

February 10, 2016

Dear Editorial Board,

Please find attached a copy of our manuscript, "Subjectivity predicts adjective ordering preferences." This manuscript is our original work, has not been previously published, and is not currently under consideration elsewhere. We would appreciate your considering it for publication as a research report in Open Mind.

This work investigates the psychological underpinnings of adjective ordering preferences, which determine the order of adjectives in multi-adjective strings. These preferences are remarkably stable both within and across the world's languages, suggesting that they emerge from deep principles of the cognitive architecture that shapes language. However, to date, they remain poorly understood. Over the course of three sets of experiments, we accomplish two empirical objectives: we measure the preferences themselves, and we measure adjective subjectivity--the property that we hypothesize determines ordering preferences. With reliable estimates of each, we then demonstrate the success of adjective subjectivity in predicting ordering preferences. We believe this work will have broad appeal, as it evidences a clear case where language universals (i.e., the regularities we observe in adjective ordering) emerge from cognitive universals (i.e., the subjectivity of the properties that the adjectives name).

Edward Gibson (Massachusetts Institute of Technology), Chris Kennedy (University of Chicago), Steven Piantadosi (University of Rochester), Andy Kehler (UC San Diego), Hannah Rohde (University of Edinburgh), and Jenny Culbertson (University of Edinburgh) have worked on linguistic and/or cognitive universals, and have either used similar methods to ours or have expertise in investigations of adjectives. They are all qualified to review this work.

Please let us know if you require additional information.

Sincerely,

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