

# The grammaticalisations of *sort of*, *kind of* and *type of* in English

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## Background

- Diachronic work done by me 2000-02, in part with Evelien Keizer (synchronic PDE).
- Presented in an informal CxG framework (Helsinki 2002).
- I simply assumed much grammaticalisation in history of SKT words (Santiago 2005 abstract).
- Data here from ARCHER unless specified.
- Partial travel support from British Academy gratefully acknowledged.

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## SKT patterns in Present-day English

Nucleus of set of constructions is **N<sub>1</sub>-of-N<sub>2</sub>** as part of NP, where

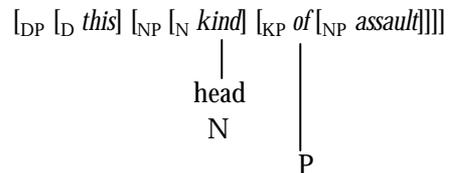
- N<sub>1</sub> is *sort*, *kind* or *type* (= 'SKT-nouns')
- possible premodifiers before N<sub>1</sub> and/or N<sub>2</sub>
- a determiner is only rarely attached to N<sub>2</sub>
- construction as a whole may be postmodified

e.g. D<sub>1</sub> N<sub>1</sub> of (D<sub>2</sub>) N<sub>2</sub>  
*this type of presentation*

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## The binominal construction

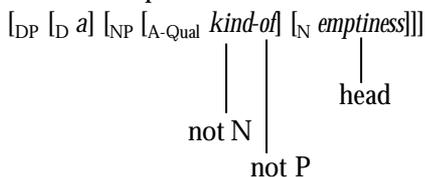
The mind of the victim of this kind of assault must be considered equally with the body.



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## The qualifying construction

When thanks is not forthcoming, we feel a kind of emptiness

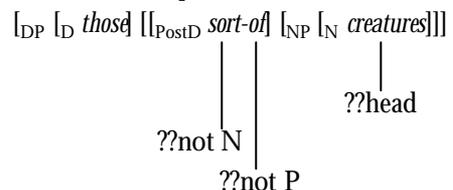


- *Type* is not found in this pattern.

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## The postdeterminer (or complex determiner) construction

Those sort of creatures know no bounds when they think they have a purse in view that will answer their impudent demands



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## Summary of three NP patterns

	sem. head	disc. fn.	D <sub>1</sub>	N <sub>1</sub>	N <sub>1</sub> num	prim. Stress	N <sub>2</sub> om.	style
binom	N <sub>1</sub>	ana-phor	free	<i>sort kind type</i>	sg or pl	D <sub>1</sub> or N <sub>1</sub>	yes	neut
qualif	N <sub>2</sub>	hdg	indef	<i>sort kind</i>	sg	N <sub>2</sub>	no	inf'l
post det	?	ana-phor	<i>these those all</i>	<i>sort kind type</i>	sg	D <sub>1</sub> or N <sub>2</sub>	yes	inf'l

## Partial lexicalisations

*a kind of / any kind of / what kind of*

*all sorts of* 'many kinds' → 'much, many'

and the fact was causing all sorts of gossip and unrest

*sort of thing*

- Not at all clear to me how frequent (how entrenched?) a string has to be for it to take on a life of its own.

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## *sort of thing*

... by which I take it you mean the mind. Every day in every way I get better and better. That sort of thing.

it's been a an about town sort of thing (WSC)

'Is that a single-engine plane?' .. 'Kind of executive runabout kind of thing.' (OED)

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## Variants of D<sub>1</sub> N<sub>1</sub> of (D<sub>2</sub>) N<sub>2</sub>

- *Sort of thing* is found as an adverbial hedge, usually in clause-final position:

if he had visitors he used to send her out of the room type of thing

- Ellipsis of *of N<sub>2</sub>* from the binominal or even the postdeterminer patterns:

'They won't last long, mate, these type never do.'

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## Patterns without *of* for *type* only

- A variant of the postdeterminer pattern  
It's one of those type LPs. I had all 'soul brothers' (1959 [OED])

virtually any type projector (1979 [OED])

- The semi-suffix *-type*

This indicated to us not only that quick-reaction type missions are feasible, but also that the results are more than satisfactory.

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## Adverbial

You're being kind of melodramatic, aren't you?

I kind of admire what he's doing. It's clever as hell.

I put a thousand dollars in the bank today, in my own name. I drive a car. I am a grownup.

Look, I walk, talk, run. Type. Even fuck. Sort of. I don't understand anything. Anything.

... and I sort of opened the door, and looked out, and I sort of saw Richard ... [Jen Smith p.c.]

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## Adverbial

- I sort of reckon by now you must be in Chester but maybe you are not.
- I was born in country like this, you know, the real thing. I mean you didn't drive out anywhere to sort of see it. You just sat down on the back porch and – there it was. Something to run from; something to get the hell away from as fast as you could.
- Only *sort* and *kind*, not *type*.

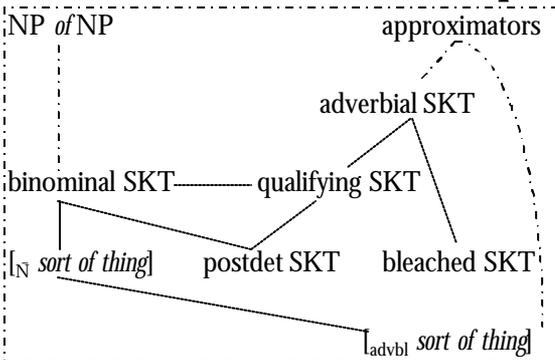
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## Subdivisions of adverbial?

- degree modifier
- hedge
- 'as it were'
- bleached
- etc.?
- Some of these are discourse particles.
- Different pragmatics and sometimes different syntax suggest more than one construction.

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## PDE construction relationships



## History

- The set of SKT-nouns  
*sort, kind, kin, type, manner, variety, class, brand, species, category*
- or printing and fixing those variety of Colours in that white Cloth (1655, *OED*)
- for all these manner of operations. (1676, *OED*)
- This class of females are known by the gang as 'Chippies', and most of them come from the slums. (1886, *OED*)

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## 'Class' meanings

- kind:**
  - 'birth, descent, nature'
  - 'a natural group of living things having a common origin' [**class (specific)**]
  - 'a class of individuals or objects merely having common attributes' [**class (general)**, from OE]
- manner:**
  - 'method, mode of procedure, behaviour' (*OED*<sup>1</sup>)
  - class (general)** (from 13C, *OED*<sup>3</sup>)

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## 'Class' meanings

- sort**
  - from a Romance source meaning 'lot, fate'
  - '[u]sed of persons, with special reference to character, disposition, or rank' [**class (specific)**]
  - '[a] kind, species, variety, or description of persons or things' [**class (general)**, from late 14C]

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## Why did *manner* almost drop out?

There are three manner of rights of Property; that is, Property absolute, Property qualified, and Property possessory. (1708)

I hate republicans, as I do all other manner of fools. (1876)

- Could it be phonological (rhythm)? – the other SKT words are monosyllables and can form a disyllable with reduced *of*.

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## Why no qualifying *type*?

- Because class (general) meaning is too young?
- Because other meanings interfere too much?
- Because other syntactic possibilities interfere?
- Because the development was time-limited, and when *sort* and *kind* underwent it, *type* was not yet a member of the SKT set?
  - Because it isn't frequent enough? Cf. approx. ARCHER figures: *type* 253 vs. *sort* 494 vs. *kind* 765.

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## Origins of adverbial?

- **Qualifying** → **adverbial (DD)**

I suppose it's ... a sort of holiday

[<sub>DP</sub> [<sub>D</sub> a] [<sub>NP</sub> [<sub>Qual</sub> *sort-of*] [<sub>N</sub> *holiday*]]]

- Approximator meaning retained, syntactic subcategorisation widened.

and they *kind of* group . put people into *kind of* categories — .

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## Origins of adverbial?

- **Binominal** → **adverbial (Tabor 1993)**

a hundred contradictory views may preserve a kind of imperfect analogy (1743)

[<sub>NP</sub> a [<sub>N'</sub> [<sub>N</sub> *kind*] [<sub>PP</sub> of [<sub>NP</sub> *imperfect analogy*]]]]

[<sub>NP</sub> a [<sub>N'</sub> [<sub>AP</sub> [<sub>DegMod</sub> *kind-of*] [*imperfect*]]] *analogy*]

The Macaronian is a kind of burlesque poetry

a *kind* [<sub>PP</sub> of [<sub>A</sub> *burlesque poetry*] ]

[<sub>AP</sub> (a) *kind of burlesque*] [<sub>N</sub> *poetry*]

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## Conclusions

- What do (would) we get by identifying certain episodes as grammaticalisations?
  - Does it help predict pathways of development? (Yes.)
  - Does it tell us anything new about processes of grammaticalisation? (No?)

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## Selected references

- Denison, David. 2002. History of the *sort of* construction family. Paper presented at ICCG2, Helsinki.
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- Tabor, Whitney. 1993. The gradual development of degree modifier *sort of* and *kind of*: A corpus proximity model. *Papers from the 29th Regional Meeting of the Chicago Linguistic Society*, 451-465.

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