

Scalar diversity

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We present experimental evidence showing that there is considerable variation between the rates at which sentences containing scalar expressions give rise to upper-bounded construals. In two experiments, we found that the frequency of scalar inferences was much higher for quantifying and modal expressions than for adjectives and verbs. However, there was no dichotomous distinction between these categories, since several adjectives and verbs gave rise to elevated levels of scalar inferences, too. We investigated several factors that might be responsible for the variation between scalar expressions, including word class, focus, word frequency, strength of association, semantic distance, and the presence of an end-point denoting scalar term.