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

SUBJECT:

"Les échelles par lesquelles on peut représenter les qualités/propriétés graduables sont fondamentalement des *continuums orientés vers le 'haut'* (vers le 'plus'), c'est-à-dire *vers un degré plus élevé de la propriété dont il s'agit* (*grand* est orienté vers *immense*, *petit* vers *minuscule*).

L'argument essentiel en faveur de cette orientation réside dans l'emploi dit 'absolu' des termes graduables. Dans l'usage quotidien, *chaud* est graduable, et on peut établir une différence entre deux objets déclarés 'chauds' tous deux, mais à des degrés différents. Il reste alors à définir le sens du prédicat 'être chaud', et on ne peut le faire sans poser la mise en jeu d'une *norme* : 'Jean aime le café chaud' signifie (sauf contraste contextuel entre 'café chaud' et 'café glacé') : 'Jean boit son café plus chaud que ne font la plupart des gens'. Le locuteur se réfère implicitement à une norme de chaleur valable pour le type d'objet dont il parle, et qui est censée correspondre à une représentation installée dans la communauté linguistique. De façon plus évidente peut-être, *un homme intelligent* renvoie à un homme d'une intelligence supérieure à une certaine moyenne. L'information véhiculée par l'emploi absolu de l'adjectif n'est pas elle-même 'absolue', mais *relative à un certain seuil-repère* (qui reste implicite). Le fait crucial est ici que l'emploi absolu de *grand* dénote toujours une taille *supérieure* à une certaine norme.

On peut noter aussi qu'il suffit de *rapprocher* un objet pourvu d'une propriété d'un autre objet du même type (possédant aussi la propriété à un degré quelconque) pour asserter une *supériorité* de cet objet sur l'échelle dont il s'agit :

> Jean est grand à côté de Pierre.

Il serait difficile d'expliquer ces faits sans postuler non seulement une orientation des échelles sémantiques mais, plus précisément, une échelle *orientée vers un degré plus grand de la propriété considérée*."

René Rivara, "Pourquoi il n'y a que deux relations de comparaison". In *Faits de langues* n°5, March 1995, pp. 26-27.

Discuss.

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

Excerpt 1

My younger sister is tall, thin, and blond, three things that with all certainty could never be used to describe me.

Chris Cavender, Rest in Pizza, 2012, COCA

Excerpt 2

Over the last three days you've come to think of this long-legged German woman in specific physical terms, individual pieces of an exotic, big-boned puzzle. Greta is taller than average, heavier than average, ample but in an understated, competitive-sculler sort of way.

Keith Kachtick, Hungry Ghost: a Novel, 2004, COCA

Excerpt 3

The compound where Yaw lived was averagely big, but as usual, it contained a house with the "face me, I face you" room apartments meant for the lower income class and the under-priviledged people of the society.

Taiye Selasi, Ghana Must Go, 2004, books.google.fr

Excerpt 4

"How warm do you think it is today?" I asked.
"It's hot as hell," he answered.

Atlanta Journal Constitution, 1999, GloWbE

Excerpt 5

Her problem is small. She has beetles in her garden. My problem is big. I have decided to quit playing piano.

Highlights for Children, 2006, COCA

Excerpt 6

In my salubriously appointed home studio, which is – I think it's 8-by-7. My home studio is extremely small.

NPR_ATCW, 2005, GloWbE

Excerpt 7

Even though the environment external to the human body is in a state of flux, the internal environment, such as body temperature, is remarkably stable. For example, a traveler from Alaska to Florida in January will be exposed to dramatic changes in air temperature; in a healthy individual, however, the body temperature will remain at or quite close to the normal of 98.4 degrees Fahrenheit.

Total Health, 2001, COCA

Excerpt 8

To teach the mapping process, the experimenter tells the child to pay attention to boxes A and C, pointing out that the two boxes each contain a sports car, but the car in box A is red while the car in box C is blue.

Education, 2008, COCA

Excerpt 9

This is the smallest laptop I've seen from LeapFrog. Even though they make laptops, this is teeny-weeny.

CBS THE EARLY SHOW, 2010, GloWbE

Excerpt 10

The Grand Gallery continues upward at the same angle of 26 degrees 18 minutes 9.7 seconds for what is nearly 1900 years in chronological measurement. This gallery symbolises the upward movement of awareness amongst the enlightened in the world. For the average person this upwards journey is physically quite difficult but by no means impossible, it seems to demonstrate that the spiritual growth of the human soul is not an easy path to take.

http://www.biblebelievers.org.au, GloWbE, accessed 2014

Excerpt 11

CHRISTIANE AMANPOU (Off-camera): Well, let me ask you to put your analyst cap on now based on your war experience. In Iraq, drawdown of combat forces and yet troubling reports that the linchpin to success bringing the Sunni groups on, the Sunni awakening may be crumbling. Reports that the Sunni awakening cells are being recruited or defecting or being kicked out by the Iraqi government back to al Qaeda. GENERAL HUGH SHELT (Off-camera): Very, very disturbing, but I would say not unexpected.

THIS WEEK, 2010, GloWbE

Excerpt 12

Mr CHERKASSKY: Yes. I – generally, when – you know, when people come backstage, "Oh, hello, do you remember me? I heard you 20 – I heard you 20 years ago. Don't you remember my sister?" And frankly, I don't want to be impolite, but I'm not a bit interested.

CBS_SunMorn, 1992, GloWbE

Excerpt 13

A. ROMNEY: You know, I'm fine about it. The boys are fine about it. You know, Mitt's worked hard all of his life and he's done his job very well, and we have absolutely not a single issue with it. We're fine with that. NAUERT: Some Republicans out there have been concerned about changes that he's made in his positions over the years on gay marriage, on abortion, even immigration. And some people are just concerned that he is not Conservative enough.

The Big Story with John Gibson, 2008, GloWbE

Excerpt 14

High finance, like some unreliable common stock, goes lower and lower. How did so many experts misjudge so badly?

New York Times, 2008, COCA

Excerpt 15

How long is a session?
Very short, a few seconds.

http://erlang.org, 2014

Excerpt 16

Although the domestic economy has improved somewhat, Ukraine and Russia remain on the verge of third world levels.

World Affairs, 2004, GloWbE

Excerpt 17

"Why –" I cut the question short; it did not matter in the least why the D'Oyly Carte company wished me to go to Lisbon.

Laurie R. King, *Pirate King: a Novel of Suspense Featuring Mary Russell and Sherlock Holmes*, 2011, GloWbE

Excerpt 18

"Put it down," he muttered in a thick American accent, gesturing to the gun. Celia couldn't utter a word. Now, her mind insisted, end it now... But her arm lowered to her side. In a flash of self-hatred, she realized she was too much of a coward to take her own life.

Lisa Kleypas, *Lisa Only with Your Love*, 1992, COCA

Excerpt 19

Male-dominated regimes in Africa seem little disposed to reserve scarce resources for women.

Africa Today, 1993, GloWbE

Excerpt 20

Since most of the guys on the team were bigger, I sat on the bench a lot for the games. That seemed to make Mom happy. She said, "Your uniform is hardly dirty, and you don't have a single bruise or cut. What a relief!"

Children's Digest, 1999, COCA

Excerpt 21

She was probably one meter seventy. Her hair, blonde and straight, almost red, spread out from under her helmet. She helped me take off mine and we walked toward the door of the restaurant.

Review of Contemporary Fiction, 2008, COCA

Excerpt 22

Mr SAMUELS: Debbie was the only one knew I was in Monterrey and knew what hotel I was at. (Footage of home vi) ROBERTS: (Voiceover) Little did Samuels know that Debbie was cooperating with Florida police and allowed them to tap her phone.

CBS_48 Hours, 2007, COCA