

The construction of SKT

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Introduction

SKT

- *Sort, kind and type* in a number of patterns, most + *of*.

1) (...) N₁ *of* (...) N₂

- (simplifies by ignoring D, modifiers)

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SKT

- Five representative examples from BNC:
 - 2) the Canadians had one sort of sovereign, and the British had another sort (A69 1471)
 - 3) There was a kind of inevitability about the whole proposal which appalled Alexei.
 - 4) It kind of built his confidence with each successive flask (A14 937)
 - 5) but she should keep those sort of remarks to herself (CDY 1447)
 - 6) so that us train spotter type supporters don't get in the way of [...] (J1C 2281)

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Family of constructions

- Notice that (4) lacks N₂, while (6) lacks *of*.
- Broad outlines of history sketched in Denison (2002).
- Keizer (2007):
 - (2) = **referential construction**
 - (3) = **qualifying construction**
 - (4) = **adverbial** use closely related to (3)
 - (5) = ('constructions of the third kind').
- NB. **construction** here is not a technical CxG term.
- (5) = **postdeterminer** or **complex determiner**.

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Two more patterns

- Brems & Davidse (2010) distinguish another two variants:
 - 7) This raises all kinds of additional problems which we can't afford to ignore (CDF 1682)
 - 8) Dunbar's a jolly sort of fellow (FS1 164)
- (7) = **quantifier** usage
- (8) = **descriptive modifier**

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Postdeterminer SKT

- Number mismatch:
- 5) ... those sort of remarks ...
- Head of NP is $N_1 = \textit{sort}$ or $N_2 = \textit{remarks}$?
- Keizer: 'all ... pragmatic and syntactic features' confirm $N_2 = \textit{remarks}$ as head (2007: 184)
- *sort* in (5) is a Postdeterminer
- Yet (5) is a subtype of (2) pattern where *sort* would uncontroversially be N and head!
- Keizer's classification predominantly form-driven.

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Postdeterminer SKT

- Brems & Davidse accept postdeterminer analysis of (5) but based on semantics and discourse properties.
- 9) There are certainly equally worthwhile climbs on Stennis Head, but none at this kind of standard with such ease of access. (ECH 953)
- Analysis of (9) would not be (10) but rather (11):
- 10) [[determiner: this] + [head: kind (postmodifier: of + standard)]]
- 11) [[determiner: this kind of] + [head: standard]]
- B & D's classification predominantly function-driven.

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Postdeterminer slot

- Van de Velde (2009) and Breban (2010) argue against need for postdeterminer slot.
- 'Postdeterminers' merely Adjectives in gradient diachronic transition to Determiners.
- Odd functional properties (position, semantics, etc.) are temporary aberration caused by incipient reclassification as a different form class.

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Postdeterminer slot

- Interesting diachrony-in-synchrony approach.
- If A and D intended as category labels (word classes), then curious interaction of category and function.
- If A and D intended as functional slots, confusing to use same term for category (word class).
- Or is rigid separation of two systems (as practised in structuralist *Cambridge Grammar*) inappropriate mindset for CxG work?

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Construction Grammar

SKT in Construction Grammar

- SKT patterns frequent in everyday English, yet present problems of analysis such as
 - location of head
 - assignment of words to traditional classes
 - precise extent of multiword lexical items
- Construction Grammar (CxG) is tempting approach, because in some versions (e.g. Croft 2001) word classes are not primary but merely epiphenomena, while words and certain longer patterns are all constructions.

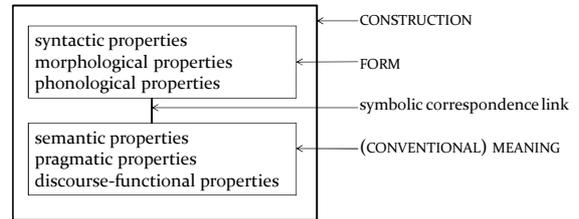
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Redundancy

- Redundancy is widespread in real language.
- Formalists disparage redundancy in analysis (Occam's Razor, elegance).
- CxG should be more tolerant of redundancy, if only because multiple inheritance can
 - motivate analysis of a construction (from linguist's point of view)
 - reinforce usage of a particular construction (from speaker's point of view)

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Construction



(Croft 2001: 18)

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Levels of schematicity

- Construct: an attested instance of use [...]
- Micro-construction: a type which sanctions a construct [...]
- Meso-construction: a group of related micro-constructions [...]
 - multiple meso levels? (Trousdale 2008: 169-70 vs. 2010b: 58)
- Macro-construction: the most schematic construction relating to part of the constructional network under discussion [...]

(Trousdale (2010a) following Traugott (2007, 2008a) and Fried (2008))

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Emergence of *kind of*

Old and Middle English

- Earliest SKT noun is *kind/kin* (Old English)
- *of*-constructions barely exist in OE, relationships often marked by genitive case.
 - all the constructions in question, and others of this type in English, depend crucially on the reanalysis in Middle English after Step 1 of Old English *of* 'out of' as the analytic equivalent of the genitive inflection, and eventually as the default preposition in English." (Traugott 2008a: 28, sim. Traugott 2008b: 228 n8).
- Once *of*-constructions arise, we get both
 - 12) close encounters of that kind
 - 13) that kind of close encounter

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OED implicitly recognises SKT

- The reduction of *kin* to its simple uninflected form may have been assisted by the equivalent use of *manere* ... from Old French, which is thus found, as *threo maner men* = men of three kinds or sorts. In this, at an early period, we find *of* inserted: *an manere of fisce, al maner o suet spices*, the syntactical relation between the words being thus reversed, and although this appears to have rarely extended to *kin* itself, it affected its later representative *kind*, also *sort, species*, etc., so that we now say 'all kinds of things' = things of all kinds. This may have been facilitated by the fact that in the order of the words (as distinct from their syntactical relation) 'al kins things' is more closely represented by 'all kinds of things' than by 'things of all kind'. See *kind* n., *manner* n., *sort* n., etc.. (s.v. *kin* n¹. 6b).

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Referential construction

(binominal, head)

Binominal constructions

- Widely found in English and elsewhere.
- With decreasing schematicity, but largely compositional
 - NP with postmodified head noun (e.g. *the man who came to dinner*)
 - postmodifier is PP (*the man in the Moon*)
 - P is purely syntactic linker of (*a man of peace*)
 - partitives
 - small size nouns and SKT (similar)

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Binominal constructions

- (More than just one simple hierarchy.)
 - By the ME period there are binominal constructions of many kinds, including some involving *kind* and the French borrowing *manner*:
- 14) Bi this kynde of speche (CMPURVEY,1,47.1982)
 - 15) Þan wer prestys in þe same place which knew hir maner of werkyng (CMKEMPE,147.3417)
- (Examples from Helsinki Corpus)

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Extension to list of SKT nouns

HTOED

- In Denison (2002) I confined discussion to *kin(d)*, *manner*, *sort*, *type* but mentioned a few others.
- Systematic approach would use *Historical Thesaurus*
- I took lists from
 - the external world | relative properties | kind or sort | noun
 - the external world | relative properties | kind or sort | noun | a kind, sort or class

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HTOED

- *i-cunde* (971), *manner* (a1225), *mould* (a1225), *hede* (a1300), *jet* (c1330), *colour* (1340), *hair* (1387), *touch* (1388), *estrete* (1393), *gender* (c1400), *stock* (c1450), *rate* (1509), *barrel* (1542), *suit* (1548), *kidney* (a1555), *fashion* (1562), *special* (1563), *moul* (1565-6), *stamp* (1573), *garb* (1600), *espece* (1602), *savour* (1608), *bran* (1610), *formality* (1610), *family* (a1626), *edition* (a1627), *kind* (1629), *make* (1660), *cast* (1673), *tour* (1702), *way* (1702), *specie* (1711), *tenor* (1729), *ilk* (1790), *genre* (1816), *persuasion* (1855), *stripe* (1863), *monotype* (1881)

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HTOED

- *kin* (c950), *distinction* (?c1225), *row* (c1300), *spece* (1303), *spice* (1303), *fashion* (c1325), *espicec* (1386), *state* (c1450), *sort* (?1523), *difference* (?1533), *predicament* (1548), *species* (1561), *vein* (1568), *brood* (1581), *rank* (1585), *order* (1588), *race* (1590), *breed* (1598), *strain* (1612), *batch* (1616), *siege* (1630), *category* (1660), *denomination* (1664), *genus* (1666), *world* (1685), *sortment* (1718), *tribe* (1731), *assortment* (1767), *description* (1781), *style* (1794), *class* (1807), *type* (1854), *age-group* (1904), *basket* (1916)

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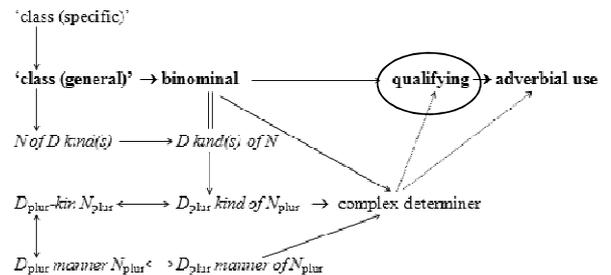
HTOED

- Most of these synonyms will fail the test of frequency or of having a sufficiently general class meaning.
- Thus *kidney* occurs in *OED* in e.g.
 - 16) A man of my Kidney · · that am as subject to heate as butter (a1616 Shakespeare *Merry Wives of Windsor* (1623) iii. v. 108) but only a dozen results with *kidney* as N_i, all strictly referential:
 - 17) inside the kidney of a living person. (1961 *Engineering* 4 Aug. 134/1)
- Perhaps *make*, *cast*, *way*, *ilk*, *rank*, *strain*, *style* worth pursuing, plus *form* (Mihatsch 2007).

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Development of qualifying construction

Denison (2002)



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Denison (2002)

- Binominal constructions have N_i as syntactic head, but the information value of the SKT-word can be relatively low, especially when unpremodified, with focus more on N₂.
- With nouns of subjective or metaphorical content especially, a conversational implicature could arise that the SKT-construction as a whole is used to refer not to a normal member of the class of N₂ but to a possible member, or perhaps an arguable member, or a peripheral member, or a near-member.
- That is, if the SKT-word is defocused and hence a precise listing of kinds is not at issue, then the construction is in effect about the nature of membership of the class of N₂. If the implicature becomes grammaticalised, the syntax changes accordingly, and the qualifying construction is born.

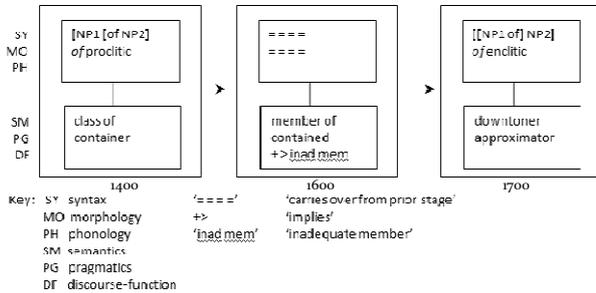
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Traugott (2008a, b)

- Full diagram (two stages omitted) summarises
 - size nouns (*a lot of*)
 - small size nouns (*(not) a shred of*)
 - SKT.
- Syntax: reanalysis of constituency of *of*
- Morphology: enclitic.
- Phonology: in effect just a realisation of e.g. *a kind of*.
- Pragmatics: 'approximator' can easily modulate into 'hedge'.
- No discourse-functional properties given.

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Traugott (2008a, b)



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Keizer (2007), Mihatsch (2007)

- Keizer fills in more detail for PDE, e.g.
 - stress typically falls on N_2
 - N_1 always singular
- Mihatsch looks at taxonomic nouns in six European languages (two Germanic, four Romance).
- Frequent use of taxonomic nouns 'with universal quantifiers, free choice and negative indefinites'
- Argues that taxonomic noun may seem redundant, since N_1 of N_2 could be replaced by N_2 alone without change of reference, but in fact enhances expressivity by associating taxonomic nouns with reference to marginal members.

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Brems & Davidse (2010)

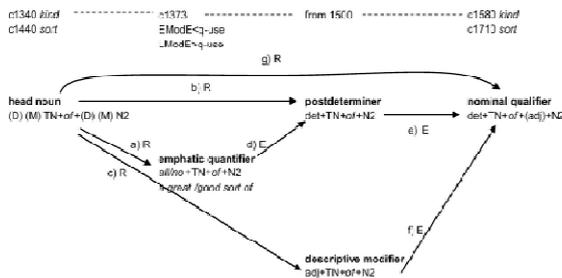


Figure 1 Main Paths of Development and Multiple Inheritance Links in the Type Noun Constructional Network.

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Brems & Davidse (2010)

- In their diagram, 'R indicates relationships involving reanalysis and E indicates entrenchment relationships'.
- Levels? All meso-cxns.
- These meso-cxns almost limited to micro-cxns involving *sort of*, *kind of*.
- 'As a later addition to that set [*type*] developed at a different rate than *sort* and *kind*; qualifying uses with *type*, for instance, are only just starting to be attested.' (2010: 182).
- There are also macro-cxns involved, including those for downtoners and hedges.

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Other phases

Losses from list of SKT nouns

- Why is *manner* in effect only retained in the quantifier pattern? – e.g. *all manner of N*
 - Blocking of plural *manners* by lexicalised use, so can't take part in number variation of other SKT?
 - Semantic interference from dynamic meaning of *manner*?
 - SKT constructions developing phonological shape which encourages monosyllable, hence recruitment of *type*?

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Approximators

- From qualifying
- 3) There was a kind of inevitability about the whole proposal which appalled Alexei.
to use with other categories (adverbial SKT)
 - 4) It kind of built his confidence with each successive flask
to free-standing use
 - 18) It's a little cartoon, it's just cheap and enj-- like Bart Simpson <-|-> kind of. (KPG 4168)

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Indefinite article

- “When both NP₁ and NP₂ have indefinite articles ... the indefiniteness may trigger the inference that because the class membership is not uniquely identifiable, it is not exact.” (Traugott 2008b: 228-9)
- Keizer finds most qualifying SKT have an indefinite article at least before N₁
- But the indefinite article is not retained in adverbial or independent use

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Indefinite article

Denison (2002, 12) ... thinks it is more plausible that the adverbial construction arose via the “qualifying construction” that refers to peripheral members of a category, e.g., *I suppose it's . . . a sort of holiday*. The hedging semantics/pragmatics of the latter are merely extended to more syntactic contexts in the adverbial construction. He does not explain why the indefinite article disappears in this construction and not in other grammaticalized uses of the SKT-nouns. (Brems 2007: 321 n.12)

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Indefinite article

- Whatever the precise internal structure of
- 3) ... a kind of inevitability ...
D at left edge persists as cue for NP. Not true of *a bit*.
 - For adjective or verb or PP, an NP cue would be inappropriate. So *a* is not retained in
 - 4) ... kind of built his confidence ...
and approximator function is carried by *kind of*.
 - Interesting that in independent use, *a bit* retains *a* but not *of*, while SKT retain *of* but not *a*.

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Loss of *of*

- Sometimes SKT allows ellipsis of entire *of*-phrase, but there are also variants with omission of *of* but presence of N₂.
 - In PDE this only concerns *type*, though in older English *manner*, *kind* and *kin* could also appear without intervening *of*. (Denison 2002)
- 19) It's one of those type LPs. I had all 'soul brothers' (1959 [OED])
 - 20) In this type program, the pupils create a model of a situation and test it to see it reflects reality. (JXK 1319)
 - 21) virtually any type projector (1979 [OED])

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X-type: semi-suffix?

- Dalton-Puffer & Plag discuss *X-type* pattern (2000: 231-6, 241-2), where *X* may be N, A or a phrase and the whole most frequently found as a premodifier within NP:
- 22) The 2ft high kangaroo-type creature was feeling a bit down-under (K97 441)
 - 23) At an Oscar type ceremony, an award winner decides to use his international platform for political purposes (A9T 268)
- They conclude on balance that *-type* is not a suffix: it is forming a compound noun. If so, a full CxG account of SKT must cross from syntax into morphology.

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Some remaining questions

Coming-into-being

- When does a new construction 'count'?

The *way*-construction emerged gradually over the course of several centuries. There is no single moment we can point to and say, "This is where the construction entered the grammar." Rather, a long process of local analogical extensions led a variety of idiomatic usages to gradually gain in productive strength even as they settled into a rigid syntax.

Israel (1996: 227) on the *way*-construction, cited by Noël (2006: 15)

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Prefabs, constructions, frequency

- How do we distinguish systematically between the entrenchment of a set phrase or 'pre-fab', and the entrenchment of a construction?
- For example,
 - *in a manner of speaking*
 - *that sort of thing*
- This may be related to the role of frequency and the possible significance of high-frequency exemplars and whether they make a construction easier to learn (Bybee & Cacoullos Torres 2009; cf. Brems 2007)

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Value added by CxG

- Many working assumptions of CxG much more congenial (to me) than those of other frameworks:
 - Usage basis
 - Lowered priority of word and of word class
 - Multiple inheritance
 - Thoroughgoing interplay of form and function, and inclusion of semantic, pragmatic and discourse functions in characterisation of constructions
- While these are important, does CxG add any real constraints on the power of grammar?

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