

Context dependent thresholds of absolute adjectives

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Absolute gradable adjectives, such as 'full', differ from relative gradable adjectives, 'big', in that they may have context-independent interpretations (Rotstein & Winter 2004, Kennedy & McNally 2005, Syrett 2007, Kennedy 2007, Syrett et al. 2010, Toledo & Sassoon 2011, Lassiter & Goodman 2013, 2015, Burnett 2014, Qing & Franke 2014, Lassiter 2015). While both kinds of adjectives are context sensitive, absolute adjectives require context only for interpretations that deviate from a certain standard threshold, e.g. the context-invariant threshold for 'full' is 100%, but the appropriate threshold for the whiskey-glass context is around 30%. While prior experiments concentrated on identifying the differences in context-sensitivity between relative and absolute adjectives (Kim et al. 2013, 2014, Leffel et al. 2016, 2017), we focus on absolute adjectives and the mechanism for setting an imprecise standard for comparison. In the first set of experiments, picture-sentence verification tasks, we identify the contextual parameters that allow for imprecise thresholds. We present the results of Experiment 1, investigating the distribution of yes/no judgments with respect to comparison classes for familiar everyday objects.