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

SUBJECT:

"Distributionally, the class of gradable adjectives has two defining characteristics [...]. First, gradable adjectives can be modified by degree adverbials such as *quite*, *very* and *fairly*. According to this criterion, *inexpensive*, *dense*, and *bright* are identified as gradable adjectives, but *dead*, *octagonal*, and *former* are not [...].

Although non-gradable adjectives like *dead* do sometimes occur with degree modifiers, as in e.g., *Giordano is quite dead*, such uses are marked, and tend to convey a sense of irony or humor. Such uses indicate that (at least some) non-gradable adjectives can be coerced into having gradable interpretations in contexts that are otherwise incompatible with their canonical meanings.

The second distributional characteristic of gradable adjectives is that they can appear in a class of complex syntactic environments, which I will refer to as *degree constructions*. Roughly speaking, a degree construction is a construction formed out of an adjective and a *degree morpheme* – an element of {*er/more*, *less*, *as*, *too*, *enough*, *so*, *how*, ...}."

Christopher KENNEDY, *Projecting the Adjective: the Syntax and Semantics of Gradability and Comparison*, London: Routledge, 1999, p. xiv.

Discuss.

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

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Excerpt 1

I have got great respect for Newt. And I think he is a very bright and capable individual.

FOX_Cavuto, 2011, COCA

Excerpt 2

I just finished the lab-test for the Business Intelligence module this afternoon, after [I] experienced a severe dizziness last night as a result of too much preparation. Hope the result will be good (although I admit the test was quite difficult).

<http://xhino.wordpress.com>, GloWbE, accessed 2014

Excerpt 3

Many modern students mistakenly believe that rhyme is the dominant feature separating poetry from prose (non-poetic) writings. However, rhyme is actually a fairly recent addition to poetry. In classical Greece and Rome, meter was the trait that separated poetry from prose.

<http://web.cn.edu>, GloWbE, accessed 2014

Excerpt 4

Leave all gates as you find them – either open or closed.

Backpacker, 1994, GloWbE

Excerpt 5

BOETTCHER Right after 9/11, President Bush made bin Laden the world's most wanted man BUSH There's an old poster out west, as I recall, that said, "Wanted: Dead or Alive."

CNN_Presents, 2003, COCA

Excerpt 6

We have accumulated 108 different varieties of chickens. Many of them have feathers that plume from the top of their head, down to extra toes or feathers down their legs. Some are fluffy, some are smooth, some are red, some are blue, some are combinations of different colors.

CBS_Morning, 2002, COCA

Excerpt 7

[A] few weeks ago, after leaving the Army, Bale Baleiwai found that he is not British enough to work as a railway track repairer, or a fibre-optic technician, or any of the other jobs he has been offered. He was British enough to pay thousands in tax and National Insurance, but he is not British enough to claim benefits.

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk>, GloWbE, accessed 2014

Excerpt 8

Finally, we get a taxi. The driver is a big African with a very round head. With a sparkling grin he introduces himself as "Funny Boy."

Analog Science Fiction & Fact, 2006, COCA

Excerpt 9

I'm a Canadian married to an Australian. We met in England, where we lived for eight years. And when I first went there, the thing that struck me is that it reminded me a lot of Canada, but the people were very British.

NPR_TalkNation, 2000, COCA

Excerpt 10

Power dead. He turned on his headlamp and swept the beam. Every cabinet door was wide open. Equipment, plants, soil, and cracked pottery littered the floor.

Analog Science Fiction & Fact, 2005, COCA

Excerpt 11

Venera was having trouble hearing Diamandis, even though the room's door was tightly closed and there were no windows in this chamber.

Analog Science Fiction & Fact, 2007, COCA

Excerpt 12

Physician-targeted marketing makes a lot of sense from a business standpoint; doctors serve as gatekeepers for prescription drugs and are highly trusted by patients, who perceive them as independent sources of medical advice. Yet, this independence sometimes is more apparent than real, as many physicians are not financially independent of drug companies.

USA Today, GloWbE, accessed 2014

Excerpt 13

I got the impression that Bramson was very ready to assume that everything was all John's fault.

Public Interest, 1992, COCA

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Excerpt 14

In 1893, the British Parliament defined blindness as “too blind to read the ordinary school books used by children”.

Journal of Visual Impairment & Blindness, 2004, COCA

Excerpt 15

“Did you recognize anything she said?” “Sir... cap’n... that’s a woman!” “It seems so, sergeant, now tell me if you recognized her language. Is it in any way related to Cheyenne or Arapaho?” He already thought he knew the answer. It hadn’t sounded a bit like a plains tribe language. If anything, some of the words had sounded vaguely European.

John G Henry, *Swords and Saddles*, 2010, COCA

Excerpt 16

South Korea’s largest automaker Hyundai Motor Company uploaded a few images of the redesigned Genesis Coupe on its Facebook page. Judging by these pictures, the front end seems to be the part which underwent the most significant upgrading, now sporting the hexagonal-ish front grille that is becoming a signature feature of the Korean manufacturer.

<http://www.eurocarblogger.com>, 2014

Excerpt 17

It is embalmers who try to make the deceased Mrs. Wong, for example, who suffered a long death from cancer, appear more like the person she was before she became sick. People see their family members in the last days of their life when they’re in agony. And that’s not a very pleasant memory for anybody to remember. Hopefully, we can change that and make them look very asleep and restful.

NPR_Saturday, 1997, COCA

Excerpt 18

It was Baker, a man whom I had not seen for twenty years. I was transfixed for a moment, regarding this visage from the past. He was a bit gray now but otherwise pretty much identical to my very vivid memory of him.

Analog Science Fiction & Fact, 2005, COCA

Excerpt 19

“If we look at price-to-sales relative to the company’s own history and compare it against the market,” explains Tengler, “we have a really powerful indicator of periods of over- and undervaluation. To put it simply, this formula helps determine whether a stock is expensive or cheap compared with other companies and its own past performance.”

Money, 2001, COCA

Excerpt 20

Considering only the current 47-odd percent that support Obama, whose composition is not exactly clear, Romney is quite right to say they are a lost cause in this election for him, and that he needs to hold the 47-odd percent he has, and work to earn the majority of the remaining 6 percent or so to win a majority, which is true.

<http://www.outsidethebeltway.com>, GloWbE, accessed 2014

Excerpt 21

Scott never suggests that history could or should have turned out differently. He makes it clear that the English victory at Culloden was far more good than bad, and that a Scottish victory would have been not merely bad but unthinkable.

American Scholar, 2003, COCA

Excerpt 22

As you know, the Bush administration has been saying that conditions indeed are improving in Baghdad, that it has become, in many ways, more safe to move around the city.

NPR_Daybreak, 2006, COCA

Excerpt 23

More survive crashes as jets become safer

Evacuations from passenger planes occur about once a week. Most are minor incidents or false alarms, government records show. Yet the importance of a quick and efficient evacuation increases as aviation grows safer and as jets and their passengers are more likely to survive a crash landing.

USA Today, 1999, COCA