty' where there is a tension between the complementary interpretation of *dirty* as opposed to *clean*, i.e. 'The laundry is *completely* dirty'. With the scalar interpretation of the word *dirty*, *quite* takes on the role of moderating the assumed mean degree of significant dirtiness on a scale of dirtiness ranging from *very slightly dirty* to *extremely dirty* (see Figure 3–5, above).

The interpretation of *rather* is probably conditioned by its former comparative meaning of 'more of' a certain property. Besides being a moderator, *rather* also implies that something has a bit more of the property indicated by the adjective it modifies than the assumed reference point might indicate or than people might believe, e.g. 'It is *rather* long' or 'It is *rather* good'. Something might be longer or better than you perhaps thought it would be. If *rather* occurs together with a negative or neutral adjective, as for example in 'It's *rather* bad' or 'It's *rather* short', it is not only worse and shorter than you would think, but also worse and shorter than you would desire or prefer. The attitudinal overtone conveys an implication of undesired excess. This negative overtone can come out of both negative and neutral adjectives, but not of positive adjectives, e.g. 'It's *rather* nice'. All adjectives which can be interpreted in terms of excess may get this interpretation (cf. below, on diminishers).

Leech and Svartvik (1994:115) interpret this excess as negative attitude. They say, for example, that 'It's *quite* warm today' suggests a positive attitude whereas 'It's *rather* warm today' suggests a negative attitude.[28] I agree with them regarding the interpretation of the utterance, but I disagree with them regarding the reason for the interpretation. I do not think that there is anything inherently negative in *rather*. The excess interpretation is most likely due to the potential differentiality (difference of degree between an item described and some reference point) that can be traced in the history of the word.[29] It seems more reasonable to me that the undesirability and negativity may come out of this excess reading. Exactly the same interpretation of excess and undesirability comes out of the diminishers, e.g. 'That man is *a bit* weird', 'The discussion was *a bit* long' ('a bit too much of the actual property' = undesirable and negative).

The comparative tension in *rather* probably plays a role both for the general versatility of the word and for the function of *rather* as a marker of epistemic modality and preference, which could be glossed: 'If I think anything, then the priority is...'. This interpretation is hovering in the background of e.g., 'It's *rather* long'. Apart from being an attenuator *rather* may get more or less the same interpretation as *most, particularly* in combination with strong adjectives such as *marvellous, disgusting*. *Rather* can in fact also be a reinforcer in certain contexts with extreme adjectives like the ones already mentioned, or with limit adjectives like *different* or *unique*.

The notion of 'moderately great' that is present in *pretty* as an adjective in *a pretty kettle of fish* is sufficiently strong to place the degree word *pretty* in the upper region of what is indicated by the adjective. 'Great' is, as it were, an inherent feature of *pretty*.

To contemporary speakers of English, *fairly* is the only modifier in the moderator paradigm which has a content component of some lexical weight. In other words, it is not as lexically bleached as the others are. The notions of 'tolerable' and 'not unjust', as in *a fair amount*, put *fairly* at the lower end within the region of a significant degree of a property.

The relative non-transparency of these four moderators makes the interpretation of them particularly interesting. They have several possible interpretations, depending on contextual clues and intonation. Special sections will be devoted to the interpretation of the maximizer *quite* and the moderator *quite* in the light of intonation (see Section 4.2.4–4.2.8), and the scaling force of all the four moderators in combination with ten different adjectives (see Section 4.3).

The members of the diminisher paradigm, i.e. *a bit, a little, slightly* and *somewhat* are relatively transparent. Originally, they all involved reference to small size,

[28] This interpretation is presented in a similar way by Stoffel (1901:132) and Vermeire (1979:334).

[29] The term 'differential' is used by Allerton (1987:21; see also section 1.6.3) for modifiers which apply to comparatives, e.g. *slightly, far*. Differentials are used to indicate the difference of degree between the item described and some reference point.

degree or amount (*OED* s.v. *bit, little, slightly, somewhat*). Diminishers are conceptualized in terms of a perceived boundary from which the degree expressed by the diminishers is measured. This is illustrated by Figure 3–5 in which *drunk* has a definite lower point, i.e. *sober.* This means that *drunk* is bounded at one end. It is possible to be *a bit drunk,* but hardly *?a bit sober.* This is so because *sober* as a scalar adjective does not appear to have a definite lower starting-point from which a diminisher can take off, as it were. Moderators can combine with scalar *sober,* since they do not have this requirement.

In addition to the scalarity requirement, there is another requirement on the adjectives that the diminishers modify, viz. that it must be possible to perceive them in terms of excess. This is possible for both neutral and negative adjectives, e.g. *a bit long, a little tired, slightly mad, somewhat depressing.* In combination with neutral adjectives like *long* or *short,* diminishers tend to imply excess, i.e. *a bit long* means 'on the verge of being too long' or simply 'a bit too long', whereas together with negatively loaded adjectives they have the effect of toning down the negativity of the excess. This requirement explains why combinations such as *?a little nice, ?slightly good, ?somewhat lovely* are strange. It is not natural to view positive adjectives in terms of excess. Like *rather,* the diminishers are thus potential differentials, yet without being etymologically associated with the comparative. The diminishers are bleached with respect to content meaning. They do not seem to differ as to their scaling force or attitudinal colouring.

In sum, differences between the degree modifiers are likely to be found in the backgrounded notions that the words map onto. In the course of time the modifiers have developed their potential as modifiers of degree and have formed paradigms of cognitive synonyms. The justification for the parallel existence of words which have the same function may be motivated by differences of spoken and written use and differences in formality, e.g. *pretty* versus *rather, terribly* versus *highly.*

3.6 Collocations

This section deals with the actual combinations of adjectives and degree modifiers in LLC. The combinations were investigated in order to:

- Further test the hypothesis (in Section 3.3.1) that scalar adjectives select scalar degree modifiers, extreme adjectives maximizers (+*most*) and limit adjectives totality modifiers, and to test the predictability of the model (in Section 3.3.6) of the relationship between the modifier and its head.

- Account for the actual adjectives (tokens) which collocate with the various degree modifiers (tokens), establish relevant frequencies, and investigate collocational preferences between them.

- Describe restrictions between certain adjectives and degree modifiers in terms of attitudinal features in the adjectives, i.e. positive, negative and neutral adjectives.

The model of the relationship between degree modifiers and adjectives predicts that the selection of degree modifiers by adjectives is based on a principle of harmony between the mode of construal of the adjective and the degree modifier. Scalar adjectives combine in a natural way with scalar modifiers, extreme adjectives and limit adjectives with totality modifiers. It was suggested that most adjectives are biased towards one type of gradability but may take on another reading through contextual modulation. Some adjectives have a very strong bias towards one reading, e.g. *lost, sufficient, nice,* whereas others are more ambiguous, e.g. *clear, certain, different.* The strength of the bias restricts the flexibility of the adjective with respect to different degree readings. This means that the less strongly biased adjectives are likely to be found with both scalar and totality modifiers. Once a degree modifier is selected the conceptualization of the adjective is made explicit. The degree modifier explicitly points to the interpretation of the adjective it applies to.

This study of collocations takes the degree modifier as the starting-point. It focuses on the restrictive force of the modifier, i.e. that once there is a degree modifier the interpretation of the adjective in terms of totality and scalarity is established. The assumption that the degree modifiers form more or less stable paradigms, with some variation within the paradigms, has been assumed for most of the modifiers. The flexibility of the members of the paradigm of moderators in terms of attenuation and reinforcement has been discussed to some extent, and will be further examined in Section 4.3, and a potential instability in particular in the superlative booster *most,* but otherwise the interpretation of the degree modifiers has been considered to be relatively stable. This has been done for practical reasons. It has been necessary to keep some constants around which other features may vary, but at this point it has become possible to consider the flexibility of the modifiers too. In the light of the type of adjective a degree modifier combines with, the degree of bias towards one or the other paradigm of degree modifiers, or one or the other type in terms of scalarity and totality, will be touched upon. To use the terminology that has been used for adjectives, it could be said that the moderators have a bias towards being attenuators and moderators, but other degree readings are possible depending on the type of adjective they combine with, the pattern of intonation and other contextual factors. This may be true of other degree modifiers too. The flexibility of the degree modifier will be revealed by the company it keeps. The results of the investigation will be presented by paradigm. Appendix 2 presents a table for each of the paradigms with examples of collocating adjectives and their distribution.

3.6.1 Maximizers

It was argued in Section 3.3.7 that the members of the maximizer paradigm, *quite, absolutely, completely, perfectly, totally, entirely* and *utterly,* combine with limit adjectives, e.g. *sure, normal, true, impossible,* and with extreme adjectives, e.g. *magnificent, splendid, horrific.* The following list contains examples of combinations of

adjectives and maximizers in the corpus. (The letters indicate the various types of adjectives: E = extreme adjectives, L = limit adjectives.) The modifiers are ordered according to their relative frequency in the corpus from the most frequent (*quite*) to the least frequent (*utterly*):

Quite + L:	sure, clear, different, right, certain, true, impossible, sufficient, wrong, normal, possible, correct, incredible, safe, satisfied, audible, unrealistic, irrelevant, meaningless
Quite + E:	extraordinary, shattered, astounding, crowded
Absolutely + L:	certain, sure, normal, right, clear, true, convinced, impossible, wrong, crucial, fixed, illogical, penniless, solid, factual, rigid, unique
Absolutely + E:	super, splendid, barmy, terrifying, wonderful, marvellous, revolting, grotesque, lovely, horrible, magnificent, charming, unnerving, excellent, ludicrous
Completely + L:	different, wrong, free, new, ungrammatical, alone, meaningless, unpredictable, empty, lost, unknown, impotent, inexcusable
Completely + E:	overwhelmed, confounded, confused
Perfectly + L:	true, normal, clear, frank, capable, logical, convinced, obvious, legal, justified
Perfectly + E:	terrible, horrible
Totally + L:	different, wrong, unreliable, incomprehensible, right, untrue, impossible, lost
Totally + E:	buggered, bewildered
Entirely + L:	new, different, incompatible, unacceptable, separate
Utterly + L:	powerless, pointless, unlike
Utterly + E:	condemning, filthy, bewildered

The reader is reminded that the classification of adjectives into limit adjectives and extreme adjectives is not always clear. There are fuzzy readings, since a point/limit is crucial for both of them, and since maximizers can both reinforce the utmost point on a scale for extreme adjectives and the complete transgression of a limit for limit adjectives. For instances, an adjective such as *crowded* may be regarded as a limit word meaning 'full' or as an extreme adjective referring to 'filled to the extreme point of the scale'. Also, it is sometimes difficult to distinguish between extreme adjectives and scalar adjectives, since both are conceptualized in terms of a scale and both are generally evaluative. *Confused* is a good example of an ambiguous case. In combination with maximizers, the extreme reading is clearly drawn out, whereas in

the context of scalar degree modifiers, such as *fairly* or *very, confused* has moved down on the imagined scale against which it is interpreted.

As can be seen from the above list of collocating adjectives, maximizers combine, as predicted, with both limit adjectives and with extreme adjectives. The only exception to this pattern is *entirely*, which only combines with adjectives which are basically limit adjectives. Moreover, maximizers also combine with adjectives which are scalar-biased, i.e. adjectives which out of context would be interpreted as scalar adjectives, but in the context of maximizers in terms of totality. These adjectives are not included in the list above, but will be dealt with under the relevant modifier. When scalar adjectives combine with maximizers, the focus is not on the typical scalarity of the adjective, but on the contextually modulated interpretation in which completeness is in focus. For instance, *completely hairy* gets a special interpretation referring to location 'hairy all over', and in *absolutely silly* the mode of *silly* is modulated by absolutely so that we interpret silly as being a superlative adjective. Let us now consider one maximizer at a time in more detail.

Quite (161)[30] is the most frequent of all the maximizers. The adjectives which collocate with *quite* are mostly neutral limit adjectives like *correct, normal, obvious, true, safe, sufficient, right, ordinary, convinced, relaxed.* However, there are also half a dozen extreme adjectives such as *shattered, crowded, astounding, extraordinary. Quite* collocates most strongly with *sure* (17%), *clear* (11%), *different* (9%), *right* (9%), *certain* (7%) and *true* (5%). There are also a few occurrences of modulated scalar adjectives with *quite.* In such cases, the presence of *quite* restricts the interpretation of the adjective to a limit reading. Consider example (3–33):

(3–33) tw\o left jabs by C\ooper #
couple of nice p\unches th/ere #
Miteff hasn't even bl\inked #
Miteff still coming f\orward #
{C\ooper} *quite* c\ool # (10.3.453)

Absolutely (121) combines both with limit adjectives, such as *certain, right, clear,* and with extreme adjectives, such as *barmy, terrifying, lovely.* There are as many types of extreme adjectives as there are of limit adjectives. There are, however, more extreme adjectives which collocate more than twice with *absolutely* than limit adjectives. As the above list shows, a significant number of the adjectives which collocate with *absolutely* are strongly emotionally loaded. There are both negative adjectives such as *revolting, dreadful, grotesque,* and positive adjectives such as *super, wonderful, fabulous.* Among the collocations we also find various instances of contextual modulation from nongradability to gradability:

[30] The figures given in parentheses after the degree modifiers indicate the total number of occurrences in the corpus.

(3–34) I'm getting *absolutely* G\erman with {my pr\ecision} #
I can't b\ear things to be in a m/ess # (2.10.978)

German is basically a nongradable adjective, but here it is mapped on to the gradable mode. It is clear from the context, in particular from the fact that *German* is modified by a degree word, that it has to be understood as a gradable adjective, more precisely an extreme adjective characterized by an evaluative feature, implying something like 'pedantic'. The process of modulating the meaning of this adjective is very much like metaphorization, i.e. the word is not used in its ordinary literal sense referring to nationality, but refers to some typical trait of this nationality. Expressed in cognitive terms, metaphors are characterized 'by the conceptualization of one cognitive domain in terms of components more usually associated with another cognitive domain' (Taylor 1989:133).

Despite the inherent strength of *absolutely*, there are instances in which an additional qualification has been added for reasons of hyperbole. Consider *absolutely bleeding* in (3–35).

(3–35) Jake is \useless #
absolutely bleeding \useless #
he is f\eeble #
he is w\eak #
he is {t\otally} un\organized # (4.2.847)

Absolutely does not collocate with any of its adjectives more than four times. It has its strongest links with *certain* and *super*.

Completely (56) collocates mainly with limit adjectives, such as *wrong, free, impotent, empty, new, lost, indifferent*. There are just a few extreme adjectives, e.g. *confounded, mad*. Also, there is an example of a modulated scalar-biased adjective, *hairy*, whose gradable features is understood as 'all over'. The adjective *different* accounts for 18% of the combinations and *wrong* for 11%. As much as 41% of the total number of adjective types has a negative prefix or suffix, e.g. *ungrammatical, incomprehensible, meaningless*.

Perfectly (43) preferably combines with limit adjectives such as *true, obvious, logical, normal, capable, convinced, decent*. There are a few extreme adjectives, e.g. *horrible, terrible*. There are also a couple of modulated adjectives with a basic scalar bias, *good* and *happy*, which combine with *perfectly*. The interpretation of *good* is then roughly 'optimal', 'acceptable' and the example of *happy* contains an explicit comment on what *perfectly happy* means.

(3–36) well they have got a m\/ap #
and they've got a *perfectly* good map m\ap reader # (1.11:2.1224)

(3–37) she app/ears to be *p\erfectly* happy #
I mean she can't be a h\/undred per cent happy #
nobody \is #
but she app/ears to be h\appy # (2.14.987)

It is important to point out that among the adjectives modified by *perfectly* there are no items with negative prefixes. *Perfectly* is strange with words which have negative morphemes, e.g. *?perfectly illogical, ?perfectly unhappy, ?perfectly unjustified. Perfectly* collocates most strongly with *true* (19%).

Totally (34) mainly collocates with limit adjectives, e.g. *different, wrong, impossible, right, unknown, lost* and with the odd extreme adjective, e.g. *tortuous, bewildered.* Like *completely, totally* collocates most often with *different* (21%) and *wrong* (9%). As in the case of *completely,* almost half the number of adjectives which are modified by *totally* have negative prefixes, e.g. *inarticulate, unreliable.* Also, several of the adjectives are negatively loaded, e.g. *buggered, obscene, orgasm-minded, dishonoured.*

Entirely (23) collocates with limit adjectives, e.g. *quiet, true, automatic, unacceptable.* There is one instance of an adjective which is polysemous, namely happy. It is *happy,* meaning something like 'satisfied', i.e. with the biased limit reading, which occurs with entirely.

(3–38) well I'd give a a wider spr\ead #
because I'm not r\eally *entirely* h=appy #
with having s\ent my students aw/ay #
knowing \only #
the things from The Wild Duck \onwards # (3.6.989)

Entirely has a rather strong link with *new* to which it applies in 35% of all occurrences, and with *different* in 13%.

Utterly (10) combines with adjectives of a more indeterminate character, e.g. *powerless, trivial, vigilant, pointless, filthy, bewildered.* For instance, *pointless* may be indeterminate between a limit and an extreme interpretation and *filthy* between extreme and scalar. The fact that *utterly* combines with many adjectives of an indeterminate character may serve as a breeding-ground for shifts. In other words, *utterly* may be on the way to losing some of its maximizer bias and becoming more booster-like. Since *utterly* occurs only ten times in the corpus, it is difficult to say anything interesting about it, except that *utterly* emphasizes that these adjectives are unambiguously beyond the limit or truly at the extreme end of the scale. There seems to be a negative touch to the adjectives *utterly* applies to.[31]

[31] The synonyms given for *utterly* in COBUILD are *absolutely, totally, completely* (see Section 1.4).

Summing up, *absolutely* stands out from the rest of the maximizers as the modifier favoured by extreme adjectives. *Completely* and *totally* are the modifiers *par preference* with adjectives with negative morphemes. *Perfectly*, on the other hand, shuns negative morphemes. *Different* is a frequent collocate with *completely, entirely, totally* and *quite*, but it does not occur and is certainly strange with *absolutely* and *perfectly*. The reason for this incompatibility seems to be that there is no 'absolute/perfect difference' in the same way as there is, say 'absolute/perfect identity'. If *different* is laid out on a scale it never reaches an absolute point. *Identical* cannot be laid out on a scale, because it represents a zero-point, i.e. the absence of difference. Used with *completely, entirely, totally* and *quite, different* is understood to mean 'in all respects', as opposed to a sectionalized difference as in *partly different*.

The maximizers examined behave differently with respect to the number of adjectives they apply to. The figures for combinations of adjectives and modifiers which occur only once are: *utterly* (80%), *totally* (71%), *completely* (57%), *absolutely* (54%), *entirely* (35%), *perfectly* (33%), *quite* (26%). Apart from having a very low Figure for combinations which only occur once, *quite* stands out from the rest in that it has the bulk of its occurrences in combinations which occur five times or more. No less than 58% of the combinations with *quite* occur in that interval. *Quite* is the most common maximizer and the adjectives which combine with *quite* five times or more are frequent adjectives. Among the combinations with *absolutely*, which is the second most frequent maximizer, there are no instances of adjectives collocating five times or more and only two four times. The reason for this is most likely that *quite* is a rather neutral, comparatively weak and non-demanding maximizer, which harmonizes with common-core types of adjectives which are frequent in spontaneous speech, whereas *absolutely* is a more powerful modifier preferred by more colourful adjectives.

3.6.2 Approximators

Almost (29) combines with limit adjectives such as *identical, definite, final, deserted, automatic, sure, central*. There is one example of an extreme adjective, *brilliant*, one of a scalar adjective, *flabby*, interpreted in terms of a limit, and a few modulated nongradables, e.g. *Russian, post-graduate, political*. *Almost* collocates most strongly with *impossible* (14%). In 72% *almost* occurs with non-recurring adjectives.

3.6.3 Boosters

As was mentioned in Section 3.5.2, the boosters come from different types of words which differ with respect to their content and emotive loading or lack of emotive loading. There are modifiers which are derived from negatively loaded adjectives, *awful, frightful, terrible*. Others are derived from more neutral measure words, *extreme, high*, there is the 'superlative' *most*, the positively loaded *jolly* and finally *very*, which has developed from a modal adjective meaning 'true' into a maximizer of absoluteness and then into a booster.

As predicted, the members of the booster paradigm, consisting of *very, terribly, extremely, most, awfully, jolly, highly* and *frightfully*, mainly combine with typically scalar adjectives, e.g. *kind, interesting, expensive, nice, difficult.* The following list contains examples of combinations of adjectives and boosters in the corpus (S = scalar adjective, E = extreme adjective): The modifiers are ordered according to their relative frequency in the corpus from the most frequent (*very*) to the least frequent (*frightfully*).

Very + S:	nice, embarrassed, tricky, sunny, pleasant, hardworking, good, boring, interesting, nasty, glad, simple, friendly, big, unpleasant, small, posh
Terribly + S:	sorry, keen, lonely, funny, good, cheap, nice, glad, depressing, thin, flat, polite, clever, interesting
Extremely + S:	bad, happy, good, difficult, nice, long, polite, glad, slow, interested, sensitive, busy, popular, dangerous
Most + S:	grateful, important, interesting, anxious, delicate
Most + E:	extraordinary, annoying, miserable, weird, exhausted, wonderful, fascinating
Awfully + S:	kind, good, nice, easy, funny, silly, sweet, sad, sorry, drunk, difficult, grateful, anxious, hard
Jolly + S:	good, nice, lucky, glad, funny, brave, decent, handy
Highly + S:	intelligent, embarrassing, respectable, athletic
Frightfully + S:	funny, expensive, neat, interesting, good, posh, dull

Very (1 464) is the most common booster and also the most lexically bleached. Therefore it is not surprising that it occurs with all kinds of scalar adjectives, e.g. *long, dull, bright, sunny, pleasant, embarrassing, small, posh.* It also combines with limit adjectives which are modulated to scalar ones by *very*, e.g. *satisfactory, different, true, clear, unique,* and with extreme adjectives or strong scalar adjectives, e.g. *terrifying, dreadful, lovely, beautiful, brilliant.* In combination with *very*, the force of these adjectives is clearly weakened. *Very* is most frequent with common adjectives. Of all the 1 464 occurrences, *good* accounts for 9% of the occurrences, *nice* for 6%, *difficult* for 4% and *interesting* for 3%.

Terribly (89) mainly combines with positively and negatively loaded scalar adjectives, e.g. *good, polite, depressing, hard, irritating, romantic. Terribly* adds some extra negative force to adjectives which are already negative. Consider example (3–39).

(3–39) when when the w\/ill came out #
she you know had plenty of m\/oney #
but she was just not \/eating#
and not ren\ewing anything#
and she got *terribly* th\/in # (5.8.837)

This added negativity is true of adjectives in combination with all the three boosters which stem from negative adjectives, i.e. *awfully, frightfully, terribly.* The inherent negativity of the booster comes across as something negative only in combination with negative adjectives. There is no such effect with positive adjectives, e.g. *terribly nice, awfully good, frightfully interesting.* There are quite a few potential limit adjectives which get a scalar interpretation in combination with *terribly,* e.g. *new, unjust, unused, independent, aware, different, underpaid.* There are also a few modulated extreme adjectives, e.g. *squalid, torn and tattered. Terribly* collocates most often with *sorry* (7%) and *difficult* (6%).

Extremely (59) preferably combines with either positive scalar adjectives, such as *happy, nice, helpful, grateful, interesting,* or with negatively loaded adjectives, such as *greedy, bad, untasteful, violent.* There are only a couple of neutral adjectives, e.g. *long.* Furthermore, *extremely* combines with the odd potential limit adjective modulated into a scalar adjective, e.g. *anomalous.* In spite of the 'extreme' element in the modifier, most of the adjectives which it applies to are comparatively weak and colourless, e.g. *nice, flexible, practical, slow, glad, popular. Extremely* occurs most frequently with *difficult* (15%).

Most (47) is the 'superlative' booster. This is revealed in the type of adjectives it combines with. *Most* indicates the highest degree of scalar adjectives, such as *most important, most interesting, most curious, most anxious. Most* differs from the other boosters in that there are notably many extreme adjectives in combination with it, e.g. *weird, wonderful, fascinating, miserable, enthusiastic.* In actual fact, *most* seems to prefer adjectives characterized by strong evaluative features. It does not combine with typical scalar adjectives such as *good, long, slow.* In this respect there is a marked difference between *most* and the other boosters, which can be explained by the superlativity of *most* itself. There is also an example of an adjective for which a limit reading is possible but which in combination with *most* gets a scalar reading and a high position on the scale. This adjective is *incomprehensible.* Clearly, the adjectives which mainly combine with *most* are of the scalar and extreme type. The occurrence of several extreme adjectives in combination with ordinary scalar adjectives suggests that *most* is flexible between maximization and boosting (cf. *utterly*).[32] It occurs most often with *grateful* (13%), and *extraordinary* (11%).

Awfully (25) preferably combines with scalar adjectives which are emotionally

[32] The synonyms of *most* given in COBUILD are *highly, extremely,* and *very* is given as a superordinate (see Section 1.4).

coloured, but not very forceful, e.g. *kind, grateful, difficult, drunk, sweet, silly* (cf. *terribly*). There are both positively and negatively loaded adjectives. It is probably the case that *awfully*, which is an informal modifier, is used to reinforce bleached adjectives which are common in informal communication. *Awfully* serves to inspire new life in them, as it were. There are no adjectives which collocate strongly with *awfully*. *Good, nice, silly* and *sweet* are the only ones which recur.

Jolly (25) prefers positively loaded scalar adjectives, e.g. *good, nice, lucky, glad, useful, brave, enterprising, handy*, which is not unnatural considering its etymology. Although there is one case of a negative adjective, *unnerving*:

(3–40) but what does he think th\at sort of beh/aviour #
does to the person who's on the rec\eiving end of it #
it's *jolly* unn\erving #
it r\/eally \is # (2.5:2.827)

In half of its occurrences, *jolly* collocates with *good*.

Highly (15) implies 'high on a scale'. It combines with scalar adjectives, e.g. *intelligent, respectable, embarrassing*, and with potential limit adjectives which then get a scalar reading, e.g. *secret*. *Highly* combines with adjectives which seem to dwell in the borderland between scalar and limit, since they respond to the criteria for both scalar and limit adjectives (Section 3.3.1) and seem to involve more or less equal proportions of criterial and evaluative features. Still, the very function of *highly* is to put the degree of the implied property high on a scale. In contrast to the typical boosters (*very, extremely, terribly*), *highly* does not combine with typically scalar adjectives, such as *good, long, fast*. As compared to *terribly, awfully*, and *frightfully, highly* is a formal degree modifier which is used for more selective purposes and maybe also in more matter-of-fact and less evaluative contexts.[33] It is probably this relatively high level of formality which accounts for the type of adjectives which occur as collocates. *Highly* does not reveal any collocational preferences: there are two adjectives which occur twice, i.e. *intelligent* and *athletic*.

Frightfully (11) combines with typically scalar adjectives, e.g. *dull, good, neat, posh, interesting*. There are both positively and negatively loaded adjectives. There are no strong links with particular adjectives. They all occur once, except *expensive* and *funny*, which occur twice. The collocational pattern of *frightfully* is comparable to that of *awfully* and *terribly*.

In over half the number of cases, most of the boosters combine with an adjective only once, *highly* (73%), *frightfully* (64%), *extremely* (61%), *awfully* (60%), *terribly* (60%), *most* (55%), *jolly* (28%), *very* (22%). *Very* and *jolly* differ from the others in that they are frequent in recurrent combinations. Also, these two have a high figure

[33] As was pointed out in Section 2.4, *highly* is more common in written English, i.e. in LOB, than in LLC, as are *almost, somewhat* and *most* too, which tallies with the level of relative formality of the collocating adjectives here.

for adjectives which combine five times or more. For *jolly* that figure is (48%), and for *very* (55%). *Awfully, frightfully* and *highly* do not collocate with any adjective five times or more.

With respect to the semantic features the adjectives represent, the hypothesis from Section 3.3.1 is confirmed. Boosters principally collocate with adjectives which are typically scalar with the exception of *most* which also combines with quite a few extreme adjectives.

The various members of the paradigm of boosters show different collocational patterns. *Very* takes a wide range of adjectives, but is more frequent with less colourful, common-core, scalar adjectives. *Awfully, frightfully, terribly* and *extremely* are also more frequent with common-core adjectives, which is natural since both such adjectives and informal boosters are frequent in speech, particularly in informal and spontaneous speech. *Most* differs from the others in that it is notably frequent with scalar adjectives which already exhibit a strong degree, or with extreme adjectives. Since *most* is a forceful modifier, it is natural that it harmonizes with forceful adjectives. Moreover, *most* does not occur with typically scalar adjectives such as *long, good, fast,* but it combines with scalar adjectives which are not likely to occur with maximizers, e.g. *important, welcome, interesting.* This suggests that *most* is flexible between maximization and boosting.

Jolly is preferred by emotive adjectives, in particular positive emotive adjectives. Finally, *highly* combines with scalar adjectives which have no clear criterial/evaluative predominance. In fact, like *most, highly* also rejects typically scalar adjectives such as *long, good, fast.* The three adjectives most often modified by boosters are *good, nice* and *difficult.*

3.6.4 Moderators

Quite, rather, pretty, and *fairly* obviously all have the function of moderating the property denoted by the adjective in question. They have a hedging function and reveal a negotiable speaker-attitude towards the relevant degree. The following list contains examples of combinations with adjectives in the corpus.

Quite + S:	good, nice, interesting, big, funny, long, close, strong, attractive, easy, difficult, stiff, cool, busy, boring, disappointed, fun, rich, dirty, silly, bad
Rather + S:	nice, good, difficult, large, expensive, young, dull, curious, strong, small, nasty, hard, disappointing, silly, old, costly, heavy, busy, nervous, careful
Pretty + S:	good, bad, expensive, strong, hard, tough, small, slow, fast, fine, tasty, interesting, funny, big
Fairly + S:	long, important, strong, hard, young, cold, big, old, short, stern, simple, wet, thin, thick, happy, easy

Quite (261) combines with all kinds of scalar adjectives, e.g. *strong, small, large, rich, easy, boring, warm.* But, like the other modifiers, *quite* also co-occurs with adjectives which are basically extreme and limit adjectives. The gradability feature is then modulated to make a good match. The situation is slightly different in the case of *quite* as compared to most other modifiers, since it has two different degree readings. If the adjective is an extreme adjective or a limit adjective, the prediction is that *quite* tends to be interpreted as a maximizer. However, there is often a possibility of contextual modulation in favour of a scalar moderator reading. As has already been pointed out, there is a greater inclination for modulation from limit or extreme readings to scalar readings of adjectives than vice versa. In potentially ambiguous cases the context is crucial for the interpretation of *quite* as either a maximizer or a moderator. Naturally there are instances where the context does not give enough information to disambiguate the two readings of *quite.* There are truly ambiguous cases such as the following:

(3–41) I think what I think of y\/our childhood #
in a way makes me feel a little bit \envious #
because in a s\/ense #
your childhood was *quite* sec\ure#
it was p\ersonally secure # (6.4:1.596)

(3–42) it \is inc/ongruous #
quite l\udicrous #
n\everthel/ess #
that's that's \it f/olks #
there are w/allabies in Br\itain # (10.8:1.502)

The cases which proved most difficult to determine were those concerning basically limit adjectives without a strong bias, e.g. *certain, clear, different,* and extreme adjectives, e.g. *ludicrous, lovely, beautiful,* which dwell in the borderland between scalarity and absoluteness, i.e. they do not have a strong bias. This reveals the fluidity of the interpretation of *quite.* It is most likely in the context of such adjectives that *quite* has developed from a maximizer into a moderator. *Quite* collocates frequently with *good* (15%), and it has a relatively strong link to *nice, big, funny, important* and *long.*

Rather (260) primarily combines with typically scalar adjectives, e.g. *nasty, small, careful, sad, disappointed, interesting, tired, worried.* It also combines with a number of potential limit adjectives, e.g. *artificial, reluctant, illogical,* and some extreme adjectives, e.g. *lovely, extraordinary, marvellous.*

Like *quite, rather* is a highly versatile and flexible modifier. The interpretation of *rather* is sometimes difficult to pin-point, but it is not perceived to have two different degree readings like *quite.* Rather, it is perceived as being extremely flexible vis-

à-vis the adjective it applies to. In other words, it is a typical moderator, whose pragmatic function, or more exactly one of its pragmatic functions, is to indicate that the value of the adjective it applies to is negotiable. The competing features of preference and moderation in combination with its readiness to be used in understatements, i.e. to be used for intensification rather than attenuation, form the basis for its flexibility, both as a modifier of degree and in other functions. In the following utterance *rather* is a straightforward moderator:

(3–43) [ae] actually I was feeling *rather* gr\otty last w/eek # (9.1:8.410)

With comparatively strong adjectives like *grotty, rather* follows suit up the scale, but retains its function as a moderator. *Rather* is used to hedge the application of *grotty,* and to make it sound less extreme. The relevance of *grotty* is asserted, but hedged. *Rather* in the context of basically limit adjectives is harder to process, and the contextual clues become more important.

(3–44) w=ell #
I've brought us to{g\/ether} \/in the studio#
cos I think there \are#
really *rather* un{\ique} \elements#
\/in our relationship#
one of the things \is {I th\ink}#
[dhi] gap be'tween our \/ages# (6.4:1.4)

I have interpreted (3–44) as a case of contextual modulation where *unique* has taken on a scalar reading. Had we replaced *rather* by *quite* in this utterance, the reading would have been that of maximization, other things being equal.[34]

Rather does not combine with extreme adjectives very often, but there are a few instances:

(3–45) and he thinks it's *rather* scandalous that we d\on't # (1.4.647)

In (3–45), *rather* has the effect of moderating *scandalous,* which indicates an extreme degree. Again, if we had replaced *rather* by *quite,* the maximizer reading would have been the more likely interpretation for *quite.* This shows that *rather* has the ability of floating along with the adjective, whereas two distinct readings are perceived in the case of *quite,* depending on the semantic type of the adjective it combines with. As we shall see, this high potential for adjustment that characterizes *rather* in combination with the preferential interpretation more often than not

[34] The only case of clear maximization that I have found with *rather* in the corpus is together with the adverb *enough:* (I think I've had *rather* enough of his elaborate p\orridge (1.6.1056)).

hovering in the background leads to divided opinion among informants regarding the scaling force of *rather*, which is more closely examined in Section 4.3.

The most frequent collocates with *rather* are the very common adjectives *nice* (4%), *good, difficult, different, long* and *strange.*

Pretty (86) is probably the most informal of the moderators. It combines with typically scalar adjectives such as *low, slow, fine, poor, interesting, heavy.* Like other scalar modifiers, it also combines with a number of adjectives which are basically limit adjectives, e.g. *unanimous, sure, certain, clear.* It also combines with quite a few potential extreme adjectives, e.g. *tedious, horrible, awful, desperate, ghastly, wretched.* The flexibility is exactly the same with *pretty* as with *rather* and the moderator *quite. Pretty* combines with *good* in 12% of the occurrences.

Fairly (84) is a less colourful modifier, meaning 'comparatively', 'reasonably'. It mainly combines with typically scalar adjectives, e.g. *small, sound, strong, old, hard, thick,* but also with a number of limit adjectives used scalarly, e.g. *solid, clear,* and there are a couple of nongradables which get a scalar reading, e.g. *non-denominational, educated:*

(3–46) and they resented the f\act that we were *fairly* \educated# (5.9.264)

There is an implied *well* in the adjective phrase in (3–46). It is this implied *well* that makes *fairly* suitable as a modifier. Among the adjectives that combine with *fairly,* there are two cases of inherently modified adjectives, *shortish* and *yellowish:*

(3–47) the cock's a bit redder than the h/en #
it's a *fairly* y\ellowish br/own # (10.8:1.119)

Fairly does not have a particularly strong link to any of the adjectives it applies to. At most it occurs three times with *clear* and *wet.*

As predicted, the moderators mainly combine with scalar adjectives. They serve to hedge the force of the adjectives. They are basically attenuators but they are by nature and function very flexible, which leads to different interpretations depending on factors such as intonation, situation and linguistic context. Because of their flexibility they will be examined in greater detail in Chapter 4. *Fairly* combines with adjectives only once in 77% of the occurrences, *rather* in 65%, *pretty* in 58% and *quite* in 31%. There is no combination in which *fairly* occurs more than three times. About half of the occurrences of *quite* occur more than three times, while the corresponding figures for *pretty* and *rather* are 21% and 17%, respectively.

3.6.5 Diminishers

The paradigm of diminishers has four members, *a (little) bit, slightly, somewhat, a little.* They serve to attenuate the force of the adjectives they apply to. Like moderators, diminishers readily lend themselves to be used for understatement and thereby

serve a reinforcing function. This inclination makes them capable of expressing excess (see Section 3.5.1). Diminishers preferably combine with typically scalar adjectives of a neutral or negative character, such as *tired, slow, high, funny* ('odd'), *big*, but not with positive adjectives:

A (little) bit + S:	difficult, odd, silly, crude, big, funny, sniffy, tough, hard, young, wild, soft, salty, catty, stupid, small
Slightly + S:	odd, crazy, difficult, foggy, shop-soiled, awkward
A little + S:	tired, sick, curious, shy, restive, worried, daring
Somewhat + S:	nasty, dirty, bleak, lengthy, inflationary, bleak

A (little) bit (122) is the most frequent of the diminishers. The adjectives that combine with *a bit* are scalar adjectives, some of which are ambiguous between scalar and extreme readings, characterized by a negative content, e.g. *exhausting, embarrassing, shattered, muddled, pissed off, ominous, unsightly, weird, banal, cruel, stupid, cynical:*

(3–48) Bank Holiday week\end#
I was *a bit* pissed off #
by the end of th\at #
st\ill haven't rec/overed from that # (7.3:6.756)

What *a bit*, and in fact all the diminishers do to the adjectives, is to view them in a scalar fashion. *A bit*, then, represents the relevant degree of the actual property of the adjective, i.e. 'a bit of a scale'. Apart from the negative adjectives, *a bit* also combines with neutral scalar adjectives:

(3–49) what's th\at #
sort of semi-cubist f\antasy #
it's *a bit* b\ig #
that's the tr\ouble# (1.4.452)

A bit in combination with neutral adjectives often calls forth a reading of excess: the speaker thinks that the picture discussed is 'too big' or 'on the verge of being too big'. The excess implied is not liked by the speaker. *A bit pissed off* (3–48) does not add 'excess', but it has the function of softening the non-desired excess already inherent in *pissed off*. This non-preferred excess is not expressed when *a bit* combines with a modulated nongradable adjective (3–50) either:

(3–50) A:is it somebody's household g\od#
B: l\/ooks like it #

th/ink it haven't /often been r\/ound the other side#
looks *a bit* J/apan\ese #
as far as I rem/emeber # (1.6.663)

In the cases where *a bit* gets its excess reading, both the actual adjective and its antonym can normally be modified by *a bit*, e.g. *a bit long, a bit short, a bit fast, a bit slow.* In cases where the adjective has a negative content, the opposite adjective cannot under normal circumstances be modified by *a bit* at all, e.g. *a bit stupid, ?a bit clever, a bit cruel, ?a bit good.* The same is true of limit adjectives, e.g. *a bit uncertain, ?a bit certain, a bit different, ?a bit identical.* There is also a type of typical limit adjective which is awkward or incompatible with diminishers, viz. zero-oriented adjectives, e.g. *identical, sober, safe.* The reason for this is that once the limit has been transgressed, it is not possible to view the adjective in terms of 'more-or-less' (see Figure 3–5). *Difficult* (6%) and *worried* (5%) are the adjectives which have the strongest link to *a bit.*

Slightly (33) shows the same pattern as *a bit.* It combines mainly with negatively loaded adjectives, e.g. *odd, crazy, annoyed, shop-soiled.* It differs from *a bit* in that there are quite a few modulated limit adjectives, e.g. *different, dormant, illiterate, misplaced, stuck. Slightly* has quite a strong link with *different* (21%).

A little (26) is also preferred by adjectives which have negative impact, e.g. *prejudiced, naughty, daring, insensitive, afraid, sick, restive, sticky,* and there are also a few neutral adjectives, e.g. *slow, high.* There is a number of basically limit adjectives which do not have a very strong bias, e.g. *reluctant, different, idiosyncratic,* and also weakly biased extreme adjectives, e.g. *appalled, distraught. A little* is similar to *a bit* with respect to its various interpretations and constraints on collocability. It does not seem to have any collocational preferences. There is only one adjective, *tired,* which occurs twice; the rest occur only once.

Somewhat (11) is infrequent in the corpus. It combines with both negatively loaded adjectives, e.g. *nasty, dirty, bleak, lengthy, inflationary,* and with limit adjectives, e.g. *predictable, analogous, different. Somewhat* does not seem to be preferred by any particular adjectives.

Diminishers typically combine with adjectives which have a negative content. In combination with neutral adjectives they imply excess. Negative adjectives tend to be inherently excessive in that they often imply a superfluous and non-desired property. Neutral adjectives get an excessive interpretation by implication, i.e. by an understood *too* (too little of the property 'sensitivity', e.g. *a bit insensitive,* or too much of the property 'tiredness', e.g. *a bit tired*). Diminishers combine with scalar adjectives, and they indicate a limited part of the scale implied by the adjective. This means that there has to be an inferable starting-point for this scale. All the diminishers have a high tendency to occur only once with an adjective in the corpus, *a little* in 92% of its occurrences, *somewhat* in 82%, *a bit* in 74% and *slightly* in 73%.

3.6.6 Summary

This section has examined three aspects of the collocations of degree modifiers and adjectives in LLC:

- Selectional restrictions between adjective types and types of degree modifiers, i.e. the general semantic features of the adjectives and the degree modifiers.
- Collocational preferences between the various degree modifiers and adjectives as lexical items.
- Restrictions in terms of attitudinal features in the adjectives in combination with degree modifiers.

The results of the investigation can be summarized as follows: Firstly, the combinations between adjective types and types of degree modifiers supported the hypothesis stated in Section 3.3.1 that scalar adjectives select scalar modifiers, i.e. boosters *(very nice)*, moderators *(fairly good)*, diminishers *(a bit tired)*, and that extreme adjectives select maximizers and *most*, *(absolutely magnificent, most fascinating)*, and that limit adjectives select totality modifiers, i.e. maximizers *(completely illogical)*, and approximators *(almost impossible)*. However, adjectives with a weak bias towards one or the other type occurred with totality as well as scalar modifiers, e.g. *completely different, very different, quite different.*

The investigation also confirmed that there are typical cases of both extreme adjectives and limit adjectives which combine with scalar modifiers, e.g. *very lovely, very true,* and basically scalar adjectives which combine with totality modifiers, e.g. *completely hairy, absolutely silly, perfectly good.* In such combinations the adjectives are modulated into a different type of adjective with respect to its gradable feature. For instance, in combination with totality modifiers, basically scalar adjectives lose their scalar reading and get an absolute interpretation. Conversely, limit adjectives and extreme adjectives in combination with scalar modifiers acquire a scalar reading in terms of a range of a scale.

As regards combinations of individual degree modifiers and types of adjectives, it was shown that the various members of the paradigms differed in the proportions of the types of adjectives which selected them. Among the maximizers, *quite* was principally selected by limit adjectives and so were *completely, perfectly, entirely* and *totally* (there were too few instances of *utterly* to comment upon). *Absolutely* was favoured by colourful extreme adjectives. *Almost* combined with limit adjectives. Boosters, moderators and diminishers were mainly selected by scalar modifiers, except in the case of *most* which combines with extreme adjectives in nearly half of the occurrences. It is natural that extreme adjectives harmonize with *most,* since *most* indicates a superlative position on a scale. *Most* is best considered a member of the scalar paradigm of boosters, since combinations with *most* are clearly perceived

in a perspective of 'more-or-less' rather than 'either-or'. However, strictly speaking there seems to be a certain degree of overlap between maximization and boosting in *most*, in the same way as there might be indeterminacy between extreme adjectives and scalar adjectives. Some degree modifiers seem to be more indeterminate or flexible than others, notably *most, highly, utterly, quite, rather, pretty*, as compared with *completely, totally, terribly*.

Secondly, in most cases the adjectives occurred only once with a degree modifier. Table 3–5 shows the percentages for non-recurrent adjectives with each degree modifier and the token/type ratios for the adjectives that occur with each degree modifier. The token/type ratio is the standard measure of variability, and therefore these ratios are given to supplement the figures.[35]

Table 3–5 Total numbers of tokens, token/type ratios, and percentages of non-recurrent adjectives

Degree modifiers	Tokens	Token/type ratios	%
a little	26	1.04	92
somewhat	11	1.10	82
utterly	10	1.11	80
fairly	84	1.15	77
a (little) bit	122	1.22	74
slightly	33	1.27	73
highly	15	1.15	73
almost	29	1.21	72
totally	34	1.31	71
rather	260	1.32	65
frightfully	11	1.22	64
extremely	59	1.37	61
terribly	89	1.37	60
awfully	25	1.32	60
pretty	86	1.41	58
completely	56	1.51	57
most	47	1.42	55
absolutely	121	1.37	54
entirely	23	1.92	35
perfectly	43	1.87	33
quite (moderator)	261	2.14	31
jolly	25	2.27	28
quite (maximizer)	161	2.78	26
very	1 464	2.82	22

[35] Figures for the non-recurrent as well as the recurrent combinations of adjectives and degree modifiers are given in Appendix 2.

The table shows that the percentages range from 92% for *a little* down to 54% for *absolutely*. Then there is a clear drop to the last few modifiers, ranging from 35% for *entirely* down to 22% for *very*. These low figures are probably related to the processes of grammaticalization and/or fossilization. *Entirely, perfectly* and *jolly* may be on their way into fossilized combinations with *new, true* and *good* respectively. In relation to their total occurrences, they collocate frequently with those adjectives. At the end of the list we also find the highly bleached modifiers *very* and *quite* (both as a moderator and a maximizer). The modifiers which have a low figure for non-recurrent adjectives also have a high figure for adjectives occurring five times or more. The recurrent adjectives are not very interesting, since they represent items which are frequent in spoken language. In other words, common degree modifiers occur with common adjectives, see Table 3–6.

Table 3–6 Adjectives occurring five times or more with the degree modifiers that also have the lowest frequency of single co-occurrence with adjectives (see Table 3–5)

Degree modifier	%	Tokens
quite (maximizer)	58	*sure, clear, different, right, certain, true*
very	55	*good, nice, difficult, interesting, important...*
jolly	48	*good*
quite (moderator)	40	*good, nice, interesting, big, important, long...*
entirely	35	*new*
perfectly	19	*true*

The table shows that the most frequent adjectives collocating with these modifiers are in fact common adjectives in the language. Also some of them are common with several modifiers. For *quite* (the maximizer), *jolly, entirely* and *perfectly* the list of tokens is exhaustive. In the case of the adjectives with *very* and *quite* (the moderator), the tokens represent the most frequent collocates.

Thirdly, some modifiers show an inclination for co-occurrence with negative elements, both adjectives which have a negative morpheme, e.g. *incomprehensible, uncertain,* and adjectives which convey a negative attitude, e.g. *horrible, pissed off. Completely, totally* and *utterly* are frequent in combination with adjectives of both these types, e.g. *completely impotent, totally unreliable, utterly filthy. Perfectly,* on the other hand, is strange with adjectives with negative morphemes, e.g. *?perfectly illogical,* but it occurs with negatively loaded adjectives, e.g. *perfectly horrible. Perfectly* is typical in the context of favourable adjectives, e.g. *perfectly true.* The diminishers are restricted to negative and neutral adjectives, i.e. adjectives which can be perceived in terms of non-desired excess. Since positive adjectives are rarely viewed in terms of negative excess, they are not used with diminishers under normal circumstances.

This chapter has investigated the nature of the harmony in the relationship between adjectives and degree modifiers. Next chapter will address another aspect of degree modifiers of adjectives in spoken English, namely the intonation of utterances with degree modifiers and adjectives.

4 Intonation

4.1 Introduction

This chapter is concerned with various intonational aspects of degree modifiers and the adjectives to which they apply. The prosodic framework within which the research is carried out is 'the nuclear tone approach', which has its roots in the British tradition of the analysis of intonation. The overall purpose of the chapter is twofold: firstly, to analyze various functional effects of nucleus placement in utterances with degree modifiers as modifiers of adjectives, and secondly, to analyze the functional effects of two different tones, viz. the fall and the fall-rise, and account for aspects concerning the naturalness of these two tones with different types of degree modifiers in different contexts. Three observational methods are used in the chapter. They are introspection, corpus-based observations, and informant testing. These three methods of obtaining data differ along two dimensions, which might be called the private/public dimension, and the constructed/non-constructed dimension. Introspection is carried out in private, whereas corpus-based material and experiments are accessible and public. Introspection and experimental testing with informants involve manipulated and constructed data, whereas corpus-based data is based on authentic language.

Section 4.1 gives a general outline of 'the nuclear tone approach'. First, there is a presentation of work on intonational theory from the point of view of both the British school of contour analysis and the American school of levels analysis. This is followed by a section on various formal aspects of intonation with an emphasis on nucleus placement and the shape of nuclear tones, both of which are relevant to the present study. The section ends with a general discussion of intonation and meaning, and the different problems that are involved in deciding what factors govern the actual interpretations of utterances in specific contexts, again with focus on nucleus placement and the choice of the nuclear tone.

Section 4.2 addresses the same issues, but now the focus is on the contribution of intonation to the interpretation of degree modifiers. It addresses the aspect of naturalness of the fall and the fall-rise in different contexts and on different types of degree modifiers. It discusses the meaning effects of nucleus placement on the degree modifier as well as on the modified adjective, and the functional implications of the use of a falling tone and the falling-rising tone. The discussions in this section are based on judgements by a mother-tongue speaker of British English, who is also an intonationist, and they are in part checked against the intuition of other English-speaking linguists. Moreover, the judgements concerning the naturalness of certain tones in combination with certain groups of degree modifiers are compared to the use of such tones in LLC.

Section 4.3 is concerned with a detailed study of the scaling potential of the

moderators, *pretty, quite, rather,* and *fairly,* seen in the light of nucleus placement. The degrees expressed by the four degree modifiers are measured on a nine-point scale, and the judgements are given by a number of informants in an experiment situation. The results of the scaling tests are discussed and evaluated. The findings are summarized in the final section of Chapter 4.

4.1.1 Contours versus levels

Although research on intonation can differ radically with respect to the choice of minimal units and methods of intonational analysis, its basic concerns are the same. All research on intonation involves (i) the division of continuous speech into intonationally delimited groups, (ii) the placement of the principal accent, and (iii) the choice of tune. In the last fifty years, there has been a basic difference in much British and American research on intonation in that British writers have preferred a contour analysis and American writers have in general preferred a levels analysis.[1]

The prosodic framework used in the present study is generally known as the 'nuclear tone' approach and belongs in the British tradition. The 'nuclear tone' approach to intonation, which is described in more detail in Sections 4.1.2 and 4.1.3, focuses on the perceptual side of speech and usually employs auditory methods in the analysis of data. Terms such as pitch, length, and loudness refer to features perceived by listeners, and segmentation of speech is defined in terms of perceived contours. This approach describes the meaning of intonation with respect to the shape of the most salient point, the nuclear tone, or with respect to certain combinations around this salient point. This means that contours are not only the minimal units, but also the minimal meaningful units. The first explicit description of the nuclear tone approach is Palmer (1922). Other writers following Palmer in more or less modified forms are Kingdon (1958), O'Connor & Arnold (1973), Halliday (1967), Crystal (1969) and more recently Cruttenden (1986).[2] Also, the nuclear tone approach is used in the prosodic analysis of LLC (see Greenbaum & Svartvik 1990, Peppé 1995).

The American tradition of levels analysis is characterized by the subdivision of speech into sequences of pitch levels plus a terminal contour. Intonational meanings are compositional in that all the pitch accents in a sequence are taken into consideration. The levels themselves are meaningless. It is their combinations into

[1] There are some American writers who cannot be taken to represent the mainstream American tradition of levels analysis. Bolinger (1961), for example, was for a long time the only one opposing levels analysis. Bolinger has his own configurative model which differs both from the American and the British system. His accents and the meanings ascribed to the accents are described in terms of movements similar to contours or glides in the British tradition, but the movements are not just from the accented syllable but also to it. Bolinger does not make use of the concept 'nuclear tone', however. Like American levels analysts, intonational meaning is associated with all pitch accents in a sequence with special emphasis on the final accent. Vanderslice and Ladefoged (1972) adopted the nuclear tone approach but modified it into a compositional system of binary features. (It should be noted that Ladefoged is British but worked at UCLA for about three decades.)

[2] For an extensive historical survey and critique of intonational analyses of English from the sixteenth century and up to 1980, see Cruttenden (1981), and for the origins of the concept of nucleus, see Cruttenden (1990a).

contours or tunes that carry meaning. In the early years, the most influential type of analysis was within the American structuralist school, represented by linguists such as Pike (1945) and Trager & Smith (1951). Their minimal units of intonation are pitch levels and not contours. These early studies have a system of four different pitch levels, and three terminal junctures (the last pitch direction on the last syllable of the intonation group): falling, rising, or level.

A line of research of levels analysis which has recently become very influential is represented by Pierrehumbert (1980), who works within generative intonation. Her model is also compositional: tunes are made up of sequences of low and high tones and an additional boundary tone. Unlike Pike and Trager & Smith, her model involves two pitch levels instead of four, and unlike both them and researchers in the British school, she makes use of instrumental methods. Pierrehumbert deals with prosodic features from the point of view of acoustically measured speech. Perceived pitch, length and loudness are replaced by measurements of frequency, duration and intensity. In the nuclear tone approach, the minimal units are contours and the emphasis is on the contour in the nuclear position. Pierrehumbert's model is made up of sequences of levels of fundamental frequency, i.e. points that are joined together. Combinations of highs and lows and the boundary tone make up the intonational meaning. Even if it seems likely that such explicit models as Pierrehumbert's are to become influential in the future, intonational meaning has so far only been explored to a very limited extent (Pierrehumbert & Hirschberg 1990).

For several decades, there has been an on-going debate regarding the relevance and validity of the choice of minimal units of intonation, aspects of intonational meaning, and auditory versus instrumental research methods. The arguments can be summarized as follows:

(a) First of all there is the problem of gradience. The four-level analysis was criticized because it was difficult to decide what levels were involved and why four levels and not five or three were applied. It has been stated that it is relative pitch and not absolute pitch that is discussed, but it has never become clear how relative. This is of course the same sort of criticism that has been levelled against contour analysis, i.e. the problem of specifying the difference between a high-fall and a low-fall. Pierrehumbert's solution to the problem is to reduce the number of tones to two, high and low. How high and low the levels of pitch are depends on a system of pitch range (which includes declination). The width of the pitch range is however disregarded in her model.

(b) It is mainly form that is dealt with in levels analysis, and intonational meaning is left at a very general level. This is a drawback since intonation is different from phonetics and phonology in that there is a more direct link between intonation and meaning. Meanings are not arbitrary, even though the meaning of a decon-

textualized contour may be highly abstract. Particular contexts create particular meanings, but the combinatory effects of context and intonation are inferable from the underlying abstract meanings of falls and rises (Cruttenden 1986: Chapter 4). This is described in more detail in Section 4.1.3.

(c) There has also been a long-standing dispute about the validity of auditory methods as used by, for example, analysts within the 'nuclear tone' approach, and instrumental methods as used by, for example, Pierrehumbert. Proponents of the instrumental school claim that the methods used by auditory analysts are unscientific and subjective as opposed to their own which are precise, instrumentally verifiable and consequently more scientific. Auditory researchers, on the other hand, argue that purely instrumental methods usually restrict the amount of data that can be investigated, and do not take enough account of listeners' perceptions.

Naturally, both the 'nuclear tone' approach and the 'levels' approach have something to contribute to the study of intonation, and it should be kept in mind that irrespective of whether the primes are perceptual, and judged by people, or acoustic, and instrumentally measured, they are, as linguistic units, all abstractions. For instance, within the auditory tradition variation in pitch is a feature perceived by the listener, whereas it is first and foremost a feature of fundamental frequency in the instrumental tradition. Fundamental frequency is an acoustic measurement measured in Hz, i.e. the number of cycles of vibrations per second. Within the auditory tradition the listener makes judgements as to whether a sound is 'low' or 'high', 'lower' or 'higher' than another sound, and whether there is a glide 'upwards', or 'downwards'. These judgements perceived by the listener are however not linearly related to fundamental frequency. For a listener to judge that one tone is twice as high as another, the two tones will differ much more at higher frequencies than at lower, e.g. 1000 Hz is judged to be twice as high as 400 Hz, but 4000 Hz is judged to be twice as high as 1000 Hz. However, Cruttenden (1986:4) points out that for most practical purposes, perceived pitch can be equated with fundamental frequency, since frequency values in speech are relatively low, usually less than 500 Hz.

I have chosen to remain in the British auditory tradition of contour analysis for three main reasons. Firstly, I am principally concerned with the functional side of intonation, and so far the treatment of intonational meaning is at a very general level in this newer American approach. Secondly, most previous work on the function of intonation stems from the British tradition (Halliday 1967, O'Connor & Arnold 1973, Crystal 1975, Cruttenden 1986) and thirdly, the corpus that I have used (LLC) is analyzed within the 'nuclear tone' approach to intonation.

4.1.2 Formal aspects of intonation

Within the nuclear tone approach the three basic concerns of intonation, i.e. (i) the

segmentation of speech into groups, and (ii) the placement of the principal accent, (iii) the choice of tune, are dealt with in the following way: Continuous speech is divided into 'tone units'.[3] In each tone unit there is a number of pitch accents. They indicate the most prominent syllables and consequently the most prominent words. One of the pitch accents stands out as the most prominent one. It is the direction of the pitch movement of the nuclear tone that is considered to be the most important part of the tune.

The tone unit is a segment of continuous speech which is contour-defined. Each tone unit has one peak of prominence in the form of a nuclear tone. After the nuclear tone there will generally be a boundary, which is indicated by a number of linguistic features. There are first the definitional factors (cf. Cruttenden's internal and external cues 1994:231f). They involve (i) the completion of the nuclear tone which indicates the boundary, and (ii) the rapid change of the pitch height of unaccented syllables that will generally only occur at the boundaries. The latter phenomenon forms part of the overall tendency of 'declination' from beginning to end of all tone units.[4] Then there are additional features which may, but do not necessarily, mark tone unit boundaries. There may be (i) a pause. There may be (ii) a lengthening of the final syllable before the boundary. This lengthening may apply to both accented and unaccented syllables of the tone unit. Boundaries may also be marked with (iii) an increase in the tempo of the unaccented syllables compared with the end of the previous tone unit.[5] It should be noted, however, that these additional features can be connected with other purposes as well, such as hesitation.

In spoken English, the mean length of a tone unit is four to five words.[6] The length of a tone unit may, however, vary according to factors such as speech situation, speed of utterance, grammatical structure, and speaker personality. There is not a simple one-to-one relationship between grammatical units and tone units. Tone units are not to be equated with grammatical clauses, let alone anything similar to sentences in written language. Yet, it has been found that there is a strong tendency for breaks between tone units to occur at grammatical junctures (Quirk et al 1985:1602). It is also true that tone units very often extend over a clause, but they may as well be coextensive with other units such as phrases or indeed sequences consisting of more than one clause.

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[3] Different writers use different names for units of similar though not identical nature. 'Tone unit' is the term used in LLC and by some British linguists (Quirk et al 1985), 'tone group' is used by Halliday (1985), 'intonation-group' is used by Cruttenden (1986), 'intonational phrase' by Pierrehumbert (1980), and 'intonation unit' by Chafe (1994).

[4] By declination is meant that, all other things being equal, pitch height will decline during a tone unit. A change in the pitch of unaccented syllables is consequently a boundary marker. It should be noted that a pitch prominence that involves a step-up or a step-down in pitch is an indicator of an accented syllable and normally falls only on accented lexical items, whereas changes in pitch level or direction on syllables which are unaccented generally indicate boundaries and not accents (Cruttenden 1986:126, 167).

[5] In Cruttenden's terminology such syllables are called 'anacrusis' (1986:24).

[6] In a study of spoken English carried out by Altenberg (1987:22f) the average tone unit length was found to be 4.5 words, with a textual variation from 3.9 words to 5.0 words.

Examples (4–1) – (4–4) illustrate these various correlations with syntax. Tone unit boundary is marked by #, and the syllable carrying the nucleus by small capitals.

(4–1) mr Brown came IN#
(4–2) the man in the STREET# is my FATHer#
(4–3) FRANKly# I don't LIKE her#
(4–4) he said he didn't DO it#

In (4–1), the tone unit covers a grammatical clause. In (4–2) there are two tone units, the first being coextensive with a noun phrase and the second with the predication. In (4–3) there are also two tone units, the first represented by an adverbial phrase, and the second by a clause. Finally, in (4–4) two clauses make up one tone unit.

The division of connected speech into tone units is however not as unproblematic as it may seem. Sometimes it is not at all apparent where to draw the boundaries in speech, especially in spontaneous conversation, since most spontaneous speech involves a lot of hesitation, repetition, incomplete utterances, and false starts. Even without these 'performance problems', some pitch sequences present special problems. One mentioned by Cruttenden (1986:43) is represented by sentences which have a final sentence adverbial, e.g.

(4–5) he went a WAY unFORtunately#

Two equally prominent pitch changes (two nuclei) suggest two tone units, but there are otherwise no indications of two units.[7] This suggests that the concept of the tone unit is an idealization which, in the same way as other linguistic models, proves to be problematic when applied to real language. However, it is not the purpose of this study to untangle such problems; I will assume the validity of tone units as they are defined above.

Having thus defined the term 'tone unit', I now proceed to deal with the notions of nucleus and nuclear tone in some detail. By definition there is one syllable which carries the nucleus in each tone unit. This syllable is the most prominent one and carries the principal accent. Accent is here used in the same way as in Cruttenden (1986:48ff), that is, the notion of accent is limited to prominence where pitch is involved, length and loudness playing a relatively minor role. Pitch accents depend on an obtrusion of pitch at the point of accent. The obtrusion depends on movements to or from the accented syllable or a combination of both. There can either

[7] This is similar to the subordinate tone units described in the LLC. The pitch contour of a subordinate tone unit falls broadly within the tonal contour of another contour (Crystal 1969:244ff). According to Altenberg (1987:21) subordinate tone units are relatively rare in the LLC. Less than 5% of the total number of tone units are subordinate.

be a step-up or a step-down to an accented syllable, or a movement up from, or down from an accented syllable, or a combination of both (for a more detailed description of this, see Cruttenden 1986:48f). There is generally a number of syllables before the nucleus. This stretch from the first prominent pitch, the 'onset', in the tone unit up to the nucleus is also of some importance for pitch variation in that it often represents the beginning of new information in the tone unit. The nucleus is generally the end of new information. The pitch pattern from where the nucleus starts up to the tone unit boundary is called the 'nuclear tone', e.g.

(4–6) the |weather doesn't BOTHer me#

In (4–6), the onset, i.e. the first prominent syllable (marked by a vertical bar), comes on *weather*. The most prominent syllable is BOTH in *bother*, and the nuclear tone spreads over *bother me*.

Different scholars distinguish a varying number of nuclear tones. O'Connor & Arnold (1973) and Cruttenden (1986) have seven different tones: 'high fall', 'low fall', 'high rise', 'low rise', 'fall-rise', 'rise-fall', and 'mid-level'. In LLC five different tones are distinguished: 'fall', 'rise', 'fall-rise', 'rise-fall', and 'level' (Svartvik & Quirk 1980, Greenbaum & Svartvik 1990, Peppé 1995).[8] The five types of tone are illustraded in examples (4–7)–(4–11), the 'fall', the 'rise', the 'fall-rise', the 'rise-fall' and the 'level', in that order.

(4–7) thanks very much ind\eed	(1.1.36)
(4–8) is this a spare p/aper	(1.1.32)
(4–9) it's terribly bad for her f\/igure	(1.11.48)
(4–10) she is very serious-m/\inded	(1.3.1209)
(4–11) w=ell	(1.11.847)

In both the seven-tone systems employed by O'Connor & Arnold and Cruttenden, and the five-tone system used in the transcription of LLC, the nuclear tones fall into two basic sets: falling tones, including 'high/low fall' and 'rise-fall', and rising tones, including 'high/low rise', 'fall-rise' and 'level'. The motivation for putting the level tone among the rises is purely functional in that it conveys the same abstract meaning of nonfinality and inconclusiveness as rises do.

For the description of the use of intonation in LLC (in Section 4.2.9), it is necessary to take all the five types of tones used in the corpus into consideration. However, for the analysis of functional aspects of the use of different tones in highly restricted declarative frames containing degree modifiers, two tones only proved

[8] In fact, they also include two additional tones which they call 'fall-plus-rise', and 'rise-plus-fall'. These tones consist of two nuclei, yet the second nucleus is said to be less prominent than the first one (cf. Greenbaum & Svartvik 1990, Quirk et al 1985:1605). Even though their definition of a tone unit is that there is one nucleus, they allow for these tones in one and the same tone unit.

sufficient, viz. the fall and the fall-rise (Sections 4.2.1). In these sections intonation is used mainly for investigative purposes in highly decontextualized settings. What is investigated is the functional effect of intonation on utterances which contain different types of degree modifiers (for a more detailed discussion see Section 4.2.2–3). Furthermore, I will make no distinction between 'high fall' and 'low fall', since this added gradient aspect has to do with different degrees of involvement only. From this it follows that I will take two basic factors into consideration: (i) the initial movement and direction from the nucleus: the fall, and (ii) an alternative second change of pitch direction following the nucleus, which comes with the complex tone: the fall-rise.

Before finishing this section on the formal aspects of intonation, something has to be mentioned about nucleus placement in English. Nucleus placement is a device for focusing on some part of the tone unit. The general rule of nucleus placement in English is that in each tone unit the nucleus goes on the stressed syllable of the last lexical item that is new,[9] e.g.

(4–12) A: what are you DOing#
B: I am reading a BOOK#

Intonational focus is however not the only device in language for showing focus. Language also has different structural and lexical means of assigning prominence to a part of an utterance. Such constructions include, for example, clefting, alternative negation, alternative interrogation, left dislocation, WH- interrogatives, and focusing adverbials. Consider examples (4–13) – (4–18):

(4–13) It was John who bought the car. [clefting]
(4–14) Pam isn't nice, she is naughty. [alternative negation]
(4–15) Shall we go by bus, or train. [alternative interrogation]
(4–16) That film, I really liked it. [left dislocation]
(4–17) Where is the map? [WH–interrogative]
(4–18) Ben is only four. [focusing adverbial]

Examples (4–13) – (4–18) all illustrate various structural and lexical ways of presenting information in order to highlight certain parts of the utterance. However, as pointed out by Nevalainen (1987:141–44), linguists of different persuasions tend to agree that grammar and intonation converge in focus marking. In the next section, I will discuss the relationship between intonation and meaning, and the use of intonation as a focusing device will be important.

[9] Cruttenden (1986:49) says that 'there seems to be some general psycho-linguistics principle at work whereby the processing of intonational meaning takes place at the end of each group and the most recent signal carries the most meaning'.

4.1.3 Intonation and meaning

As has already been established in Section 4.1.1, pitch changes in English have three main functions with respect to prosodic form: (i) the division of continuous speech into tone units, (ii) the signalling of accented syllables, and (iii) the shaping of the tune. But intonational contours are not only a matter of form, they have an interpretative side as well. I assume that intonation involves a set of universal meanings on a highly abstract level and that these meanings have specific interpretations in different languages and contexts. Specific interpretations of intonational meaning are due to both nucleus placement, the shape of the nuclear tone, and contextual factors.[10] Interpretation of intonational meaning appears to take place at the interface between syntax, semantics, and pragmatics. This section is concerned with the various general functions of nuclear placement and type of nuclear tone. I will first discuss various functional aspects of nucleus placement and then go on to discuss the aspects of meaning associated with tones.

In the previous section, the tone unit was defined as a segment of speech containing one nucleus. The function of each such nucleus is to highlight a piece of information, generally a piece of 'new' information. From this definition it follows that a tone unit can be equated with a discoursal information unit. Consider the following exchange:

(4–19) A: what did Mr Brown BUY
B: he bought a pretty expensive JACKet

The nucleus on the first syllable of *jacket* indicates the focus of the utterance. The scope of the focus, however, is contextually determined by the presupposition which the utterance bears upon. In (4–19) the scope of the focus covers 'a pretty expensive jacket', and it is determined by the prompting question, which conditions the nucleus placement and the focus of the answer. In discoursal terms 'a pretty expensive jacket' constitutes the piece of 'new' information which is requested to fill a gap in information. The initial part of the utterance, 'he bought', is outside the focus. It represents 'old' or 'given' information and as such it serves as the starting-point and the link to the prompting question. 'New' information is to be taken in the sense of 'newsworthy' information, and 'given' information in the sense of 'predictable' information (cf. Halliday 1967, Taglicht 1982)

There is commonly a one-to-one relationship between 'focus' on the one hand

[10] I will only discuss nuclear placement and the shape of the nuclear tone in this study, because they are the two factors that are most important with respect to meaning. I am aware of the fact that any pitch obtrusion in the tone unit gives prominence to a word. This may especially be so for BOOSTERS, i.e. step-ups from a falling contour. They may have a special intensifying effect (Altenberg 1990:194). Cruttenden (1986:88) and Taglicht (1982:219) note that pre-nuclear pitch accents may be used to mark the beginning of the scope of focus in a tone unit. Bolinger (1986:46f) discusses initial step-ups or hat-like contours in terms of theme and rheme, and he notes that an initial step-up has a thematic or 'annunciatory' function in contrast to a final rhematic accent. However, the function of pre-nuclear accents has so far been little explored.

and 'new' information on the other.[11] Focus can be said to be intermediate between form and function in that it is formally defined in terms of position and prosody, i.e. nucleus placement, but the scope of focus is contextually determined. 'New' information on the other hand is a purely functional term, which is determined by contextual factors only. The term which is complementary to focus is 'theme'. The theme is the part of the utterance that is outside the scope of focus[12], which then usually is coextensive with 'given' information. With regard to nucleus placement and focus assignment, there are (at least) two questions that suggest themselves:

i) What items can be brought into focus by means of nucleus placement?
ii) What types of foci are there?

The answer to the first question is that in principle any item can carry the nucleus, but some items are more likely to have the nucleus than others. If we assume that it is possible to divide the vocabulary of the language into a simple dichotomy of function words and lexical words, where function words are, for example, articles, auxiliary verbs, pronouns, prepositions, conjunctions, and some adverbs, such as degree modifiers, and lexical words are nouns, verbs, adjectives, and some other adverbs, such as manner adverbs, the prediction, according to the prosodic rule for nucleus placement, is that in the unmarked case the nucleus will fall on the last lexical item of the tone unit, and in the marked case the nucleus will fall on a non-final element and/or a function word.[13] The division of words into lexical words and function words is of course a simplified artefact, which is not an all-or-none business but rather a gradience between the most typical lexical words to the most typical function words. Still, this division is convenient in linguistic description to cover items typically accented and typically unaccented. As determined by the prosodic rule, the nucleus will fall on the last part of the 'new' information, which in the unmarked case will be on the stressed syllable of the last lexical item of the tone unit.[14]

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[11] Taglicht (1982:219) claims that (i) items carrying nucleus are always 'new', i.e. 'newsworthy', (ii) items carrying no pitch accent, nuclear or non-nuclear, are always 'given', or 'predictable', (iii) items carrying non-nuclear pitch accents are from the listener's point of view potentially 'new', and their interpretation depends on his or her assessment of the total context. Taglicht also points out that even though 'new' and 'given' information suggest that the utterance has to be informative in content, that is not necessarily the case. Some nuclei fall on items such as *actually, surely,* which convey interpersonal content rather than purely informative content. Taglicht makes a distinction between intonation structure, i.e. the division into tone units and the separation of focal items marked by accent and residual items, unmarked by accent, and assessment of information, which is a pragmatic concept.

[12] Some linguists use the terms 'theme/rheme', or 'topic/comment' for what I have called 'theme/focus' here (cf. Quirk et al 1985: 1363).

[13] There is an obvious element of circularity in this reasoning, in that the prosodic rule accounts for prosodically unmarked sentences, and prosodically unmarked sentences are characterized by the nucleus placement that the prosodic rule predicts. However, for the purpose of this study, I will assume this prosodic rule.

[14] There are, however, quite a few exceptions to this rule. Cruttenden points out three main exceptions: (i) 'event' sentences, such as 'A WIND got up'; (ii) final adverbials, such as 'I went to LONdon on Thursday'; (iii) adjectival WH-objects, such as 'What SEEDS did you use?' (Cruttenden 1990 b).

The second question has to do with what types of foci there are. In a typological model of focus assignment within functional grammar, Dik et al (1981:42) approach the problem of focusing from a contextual point of view. On the one hand, there is non-contrastive focus. Non-contrastive focus is only meant to fill a gap in information for the receiver. A reply to a WH-question typically involves non-contrastive focus, as in (4–20).

(4–20) A: what was JOHN doing
B: he was READing

Contrastive focus, on the other hand, typically has to do with a specific presupposition in that the choice of item in focus is restricted to a choice from a set of items conditioned by the presupposition, as in (4–21) below. A non-contrastive utterance, such as (4–20), also relates to a presupposition, but not to a specific one.

(4–21) A: did you go to LONdon
B: NO# I went to \STOCKholm

Taglicht (1982:225f) also addresses the question of contrastivity in a framework of information assessment. He accounts for contrastivity in the following way:

• 'New' items, i.e. items in focus, may be contrastive or non-contrastive. 'Contrastive' means items presented as one of a pair of opposites. The relation between 'contrastive' and 'new' is then the link between contrastiveness and intonation, since 'new' entails 'focal in intonation' (though the reverse does not hold good).

• 'Oppositeness' is a contextual-pragmatic concept, which may be represented by opposite terms in semantic structure, such as *alive–dead, hot–cold, up–down,* and by other kinds of contextual opposites, such as *green–red* traffic lights.

• Contrastiveness may be explicit or implicit. If it is explicit, both members of the pair of opposites are present in the utterance. If it is implicit, only one of the opposites is present, but the utterance conveys the implication of something unsaid.

In Taglicht's model the term 'contrastive' indicates a co-selection of [opposed] and [new] in a system of features. Taglicht's feature [opposed] is thus a more specific condition than Dik et al's specific presupposition.

Cruttenden (1986:81ff) addresses the question of focus in a slightly different way. He makes a distinction between 'broad' and 'narrow' focus (cf. Ladd 1979). This difference in focus assignment is not only defined contextually, but also prosodically (cf. Taglicht 1982). Broad focus involves 'all-new' utterances, which

might be found in narratives, or utterances, that can be said in answer to WH-questions, such as (4–22) and (4–23) respectively:

(4–22) a car pulled up in front of a hoTEL

(4–23) A: what was JOHN doing
B: he was READing

The rule for nucleus placement in broad focus is that it falls on the last lexical item of the tone unit (but for exceptional cases see footnote 14 of this chapter).

Prosodically, narrow focus works in the same way as broad focus, in that the nucleus normally falls on the last lexical item of the part of the tone unit that is in focus, but for various reasons some other part of the tone unit is out of focus. The scope of the focus is determined by a specific presupposition. Consider (4–24) which is quoted from Cruttenden (1986:87).

(4–24) A: have you had a good DAY
B: I have had a bloody HORRible day

In (4–24) *day* in B's reply is presupposed, given information, which is out of focus, and 'bloody horrible' is the kind of specific information relevant to the question. According to the prosodic rule, the nucleus falls on the last lexical syllable that is in focus, viz. HORR in *horrible,* and the scope of the focus is determined by the context. Cruttenden's narrow focus can be compared to Dik et al's contrastive focus in that the part of the utterance that is in focus is prompted by a specific presupposition. Consider a couple of examples, which involve degree modifiers, (4–25) and (4–26), with narrow focus in Cruttenden's terms, or contrastive focus in Dik et al's terms:

(4–25) A: how exPENsive was the jacket
B: it was VEry expensive

(4–26) A: did he say the jacket was QUITE expensive
B: he said it was VEry expensive

The nucleus is placed on a non-final element of the tone unit, and moreover, this non-final element is a function word rather than a lexical word. In Dik et al's terms these are both examples of contrastive focus bearing upon a specific presupposition about the degree of expensiveness. In (4–25) the presupposition is that the jacket was expensive, and the answer to the question involves a restricted choice of values concerning this degree. The contrast in this utterance lies in that the degree modifier has been chosen from a closed set of potential degree modifiers and in this

respect there is an implicit contrast to the other members of that set. There is thus no explicit contrast involved as is the case in (4–26).

As has been illustrated above, nucleus placement mainly concerns discoursal meaning. It has to do with presuppositions and the establishment of links between various utterances and parts of utterances. Nucleus placement serves to highlight a piece of information, in general new information as opposed to given information. Nucleus placement is also decisive in manifestations of contrastivity. Within Halliday's framework (1987:281), the matter of the location of the information focus, i.e. nucleus placement, is related to the organisation and cohesiveness of the discourse, i.e. it has a textual function, whereas the choice of tone, or pitch direction involves aspects which are relevant to the relationship between the speaker and the hearer, i.e. the shape of the tone is, by and large, more relevant to interpersonal function.

In this study, I will assume that in utterances of the type 'It was (degree modifier) (adjective)' some kind of contrastive focus is assigned when the nucleus goes on the modifier. This means that (4–27) represents non-contrastive focus, whereas (4-25) and (4–26) here repeated as (4–28) and (4–29) represent contrastive focus.

(4–27) A: what did you SAY
B: I said it was very exPENsive

(4–28) A: how exPENsive was the jacket
B: it was VEry expensive

(4–29) A: did he say the jacket was QUITE expensive
B: he said it was VEry expensive

In (4–27) the nucleus is on the last lexical item of the tone unit, which is the unmarked and neutral case according to the prosodic rule. Yet (4–27) may be ambiguous, in that the utterance may very well relate to a specific presupposition in a broader pragmatic context. But, since I am here dealing with restricted contexts in the form of conversational frames, I will just assume this to be the unmarked, non-contrastive case. In (4–28) and (4–29), where the nucleus goes on the degree modifier, a case of contrastive focus is assigned with the motivation that the nucleus is placed on an item that is not the last lexical item of the tone unit; the utterance bears on a specific presupposition in that the modifier has to be chosen from a closed set of potential degree modifiers. Very often this set is represented by a pair of opposites in Taglicht's terms, but this is not necessarily the case. In (4–29) above, for example, various degree modifiers may be possible in preference to *quite*, such as *extremely, a bit, somewhat.* Their relationship may be more scalar than pure bipolar opposition.

Up to now, I have been dealing with nucleus placement and focus assignment

only. I will now proceed to discuss the meaning of the different tones. Following Cruttenden (1981:191ff, 1986: Ch. 4), I assume that there is a basic dichotomy of meaning in English between falls and rises in that falls involve finality and conclusiveness, whereas rises involve non-finality and inconclusiveness. This dichotomy of intonational meaning operates at a high level of abstraction, and it is only in specific contexts that these highly abstract meanings become understandable and useful in various grammatical, discoursal, attitudinal, and lexical functions. The lower level meanings created in specific contexts are referred to as 'local' meanings by Cruttenden (1986:99ff). Thus, the abstract intonational meanings are reflected in local meanings which in specific contexts appear to be grammatical, discoursal, attitudinal or lexical. These four dimensions are however very difficult to separate in a consistent way, as we shall see later on in this chapter. In other words, a contrast is created when the nucleus goes on the degree modifier because of the marked location of the nucleus on an element that is neither the last lexical item, nor a typical lexical item, and the degree modifier is chosen from a set of potential items.

The various local meanings are sometimes more grammatical in that certain tones are typically associated to certain syntactic structures. For instance in English, declaratives, WH-interrogatives, and imperatives are associated with falls, whereas yes/no interrogatives are associated with rises,[15] as in (4–30) – (4–33) respectively:

(4–30) I live in \MANchester
(4–31) what's your ad\DRESS
(4–32) shut \UP
(4–33) are you going by /BUS

It is important to note that any nuclear tone can be found with any syntactic structure, but deviations from the typical patterns will create some kind of effect, be it of a discoursal or an attitudinal nature, on how the utterance is interpreted. This state of affairs implies that typical grammatical meanings can be overruled by discoursal, attitudinal or lexical considerations. Discoursal meanings of intonation have to do with links between tone units. Discoursal effects involve considerations of 'new' and 'old' information, which are mainly decisions about the location of the nucleus. Discoursal approaches to the meaning of tones operate with concepts such as shared mutual knowledge of speakers and listeners. Attitudinal meanings involve speakers' degree of certainty as to the truth of what they are saying, or other attitudes such as 'neutral', 'impressed', 'bored', 'ironic'. Intonational meanings of falls and rises also co-occur with certain lexical meanings which are associated with reinforcement and limitation. This is particularly so with adverbials.

The basic division of intonational meaning into falling and rising contours is employed by most intonational analysts, albeit from slightly different points of

[15] Discoursal meanings usually associated with these syntactic structures, i.e. statements, questions, and commands, will in the same fashion have typical tones, even when they are not syntactically marked.

view. The correlation between sentence types and intonation is of course the most obvious relationship to be described. Halliday (1967, 1970) operates with five basic tunes and several subdivisions, and his statement on the distinctions expressed by the choice of different tones is that they belong in the realm of grammar, and, within grammar, in the realm of syntax (1970:21ff). Yet, it should be noted that many of his comments concerning the interpretation of intonational meaning are of a character that would usually be considered to be attitudinal. Brazil (1994) attempts to explain the choice of tune in discoursal terms, where rising tunes are said to be 'referring' and falling tunes 'proclaiming'. Like Brazil, Gussenhoven (1983) also interprets the meanings of tones as mainly discoursal, although he makes use of a three-tone model based on the fall, the fall-rise and the rise. The choice of tone means a choice of discoursal viewpoint as to whether the communicated information is shared background, 'new' information, or whether a piece of information should be established or not. Pierrehumbert and Hirschberg (1990) also account for the meanings of intonational contours from a discoursal/attitudinal perspective, although they are discussed in a compositional system of levels, where different aspects of meaning are associated with different parts of the contour. O'Connor & Arnold (1973) approach the problem of the function of tones in more attitudinal terms. They have ten tone-groups, each of which involves a particular sequencing of pre-head + head + nuclear tone. These ten tone-groups are associated with various attitudes.

As has already been pointed out, it is not always easy to distinguish between what is to be considered to be grammatical, discoursal, attitudinal, or lexical meaning effects. In fact, they are very often interwoven and inseparable, and different meanings can be described in more than one of these dimensions, although in different terms. I will now illustrate the problems of separating these perspectives by means of some examples. Utterances which occur with a tone which is non-typical of a certain syntactic structure may yield different discoursal interpretations due to a particular combination of tone and syntactic structure in certain contexts, e.g. (4–34):

(4–34) A: I find this chapter very difficult to underSTAND
B: why don't you come and talk to /ME

In (4–34), B's answer has the form of a WH-interrogative, but instead of the typical falling tone it has a rise. This combination in this particular setting has the effect of turning the syntactic WH-interrogative into a request in discoursal terms, and the rising tone adds a polite attitude to it. In the same way, tag-interrogatives can take either a rising or a falling tone, e.g. (4–35) and (4–36):

(4–35) that's not important /IS it
(4–36) that's not important \IS it

Again the difference of meaning can be explained in discoursal terms. Both utterances expect the answer 'no', but the tag with the falling tone expects it more strongly than the one with the rising tone. It should also be noted that this difference could be accounted for in terms of different speaker attitudes. The rise implies an open attitude and invites an answer from the receiver, whereas the fall is speaker assertive and at most invites a signal of support from the hearer.

Other deviations from the typical use of tones in combination with certain syntactic structures give rise to a variety of more clear-cut attitudinal meanings, shown in examples (4–37) – (4–39):

(4–37) A: I have decided not to go to the party
B: Ben will be very disap\/POINTed

(4–38) A: the Hopes are nice people aren't they
B: well \/JOHN is

(4–39) A: who is that woman over there
B: she is the author of the /\BOOK

In (4–37) the fall-rise with the declarative structure conveys the attitudinal meaning of warning to the utterance, and in (4–38), the meaning of the fall-rise implies reservation. Reservation is clearly ambiguous between discoursal and attitudinal meaning in that the answer indicates a 'reservational'[16] attitude or a mild contradiction vis-à-vis the previous utterance. But the more obvious meaning is that you can potentially go on and say 'but the others aren't particularly nice'. In (4–39) the rise-fall has the effect of showing that B is impressed. Naturally, these attitudinal meanings arise from a combination of shape of tone, nuclear placement, syntactic structure, lexical meaning, and pragmatic context.

Finally, some meanings of intonation are related to lexical meaning. For instance, the verb *think* typically takes the rising contour, whereas the verb *know* commonly co-occurs with the falling tone in constructions such as (4–40) and (4–41) (Cruttenden 1981:196f):

(4–40) I \/THINK it's raining
(4–41) I \KNOW it's raining

This use of the rising and the falling tones appears to be associated with the lexical meanings of the words *think* and *know*. The rising contour on *think* is due to its

[16] I employ *reservational* for practical purposes, since there is no adjective for 'showing reservation'. It will henceforth be used in this sense.

inconclusive and limiting lexical meaning, and the fall-rise is the most natural choice since there is an inherent lexical implication of reservation in *think*. With *know* the most natural choice is the fall due to its conclusive and reinforcing lexical meaning. Again, the use of the two different tones can be accounted for either in discoursal terms, in that the fall-rise on *think* conveys the meaning of contextual reservation and openness towards the listener, whereas the fall on *know* is speaker oriented, or in attitudinal terms, in that the fall-rise on *think* conveys the meaning of doubt as opposed to certainty for the fall on *know*. A similar division of tonal choice operates with adverbials the lexical meanings of which are associated with limitation and reinforcement, shown in (4–42) and (4–43):

(4–42) \/USUALLY he is happy
(4–43) of \COURSE he is happy

All the examples of the meaning of the different tones as they are interpreted in specific contexts illustrate that the highly abstract intonational meanings of falls, representing finality, closeness and conclusiveness, and rises, representing non-finality, openness, and inconclusiveness, get their various local meanings in the specific contexts in which they occur. The local meanings are conditioned by structural, discoursal, attitudinal, and lexical factors, and abstract intonational meanings are interpreted in the context of all these factors. Cruttenden (1986:115) points out that no analyst has systematically related the abstract meanings of intonation to local meanings. It is also clear that there is no easy way of distinguishing between discoursal, attitudinal, and lexical meanings. What can be stated, however, is that grammatical considerations are easily overruled by discoursal, attitudinal, and lexical considerations.

4.2 Degree modifiers and intonation

The following sections present (i) judgements on the naturalness of potential intonations of phrases consisting of a degree modifier and an adjective in a simple tone unit frame. Various restrictions on intonations judged to be natural are discussed within each group of degree modifier. These sections also discuss (ii) the interpretation of the actual phrases with respect to discoursal, attitudinal and lexical meaning. The aim of these sections is to see whether any general rules for the intonation of degree modifiers can be formulated.

To the best of my knowledge no systematic investigation of the intonation of degree modifiers of adjectives in English has been carried out.[17] Allerton & Cruttenden (1974, 1976) and Cruttenden (1981) have made detailed studies of intonation patterns of English sentence adverbials, such as viewpoint adverbials,

[17] Bolinger (1972) makes occasional remarks on the intonation of degree modifiers, but to a very limited extent and in no way systematically.

and validity adverbials, in different positions. They have also investigated intonation patterns with non-sentence adverbials, such as adverbials of time, manner, place, and degree. Their research reveals that the abstract and independent meanings of falling tones as indicators of completeness, finality, and assertiveness, and of rising tones as indicators of incompleteness, non-finality, and non-assertiveness are reflected by, and naturally compatible with, certain attitudinal and lexical meanings. The use of the falling tone is due to the inherent certainty and reinforcing nature of certain adverbials compared to the doubt or limiting nature of certain other adverbials with rising tones, as in (4–44) and (4–45):

(4–44) John goes by car \ALways [REINFORCING]
(4–45) John goes by car \/USually [LIMITING]

According to Allerton & Cruttenden (1978:178), this general pattern is applicable to degree adverbs in verbal modification too. They report that degree adverbials are fairly complex in their intonational potential, but they fall broadly into two types: (i) intensifiers, such as *greatly, a lot, completely,* favour falling intonations, whereas (ii) attenuators, such as *almost, a bit, slightly,* prefer rising intonations. This preference of choice of falling versus rising tones is assumed to be determined by the lexical contribution that the adverbial makes to the sentence. Generally speaking, adverbials may be used either to emphatically support or to emphatically reject what has previously been asserted, or to tone down or modify what has been said or to accept it with reservation. In the first case the fall is preferred and in the second case a rising tone is favoured. This is also the assumption that this investigation will be based on.

4.2.1 Procedure and method

The investigation was carried out in two steps: the first step involves judgements of the naturalness of the utterances in a given tone unit frame with respect to two different variables, viz. nucleus placement and nuclear tone. The second step of the investigation involves an analysis of the interpretation of these constructions from the point of view of discoursal, attitudinal, and lexical meaning. The hypotheses for the functional effects of difference of nucleus placement and different nuclear tones were:

• The location of the nuclear tone has mainly textual or discoursal implications. An utterance with a degree modifier and its associated adjective will differ with respect to the presuppositions they bear upon when the nucleus goes on the degree modifier as opposed to when it goes on the adjective. Nucleus on the degree modifier involves some kind of contrast or contradiction, which distinctly brings out the aspect of degree. When the nucleus falls on the adjective, however, the degree modifier becomes backgrounded and less prominent. At the same time, the application

of the actual level of degree becomes less clear and less speaker-assertive. This state of affairs is assumed to provide a breeding-ground for potential overlaid meanings of the degree modifiers of a lexical and attitudinal character.

• Attitudinal and lexical factors, rather than discoursal factors, will be of greater importance for the choice of tone. The assumption is that reinforcing degree modifiers prefer a falling tone, whereas limiting or attenuating modifiers prefer a falling-rising tone. These preferences have to do with aspects of naturalness, since reinforcement goes hand in hand with the abstract meaning of the falling tone as an indication of completeness and assertiveness, and attenuation (limitation) with the meaning of incompleteness and reservation of the fall-rise.

The method was to test the use of degree modifiers from the five groups of maximizers, approximators, boosters, moderators, and diminishers, in a simple declarative tone unit frame. The guiding principle was to adhere strictly to a frame. It was also important to keep the frames at a neutral and relatively context-independent level, such as in (4–46)–(4–49):

[4–46] A: what did he SAY
B: he said it was [degree modifier] [ADJECTIVE]

[4–47] A: did he say it was [DEGREE MODIFIER] [adjective]
B: he said it was [DEGREE MODIFIER] [adjective]

[4–48] A: how [ADJECTIVE] did he say it was
B: he said it was [DEGREE MODIFIER] [adjective]

[4–49] A: was he [ADJECTIVE]
B: he was [DEGREE MODIFIER] [adjective]

The frames consist of a question which provides the general setting, and an answer containing two variable slots, one for the degree modifier, and one for the adjective. Obviously, a variable slot was needed for the testing of the different modifier items. A variable slot was also needed for the adjective, since not all the degree modifiers collocate with the same types of adjective (as is well established by now). Minor alterations to the frames, such as the substitution of *he/she/they* for *it*, were sometimes necessary. The four different frames were used to satisfy alternative nucleus placements, one for nucleus on the adjective and three for nucleus on the degree modifier. Frame (4–46) can be used with all combinations of degree modifier and adjective. Frames (4–47)–(4–49) were used to prompt different nucleus placement on the modifier in different combinations. The various restrictions that these three frames exert on the combination of degree modifier and adjectives and their tones

will be discussed when each combination of modifier and adjective together with a particular intonation is examined.

Variable 1 involves nucleus placement. The nucleus was either placed on the adjective or on the degree modifier, and different questions had to be used to provide the right environment for the location of the nucleus. The very general question 'What did he say?' thus paves the way for the nucleus to go on the adjective.[18] As has already been discussed in Section 4.1.3, the unmarked rule for nucleus placement is that the nucleus goes on the stressed syllable of the last lexical item of the tone unit that is new information. This means that when the nucleus falls on the adjective, such as in (4–46), the utterance will be interpreted as a neutral statement. However, a case of contrast is present in (4–47)–(4–49), where the nucleus goes on the degree modifier, which is not the last lexical item. The more precise and restrictive questions as to the level of degree, 'Did he say it was [degree modifier] [adjective]?', and 'How [adjective] did he say it was?', were used to prompt nucleus placement on the modifier. 'Was he [adjective?]' was used for non-scalar adjectives, where the '*how*-question' cannot be used.

Variable 2 involves pitch direction of the nuclear tone. As has already been stated in Section 4.1.2, the five types of tone considered in this thesis are fall, rise-fall, rise, fall-rise, and level. These five tones were selected because they are the tones used in the analysis of the spoken material in LLC. In the investigation of the naturalness of particular combinations of degree modifier and intonation in declarative frames, the types of tone considered were reduced to two, the fall and the fall-rise. In all styles of English speech the simple fall is the most common nuclear tone, i.e. around 50%. Simple rises are estimated at 20–25% and fall-rises around 15% (Crystal 1969:225, Altenberg 1987:36f). Even higher figures for the fall and the fall-rise are estimated in most conversation, between 60% and 70% for the falling tone and 20% for the fall-rise (Cruttenden 1994:267). The reasons for excluding simple rises, levels, and rise-falls are that they are less frequent. Their use is highly restricted to special contextual environments in declarative structures. In final declarative tone units, simple rises are used in, for example, echoes with queries or declarative questions, or in contexts where they have the overlaid meanings of 'encouragement' or 'condescension'. Similarly, the rise-fall on declaratives also has the very special meanings of 'impressed' or 'challenging' (Cruttenden 1986:101–106). Level tones are normally not used in utterances which are characterized by completeness. These conditions thus leave us with the simple fall and the fall-rise. The potential difference between a high fall and a low fall is not taken into consideration because this gradience is a scaling affair which does not affect meaning other than in terms of

[18] Naturally, the nucleus could also fall on the modifier, since the answer is just an echo of what has been said. But, the neutral answer would be with a fall on the adjective, i.e. with the nucleus on the last lexical item of the tone unit. More restricted questions are used to prompt answers with nucleus on the degree modifier in (4-47) and (4-48).

more or less involvement. Also, this distinction between high and low fall is not made in LLC.

4.2.2 Nucleus placement

Given a number of set frames with degree modifiers and their modified adjectives, the assumption was that the location of the nucleus would have mainly discoursal effects in that nucleus placement on either the adjective or the degree modifier would produce different presuppositions. Nucleus placement on the adjective would represent the neutral and unmarked case, where the adjective is 'new' information, whereas nucleus placement on the degree modifier would involve some sort of contrast or contradiction, the adjective being 'given' information.[19] It was also assumed that the location of the nucleus could have some lexical and attitudinal implications. Nucleus placement on the degree modifier would bring out the aspect of degree distinctly, whereas nucleus on the adjective would have the effect of making the degree aspect less clear, less prominent, and less speaker-assertive. Moreover, this lack of speaker assertiveness with respect to degree would be a possible breeding-ground for the development of overlaid meanings, lexical ambiguity, and in a diachronic perspective incipient semantic change.

Two alternative locations for nucleus placement were examined; either the nucleus went on the adjective, as in (4–50) and (4–51) or on the degree modifier, as in (4–52) and (4–53). Two different types of adjective were used to cover both scalar adjectives and non-scalar adjectives. *Good* is a scalar adjective, which goes with scaling modifiers, and *identical* is a non-scalar adjective, which goes with totality modifiers.

(4–50) A: what did you SAY
B: I said it was very GOOD

(4–51) A: what did you SAY
B: I said they were completely iDENtical

(4–52) A: how GOOD was it?
B: it was VEry good

(4–53) A: were they iDENtical
B: they were comPLETEly identical

[19] I will use the terms 'contrastivity', 'contrastive focus' and 'contrast' in the following way: Contrastivity refers to the phenomenon as such at an abstract level. On the concrete level contrastive focus is the prosodic realization. Contrastive focus involves two ingredients: a contrast to something in the context, and emphasis. 'Contrast' is a textual term understood from the context, whereas emphasis is related to attitudinal meaning and involvement. When the contrastive focus is triggered by an explicit contrast in the context, the aspect of contrast will dominate, whereas when the contrastivity is implicit the aspect of emphasis is foregrounded.

Examples (4–50) and (4–51) represent neutral and straightforward statements where the nucleus falls on the last lexical item. The utterances express responses to something in a context where a judgement of an adjectival value is wanted. This judgement is that something is 'good', or more exactly 'very GOOD', 'identical', or more exactly 'completely IDENtical'. Examples (4–52) and (4–53) focus on specifications of degree. In (4–52) the nucleus is forced by the question to go on the modifier, and the focus is restricted to *very*. In (4–53) an alternative frame had to be used because the non-scalar adjective *identical* is incompatible with the scalar implication of the '*how*-question'. The response, however, specifies a degree of completeness and the focus is restricted to *completely* in the same way as it is to *very* in (4–52).[20]

Chomsky (1971:205) notes that choice of focus determines the relation between utterances. In order to be able to explain how discourse is constructed, the notions of focus and presupposition have to be determinable from the semantic interpretation. The focus is a phrase which contains the intonation centre, and the presupposition is an expression which is derived by replacing the focus by a variable. Each sentence is thus associated with a class of pairs (F, P), where F is focus and P is presupposition, and each such pair corresponds to one possible interpretation. This formal approach to utterance interpretation in terms of the correlation between intonation centre, focus assignment, and presupposition, implies that there is an algorithm for the correct assignment of focus in relation to the presupposition, and utterance interpretation is reduced to a mere decoding of a message. Clearly, this view of utterance interpretation is too simple to deal with language in use. Utterance interpretation in real life has computational and intentional properties, which are lacking in the formal modular component of grammar in which Chomsky's model operates (Sperber and Wilson 1986).[21] In this study the decision has been to reduce the context to manageable proportions, and to construct the utterances so that they will reveal something about the function of intonation with respect to degree modifiers and their associated adjectives. My position is that a systematic study of the effects of nucleus placement and focus assignment requires restrictions on contextual variables in order for it not to become completely blurred and difficult to interpret.

Let us now go back to our four examples with *very* and *completely*, again within the frames used in the examination, repeated here as (4–54) to (4–57).

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[20] The question in (4-53) concerning *identical* can of course trigger a completely different answer, e.g. a confirmation such as *Yes, they were identical.* But, if a degree modifier is used, the nucleus has to go on the modifier in the same way as in (4-52).

[21] In Sperber's and Wilson's (1986) cognitively based theory of communication, utterance interpretation is carried out as a search for relevance. It involves explicit and implicit contributions to communication, individual utterances in context, new and old information, and stylistic effects, such as metaphor and irony. It should be pointed out, however, that Sperber and Wilson (1986) do not make any reference to intonation in their approach to utterance interpretation. The role of intonation from a relevance theoretical viewpoint is briefly discussed in Marek (1987).

(4–54) A: what did you SAY
B: I said it was very GOOD

(4–55) A: what did you SAY
B: I said they were completely iDENtical

(4–56) A: how GOOD was it
B: it was VEry good

(4–57) A: were they iDENtical
B: they were comPLETEly identical

The question in (4–54) and (4–55) does not necessarily prompt a response with the nucleus on the adjective. It would be possible to get a response where the nucleus falls on the modifier, or indeed on any other word in the tone unit. The question is too general to absolutely exclude alternative nucleus placements. Nevertheless, this type of setting was chosen, because it most typically produces a nucleus on the adjective, because no specific presupposition was intended, and because it would be convenient to use the same frame for all the combinations of adjectives and modifiers that were under scrutiny. The questions in (4–56) and (4–57) on the other hand can only trigger an answer with the nucleus on the modifier. A case of contrast is created in the sense that both *very* and *completely* are chosen from a set of possible items for specification of degree. The alternative degree modifiers that could have been used with *good* could either have been chosen from the paradigm of moderators, e.g. *pretty, quite, rather, fairly,* or from the paradigm of boosters, e.g. *very, terribly, awfully, extremely.*[22] The alternative degree modifiers that could have been used with *identical* have to be chosen from the paradigm of maximizer, e.g. *completely, totally, absolutely,* or from the paradigm of approximator, e.g. *almost, nearly.*

It is obvious that the choice of nucleus placement is determined by two different presuppositions. This difference in presupposition has certain effects that have to be explained in terms of how the adjective is conceptualized. Let us use the adjective *good* as an example. When the nucleus goes on the adjective as in (4–54), the value of something encoded in terms of an adjective is made prominent. What the speaker has in mind is that something is 'good' rather than 'bad'. The speaker (and of course also the hearer) has a scale of merit in mind, where 'good' and 'bad' represent the two opposite poles. This scale is illustrated in Figure 4–1.

[22] The alternative degree modifiers which can be chosen in example (4-56) naturally differ according to the type of adjective and according to the degree modifiers that this adjective collocates with. For example, the adjective *clear* can combine with more than two paradigms of degree modifiers. It can combine with maximizers (*completely*), boosters (*very*), moderators (*pretty*), approximators (*almost*).

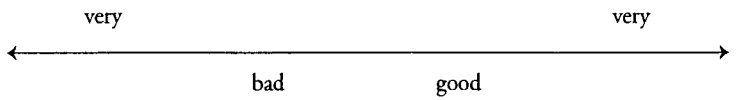

Figure 4-1 The scale of merit

Very indicates a point which involves a lot of merit. The opposite of *very GOOD* is *very BAD*. *Very* falls within the scope of the focus assigned by the location of the nucleus on the adjective, and *very good* is new information. However, *very* occurs in the shade of the adjective and is interpreted as carrying less information value. The main point of the message is that something is *good*, while *very* is mentioned additionally and is apparently of minor importance in the actual context.

In contrast, nucleus placement on the degree modifier, as in (4-56), does not conjure up a scale of 'good' as opposed to 'bad' in speaker and hearer, but restricts the view to a scale of 'goodness', where *very* appears at the upper end in the same way as it does when the nucleus goes on the adjective. *Good* is already shared knowledge and old information. The scale that the speaker and the hearer now have in mind is illustrated in Figure (4–2):

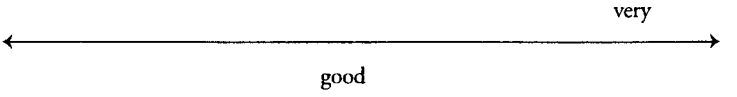

Figure 4-2 A scale of 'goodness'

The '*how*+adjective' question prompts a response in which the degree of *very* is viewed on a scale of 'goodness' only. As has already been established in Section 4.1.3, a typical contrastive focus is created if the variable in focus is chosen from a restricted set of potential variables. The degree modifiers which are conceivable in collocation with *good* must be chosen from either the paradigm of moderators, e.g. *pretty, quite, rather, fairly,* or from the paradigm of boosters, e.g. *very, awfully, terribly, extremely.* The choice of an alternative degree modifier comes from two sets of modifiers which form a scale, rather than a pair of opposites. There is no opposite of *VEry good*, in the same sense as *very BAD* is the opposite of *very GOOD*. Consider the following examples, (4–58) and (4–59):

(4–58) I didn't say it was very GOOD#
on the CONtrary# I said it was very BAD#

(4–59) *I didn't say it was VEry good#
on the CONtrary# I said it was FAIRly good#

In principle, this works in the same way with adjectives that are non-scalar, such as *identical*. The opposites are evoked irrespective of whether the opposition is of a scalar or a non-scalar nature. Examples (4–60) and (4–61) illustrate the effects with the non-scalar adjective *identical*.

(4–60) I didn't say they were completely iDENtical#
on the CONtrary# I said they were completely DIFFerent#

(4–61) *I didn't say they were comPLETEly identical#
on the CONtrary# I said they were ALmost identical#

A further effect of different nucleus placement is that when the nucleus falls on the degree modifier, the aspect of degree is made prominent and emphasized. For scaling degree modifiers such as boosters, moderators, and diminishers, nucleus placement on the modifier has the effect of adding to its scaling potential. The scaling potential of boosters is strengthened and at the same time they become more reinforcing. Correspondingly, the attenuating potential of moderators and diminishers becomes stronger too. They indicate a lower degree on the abstract scale of intensity than when they are non-nuclear. In other words, reinforcing modifiers such as boosters indicate a higher degree on an abstract scale of intensification when they carry the nucleus than when they are non-nuclear, whereas the opposite applies to the attenuators, i.e. the moderators and the diminishers. This is shown in examples (4–62)–(4–67)

(4–62) it was very HOT
(4–63) it was VEry hot

(4–64) it was fairly LONG
(4–65) it was FAIRly long

(4–66) it was slightly DIFFerent.
(4–67) it was SLIGHTly different.

In (4–63), where *very* carries the nucleus the interpretation is that it indicates a higher degree of 'hotness' than it does in (4–62). The reverse relation applies to the two attenuating modifiers *fairly* and *slightly*. When *fairly* and *slightly* carry the nucleus they indicate a lower degree of 'length/longness' and 'difference' than when they are non-nuclear. Nucleus placement on the modifier thus stretches the scale in both directions and makes the various degree modifiers stronger with respect to their scaling potential, either more attenuating or more reinforcing.

This effect of altering the scaling potential of modifiers is clear and unambiguous with the boosters. With the attenuating modifiers the picture is somewhat

more complicated, because some of them may develop alternative or overlaid meanings in collocation with certain adjectives, as will be seen later in this section. This is particularly true of the moderators, and a special section is therefore devoted to a detailed study of nucleus placement and scaling effects with respect to *pretty, quite, rather,* and *fairly* (Section 4.3). There can of course be no scaling effect in the case of the non-scaling degree modifiers. There is only an effect of added emphasis, such as in examples(4–68)–(4–71).

(4–68) it was completely EMPty
(4–69) it was comPLETEly empty

(4–70) it was almost EMPty.
(4–71) it was ALmost empty

All the utterances in which the nucleus falls on the degree modifier are more speaker-assertive with respect to degree. This difference is especially obvious with the moderators *pretty, quite, rather,* and *fairly.* Consider examples (4–72) and (4–73):

(4–72) it was pretty HOT
(4–73) it was PRETty hot.

In example (4–72) the degree aspect in *pretty* is backgrounded. *Pretty* is not speaker-assertive; on the contrary *pretty* has a negotiating and hedging function. *Pretty* in (4-73) is speaker-assertive and the degree aspect is made paramount.

Furthermore, the location of the nucleus has implications for the appearance of overlaid meanings with certain modifiers. Those modifiers are *rather, slightly, somewhat, a little* and *a bit.* When the nucleus falls on the adjective, and when the adjective is a neutral scalar adjective (which can be calibrated in conventional units), *rather, slightly, somewhat, a little* and *a bit* imply 'too'.[23] This may be implied, but is not clearly evoked when the nucleus goes on the modifier. Examples (4–74) and (4–75) illustrate this phenomenon:

(4–74) it was rather HOT
it was slightly HOT
it was somewhat HOT
it was a bit HOT

[23] The types of adjective that have this effect on *rather, slightly, somewhat, a little* and *a bit* are relatively neutral adjectives that can be calibrated. Naturally, there are no clear boundaries to such a group of adjectives. The combinations have to be judged in the context where they appear. Some adjectives represent less clear cases where people may disagree. One such case may be *rather drunk.*

(4–75) it was RAther hot
it was SLIGHTly hot
it was SOMEwhat hot
it was a BIT hot

All the degree modifiers in (4–74), mean something like 'a bit too', 'somewhat excessively', 'or on the verge of being too'. This additional differential aspect 'too' is not as clearly pronounced when the nucleus goes on the degree modifier. The basic attenuating degree aspect is then foregrounded. When the nucleus falls on the adjective, the modifiers have the function of judging the value of 'hot' as beyond acceptable or desirable limits, and in actual fact beyond the scale of 'hot' proper.

In sum, according to the assumptions above, nucleus placement has effects primarily at the discourse level. A change of nucleus position means a change of the presupposition to which the utterance relates. When the nucleus goes on the adjective, it is the adjective that receives the main focus of attention. The scenario which is conjured up in the speaker's and the hearer's minds is a conceptualization of the adjective as opposed to its opposite, e.g. 'good' as opposed to 'bad', 'identical' as opposed to 'different'. The specification of degree is added to the actual scale or to the adjectival domain, i.e. to the scale of 'merit', or to the domain of 'identity'. When the nucleus goes on the modifier, on the other hand, the modifier receives the focus of attention. The adjective to which the modifier applies constitutes mutual knowledge and is considered given information. The conceptualization of the adjective is restricted to that particular adjective. It is no longer relevant to see the adjective in the light of its opposite. To use the first two examples again, the modifier applies to the scale of 'goodness' and to the domain of 'identity' only. The conceptual scenario is thus confined to that induced by a specific adjective and to a specific degree of the particular property expressed by the adjective. The actual degree is viewed in relation to other potential specifications of degree which are possible with the adjective in question.

There are also certain other effects of a lexical and attitudinal nature. Firstly, nucleus placement on the modifier has the effect of clearly bringing out the aspect of degree which constitutes the core feature of all the modifiers. The explanation for this effect is that when the nucleus goes on an element that would not receive the nucleus in a neutral statement, a case of contrastive focus is created. This contrastive focus marking has the effect of making the outcome of the utterance very speaker-assertive with respect to the aspect of degree. Secondly, the location of the nucleus on the modifier also has a strengthening effect on the reinforcing and attenuating potential of the various modifiers. This means that the reinforcing modifiers become more reinforcing, i.e. the scaling modifiers indicate a higher degree on an abstract scale of intensity, and the totality modifiers become more emphatic. The attenuating modifiers become more clearly limiting, i.e. the scaling modifiers become more attenuating in that they indicate a lower degree on a scale of intensity

than when they do not carry nucleus, and the effect on the totality modifiers is that of more emphasis on the aspect of limitation than when they do not have nucleus. Thirdly, when the nucleus goes on the adjective some of the modifiers develop additional overlaid meanings, which are suppressed when the nucleus goes on the modifier. This applies to *rather, slightly, somewhat, a little* and *a bit,* which take on the additional overlaid meaning of 'too' in the context of certain neutral adjectives. The differential aspect of 'too' adds a subjective judgement to the utterance in that the adjectival quality modified surpasses the limit of desirability. Finally, it should be noted that the case of *quite* deserves special attention with respect to certain lexical effects of nucleus placement and tone (see Sections 4.2.4–4.2.8).

4.2.3 Nuclear tones

The assumption was that choice of tone on degree modifiers would principally be governed by lexical and attitudinal factors (see Section 4.2.1). The lexical factors that were assumed to govern the choice of tone were the reinforcing property of maximizers and boosters, and the limiting property of moderators, diminishers, and approximators. These lexical properties are associated with different attitudes in that reinforcement involves certainty and conclusiveness on the part of the speaker, and limitation involves uncertainty and reservation. The lexical properties and their associated speaker attitudes were assumed to favour different tones (see Section 4.1.3). It was argued that the lexical and attitudinal factors of reinforcement and certainty would harmonize with the abstract meaning of certainty and conclusiveness of the falling contour in statements, and the lexical and attitudinal factors of limitation and uncertainty would harmonize with the abstract meaning of the rising contour, i.e. the fall-rise, in the same environment. The fall would thus be the unmarked and preferred tone on reinforcing modifiers, and the fall-rise would be the unmarked and preferred tone on limiting modifiers.

All the degree modifiers were tested against two different adjectives, *drunk* and *identical.* The adjective *drunk* was chosen because it is a scalar adjective which combines with members from all the three paradigms of scaling degree modifiers, i.e. boosters, moderators, and diminishers. The adjective *identical* was chosen because it is a non-scalar adjective, which combines with the totality modifiers, i.e. maximizers and approximators.[24] Obviously, it is only when the nucleus goes on the modifier that the aspect of harmony between the tone and the lexical properties of reinforcement and limitation and the attitudinal properties of certainty and reservation are relevant. When the nucleus goes on the adjective, the adjective receives the main focus and the tone is only relevant with respect to the adequacy of the adjective in a certain context, irrespective of whether it is modified or not. A falling

[24] Being a hybrid anto-complementary adjective (see Section 3.3.5), *drunk* also combines with members of the paradigm of maximizer, e.g. *completely drunk, absolutely drunk.* However, in this section the maximizers will be discussed in connection with *identical.* The simple reason for this is that *identical* combines with both the paradigms of totality modifier, i.e. both maximizers and approximators, which *drunk* does not.

tone on the adjective is the unmarked tone in a neutral statement, such as (4–76). A falling-rising tone on the adjective, as in (4–77), is used to show some sort of contrast or reservation.

(4–76) A: what do you \THINK about the house
B: it's very \LARGE

(4–77) A: is the house o/K
B: \YES# it's very \/LARGE though

The fall in (4–76) expresses a final and conclusive statement concerning the adjectival property, whereas the fall-rise in (4–77) indicates some sort of contrast and/or reservation. Different tones on the adjective will thus be regarded as irrelevant to the present study, and the focus will be on the choice of tone on the degree modifier. Firstly, I will deal with the reinforcing modifiers, i.e. maximizers and boosters, and then with the limiting modifiers, i.e. moderators, diminishers, and approximators.

Initially, it should be noted that since the nucleus goes on the modifier in all the utterances tested, there is always some sort of contrast involved. However, the degree of contrastivity may vary from a subtle kind of contrast, which means that the actual degree modifier is chosen from a set of potential modifiers to a more clearly pronounced contradiction of another degree modifier.

The most natural tone on maximizers, such as *completely, totally,* and *absolutely,* is the fall, as shown in examples (4–78)–(4–80).

(4–78) A: were they i/DENtical
B: \YES# they were com\PLETEly identical

(4–79) A: were they i/DENtical
B: \YES# they were \TOtally identical

(4–80) A: were they i/DENtical
B: \YES# they were \ABsolutely identical

Examples (4–78)–4–80) illustrate utterances where qualifications with respect to totality are given. The paradigm of maximizer represents the strongest form of reinforcement among the degree modifiers, and the members of the paradigm demand the falling tone. Also, when the maximizers were used in a test frame which involves a contradiction vis-à-vis the prompting question the falling tone was the natural one, as in (4–81)–(4–83)

(4–81) A: did you say they were \/ALmost identical
B: \NO # I said they were com\PLETEly identical

(4–82) A: did you say they were \/ALmost identical
B: \NO# I said they were \TOtally identical

(4–83) A: did you say they were \/ALmost identical
B: \NO# I said they were \ABsolutely identical

The same pattern is repeated for the other group of reinforcing modifiers, i.e. the boosters. They too harmonize in a natural way with the fall, as in (4–84)–(4–87):

(4–84) A: was he /DRUNK
B: \YES# he was ex\TREMEly drunk

(4–85) A: was he /DRUNK
B: \YES# he was \AWfully drunk

(4–86) A: was he /DRUNK
B: \YES# he was \TERRibly drunk

(4–87) A: was he /DRUNK
B: \YES# he was \VEry drunk

Again, it is clear that the abstract meaning of certainty and conclusiveness of the falling contour harmonizes with the trait of reinforcement which is inherent in all the boosters. By using a booster, speakers show that they are certain of the relevance of the adjective, and that, in fact, it applies to a high degree. The same pattern as for maximizers holds good for boosters in a contradictory setting, too, as is shown in (4–88)–(4–91).

(4–88) A: did you say he was \/FAIRly drunk
B: \NO# I said he was ex\TREMEly drunk

(4–89) A: did you say he was \/FAIRly drunk
B: \NO# I said he was \AWfully drunk

(4–90) A: did you say he was \/FAIRly drunk
B: \NO# I said he was \TERRibly drunk

(4–91) A: did you say he was \/FAIRly drunk
B: \NO# I said he was \VEry drunk

This argues that the harmony between the lexical property of reinforcement in

maximizers and boosters and the abstract meaning of certainty and conclusiveness in the falling tone is strong. Indeed, it is difficult to create a context where the strong harmony between the falling tone and the reinforcing modifiers is overruled. Maximizers are not natural with anything else but a fall in declaratives. However, if a maximizer is contrasted by a booster in a contradicting frame, the fall-rise becomes a possible choice, as in (4–92):

(4–92) A: did you say he was com\PLETEly drunk
B: \NO# but I did say he was \/VEry drunk

This suggests that the local meaning of the fall-rise on degree modifiers in declaratives is reservation rather than straightforward contradiction. The fall is the unmarked tone with all reinforcing degree modifiers. It is only in very special contexts that speakers make use of a reinforcing modifier at the same time as they show reservation to what they are saying. There is an obvious mismatch between reinforcement and reservation. The strongest reinforcing degree modifiers, i.e. the maximizers, do not harmonize with the meaning of reservation and the fall-rise at all. However, the less strong reinforcing modifiers from the booster paradigm, e.g. *very*, may take the fall-rise in a setting where they contradict a maximizer, such as in (4–92).[25] Thus, there seems to be a gradience of contextual amenability in that the strongest reinforcing modifiers demand the unmarked fall to match their uncompromising lexical meaning, whereas the lexical property of the less strong and less precise members of the booster paradigm can be overruled by other considerations.

If we now proceed to look at the naturalness of the tones with attenuating modifiers, i.e. the moderators, the diminishers, and the approximators, we will see that the more natural tone on attenuating modifiers is the falling-rising tone. The reason for this has to be explained in terms of harmony between the 'reservational' meaning of the fall-rise and the inherent lexical meaning of uncertainty associated with these modifiers. We will start by looking at non-contradictory utterances which involve the members of the paradigm of moderator in (4–94)–(4–97).

(4–94) A: was he /DRUNK
B: well he was \/PRETty drunk

(4–95) A: was he /DRUNK
B: well he was \/QUITE drunk

[25] The less strong booster *very* is more adaptable than, for example, the stronger *extremely*, which sounds strange with the fall-rise in the same test frame, as in (4-93):

(4–93) A: Did you say he was com\PLETEly drunk
B: ?\NO# but I did say he was ex\/TREMEly drunk

(4–96) A: was he /DRUNK
B: well he was \/RAther drunk

(4–97) A: was he /DRUNK
B: well he was \/FAIRly drunk

Clearly, the abstract meaning of inconclusiveness and uncertainty of a rising contour matches the limiting and negotiating lexical feature of the moderators. It should be noted that (4–94)–(4–97) all set out with *well*, which is here a signal of indeterminacy and uncertainty. It is not possible for B to start the utterance with *yes* and then make use of the fall-rise. A *yes* would demand the falling tone, and the result would be a conclusive statement that shows certainty with respect to the degree indicated by the modifier, as in (4–98). In all the non-contradictory examples of reinforcing modifiers (4–78)–(4–80), and (4–84)–(4–87), the utterances set out with *yes*. It is not likely that *well* would introduce B's reply with a reinforcing modifier. In such a frame the use of *well* is as unlikely as the use of the fall-rise, as in (4–99):

(4–98) A: was he /DRUNK
B: \YES# he was \PRETty drunk

(4–99) A: was he /DRUNK
B: *well he was \/VEry drunk

The fall-rise is the preferred tone on diminishers and approximators too, as in (4–100)–(4–102), and (4–103), respectively.

(4–100) A: was he /DRUNK
B: well he was \/SOMEwhat drunk

(4–101) A: was he /DRUNK
B: well he was a \/BIT drunk

(4–102) A: was he /DRUNK
B: well he was \/SLIGHTly drunk

(4–103) A: were they i/DENtical
B: well they were \/ALmost identical

Again, it is apparent that limiting modifiers are comfortable with the meaning of reservation that comes with the fall-rise on degree modifiers in statements. The

inherent lexical feature of reservation in all the attenuating modifiers harmonizes with the same meaning of the fall-rise.[27] The fall-rise will of course be the natural tone in contradictory frames, too, as in (4–104) to (4–106):

(4–104) A: did you say he was ex\TREMEly drunk
B: \NO# but I did say he was \/PRETty drunk

(4–105) A: did you say he was ex\TREMEly drunk
B: \NO# but I did say he was \/SOMEwhat drunk

(4–106) A: did you say they were com\PLETEly identical
B: \NO# but I did say they were \/ALmost identical

In (4–104)–(4–106) speaker B makes a reservation against the strong reinforcement of *drunk* and *identical.* There is perfect harmony between the uncertainty and reservation conveyed by the fall-rise and the 'reservational' meaning of the limiting modifiers. However, with limiting modifiers it is also possible to create a straightforward contradiction which has no element of reservation. This can be done by replacing the fall-rise with a simple fall. The disharmony between the lexical meaning of the limiting modifiers and the abstract meaning of the fall creates a situation where the attitudinal meaning of the tone takes over. The tone is there to disambiguate the message, i.e. to make sure that the utterance is interpreted as a simple contradiction and not a contradiction with reservation. Consider examples (4–107) to (4–109).

(4–107) A: did you say he was ex\TREMEly drunk
B: \NO# I said he was \PRETty drunk

(4–108) A: did you say he was ex\TREMEly drunk
B: \NO# I said he was \SOMEwhat drunk

(4–109) A: did you say they were com\PLETEly identical
B: \NO# I said they were \ALmost identical

In order to show the certainty that is needed for the contradiction to be effective, the fall has to be used instead of the fall-rise. The attitudinal meaning of reservation which is an inherent component in the limiting modifiers disappears with the dis-

[27] A reply starting with *yes* is possible with the diminishers *somewhat* and *a bit,* not likely with *slightly,* and impossible with *almost* which goes with *no.* This state of affairs may indicate that with *somewhat* and *a bit* the level of drunkenness is high enough for *drunk* to be the adequate adjective, whereas *slightly drunk* may indicate that the level of drunkenness is so low that it is really questionable if *drunk* is the right word. *Almost* and *nearly* indicate a degree which in actual fact does not apply to *identical* at all.

appearance of the fall-rise, and the pure degree aspect becomes paramount. The choice of the falling tone on the modifiers marks speaker certainty with respect to degree.

To sum up, the general pattern is, as assumed, that the reinforcing degree modifiers, viz. the maximizers and the boosters, are more natural with the falling tone, because their inherent reinforcing nature reveals that the speaker is sure about what he or she is saying. Their lexical meanings combine in a natural way with the attitudinal meaning of certainty, finality, and conclusiveness that is expressed by the falling tone. The limiting degree modifiers, i.e. the moderators, the diminishers and the approximators, on the other hand, are all inherent markers of doubt as to the adequacy of the adjective used. This component of doubt combines in a natural way with the abstract meaning of uncertainty, non-finality, and inconclusiveness expressed by the rising contour. The division between reinforcing modifiers being more natural with the falling tone, and limiting modifiers with the fall-rise is shown in Table 4–1.

Table 4–1 Tone preference in declaratives

	Reinforcing modifiers		Attenuating modifiers		
Tone	Maximizers	Boosters	Moderators	Diminishers	Approximators
Fall	x	x			
Fall-rise			x	x	x

A more subtle difference among the modifiers was also discovered. This difference has to do with contextual amenability. First of all, it should be noted that it was possible for all the degree modifiers to take the falling tone in certain contexts. Thus, it could be argued that the fall is the unmarked tone on degree modifiers for a straightforward statement of the actual degree. This claim has then to be qualified by saying that there is a gradient of contextual amenability to tone among the degree modifiers, which runs from no amenability to a high degree of amenability. Maximizers obligatorily take the falling tone in declaratives. They represent the strongest form of reinforcement. They possess the absolute and uncompromising degree of completeness. This strong and precise form of reinforcement cannot combine with the meaning of reservation, which is associated with the fall-rise. Reinforcement is a lexical feature of boosters too, but it is less strong, less precise, and in highly restricted contexts it may be overruled by other considerations. This means that in contexts where a booster contradicts a maximizer, the contradiction can come with the attitude of reservation and hence with the fall-rise.

Attenuating modifiers, on the other hand, are actually more natural with the fall-rise, as has been pointed out before, but the fall is nevertheless natural in a

context where a simple contradiction and focus on pure degree is expressed. Attenuating modifiers can take both the fall and the fall-rise in both non-contradictory and contradictory settings. The difference is simply that their inherent trait of limitation and doubt favours the falling-rising tone, and that when it comes with this tone it is a statement with reservation. Attenuating modifiers are hence more amenable to contextual factors. This state of affairs is shown in Table (4–2).

Table 4–2 Tone possibilities in declaratives

	Reinforcing modifiers		Attenuating modifiers		
Tone	Maximizers	Boosters	Moderators	Diminishers	Approximators
Fall	x	x	(x)	(x)	(x)
Fall-rise		?	x	x	x

Key to Table 4–2:
x = preferred tone
(x) = possible tone
? = marginally possible tone

Thus the falling tone is always possible with all degree modifiers. But (as previously shown in Table 4–1), the fall is the preferred tone on reinforcing modifiers, and the fall-rise is the preferred tone on attenuating modifiers. As was assumed at the beginning of this section, the choice of tone is principally governed by lexical and attitudinal considerations. The lexical element of reinforcement and the attitude of certainty which comes with that trait govern the preference for the falling tone on maximizers and boosters, whereas the preference for the falling-rising tone is governed by the limitation and reservation that accompany moderators, diminishers, and approximators. Moreover, the modifiers show varying degrees of contextual amenability. Strength and precision are the factors that govern this phenomenon. The stronger and the more precise the modifier, the less its contextual amenability.

4.2.4 The case of quite

Quite is the only degree modifier in English which is a member of two different paradigms and hence capable of expressing two different degrees (for the etymology of *quite,* see Section 3.5.2). It gets its maximizer reading when it combines with non-scalar adjectives, as in (4–110)–(4–112), and its moderator reading when it combines with scalar adjectives, as in (4–113)–(4–115).

(4–110) The man was *quite* dead [MAXIMIZER]
(4–111) It is *quite* true [MAXIMIZER]
(4–112) It was *quite* impossible to understand [MAXIMIZER]
(4–113) The film was *quite* long [MODERATOR]
(4–114) It was *quite* good [MODERATOR]
(4–115) It's *quite* warm in here [MODERATOR]

Despite the restricted context and the absence of any indication of intonation, *quite* is not ambiguous between its two interpretations in any of these examples. However, when *quite* combines with adjectives which are potentially ambiguous between a scalar and a non-scalar reading, it becomes impossible to judge whether the one or the other of the two readings is intended, as in (4–116)–(4–118).

(4–116) It was *quite* clear
(4–117) He was *quite* drunk
(4–118) They were *quite* different

In a natural context, it would probably have been clear which of the two readings was the relevant one, whereas in decontexualized examples the interpretation is unclear. Apart from context, intonation is a factor that can shed light on this potential ambiguity. This section sets out to investigate the intonational effect on the lexical interpretation of *quite* as reinforcing rather than limiting, the main aim being to find out to what extent intonational clues are helpful in the interpretation of contexts where *quite* is ambiguous between the two readings.

The general hypotheses concerning the interaction between intonation and adjective phrases containing *quite* are based on the findings presented in Sections 4.2.2 and 4.2.3. Firstly, nucleus placement on either the adjective or *quite* will have mainly discoursal implications in that otherwise identical utterances will involve different presuppositions. More specifically, utterances with nucleus on the modifier represent the marked case which involves narrow and contrastive focus assignment, whereas nucleus on the adjective is neutral and unmarked, and *quite* may or may not be within the scope of focus. If it is within the scope, it is in the shade of the prosodically and lexically most prominent item, i.e. the adjective (cf. Ladd 1979). The aspect of degree comes across as less distinct and the interpretation of degree is of subordinate importance.

The first assumption, then, is that nucleus placement as such will have no discriminating effect on the interpretation of *quite* with regard to its different reinforcing and limiting readings in that nucleus placement will not rule out one of the readings in favour of the other. Nucleus placement will only have implications for the inducement of different contextual presuppositions and, in accordance with that, for the relative prominence of the degree aspect in the utterance.

The second assumption is that when the nucleus goes on *quite*, the maximizer

meaning will demand the falling tone, whereas the moderator meaning will take either the fall or the fall-rise. However, the fall-rise will be the more natural choice for the moderator for reasons of harmony between the meaning of reservation and limitation in the moderator *quite* and the meaning of reservation in the falling-rising tone. The shape of the tone will thus be a discriminating factor in the interpretation of *quite* in that it rules out the maximizer interpretation in combination with the fall-rise in potentially ambiguous contexts.

The third assumption is that the fall on the adjective will indicate a neutral statement, whereas the fall-rise on the adjective will imply some sort of reservation, borne out by the shape of the tone. It is a reservation as to the validity of the adjective itself, the adjective phrase or the whole utterance, depending on the scope of the focus as determined by the context. The reason for including utterances with the fall-rise on the adjective in the study of *quite* was to see whether the potential 'reservational' meaning of the fall-rise in utterances which are prosodically unmarked and neutral with respect to nucleus placement would in any way interact with the competing functions of reinforcement and limitation in *quite*. In other words, the assumption is that the fall-rise on the adjective will force the moderator reading of *quite* in the way that the fall-rise does when it goes on *quite* itself.

This study of *quite* was thus based on the same two variables as the rest of the study of the intonation of degree modifiers, i.e. nucleus placement and shape of tone. Either the tone went on the adjective or on *quite*, and the tone was either the fall or the fall-rise. Nucleus on the adjective was supposed to represent the unmarked case, and nucleus on *quite* was supposed to represent the marked case of nucleus placement. As has already been argued, the general rule for nucleus placement in neutral utterances is that the nucleus falls on the last lexical item of a tone unit. By this definition, nucleus placement on a non-final, semi-functional/semi-lexical item such as *quite* represents narrow and contrastive focus, which was discussed in Section 4.1.3.

We will start by discussing nucleus placement on the adjective, and the effects of the falling tone as compared to the falling-rising tone. Then we will go on to nucleus placement on *quite* in combination with the two different tones. We will start with non-ambiguous adjectives, i.e. adjectives which are clear cases of either the non-scalar or the scalar type. The section will end with an examination of *quite* in combination with adjectives which are ambiguous between a scalar and a non-scalar reading.

4.2.5 Nucleus on the adjective

As discussed in Section 4.2.2, the fall on the adjective normally represents the neutral and unmarked case of an utterance reflecting a non-specific contextual presupposition, as in (4–119) and (4–120).

(4–119) A: what did you \SAY
B: I said he was quite \DEAD

(4–120) A: what did you \SAY
B: I said it was quite \GOOD

When the fall in these utterances was replaced by the fall-rise, the scope of the focus was still the same, i.e. it could cover the adjective only, the whole adjective phrase, or the whole utterance, depending on the context. In these very short utterances, however, it does not make a great difference what is within the scope of focus, since the only really meaningful element is the adjective. It is the adjective that is most prominent both lexically and prosodically. However, the fall-rise has the effect of conveying some sort of contrast. Consider examples (4–121) and (4–122).

(4–121) A: what did you \SAY
B: ?I said he was quite \/DEAD (but...)

(4–122) A: what did you \SAY
B: I said it was quite \/GOOD (but...)

In both (4–121) and (4–122) the nucleus is in the unmarked position, but the falling-rising tone is marked, as opposed to the unmarked falling tone in declarative utterances. The use of the fall-rise creates some kind of contrast. This contrast can be of two kinds. Either it expresses a 'reservational' contrast as to the appropriateness or validity of the adjective chosen, or a metalinguistic contrast to something in the broad external-world context, i.e. in the context of situation.

In (4–121) the non-scalar adjective *dead* and the maximizer reading of *quite* do not harmonize with the meaning of the fall-rise. There is an inbuilt antagonism between the 'reservational' meaning and the negotiating function associated with the fall-rise and the absolute and uncompromising meaning of the non-scalar adjective *dead*. This incompatibility is even more emphasized when *quite* with the maximizer reading is brought into the scope of focus. It is not really possible to express reservation as to the validity of *dead*, and at the same time qualify *dead* with the maximizing *quite*. To assert that somebody is completely dead and to indicate an attitude of reservation at the same time creates a clash between meaning and tone. The only possible interpretation of (4–121) would be a metalinguistic contrast with narrow focus on the adjective, 'you might think I said he was quite red, but I said he was quite dead'. I refer to it as a metalinguistic phenomenon, since it is an overt comment on the linguistic medium. It is contrastive in that the utterance contrasts with what is assumed to be expected by the hearer.

In (4–122) on the other hand, the fall-rise on the scalar adjective *good* indicates either a metalinguistic contrast to something in the broad external-world context,

such as the selection of the right adjective seen in the context of the situation, or a reservation as to the validity of the adjective phrase. The meaning of reservation in the fall-rise, and its potential negotiating function in declaratives is natural and easily compatible with the scalar property of the adjective *good,* and with the limiting and negotiating character of the moderator reading of *quite.*

To sum up so far, the situation appeared to be a bit more complicated than was thought at the outset of the investigation in that also the shape of the tone is capable of expressing some sort of contrastive attitude despite the location of the nucleus in the unmarked position. The meaning of reservation, which is conveyed by the fall-rise in declaratives, harmonizes with the same meaning of *quite* as a moderator, modifying a scalar adjective such as *good,* but it clashes with the strongly reinforcing maximizer *quite* together with a non-scalar adjective such as *dead.* What is within the scope of focus must harmonize with the meaning of the tone, otherwise the relevance of the use of the tone has to be sought elsewhere than in the immediate lexical and propositional content. The fall-rise is easily matched with a scalar adjective but is strange with a non-scalar adjective. In a non-scalar context the only possible interpretation is the metalinguistic type.

4.2.6 Nucleus on quite

The next step in our investigation involves the placement of the nucleus on *quite.* When the nucleus goes on *quite,* the focus is always narrow. It is the location of the tone which makes the interpretation of the utterance contrastive in that *quite* becomes the preferred degree to other potential degrees. The meaning of the fall is that of certainty and conclusiveness, and its function is to confirm the actual degree indicated by *quite* in contrast to other potential degrees. Narrow focus on *quite* forces the moderator meaning. This means that when the nucleus goes on *quite,* combinations such as *quite dead* are out, whereas *quite good* is fine. Consider examples (4–123) and (4–124).

(4–123) A: Was it /GOOD
B: It was \QUITE good

(4–124) A: Was he /DEAD
B: ?He was \QUITEdead

There is thus a clear division of labour in narrow focus between what the placement of the nucleus does to the interpretation and what effect the shape of the tone has. The placement of the tone takes care of the aspect of contrastivity, whereas the tones become pure carriers of the different meanings they represent. Again, it is obvious that non-scalar phrases with *quite* such as *quite dead* are not natural in a contrastive perspective. This restriction does not hold good for maximizers in general. It is perfectly accepableto say for example 'It is com\PLETEly true'. There has to

be an explanation for the inability of *quite* to occur in contrastive focus. The explanation is probably that *quite* in this use is not a proper degree word in that there is no element in a set of opposites or in a scale that *quite* contrasts with. A potential opposite of *completely* is *almost* in the same way as *very* may be the opposite of *fairly*. The function of *quite* with the maximizer reading is, in this respect, more like the function of members of the category of emphasizers, such as *certainly, indeed, really, surely* (cf. *Collins Cobuild English usage* 1992:566). They have the function of emphasizing the truth value of the element they apply to and they do not occur in sets of opposites. Thus, a prerequisite for a lexical item to function properly in contrastive focus is that it has a potential opposite.

The fall has the function of showing speaker certainty with respect to the degree conveyed by *quite*. The meaning of the fall-rise in narrow focus is restricted to reservation, and the tone is only compatible with the moderator meaning of *quite*, as in (4–125). *Quite* with the maximizer meaning is out, as in (4–126).

(4–125) A: was it /GOOD
B: it was \/QUITE good

(4–126) A: was he /DEAD
B: ? he was \/QUITE dead

The fall-rise on *quite* in (4–126) is awkward, as would be the case for other maximizers here too. The reason is the disharmony between the meaning of uncertainty and reservation associated with the tone and the lexical meaning of certainty associated with members of the maximizer paradigm. The meaning of the fall-rise makes a perfect match with the limiting and negotiating properties of the moderator *quite* and indeed with all limiting degree modifiers (cf. Section 4.2.3). The effects of nucleus placement and type of tone in combination with the maximizer *quite* and the moderator *quite* in terms of contrastivity and reservation are shown in Table 4–3.

Table 4–3 Effects of nucleus placement and type of tone in utterances with *quite* +adjective in terms of contrastivity

Degree modifier	Nucleus on the adjective		Nucleus on the modifier	
	Fall	Fall-rise	Fall	Fall-rise
Maximizer *quite*	no contrast	[contrast (m)]	?	?
Moderator *quite*	no contrast	contrast	contrast	contrast

Key to Table 4–3:
Contrast = contrast
Contrast (m)= metalinguistic contrast
?= unlikely

It is clear from Table 4–3 that if the nucleus goes on the adjective and the tone is the fall, we are dealing with unmarked utterances which are not associated with a contrast. This is so both with maximizing *quite* and moderating *quite.* All other constellations involve a contrast, both when the nucleus goes on the adjective and when the nucleus goes on *quite.* When the nucleus goes on *quite,* the location of the tone is responsible for the contrast irrespective of the shape of the tone. When the nucleus is on the adjective and the tone is the fall-rise the tone creates the contrast.

With maximizer *quite* the fall-rise on the adjective can only be used to signal a metalinguistic contrast, and with the moderator *quite* it can either be a metalinguistic contrast or a contrast which applies to the validity of the adjective itself or to the whole adjective phrase. In other words, the type of tone is capable of expressing a contrast despite the location of the nucleus on the adjective.

In narrow focus, i.e. when the nucleus goes on *quite,* the maximizer interpretation is not possible, because nucleus placement on the modifier forces a degree contrast. There is no such element contrasting with maximizing *quite* and hence the moderator meaning is favoured in narrow focus. Nucleus placement on *quite* in *quite dead* is thus out because it forces an impossible contrast. Nucleus placement on *quite* with the moderator meaning, in *quite good,* is fine, because of the existence of other scalar modifiers that may operate as implicit contrasting lexical items. The function of the fall-rise is restricted to the attitudinal meaning of reservation. The inherent lexical meaning of the moderator *quite* and the meaning of the fall-rise make a perfect match.

4.2.7 Quite *with hybrid anto-complementary adjectives*

Two hybrid anto-complementary adjectives, *drunk* and *sober,* were examined. *Drunk* and *sober* can get both a scalar and a non-scalar reading. *Drunk* is more prone to a scalar interpretation than *sober* in that it is comfortable with a range of different scalar modifiers. It goes with members of the diminisher paradigm, e.g. *a bit drunk,* with members of the moderator paradigm, e.g. *fairly drunk,* and with members of the booster paradigm, e.g. *very drunk. Drunk* is also fine with non-scalar modifiers, such as members of the maximizer paradigm, e.g. *completely drunk. Sober,* on the other hand, is more restricted in its use. *Sober* is natural with modifiers from the maximizer paradigm, e.g. *completely sober,* and the approximator paradigm, e. g. *almost sober.* It is also fine with members of the moderator paradigm, e.g. *fairly sober,* but not with members of the diminisher paradigm, e.g. **a bit sober,* or the booster paradigm, e.g. **very sober.* We will start with the intonation of *quite drunk* and then compare that to the intonation of *quite sober.* Consider examples (4–127) and (4–128):

(4–127) A: What did you \SAY
B: I said he was quite \DRUNK

(4–128) A: What did you \SAY
B: I said he was quite \/DRUNK (but...)

In (4–127) the fall on the adjective triggers the maximizer reading of *quite*. The explanation for this is that in a case where *quite* is potentially ambiguous between the maximizer reading and the moderator reading, the meaning of the falling tone in terms of certainty and conclusiveness harmonizes best with the uncompromising, confident and conclusive meaning of reinforcement. In (4–128), however, where the tone is the fall-rise, reflecting uncertainty and reservation, we are left with ambiguity as to which of the two meanings is intended, and to be absolutely sure we need contextual clues. In a decontextualized setting like (4–128) the more likely interpretation is the moderator meaning. This means that in both cases the interaction between the two potential lexical meanings of *quite* and the meanings of the tones is likely to be one of harmony between the two. This seems to be the case, even though the main focus of attention is not on the modifier itself but on the adjective.

If we test *sober* in the same way, we will see that *drunk* and *sober* behave differently, as demonstrated in (4–129) and (4–130):

(4–129) A: what did you \SAY
B: I said he was quite \SOber

(4–130) A: what did you \SAY
B: I said he was quite \/SOber (but...)

In (4–129), where the tone is the fall, *quite* has the maximizer reading in the same way as in *quite drunk* with the fall on *drunk*. However, in contrast to *quite drunk* with the fall-rise on *drunk*, *quite* together with *sober* with the fall-rise on *sober* cannot be interpreted as a moderator. *Quite* in (4–129) is a maximizer. This is a reflection of the fact that the non-scalar feature is the dominant one in *sober*. *Sober* is a limit-biased word, which is associated with a zero-point, rather than being associated with a scale of sobriety. This state of affairs makes *quite sober* less apt to take on an attenuating scalar reading. Thus, even though it is perfectly possible to interpret *sober* scalarly, this suggests that its scalar potential is not as easily induced as the limit reading (see Section 3.3.5). Since the main focus is on the adjective in (4–127)–(4–130), it is the lexical properties of the adjective that govern the hearer's search for the most relevant interpretation. When the two adjectives have the falling tone, it is the harmony between the meaning of the fall and the non-scalar potential which is most naturally evoked. But, when the tone is the fall-rise, the potential scalar reading of perfectly scalar adjectives such as *drunk* becomes the natural one to harmonize with the tone. This leaves us with the more natural interpretation of *quite* as a moderator rather than a maximizer with the fall-rise on the adjective. In the case of the more clearly non-scalar adjective *sober*, the relative strength of this non-scalar property takes over, and the result is more likely a maximizer interpretation of *quite*.

Thus, examples (4–127)–(4–130) demonstrate that when the nucleus goes on the adjective in utterances with ambiguous lexical items such as *drunk* and *sober*, the relative strengths of the scalar and limit properties of the adjectives influence our interpretation of *quite* in combination with the fall and the fall-rise.

In narrow focus, as in (4–131) to (4–134), the placement of the tone highlights the degree aspect, ensuring that *quite* is interpreted a moderator. This is so with both *drunk* and *sober*, and it is so irrespective of whether the tone is the fall or the fall-rise.

(4–131) A: was he /DRUNK
B: he was \QUITE drunk

(4–132) A: was he /DRUNK
B: he was \/QUITE drunk

(4–133) A: was he /SOber
B: he was \QUITE sober

(4–134) A: was he /SOber
B: he was \/QUITE sober

In (4–131)–(4–134) the moderator reading is the one that comes to dominate over the maximizing reading. The emphasis on degree in narrow focus favours the moderator interpretation with ambiguous adjectives.[28] There are however exceptions to this too. *Quite* in combination with the adjective *different* is a maximizer when the nucleus falls on the adjective. *Quite* is also a maximizer with *different* in narrow focus, when the tone is the fall. But with the fall-rise on *quite* it is a moderator in the same way as *quite* is with the rest of the hybrid anto-complementaries.[29]

The pattern that has been revealed for the interpretation of *quite* in combination with hybrid anto-complementary adjectives is shown in Table 4–4.

Table 4–4 The interpretation of *quite* with adjectives which are ambiguous between a scalar and a limit reading

Degree modifier	Nucleus on the adjective		Nucleus on the modifier	
	Fall	Fall-rise	Fall	Fall-rise
Maximizer *quite*	x	(x)	(x)	*
Moderator *quite*	*	(x)	(x)	x

Key to Table 4–4:

x= applies generally

(x)= does not apply generally

*= unlikely combination

[28] *Dirty* : *clean* and *dangerous* : *safe* are other pairs of hybrid anto-complementaries that function in the same way as *drunk* : *sober*.

[29] Other hybrid anto-complementary adjectives which behave like *different* are, for example *certain, sure.*

Table 4–4 shows that when the nucleus is on the adjective and the tone is the fall, *quite* always has the maximizing reading with hybrid-complementary adjectives. When the nucleus is on *quite* and the tone is the fall-rise, it is always the moderator *quite*. The harmony between the type of tone and the reinforcing/attenuating function is at its strongest in those cases. In the other combinations it is also the moderator interpretation that is favoured, but this pattern is not consistent. The moderator interpretation applies nearly always in the case of narrow focus even with the fall on *quite*, but there are some exceptions such as *different, certain, sure*. The two readings are more evenly divided when the tone is the fall-rise.

4.2.8 Summarizing quite

When the adjective modified by *quite* was a clear-cut scalar adjective, such as *good*, *quite* always had the moderator reading. When the adjective modified by *quite* was a clear-cut limit word, such as *dead*, *quite* always had the maximizer reading. In these two cases the interpretation of *quite* was governed by collocational factors. Furthermore, *quite dead* was only natural with the fall on *dead*. Narrow contrastive focus created by nucleus placement on *quite* was not natural. The reason is that contrastive focus presupposes polarity. There is no element that is an opposite of *quite* in *quite dead*. This lack of polarity makes contrastive focus awkward. *Quite good* was natural both with the nucleus on *quite* and on *good*. When the nucleus went on *quite* the degree aspect was highlighted, and the fall-rise harmonized best with moderator *quite* because of the inherent meaning of reservation both in the tone itself and in moderator *quite*. When the nucleus went on the adjective, the fall was of course the more natural tone, since the fall represents the unmarked case in declaratives with neutral focus assignment (cf. Section 4.1.2). The fall-rise expresses some kind of reservation to the meaning conveyed by the adjective, the adjective phrase, or the whole utterance.

Finally, with hybrid anto-complementary adjectives, such as *drunk* and *sober*, there was uncertainty concerning the two interpretations of *quite*. Out of context, intonation proved to be the only guide to interpretation. The combination of nucleus placement and shape of tone were decisive for the interpretation of *quite* in two cases. On the one hand, *quite* was always interpreted as a maximizer when the nucleus went on the adjective and the tone was the fall. On the other hand, *quite* was always interpreted as a moderator when the nucleus went on *quite* and the tone was the fall-rise. However, the fall-rise on the adjective and the fall on *quite* did not consistently constrain the interpretation of *quite*.

4.2.9 Degree modifiers carrying nucleus in LLC

Having discussed the principles that govern the location and shape of the tone in the previous sections of this chapter, we will now take a look at the actual use of these tones in LLC. As described in Section 4.1.2, the location of the tone coincides with the communicatively most important part of the tone unit, and in the un-

marked case the nucleus goes on the last lexical item of the tone unit. The degree modifiers we are concerned with all have a syntactically subordinate role in that they are modifiers of adjectives which themselves may or may not be constituents at the clause level. Accordingly, the semantic role of degree is of subordinate character in relation to the adjective. It is therefore reasonable to assume that in the majority of cases the degree modifiers will not carry the nucleus.

Table 4–5 shows that the degree modifiers in LLC carry nucleus in only 14% of the cases. The figures for the individual modifiers are also shown in the table.[30] Two types of modifier are distinguished: reinforcers and attenuators.

Table 4–5 Degree modifiers carrying nucleus in LLC

Degree modifier	Total number of occurrences	Number carrying nucleus	%
Reinforcers	2192	392	18
awfully	25	13	52
terribly	89	45	51
totally	34	13	38
frightfully	11	4	36
extremely	59	18	31
completely	56	13	23
highly	15	3	20
jolly	25	4	16
very	1473	228	15
perfectly	43	6	14
entirely	23	3	13
quite	161	21	13
absolutely	121	15	12
most	47	5	11
utterly	10	1	10
Attenuators	964	63	7
almost	31	5	16
fairly	84	13	15
slightly	41	6	15
somewhat	13	1	8
quite	261	16	6
a (little)bit	143	7	5
rather	270	13	5
a little	35	1	3
pretty	86	1	1
Total	3156	455	14

[30] The totals for *very, almost, rather, a (little) bit, a little, somewhat* and *slightly* are not the same in Table 4-5 as in the tables in Chapter 2. The reason is that Table 4-5 also includes combinations with comparative and superlative forms of the adjectives.

The reinforcers carry nucleus more often than the attenuators: the reinforcers have the nucleus in 18% of the cases as compared to 7% for the attenuators. Reinforcers increase the force of the adjectives they apply to, whereas attenuators have the opposite function, i.e. they limit the force of the adjective. Not surprisingly, it is the reinforcers that most often have the nucleus, and among the reinforcers it is the stronger and more forceful elements which attract the nucleus most frequently. *Awfully* (52%) and *terribly* (51%) carry nucleus in around half the number of cases,[31] while, for example, *very* and *quite* (as a maximizer) only carry nucleus in 15% and 13% of the cases respectively. The degree modifiers that carry nucleus most rarely are the attenuators *somewhat* (8%), *quite* (7%), *a (little) bit* (5%), *rather* (5%), *a little* (3%) and *pretty* (1%).

In the majority of cases degree modifiers carry the nucleus for reasons of emphasis. The speakers want to show that they have strong feelings about what they are saying.[32] By the marked focus on degree modifiers speakers then add emotive emphasis to the utterance. Consider examples (4–135) and (4–136) in which the degree modifiers carrying the nuclear tone are given in italics.

(4–135) but I think that unl\ess you're a tw/in#
or know a lot ab\/out twins#
it's something that is *extr\emely* difficult#
to really get ins=ide# (6. 5. 713)

(4–136) A:my wife is a particularly good c\ook#
but G\od {kn\ows#} {what she'd g\ive me#}#
if I only gave her three pound ten a w\eek# for^g\ive me#
B:it would be *r\ather* interesting# to tr\y# w/ouldn't it# just to see what
h/appens# (5.4. 668)

The function of the degree modifiers themselves is not only to specify a certain degree, but to convey emotional overtones. They are highly subjective in nature. In

[31] It should be noted that the frequency of some of the degree modifiers is very low in this material. In such cases it is difficult to draw any far-reaching conclusions about the occurrence of tones on the degree modifiers and the distribution of the different tones.

[32] There is a long history of the study of nuclear tones or 'inflexions' in the literature of English phonetics. As far back as Walker (1781, 1787), who wrote one of the many manuals of elocution common at the time, use was made of the tone marks ` ´ ˜ ^ ¯ and the words carrying the tone marks were said to be emphasized. Walker distinguished two types of emphatic meaning: one of passion, where the emphasis applied to the whole sentence, and one of sense, where the emphasis applied to one word in opposition to another expressed or implied in the preceding context. Walker's division is similar to unmarked and marked focus discussed in Section 4.1.3 but, on the other hand, it also bears similarities to the different reasons for the marked focus on degree modifiers, in that one of them is passion, or emotive emphasis in my terminology (cf. Leech & Svartvik 1994:152ff), and the other is contrast.

accordance with earlier statements about harmony between intonational meaning and lexical meaning (cf. Sections 4.1.3, 4.2.3) it is only natural that the stronger and the more emotively forceful degree modifiers are more often made prosodically prominent than weaker and more bleached degree modifiers. For obvious reasons it is more natural to emphasize a reinforcer than an attenuator, and, moreover, it is more natural to emphasize a strong and emotionally forceful adverb than a lexically weak adverb.

Sometimes the purpose of marked focus on degree modifiers is more clearly one of highlighting a contrast than for pure emphasis. Marked focus on degree modifiers always involves an element of contrastivity, in that the degree modifier made prominent is chosen from a set of potential degrees. This aspect of contrast is clearest when there is an explicit contrasting element, as in examples (4–137) and (4–138):

(4–137) I think well I'm at the stage n\/ow# where I'm trying to ass\/ess#
what what are my capab\ilities# =and# I c\ould do s/urgery#
I would not be good at [?] I'm not ((3 to 4 sylls)) I may be being y\ou know#
\average# using g\/ood# to be a!b\ove average# well that's n\/ot quite true#
good is =average# \isn't it but# but I wouldn't be *v\/ery* good at it#
I kn\ow that# (2.9. 725)

(4–138) we run a y\ear's course h/ere#
a year's *pretty* concentrate *f\/airly* concentrated c\ourse# (3.6.899)

In example (4–137) there is an explicit contrasting element in the context: i.e. unmodified *good*. The aspect of contrast is clearly foregrounded. In example (4–138) the speaker corrects himself. In doing that he is creating a contrast between the degree of the non-nuclear *pretty* and *fairly* with the nucleus. (The difference of degree between *pretty* and *fairly* is discussed in Section 4.3.2)

Let us now also take a look at the different types of tone employed in the corpus. LLC distinguishes three different categories of tone: simple tones, complex tones and compound tones (Crystal 1969, Svartvik & Quirk 1980, Quirk et al 1985). Simple tones are falls, rises and level tones. Complex tones are fall-rises and rise-falls. Complex tones are realized on one and the same syllable. Compound tones are binuclear and extend over more than one word. Compound tones can be described as simple tones and complex tones in various combinations, e.g. fall + rise, fall + fall-rise, rise + fall.

For practical reasons, the system of tones used in LLC has been simplified in the present study. Five types of tone are distinguished: fall, fall-rise, rise, rise-fall and

level tone. This system conflates the compound tones and the simple tones in that only the nucleus on the degree modifier in the compound tones has been taken into account, and what in LLC is transcribed as, for example, a rise + fall is regarded as a fall (4-140), a fall+rise also as a fall (4–141). Generally, the compound tones start on the degree modifier and end on a following word in the same tone unit as in (4–141) and (4–142), but occasionally they end on the degree modifier itself, as in (4–140).[33] The reason for the conflation is that the impact of the tones on the degree modifier is the same in all these cases. Example (4–139) shows a simple tone, (4–140)–(4–142) compound tones; (4–140) a rise + fall[34], (4–141) and (4–142) a fall + rise and finally (4–143) and (4–144) complex tones, a rise-fall and a fall-rise.

(4–139) I [kwa:] I quite agr=ee with you#
this this was made *v\ery* clear# (1.2:1.444)

(4–140) oh g\osh# getting m/arried is an *\awfully* complicated business# (2.11:2.369)

(4–141) nothing had occ\urred to me by th/en# at /all#
I still wasn't even slightly susp\icious# being a *v\ery* s/illy
girl# s\o# (2.12.636)

(4–142) so so I so I knocked on the d\oor#
and an *\awfully* sweet lady c/ame# (11.3:6.931)

(4–143) oh it was *t/\erribly* crowded# (2.7.939)

(4–144) it's saying that it was making her feel *a b\/it* homesick#
because it was so \English# b\ut# . (4.4.39)

The falling tones on the modifiers in examples (4–139)–(4–142) all convey conclusiveness and finality with respect to the degree expressed. The falls in (4–140)–(4–142) have the same function as the fall in (4–139). There is no element of reservation associated with the fall + rises in (4–141) and (4–142). The tones are not associated with the typical 'buts' and 'ifs' of the fall-rise. The implication of the rise which follows the fall in (4–141) and (4–142) is to signal continuation. In (4–141) it also signals an attitude of openness which may be an appeal for sympathy or an invitation to the hearer to say something more about the subject (cf. O'Connor & Arnold 1973:82ff). Just like these, the rise-fall in (4–143) also involves a sense of

[33] In the whole material 66 of the 438 tones were one of the nuclei in a compound tone.
[34] I will not discuss the meanings of the rise and the level tone in this material since these tones are very few in the material.

definiteness and conclusiveness. In addition to this the rise-fall may convey an 'impressed', 'challenging', or 'censorious' attitude on the part of the speaker. The impact of the fall-rise in (4–144), however, reveals a non-dominant and tentative speaker attitude. The fall-rise conveys the speaker's reservation to what he is saying. The meaning conveyed by the tone is in perfect harmony with the 'reservational' function of *a bit*.

Table 4–6 shows which kinds of tones are used with the various degree modifiers in LLC.

Table 4–6 The distribution of the nuclear tones on the degree modifiers in LLC

Modifier	Fall	Rise-fall	Rise	Fall-rise	Level
Reinforcers	294 (75%)	25 (6%)	13 (3%)	57 (15%)	3 (1%)
awfully	13	0	0	0	0
terribly	29	1	0	15	0
totally	8	1	1	3	0
frightfully	2	1	0	1	0
extremely	14	0	1	3	0
completely	7	2	2	1	1
highly	2	0	0	1	0
jolly	3	0	1	0	0
very	174	19	7	27	1
perfectly	6	0	0	0	0
entirely	3	0	0	0	0
quite	16	0	1	4	0
absolutely	13	0	0	1	1
most	3	1	0	1	0
utterly	1	0	0	0	0
Attenuators	27 (42%)	0 (0%)	7 (11%)	29 (47%)	0 (0%)
almost	2	0	0	3	0
fairly	6	0	0	7	0
slightly	4	0	0	2	0
somewhat	1	0	0	0	0
quite	2	0	3	11	0
a (little) bit	3	0	1	3	0
rather	8	0	3	2	0
a little	1	0	0	0	0
pretty	0	0	0	1	0

Only the fall and the fall-rise are common with degree modifiers. What is even more striking is their different distribution among reinforcers and attenuators. The fall is by far the most common tone on reinforcers. It comes with reinforcers in 75% of the cases as compared to 15% for the fall-rise. If the rise-falls are added to the falls, the figure becomes even higher. The falling contour then amounts to

81%.[35] The occurrences of the two tones are more evenly distributed for the attenuators. Yet, there is a slight predominance for the fall-rise (47%) as compared to the fall (42%). The proportions for these two types of tone are thus almost reversed for reinforcers and attenuators.

It should also be noted that all the reinforcers favour the fall. The fall is the only type of tone that is used in LLC with *awfully, perfectly, entirely* and *utterly*. On the other hand, not all the attenuators favour the fall-rise. *Rather* favours the fall. *Quite* favours the fall-rise. The distribution between the two tones is even for *fairly* and *a bit*. However, some of the degree modifiers are rare with a nuclear tone, which means that it is difficult to draw conclusions about their tonal preferences. This is particularly the case with *somewhat, a little* and *pretty*.

The distribution of falls and fall-rises supports the statements in the previous sections of this chapter in that the preferred tone tends to be governed by a principle of harmony between the meaning of the tone and the lexical meaning of the degree modifier. The attitude of certainty associated with the fall is in perfect harmony with reinforcing adjectives where the speaker wants to show strong conviction.

(4–146) yes \I've been at conferences where#
ae? ae? \African chap would get up#
and be *r\otally* incomprehensible#
it was so emb\arrassing# (2.8:2. 682)

The fall-rise, on the other hand, comes more naturally with the attenuators to accompany the speaker's reservation or uncertainty about the appropriateness of the degree of the adjectives.

(4–147) I think they're they're pretty g\ood#
I think their st\andard's pretty h/igh# /.../ *qu\/ite* high# (6.2.827)

However, the fall-rise is used with maximizers and boosters too. Speakers may have

[35] It should also be noted that the majority of the rises are not only simple rises which indicate a question or continuation, but represent one of the nuclei in the rise+fall compound tone, where the rise comes on the degree modifier (4-145):

(4–145) ^well of course :Jack's *qu/ite* r\ight# (5.1.501)

Due to my conflation of the tones the rise+fall is represented as a rise in Table 4–6. This state of affairs is of course disputable for a rise+fall when the rise comes on the degree modifier and the fall comes on the next word, because the meaning of the contour is basically the same as for the simple fall, but for the sake of consistency I have chosen to adhere to my system of grouping the tones based on the shape of the tone on the degree modifier itself. My motivation is that there are so few occurrences that it does not affect the analysis of the use of tones. I am mainly interested in the difference between uses of the falling intonation and the meaning of reservation that comes with the fall-rise to harmonize with the various lexical meanings of degree modifiers.

contextual reasons for attenuating the force of the modifier even though they have chosen to reinforce the adjective lexically by means of a maximizer or a booster. Consider example (4–148).

(4–148) it's not that Mervyn's f\/*totally* unreliable#
he's just {g\enerous} to a f\ault if you know what I mean with p/eople# (2.6.1119)

In (4–148) the fall-rise conveys an implied reservation –'it is not the case that Mervyn is *totally* unreliable; in fact he is *a bit* unreliable because he is generous to a fault, which in itself is not really the same thing as being unreliable'.

In natural communication there are always contexts which call for 'less natural combinations' in order to get a marked interpretation of the utterance in a broader context. For instance, a speaker might want to use the fall-rise with a reinforcer to show a non-dominant attitude vis-à-vis what he/she is saying or vis-à-vis the hearer (Brazil 1994:65). Holmes (1984a) interprets the choice of tone in a discourse perspective as a means of striking the right balance between reinforcing/attenuating and politeness. Such an account takes into consideration the cost in relation to the benefit of the interlocutors and cannot be generalized over the board, but it could explain many 'less natural' uses of tones when they do not harmonize with the lexical meaning of the modifier. In particular, she points out that the fall-rise is used to attenuate the illocutionary force of a speech act.

It must be pointed out that the use of various tones on the degree modifier refers to the minority of cases where the modifier carries the nucleus; in the majority of cases the degree modifier is non-nuclear. This is natural, since degree modifiers normally play a subordinate role both semantically and syntactically. Nucleus placement on a degree modifier creates a marked focus assignment to the utterance. There are basically two reasons why speakers might want to highlight a degree modifier: emotive emphasis and contrast. Degree modifiers also have dual functions. On the one hand they have a semantic role of degree, and on the other hand they convey a subjective judgement. The location of the tone on a degree modifier has the effect of highlighting one or the other of these aspects.

In the majority of cases in LLC degree modifiers carry the nucleus for attitudinal reasons. Speakers want to show that they feel strongly about what they are saying. In accordance with this, the modifiers which are already strong and emotive are more often prosodically prominent than the weaker modifiers. Reinforcers which are inherently more forceful than attenuators carry the nucleus more often than attenuators. Sometimes the use of the tone is more discoursal in that the speakers want to highlight a contrast. In such cases the degree modifier is viewed in the light of another potential degree.

The two main tones that are employed with degree modifiers are the fall and the fall-rise. The fall is by far the most common tone with reinforcers. With attenuators

the distribution of falls and fall-rises is more even, but the fall-rise is slightly the more common of the two. This means that the proportion of falls and fall-rises tends to diverge in different directions for reinforcers and attenuators. The conclusive meaning of the fall is in harmony with the certainty of the reinforcers just as the meaning of reservation that comes with the fall-rise agrees very well with the uncertainty of the attenuators.

Thus, both the placement of the nucleus on degree modifiers and the divergent distribution of the different types of tone over the two categories of degree modifiers in LLC support the idea of harmony between intonational and lexical meaning put forward in the present chapter.

4.3 Scaling test

There is no clear picture of the scaling potential of *quite, rather, pretty,* and *fairly* in the handbooks. Leech & Svartvik (1994:113) say that *quite, rather, fairly,* and *pretty* all slightly intensify the meaning of a scalar adjective. *Collins* (1990:94) claim that they all reduce the strength of a qualitative adjective. Quirk et al (1985:446) say that *quite, rather, pretty,* and *fairly* are all attenuators in combination with scalar adjectives, except in American English where *quite* can be a reinforcer.[36] They also say that among *pretty, rather,* and *fairly, pretty* is the strongest. These rather vague and seemingly conflicting descriptions call for an investigation into the scaling force of *quite, rather, pretty,* and *fairly.*

It was stated in Section 3.5.1 that *quite, rather, pretty* and *fairly* are broadly synonymous in that they all have the semantic role of approximating a mean degree of the adjective they apply to. However, there are also differences between them. One aspect in which they may differ is the grading force they have on the adjective involved. In comparing the relative strength of, for example, *extremely* and *very,* it is always the case that *extremely* has a stronger scaling force than *very.* The situation is a bit more complicated with *quite, rather, pretty* and *fairly,* since they are all lexically bleached and conceptually vague. It is not altogether clear whether there is a stable scale of grading force among them. It is to this matter that the present section is devoted. More precisely, the questions that will be investigated are:

1 Do *quite, rather, pretty* and *fairly* form a scale, where their relative positions are more or less stable?
2 Does intonation affect the scaling force of the modifiers?
3 Do the properties of the collocating adjective affect the scaling force of the modifiers?

[36] In a footnote (Quirk et al 1985:599) say that when *quite* is non-nuclear it is either a moderator or an upgrader without reference to either American of British English.

4.3.1 Procedure and method

A scaling test was designed to investigate the grading force of *quite, rather, pretty* and *fairly.* Ten adjectives were chosen, which can be divided into two main groups: (i) scalar adjectives and (ii) hybrid anto-complementary adjectives. The scalar adjectives are *long, hot, good, happy, beautiful, bad* and *disgusting. Long* and *hot* represent neutral adjectives, *good, happy,* and *beautiful* positive adjectives, *bad* and *disgusting* negative adjectives. Moreover, *beautiful* and *disgusting* were chosen to represent extreme adjectives. They can be regarded as a subgroup within the group of scalar adjectives. The hybrid anto-complementaries were *drunk, sober,* and *different.*

The test contained 40 sentences. Each of the four moderators occurred with all the ten adjectives (4 x 10= 40). The instructions and the test sentences were taped and played to the informants, who were also provided with handouts with the sentences in written form (see Appendix 3). The informants were asked to give judgements of naturalness on a nine-point scale on the degree expressed in each of the sentences. The nine-point scale extended from the lowest imaginary degree of a given adjective to the highest imaginary degree, for example from 'least good' to 'most good'. 'Least good' was then understood to be 1 on the nine-point scale and 'most good' 9, with 5 as the mean degree of 'good'. The informants were asked to put a tick in the appropriate box on the scale. Each sentence was repeated once and a short interval of time was allowed for the informants to put the tick. If a sentence was considered totally unacceptable this could be indicated by a question mark in the margin.

It should be noted that there is no guarantee that the steps on the nine-point scale were always interpreted as having the same power. In that respect there is no precision built into the test. What is important is rather the relative positions of the modifiers. Also, it should be kept in mind that contextual aspects are likely to play a role in the interpretation. Since the test sentences were given without context, the informants had to imagine a context themselves and this state of affairs means that the imagined context will differ among the informants. No attempt was made to control such individual interpretations.

The scaling tests were given in two different versions. In Scaling Test 1, henceforth S1, the nucleus went on the adjective and in Scaling Test 2, henceforth S2, the nucleus went on the modifier. The sentences in S1 represent unmarked utterances as compared to the sentences in S2, which are marked in terms of contrastivity. In both tests the most natural shape of tone was chosen for the sentences. When the nucleus was on the adjective the tone was a fall, and when the nucleus was on the modifier the tone was a fall-rise (cf. Section 4.2.3)

Both tests were given to 25 informants. The informants were students and staff at the Universities of Manchester and Nottingham in England, and the University of Lund in Sweden. They were all mother-tongue speakers of British English. The majority of the informants were in their twenties (70%) and the rest were between 30 and 50.

4.3.2 Results of the Scaling tests

Table 4–7 shows the results of S1 and Table 4–8 the results of S2. The two tables are organized in the same way. The first column lists the four modifiers ordered from the strongest to the weakest in terms of the scaling force they have on the adjectives according to the nine-point scale. The second column gives the number of responses given by the informants for each of the four modifiers. If none of the utterances had been judged as unacceptable by the informants, the number of responses would have been 250 for each of the modifiers in both S1 and S2. Non-responses included those marked '?' in the margin and those with no mark at all. The third column shows the mean score of each modifier in combination with all the adjectives tested. Finally, the fourth column shows the standard deviation of the scores. All the mean scores and standard deviations for the modifiers in combination with each of the adjectives are given in Appendix 4.

Let us first take a look at the results of S1, shown in Table 4–7. The number of responses given in S1 totals 995, which means that only five sentences out of 1,000 were considered unacceptable.

Table 4–7 S1: Scaling force of *rather, pretty, quite* and *fairly* with the nucleus on the adjective

Modifier	Number of responses	Mean score	s.d.
rather	250	6.51	1.22
pretty	248	6.30	1.33
quite	250	6.05	1.60
fairly	247	5.40	1.49
Total	995	6.07	

All the utterances with *rather* and *quite* were found fully acceptable by all the informants, while for *pretty* and *fairly* two and three utterances respectively were considered totally unacceptable. In other words, the acceptability of the test examples can be regarded as high.

The total mean scaling force of the four modifiers is 6.07 in S1. Each of the four modifiers have a higher score than 5, which means that they all reinforce the adjectives they apply to. The figures also show that they differ with respect to their grading strength. *Rather* at the top has a mean of 6.51, followed by *pretty* with a mean of 6.30. *Quite* has a mean score of 6.05, and at the bottom is *fairly* with the lowest mean score of 5.40. The dispersion of the mean scores is 1.11, which means that the difference between the strongest item (*rather*), and the weakest (*fairly*) is roughly one step on the nine-point scale.

The variability of the responses measured in terms of standard deviation shows that the scaling force of *rather* was judged to be the least variable and *quite* the most variable item. There was thus a lower degree of consensus among the informants regarding the interpretation of *quite* than of the others and in particular in com-

parison with *rather*. *Rather* proved to be the most stable modifier with regard to the informants' judgements. The agreement among the informants concerning the interpretation of *rather* was especially strong together with *good*, *long* and *disgusting*. It should be noted that the mean scores may conceal considerable variations in the interpretation of different adjective combinations (cf. Appendix 4). The results of S1 show that the moderators all have a reinforcing effect on the adjectives in the unmarked sentences in S1. *Rather* is the strongest of the four, and *fairly* the weakest.

The same calculations were made for S2, and the results are shown in Table 4–8.

Table 4–8 S2: Scaling force of *rather*, *pretty*, *fairly* and *quite* when they carry nucleus

Modifier	Number of responses	Mean score	s.d.
rather	232	5.59	1.60
pretty	244	4.88	1.49
fairly	247	4.19	1.34
quite	248	4.18	1.60
Total	971	4.71	

In S2 more informants regarded certain utterances as unacceptable than they did in S1. The total number of responses in S2 was 971 out of 1,000. For *rather* 18 utterances were considered unacceptable, for *pretty* 6, and for *quite* 2, while *fairly* stayed the same with 3 utterances considered unacceptable. The marked focus on the modifier obviously made some examples less acceptable to some of the informants, but the overall acceptability (97%) must still be regarded as high.[37]

If we take a look at the mean scores of the four modifiers, it is clear that they all have a considerably lower grading force on the adjectives than in S1. The total

[37] On the whole the number of unacceptable sentences is very low. Only 34 examples out of 2,000 were marked with question-marks, 5 in S1 and 29 in S2. The general pattern is that more informants regarded sentences as unacceptable when the modifier carried the nucleus. It should be noted that none of the informants made use of the question-mark more than twice, except for one person, who marked 9 utterances in S2 as unacceptable. The informant found 8 combinations with *rather* unacceptable. This means that one and the same informant was responsible for nearly half of the question-marks for *rather*. In S1, all the sentences with *rather* were acceptable, whereas in S2 as many as 18 sentences were considered unacceptable. *Rather* was considered awkward with the scalar adjectives *long*, *good*, *happy*, *hot*, and *bad*, and with the hybrid-complementary adjectives *different* and *sober*, as well as with the extreme adjective *beautiful*. The reason for this must be due to the marked intonation, since *rather* seems to collocate with all these adjectives in a natural way in the unmarked sentences. *Quite*, too, only got question-marks in S2. Two sentences with hybrid-complementary adjectives got a question-mark each, *quite different* and *quite sober*. This may be due to uncertainty as to whether to interpret *quite* as a maximizer or a moderator with these adjectives. *Pretty* received question-marks both in S1 (2) and in S2 (6) for *pretty beautiful*. This combination was probably judged as unacceptable for the simple reason that *pretty* and *beautiful* make a stylistically inappropriate combination, and this becomes even more conspicuous when the nucleus goes on *pretty*. Finally, *fairly* was disliked by three of the informants both in S1 and S2 in combination with *beautiful*. The reason why these informants disliked *fairly beautiful* is most likely that *beautiful* is too strongly positive to collocate perfectly with *fairly*. The combination of *fair* and *beautiful* may also have been stylistically objectionable for the same reason as *pretty* and *beautiful*.

mean score in S2 is 4.71 as compared with 6.07 in S1. This means that the effect of the modifiers is now on the attenuating side. The lowering applies to all of the four modifiers. It should be noted, however, that *rather,* which again is at the top of the list, still scores a little bit above 5, viz. 5.59. The others are all below 5. *Pretty* occupies a middle position, only slightly attenuating the adjectives, while *fairly* and *quite* cluster at the bottom. The order is changed in that *quite* has moved downwards and now keeps company with *fairly.* Another thing that has happened is that the range has increased somewhat from 1.11 in S1 to 1.41 in S2.

The standard deviation has gone up for *rather* and *pretty,* but has dropped for *fairly.* On the whole, there is less agreement among the informants concerning the scaling force of the modifiers in S2 than in S1. The reason is most likely that the sentences in S2 represent a marked situation and that it is more difficult to imagine a context in S2 than in S1. This is also supported by the greater number of 'unacceptable' responses in S2.

We can conclude, then, that *rather, pretty, quite,* and *fairly* all had a considerably higher scaling force when the nucleus went on the adjective than when it went on the modifier. *Rather, pretty,* and *fairly* are in the same order in both S1 and S2. *Quite,* on the other hand, has a rather high mean score in S1, but appears at the bottom together with *fairly* in S2. In comparison with S1 the grading force of *rather* has gone down by 0.92 units on the nine-point scale, *fairly* by 1.21, *pretty* by 1.42, and *quite* by as much as 1.87. Also, the dispersion of the mean scores is greater in S2, which is largely due to the low figure for *quite.* In other words, the contrastive focus highlights the limiting force of *rather, pretty, quite,* and *fairly.*[38] even though not all of them drop below 5. This is demonstrated in Figure 4–3.

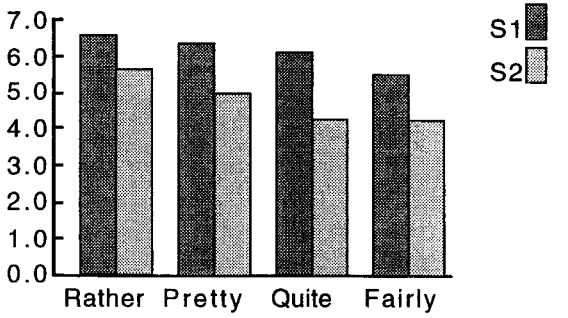

Figure 4–3 The mean scores of *rather, pretty, quite,* and *fairly* in S1 and S2

[38] The same is true of other attenuating modifiers, such as *slightly, a bit.* As we have seen in Section 4.2.2, the pattern is reversed for boosters, e.g. *very, terribly.* When the nucleus goes on a booster, the scaling force is increased.

Quite has the highest figures for standard deviation in both S1 and S2. The reason must be that the informants are uncertain about the interpretation of *quite* in certain combinations (this is discussed in more detail below). *Rather* shows the highest level of agreement among the informants in S1 and the lowest in S2. Some informants regarded *rather* as strongly reinforcing in certain combinations when the nucleus went on *rather,* whereas others interpreted *rather* as having a lower scaling force, consistent with the general pattern for limiting modifiers carrying the nucleus.

4.3.3 The effect of the adjectives

Having looked at the mean scaling force of each of the four modifiers in combination with the ten adjectives, we will now look at the scaling force from the point of view of the collocating adjectives. Table 4–9 shows the mean scaling force that all the four modifiers taken together exerted on each individual adjective tested in S1 and S2 respectively.

Table 4–9 The mean scaling force on the adjectives in S1 and S2

Adjectives in S1	Mean scores	Adjectives in S2
disgusting	6.84	
different	6.47	
beautiful	6.19	
sober	6.19	
bad	5.94	
drunk	5.93	
long	5.89	
good	5.78	
happy	5.71	
hot	5.71	
	5.19	*disgusting*
	4.99	*different*
	4.90	*drunk*
	4.82	*hot*
	4.77	*long*
	4.74	*bad*
	4.65	*sober*
	4.51	*happy*
	4.25	*good*
	4.21	*beautiful*

The force of the adjectives in S1 ranges from 6.84 to 5.71, and in S2 from 5.19 to 4.21. There is thus no overlap between the ranges of the scaling in the two tests.

There is a gap of half a unit on the nine-point scale. The averages of the adjectives in S1 are all above 5, which means that they are reinforced by the moderators. In S2, on the other hand, they are all attenuated by the four moderators, except for *disgusting* which has a mean score just above 5. Moreover, the mean scores deviate more from 5 in S1 than they do in S2, i.e. the adjectives are more clearly reinforced by the modifiers in S1 than they are attenuated in S2. A more adequate description of the scaling force of the four moderators than has been given in handbooks such as Quirk et al (1985:446), *Collins* (1990:94) and Leech & Svartvik (1994:113) would be to say that *quite, rather, pretty* and *fairly* serve to reinforce the value of adjectives in the unmarked case, but that they have an approximating and/or attenuating effect when they are prosodically emphasized.

In S1 *disgusting, different, beautiful* and *sober* score highest, which is due to the way these adjectives are conceptualized. *Disgusting* and *beautiful* are extreme adjectives, and *different* and *sober* are basically limit adjectives. The reinforcing effect of the moderators is interpreted as extra strong, since the adjectives themselves are already felt to have a strong force.

In S2, *disgusting* and *different* are found at the top of the list again, while *sober* and *beautiful* now appear further down. *Beautiful* is actually at the very bottom of the list. The function of the moderators in S2 is to limit the force of the adjective. This attenuating function does not seem to be affected by the actual strength of the adjectives in the same way as in S1. Rather, there seems to be a division into negative and neutral adjectives at the top and positive adjectives at the bottom. The moderators represent the lowest degree of attenuating that can apply to these adjectives, which may explain why the moderators have a lowering effect on *beautiful* and *sober* in S2. Positive adjectives and zero-oriented adjectives are strange with diminishers, e.g. *?a bit beautiful, ?a bit sober.*

The combinations of modifier and adjective that get the highest mean scores all appear in S1. The eight highest are *rather disGUSTing, pretty disGUSTng, rather DIFFerent, quite DIFFerent, quite disGUSTng, rather GOOD, rather HAPpy* and *rather LONG. Rather* occurs in five out of eight of the combinations at the top of the list. It has a comparatively strong scaling force on adjectives irrespective of whether the adjective itself is strong (*disgusting*) or less strong (*good*) and irrespective of whether the adjective is positive (*good, happy*), negative (*disgusting*) or neutral (*different, long*). Moreover, some informants also gave *quite* strong scaling force, interpreting it as a maximizer in combination with *different, sober,* and *disgusting.*

The combinations that rank lowest all appear in S2. They are, in descending order: *QUITE happy, QUITE hot, QUITE beautiful, QUITE long, FAIRly good, QUITE good, FAIRly happy, PRETty beautiful* and *FAIRly beautiful.* There are five combinations with *quite,* three with *fairly* and one with *pretty. Fairly* and *quite* both occur with all the three positive adjectives, *quite* also combines with two neutral adjectives, and *pretty* combines with a positive adjective. Thus, the attenuating moderators *pretty, quite* and *fairly* have their strongest limiting effect on positive adjectives. Moreover, *quite*

and *fairly* dominate from the point of view of frequency at the very bottom of the list.[39] *Quite* is definitely an attenuator when it carries the nucleus and it is most strongly attenuating with positive adjectives. On the other hand, *quite* is clearly a reinforcer when the adjective carries the nucleus, and it is particularly strong with inherently strong adjectives that are near an extreme point or represent a high degree of the adjectival property. The same pattern applies to *pretty*, but with the difference that *pretty* is a reinforcer with half of the number of the adjectives also in S2.

Finally, as regards the standard deviations, *rather* and *quite* are the two modifiers about whose interpretation the informants disagree most. This is particularly clear in combinations with the implicit superlatives *disgusting* and *beautiful*, and with the hybrid-complementary adjectives *sober* and *drunk*. The explanation is that some informants regarded *quite* as a maximizer when it co-occurs with an adjective that is associated with a limit of some kind, while others gave it a less strong interpretation. Also, there was a lot of disagreement regarding the interpretation of *rather* in S2. This is due to some informants interpreting *rather* as strongly reinforcing especially with strong adjectives, e.g. *RAther sober*, *RAther disgusting*, while others did not. By contrast, in S1 *rather* is at the top of the list of combinations with the highest level of agreement among the informants.

4.3.4 Summary

At the beginning of this section we set out to answer three questions. They will be repeated here for convenience:

1 Do *quite*, *rather*, *pretty* and *fairly* form a scale, where their relative positions are more or less stable?
2 Does intonation affect the scaling force of the modifiers?
3 Do the properties of the collocating adjective affect the scaling force of the modifiers?

The answer to the first question is that the moderators did form a relatively stable scale. *Rather* proved to be the strongest of the four. In fact, judging from the mean scores of the investigation, its scaling force was always on the reinforcing side. *Rather* was followed by *pretty*, while *fairly* had the lowest scaling force. The only 'unstable' moderator turned out to be *quite*, which did not have a fixed position in relation to the others. It was suggested that the mobility of *quite* is probably due to its two competing readings, viz. that of maximization and that of moderation (cf. Section 4.2.8).

[39] If we look at the figures for *pretty* separately, we can see that *pretty*, too, scores its lowest figures with *beautiful*, *good* and *happy*. This does not apply to *rather*. The combinations that score the lowest figures are *RAther disgusting* (5.36), *RAther good* (5.30), *RAther drunk* (5.20) and *RAther sober* (5.18). This is thus still another feature that makes *rather* different from the other three moderators.

Intonation played an important role in the interpretation of the four moderators in that they all had a stronger scaling force on the adjectives when the nucleus went on the adjective than when the nucleus went on the modifier. More precisely, all the modifiers had a reinforcing effect on the adjectives they applied to in S1. The picture was less clear in S2, where *rather* still reinforced the adjectives, *pretty* reinforced certain adjectives but had an attenuating effect on others, and *quite* and *fairly* had an attenuating effect on all the adjectives.

Inherent properties of the collocating adjectives also affected the scaling force of the modifiers. In the scaling tests *disgusting, different, beautiful* and *sober* were the adjectives that were most strongly reinforced by *rather, pretty* and *quite.* These adjectives are inherently strong. They are already close to or at an extreme point. The reinforcing effect of the moderators is consequently interpreted as extra strong, since the adjectives themselves are already felt to express strong features. At the other end, *quite, pretty* and *fairly* had the strongest limiting effect on the positive adjectives *happy, good* and *beautiful* in the test. The explanation may be that *quite, pretty* and *fairly* constitute the lowest degree of grading force that these adjectives can take.

Finally, intonation in combination with certain types of adjectives played a crucial role in the interpretation of the four moderators. This was particularly clear in the case of *quite,* which was strongly reinforcing with adjectives associated with a limit (such as *different*) or with negative extreme adjectives (*disgusting*), when the adjectives carried nucleus. On the other hand, *quite* with contrastive focus had its strongest attenuating effect in combination with positive scalar adjectives (such as *beautiful*) and with neutral scalar adjectives (*long*).

4.4 Conclusion

The overall purpose of this chapter has been to explore the general principles which influence the intonation of degree modifiers as modifiers of adjectives. The interplay between intonation on the one hand, and discoursal, attitudinal, and lexical meaning on the other, has been explored, and it has been argued that there has to be a harmonius relationship between these aspects for optimal effect.

It has been shown that when the degree modifier carries nucleus, the choice of tone is governed by a principle of harmony between the tone and the lexical meaning of the modifier. More exactly, the meaning of the intonational contour should agree with the meaning of the modifier in terms of reinforcement and attenuation. The reinforcing modifiers, i.e. the maximizers and the boosters, are more natural with a falling tone, since both the fall and the lexical meaning of these items reflect speaker-assertiveness, certainty and conclusiveness. On the other hand, the attenuating modifiers, i.e. moderators, diminishers and approximators, are normally less speaker-assertive and also more hearer-oriented. They are markers of doubt and uncertainty as to the appropriateness of the adjective they modify. These attitudinal meanings are also reflected in the choice of a rising contour in statements.

Moreover, a more subtle difference between the various degree modifiers was discovered. There is a gradient of contextual amenability to tone that has to do with the inherent strength of the modifier in question. Maximizers more or less obligatorily take a fall in declaratives. They represent the uncompromising degree of totality, i.e. the strongest form of reinforcement, and this feature does not match the meaning of reservation associated with the fall-rise. Boosters are less strongly reinforcing and hence more amenable to context. They are possible with the fall-rise in, for example, a contradictory context. Limiting modifiers are more natural with the fall-rise. The fall is nonetheless natural in a context, either contradictory or non-contradictory, where pure degree without mitigation is expressed. The attenuating modifiers are thus the most contextually amenable of the modifiers. This state of affairs is also in accordance with the principle of harmony, since the complexity of the limiting modifiers is mainly due to the fact that they are more context-sensitive.

Thus, the lexical features of reinforcement and attenuation and the concomitant attitudes of certainty and speaker-assertiveness, and uncertainty and hearer orientation, respectively, govern the preferences for the fall and the fall-rise. The choice of tone is thus constrained by a principle of harmony between lexis and intonational meaning.

The location of the nucleus has effects primarily on discoursal meaning. A change of nucleus placement means a change in the presupposition to which the utterance relates. When the nucleus is on the adjective, the adjective is conceptualized in the light of its opposite. The degree indicated by the modifier emerges as additional information about the force of the adjective. When the nucleus is on the modifier, on the other hand, the modifier receives the focus of attention and the adjective is regarded as shared knowledge. The adjective is no longer conceptualized in relation to its opposite. The modifier is instead contrasted to other potential specifications of degree which are possible with the adjective in question.

However, there are also certain lexical and attitudinal effects of nucleus placement. In a contrastive context, nucleus placement on the modifier has the effect of clearly bringing out the aspect of degree. Also, the contrast has the effect of putting emphasis on the modifier. It was discovered in the corpus that strong modifiers, such as *awfully, totally, terribly, extremely,* more readily attract the nucleus than weaker modifiers. These items are in themselves powerful and they convey strong emotion and emphasize the expression. The more emotive and emphatic the modifiers are, the more readily they attract the nucleus. The contrastive focus marking, which is in itself emphatic, highlights the powerful features already present in these items. This interplay is thus also governed by the principle of harmony between lexis and intonation.

Furthermore, nucleus placement has a strengthening effect, in opposite directions, on the reinforcing and attenuating potential of the various modifiers. Reinforcing modifiers had a more intensifying effect on the adjective when they carried the nucleus, whereas attenuating modifiers became weaker and had a more limiting

effect on the adjective. This is most clearly revealed in the case of *quite* in combination with adjectives which are potentially ambiguous between a scalar and a non-scalar reading, such as *drunk*. When the adjective carries nucleus, *quite* will be interpreted as a maximizer by many people, whereas with the nucleus on *quite,* it will be interpreted as a moderator. Still another effect of nuclear placement that was revealed was that when the nucleus goes on the adjective, some of the modifiers developed overlaid meanings. For example *rather* LONG comes with an overlaid meaning of 'too long'.

Finally, the scaling potential of the four moderators was investigated. It was shown that they formed a relatively stable scale. *Rather* was the strongest of the four, followed by *pretty,* while *fairly* had the lowest scaling force. *Quite* proved to be the only 'unstable' modifier of the four. It did not have a fixed relation to the others, probably due to its two competing readings. Intonation was important in that they all had a stronger scaling force when the adjective carried the nucleus than when the moderator carried the nucleus. All four had a reinforcing effect in the unmarked test sentences. In the marked test sentences, *rather* was a reinforcer, *pretty* reinforced certain adjectives, while *quite* and *fairly* had an attenuating effect on the adjectives they modified. Also, certain types of adjectives turned out to be crucial for the interpretation of the four moderators. The moderators had their strongest effect on adjectives which themselves are inherently strong, and the moderators had their most limiting effect on positive adjectives.

5 Conclusion

This study has explored a set of degree modifiers of adjectives common in spoken British English. Firstly, the semantics of combinations of degree modifiers and adjectives was analyzed. This analysis revealed that the gradable feature in the adjective must harmonize with the grading function of the degree modifier in terms of totality and scalarity to make a successful match. Based on this observation a bidirectional semantic model of the relationship between degree modifiers and adjectives was presented in order to account for constraints on their combinatorial potential. Secondly, the intonation of degree modifiers and adjectives was examined and analyzed. Again it was clear that there was a relationship of harmony between intonational meaning on the one hand and discoursal, attitudinal and lexical meaning on the other hand.

Three observational methods were employed in the study: introspection, corpus-based observations and informant testing. These three methods differ along two dimensions. They differ along the private/public and the constructed/non-constructed dimension. Introspection is carried out in private, while corpus-based material and experiments are accessible and public. Further, introspection and informant testing involve manipulated data, while corpus-derived material represents authentic language.

The main focus of the study was on generalizable semantic and intonational features, but a fair amount of attention was also given to the use of the various modifiers in LLC in terms of frequency, collocability and attitudinal aspects.

In this final chapter we return to the aims set up for the study in order to see if they have been fulfilled. The main results of the investigation will be summarized in two separate sections. Section 5.1 presents the findings concerning the semantics of degree modifiers and adjectives with respect to gradability, and Section 5.2 the intonation of combinations of degree modifiers and adjectives. The aims are repeated here for convenience:

1 To describe the use of degree modifiers of adjectives in spoken English on the basis of the London-Lund Corpus in terms of frequency, collocability, and intonation (Chapters 2–4).

2 To provide a semantic analysis of these degree modifiers and the various types of adjectives they combine with and, in doing so, to account for the influence that the semantic features of the degree modifiers and the adjectives have on one another (Chapter 3).

3 To describe the interplay between intonational meaning, discoursal meaning, attitudinal meaning, and the lexical meanings of the degree modifiers (Chapter 4).

5.1 Semantic harmony

The function of degree modifiers is to reinforce or attenuate a gradable feature in the adjectives they combine with. This means that there is an intimate relationship between the two elements. In accordance with earlier works in the field, it was noted that there are restrictions on their combinatorial potential. For instance, combinations such as *very nice* and *absolutely impossible* are natural, whereas **very impossible* and **absolutely nice* are awkward. The purpose was to analyze the nature of the constraints and whether or not they are predictable.

Following Allerton (1987), three basic types of gradable adjectives were distinguished. Allerton's division of gradable adjectives into three groups hinges on the types of degree modifiers they combine with. My contribution to this categorization has been to shed light on the underlying semantic features of gradability that account for the types of adjectives and that also account for their selection of degree modifier. The hypothesis was that the conceptualization of the adjective must harmonize with that of the degree modifier for optimal efficiency. The investigation yielded the following results.

The three types of adjective are scalar, extreme and limit adjectives:

SCALAR ADJECTIVES:	e.g. *good, fast, long, difficult, nasty, interesting*
EXTREME ADJECTIVES:	e.g. *excellent, huge, minute, terrific, disastrous, brilliant*
LIMIT ADJECTIVES:	e.g. *true, sober, sufficient, dead, identical, possible*

Scalar adjectives are conceptualized in terms of a range on a scale, i.e. in terms of 'more-or-less'. These adjectives are typically unbounded in that they denote a property which has no definite limit. Extreme adjectives represent an extreme point on a scale. They denote a superlative property. Finally, limit adjectives are conceptualized in terms of a definite limit, i.e. in terms of 'either-or'. The mode of construal of the adjective is in turn constrained by their content proper.

In the case of the degree modifiers, two main types were distinguished, viz. totality modifiers and scalar modifiers. This dichotomy of totality and scalarity reflects their modes of construal. Within these two groups there are both reinforcers and attenuators. In fact, the modifiers fall into five different paradigms of cognitive synonyms, i.e. maximizers, approximators, boosters, moderators and diminishers, as in illustrated Table 5–1 (Table 1–4, repeated).

It was shown that the various conceptualizations of the adjectives and the degree modifiers must harmonize in order to make a perfect match. Scalar adjectives denote a property, the variability of which is conceived of in terms of a range on a scale. Therefore it is natural for scalar adjectives to combine with degree modifiers which are capable of indicating a subrange on a scale, e.g. *very good, fairly long.* Totality modifiers, however, are incompatible with these typically unbounded scalar adjectives, e.g. *?absolutely good, ?almost long.* Conversely, it is natural for adjectives which are conceptualized in terms of a limit to combine with totality modifiers, e.g. *quite*

Table 5–1 The different members of the five paradigms of degree modifiers divided into totality modifiers and scalar modifiers, reinforcers and attenuators

TOTALITY MODIFIERS		
Reinforcers	maximizers	*quite, absolutely, completely, perfectly, totally, entirely, utterly*
Attenuators	approximators	*almost*

SCALAR MODIFIERS		
Reinforcers	boosters	*very, terribly, extremely, most, awfully, jolly, highly, frightfully*
Attenuators	moderators	*quite, rather, pretty, fairly*
	diminishers	*a (little) bit, slightly, a little, somewhat*

sufficient, perfectly true, completely wrong, almost identical, whereas scalar modifiers are incompatible with adjectives which denote a property related to a limit, e.g. ?*very sufficient* and ?*fairly identical*.

Extreme adjectives are intermediate between the gradability typical of scalar adjectives and of limit adjectives in that they are marginally comparable, perfect in exclamatory expressions and above all in denoting a property occupying not a range on a scale but an ultimate point. Moreover, extreme adjectives are typically highly evaluative. They differ from both scalar adjectives and limit adjectives in that they take reinforcers only. This mixture of gradability features typical of both scalar and limit adjectives in extreme adjectives is also revealed in their selection of degree modifiers. They select maximizers and the superlative booster *most*. The superlativity of these modifiers matches that of the adjectives themselves. This means that maximizers are both capable of indicating the complete transgression of a criterial limit with limit adjectives and indicating the absolute ultimate point on a scale with extreme adjectives. *Most* is indeterminate between maximization and boosting in that it reinforces the superlativity of extreme adjectives and indicates the highest degree on a scale of a scalar adjective, which can then be perceived as bounded, e.g. *most intelligent*, but not **most long*. The criteria for the division of adjectives into three basic groups and the types of degree modifiers they combine with are summarized in Table 5–2 (Table 3–2, repeated).

It has often been pointed out in recent semantic literature that the interpretation of lexical items in general is context-dependent rather than constant and absolute. This study has shown that there are adjectives which are relatively stable with respect to their gradability feature and have an inherently strong bias towards a scalar (*nice, long*), an extreme (*excellent, huge*) or a limit (*sufficient, identical*) reading, while others are more open to different potential readings and do not have a

Table 5–2 Criteria for the division of adjectives into scalar adjectives, extreme adjectives and limit adjectives and the types of degree modifiers they combine with

Defining features	Scalar adjectives	Extreme adjectives	Limit adjectives
Comparison	yes	yes/no	no
'How x is it?'	yes	no	no
'How x!'	yes	yes	no
Oppositeness	antonymy	antonymy	complementarity
Degree modifiers	scalar modifiers	totality modifiers	totality modifiers
	boosters	maximizers	maximizers
	moderators	+ *most*	approximators
	diminishers		

strong bias towards just one of the three types of gradability, e.g. *clear, sure, certain, different, lovely, beautiful.* Such adjectives can combine with degree modifiers of both the totality and the scalar type, e.g. *very clear, completely clear, very certain, absolutely certain, very beautiful, absolutely beautiful.*

Context is important for both the strongly biased adjectives and for the more indeterminate adjectives. Out of context, or with very little context, the adjective will automatically get its biased reading. In the case of other potential interpretations the existence of contextual clues are of crucial importance. This is true of both strongly biased and less strongly biased adjectives. For instance, *old* is an adjective with a scalar bias and is thus natural with scalar modifiers, e.g. *very old.* However, it can be coerced into a limit reading, as in 'the man she is going out with is *almost old*'. This is a possible match, but only in a restricted context with jocular overtones.

Adjectives with a more indeterminate bias on the other hand are in general more context-dependent, but they do not have to be coerced into a particular reading. On the contrary, such adjectives are felt to be natural with more than one type of gradability. For instance, both the limit and the scalar readings of *absolutely/very clear,* and the extreme and the scalar readings of *absolutely/very beautiful* come easily to speakers and hearers.

It is probably always possible for adjectives to map onto different modes of construal with respect to gradability, but there is a difference as to the naturalness of the different uses, and there is a cline between strongly biased adjectives typical of one type of gradability and adjectives which are indeterminate or have a weak bias. This cline includes all adjectives, not only various gradable adjectives, but also typical nongradable adjectives which can be turned into gradables, e.g. *very Swedish, very married.* These adjectives have a strong bias towards nongradability, and they require clear contextual clues to get a different interpretation.

Based on these observations regarding the conceptualization and combinatory

possibilities of adjectives and degree modifiers, a model was proposed which takes into account the semantic features of both degree modifiers and adjectives and the interplay between the two elements. This model accounts for the constraints degree modifiers and adjectives exert on one another. It is a model of semantic bidirectionality which reveals that both the adjective and the degree modifier exert semantic pressure on one another. It argues that once a speaker has chosen to use a certain adjective, the interpretation of the adjective is settled in the mind of the speaker.

Where there is ambiguity as to the intended interpretation of the adjective, the receiver may be helped by contextual clues of various kinds. One such clue as to the type of gradability involved is the choice of degree modifier. Once the speaker has opted for a particular degree modifier, the interpretation is made explicit to the receiver. In other words, the actual use of a particular degree modifier constrains the interpretation of the adjective and thereby disambiguates the interpretation of the adjective.

Thus, the bidirectionality lies in the fact that the adjective selects its degree modifier on the basis of its own conceptualization in terms of type of gradability, and the degree modifier confirms this interpretation. In cases where contextual modulation into another mode of gradability is possible the selection of a degree modifier from the totality or the scalar type restricts the interpretation.

In order to test the validity of the model, combinations of degree modifiers and adjectives were investigated in LLC. This investigation took the degree modifier as the starting-point in order to see if a random collection of combinations of degree modifiers and adjectives complied with what has been argued. First of all, the argument that limit adjectives combine with totality modifiers, scalar modifiers with scalar adjectives, and extreme adjectives with maximizers and *most* was investigated. In the case of different potential interpretations the restrictive force of the degree modifiers was discussed in each individual case. Secondly, collocational patterns of individual degree modifiers or paradigms of degree modifiers and their adjectives were discussed.

The line of argument pursued in the present study concerning combinatory restrictions and preferences of adjectives and degree modifiers was confirmed by the material in LLC. It was clear that in the case of different potential interpretations the degree modifier put restrictions on the conceptualization of the adjective to fit the conceptualization of the modifier. For instance, *different* in combination with *completely* indicates that there is a limit associated with the interpretation of *different*, whereas in combination with *very* or *slightly*, *different* is conceptualized in terms of a range on a scale.

The results of the investigation of LLC concerning the combinations of degree modifiers with adjectives on the level of paradigms and on the level of individual items can be summarized as follows. Among the maximizers, *quite, completely, perfectly, entirely* and *totally* were favoured by limit adjectives, whereas *absolutely* was

favoured by extreme adjectives. There were too few instances of *utterly* to say anything interesting about it. The approximator *almost* was favoured by limit adjectives.

The boosters in LLC preferably combined with typical scalar adjectives. *Most* differed from the others in that it combined with both scalar and extreme adjectives. This difference may indicate that *most* is indeterminate between maximization and boosting. At any rate, *most* seems to be preferred by adjectives with strong evaluative features.

Generally speaking, the attenuators are more complex in nature than the reinforcers. On the one hand, they have the function of attenuating a property denoted by the adjective, but they also readily lend themselves to understatements, i.e. 'I'm *a bit* tired' may very well be used as a mitigator for 'I'm *very* tired' and 'It's *rather* long' may indicate that the speaker thinks that something is '*too* long'.

The members of the paradigm of moderators, *quite, rather, pretty, fairly*, are similar to each other in that they mostly combine with typical scalar adjectives. They are, however, flexible as to what degree on the scale they are capable of indicating. They are all indeterminate between attenuation and reinforcement. It was shown that when they carry the nucleus the attenuating function and the aspect of degree predominates, whereas when the nucleus is on the adjective they become more indeterminate as to their degree function in that they may either have an attenuating or a reinforcing function. Also, the location of the nucleus on the adjective promotes overlaid meanings of an attitudinal type, such as mitigation and uncertainty.

The scaling force of the four moderators with a selection of different adjectives was judged by informants. It was shown that on the whole *rather* is the more reinforcing of the moderators, followed by *pretty*. *Fairly* is more clearly an attenuator. *Quite* proved to be 'unstable' in its scaling force in comparison to the other moderators, which is probably due to *quite* having both a maximizing and a moderating reading as well as being capable of use in understatements for scalar reinforcement.

Finally, the diminishers preferably combined with typically scalar adjectives. They were restricted to neutral and negative adjectives, the meaning of which can be conceived of in terms of non-desired excess, e.g. *a bit long* and *a bit stupid*, but not **a bit good*.

5.2 Lexico-intonational harmony

Both in the study of the semantics of degree modifiers and adjectives and in the study of the intonation of degree modifiers of adjectives, it was shown that all combinations of elements on these dimensions are naturally governed by a principle of harmony. In the case of intonation, there has to be a harmonious relationship in the interplay between intonational meaning on the one hand, and discoursal, attitudinal and lexical meaning on the other.

Normally, degree modifiers do not carry a nuclear tone. The placement of the tone has repercussions primarily at the discoursal level in that a change of the location of tone changes the presupposition to which the utterance is related. When the tone goes on the adjective, the degree indicated by the modifier is interpreted as additional information about the force of the adjective, whereas with the tone on the modifier, a contrast to other possible degrees is created.

There are also certain lexical and attitudinal effects of the placement of the tone. It was discovered that when the tone goes on the degree modifier, the aspect of degree became paramount, whereas when the tone goes on the adjective a breeding-ground for various overlaid meanings is created. The location of the tone on the modifier also has the effect of strengthening the force of reinforcers and attenuators in opposite directions. When the tone goes on a reinforcer it becomes more intensifying, and when the tone goes on an attenuator it becomes more limiting in its force.

If the nucleus is on a degree modifier, the meaning of the tone must harmonize with the meaning of the modifier in terms of reinforcement and attenuation. Maximizers and boosters are natural with the falling tone, since both the tone and the lexical meaning of these items reflect speaker-assertiveness, certainty and conclusiveness. Approximators, moderators and diminishers, on the other hand, normally express uncertainty and inconclusiveness. These attitudinal meanings are in harmony with the meaning of the rising contour in statements. It should be noted that while the matching of semantic features mainly functions in terms of totality and scalarity, the harmony between lexis and intonation is based on the force of the degree involved, i.e. in terms of reinforcement and attenuation.

As has already been pointed out repeatedly, adjectives differ with respect to the semantic stability of their gradable feature in that some adjectives have a clear bias towards one or the other type of gradability and are resistant to contextual modulation, while others have a weaker bias and can more readily undergo modulation. Similarly, some degree modifiers are flexible, while others are relatively stable. This state of affairs was shown to have a counterpart in the relation between degree modifiers and intonation.

It was discovered that there is a gradient of contextual amenability of degree modifiers to tone, which is related to the inherent strength of the modifier in terms of the certainty expressed. Maximizers more or less obligatorily take the fall. The uncompromising meaning of maximizers does not match the uncertainty expressed by the fall-rise. Boosters are less strongly reinforcing, more amenable to context, and they are possible with the fall-rise in straightforward contradictions. The uncertainty and the attitude of reservation of attenuators are more natural with the fall-rise. Nevertheless, the fall is natural when there is an emphasis on pure degree without attitudinal overtones of mitigation. The attenuators are thus the most contextually amenable of the modifiers. This is in agreement with the principle of harmony in that the complexity of the interpretational potential of attenuators is

mainly due to the fact that they are more sensitive to the context they occur in. Thus, the semantic features of reinforcement and attenuation in the modifiers govern the choice of tone.

This study contributes to our understanding of degree modifiers of adjectives in several ways. The main contribution is that it offers an explanation for the constraints that govern the intonation of degree modifiers in terms of harmony between the meaning of intonation and the meaning of the modifiers, and the semantic relationship between degree modifiers and adjectives in terms of their conceptualization. The selection of degree modifiers by adjectives is predictable at the level of the type of gradability that the adjective represents.

Also, the study provides an explanation for the intonation of degree modifiers in terms of harmony of meanings. The placement of the tone and the choice of tone are two variables which are constrained by the presupposition that an utterance relies on, the harmony between intonational meaning, speaker attitudes and the function of the degree modifier. Against this background the choice of tone is predictable, based on generalizable features at semantic, pragmatic and intonational levels.

Appendix 1

Prosodic notation

The transcription of LLC, which is very detailed, is comparable to the system in Crystal (1969). The present work employs a reduced transcription. The prosodic transcription of the examples is in each case adapted according to which features are considered useful for the specific purpose. A guiding principle has been to keep at least the nuclear tones to make it possible for the reader to understand the example in the best way possible. The following prosodic features have been marked although not invariably: location of the nuclear tone, pitch direction (falls, rises, fall-rises etc.), two types of stress, three types of booster (step-up in pitch). Moreover, in most cases tone unit boundaries are marked. For each example the location in the corpus is indicated thus: 1.3.214, where 1.3 refers to the text and 214 to the tone-unit.

Key to prosodic symbols in the examples (adapted from Aijmer 1996)

Type	**Explanation**
#	tone-unit boundary
{ }	subordinate tone unit
\	fall
/	rise
\/	fall-rise
/\	rise-fall
=	level
\ /	fall + rise
/ \	rise + fall
' "	degree of stress
: ! !!	degree of booster
· –	brief pause and unit pause
^	onset (first prominent syllable)

Appendix 2

Degree modifier collocations

The tables below show the 23 degree modifiers, grouped into maximizers, boosters, approximators, moderators and diminishers and their collocating adjectives. In the first column all the degree modifiers and their total number of occurrences are given. The second column gives examples of adjectives which collocate five times or more with the degree modifier in question. The figure after each adjective in this column specifies the number of times it occurs with that particular modifier. The second column specifies adjectives which collocate four times, the third column specifies adjectives which collocate three times and so on down to one occurrence. It should be noted that sometimes the list is exhaustive. This is so when there are no more than six different types of collocating adjectives. If there are more the examples are randomly chosen, except in the interval ≥5, where the most frequent ones are given.

MAXIMIZER	≥ 5	4	3	2	1
quite	sure 27 clear 18 different 15 right 14 certain 11 true 8	honest impossible	obvious satisfied	sufficient all right wrong normal possible correct	relaxed astounding useless OK irrelevant exceptional
161	93 (58%)	8 (5%)	6 (4%)	12 (7%)	42 (26%)
absolutely		certain super	splendid terrifying barmy wonderful marvellous sure	normal right clear true horrible lovely	magnificent awful dreadful excellent clear-cut illogical
121	0 (0%)	8 (7%)	18 (15%)	30 (25%)	65 (54%)
completely	different 10 wrong 6	free		mad new	indifferent formless lost overwhelmed unknown empty
56	12 (21%)	8 (14%)	0 (0%)	4 (7%)	32 (57%)

MAXIMIZER	≥ 5	4	3	2	1
perfectly	true 8	all right	normal clear willing	frank mortgageable capable	reasonable horrible obvious logical happy decent justified
43	8 (19%)	4 (9%)	9 (21%)	8 (19%)	14 (33%)
totally	different 7		wrong		impossible buggered unreliable bewildered cut off inadequate
34	7 (21%)	0 (0%)	3 (9%)	0 (0%)	24 (71%)
entirely	new 8		different	happy true	separate unjustified quiet incompatible automatic unacceptable
23	8 (35%)	0 (0%)	3 (13%)	4 (17%)	8 (35%)
utterly				powerless	trivial vigilant bewildered pointless condemning filthy
10	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	2 (20%)	8 (80%)

APPROX.	≥ 5	4	3	2	1
almost		impossible		complete sure	negligible identical ready central definite automatic
29	0 (0%)	4 (14%)	0 (0%)	4 (14%)	21 (72%)

BOOSTER	≥ 5	4	3	2	1
very	good 128 nice 87 difficult 53 interesting 47 important 33 long 24	unhappy similar serious satisfactory rare old	awkward disappointed impressive lucky proud surprised	bright confusing boring dark dull hot	unjust wet tiny swift sunny distressed
1 464	817 (55%)	52 (4%)	93 (6%)	176 (12%)	326 (22%)
terribly	sorry 6 difficult 5		helpful worried bad important good	cheap expensive funny nice happy	serious intriguing crowded witty clever depressing
89	11 (12%)	0 (0%)	15 (17%)	10 (11%)	53 (60%)
extremely	difficult 9	good		nice useful rare happy grateful	fond of interesting bad polite flexible long
59	9 (15%)	4 (7%)	0 (0%)	10 (17%)	36 (61%)
most	grateful 6 extraordinary 5			beautiful important interesting unfortunate peculiar	unfair unusual off-putting touching annoying welcome
47	11 (23%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	10 (21%)	26 (55%)
awfully			good nice	silly sweet	kind drunk grateful complicated easy sad
25	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	6 (24%)	4 (16%)	15 (60%)
jolly	good 12			nice lucky glad	handy useful brave enterprising funny decent
25	12 (48%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	6 (24%)	7 (28%)

BOOSTER	≥ 5	4	3	2	1
highly				intelligent athletic	unreliable embarrassing respectable mottled general desirable
15	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	4 (27%)	11 (73%)
frightfully				funny expensive	neat interesting good posh dull convenient
11	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	4 (36%)	7 (64%)

MODERATOR	≥ 5	4	3	2	1
quite	good 38 nice 14 interesting 11 big 8 important 6 long 6	difficult easy pleasant happy small interested	large simple surprised	pretty handy sorry rich clever strong	boring comfortable revealing keen posh warm
261	104 (40%)	24 (9%)	9 (3%)	42 (16%)	82 (31%)
rather	nice 11 good 8 difficult 6 different 5 long 5 strange 5	large	peculiar expensive young busy	hopeless new vague ridiculous annoyed sophisticated	subtle impressive peculiar pathetic lovely unpleasant
260	40 (15%)	4 (2%)	12 (5%)	36 (14%)	168 (65%)
pretty	good 10	bad sure	expensive strong	hard tough small clear certain useful	impressed interesting depressing tedious awful fast
86	10 (12%)	8 (9%)	6 (7%)	12 (14%)	50 (58%)

MODERATOR ≥ 5	4	3	2	1
fairly		clear wet long	simple sound important stern strong	promising unpleasant thin young cold recent
84	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	9 (11%)	10 (12%)	65 (77%)

DIMINISHER ≥ 5	4	3	2	1
a (little) bit	difficult 7 worried 6	odd silly off	different big early funny tired	weird priggish stupid unsightly pissed off exhausting
122	13 (11%)	0 (0%)	9 (7%)	10 (8%)	90 (74%)
slightly	different 7		odd	misplaced crazy nervous foggy damaged unusual
33	7 (21%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	2 (6%)	24 (73%)
a little			tired	different daring worried slow reluctant impatient
26	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	2 (8%)	24 (92%)
somewhat			different	nasty dirty bleak inflationary extravagant lengthy
11	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	2 (18%)	9 (82%)

Appendix 3

Scaling test

Here are the instructions for the scaling test. In front of you you have a scaling test containing 2 example sentences and 40 test sentences. Firstly, you will hear the instructions you need to complete the test. Then the 40 test sentences will be read to you, each sentence being repeated once. There will be a short interval for you to write your answer after each sentence. Please listen carefully and do as instructed.

In this scaling test you are asked to give your judgements on the degree expressed in each of the 40 sentences. Degree of a quality can be expressed by different words and by different strengths. For example, ***somewhat*** dull, ***rather*** dull, ***very*** dull, ***terribly*** dull.

Now listen to example number one on page one. The sentence runs as follows:

The book was ***very*** dull.

Now, look at the scale below the sentence. It is a nine-point scale, which extends from an imaginary point of **least dull** to another imaginary point, **most dull**. **Least dull** is the left-most box, and **most dull** is the right-most box. The point in the middle, where it says just **dull**, represents an imaginary point of average dullness.

If you feel that ***very*** indicates a degree somewhere between just **dull** and **most dull**, put a tick in what you think is the adequate box. I have already done this for ***very*** **dull** in example number one.

Now, let us try example number two. Listen to the sentence:

The book was ***somewhat*** dull.

If you feel that ***somewhat*** indicates a degree somewhere between **least dull** and **dull**, you should put a tick in the appropriate box on the scale in the same fashion as I've already done in this example.

Now turn to page 2 and proceed to the scaling test itself. There are 40 test sentences, each with an accompanying scale on which you are requested to put your tick. Please don't write anything on your sheet until you have heard the sentence read to you on the tape. There will be approximately 10 seconds for you to answer between each sentence. Answer as spontaneously as possible, and please do not change an answer once given. If you find a sentence totally unacceptable, put a question mark on the line to the right. Please rate all the sentences and put one tick only on each scale.

The sentences for you to judge begin in 20 seconds.

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Scaling Test

Please tick in the appropriate boxes below for sex and age:

SEX: [ ] female [ ] male

AGE: [ ] - 20 [ ] 21-30 [ ] 31-40 [ ] 41-50 [ ] 51-60 [ ] 61-

Example sentences

I The book was ***very dull.***

[ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] —

least dull dull most dull

II The book was ***somewhat dull.***

[ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] —

least dull dull most dull

Scaling test

1. The essay was ***quite long.***

[] [] [] [] [] [] [] [] [] —
least long most
long long

2. The weather was ***fairly good.***

[] [] [] [] [] [] [] [] [] —
least good most
good good

3. The dress she brought was ***pretty beautiful.***

[] [] [] [] [] [] [] [] [] —
least beautiful most
beautiful beautiful

4. Mr Smith was ***rather drunk.***

[] [] [] [] [] [] [] [] [] —
least drunk most
drunk drunk

5. We were all ***pretty happy.***

[] [] [] [] [] [] [] [] [] —
least happy most
happy happy

6. In the morning the guests were ***rather sober.***

[] [] [] [] [] [] [] [] [] —
least sober most
sober sober

7. John's opinion was ***fairly different.***

[] [] [] [] [] [] [] [] [] —
least different most
different different

8. The whole story was ***rather disgusting.***

[] [] [] [] [] [] [] [] [] —
least disgusting most
disgusting disgusting

9. The oven was ***quite hot.***

[] [] [] [] [] [] [] [] [] —
least hot most
hot hot

10. The film was ***pretty bad.***

[] [] [] [] [] [] [] [] [] —
least bad most
bad bad

11. The weather was ***quite good.***

[] [] [] [] [] [] [] [] [] —
least good most
good good

12. Mr Smith was ***pretty drunk.***

[] [] [] [] [] [] [] [] [] —
least drunk most
drunk drunk

13. In the morning the guests were ***quite sober.***

[] [] [] [] [] [] [] [] [] —
least sober most
sober sober

14. The whole story was ***fairly disgusting.***

[] [] [] [] [] [] [] [] []
least disgusting most
disgusting disgusting

15. The film was ***quite bad.***

[] [] [] [] [] [] [] [] [] —
least bad most
bad bad

16. The essay was ***fairly long.***

[] [] [] [] [] [] [] [] [] —
least long most
long long

17. The dress she brought was ***rather beautiful.***

[] [] [] [] [] [] [] [] [] —
least beautiful most
beautiful beautiful

18. We were all ***quite happy.***

[] [] [] [] [] [] [] [] [] —
least happy most
happy happy

19. John's opinion was ***rather different.***

[] [] [] [] [] [] [] [] [] —
least different most
different different

20. The oven was ***pretty hot.***

[] [] [] [] [] [] [] [] [] —
least hot most
hot hot

21. The film was ***fairly bad.***

[] [] [] [] [] [] [] [] [] —
least bad most
bad bad

22. The whole story was ***pretty disgusting.***

[] [] [] [] [] [] [] [] [] —
least disgusting most
disgusting disgusting

23. The oven was ***rather hot.***

[] [] [] [] [] [] [] [] [] —
least hot most
hot hot

24. John's opinion was ***quite different.***

[] [] [] [] [] [] [] [] [] —
least different most
different different

25. In the morning the guests were ***pretty sober.***

[] [] [] [] [] [] [] [] [] —
least sober most
sober sober

26. We were all ***rather happy.***

[] [] [] [] [] [] [] [] [] —
least happy most
happy happy

27. Mr Smith was ***fairly drunk.***

[] [] [] [] [] [] [] [] [] —
least drunk most
drunk drunk

28. The weather was ***pretty good.***

[] [] [] [] [] [] [] [] [] —
least good most
good good

29. The dress she brought was ***fairly beautiful.***

[] [] [] [] [] [] [] [] [] _____
least beautiful most
beautiful beautiful

30. The essay was ***rather long.***

[] [] [] [] [] [] [] [] [] _____
least long most
long long

31. The weather was ***rather good.***

[] [] [] [] [] [] [] [] [] _____
least good most
good good

32. Mr Smith was ***quite drunk.***

[] [] [] [] [] [] [] [] [] _____
least drunk most
drunk drunk

33. In the morning the guests were ***fairly sober.***

[] [] [] [] [] [] [] [] [] _____
least sober most
sober sober

34. The whole story was ***quite disgusting.***

[] [] [] [] [] [] [] [] [] _____
least disgusting most
disgusting disgusting

35. The film was ***rather bad.***

[] [] [] [] [] [] [] [] [] _____
least bad most
bad bad

36. The essay was ***pretty long.***

[] [] [] [] [] [] [] [] [] _____
least long most
long long

37. The dress she brought was ***quite beautiful.***

[] [] [] [] [] [] [] [] [] _____
least beautiful most
beautiful beautiful

38. We were all ***fairly happy.***

[] [] [] [] [] [] [] [] [] _____
least happy most
happy happy

39. John's opinion was ***pretty different.***

[] [] [] [] [] [] [] [] [] _____
least different most
different different

40. The oven was ***fairly hot.***

[] [] [] [] [] [] [] [] [] _____
least hot most
hot hot

Appendix 4

Testing the scaling force of *rather, pretty, quite,* and *fairly.*

Mean scores and standard deviations in S1 and S2.

LONG	Mean score(S1)	s.d.(S1)	Mean score(S2)	s.d.(S2)
rather	6.68	0.90	5.87	1.22
pretty	6.04	1.06	5.08	1.38
fairly	5.84	1.21	4.28	1.24
quite	5.00	1.38	3.84	1.21
GOOD				
rather	6.76	0.88	5.30	1.46
pretty	5.72	1.37	4.24	1.33
quite	5.44	1.04	3.68	1.18
fairly	5.20	1.63	3.76	1.33
BEAUTIFUL				
rather	6.64	1.25	5.71	1.74
quite	6.48	2.00	3.96	1.59
pretty	6.48	1.16	3.63	1.01
fairly	5.14	1.36	3.55	0.86
DRUNK				
quite	6.20	1.87	4.20	1.73
pretty	6.16	1.14	5.44	1.39
rather	5.80	1.58	5.20	1.80
fairly	5.56	1.45	4.76	1.23
HAPPY				
rather	6.72	0.98	6.30	1.49
pretty	5.80	1.29	4.08	1.38
quite	5.68	1.14	4.00	1.44
fairly	4.64	1.29	3.64	1.11
SOBER				
pretty	6.48	1.64	5.00	1.15
quite	6.48	1.50	4.29	1.76
rather	6.36	1.47	5.18	2.02
fairly	5.44	1.66	4.12	1.33
DIFFERENT				
rather	6.96	1.02	5.92	1.25
quite	6.88	1.27	4.46	1.69
pretty	6.48	1.36	5.20	1.32
fairly	5.56	1.42	4.36	1.68

DISGUSTING	Mean score(S1)	s.d.(S1)	Mean score(S2)	s.d.(S2)
rather	7.16	0.90	5.36	1.87
pretty	7.12	1.24	5.68	1.57
quite	6.88	1.74	5.16	1.99
fairly	6.20	1.58	4.56	1.56
HOT				
pretty	6.40	0.96	5.40	1.47
rather	6.16	1.18	5.52	1.41
quite	5.52	1.56	3.96	1.54
fairly	4.76	1.09	4.40	1.19
BAD				
pretty	6.36	1.55	4.76	1.67
quite	5.88	1.27	4.24	1.48
rather	5.84	1.18	5.52	1.53
fairly	5.68	1.60	4.44	1.33

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