

Totally Between Subjectivity and Discourse. Exploring the Pragmatic Side of Intensification.

Andrea Beltrama

Department of Linguistics, Universität Konstanz, Konstanz, Baden-Württemberg, Germany
E-mail: andrea.beltrama@uni-konstanz.de

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Abstract

In American English, the intensifier *totally* presents a PRAGMATIC use, in which it strengthens the speaker's commitment towards the utterance (e.g. 'The Bulls will *totally* make the playoffs'). This use has received considerably less attention than the canonical LEXICAL contribution of the adverb (e.g. 'the glass is *totally* full'). First, I rely on three acceptability studies to show that pragmatic *totally* is used only in discourse moves that allow for the possibility of *not* adding *p* to the Common Ground of the conversation—that is, subjective, outlandish and responsive assertions. Second, I propose that *totally* flags speaker's meta-conversational belief that every continuation of the exchange should involve the addition of *p*, framing the analysis within Farkas & Bruce (2010)'s discourse model. The proposal allows us to account in a unified way for the different effects that pragmatic *totally* contributes, highlighting the intensifier as a window into how declarative sentences with different kinds of content—subjective, objective, outlandish—structure the conversation.

1 INTRODUCTION

The intensifier *totally* features a widespread distribution in American English. In its most documented use, it combines with predicates that lexicalise upper-bounded scales (Kennedy & McNally, 2005 a.o.), as in (1). I shall label this flavor of the intensifier LEXICAL *totally*.

- (1) a. The bus is *totally* full.
b. She *totally* agrees with me.

In other cases, *totally* combines with predicates that do *not* lexicalise a bounded scale, as in (2). I shall refer to these cases as PRAGMATIC *totally*. In such contexts, the use of *totally*

contributes to strengthening the speaker's commitment towards the utterance.¹ All caps in (2c), as well as throughout the paper, indicate pitch stress; the use of italics in the examples, instead, highlights *totally* or the linguistic form under discussion, but does not bear any connection with intonation.

- (2) a. You should *totally* click on that link! It's awesome.²
 b. Skiing around Salt Lake is *totally* awesome.³
 c. Dionne: Hello? There was a stop sign.
 Cher: I *totally* paused.⁴
 d. A dude *totally* walked off a train, threw his shit down & camped out.⁵

This particular flavor of the intensifier has received considerably less attention than the lexical version. As such, little is known on the empirical and formal properties of its contribution. Relying on evidence from a series of controlled acceptability studies, this paper proposes an analysis of pragmatic *totally* as a conversational operator, which flags the speaker's meta-conversational belief that every continuation of the exchange should involve the addition of *p* to the Common Ground. The proposal allows us to account in a unified way for the different effects that the intensifier contributes, as well as for the different environments in which it is licensed. On a broader level, *totally* emerges as a window into fine-grained differences between seemingly identical types of assertions, leading to a more nuanced view of how declarative sentences with different kinds of content—subjective, objective, outlandish—structure the conversation.

The paper is structured as follows. In Section 2 I illustrate several diagnostics to tease apart lexical *totally* and pragmatic *totally*. In Section 3 I outline the constraints on the distribution of pragmatic *totally*. In Section 4 I spell out a proposal for pragmatic *totally*, building on Farkas & Bruce (2010)'s discourse model and on Giannakidou & Mari (2013)'s notion of (non-) *homogeneity*. In Section 5 I explore how the analysis of *totally* fits into the broader picture of semantic/pragmatic phenomena involving Verum and intensification. Section 6 concludes.

2 DIAGNOSING PRAGMATIC TOTALLY

The intuitive difference between lexical and pragmatic *totally* is supported by a variety of diagnostics, showing that the two uses are differentially encoded in the grammar. First, pragmatic *totally* is a positive polarity item, as already noted by Irwin (2014) and McCready & Kaufmann (2013). To begin with, it cannot appear in the scope of negation or a negative quantifier.

1 The OED added a dedicated entry in 2005: 'In weakened use, as an intensifier: (modifying an adjective) *very, extremely*; (modifying a verb) *definitely, absolutely*.' However, we will see throughout the paper that these adverbs are not always interchangeable with *totally*.

2 <https://www.facebook.com/TheBiscuitGames/posts/488916347870627> accessed on June 5th 2015

3 <http://www.csmonitor.com/1996/1218/121896.feet.travel.1.html>

4 From the movie *Clueless*, first cited in Irwin (2014)

5 <http://bartidiothalloffame.com/dude-totally-walked-off-a-train-threw-his-shit-down-camped-out-embaracado-station/>

- (3) a. ✓ The bus is **not** *totally* full
 b. ✓ I don't *totally* agree with you
 c. * You shouldn't *totally* click on that link.
 d. *A dude *totally* didn't *totally* walk off a train, throw his shit down and camp out.

Likewise, pragmatic *totally* is strongly degraded in information-seeking questions, confirming the idea that it requires positive polarity (McCready & Kaufmann, 2013, Irwin, 2014).⁶

- (4) a. ✓ Is the bus *totally* full?
 b. ✓ Do you *totally* agree with me?
 c. #Did a dude *totally* walk off a train and camp out?⁷
 d. # Should I *totally* click on that link?

Note, however, that pragmatic *totally* is sensitive to the type of speech act, even when the speech act does have positive polarity, as already noticed by McCready & Kaufmann (2013). In particular, besides being infelicitous in questions, it is barred in command imperatives and Wh-exclamatives.

- (5) ✓ *Totally* fill that glass!
 (6) #What a link I *totally* clicked on!
 (7) # *Totally* click on that link!⁸

The observation that pragmatic *totally* cannot be targeted by truth-conditional operators, together with its sensitivity to speech act type, also suggests that this version of the intensifier is not part of the at-issue content of the utterance (see Rett 2017 for further discussion on how speech-act sensitivity relates to non-at-issueness). This is confirmed by the fact that the intensifier is not challengeable through the use of a denial that questions the truth of the proposition, on a par with a wide array of linguistic expressions (expressive

6 It must be observed that in biased (rhetorical) questions *totally* has a better, though still less-than-perfect, status. Also, Irwin claims that polar questions are slightly more acceptable than Wh-questions.

(1) ? Shouldn't you *totally* click on that link?

Such improvements in the acceptability of *totally* in specific question environments will not be accounted for by the current analysis.

7 This question can be felicitously interpreted as an expression of surprise on the part of the speaker, but not as an information-seeking speech act. See the preceding footnote on the improvement of *totally* in other kinds of non information-seeking questions.

8 Note that the example becomes felicitous if it is used to give advice, as opposed to a command. The distinction between advice and pure deontic modality is explored throughout the paper, and represents an important axis governing the distribution of *totally*.

meaning: Potts 2005; Amaral *et al.* 2007 amongst others; certain evidentials: Faller 2002; Rett & Murray 2013; speaker-oriented adverbs: Ernst 2009; Nilsen 2004).⁹

- (8) a. The bus is *totally* full.
 B: ✓ **No, that's not true!** It's basically full, but not completely! Lexical *totally* challenged.
- b. She should *totally* click on that link!
 B: # **No! That's not true!** She should click on that link, but you can't be so committed to giving this advice! Pragmatic *totally* challenged.
 B' ✓ **No! That's not true!** It's not a good idea to do that! Modal challenged.
- c. A: A dude *totally* walked off a train, threw his shit down and camped out.
 B: # **No, that's not true!** He did this, but you can't be so committed to saying this. Pragmatic *totally* challenged.
 B: ✓ **No, that's not true!** He didn't walk off the train. Verb Phrase challenged

Conversely, the challenge to pragmatic *totally* sounds more natural if carried out through a different linguistic strategy. An example is the widely discussed 'Hey, wait a minute!' response, which has been shown to be a felicitous means to object to non-at-issue content (Shanon 1976; von Stechow 2004).

- (9) a. She should *totally* click on that link!
 B: # **Hey! Wait a minute!** Yes, she should click on that link, but how can you be so committed to giving this advice?
- b. A: A dude *totally* walked off a train, threw his shit down and camped out.
 B: # **Hey, wait a minute!** Yes, he did this, but how can you be so committed to saying it?

A final diagnostic is that lexical *totally* can be replaced by maximizers like *completely* and *entirely*, and can compositionally interact with other endpoint-oriented modifiers like *almost*. By contrast, pragmatic *totally* cannot be replaced by these expressions, nor can it interact with approximators.

- (10) a. ✓ The bus is *completely/entirely* full.
 b. ✓ I *completely/entirely* agree with you.

9 A reviewer points out that in examples like the following the use of a denial to challenge *totally* appears relatively natural.

- (1) A: She should *totally* click on that link.
 B: No! She *maybe* should click on that link (but it's not definite).

However, it seems to be the case that the use of *maybe* in this example does not just challenge *totally* alone, but the advice conveyed by the modal as well, introducing a confound. In other words, saying that someone *maybe* should do something amounts to questioning the very advisability of the suggested action. Accordingly, we can observe that B's response would be felicitous even if the previous move didn't contain *totally*.

- (2) A: She should click on that link.
 B: No! She *maybe* should click on that link (but it's not definite).

- c. # She should *completely/entirely* click on that link.
- d. # A dude *completely/entirely* walked off a train, threw his shit down and camp out.
- (11) a. ✓ The bus is **almost** *totally* full.
 b. ✓ I **almost** *totally* agree with you.
 c. # You should **almost** *totally* click on that link!
 d. # A dude **almost** *totally* walked off a train, threw his shit down and camp out.

Moreover, only *totally*—and not *completely* or *entirely*—can serve as stand alone fragments to answer a question.

- (12) A: Will you click on that link?
 B: ✓ *Totally!* / # *Completely!* / # *Entirely!*

Finally, a less reliable diagnostic for differentiating between the two uses is prosody. While Irwin argues that pragmatic *totally* almost always comes with focal stress, there appears to be no one-to-one correspondence between this particular contour and the semantic flavor of the intensifier. Rather, I will argue that pitch stress on *totally* independently marks the presence of Verum Focus, which is in turn necessary to license the use of *totally* in particular discourse contexts (see Section 4.5). Because of this, I will not rely on prosody as a criterion to distinguish between the two uses throughout the paper.

The table below summarises the results of the tests.

	Flavor	Negation	Quest	Imp/Exc	Compl	Almost	Fragment
(13)	Lexical	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	#
	Pragmatic	*	#	#	#	#	✓

3 THE DISTRIBUTION OF PRAGMATIC TOTALLY

The diagnostics considered thus far show that pragmatic *totally* is treated by the grammar in a different way from lexical *totally*. Yet, they offer little indication concerning the semantic and pragmatic constraints governing the distribution of the former. I turn to discuss this issue in the present section, dividing the presentation of the data into two parts. Section 3.1 focuses on the distribution of the intensifier in discourse-initial utterances, unveiling a correlation between the felicity of the adverb and the *subjectivity* of the anchor proposition. Section 3.2 discusses the distribution in responsive utterances.

3.1 Discourse-initial utterances

While the introspective judgments on the diagnostics reported in Section 2 are quite consistent, intuitions on the more fine-grained semantic and pragmatic properties of *totally* tend to be subject to a great deal of variability, especially in light of the fact that the pragmatic usage of the adverb has undergone grammaticalization very recently and is a ripe locus of sociolinguistic variation (Beltrama 2016; Irwin 2014). To ensure a sufficiently robust empirical basis for the analysis of *totally* in discourse initial assertions, I thus opted to rely on two separate sources of evidence: informally collected introspective judgments; and three quantitative surveys conducted to confirm the robustness of the initial judgments. In the remainder of the section, I divide the discussion into two parts: Section 3.1.1 illustrates

the interaction between *totally* and subjectivity; Section 3.1.2 discusses the correlation between *totally* and propositions that violate the interlocutors' assumptions/expectations.

3.1.1 *Totally and subjectivity* To begin with, *totally* features a strong tendency to be used in propositions containing expressions contingent on a subjective assessment on the part of the speaker. This applies to both adjectives and modals, that is, the two categories of predicates that are primarily associated with subjectivity.

Adjectives

Concerning adjectives, we observe that, amongst predicates that do not encode an upper-bounded scale, *totally* sounds particularly natural with evaluative adjectives such as *awesome*, *amazing*, *great*.

- (14) a. Skiing around Salt Lake City is *totally* awesome.¹⁰
 b. This happier camper is *totally* amazing, inside and out.¹¹

The crucial property distinguishing evaluative adjectives is that they systematically give rise to the phenomenon commonly labeled as *faultless disagreement* (Kölbel 2002; Laser-sohn 2005; Stephenson 2007), which is normally taken to be the signature of perspective dependent meanings. This reflects a situation in which two speakers have opposing views on a particular matter, but the disagreement can't be settled with evidence other than the participant's own subjective feelings. As a consequence, although the interlocutors are producing conflicting assertions, neither of them is saying something false, or making a pragmatically infelicitous move. By contrast, subjectivity is *not* systematically part of the picture with predicates that license lexical *totally*. This is shown by the observation that most of these predicates fail to license faultless disagreement: one of the two interlocutors is blameworthy for being wrong, and one of the two assertions must be infelicitous, as shown in (15c).¹²

- (15) a. **Kim:** Skiing around Salt Lake City is *awesome*.
 Alex: No, it's not! Faultless
 b. **Kim:** This happier camper is *amazing*, inside and out.
 Alex: No, it's not! Faultless
 c. **Kim:** Dodos are *extinct*.
 Alex: No, they're not. Factual

10 <https://www.questia.com/newspaper/1P2-33415750/feeling-empowered-while-skiing-in-utah-the-snow-is>

11 <http://sfglobe.com/2015/05/12/k3c/>

12 In the paper I will exclusively consider cases of faultless disagreement that revolve around a *bona fide* qualitative assessment of a property, as in the case of *awesome* or *amazing*. These cases are different from cases of faultless disagreement that surface with vague predicates like *tall* (Fleisher 2013; Kennedy 2012; Richard 2004), where the dispute is normally taken to be about the standard for the assessment of their truth conditions, and has thus a marked metalinguistic flavor. Kennedy (2012) calls the inherent subjectivity associated with *awesome* Qualitative Assessment, whereas the subjectivity associated with vague predicates in general Dimensional Uncertainty. Fleisher (2013) dubs them Mapping Subjectivity and Standards Subjectivity respectively. Interestingly, *totally* only seems to be sensitive to subjectivity of the former kind.

A corpus search on the Corpus of Web Based Global English¹³ (Davies 2013), a resource that is particularly useful for investigating the use of expressions associated with informal registers, confirms that, amongst adjectives encoding open scales, the distribution of *totally* is skewed towards evaluative ones. On the other hand, the intensifier is remarkably rare with *dimensional* adjectives like *large*, *tall* and *big* (Bierwisch 1989), which express a measurement with respect to a quantifiable scale. The table in (16) reports the eight most common non upper-bounded adjectives with which *totally* is attested in the Corpus, comparing it to the attestation of *totally* with dimensional predicates.¹⁴

Open Scale Adjective	Type	totally Count	tot Adj frequency
Awesome	Evaluative	186	25 000
Ridiculous	Evaluative	73	44 000
Amazing	Evaluative	55	40 500
Wonderful	Evaluative	27	32 000
Great	Evaluative	27	34 000
Bad	Evaluative	21	131 000
Hot	Evaluative	18	32 000
Beautiful	Evaluative	8	41 000
Big	Dimensional	1	170 000
Tall	Dimensional	1	40 000
Large	Dimensional	0	90 000

Before proceeding any further in the discussion, let me raise and reject two potential objections. First, how can we be sure that, with these adjectives, *totally* is not contributing at the lexical level? This point becomes particularly pressing when one considers that many of these adjectives are members of the class of *extreme* adjectives (Morzycki 2012), which, due to their reference to a property inherently instantiated to a high degree, have been suggested to be lexically upper-bounded, despite the absence of an ontological maximum (Paradis 2001). Yet, three observations suggest that this account cannot be right. First, other maximizers, despite sounding considerably better than they do with regular open scale adjectives, are still not perfectly felicitous with extreme adjectives (3a). Second, extreme adjectives cannot be modified by other endpoint-oriented modifiers like approximators and proportional modifiers (3b) (see Portnerzn & Rubinstein 2016 for a similar point). Third, and most importantly, when *totally* is used with extreme adjectives it still allows for another individual to instantiate the property to a higher degree (3c). This, crucially, is *not* the case for real upper-bounded predicates (see Kennedy & McNally 2005; Morzycki 2012; Portnerzn & Rubinstein 2016 for a similar observation). These considerations suggest that *totally* is not targeting the lexical scale encoded by these adjectives.

- (17) a. ? *completely*/? 100% {awesome, amazing} v. √ *completely*/100% {full}
 b. # *almost/partially* {awesome, amazing} v. √ *almost/partially* {full}
 c. √ This movie was *totally* amazing, but this other one is (even) better.
 # This glass is *totally* full, but this other one is (even) fuller.

13 <http://corpus.byu.edu/glowbe/>

14 Concerning *hot*, it is pretty telling that, out of 18 hits, 17 were instances of *hot* as an aesthetic judgment, and only one as an adjective of temperature.

The second objection is that *totally* might be quantifying over dimensions of evaluation, requiring that the individual at stake count as *awesome* in every respect. As such, it would still be used in a lexical fashion. Though appealing, this idea cannot however be an exhaustive explanation of the pattern above.

In particular, if *totally* were quantifying over lexically encoded dimensions, we would expect it to pattern in the way it does with absolute adjective like *full*. Even though the domain of quantification is different—degrees within a scale v. number of scales—both of them should be similarly encoded as part of the at-issue content of the proposition. Yet, as the incompatibility with maximizers discussed in the example above suggests, *totally* features a different compositional profile when combining with evaluative adjectives, suggesting that quantification over dimensions, while being an independently available reading of truly multi-dimensional adjectives, cannot be an explanation for the combinability of the intensifier with such predicates.

Before proceeding to consider the distribution of *totally* with modals, it is important to verify the empirical robustness of the association between the status of *totally* and the subjective nature of the modified adjective. An online acceptability rating survey, which I now turn to discuss, was conducted to fulfill this goal. Two factors were crossed in a 2×2 design with four conditions in total. The first factor, ‘Adjective’, manipulates the nature of the adjective, with ‘subjective’ (e.g. *beautiful*) and ‘dimensional’ adjectives (e.g. *large*) as levels. To rule out the possibility of a lexical reading of *totally*, only adjectives encoding scales open on top were chosen. The second factor manipulates the type of intensifier, with *totally*—our target, predicted to be affected by subjectivity—and *really*—a control that has not been claimed to track subjectivity (Constantinescu 2011; McNabb 2012b)—as levels. A full item is provided in (3.1.1).

(18) John’s new house is {*totally/really*} {*beautiful/large*}.

A total of eight items, each with a different pair of adjectives, were created. The test items were distributed into four lists with a Latin Square design. 10 fillers were added. After each sentence, the participants were asked to answer the question ‘How acceptable does this sentence sound in English?’ on a one–seven scale, with one = ‘completely unacceptable’ and seven = ‘perfectly acceptable’. 40 participants of age between 18 and 40 were recruited online and paid \$1 for participation.¹⁵ The results are plotted in Figure 1.

For statistical analysis, linear mixed-effects models were run on the sentence ratings with the R statistical package *lmerTest* (Kuznetsova *et al.* 2016). The fixed effect predictors included Adjective Type and Intensifier and their interactions, and the random effects included random intercepts and random slopes for subjects and items. ‘Really’ and ‘dimensional’ were selected as reference levels. A main effect of Intensifier was found ($\beta = -2.36$, standard error (SE) = 0.22, $t(38.5) = 10.2$, $p < 0.0001$) as well as an interaction between Subjectivity and Intensifier was found ($\beta = 1.62$, SE = 0.25, $t(173.14) = 6.4$, $p < 0.0001$). Post hoc comparisons with an application of a Tukey correction for multiple

15 Limiting the age range was motivated by the need to ensure a demographically homogeneous pool of subjects. Unfortunately, such a methodological decision does not allow for the possibility of exploring the acceptability of *totally* across different age groups, an interesting question that I leave to future research.

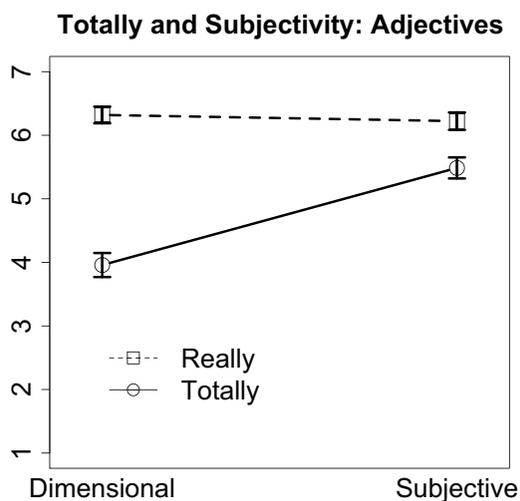


Figure 1 Acceptability of *totally* and *really* with subjective and dimensional adjectives.

comparisons¹⁶ support the following observations: (i) *totally* with subjective adjectives was rated significantly higher than with dimensional ones ($t(18.9) = 6.4, p < 0.0001$); (ii) *totally* with dimensional adjectives was rated significantly lower than *really* with dimensional adjectives ($t(38.2) = 10.5, p < 0.0001$); (iii) no significant difference emerged between *really* with subjective and dimensional adjectives ($t(18.9) = 0.4, p = 0.97$). In sum, these results confirm the interaction between the felicity of pragmatic *totally* and subjectivity, corroborating the intuitions and the corpus data reported above.

Modals

Let us now consider modals, the second class of predicates with which *totally* is licensed. Once again, *totally* appears to be licensed when the modal is dependent on a subjective assessment on the part of the speaker (or a relevant anchor), as shown in (19).

- (19) a. You **should** *totally* click on that link!
 b. Owners **must** *totally* be from Chicago! I see Bears, Blackhawks and Cubs as the decorations in here.¹⁷
 c. The Bulls **will** *totally* make the playoffs.

While there is hardly consensus on the analysis of these modals—and, once again, the present paper is not designed to provide a direct contribution in this direction—a connection with subjectivity has been separately suggested for all of them.¹⁸

- 16 The comparisons were carried out with the 'lsmeans' function in the *lsmeans* package (Lenth 2017).
 17 http://www.yelp.com/biz_photos/dt-kirbys-lafayette?select=tyJmzDm-PtYX5Z_2hTxPCG, accessed June 5th 2015
 18 A possible confound is that in all these examples *totally* occurs between the modal and its prejacent and could in principle be interpreted as a VP-level modifier. Yet, this objection can be rejected on the basis of two arguments. First, note that in all the examples above the VP-level reading is blocked

The use of *should* to give advice is dependent on a subjective assessment of whether the prejacent fits the advisee's goals (Yanovich 2014); the meaning of epistemic *must* is relativised to both the belief state of a particular individual (Stephenson 2007) and, often, a perspective-dependent *best explanation* from that knowledge/evidence (Lassiter 2014).¹⁹ Finally, *will* and *would* require a subjective prediction of the speaker about an event that is not accessible to the speakers, giving rise to communicative situations similar to those in which opinions about personal taste are compared (for a way of implementing this intuition, see Giannakidou & Zwarts 1999; Giannakidou & Mari 2013 on the notion of *subjective veridicality* and *projected truth*). Conversely, with flavors of modality that do not leave room for subjectivity and are tied to objective criteria of evaluation, the status of *totally* considerably worsens. This is shown by three basic contrasts: advice v. deontic modals based on a set of external laws; epistemic v. deontic *must*; and predictive v. 'scheduled' uses of the future (Copley 2002), where the latter make reference to an event that has been already settled, making a subjective assessment irrelevant. For each of the contrasts, the second member is degraded with *totally*.²⁰

by the fact that the prejacent does not make a scale compositionally available, as suggested by the impossibility of replacing *totally* with another maximizer. As such, only the pragmatic reading of *totally* is available.

- (1) a. # You should *completely/entirely* click on that link.
b. # The Bulls will *completely/entirely* make the playoffs.

When a VP-level reading is instead available, as in the following example, all maximizers are licensed.

- (2) a. You should *totally* fill out that form. VP-level reading available.
b. You should *completely/entirely* fill out that form. Other maximizers licensed.

Second, speakers report no substantive difference in the interpretation if, for the same examples, *totally* is moved above the modal.

- (3) a. You *totally* should click on that link.
b. The Bulls *totally* will make the playoffs.

On a broader level, it has been observed that certain modal modifiers can indeed occur either before or after the modal, with no significant difference in meaning (e.g. *easily* discussed in Klecha 2014)

19 For a different analysis of epistemic *must*, see von Stechow & Gillies (2010).

20 Note that, on a par with adjectives, subjective modals give rise to faultless disagreement, where the object of the dispute depends on the particular modal (inference from evidence, prediction, judgment of advisability). Modals with which *totally* is infelicitous, however, only give rise to factual disagreement. Whenever they are used in a dispute, there appears to be a source of evidence that can solve the conflict without relying on the interlocutors' subjective feelings/predictions, as shown by the contrast below

- (1) a. Kim: The Bulls will make the playoffs.
Alex: No, they won't! They aren't deep enough. Faultless
b. Kim: The Bulls will play Tuesday at 8.30 pm.
Alex: No, they play at 7. Factual

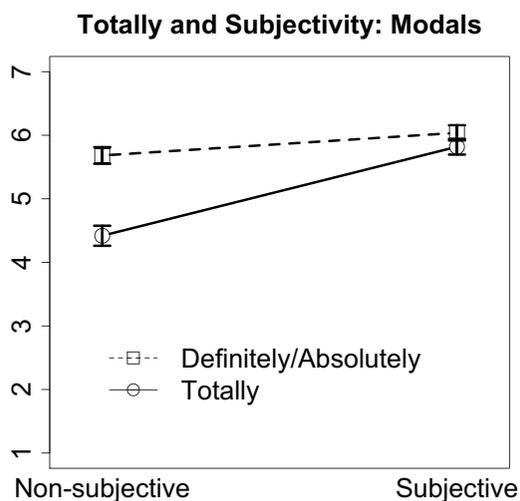


Figure 2 Acceptability of *totally* and *definitely/absolutely* with subjective and non-subjective modals.

- (20) a. ✓ The owners must *totally* be from Chicago! I see Bears, Blackhawks and Cubs as the decorations in here. Epistemic
 b. # The owners must *totally* apply for a special license, otherwise they will be kicked out of the place. External obligation
- (21) a. ✓ You *totally* have to watch this movie. It's awesome. Advice
 b. # You *totally* have to apply for a parking permit if you want to leave the car here and find it tomorrow. External obligation
- (22) a. ✓ The Bulls will *totally* make the playoffs. Prediction/Opinion
 b. # The Bulls will *totally* play Tuesday at 8.30 pm. Scheduled

Following the procedure adopted for adjectives, the correlation between the status of pragmatic *totally* and the presence of a subjective modal in the proposition has been tested experimentally. Two factors were crossed in a 2×2 design, with four conditions in total. The first factor, 'Subjectivity', manipulates the nature of the modal, with 'subjective' and 'non-subjective' modal as levels. Following the discussion above, three subjective v. non-subjective modal contrasts were tested: epistemic v. deontic *must*; advice v. deontic *have to*; and predictive v. scheduled *will*. The second factor manipulates the type of intensifier, with *totally* and a control not sensitive to subjectivity as levels. *Absolutely* was used as a control for *must* and *have to*, while *definitely* was used as a control for *will*. A full item is provided in (23).

- (23) The Bulls will {*totally/definitely*} {*make the playoffs/play Tuesday at 8.30 pm*}.

A total of 12 items—four each for *must*, *have to* and *will*—were created. The test items were distributed into four lists with a Latin Square Design with 10 fillers. The instructions were the same as in the first experiment. 40 participants were recruited online and paid \$1 for participation. The results are plotted in Figure 2.

For statistical analysis, linear mixed-effects models were run on the sentence ratings with the R statistical package *lmerTest* (Kuznetsova *et al.* 2016). The fixed effect predictors included Subjectivity and Intensifier and their interactions, and the random effects included random intercepts and random slopes for subjects and items. ‘Definitely/Absolutely’ and ‘non-subjective’ were selected as reference levels. In the general model, a main effect of Intensifier was found ($\beta = -1.27$, $SE = 0.16$, $t(59.7) = 7.6$, $p < 0.0001$) as well as an interaction between Subjectivity and Intensifier was found ($\beta = 1.04$, $SE = 0.19$, $t(296.5) = 5.3$, $p < 0.0001$). Post hoc comparisons with an application of a Tukey correction for multiple comparisons support the following observations: (i) *totally* with subjective modal was rated significantly higher than with non-subjective ones ($t(22.4) = 6.8$, $p < 0.0001$); (ii) *totally* with non-subjective modals was rated significantly lower than *definitely/absolutely* with non-subjective modals ($t(59.7) = 7.6$, $p < 0.0001$); (iii) no significant difference emerged between *definitely/absolutely* with subjective and non-subjective adjectives ($t(22.3) = 1.7$, $p = 0.37$). In sum, while the control intensifiers are not significantly affected by subjectivity, a robust correlation emerges between the felicity of pragmatic *totally* and subjectivity for modal expressions as well, confirming the intuitions and the contrasts reported above.²¹

3.1.2 *Totally and outlandishness* Finally, let us consider the status of factual propositions. Thus far, we have seen that propositions containing subjective predicates are considerably better than those containing factual ones. Yet, there is an important exception to be noted. While factual assertions describing nondescript, routine events are clearly odd when intensified with *totally* (as in 24a), their status strikingly improves if we make their content less plausible, and hence harder to believe, as in (24b).

- (24) a. Luke *totally* got married at 25.
 b. Luke *totally* got married at 12.

This intuition is confirmed by the retrieval on the web of uses of *totally* with out-of-the-blue factual assertions, all of which describe events that, by virtue of a high degree of deviance from the assumed norms, are somewhat more likely to encounter the hearer’s skepticism than a regular factual assertion. In (25a), the speaker reports of a dismissal from work taking place on the day in which similar events only happen as pranks; the person in (25b)

21 To look into the subjective v. non-subjective contrasts for the three modals separately, additional mixed-effects models with the same structure as the general one were fitted for the subsets of data containing *must*, *have to* and *will* respectively. As far as main effects and interactions are concerned, the findings for each modal are identical to the ones of the general model, with one exception: no significant interaction was found between Subjectivity and Intensifier for *must*. As far as post hoc comparisons are concerned, we found that: (i) *totally* with subjective modals was rated significantly higher than with non-subjective ones (*will* and *have to*: $ps < 0.0001$; *must*: $p < 0.05$); (ii), *totally* with non-subjective modals was rated significantly lower than the control with non-subjective modals (*will* and *have to*: $p < 0.0001$) with the exception of *must* ($p > 0.01$); (iii) no significant difference emerges between controls with subjective and non-subjective modals, even though controls tend to be better with subjective than with non-subjective modals (all $ps > 0.01$). In sum, while *will* and *have to* pattern in the exact same way, *must* is the one for which *totally* records the smallest difference between subjective and non-subjective uses, as well as the overall lowest acceptability across conditions. I leave the investigation of this idiosyncrasy of *must* to future research.

elects the railway as his camping site; and in (25c) the head of a former US president appears in a show, forcing the producing company to issue a formal apology.²²

- (25) a. True story: This one time? I *totally* got fired on April Fools Day.
 b. Dude *totally* walked off a train. Threw his shit down & camped out.
 c. George W. Bush was *totally* beheaded In ‘Game Of Thrones’.²³

The use of *totally* in factual assertions presents an empirical difference with respect to the uses with subjective predicates: while in the previous environments the intensifier could be paraphrased with adverbs expressing epistemic confidence, such as *definitely*, this paraphrase breaks down with the cases above (in (27a)). Also, note that the use of *totally* in these examples cannot be paraphrased with Verum Focus, which, as will be discussed in Section 3.2, can license the use of the intensifier in responsive factual assertions (in (27b)). Instead, a better gloss is offered by mirative constructions—e.g. OMG! or WTF!—which convey an effect of disbelief or surprise on the part of the speaker (in (27c)).²⁴

(26) With modals:

- a. ✓ You should *definitely* click on that link.
 b. ✓ The Bulls will *definitely* make the playoffs.

(27) With factual assertions:

- a. # A dude *definitely* walked off a train, threw his shit down & camped out.
 b. # A dude *did* walk off a train, throw his shit down & camp out.
 c. ✓ OMG!/WTF! A dude walked off a train, threw his shit down & camped out!

Once again, such data have been put to test in a quantitative study. For outlandish assertions, however, the design of the previous studies cannot be adopted wholesale. While the categories of subjective and non-subjective modals/adjectives are sufficiently robust to serve as a primitive to design a survey, there are no lexical signatures of outlandishness, nor are there diagnostics that, similarly to faultless disagreement for subjectivity, can directly test for whether a content is deviant from our background assumptions. In light of this fact, a necessary step to construct the experimental materials is to first establish an empirically reliable distinction between outlandish and non-outlandish propositions. To do so, a norming study was run in which participants were presented with a list of 20 sentences and asked to answer the question ‘How bizarre is the content of this sentence?’ after each item. Of the 20 sentences, 10 were derived from the web-based examples with *totally* reported in (25) and 10 were constructed. A total of eight sentences were then extracted and grouped in two categories based on their degree of outlandishness: ‘outlandish’ assertions included the four sentences with the highest score; ‘normal’ assertions included the four sentences with the lowest score. Four lists of four sentences each were constructed, each including two outlandish and two non-outlandish ones. In each list, one outlandish and one non-outlandish sentence was modified by *totally*; as a control, the remaining two sentences

22 <http://www.today.com/popculture/hbo-apologizes-over-decapitated-george-w-bush-likeness-game-thrones-828036>

23 <http://www.buzzfeed.com/daves4/george-w-bush-was-beheaded-in-game-of-thrones>

24 An anonymous reviewer observes that, to the extent that *definitely* is acceptable in such contexts, it must likewise receive a mirative interpretation. Most interviewed speakers, however, found *definitely* out of place altogether in this environment.

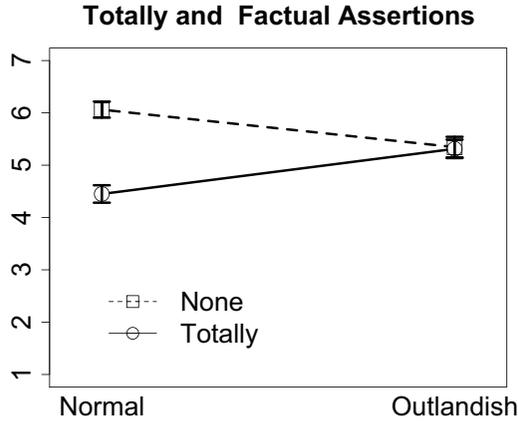


Figure 3 Acceptability of *totally* with outlandish and non-outlandish assertions.

in each list were presented with no modifier. A total of 80 participants were recruited on Mechanical Turk. Below is an example of a list:

- (28) a. **Outlandish, *totally***
 A cab driver *totally* asked us if we had any pot.
- b. **Outlandish, none**
 Joe got married at 13.
- c. **Non-outlandish, *totally***
 John totally had dinner at 7 pm last night.
- d. **Non-outlandish, none**
 Emily spent 25 dollars on groceries last night.

The experiment consisted of two parts. In the first part, subjects were asked to rate the acceptability of each sentence on a one–seven scale, so as to assess whether a correlation holds between the status of *totally* and the degree to which the modified assertion challenges our background assumptions about the world. The results are plotted in Figure 3.

Linear mixed-effects models were run on the sentence ratings. The fixed effect predictors included Content (‘Non-Outlandish’ v. ‘Outlandish’) and Modifier (‘Totally’ v. ‘None’) and their interactions, and the random effects included random intercepts for subjects and items. ‘Non-outlandish’ and ‘none’ were selected as reference levels. An interaction between Content and Modifier was found ($\beta = -1.52$, $SE = 0.46$, $t(4) = -3.2$, $p < 0.05$). Post hoc comparisons with an application of a Tukey correction for multiple comparisons revealed that, as predicted, the use of *totally* is more acceptable in outlandish than in normal assertions ($t(4) = 4.9$, $p < 0.05$). For unmodified assertions the pattern is reversed, with normal assertions being more acceptable than outlandish ones ($t(4) = 5.1$, $p < 0.05$).

To confirm that the effect was indeed driven by the outlandishness of the assertion, in the second part of the experiment participants were asked to briefly explain why, in the previous part, they rated the sentences differently (if they did so). Unlimited blank space was allotted to type the answer in the survey. Most participants touched on the deviant content of the outlandish sentence as the crucial factor that improved the status of *totally*, confirming the intuition that, in factual assertions with markedly deviant content, the status

of *totally* considerably improves, and that speakers are aware of the role of outlandishness as a factor determining the acceptability of *totally*.²⁵

3.2 Responsive assertions

The discussion thus far has only involved situations where pragmatic *totally* is used in discourse-initial position. Things considerably change, however, if *totally* is used in responsive assertions, highlighting an interaction between discourse structure and subjectivity. Let us consider the assertion ‘# Luke *totally* got married at 25’, which, as seen above, does not license *totally* out of the blue and does not give rise to faultless disagreement. The crucial observation is the following: when used in response to discourse moves expressing less than full commitment to the anchor proposition, *totally* becomes perfectly felicitous with factual assertions, *regardless* of whether the content is outlandish. Three types of move, in particular, are systematically able to license *totally* in the ensuing conversational turn: (i) a polar question about *p*; (ii) a doubtful assertion of *p*; (iii) asserting the complement of the proposition. This shows that, when certain discourse conditions are met, subjectivity and outlandishness can be overridden as a requirement for using *totally*.

- (29) a. **John:** Did Luke get married at 25? Asks whether *p*
 Mark: Yes, he TOTALLY got married at 25.
 b. **John:** I can’t remember if Luke got married at 25. Doubt about *p*
 Mark: Yes, he TOTALLY got married at 25.
 c. **John:** Luke didn’t get married at 25. Asserts $\neg p$
 Mark: No! What are you talking about! He TOTALLY got married at 25.

The contrast clearly emerges with modals as well. Recall that, out of the blue, *totally* with deontic modals based on a body of external laws sounds infelicitous. Yet, if embedded in the right discourse context, it becomes perfectly acceptable.

- (30) **John:** Do I have to turn in the assignment by 3?
 Mark: Yes, you TOTALLY have to turn in the assignment by 3.

Note that in these cases *totally* normally comes with pitch stress, represented here in all caps.²⁶ I will instead suggest in Section 4.5 that stress marks the presence of Verum Focus, a crucial requirement to license *totally* in this responsive context.

25 Sample comments included the following.

- (1) a. ‘The use of the word *totally* in sentence A is more appropriate than sentence B because wearing flip flops to a wedding is more shocking than getting married at 28’.
 b. ‘The use of “totally” feels more appropriate if the associated action is somehow surprising or inappropriate.’
 c. ‘The use of *totally* in the first sentence connotes surprise like “can you believe he did that?”’

26 For details on the prosodic profile of this stress, I refer to Irwin (2014).

3.2.1 *The distribution of totally: Summary* The following table summarises the distribution of pragmatic *totally* with respect to discourse position and subjectivity.

(31)

Discourse position	Previous move	Nature of p	<i>totally</i> licensed
Initiating	NA	Factual	#
Initiating	NA	Factual— Outlandish	✓
Initiating	NA	Subjective	✓
Reactive	Assert p	Factual	#
Reactive	Question p	Factual	✓
Reactive	Assert $\neg p$	Factual	✓

4 ANALYSIS

We can now put together a proposal to model the contribution of pragmatic *totally*. The account needs to capture three aspects: the non-trivial interaction with discourse structure and subjectivity; the different pragmatic effects of the intensifier, ranging from heightened confidence to surprise; and the specific semantic properties discussed in Section 2, for example positive polarity, lack of interaction with the at-issue content and speech-act type sensitivity. In a nutshell, I analyse pragmatic *totally* as a Common Ground-managing operator that conveys an attitude roughly paraphrasable as *unquestionably*, or, more explicitly, ‘from the speaker’s perspective, there should be no option other than adding *p* to the Common Ground’. As a consequence, the use of *totally* will only be felicitous in utterances whose addition to the Common Ground is not something that the speaker typically takes for granted. Utterances of this sort include those containing subjective predicates and those making outlandish claims. In addition, I will argue that such utterances include those with Verum Focus, thus accounting for the attested uses of pragmatic *totally* in responsive utterances. Conversely, in the theory of discourse structure we assume here, assertions involving non-subjective predicates and non-outlandish claims are ones where the speaker assumes that the only allowable continuations of the discourse necessarily add the asserted proposition to the Common Ground. In this way, our account captures the infelicity of *totally* in such contexts. Finally, since pragmatic *totally* operates at a level above the truth-conditions of a sentence, and since it crucially assumes that the utterance in question is potentially making an addition to the Common Ground, the account captures the diagnostics for pragmatic *totally* outlined in Section 2.

On a technical level, I model the attitude conveyed by *totally* in terms of universal quantification over worlds in the possible Common Ground (henceforth, CG) projected by an assertion. Before presenting the analysis, however, I lay out the basic ingredients that will constitute the technical machinery of the proposal: Farkas & Bruce (2010)’s discourse model (in Section 4.1), and Giannakidou and Mari’s (Giannakidou 2013; Giannakidou & Mari 2013) notion of non-homogeneity (in Section 4.2), which allows us to see how the environments that license *totally* can be seen as a natural class.

4.1 Preliminaries: discourse effects and subjectivity

Let us consider again the two different components that determine the felicity of *totally*: the subjectivity/outlandishness of the proposition and the discourse position of the intensifier. The first question that needs to be asked is whether the various environments in which *totally* is licensed, which at first sight have little to do with one another, can be seen as a natural class. In order to proceed in the right direction, it is first of all important to understand how subjectivity and outlandishness relate to discourse, and how the different discourse moves considered above structure the conversational context. To see how this is captured formally, I build on the model outlined by Farkas & Bruce (2010), who offer a comprehensive view of how different speech acts structure the context and affect the distinct components of a discourse state. The model, which combines insights from the foundational proposals by Stalnaker (1978), Hamblin (1971) and Carlson (1983), represents a conversational state by means of four main components:

- The *Common Ground* (henceforth, CG), which consists of the set of propositions that have already been confirmed by the discourse participants and represents the background against which discourse develops.
- The participants' *Discourse Commitments* (henceforth, DCs), which include the set of propositions that have been publicly taken as true by individual participants in a conversation, but which have *not* been added to the CG.
- *The Table* (henceforth, T), a stack of propositions whose top item corresponds to the most salient proposition, that is, the one that has been raised by a move and whose addition to the CG is still 'under discussion' amongst the discourse participants.
- The *Projected Set* (henceforth, PS), that is, the set of *possible* common grounds that correspond to the felicitous continuations of the conversation calculated on the basis of what propositions are at issue on the table and what propositions are in the common ground.

Against this background, speech acts are seen as functions that take a proposition and an input conversational state as argument and return an output conversational state (Krifka 2001); the differences between speech acts can be cashed out in terms of the effect that they have on each of these components between the input and the output state, as I now proceed to discuss.

4.1.1 Factual assertions and polar questions Let us begin with factual assertions and polar questions in discourse initial moves, the most straightforward cases. I model the assertion operator ASSERT as a function from an input context K_i to an output context K_o , where A is the author of the assertion, $DC_{A,o}$ and $DC_{A,i}$ are A 's output and input context discourse commitments and T_o and T_i are the output and input Table, respectively.

- (32) • $\text{ASSERT}(p, A, K_i) = K_o$ such that:
- $DC_{A,o} = \{DC_{A,i} \cup \{p\}\}$
 - $T_o = \text{push}(\{p\}, T_i)$
 - $PS_o = \{CG_i \cup \{p\}\}$

When A makes an assertion, the effects modeled in (32) above are the following. First, p is added to A 's *PC*, which already represents a set of worlds. Second, p is pushed on

top of the input Table via the move *push*, whereby p is made available to the interlocutor for approval or rejection. The resulting Table T_o corresponds to the input stack T_i with p pushed on top.²⁷ Third, a new PS is projected consisting of the union between p and the input CG. If B has no objection, p is added to the CG and, as a consequence, removed from the Table. On this view, assertions can be seen as proposals that are made available for a variety of reactions. They are moves directed at enriching the CG, but which do not automatically update it. Rather, the interlocutor's acceptance is required to ratify acceptance and update the CG. (33) below presents an example.

- (33) a. A to B: Luke got married on January 15.
 b. Move: Factual Assertion

Discourse component	Before A's assertion	After A's assertion
DC _A	DC _i	{DC _i ∪ {p}}
DC _B	DC _i	DC _i
Table		{p}
CG	CG _i	CG _i
PS	CG _i	{CG _i ∪ {p}}

Let us compare this effect with the one contributed by a polar question. Intuitively, these moves are at the opposite ends of a spectrum. While assertions are purely *informative*, that is, they are proposals for the addition of content, questions are *inquisitive*. They are not so much proposals as *requests* for proposals. Their effects are captured in the following template.

- (34) • POLAR QUESTION(p , A, K_i) = K_o such that:
 • DC_{A,o}: DC_{A,i} ∪ ∅
 • T_o = *push* ({ p , $\neg p$ }, T_i)
 • PS_o = {CG_i ∪ { p }, CG_i ∪ { $\neg p$ }}

Several important differences distinguish a polar question from an assertion. First, what is being put on the Table is *not* simply p , but a set containing both p and its complement $\neg p$. Each of these two alternatives is pragmatically encoded by the question as a felicitous, unmarked continuation of the discourse following the speech act. This, in turn, is reflected in the structure of the PS, which contains two possible CGs: one in which p is added, and one in which $\neg p$ is added. Finally, asking a polar question does not change the speaker's DC set. If the speaker is asking about p , it follows that she is not in a position of publicly committing to it individually. Let us show this with a concrete example.

27 In Farkas and Bruce (2010) model, what gets pushed on the table following an assertion is the tuple $\langle D, \{p\} \rangle$, where D represents the syntactic structure representing this sentence (i.e. Declarative) and $\{p\}$ its denotation. For reasons of readability, we will omit this detail and represent this move as if p were the only object that gets added to the Table. Also, see Ginzburg (1996) for a proposal to model the Table as a partial order. We follow Farkas and Bruce (2010) in suggesting that this is not necessary to model the discourse moves that will be discussed in this paper.

- (35) a. A (to B): Did Luke get married on January 15?
 b. Move: Polar question

Discourse component	Before A's move	After A's move
DC_A	DC_i	DC_i
DC_B	DC_i	DC_i
<i>Table</i>		$\{p, \neg p\}$
CG	CG_i	CG_i
PS	CG_i	$\{CG_i \cup \{p\}, CG_i \cup \{\neg p\}\}$

Before moving on to the discussion of subjective assertions, it is important to emphasise a crucial difference between assertions and polar questions. As we have seen, neither of these moves automatically updates the CG. In light of this, one might wonder why the *Table* and the *PS* are structured differently in the two speech acts. After all, if assertions can be rejected, why not encode the addition of $\neg p$ as an alternative in the *PS*? This difference is warranted by the observation that a $\neg p$ answer to a question is an unproblematic move, which contributes to enriching the CG. By contrast, rejecting an assertion is a *highly* disruptive move. First, it undermines the felicity of the assertion itself, implying that the speaker is to blame for producing an infelicitous speech act. Second, it leads the exchange into a *conversational crisis*, where the two interlocutors have inconsistent commitments, and no consistent CG can be projected. As a result, this situation can only be solved via retraction or via a mutual negotiation to leave the issue unsettled and ‘agree to disagree’ (Farkas & Bruce 2010). Rejection, while possible in the unfolding of the conversation, is instead *not* pragmatically encoded by an assertion as a possible outcome.

4.1.2 Subjective assertions Let us now consider the discourse profile of assertions containing subjective predicates. Assertions of this kind have not been addressed by Farkas & Bruce (2010) and, to my knowledge, have not received an explicit treatment within this model in terms of their discourse effects. I propose an extension of Bruce and Farkas’ model to account for them, building on the theory of subjective predicates proposed by Stephenson (2007) and Malamud & Stephenson (2014). Stephenson (2007) proposes an analysis in which the interpretation of propositions containing a subjective predicate is relativised not only to a world, but also to a *judge* representing the particular perspective with respect to which the predicate is evaluated.²⁸ While with factual assertions the judge is trivial—different perspectives on p do not affect whether Luke got married at 25 or not—it plays a crucial role for subjective assertions. Introducing the judge variable, thus, has two consequences on the pragmatics of these predicates.

28 I am aware that the choice of hardwiring a *judge* argument in the semantics, advocated by Lasnik (2005) and Stephenson (2007), is not uncontroversial. Judge free semantic accounts have also been proposed (see e.g. Stojanovic 2007; Pearson 2013). While I follow Stephenson’s account in this paper, I mostly do so for practical purposes, as judge arguments provide a handy convention for representing the pragmatic behavior of subjective assertions. I do not intend to take a particular position on this debate, or on the deep philosophical underpinnings of faultless disagreement. And while exploring this would go beyond the scope of the paper, the proposed account of the discourse effects of subjective predicates does not exclude the possibility to capture the very same facts with a judge-free semantics.

On the one hand, it requires the introduction of a new norm of assertion, which Stephenson, following Lasersohn (2005), labels *autocentric*. On this view, the felicity condition of an assertion is merely that the speaker, in her doxastic state, believes that p . Crucially, however, the speaker need not believe that p is true as judged by the other conversation participants. This requirement makes the norm of assertion for propositions with a nontrivial judge parameter *weaker* than the ones where the judge is not relevant, as Stephenson explicitly acknowledges (Stephenson 2007: 509). On the other hand, although the norm of assertion is anchored to an individual, assertions are still proposals that can be either accepted or rejected, where finding convergence is inscribed in the general participants' project of enriching the CG of the conversation.²⁹

With respect to this norm of assertion, subjective predicates enter the CG if they are agreed upon by all participants, that is, if they are true as parameterised to all judges involved in the conversation. In this perspective, the group of participants can be seen as just another judge, a *collective* one, with respect to which all propositions in the CG must hold true. With these theoretical assumptions in mind, we can move on to explore the discourse profile of assertions containing subjective predicates.

Specifically, I propose that assessments containing subjective predicates partially overlap with both factual assertions and polar questions. On the one hand, they have *informative* nature, as they convey information about the speaker's view on a particular issue. Similar to assertions, then, they add p to the speaker's list of discourse commitments. On the other hand, they are *inquisitive*, as they summon the hearer's view on the issue.³⁰ Similar to questions, subjective assertions load the Table with the proposition and its complement, encoding disagreement as a pragmatically allowed option. However, they are unique in that the $\{p, \neg p\}$ option is anchored to the addressee's point of view. As a result of this, the PS contains two possible CGs: one in which, following agreement, p is added to the CG and one in which, following disagreement, no joint commitment is reached.³¹ The specific update procedure is provided in the following template, where the subscript j on p indicates a variable for the judge to which the proposition is parameterised, p_A and p_B

29 A different case is represented by *presentational* uses of subjective predicates. Stephenson (2007) brings evaluative predicates embedded under 'I find that' or with an overt experiencer as example of this. These cannot be challenged even in case the interlocutor has a different view/experience on the matter.

- (1) Mary: How is the cake?
 Sue: It tastes good to me.
 Sam: # No, it doesn't! It tastes terrible.

Dechaine *et al.* (2016) make a similar point, arguing that these constructions merely update the *Origo Ground*, as opposed to the Common Ground.

30 The same term has been used by Giannakidou (2013) to describe assertions containing epistemic modals, even though the author does not provide an explicit account of the discourse profile of these speech acts.

31 This corresponds to what Farkas & Bruce (2010) label *agree to disagree* moves following denials to assertions. The crucial difference is that, while 'agreeing to disagreeing' with factual assertions is a last resort strategy to avoid conversational crises—crucially, one which is not encoded in the PS projected by a factual assertion—it is instead a felicitous continuation for assertions containing a subjective predicate. As such, it contributes to outlining the potential common grounds created by the assertion.

indicate the proposition as judged by speaker and the hearer respectively and p_{AB} indicate the proposition as judged by *both* the speaker and the hearer, that is, by the collective judge in the conversation.

- (36) • SUBJECTIVE ASSERTION(p_j, A, K_i) = K_o such that:
- $DC_{A,o}: \{DC_{A,i} \cup \{p_A\}\}$
 - $T_o = push(\{p_B, \neg p_B\}, T_i)$
 - $PS_o = \{CG_i \cup \{p_{AB}\}, CG_i \cup \{p_A\} \cup \{\neg p_B\}\}$

The following sentence provides an example:

- (37) a. A (to B): The Bulls *will* make the playoffs.
 b. Move: Subjective Assertion

Discourse component	Before A's move	After A's move
DC_A	DC_i	$\{DC_i \cup \{p_A\}\}$
DC_B	DC_i	DC_i
<i>Table</i>		$\{p_B, \neg p_B\}$
CG	CG_i	CG_i
PS	CG_i	$\{CG_i \cup \{p_{AB}\}, CG_i \cup \{p_A\} \cup \{\neg p_B\}\}$

That subjective assertions come with the discourse profile specified above is empirically shown by the way in which denials following these moves shape the continuation of discourse. On the one hand, a denial targeting a factual assertion leads the discourse into an inconsistent condition, which requires a solution via retraction or an ‘agree to disagree’ resolution. No conversational crisis, instead, comes with subjective disagreement. While it is obviously possible for the interlocutors to elaborate further on the sources of their disagreement, a divergence is not strong enough to force a retraction, as shown by (38a) and observed by [Stephenson \(2007\)](#).

- (38) a. **Kim:** The movie was awesome.
Alex: No, I didn't like it.
Kim: # Oh, sorry, I got it wrong.
- b. **Kim:** Luke got married at 25.
Alex: No, he didn't. He got married at 27.
Kim: ✓ Oh, sorry, I mixed up the dates.

We can thus conclude that subjective and factive assertions, despite being both encoded in the form of declarative sentences, ought not be treated on a par with respect to their impact on discourse, and should therefore be assigned different discourse profiles.

4.1.3 Outlandish assertions Finally, let us consider *outlandish assertions*, the last type of context where *totally* is licensed. As we saw earlier, these speech acts propose updates whose content somewhat deviates from our expectations, and is thus likely to undergo special scrutiny before making its way into the Common Ground. I translate this intuition by proposing that outlandish assertions differ from regular factual assertions in two respects. First, they come with a strong bias against p in the input Common Ground. Second, they

project two possible continuations of the conversation: one in which the listener is willing to overcome the bias and accept p ; and one in which the listener cautiously double checks with the speaker on the appropriateness of adding p to the Common Ground, deferring any decision on the acceptance of the proposal until after the speaker's confirmation (see Romero & Han 2004; van Rooij & Safarova 2003 for extensive discussion of double-checking moves³²).

An example is provided below, where this function is performed by Mary by means of *Wait, really?* or *Wait, did this really happen?*

- (39) a. Luke: A dude walked off a train, threw his shit down and camped out.
Mary: *Wait, really?*
- b. Luke: George Bush was beheaded in Game of Thrones.
Mary: *Wait, did this really happen?*

In the discourse model, I follow Romero & Han (2004) in suggesting that such double-checking reactions are meta-conversational moves, whose aim is to verify the appropriateness of adding a proposition to the CG. As such, these moves behave as *biased* polar questions: they partition the PS not between adding p or $\neg p$, but between absolute certainty about adding p to CG—the unexpected option, labeled by the authors as FOR-SURE-CG(p)—and any other degree of certainty—that is the expected option, labeled as \neg FOR-SURE-CG(p). This partition essentially asks whether the addressee is sure that p should be added to the CG or not. The difference between the output PS of a run-of-the mill polar question and a double-checking polar question is summarised below.

- (40) a. **Regular polar Q output PS:** $\{CG_i \cup \{p\}, CG_i \cup \{\neg p\}\}$
- b. **Double-checking Q output PS:** $\{CG_i \cup \{\text{FOR-SURE-CG}(p)\}, CG_i \cup \{\neg \text{FOR-SURE-CG}(p)\}\}$

Assembling the pieces, the emerging picture is one in which outlandish assertions effectively project two possible continuations of the exchange, depending on how willing/ready the listener is to overcome the $\neg p$ bias. In one such continuation, the listener opts to accept the update, just like in a normal assertion. In the alternative continuation, the listener can instead prefer to be more cautious and use a double-checking move of the sort discussed above, opting to provisionally hold on to their background assumptions until further confirmation is provided. The resulting discourse profile of an outlandish assertions is outlined below, with the PS corresponding to the double-check response highlighted in boldface.

- (41) • OUTLANDISH ASSERTION(p, A, K_i) = K_o such that:
- $DC_{A,o} = \{DC_{A,i} \cup \{p\}\}$
 - $T_o = \text{push}(\{p\}, T_i)$
 - $PS_o = \{CG_i \cup \{p\}, CG_i \cup \{\text{F-S-CG}(p)\}, CG_i \cup \{\neg \text{F-S-CG}(p)\}\}$

32 These moves are easily triggered not just by outlandish assertions, but in any situation in which the proposition at issue is pitted against a set of negative beliefs or expectations, either shared by the interlocutors or privately held by an individual speaker.

A concrete example is provided below.

- (42) a. A (to B): A dude walked off a train, threw his shit down and camped out.
 b. Move: Outlandish Assertion

Disc. comp.	Before A's move	After A's move
DC_A	DC_i	$\{DC_i \cup \{p\}\}$
DC_B	DC_i	DC_i
Table		$\{p\}$
CG	CG_i	CG_i
PS	CG_i	$\{CG_i \cup \{p\}, CG_i \cup \{FS-CG(p)\}, CG_i \cup \{\neg FS-CG(p)\}\}$

The idea that outlandish assertions come with a special discourse profile is supported by a number of empirical observations. I will consider two here. First, outlandish assertions can be introduced by anticipatory moves such as *believe it or not*, a speaker's comment that explicitly empowers the listener with the possibility of questioning the appropriateness of the update. The same preamble, instead, is odd with regular assertions, unless the listener already expressed disagreement in the previous moves (which, of course, would disqualify the assertions from being discourse-initial).

- (43) a. \checkmark *Believe it or not*, a dude walked off a train, threw his shit down and camped out. Out
 b. \checkmark *Believe it or not*, George Bush was beheaded in Game of Thrones. Out
 c. # *Believe it or not*, John got married at 28. Non-out
 d. # *Believe it or not*, Mary woke up at 8 am this morning. Non-out

Second, double-checking moves have different status following the two types of assertions. If they follow a factual assertion, they are highly disruptive moves, and are only felicitous insofar as the listener possess sufficient evidence to successfully contradict the claim of their interlocutor. By contrast, the same kind of response is systematically licensed following an outlandish assertion. The difference emerges in the following contrast. If we imagine a context in which the hearer knows nothing about the facts that the speaker is discussing, double-checking is pragmatically justified only in the case of an outlandish assertions, suggesting that these type of moves indeed project this move as part of their discourse profile.

- (44) a. Luke: A dude walked off a train, threw his shit down and camped out. Out
 Mary: \checkmark Wait, really?
 Context: Mary knows nothing about the fact.
 b. Luke: George Bush was beheaded in Game of Thrones. Out
 Mary: \checkmark Wait, really?
 Context: Mary knows nothing about Game of Thrones.
 c. Luke: John got married at 28. Non-out
 Mary: # Wait, really?
 Context: Mary knows nothing about John.

4.2 From assertion types to totally: Projected Common Grounds and (non-)homogeneity

This overview has shown that different varieties of assertion, despite sharing the core effect of putting forward a proposal for increasing the Common Ground, place different constraints on how the exchange can proceed, depending on the particular type of propositional content that they convey. Besides revealing a layer of semantic variation between assertion types, this observation provides a jumping off point to look into the distribution of pragmatic *totally*. In particular, it allows us to verify if (and how) the different contexts in which the intensifier is found form a natural class, providing a window into what discourse component the intensifier is tracking. It is precisely on this aspect that the rest of the discussion will focus. The crucial generalization, informally, can be stated as follows:

- (45) **Informal generalization** — *Totally* is licensed whenever the assertion projects a *weak* relationship between p and the Common Ground. This happens either when p can be harmlessly rejected (i.e. with Subjective Assertions) or can thus be harmlessly double-checked (i.e. with Outlandish Assertions).

In the remainder of the section, I cash out the notion of weak relationship in terms of *non-homogeneity*, pointing to the assertion's Projected Set as the crucial discourse component that tracks the distribution of *totally*. To begin with, let us consider the various types of assertion discussed above. While all these moves are identical in terms of individual commitments—they entail the addition of p to the speaker's DCs—they feature an important difference in the way in which they structure the shared spaces of the discourse. More specifically, they introduce a different relationship between p and the CG. Let us consider the table below.

(46)

Discourse position	Nature of p	Totally licens.	Projected PS	PS Hom
Initiating	Fact.	#	$\{CG \cup \{p\}\}$	Yes
Initiating	Fact. - Out.	✓	$\{CG_i \cup \{p\}, CG_i \cup \{FS-CG(p)\}$ $CG_i \cup \{\neg FS-CG(p)\}\}$	No
Initiating	Subj.	✓	$\{CG \cup \{p_{AB}\}, CG \cup \{p_A\} \cup \neg\{p_B\}\}$	No

Regular factual assertions, in which *totally* is ruled out, exclusively encode a projected CG which entails p . No $\neg p$ option is allowed for as a continuation of the conversation. Building on Giannakidou and Mari's formal model of epistemic spaces (Giannakidou 1998, 2013; Giannakidou & Mari 2013) I label the PS projected by regular factual assertions *homogeneous* with respect to p ; conversely, I label the PS projected by subjective and outlandish assertions, in which *totally* is licensed, *non-homogeneous* with respect to p . For both moves, it is not the case that the CG projected by the utterance exclusively entails

p .³³ More formally, for a Projected Common Ground (henceforth, PCG) within the PS of an utterance, I propose the following distinction:

- (47) A Projected Common Ground PCG is homogeneous with respect to p iff:
 $\forall w \in \text{PCG}, p(w) = 1$
- (48) A Projected Common Ground PCG is non-homogeneous with respect to p iff:
 $\neg \forall w \in \text{PCG}, p(w) = 1$

Because Projected Sets are, in turn, *sets* of PCGs, let me extend the definition of homogeneity to this discourse component as well.

- (49) a. A Projected Set PS relative to participants A and B is homogeneous with respect to p iff:
 $\forall \text{PCG} \in \text{PS}, \text{PCG is homogeneous}$
- b. A Projected Set PS relative to participants A and B is non-homogeneous with respect to p iff:
 $\neg \forall \text{PCG} \in \text{PS}, \text{PCG is homogeneous}$

Relying on these analytical tools, it is now possible to understand more clearly in what sense subjective and outlandish assertions form a natural class, despite their obviously distinct natures. For different reasons, each of them projects a CG in which at least one $\neg p$ option is available. In a broader sense, the non-homogeneity of the PS means that, from the point of view of the CG, both types of moves project a *weaker* relationship between p and the CG than factual assertions. As we shall see briefly, it is precisely this discrepancy between the addition of p and the discourse effects of the assertion that justifies the use of *totally* as a device to strengthen the discourse move.

4.3 The proposal

It is now time to put forward a proposal to capture the contribution of pragmatic *totally*. I argue that the intensifier targets the weakness of subjective and outlandish

33 In the authors' original work, the notion of homogeneity is used to model the relationship between the presence of modal operators in the assertion and the speaker's epistemic state. Specifically, Giannakidou and Mari focus on contrasts between non-modalised, *veridical* assertions, which entail the truth of p ; and modalised, *non-veridical* assertions, which do *not* entail the truth of p . To capture the difference between these two types of sentences, the authors suggest that they are mapped onto different states of the speaker. On the one hand, veridical sentences are mapped onto *homogeneous* epistemic spaces, that is, sets of worlds in which all worlds are p -worlds; by contrast, non-veridical ones are mapped onto *non-homogeneous* (or *partitioned*) spaces, that is, sets of worlds in which there is at least one $\neg p$ world. In the current paper, I essentially propose that the same model can be used to capture the dynamics of conversational spaces, that is, to modulate sets of worlds that are shared between the interlocutors as the conversation, and thus have a collective, rather than individual, nature. A similar extension of the model from the dimension of individual/epistemic spaces to the one of collective/discourse spaces has been proposed by Mari (2015), Mari (2016) to account for the distribution of the subjunctive mood in Italian.

assertions, conveying the speaker's belief that the assertion of p should only project a continuation in which p is actually added to the CG. I informally spell out the attitude as follows.

- (50) ASSERT(*totally*(p)) = The speaker believes that there should be no option other than adding p to the CG.

On this view, *totally* is treated as a *conversational* operator with a CG-managing function, together with a class of expressions that has recently garnered attention in the field (Repp 2013). In particular, its contribution is similar to the one associated with Verum Operators like *really* (see Romero & Han 2004; Gutzmann & Castroviejo Miró 2011; Repp 2013. I address the comparison between *totally* and these operators in Section 5.1). In more technical terms, by using *totally*, the speaker signals that in her view the projected CG, despite its non-homogeneity, should be actually seen as homogeneous with respect to p . I model this intuition by suggesting that the attitude conveyed by *totally* universally quantifies over worlds in the set of possible Common Grounds projected by the assertion, requiring that all of them be p -worlds. A preliminary denotation, to be augmented throughout the analysis, is proposed below, where PCG is a projected Common Ground and PS is the set of CGs projected by the assertion.

- (51) ASSERT(*totally*(p)) = \forall PCG \in PS(Assert(p))[\forall w \in PCG]: p (w) = 1 Preliminary

An obvious problem with this denotation is that it operates on the wrong level. More precisely, the strengthening effect of *totally* as modeled here would behave as regular propositional content, directly impacting the relationship between p and the CG and changing the PS projected by the assertion. Yet, this cannot be adequate. Even when modified by *totally*, for instance, a subjective assertion does not cease to be subjective, and indeed continues to project a non-homogeneous PS. This is confirmed by the observation that it still licenses faultless disagreement, even though one of the speaker believes that every possible CG following their utterance should entail p .

- (52) a. Alex: The Bulls will make the playoffs this year.
Kim: No, they will finish 10th at best. Faultless
- b. Alex: The Bulls will *totally* make the playoffs this year.
Kim: No, they will finish 10th at best. Faultless
- c. Alex: The Bulls play in Seattle.
Kim: No, they play in Chicago. Factual

Instead, what *totally* does is conveying that, from the speaker's perspective, the PS *should* be homogeneous. As such, while targeting a shared space in the conversation, it reflects the speaker's personal attitude towards the conversation, operating on an independent dimension. To reflect this, I follow Romero & Han (2004) in positing that relationship between conversational operators like *totally* (and, in their account, *really*) and propositions is mediated by CONV_S, that is, the set of worlds where all the *conversational goals* of the speaker S are fulfilled (Romero & Han 2004: 627). Such goals, Han and Romero argue, include attaining maximal information and increasing the CG of the conversation while

preserving truth.³⁴ In this sense, CONV_S can be seen as a sort of teleological ‘conversational’ modal base anchored to each participant in the exchange, representing the perspective of the speaker on the conversational exchange she is participating in.

(53) $w \in \text{CONV}_S$ iff S' conversational goals are fulfilled at w Romero & Han (2004)

Introducing this notion allows us to relativise the attitude conveyed by *totally* to such a modal base. This, on the one hand, captures the fact that *totally* expresses a subjective attitude which does not directly affect the relationship between p and the CG projected by the assertion. On the other hand, it correctly predicts that such an attitude is *about* such a relationship. The revised denotation for *totally* is provided below:

(54) $\text{Ass}(\text{tot}(p)) = \lambda w. \forall w' \in \text{CONV}_S(w) [\forall \text{PCG} \in \text{PS}(\text{Ass}(p))(w') [\forall w'' \in \text{PCG}]]: p(w'') = 1$

The denotation reads as follows: to fulfill the speaker’s conversational goals, the PS of the assertion modified by *totally* should be homogeneous with respect to p . In light of this semantics, we can now see more clearly why the use of *totally* presupposes the presence of a non-homogeneous PS to begin with, and is therefore infelicitous with regular factual assertions. Because these speech acts make the conversation already ‘maxed out’ with respect to their possible continuations—that is, they categorically project adding p to the Common Ground, and leave no other option—the move of explicitly signaling the desire to adding p is correctly predicted to sound incongruent. More precisely, strengthening the assertion in such a situation would suggest that the speaker desires to bring about a situation that, as a matter of fact, is *already* in place, resulting in pragmatically irrational behavior.³⁵

By contrast, the attitude conveyed by *totally* requires that the option of *not* adding p to the CG must be encoded as an alternative in the representation of the conversational state. In other words, there needs to be a discrepancy between the addition of p to the CG and the independent illocutionary force of the assertion, where the assertion by itself is not sufficient to project the addition of p as the only possible option. As we are going to see shortly, the environments in which *totally* is licensed all satisfy this requirement, though via different mechanisms. I label this general admissibility condition on *totally* the Non Homogeneity Condition (NHC).

(55) **NHC**

$\text{totally}(p)$ is felicitous iff $\neg \forall \text{PCG} \in \text{PS}(\text{Assert}(p)) [\forall w \in \text{PCG}] p(w) = 1$

At the same time, note that the NHC is a necessary, yet not sufficient condition for licensing *totally*. As discussed in the first part of the paper, pragmatic *totally* is indeed not licensed with polar questions, which do project a non-homogeneous PS. As I explain below, the infelicity of the intensifier in this context is due to a conflict between the commitment-strengthening contribution of *totally* and the fact that in questions the speaker is not committing to any proposition.

34 Other authors—see for instance van Rooij & Safarova (2003)—argue that these goals should also include the speakers’ preferences and desires, combining informativity with utility. The analysis proposed for *totally* does not hinge on taking a specific position in this debate.

35 Seth Cable (p.c.) observes that the presupposition that a certain state of affairs be not already in place is not just a property of *totally*, but a general feature of desire attitudes, which are inherently counterfactual. I am grateful for the suggestion.

What remains to be seen, at this point, is the compositional level at which *totally* operates. Thus far, we have seen that the intensifier is not part of the at-issue content and does not contribute to changing the PS of the utterance it occurs in, even though it is sensitive to the PS' structure. These properties, however, are not sufficient to pinpoint the exact discourse component that the contribution of *totally* pertains to. On a more general level, Farkas and Bruce's model has been admittedly designed to model basic moves such as assertions and questions, and, as the authors themselves claim, is not equipped to directly encode more fine-grained types of content, such the representations of the interlocutors' private doxastic states (Farkas & Bruce 2010: 89). Crucially, pragmatic *totally* precisely appears to convey one such kind of content: by signaling a meta-conversational belief on the part of the speaker, the intensifier expresses a personal evaluation that is anchored to a particular participant, and that does not seem to affect the shared spaces in the discourse. Following Rett and Murray's work, likewise aimed at modeling similar speaker-oriented modifiers (Rett 2011; Rett & Murray 2013; Murray 2014; Rett 2017), I propose that the intensifier enriches the *sincerity conditions* of the speech act, on a par with other expressions marking the speaker's attitude towards the propositional content—for example *alas* and *fortunately* in English, markers of surprise like mirative evidentials in Cheyenne. In particular, the authors argue that, while such modifiers do not directly modify the *force* of the speech act per se—the discourse effects of an assertion modified by *alas* are the same as those of an assertions without the attitude marker—they non-trivially enrich the requirements that need to be satisfied for the speech act to be felicitous. For example, an assertion modified by *alas* does not only require that the speaker believes p —the basic sincerity condition of every assertoric move—but also that the speaker is somewhat disappointed that p . The situation of *totally* seems to be parallel: while the modifier does not change the nature of the speech act in which it is embedded, it nevertheless adds further content to its sincerity conditions, specifying that the speaker, besides believing that p , also believes that p should be added to the CG in any possible continuation of the move. In this sense, on a par with *alas* and *unfortunately*, *totally* emerges as an *illocutionary* operator, which modifies a property of the speech act it is embedded into. This claim is supported by the fact that the intensifier, as seen in Section 2, is not compatible with speech acts that encode conflicting sincerity conditions with its contribution. Questions provide a relevant example: because their sincere use already requires that the speaker *not* believe that p , they cannot host a modifier whose contribution crucially presupposes that the speaker believes that p .³⁶ The distinctive speech act sensitivity of *totally* emerges more clearly when compared to traditional expressives like *fucking* which, while also not being at-issue, are claimed to operate at the level of the anchor proposition, rather than the utterance itself, and are available across different speech act types, including questions, imperatives and Wh-exclamatives (Rett 2017).³⁷

- (56) a. # Should I *totally* click on that link? Question
 b. ✓ Should I *fucking* click on that link? Question

36 Rett (2017) shows that *alas* and *unfortunately* feature precisely the same kind of restriction in question environments, also due to a conflict between the sincerity conditions of the speech act and their own illocutionary contribution.

37 To distinguish them from illocutionary modifiers, Rett (2017) suggests that modifiers like *fucking* are part of the *locutionary* content, building on the long standing distinction first proposed by Searle (1969).

- (57) a. # *Totally* click on that link! Command imperative
 b. ✓ *Fucking* click on that link! Command imperative
- (58) a. # What a link you *totally* clicked on! Wh-exclamative
 b. ✓ What a link you *fucking* clicked on! Wh-exclamative

Within the discourse model, I follow Rett and Murray in suggesting that illocutionary modifiers are encoded in the Discourse Commitments of the participants, which store content that is mutually available to all participants, but is nevertheless inherently anchored to the perspective of the speaker and is not available for challenge or discussion. The difference with respect to most propositions that are added to the DC is that, while these stay there only for the time necessary for their acceptance into the CG and are then deleted from there once they become shared, the commentary contributed by *totally* is never meant to be put on the table.³⁸ The final representation of the effect of an utterance modified by *totally* is reported below, with the contribution of the intensifier underlined.

- (59) a. **Kim (to Alex):** The Bulls will *totally* make the playoffs
- b. • ASSERT($\text{totally}(p_j, \text{Kim}, K_i)$) = K_o such that:
- $D_{C_{\text{Kim}}}$:
 1. { p_{Kim} }
 2. $\forall w \in \text{CONV}_{\text{Kim}}[\forall \text{PCG} \in \text{PS}(K_o)(w)[\forall w' \in \text{PCG}]]: p(w')=1$

4.4 Deriving the properties

Let us now consider how the proposed semantics for *totally* accounts for its empirical properties. First, the inability to interact with operators like negations and *almost* is expected if the intensifier is not part of the truth-conditional content of the utterance, and therefore cannot compose with any operator therein contained. Concerning speech-act sensitivity, we have already discussed incompatibility with questions. The restriction, however, is less obvious for Wh-exclamatives, which, unlike questions, pragmatically require that the speaker believes the content to be true. I argue that, in this case, the incompatibility does not stem from lack of belief, but from the fact that exclamatives do not raise an issue concerning the relationship between p and the CG. It has been observed by Zanuttini & Portner (2003) and Chernilovskaya *et al.* (2012) that, contrary to assertion, exclamatives cannot be challenged or confirmed (in 60b). Moreover, exclamatives cannot be used to respond to questions in (60c), as observed in Grimshaw (1979), Zanuttini & Portner (2003) and Castroviejo Miró (2006).

- (60) a. A: I learned a lot in this course.
 B: That's right. Assertion

38 Such a proposal is similar to the proposal by Rett (2017) to capture for the 'surprise effect' conveyed by propositional exclamatives, which indeed shares most of the semantic and pragmatic properties that we have seen for *totally*. An alternative would be to posit that *totally* directly updates the CG, without being put on the Table. This is the account that Rett and Murray propose for locutionary content such as traditional expressives.

- b. A: What a big crowd that is!
 B: # That' right./# That's wrong! Exclamative
- c. A: Are there a lot of people?
 B: #What a big crowd this is! Response

To explain this discourse behavior, it has been suggested that exclamatives, contrary to assertions, do not proffer content for enriching the CG; rather, they automatically update the CG, without giving the addressee the opportunity of reacting to this move (see [Castroviejo Miro 2006](#); [Chernilovskaya et al. 2012](#) for different implementations of this idea). If this is right, it is then possible to see why *totally* cannot be used with these moves: because the proposition is automatically used to update the CG, the PS of an exclamative would not encode any alternative to adding *p*, thus failing to satisfy the NHC, and explaining the deviant status of *totally*.³⁹

Finally, we are left with command imperatives. While the literature on this kind of speech act features a lively debate, there is consensus that these moves, by virtue of their performative nature, aim at pushing the interlocutor to undertake a certain course of action. While this contribution has been modeled in different ways—for example by suggesting that imperatives change the Hearer's preference structure ([Condoravdi & Lauer, 2011](#)) or add material to their To-Do list ([Portner 2005](#))—the crucial point for our discussion is that such moves are designed to change the state of the current world, rather than to provide a correct representation of it. As such, they have nothing to do with the enterprise whereby two interlocutors collectively strive to zero in on an adequate description of the actual world. More precisely, they do not introduce content that is aimed at enriching the Common Ground, and thus supply the proposition that *totally* can operate on, as suggested by the fact that their content cannot be challenged or commented upon.

- (61) A: Click on that link!
 B: # No! You're wrong
 B': # False!

The use of the intensifier in this context will thus turn out to be inconsistent with the illocutionary force of the speech act, giving rise to an incongruous utterance. In light of this, the availability of *totally* with *should*, which have been argued to share a similar performative component with command imperatives ([Yanovich 2014](#); [Condoravdi & Lauer 2011](#)), might strike one as problematic. Yet, I argue that the felicity of *totally* in this context is indeed consistent with the proposal outlined above. As [Yanovich \(2014\)](#) argues,

39 The non-deniability of exclamatives is not agreed upon in the literature. [Castroviejo Miro \(2006\)](#), for instance, suggests that exclamatives license confirmation moves, and as such are similar to assertions. [Rett \(2011\)](#) claims that, in certain cases, Exclamatives *can* indeed be denied. While taking a stance in this debate goes beyond the scope of this paper, I note that even a view in which exclamatives proffer refutable content would not create a substantial problem for accounting for the distribution of *totally*. At the very least, exclamatives would structure the context like a regular, factual assertion, where only a homogeneous PS is projected. This would rule out *totally* for the same reason that the intensifier is ruled out in factual, discourse-initial assertions.

correlation between *totally* and non-homogeneity surfaces again. While questions and $\neg p$ assertions projected a non-homogeneous PS with respect to p , assertions do not ($\neg p$ worlds are in bold face). Crucially, *totally* is licensed with the former, but not with the latter.

	Discourse position	Previous move	Nature of p	Totally licensed	PS projected by previous move
(65)	React.	Assert p	Factual	#	{CG \cup { p }
	React.	Question p	Factual	✓	{CG \cup { p }, CG \cup { $\neg p$ }
	React.	Assert $\neg p$	Factual	✓	{CG \cup { $\neg p$ }

In light of this pattern, a tempting explanation could be that non-homogeneity is grounded in the interlocutors' discrepant view of the relationship between p and the CG. More specifically, if an interlocutor makes a move that projects a non-homogeneous PS, one could posit that *totally* can indeed track the non-homogeneity of such a PS. The NHC could be just modified to reflect that, if the interlocutor's perspective on the CG manifestly includes at least a $\neg p$ world, then *totally* can still be licensed, regardless of the PS projected by the responsive assertion.

Yet, while this seems to be on the right track, it is not enough to license *totally*. To see this, let us consider the data on focus again. When introducing the phenomenon, I observed that uses of *totally* in responsive assertions typically come with focal stress. In this part, I consider the empirical picture more closely, showing two important facts. First, focal stress is obligatory to license *totally*; the lack thereof makes the sentence sound odd.

(66) **John:** Did Luke get married at 25?

Kim: # Yes, he *totally* got married at 25.

Second, focal stress does not reflect focus on the intensifier itself. Rather, it marks the underlying presence of Verum Focus (hence, VF), a particular kind of focus that emphasises the polarity of the proposition in contrast to an antecedent with different polarity (Hohle 1992; Romero & Han 2004; Gutzmann & Castroviejo Miró 2011). This is shown by the fact that *totally* is licensed also when the intensifier itself is de-accented and VF is marked in other ways, such as 'do support' or prosodic stress on the auxiliary. That VF can be realised in various ways, and precisely by any expression in the C projection, is a well-documented fact, given the lack of a functional category to express polarity (Lohnstein & Strommer 2009 amongst others).

(67) a. **John:** Did Luke get married at 25?

Kim: ✓ Yes, he *totally* DID get married at 25.

b. **John:** Is Luke planning to get married at 25?

Kim: Yes, he *totally* IS planning to get married at 25.

These data suggest that the presence of Verum Focus is crucial to license *totally*. As far as how this happens, I follow the consensus view in the literature in suggesting that a proposition with VF carries two presuppositions: (i) it needs to be given in discourse (Gutzmann & Castroviejo Miró 2011) and (ii) it must have different polarity from its antecedent (Samko 2016; Lai 2012). Against this background, I propose that asserting a proposition under Verum Focus, besides the effects of a regular assertion, has an extra effect

on the output context. It introduces a set of alternative relationships between p and the CG, which include both the PS projected by the assertion *and* the PS projected by the previous move. I posit that such alternatives are stored in the output PS of the assertion, and thus end up being part of the set of possible Common Grounds projected by the move. Note that this assumption follows from the general properties of propositions embedded under Verum Focus. More specifically, if the correct representation of a proposition of the type $\text{VF}(p)$ encodes information about the polarity of the antecedent, it is reasonable to posit that, by the same token, the representation of the speech act ‘Assert($\text{VF}(p)$)’ must bear traces of the discourse profile of the antecedent, including its output PS (i.e. the input PS of the assertion under VF). I represent this by suggesting that the output PS of a proposition under VF corresponds to $\text{ALT}(\text{PS}(K_o))$, a set of contextually relevant alternatives that includes both the PS projected by the assertion (in boldface) as well as the possible Common Grounds projected by the previous move. More concretely, if the previous move is a polar question with p as the anchor proposition, the end result would be the following, with the alternatives made available by VF underlined.

- (68) • $\text{ASSERT}(\text{VF}(p), A, K_i) = K_o$ such that:
- $\text{DC}_{A,o} = \{\text{DC}_{A,i} \cup \{p\}\}$
 - $T_o = \text{push}(\{p\}, T_i)$
 - $\text{PS}_o = \{\text{ALT}(\text{PS}(K_o))\} = \{\text{PS}_i \cup \{p\}, \{\text{PS}_i \cup \{p\}, \text{PS}_i \cup \{\neg p\}\}$
 - NHC: \checkmark

An assertion under Verum Focus responding to a statement asserting that $\neg p$ would have the very same structure, except for the alternatives made available by Verum Focus, would simply consist of $\text{PS}_i \cup \{\neg p\}$. At this point, it is possible to see how responsive assertions, from a discourse perspective, form a natural class with subjective and outlandish ones, and thus provide the right conditions for licensing *totally*. Thanks to the alternative PCGs provided via Verum Focus, these moves also fail to encode the addition of p as the only possible continuation, thus satisfying the NHC. An important observation is that the non-homogeneity of assertion’s PS, on this view, emerges as a corollary of the availability of VF. More precisely, because VF, by definition, requires an antecedent with different polarity, it follows that the output PS of the previous move must be necessarily different from the PS independently projected by the assertion containing *totally*, thus creating non-homogeneity in the cumulative $\text{ALT}(\text{PS}(K_o))$ generated by VF. By contrast, when the previous move projects a PS that is identical to the one of the assertion—that is, when the proposition and the antecedent have identical polarity—VF is unavailable, making *totally* unavailable as well.⁴⁰

40 It is worth observing that factual assertions, even when under Verum Focus, do not seem to be as inherently ‘challengeable’ as assertions with a subjective predicate. In particular, disagreement following these moves retains a factual, rather than a faultless nature, as shown by the following example.

- (1) A: Luke didn’t get married at 25.
 B: No! He **TOTALLY** got married at 25.
 A: No, he didn’t!

5 THE BROADER PICTURE

Before concluding, it is worth considering how the study presented in this article fits into two currently debated areas of research at the interface between semantics, pragmatics and discourse. One such area is represented by the study of Verum operators, discussed in section (5.1); the other area concerns the study of intensification, discussed in section (5.2).

5.1 *Different shades of Verum: comparison with other proposals*

The analysis proposed for *totally* closely resembles some of the analyses that have been suggested to capture the behavior of other CG-managing operators, with particular attention to Verum. I want to focus on two proposals, arguing that the behavior of *totally* cannot be fully captured by either of these accounts. This suggests a picture in which Verum can be realised by a variety of different operators, each of which has a different semantic and pragmatic profile.

Romero & Han (2004) discuss the use of *really* in examples like the following, which they take to be distinct from uses of *really* as a modifier of gradable adjectives.

- (69) a. I *really* am tired.
 b. Did Jorge *really* bring a present?

The authors argue that in the examples above *really* is an epistemic conversational operator, expressing the speaker's *certainty* about whether p should be added to the CG. This contribution, they suggest, is not exclusive of *really*, but is a general property of Verum, which can be observed in any expression that can be used to realise it. The proposed denotation is one in which *really*, roughly speaking, means 'I am certain that p should be added to the CG', combining an epistemic base anchored to the speaker and the already discussed conversational modal base in which the speaker fulfills her conversational goals.

$$(70) \llbracket \text{VERUM} \rrbracket = \lambda p \lambda w. \forall w' \in \text{Epi}_x(w) [\forall w'' \in \text{Conv}_x(w') [p \in \text{CG}(w'')]]$$

This denotation is intuitively similar to the one proposed for *totally*. Both *totally* and Verum-*really* are operators managing the CG and expressing the speaker's stance with regard to a proposition's status with respect to it. Yet, by having reference to certainty directly hardwired into its lexical meaning, the former encodes an epistemic component that *totally* lacks. If we look at the distribution of the two expressions, this difference in the

At first sight, this might appear at odds with the proposal that B' assertion encodes a non-homogeneous PS. However, it is important to remember that the factual v. faultless nature of disagreement remains a separate notion from the structure of the PS, even though it often correlates with it. More specifically, the specific flavor of a disagreement scenario is tied to whether the issue at stake can be settled with evidence that does not reduce to the participants' subjective feelings. Since marriage dates are indeed externally verifiable, disagreements concerning propositions like the one above will always have a factual nature, regardless of the discourse position in which they occur. The homogeneity of the PS, by contrast, is a discourse-level notion, which can be introduced by a variety of different sources. While subjectivity is one of them, as extensively discussed throughout the paper, what really matters in the Verum Focus cases is that the interlocutors have clearly distinct ideas about what the relationship between p and the Common Ground should be. It is this very discrepancy that introduces (via Verum Focus) non-homogeneity, thus justifying the speaker's move to use *totally* to signal their belief that the CG should be updated with p .

meanings makes the right predictions. Romero & Han (2004) argue that *really* can only be used in a context where the issue on the Table is not $\{p; \neg p\}$, but rather certainty or lack of certainty about the addition of p to the CG. These typically emerge in contexts introducing a negative epistemic bias about p on the part of the speaker. On the contrary, *totally* is not sensitive to epistemic bias, but, more generally, to the polarity of the previous move, which in turn determines the non-homogeneity of the projected CG. This makes the prediction that the distribution of *totally* is broader than the one for *really*: while the former can be used in responses to negative assertions and unbiased questions—both of which have different polarity, none of which introduce an epistemic bias—the latter should not be felicitous in these contexts. The prediction is borne out.

- (71) a. Kim: Did Luke get married at 25? Unbiased
 Alex: #He REALLY did!
 Alex: ✓ He TOTALLY did!
- b. Kim: Are you sure that Luke got married at 25? Epistemically biased
 Alex: ✓ He REALLY did!
 Alex: ✓ He TOTALLY did!

In a different proposal, Gutzmann & Castroviejo Miro (2011) focus on Verum Focus in German. The authors suggest a multi-dimensional analysis for Verum, where the operator combines with a proposition and returns the interpretational instruction to downgrade the corresponding question from the Question Under Discussion. A commonality between their analysis and the one proposed for *totally* is that neither encodes an epistemic component. Instead, confidence and certainty are derived as pragmatic effects of pushing the hearer to accept p in the CG.⁴¹ At the same time, there is an important difference between Verum and *totally*. The former, by being anaphoric to a Question under Discussion, is predicted to be infelicitous when uttered out of the blue. *Totally*, on the other hand, is felicitous in discourse-initial assertions, provided that the right conditions are met. It is quite telling, in this sense, that Gutzmann & Castroviejo Miró (2011) argue for the infelicity of VF out of the blue by providing an example that would be a perfectly fitting case of outlandish assertion for *totally*.⁴²

- (72) SCENARIO: A goat walks in. A sees the goat and is pretty sure that it is a goat. B hasn't seen the goat, yet. Gutzmann & Castroviejo Miro (2011)
- a. A: Da ist/#IST eine Ziege.
 there is/is-#VF a goat
- b. ✓ There is *totally* a goat!

Finally, *totally* differs from Verum operators in being restricted to assertions. By contrast, *really* and the operators analysed by Gutzmann & Castroviejo Miró (2011) and Repp (2013) are less selective in terms of the speech act types with which they can occur.

41 In Gutzmann & Castroviejo Miro (2011)'s words, 'if the speaker asserts that p , and at the same time wants to downgrade $?p$, then s/he must be sure that p should be added to the CG'.

42 An additional difference concerns, again, the different speech act distribution of VF markers in German and *totally* in English, with the former being licensed in questions and imperatives. In this sense, German VF patterns with *really*.

For example, *really* can freely occur in questions, while the examples of VF analysed by Gutzmann & Castroviejo Miró (2011) are found in imperatives as well.⁴³

- (73) a. ✓ Will the Bulls *really* make the playoffs?
 b. # Will the Bulls *totally* make the playoffs?

In sum, the analyses proposed for *really* and VF marking in German cannot be extended wholesale to *totally*, unveiling a picture in which the core function of expressing the status of a proposition with respect to the CG can be performed by a number of different devices, each of which features unique semantic and pragmatic properties.

5.2 *Totally and intensification*

Another important issue concerns the relationship between the analysis offered for *totally* and the landscape of intensification and scalar modification. While scholars have mostly focused on cases of lexical intensification (see Bolinger 1972; Quirk *et al.* 1985; Kennedy & McNally 2005 amongst others), it has long been known that certain scalar modifiers can operate without composing with a gradable predicate. Below is a non-exhaustive list of examples discussed in the literature.

- (74) a. We won the match . . . *-ish*. From Bochnak & Csipak (2014)
 b. Jamie has *so* dated that type of guy before. From Irwin (2014)
 c. Your problems are *more* financial than legal. From McCawley (1998)

Examples investigated in English include *so* (Bylina 2011; Zwicky 2011; Irwin 2014), *-ish* (Sugawara 2012; Bochnak & Csipak 2014) and *metalinguistic comparatives* like *more* (McCawley 1998; Giannakidou & Yoon 2011; Morzycki 2011). Similar cases described in other languages include Italian *-issimo* and Washo *semu* (Beltrama & Bochnak 2015), Hebrew *mamas* (McNabb 2012a) and intensifying morphemes in Quebec French (Bouchard 2012). From an analytical standpoint, the proposal advocated by most authors is that, in such contexts, scalar modifiers track a *pragmatic* attitude that relates the speaker to the propositional content, as opposed to a gradable property *within* the propositional content itself. While these two dimensions pertain to separate linguistic levels—one operates at the level of the lexical semantics, the other at a higher pragmatic level—they share an isomorphic scalar structure, and they can thus lend themselves to be ‘measured’ and manipulated by scalar modifiers.

To be sure, assuming an isomorphism between lexical and commitment/preference/precision scales and using the tools of degree semantics to model the latter is an elegant analytical strategy to account for non-lexical intensification. At the same time, though, this approach does not help us understand, from a conceptual standpoint, what areas of pragmatics are suitable to being targeted by a particular intensifier and what areas, instead, are less permeable to it. For instance, if the availability of some gradable pragmatic dimension were a sufficient condition to license an intensifier at the non-lexical level, we would expect *totally* to be able to systematically combine with expressions that come with *pragmatic halos*

43 While CG-managing operators have been traditionally seen as modifying propositions which are then passed up to illocutionary operators (see Repp 2013 for a template), I have argued that *totally* directly specifies a property of the speech act, and as such operates at a higher level in the structure. Therefore, the observation that *totally* exhibits a more restricted distribution with respect to speech act types points to another axis of differentiation amongst CG managing expressions.

(Lasersohn 1999), thus manipulating the margin of deviance from the truth conditions with which an expression can be interpreted. Yet, this is not what we observe. Deontic modals, for instance, have been shown to make halos compositionally available to modifiers like *absolutely* (see Klecha 2014 and Brasoveanu & Anand 2010 for recent accounts), and yet cannot felicitously combine with *totally*, as discussed in the first part of the paper.

- (75) a. The paper absolutely must be submitted by 3 pm.
 b. Citizens absolutely have to pay taxes by April 15th.

In this perspective, the analysis proposed for *totally* represents a step forward towards a better understanding of how the licensing of non-lexical intensification goes well beyond the sheer availability of a gradable pragmatic dimension. By tying the admissibility of the intensifier to the particular relationship between the anchor proposition and the Common Ground projected by an assertion, the current analysis shows how the intensifier is *constrained* at the discourse level, casting light on how *totally* interacts with other components that independently exist in the pragmatics. As such, an account along these lines at the very least makes the typology of pragmatic intensification more complex, showing that, in the absence of a lexical scale, intensifiers need not be modeled by positing the presence of an arbitrary pragmatic scale isomorphic to the degree scales encoded by gradable predicates.

An outstanding issue concerns the relationship between the lexical and the pragmatic use, and in particular whether, beneath their obvious differences, the two flavors of the intensifier still share a semantic kernel. While such an investigative enterprise would go beyond the scope of the current paper, a promising starting point to model the connection between the two uses might relate to universal quantification. Its relevance to the pragmatic use is obvious, in light of the analysis presented above. As far as the lexical use is concerned, the different proposals likewise appear to revolve around this notion. For example, it has been argued that, in their lexical uses, maximizers like *totally* combine with a gradable adjective and place a restriction on such a degree, requiring that it must correspond to the maximum degree of the scale encoded by the adjective. Following the assumption that such scales are monotone (Heim 2000), lexical maximizers can be also seen as de facto universal quantifiers.⁴⁴ However, while recasting the meaning of *totally* in terms of universal quantification could be a promising jumping off point, comparing the denotations assigned to the two uses would hardly be sufficient to zero in on the relationship between them. First, something more precise needs to be said on the diachronic trajectory of *totally* besides the observation that lexical *totally* predates the pragmatic use (Beltrama 2015). This includes understanding if there has been any intermediate stage in the transition between the two uses, or which class of subjective predicate—adjectives or modals—first began to be modified by *totally* in its pragmatic version. Second, it would be necessary to frame this trajectory within a larger study of how other maximizers have developed pragmatic uses out of lexical ones, investigating the empirical and theoretical relationship between *totally* and other case studies in English as well as in other languages (e.g. Tagliamonte 2008 on intensifiers in Canadian English; Burnett 2014 on universal quantifiers in French and Italian; Hoeksema 2011 on Dutch *helmaal*).

44 As an anonymous reviewer points out, *totally* does in fact originate from *all* (Latin 'totus'), confirming the idea that a core of universal quantification might be shared across the two uses.

6 CONCLUSION

In this paper I provided an analysis of pragmatic *totally* in English. By accounting for the different licensing environments and effects of the intensifier in a unified way, the present work represents a step forward in the exploration of intensification at the pragmatic level, an intriguing and yet still largely uncharted area. In addition, studying the distribution of *totally* allows to make a step forward in understanding how different types of propositional content—objective, subjective, outlandish—relate to different types of discourse effects, laying the ground for a more systematic investigation of the fine-grained illocutionary differences between types of assertions.

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APPENDIX: EXPERIMENTAL MATERIALS

Experiment 1: Acceptability of *totally* with dimensional v. evaluative adjectives.

1. John's new house is {totally/really} {big/beautiful}.
2. Italian pizza's crust is {totally/really} {thin/delicious}.
3. The drive from Italy to France is {totally/really} {long/amazing}.
4. The new boss is {totally/really} {young/brilliant}.
5. John's brother is {totally/really} {tall/cool}.
6. The state of Illinois is {totally/really} {large/boring}.
7. The lake in front of my house is {totally/really} {deep/gorgeous}.
8. The statue they just built in the park is {totally/really} {small/impressive}.

Experiment 2: Acceptability of *totally* with subjective v. objective modals.

Must:

1. **Epistemic:** The owners must {totally/absolutely} be from Chicago. I see Bulls, Blackhawks and Cubs signs everywhere!
Deontic: The owners must {totally/absolutely} apply for a new license, or they will be kicked out.
2. **Epistemic:** Joe's brother must totally be a pothead. He always smells marijuana when I see him.
Deontic: Joe's brother must {totally/absolutely} show up in court to get his driving license back.

3. **Epistemic:** My neighbor must {totally/absolutely} be a hippy. I always see her with flowers in her hair.

Deontic: My neighbor must {totally/absolutely} be at work every morning at 6 am if she doesn't want to be fired.

4. **Epistemic:** Julia must {totally/absolutely} be dating someone. She's never home on weekend nights! **Deontic:** You must {totally/absolutely} apply for a permit to camp on the lake.

Have to:

1. **Advice:** Greg {totally/absolutely} has to read this book. He would love it!

Deontic: Greg {totally/absolutely} has to read this book to pass the class.

2. **Advice:** Tim {totally/absolutely} has to try this restaurant! It's great!

Deontic: Tim {totally/absolutely} has to get a parking permit if he wants to leave the car here.

3. **Advice:** You {totally/absolutely} have to visit me once I move to Europe!

Deontic: You {totally/absolutely} have to be a US citizen to work in a National Park.

4. **Advice:** You {totally/absolutely} have to spend a couple days in New York if you come to the US.

Deontic: You {totally/absolutely} have to be 21 to drink in the US.

Will:

1. **Prediction:** Pat loves surfing. He will {totally/definitely} move to California for college. **Scheduled:** Pat has been officially hired. He will {totally/definitely} move to California in July.

2. **Prediction:** The Bulls will {totally/definitely} make the playoffs.

Scheduled: The Bulls will {totally/definitely} play Tuesday at 8.30 pm.

3. **Prediction:** Julia studied so hard! She will {totally/definitely} pass the test!

Scheduled: They just announced the exams schedule. Julia will {totally/definitely} take her test Friday at 11 am.

4. **Prediction:** The bus will {totally/definitely} be delayed. There's always traffic on the highway.

Schedule: The train will {totally/definitely} leave at 9.42 am, per the official schedule.

Good Fillers:

1. Chicago is in Illinois.

2. California is larger than Delaware.

3. Dumb and Dumber is an awesome movie.

4. Larry Bird was born in a small town.

5. Spring is very better than fall.

Bad Fillers

1. Julia is the most youngest girl in my family.

2. The rain didn't stop until 5 pm.
3. They gave to John 3 prizes.
4. I didn't know the person that the guy who knows lies on a bed.
5. The rain kept bugging long floor half day.

Experiment 3: Acceptability of *totally* in outlandish sentences.

(76) Outlandish

- a. Mark {totally/∅} showed up at a wedding in flip-flops.
- b. Joe {totally/∅} got married at 13.
- c. A cab driver {totally/∅} asked us if we had any pot.
- d. A dude {totally/∅} walked off a train, threw his shit down and camped out.

(77) Normal

- a. Italy is {totally/∅} in Europe.
- b. Joe {totally/∅} got married at 28.
- c. John {totally/∅} had dinner at 7 pm last night.
- d. Emily {totally/∅} spent 25 dollars on groceries last night.

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