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La leçon se déroule en anglais. Elle est suivie d'un entretien en français.

SUBJECT:

"Yet we encounter somewhat facile generalizations concerning the behaviour of individual words in terms of their gradability, and also the tendency to treat the category of gradability as a rather rigid one, marking individual words either [+ gradable] or [- gradable]. In this paper I challenge that position and want to show that adjectives such as *dead*, *married*, and *pregnant*, which are often cited as non-gradables *par excellence*, are actually used as gradables. At the same time I propose that gradability be redefined as a 'squishy' category but not as an 'either-or' feature."

Kazuo KATO, "Gradable gradability", *English Studies* 67, 1986, p. 174.

Discuss.

Candidates will use relevant excerpts from the following corpus to address the above topic.

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Excerpt 1

"You are to learn the subtle science and exact art of potion-making," he began. He spoke in barely more than a whisper, but they caught every word – he had the gift of keeping a class silent without effort. "As there is little foolish wand-waving here, many of you will hardly believe this is magic. I don't expect you will really understand the beauty of the softly simmering cauldron with its simmering fumes [...]."

Joanne K. Rowling, *Harry Potter*, 1997

Excerpt 2

"And Lilian, look sharp. Help the little girl out of her coat. Poor child, looks more dead than alive." Dot felt herself freeze with fear as the swivel-eyed Lilian lurched towards her, arms outstretched, to try to remove her coat. "Don't mind her," Gloria hissed in Dot's ear. "She's just a bit mental. Always has been."

Rachel Anderson, *Paper Faces*, 1991

Excerpt 3

"Good riddance, I say. Pregnant! She was no more pregnant than I am!" "Then why did she claim to be?" Corbett enquired.

Paul C. Doherty, *Crown in Darkness*, 1991

Excerpt 4

And as I came back down this mucky road from the High Street, which, as you know, can be a pretty depressing trek home especially if you're tired, it all seemed bright somehow, and welcoming. The people seemed kindly and one or two nodded or greeted me. And all the babies suddenly looked so nice.

Jenny Joseph, *Persephone*, 1986

Excerpt 5

"I understand perfectly what you're saying. You're saying that I'm pretty hopeless at everything, but somebody might, just might, be prepared to put up with my teaching." "No, I'm not saying that at all. You're perfectly capable of teaching; it's just that you've now got this thing about it."

Michael Falk, *Part of the Furniture*, 1991

Excerpt 6

My mother would sing that song up and down the corridors of this house. Tan alegre, mi madre. Such a happy woman, my mother.

Tanya Saracho, *El Nogalar*, 2011

Excerpt 7

No, not that, but I had seen men struck down in the streets of Cleveland. They'd leave for the office in the morning feeling fine. During the day, they'd complain of being hot and achy. By evening, waiting on the corner for a streetcar, they'd fall to the pavement, already dead or near to it. Gary soon became one of them. Poor boy.

Marie Doria Russell, *Dreamers of the Day*, 2008

Excerpt 8

Thomas Carter came right out and told you that he thought England was the only truly civilized country in the world and that as the most English of English cities, Oxford was its heart and soul [...]

Michael Dibdin, *Dirty Tricks*, 1991

Excerpt 9

You are very alive, very active... you just travel too fast to see the end result.

Robert Holdstock, *Lavondyss*, 1988

Excerpt 10

Frinton-on-Sea, in the Harwich constituency, is mocked as the deadest town in England.

The Daily Telegraph, 06/04/1992

Excerpt 11

America had, said the paper, just launched a new submarine torpedo boat, declared (by the Americans, I hope) to be "the most unique vessel of that character ever invented".

New Scientist, 1991

Excerpt 12

A very unique Swan – the only Swan ever built with a sauna in the forecabin!

[Goods adverts], BNC

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Excerpt 13

USA TODAY's Olivia Barker shared Otto's profile with find-a-husband consultant Rachel Greenwald, who mapped out a matter-of-fact market plan. Lincoln is a college town where the single men are too young and the thirtysomething men are too married.

Olivia Barker, *USA Today*, 2003

Excerpt 14

The thing was more than irregular, of course – it was preposterous! A married woman – and married, what is more, to one of the best-known grooms of the county – going through another ceremony with a different groom!

Clerence Brown, *The Groom*, 1997

Excerpt 15

"Have you told Matt?" The redhead shook her head. "How pregnant are you?" "I don't know. Maybe about six weeks."

Danielle Steel, *Message from Nam*, 1990

Excerpt 16

Her mother had been too pregnant to make the trip, so her father had taken her along instead.

Marly Swick, *Evening News*, 1999

Excerpt 17

You don't look too pregnant, he said. I figured you'd be bigger. She said nothing to him yet. Your face got rounder, he said.

Kent Haruf, *Plainsong*, 1998

Excerpt 18

Come around to this side of the counter and you'll see how impossible it is to read it from here.

Harley Jane Kozac, *Dating Dead Men*, 2005

Excerpt 19

"The cigarette is the most perfect of perfect pleasures. It is exquisite and it leaves you unsatisfied. What more could anyone wish for?"

Patricia Berman, *Edvard Munch's Self-portrait with Cigarette*, 1993

Excerpt 20

Underemployment remains a serious problem. Civil demonstrations are becoming more common; they were not directed towards Chavez until the May-June protests in 2007. There is no question that the most enormous task at hand for the President to resolve is the pervasive corruption in every layer of Venezuelan society.

Leon Yacher, *Photojournal: Venezuela*, 2007

Excerpt 21

I'm an American. I believe in optimism. I believe in looking forward, not back. Of course, you don't always take all your old friends and acquaintances forward with you.

John Lathrop, *The Desert Contract*, 2008

Excerpt 22

The house belongs to him and his wife, a very old friend of mine.

Jane Feather, *A Husband's Wicked Ways*, 2009

Excerpt 23

After the Friday night meal, Aunt Bella and her husband hold frequent teas for a few acquaintances, usually as old as they, and this is the range of Masha's life.

Joe Tyennick, *Life without Valentino*, 2001

Excerpt 24

Eight thousand, with the wind buffeting me and the altitude signs swaying. Nine thousand. Almost done. Which was good. After five hours, I was ready to get off this bike, no matter how nice. I was suddenly very ready to eat something.

Stephen Madden, *The Haole Who Rode Up Haleakala*, 2002